THE POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE:

THE IMPACT OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS' CAPACITIES TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR THEIR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) to analyse the politics of educational disadvantage in Australia. The historical influence of two competing coalitions at Commonwealth and State level in New South Wales and Victoria is traced. For most of the 20th century there has been a dominant conservative coalition and a minority coalition that has favoured reforms to assist socially disadvantaged groups in each of the three jurisdictions. However, the composition of these contending coalitions and their relative strengths have varied substantially from State to State. The theoretical model provided by the ACF was supplemented by explorations of Halligan and Power’s (1992) ‘regime dynamics’ framework which helps explain these differences in terms of the differing politico-administrative cultures of Victoria and New South Wales.

The historical interpretation is based partly on the insights into educational disadvantage found in the work of Coleman (1966, 1990, 1997) and Bourdieu (1977, 1979, 1990, 1991). Following the analysis of the development of Commonwealth and State policies, the research then focuses on the ‘street level’ strategies (Lipsky, 1980) of school principals in disadvantaged areas of New South Wales and Victoria, as they seek to assist their students to achieve better educational outcomes. The strategies of the Principals are viewed as deriving from (a) their perceptions of the nature of educational disadvantage (b) their assessment of the extent to which a curriculum that privileges academic values can be adapted to suit the needs of the range of students in their care and (c) their own governance skills in working with and around the directives of the Commonwealth and State Governments.

The major source of data on these issues was a series of in-depth interviews with school principals in the two States. The interviews with practitioners were supplemented by discussions with administrators and policy-makers expected to have system-wide perspectives. The practical policy recommendations in the conclusion of the thesis derive, in part, from these interviews. The findings of the thesis reinforce those of Richard Teese (1993, 1998, 2000) and Teese and Polesel (2003) that poor educational outcomes for socially disadvantaged students are connected to the nature of the curriculum and its methods of assessment, as well as to the hierarchical organization of schooling that mirrors that of the curriculum.

The concluding section of the thesis attempts a synthesis of the Sabatier and Halligan and Power perspectives used in the development of the argument. In particular, it suggests modifications of the ACF for application to the Westminster system and the goal of practical reform.

Declaration

I, Ann Morrow, declare that this thesis, submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University of Melbourne, for the examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography and endnotes.
Acknowledgements

As every doctoral candidate discovers, any credit that results from the production of a thesis must be shared with a great many people. My thanks go, principally, to two academic staff from the University of Melbourne. Associate Professor Bruce Headey provided cheerful encouragement and detailed academic support throughout a process so attenuated that – although he never said so - must have tested the limits of his tolerance. I thank him for his expert supervision. And I thank Professor Richard Teese, not only for the discussions and exchange of email correspondence on the subject-matter of the actual thesis, but also for the continuing inspiration of his research and writing that – more than that of any other analyst – has increased my understanding of the reasons for the differences in educational outcomes between different groups of students and schools.

Without the thoughtful contributions provided by the 28 school principals in New South Wales and Victoria who agreed to be interviewed at length, it is doubtful that the thesis would have been completed. The principals’ views were anonymously shared with teacher colleagues in several States, and, though not named in the thesis, they provided supporting (or dissenting) comments that strengthened my knowledge of contemporary conditions in the various categories of schools. I am continually impressed by the skill and dedication of education practitioners: their enthusiasm for their increasingly difficult task – very often in the face of inadequate resources – always energises me. I am grateful, too, to fellow doctoral students in the Centre for Public Policy, and others in Canberra and Sydney, who shared their knowledge with me.

I owe a debt to State and Regional educational administrators, TAFE personnel, and policy workers in both States. Mr Ray Gillies and Dr. Lyndsay Connors from New South Wales graciously responded to multiple requests for interviews and for additional ‘updates’ over several years. My grateful thanks to Mr Roy Martin and Mr Ben Power for their statistical assistance. I owe much to Victorian friends and colleagues, who include Mr Ian Hind from the Victorian Department, Messrs Bill Hannon, Howard Kelly, Bruce McKenzie and Ms Marie Dumais who were happy to have telephone or email conversations on issues arising from the thesis. Professors Jack Keating, Gerald Burke and Helen Praetz, Dr John Polesel and Dr John Spierings also uncomplainingly emailed responses to my incessant ‘questions without notice’. Ms Joan Kirner’s excellent memory was very helpful. Members of the Wyn Bay LLEN provided a valuable sounding board for policy ideas on early school leavers.

It is commonplace for writers of all varieties to acknowledge their families’ forbearance during ‘the production process’, and I am no exception. My special thanks go to my loving husband, John, not only for his unfailing patience, but also for his constant intellectual companionship.
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PART ONE: - OVERVIEW

This is the first of the four Parts of the thesis. In this Part, the **Introduction** sets out the aims and methods of the research. **Chapter 1** outlines the Advocacy Coalition Framework: the theoretical perspective that has proven - for all its limitations - most useful for the project.
## Introduction

At the end of 1996, 17 year old ‘Emma’ emerged from her Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) exams with a Tertiary Entrance Score (TER) of 94.75, very disappointed not to have achieved the 95.5 she needed to secure a place in a law course at Melbourne or Monash University.

Emma is the third child and only daughter of a mother who is a senior TAFE administrator, and a father who, when Emma began her secondary schooling, was a Ministerial Advisor. Subsequently, he became the chief executive officer of a firm of management and strategic planning consultants.

Emma had attended a Catholic Secondary College in an upper middle-class south eastern metropolitan area, 20 kilometers from her home. In her two VCE years, her parents paid annual school fees of $3,000.00 per year, excluding fees for ‘extras’ such as school camps and excursions, materials and subject fees.

Emma was a diligent senior secondary student, averaging 21 hours of private study per week. Nevertheless, she always helped entertain the constant stream of interesting visitors that her parents invited to the family home. Moreover, in addition to study and a full and active family life, she managed to hold down a part-time job in a fashion store, and to spend a semester in Indonesia, improving her Indonesian language.

Frustrated to have missed out on Law, she settled for Arts at Monash, turning in an exceptional performance.

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At the end of 1996, at age 18, ‘Ruby’ graduated from her government high school in a municipality in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne – an area in which, in that year, 10.4 per cent of its population was unemployed; the ‘proportion of persons not attending an educational institution’ was higher than the Melbourne average; and, of those who were attending an educational institution, the proportions at secondary and tertiary levels were lower than the Melbourne averages.

Ruby is also the third child and only daughter in her family. Ruby’s father left home just after her first birthday, and for the twelve years of her schooling, her mother, ‘Brenda’, earned income for her family by cleaning people’s houses – casual work in the only field available to her, given her own lack of formal education.

Brenda could never afford holidays for her children, and her cleaner’s earnings did not extend to purchasing a home computer for the three children of the family. One of Ruby’s abiding memories of her final year at school is of waiting an hour for her turn at one of the handful of computers in the school library, only to be ‘hassled’, as she keyed in her assignment, by her friends who were still waiting in line.

Like Emma, Ruby had part-time work: she ‘waitressed’ at a local café and did baby-sitting at night, and her earnings enabled her to contribute the ‘rent’ that helped her mother to pay the family bills.
performance that enabled her to transfer to Law at the beginning of her third year.

Following a semester’s exchange undertaken at the University of Amsterdam, Emma graduated in Arts and Law at the end of 2001. She received offers of placements for her Articles from eight leading Melbourne Law firms and now works as a solicitor with one of these.

Ruby was ecstatic to receive a TER score of 68, which gave her the opportunity of tertiary studies at Victoria University or TAFE. Pursuing a long-held goal, she applied to every university and TAFE institute that advertised a photography course. The only one that offered her a place was a 'private provider' that charged annual fees of $10,000 – impossibly beyond Ruby’s means. Having no money, she decided to defer for a year to take a job in a child-care centre, where, as an unqualified worker, she earned $6.00 per hour, from which she continued to contribute 'rent' while she lived with her mother.

The following year (1998), Ruby decided to take up her place at VUT, enrolling as a part-time student, and she also managed to get a job in a bar. In 1999, Ruby's mother contracted cancer.

Forced to give up her cleaning jobs, Brenda now had to live on a sickness benefit pension, and the small contributions from her children’s wages were needed even more.

A highly-motivated, well-organised student, Ruby graduated from VUT in March 2001 with an Arts Degree and majors in Women’s Studies, Sociology and Literature. She is now working five nights per week in the bar of one of the clubs in the Casino. Her employers are paying for her to do a TAFE Hospitality course and she hopes to have her Certificate III by the end of next year.

She and a girlfriend now share their small flat with Ruby’s mother, who is no longer able to work. Ruby plans to take her first overseas trip ‘if ever (she) save(s) the money'.
There are significant differences in the ways in which students from different social groups experience schooling. There are also persistent patterns in the geographical distribution of end-of-schooling rewards. Data of these kinds of course conceal the fact that the last two decades have seen a substantial overall increase in the numbers of young people completing secondary schooling and accessing further education in Australia. Between 1982 and 1992, the proportion of students completing school doubled, with the result that ‘Many poor children complete school today who were unknown in senior forms twenty years ago or even ten’. (Teese, 2000,1) But notwithstanding the gradual trend upwards in the overall levels of achievement, marked differentials between different groups of students remain, with large differences between disadvantaged students and those of their more socially advantaged peers:

While there has been no comprehensive study published of social disadvantage in educational achievement, numerous individual studies have shown sharp and persistent patterns. It is known, for example, that the likelihood of failing in English rises dramatically from suburbs with many tertiary-educated families to those with mainly blue-collar and migrant workers. Similarly, in mathematics - even in the terminal stream of Further Mathematics - there are very pronounced disparities in achievement with high proportions (sometimes the majority) of students in poorer suburbs failing to reach satisfactory standards. These differences in attainment add to lower participation rates in the more 'academic' subjects, such as Chemistry and Mathematical Methods. Lower achievement and lower rates of participation are usually experienced by populations who complete school less frequently, so there is a progressive compounding of disadvantage - higher rates of early leaving, poorer access to academic subjects, lower achievement and failure to obtain tertiary places, where these are applied for. The correlation between achievement and morale being a strong one, those schools and communities in which the experience of failure is common are also those in which student motivation is often weak and the desire to leave school early is strong. As this occurs where unemployment is also high, there is a dangerous convergence of educational and economic collapse. The notion that the complex of problems arising from this conjuncture can be left for schools to solve in isolation and through market mechanisms or greater administrative freedom is unconvincing. These are structural problems which must be addressed systematically through public policy. Anything short of this smacks of the discredited Friedmanite philosophy, that the best thing for the poor is to 'leave them alone'. (Teese, 1999)

Public policy’s historic incapacity to come to grips with the dramatically uneven distribution of educational outcomes has serious consequences. For the community, it
means a loss of talent and the costs associated with early school leaving. In 1999, it was estimated that for each national cohort - or year of students going through school - 35,000 will not complete their secondary schooling and will subsequently obtain no further formal education or training qualification. In that year, the overall cost to the country for the annual batch of early school leavers was estimated at $2.6 billion. (King, 1999, 119). In 2000, 15.1 per cent of 15-19 year olds – around 205,300 young Australians – were neither in education nor full-time work, and a quarter of 18-19 year olds were experiencing real difficulties in obtaining full-time employment. (Curtain, 2001). Australia ranks 13th out of 18 OECD countries in the numbers of 20-24 year-olds in education or full-time work. (OECD, 2001).

To individual students and their families, low school achievement brings the physical and psychological manifestations of ‘failure’. Behind the aggregate statistics lurks personal tragedy on a vast scale, because all children, irrespective of their family background, begin their schooling with high aspirations. Incremental improvement for the group as a whole cannot erase the reality that every improvement for those at the top of the education hierarchy actually exacerbates the desperate situation of those left behind.

Students’ successful transition from school to further education, training and employment is strongly linked to the year in which they complete school. In 1999, 69 per cent of students who left school having completed Year 12 went on to higher education. Only 39 per cent of Year 11 graduates did so. Around one third of early school leavers have not made a successful transition to further study or full-time work. Many of these would have had low levels of literacy and numeracy. (Praetz, 2002) Low achievement at school is strongly correlated with social disadvantage. (Teese, 2000, 202-3.) If Australian governments wish to see dramatically improved outcomes across the board, they must develop strategies for lifting the success rates of socially disadvantaged students.

While schools cannot be expected to correct the inequalities in society at large that provide the social context for educational disadvantage, given appropriate policy support, they can — and do — improve the life chances of many of their students. This research is based on the premise that it should be possible to fashion public policies
that, at the very least, help schools to stem the growth of large differentials in outcomes between groups of students, and at best, lead to the reduction of these differences over time.

The main aim of the research is thus to examine the impact of public policy on the capacities of (secondary) schools to improve educational outcomes for their disadvantaged students. I am particularly interested in the strategies being employed by schools that have significant concentrations of socially disadvantaged students. The field visits uncovered many examples of good practice in such schools - schools that, notwithstanding the unpromising contexts within which they are operating, appear to be making a difference in the lives of their students.

The principal research questions of the thesis are as follows:

What accounts for the persistence of differentials in patterns of educational achievement?

What approaches have been taken by Commonwealth and State governments to counter the effects of social disadvantage in schooling? Under what circumstances do these types of policy goals gain or lose support?

How have the differing ‘cultures of schooling’ in New South Wales and Victoria shaped policy approaches in those States, and are there different outcomes that can be attributed to these cultures?

How do local schools define issues of disadvantage and what strategies do they develop to deal with them?

How do schools experience central government policies? In responding to public policy changes, what adjustments do they have to make and what are the effects of these adjustments on neighbouring schools?
Twin Themes: Governance and Curriculum

Throughout the thesis, it has been useful to use, as organising constructs, the two themes of ‘Governance’ and ‘Curriculum’. The theme of ‘Governance’, relates, firstly, to the ways in which the school systems of each State are organised. One of the most fascinating outcomes of the investigation was to find evidence that supports the contention of Teese (Teese, 2000, 203 ff.) that the organisation of schooling is inextricably related to the organisation of the curriculum – an issue that receives detailed consideration in Chapters 7 and 8.

Definitions

Governance

‘Governance’ has been defined as ‘the institutional ecology through which interests within the structure of government relate to interests in civil society and to each other.’ (Power, 1999). Governance in schooling therefore speaks to the relationship between schools and the central government administrators of their system, as well as to their other external relationships – with parents, with their local communities, with neighbouring schools. Because the subject of the thesis is public policy, the principal foci have been the organisation of the school systems by governments and schools’ relationships with government. By no means does the thesis examine all the possible dimensions of governance. Nor does it provide a detailed examination of the internal governance of schools, though, in talking to school principals about their local, school-based strategies, I have learned, en passant, about some of the related complexities in the internal governance of those schools that cope with significant social disadvantage on a daily basis.
Curriculum

In Power's formulation, the institutional ecology of each of the subsystems of governance is sustained by distinctive flows of services. In the schools subsystem, the core service is the 'delivery' of the curriculum. It was hardly surprising, therefore, to discover that 'Curriculum', was the major preoccupation of every school principal interviewed. Used in its broadest sense, the term describes what it is that schools actually do: what they teach and how and why; their methods of assessment; the values that underpin their teaching philosophies; their use of curriculum in the recruitment of their students and in the development of their teaching staff. Power over the curriculum – its design, and the ways in which performance within it are measured – is regarded in all school systems, and increasingly, by central governments and other interests external to education systems, as a political prize. (Lawton, 1980); (Hannan, 1985); (Cohen, 1985); (Teese, 2000). Battles for political control over the post-secondary curriculum – particularly those aspects that determine a student's access to tertiary education – have contributed in a major way to the demise of one of the State governments studied in this thesis.

Equality of opportunity

'Equality of opportunity' refers to the distribution of life chances among the population. The more even the distribution, the greater the equality. All Australian governments claim a commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity through schooling. Prominent among the factors that reduce such equality are those that limit the capacity of some students to benefit from formal education. Of such limiting factors, those that are rooted in socio-economic and cultural systems – several of which have been identified by Teese in the above quotation - are what I understand to be the components of 'structural inequality'.
The Resources of Schools

It is currently impossible to make a thorough-going comparison of the overall resources of public and private schools. In particular, differences in capital endowments are impossible to quantify - although obvious on the most cursory visit to those school campuses fortunate enough to attract them. From a recent paper by Burke and Spaull (Burke, 2001) it is possible, however, to gain reasonably accurate estimates of levels of recurrent funding. In 1999, the average public funding of schools was running at levels that only marginally favoured public schools. When private contributions were taken into account, there was a considerable resources gap between public and private schools. However, it should be borne in mind that these are average figures. Of the schools in the two study sites, the most elite (PrN10) charged fees in 2003 of $16,000 per annum - a level 60 per cent higher than the average for non-Catholic private schools. As Table 5.1 shows, there were considerable differences between the Catholic and non-Catholic schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of School</th>
<th>From Governments</th>
<th>From Private Contributions</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5700</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>7000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Private</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>11,300</td>
</tr>
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Sources: (Burke, 2001, 438-440) and (Australian Senate. Employment, 1997), which estimated that private contributions to public education were running at 5-7 per cent of total expenditure. Figures have been rounded to nearest $100.

These are of course average figures for the nation as a whole. In order to do justice to the particularities of specific locations, I had to go into the field. What follows is an account of the way this exercise was approached.
Methods of Investigation

The research questions were investigated in a number of different ways.

Theoretical research

The thesis does not include a 'stand-alone' literature review. Following the advice of Dr David Evans of this University, (Evans, 1995) the relevant literature is introduced as issues arise in the course of developing the thesis argument. As a result, some chapters (such as Chapter 1: The Politics of Educational Disadvantage: a Framework for Analysis) are more theoretical and comparative in nature than others (such as Chapter 2: Political Cultures and Educational Traditions Prior to the Whitlam Revolution: the 1850s to 1972).

The theoretical framework therefore emerges in two stages. An early chapter outlines some of the most important elements in the framework, but does not purport to be comprehensive. Then, the beginning of each of the chapters in Part 2 unveils the aspect of the theoretical framework that is relevant to the chapter's subject matter. This has of course been a cumulative process: the theoretical sections of the later chapters have drawn on what has gone before. Because of this, the focus of these sections progressively shifts as the thesis develops. The final theoretical synthesis occurs in the ninth and concluding chapter. (Appendix Intro:1. to this Introduction identifies two further bodies of recent writings that came to my attention too late to shape the theoretical framework, but not too late for some of their empirical findings to be used to support some of the policy recommendations).

The search for theoretical perspectives that would strengthen an analysis of Australian events has taken me beyond the literature of this country, especially to that of the USA and France. As is demonstrated in Chapter 1, the foundation for the work on theoretical development is the Advocacy Coalition Framework of Paul Sabatier and his colleagues. In successive chapters, that framework is extended to
accommodate the contributions of scholars such as James Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu, R.W. Connell, Richard Teese, John Halligan and John Power, and Michael Lipsky.

Although these scholars will be considered in turn, it is necessary at this point to provide a justification for focusing the fieldwork on the two States of New South Wales and Victoria. There are good theoretical grounds for contending that there are only two major types of politico-administrative cultures functioning in Australia. Earlier work on local government systems and state executive branches (Power et al, 1981) (Halligan and Power, 1992) had indicated that long periods of one-Party rule have left lasting imprints on the political culture of particular jurisdictions. Halligan and Power’s research on ‘regime dynamics’ also demonstrated that the two ‘paradigm cases’ for these imprints had been the two largest States. Keating took up this theme and extended it to analyse the education systems of the same two States (Keating, 1999) and I have used ‘regime dynamics’ to help explain their differing policy approaches to social disadvantage in secondary education.

Choice of jurisdictions

My reasons for restricting the research to just three of the nine Australian jurisdictions were logistical and strategic, as well as theoretical. The choice of the Commonwealth was so obvious as to need little justification. For a brief period in the 1970s, the Federal Government gained international recognition for policies and programs designed to counter at least some of the effects of educational disadvantage. (Connell 1993, 87). More recently, Commonwealth policies have moved to the Right, and, in doing so, have greatly influenced the nature of the policy-making environment in the other jurisdictions.

Within the Australian system of government, each State and Territory has its own idiosyncrasies, and these affect the approaches available to school-based strategists. As I wanted to investigate local strategies as well as central policy processes, I had to define the jurisdictions that provide the politico-administrative contexts in which schools operate. The selection of just two of the eight State/Territory jurisdictions was made on conventional grounds: there are serious
resource limitations on the scope of the work that can be undertaken for a Ph D project. The expense of travelling the length and breadth of a very large country has to be justified in terms of the research ‘payoff’. In this case, such a payoff was very unlikely. I chose to study New South Wales and Victoria - two contiguous States that also happen to be the most populous, and, possibly because of the size of their populations, the ones with the largest concentrations of urban disadvantage. In addition, one is the State in which I live and work.

Historical research

I have consulted historical accounts of relevant policy developments at Commonwealth level, as well as in New South Wales and Victoria - the two States that have the largest school systems. To gain an understanding of political motivations, the Australian public policy and educational research literature, ministerial statements and press releases have been accessed, and interviews conducted of State and regional administrators. I was privileged to gain access to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library for the purposes of consulting Hansard records and other library materials.²

Field interviews

To gain some insight into the ways in which schools ‘read’ public policy, and to examine the ways in which public policies impact on school practice, ‘on the ground’ interviews of local education practitioners and administrators were conducted in both of the selected States. Interviews of 28 principals (12 from New South Wales and 16 from Victoria) revealed both differences and similarities in the strategies mounted by schools that are trying to cope with significant social disadvantage among their students. Besides talking to principals, I collected documentation from the schools: school charters, descriptions of curriculum offerings, school policies, and budgets, for example. The budgets highlighted the differing resource situations of different kinds of schools in a local area, and they shed additional light on the impact of comparative expenditure patterns in the two States. Data from the Victorian interviews have been
supplemented through access to the 160 submissions to a citizens’ inquiry into public education conducted in that State in 1999.

Choice of research sites

In each of the two States, I selected, as the research sites, a part of the western metropolitan region of the capital city. (The two sites are described and compared in Chapter 5). The New South Wales site contained 24 schools and the Victorian area, 17 schools, though not all schools agreed to be part of the study. While comparatively low on the socio-economic status (SES) scale, each site nevertheless was an area of mixed status. I therefore expected there to be some variation in the range of educational needs they exhibited, and consequently, that they would be trying a range of local strategies.

Use of Pseudonyms and Codes

In view of the sensitivities that inevitably characterise the relationship between schools and their central governments, and of the competitive environment in which schools currently are operating, the thesis uses pseudonyms for schools, (eg. ‘Latteville High’, ‘Cherry Blossom High’). For the same reasons, the names of school principals or teachers are not disclosed. Principals are simply identified as coming from a New South Wales Public (PuN) or private (PrN) school, or from a Victorian Public (PuV) or private (PrV) school. The numbers following the letters (as in ‘PuN11’ or ‘PrV6’) simply refers to the order - within each of the four categories of schools – in which I interviewed the principals.
Overview of Chapter Content

As was stated in the PART 1 Preface, the 9 chapters of the thesis are divided into four parts:

**PART 1** contains this Introduction, as well as **Chapter 1: Theoretical Frameworks, Advocacy Coalitions and Regime Dynamics.** The first chapter sets out the theoretical constructs used to structure the argument of the thesis. It outlines the principal characteristics of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, and establishes the grounds on which the ACF was chosen. An Appendix to this chapter contains a consolidated list of the Hypotheses through which Sabatier has sought to elaborate his Framework.

**PART 2** commences with **Chapter 2, Political Cultures and Educational Traditions prior to the Whitlam Revolution, the 1850s to 1972,** which traces the development of schools policy in the two State jurisdictions of New South Wales and Victoria. While noting the many similarities between the two States, it also draws on previous scholarship to differentiate them in terms of their dominant advocacy coalitions and the political cultures that provide the context for policy-making in each. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the minor role in schools policy that the Commonwealth played in its first seven decades of existence.

**Chapter 3: The Commonwealth: The Whitlam Revolution and After:** **1972 to 2003,** begins by describing the reforming climate of opinion that preceded a massive expansion of the Commonwealth’s role in schooling. Crucial for the formation of that climate was the path-breaking investigation conducted by James Coleman and his colleagues into the effectiveness of US schools’ attempts to counter the impacts of disadvantage. In this chapter, the Commonwealth moves to centre stage, following the 1972 election victory of Whitlam and the subsequent appointment of the Karmel Committee. The chapter traces the rise, decline and ultimate demise of the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP). It investigates the emergence of a dominant national coalition during this period and examines the extent to which this formation could be regarded as an advocacy coalition. One of the continuities linking this chapter with Chapter 4 is the
identity of the proponent of the major curriculum reform advanced in Victoria - one of Karmel’s chief lieutenants of a decade or more earlier – Jean Blackburn.

In Chapter 4: The States in an Era of Economic Rationalism: 1972 to the present, which concludes PART 2, the primary focus shifts back to the States, as the Commonwealth role developed in ways that increasingly marginalised concern for disadvantaged students. The chapter begins with a consideration of another great theorist of educational disadvantage – Pierre Bourdieu – and examines the ways in which his work shaped the climate of opinion in Victoria as it approached the new millennium. In New South Wales, by contrast, the nature of reform was continuity rather than innovation. That State’s attachment to this goal was exemplified by its reaction to the Commonwealth’s abolition of the DSP: the State Government replaced the Commonwealth program with its own version of the DSP. Of particular interest in this chapter is the differing ways in which minority Advocacy Coalitions in Australia have attempted to grapple with the ongoing academic hegemony over the secondary school curriculum.

PART 3 begins with Chapter 5: Local Strategies. This chapter indicates the nature and scope of the fieldwork, of which the main activity was a set of 28 interviews with school principals in the Western suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. This chapter also describes the two study areas and their characteristics.

The following three chapters then deal with the three major themes that emerged in the interviews:

Chapter 6. Perceptions of Disadvantage
Chapter 7: Governance Strategies
Chapter 8: Curriculum Strategies

Overall, PART 3 provides a theoretically grounded justification for investigating schools’ own definitions of disadvantage and describes the local strategies they have put in place to deal with it. PART 3 also describes the ways in which schools interact with central policy processes. The impacts of Commonwealth and State level policies
on different types of schools is observed, particularly in the area of making provision for disadvantaged students.

**PART 4** of the thesis comprises a single **Chapter 9: Conclusion**. In this chapter, several directions for policy reform will be identified. The chapter also suggests new theoretical directions to guide future research into policy making on social disadvantage in schooling in Australia. While this framework has the Advocacy Coalition Framework as its foundation, it attempts to extend the analysis into salient aspects of the institutional environments within which advocacy coalitions function. Appendix 9.1 contains a ‘culled’ (and modified) set of Hypotheses, which represent those elements from the Advocacy Coalition that have proven most valuable in the development of this project.

As the argument of the thesis progresses, its explanatory and outcome variables shift. The policy variables that, in the early sections of the thesis, are treated as ‘explanatory’ later become aspects of progressively more complex sets of ‘outcome’ variables. The final outcome variable is: ‘educational outcomes for disadvantaged students’. Appendix Intro: 2 presents these shifts in a graphical way.
Appendix Intro 1: The Arrival of New Materials

As the thesis neared completion, unavoidably I faced the dilemma of all researchers. At what point do you decide to stop re-shaping your work to take account of other relevant works that have just come to your attention? In my case, the ‘other works’ that came to my notice were empirical studies of civic capacity building in schools systems by scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom (Stone, 2001); (Power, 2001).

Ultimately, I decided not to try to accommodate these writings that were discovered so late in my project. But they are referred to here as signposts for future research into the development of policies to counter some of the negative impacts on schooling of socio-economic disadvantage.

(I was encouraged to handle my problem in this way by a precedent established by no less a figure than Harold Wilson. One month before Wilson was to complete his final examinations in economics at Oxford, Keynes’ *General Theory* appeared. When asked how he proposed to deal with this work when it was raised – as it surely would be – in the imminent oral examinations, Wilson serenely replied that he would refuse to discuss the book because it had come too late! Wilson subsequently emerged with first class honours).

(Source: Personal reminiscence of a fellow student of Wilson’s, the late Richard Spann, as told to John Power).
## Appendix Intro 2: Explanatory and Outcome Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Explanatory variable(s)</th>
<th>Outcome variable(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dynamics of Advocacy Coalitions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Politico-administrative cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politico-administrative cultures + Dynamics of advocacy coalitions</td>
<td>Commonwealth policies for disadvantaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Politico-administrative cultures + Dynamics of advocacy coalitions + Commonwealth policies</td>
<td>State policies for disadvantaged students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 8</td>
<td>Politico-administrative cultures + Dynamics of advocacy coalitions + Commonwealth policies + State policies</td>
<td>School strategies for disadvantaged students</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Politico-administrative cultures + Dynamics of advocacy coalitions + Commonwealth policies + State policies + School strategies</td>
<td>Educational outcomes for disadvantaged students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The use of the two cases in the introduction of the thesis follows the example of R.A.W. Rhodes, who illustrated the effects of 'the unintended consequences of corporate management and marketization' on public administration by means of 'boxed examples of how individual actors responded to the difficulties of governance'. Rhodes, R.A.W. (2000, 64-6). Written permission to include the cases was obtained from the two girls concerned.

Kindly arranged by the Democrats' Spokesperson on Schools, Senator Lyn Allison.
Chapter 1: The Politics of Educational Disadvantage - a Framework for Analysis

For the 15 years between 1982 and 1997, my involvement in the development of public policies on schooling\(^1\) encouraged me to search for a theoretical framework that increased my understanding of the ways in which certain policies are developed - often at a glacial pace - and of why some of them, in the process, acquire hegemonic status.

In my experience, the single most important determinant of success in the education policy field is the continuing existence of a dominant group, made up of actors from various political parties, the public service, academe, the teaching profession and various other interests, all collaborating towards the achievement of at least one shared policy goal. Because of its potential contribution to the analysis of this phenomenon, I chose, as my primary theoretical lens, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed by Paul Sabatier and his colleagues. (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier, August 1996; Sabatier, 1999a). Much education debate in Australia is conducted with an almost ideological fervour by its participants. The emphasis given by Sabatier to the importance of the ‘core values’ around which advocates of one position or another coalesce therefore seemed to me to be specially pertinent to a study of developments in education policy. Further, the ACF’s potential for explaining the development and maintenance of the structures of power that are the context for education policy-making in Australia seemed worth exploring. However, in the process of this exploration, I also found it useful to refer to theoretical perspectives that lie outside Sabatier’s framework.

According to Sabatier, the making of public policies occurs within a number of segmented policy subsystems. In his lexicon, a policy subsystem comprises the relevant policy domain and all those who are systematically engaged in trying to influence the policy issues within that domain. The characteristics of policy subsystems are: longevity, focus, and active engagement:
For ACF purposes, the concept of a subsystem needs to focus on the group of people and/or organisations interacting regularly over periods of a decade or more to influence policy formulation and implementation within a given policy area/domain. (Sabatier, 1999a, 135.)

Subsystems are made up of a variety of actors from public and private organizations who are actively concerned with a particular issue such as air pollution or energy policy (Elliott, 2001) (and who) regularly seek to influence public policy related to it. (Kubler, 2001, 624.)

For the purposes of this thesis, the subsystem that provides the policy context for the operation of the advocacy coalitions I wish to examine is that of ‘secondary schooling’. I recognise that it may be more technically correct to treat ‘secondary schooling’ as a ‘sub-subsystem’ within the ‘system’ of ‘education policy’ and the ‘subsystem’ of ‘schools policy’. But strict adherence to ‘Russian doll’ definitions of this kind would soon become tedious. Moreover, it is possible to identify longstanding groups of people (dating back at least to the 1960s) who have worked consistently to influence the direction of public policy on a range of ‘secondary schooling’ issues: the physical provision of schooling for an expanding secondary school population; the appropriate distribution of government funding; the role of ‘middle’ and post-compulsory schooling; the appropriate nature of the secondary school curriculum; methods of assessment and certification; transition from secondary schooling to post-school education and work, to name a few. For these two reasons, ‘secondary schooling’ can justifiably be regarded as a subsystem for the purpose of tracing policy developments relating to the socially disadvantaged students of that sector of the education system.

In each sub-system, there is a dominant advocacy coalition, and, ranged against the dominant advocacy coalition, there may be one or more minority opposing advocacy coalitions. Advocacy coalitions have two main characteristics: their actors share a set of normative and causal beliefs and they ‘engage in a nontrivial degree of co-ordinated activity over time.’ (Sabatier, 1999b, 120.)

It is this distinctive, shared ‘policy’ core belief that is the ‘glue’ that holds together each advocacy coalition. The policy core contains ‘causal perceptions, basic strategies and policy positions for achieving deep core beliefs in a policy subsystem’ (Kubler, 2001) and it is extremely slow to change.
The ‘deep’ core belief referred to by Kubler underpins the ‘policy’ core shared by members of an advocacy coalition across the subsystem. Confusingly, the term, ‘deep’ suggests a ‘deeply held’ shared belief that is stronger than a (mere) ‘policy’ core. This turns out not to be the case. The ‘deep’ core consists of:

...fundamental normative and ontological axioms that define a vision of the individual, society and the world. (Kubler, 2001, 624.)

In other words, the ‘deep’ core will be expressed in general, ‘life, liberty and pursuit of happiness’ terms; for example: ‘Every child is entitled to reach his or her full potential’. Lacking the detail of the policy core belief, a deep core belief is capable of loosely uniting people across a system, and, as a result, is very resistant to change. But, when subjected to the hard questions of policy development, such as, ‘Should scarce education resources be redistributed in ways that ensure that socially disadvantaged students will receive the compensatory preparation that would facilitate their admission to university?’ such a vague consensus is likely to fracture and be incapable of holding together the coalition of interests that subscribe to it. For this reason, the thesis will focus on the ‘policy’ cores of secondary education advocacy coalitions, and will not be much concerned with the vaguer, ‘deep’ cores.

A third, weaker set of beliefs observable within individual advocacy coalitions are described as ‘instrumental policy beliefs’ (Kubler, 2001, 630.) or ‘secondary aspects’. These relate mainly to beliefs about methods of implementing the policy core and, of the three categories of belief, are the ones most likely to undergo change.

The analysis of the circumstances within which advocacy coalitions change their views about policy is an important feature of the ACF. Policy change is perceived as:

A transformation of a hegemonic belief within a policy subsystem. (Kubler, 2001, 624.)

Policy change happens when one or both of two things occur. A dominant advocacy coalition may refine its ‘policy core’ as a result of ‘policy-oriented learning’, for
example as the result of exposure to new, technical information. (Presumably, a non-hegemonic or opposing advocacy coalition can also engage in ‘policy learning’.) A second cause of change in an advocacy coalition’s belief system might be an ‘external perturbation’ – a ‘non-cognitive event’ occurring outside the policy subsystem. (Kubler provides the example of the AIDS epidemic causing the dominant Swiss advocacy coalition on drugs policy to be more receptive to harm-minimisation strategies, as distinct from criminal investigation – though he points out that such a change of view on the best means of implementing a policy goal may in fact leave the policy core intact.) (Kubler, 2001, 625.) Of course, political actors are not solely reactive when it comes to external perturbations. In her study of campaigns in support of Francophone schools in an Ontario long dominated by an Anglophile Advocacy Coalition, Mawhinney (1993) observed that ‘advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem may manipulate, or even inflame, exogenous crises to their own purposes’ (Mawhinney, 1993, 81). Stone et al express a similar point more generally:

> At times, however, collective attention is directed at a policy issue in a manner that makes “cozy” subsystem politics unfeasible. Groups mobilize; emotion intensifies; publicity increases...the policy ideas that underlie mobilization spill over from one policy venue to others, actually promoting rather than retarding change. (Stone, 2001, 100.)

Because of this volatility of political activity, Sabatier is critical of the ‘stages heuristic’ approach to the analysis of policy change, with its linear delineation of phases of ‘problem-identification’, through ‘formulation’ and ‘implementation’ to ‘evaluation’. But to the extent that ‘the stages’ retain any descriptive value – and I believe they do – the stage to which Sabatier’s research most closely relates is that of ‘policy formulation’.

Now, if there is one continuing complaint about the ACF, it is that it pays insufficient attention to the actual processes of public policymaking. (Schlager, 1996, Schlager, 1999). For this reason, scholars working within the AC framework have suggested various 'add-ons' in order to capture these processes. Mintrom, for example, has re-introduced the notion of ‘policy entrepreneurship’ (Mintrom, 1996) and, Sato, that of ‘policy process analysis’ (Sato, 1999). In my account of educational policymaking in Australia, I have not found it necessary to elaborate the ACF in this
way because I am satisfied that the Framework – as presented by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith - allows me to chart and explain major policy directions in Australia, especially over the past decade or so. From time to time, an individual forceful Australian Education Minister such as David Kemp may have accelerated and even steered the development of some policies, but I contend that his activities can be comprehended by identifying the Advocacy Coalition to which he belonged. I therefore have little to say in Chapters 3 and 4 about the actual practices of policymaking. My principal concern in those Chapters is to trace the evolution of stable policies, and for the most part the ACF provides acceptable theoretical grounding for this work.

I say 'for the most part', because there is one critical aspect of stable policymaking that has not been adequately explained by the ACF and in fact is one point where Sabatier and his long-time collaborator Jenkins-Smith themselves are at odds. This aspect is the contribution made by constellations of material interests, for example ‘business’, or ‘recipients of government funding’, to the stability of policymaking. Sabatier contended that material interests alone would not provide the ‘glue’ strong enough to hold together an AC over a lengthy period of time. Only a shared policy core, derived from value-based shared beliefs, could provide this: ‘the fundamental value priorities in the policy core are still the most stable aspect of a group’s belief system’. (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, 225.)
Using the Advocacy Coalition Framework in this Thesis: from Hypotheses to Interpretive Text

In their work on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Sabatier and his colleagues have developed a feature that has been unusual in political science: a number of hypotheses that have changed over time in response to continuing research. In the early phases of my own research, I attempted to prepare a consolidated list of these—a task that, as I understand it, had not been accomplished before. (In a personal communication, Professor Sabatier himself acknowledged as much) (Sabatier, 2002). I then set about the work of attempting to test the hypotheses, with results that were equally disappointing for my supervisors and me. The hypotheses seemed to be pitched at too general a level to assist me in making the discriminations I needed to make. I then abandoned the idea of testing the hypotheses in my own policy environment and instead tried to ‘transcribe’ them into a paragraph of interpretive text. (Reluctant to completely abandon the consolidated list of hypotheses to which I had devoted so much work, I have retained them as Appendix 1:1 to this chapter).

A further purpose of this research is to understand why policies purportedly designed to alleviate the impact of social disadvantage on schooling have apparently been ineffective. Two interrelated sets of reasons suggest themselves. First, the actors involved in policy formation and implementation may have had interests opposed to the thrust of the policies in question. Second, irrespective of the contending interests, there may have been significant structural barriers to policy implementation.

The ACF has offered the best, if still inadequate, coverage of both these contingencies. It increases our understanding of the ways in which policy formations persist through time and how they change. It also allows for contestation between ACs, and it identifies the circumstances under which members of differing ACs may learn from each other.

The account of policymaking given by the ACF therefore reads as follows.
Policy packages in any given sub-system are promoted by long standing, stable coalitions of actors drawn from a variety of organisations, but sharing common policy – and often value – commitments. Commonly, but not invariably, the long-standing, dominant coalition will be opposed by one or more contending coalitions, and the more powerful these opponents are perceived to be by the members of the dominant coalition, the more united those members are likely to be. Established policies will be altered significantly only when there are new perturbations external to the policy subsystem. Some minor policy modifications are possible through ‘across coalition’ learning, especially when this is promoted through prestigious forums in the more technical disciplines.

Beyond the ACF

Although Sabatier’s proposition on the sharing of values was what attracted me to the ACF in the first place, I have found it useful to go beyond his oeuvre to attempt to provide a more comprehensive account of the ways in which values have shaped policymaking on schooling for the disadvantaged in Australia. Unlike Mintrom’s and Sato’s, my process of ‘going beyond’ did not entail ad hoc additions, but rather a successive widening of the framework to accommodate the concerns of later chapters. So, in Chapter 2, for example, I have tried to extend the ACF to accommodate Westminster-style regimes by introducing the regime dynamics framework of Halligan and Power. In Chapter 3, I discuss a highly influential framework for the interpretation of educational disadvantage – the Coleman paradigm. In Chapter 4, I have focused on a more recent account of the structural underpinnings of educational disadvantage – that provided by the Bourdieu paradigm. It is at this point that the work of Teese is of great significance. He draws on the Bourdieu paradigm in order to demonstrate the ways in which values, institutions and interests interact in the construction and maintenance of critical elements of public policy on secondary schools in Australia – on systems of curriculum, assessment, and school organisation for example. In Chapters 5 to 8, I consider the ways in which policies are implemented ‘on the ground’ and in doing so, I draw on the work of Lipsky. In the concluding Chapter 9, I shall attempt a modest synthesis of all these contributions.
The main purpose of this comparatively brief Chapter has been to present the overarching theoretical framework for my argument and to flag the additional theoretical perspectives I will invoke throughout the thesis. The particular strengths of the ACF for an analysis of developments in the secondary education domain are its emphasis on policy-making in the longer term, and its emphasis on the importance of shared, value-based policy core beliefs within advocacy coalitions. I was surprised to discover, however, that the ACF pays relatively little attention to the role of institutions in the dynamics of policymaking. To fill this gap, I have turned to the regime dynamics framework of Halligan and Power, who have demonstrated that long periods of one party rule in both New South Wales and Victoria have left long-lasting institutional outcomes in the form of distinctive politico-administrative cultures.

Other potential difficulties with the ACF relate to the relative weighting to be given to ‘material’, and value-based, ‘purposive’ interests (or even whether such a distinction is justified). Nor is the ACF likely to be able fully to illuminate the ways in which central policies play out at the local level. To discover how local actors experience central policy prescriptions and extract some discretionary room to experiment with local solutions, I will have to turn to the schools themselves, and to theorists such as Bourdieu and Lipsky. In tapping these varied theoretical frameworks, I am not attempting to add features to the ACF – merely to broaden the Framework for the purposes of this study.

The next task, however, is to trace the sporadic interest of Australia’s central policy-makers in the fate of socially disadvantaged students from the establishment of the colonial governments in the 1850s until the entry of the Commonwealth as a serious contributor to schools policy from the early 1970s.
Appendix 1.1: Hypotheses Concerning Advocacy Coalitions

For the researcher, one of the most distinctive features of the ACF is that it claims to have generated a range of testable hypotheses. In this Appendix, I shall present all thirteen of these hypotheses. As the hypotheses have been developed predominantly in the domain of environmental policy, some are of extremely limited relevance to the concerns of this thesis. For this reason, I have ‘culled’ the hypotheses in Appendix 9.1, and provide the shortened list to support my attempt to establish a theoretical framework loosely synthesizing elements in the works of Sabatier, Halligan/Power, Coleman, Bourdieu, Lipsky and Elmore.

It has not been easy to compile the most up-to-date list of AC hypotheses. There are three main sources:

The 1988 array of 9 hypotheses (reproduced in Sabatier, August 1996, 124);

The 1993 set of hypotheses, curiously ignored later in 1999, but presumably replaced by the amended version proposed in 1999;

The 4 additional hypotheses and the amendment of the original hypotheses, in the 1999 chapter. Unfortunately, these were not consolidated into a new listing at the end of that chapter.

Inspection of the Sabatier website does not reveal any further progress. Indeed, the 1999 volume is not even mentioned there! However, Professor Sabatier has been good enough to read an earlier draft of this Chapter, and to provide constructive critical feedback (Sabatier, 2002). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith group their thirteen hypotheses under three heads: ‘Coalition’; ‘Change’; and ‘Learning’. The first six of the ACF hypotheses deal with the characteristics of advocacy coalitions:
1. **Coalition Hypothesis 1**

On major controversies within a *mature* policy subsystem, when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so.

2. **Coalition Hypothesis 2**

Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects.

3. **Coalition Hypothesis 3**

An actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of his (its) belief system before acknowledging weaknesses in its policy core.

4. **Coalition Hypothesis 4**

Within a coalition, administrative agencies will usually advocate more moderate positions than those voiced by their interest group allies.

5. **Coalition Hypothesis 5**

Elites of purposive groups are more constrained in their expression of beliefs and policy positions than elites from material groups.

6. **Coalition Hypothesis 6**

Actors who share policy core beliefs are more likely to engage in short-term coordination if they view their opponents as (a) very powerful and (b) very likely to impose substantial costs upon them if victorious.

The next two ACF hypotheses refer to the conditions under which policy change will (or will not) occur:
7. Change Hypothesis 1
The policy core attributes of a governmental program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instituted the program remains in power within that jurisdiction – except when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction.

8. Change Hypothesis 2
Significant perturbations external to the subsystem (e.g., changes in socioeconomic conditions, public opinion, system-wide governing coalitions, or policy outputs from other subsystems) are a necessary but not sufficient, cause of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program.

The final five ACF hypotheses deal with the phenomenon that Sabatier calls ‘policy learning’.

9. Learning Hypothesis 1
Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there is an intermediate level of informed conflict between the two coalitions. This requires that each have the technical resources to engage in such a debate; and that the conflict be between secondary aspects of one belief system and core elements of the other or, alternatively, between important secondary aspects of the two belief systems.

10. Learning Hypothesis 2
Problems for which accepted quantitative data and theory exist are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those in which data and theory are generally qualitative, quite subjective, or altogether lacking.
11. Learning Hypothesis 3

Problems involving natural systems are more conducive to policy-oriented learning across belief systems than those involving purely social or political systems because in the former, many of the critical variables are not themselves active strategists and because controlled experimentation is more feasible.

12. Learning Hypothesis 4

Policy-oriented learning across belief systems is most likely when there exists a forum which is:

- Prestigious enough to force professionals from different coalitions to participate;
- and
- Dominated by professional norms

13. Learning Hypothesis 5

Even when the accumulation of technical information does not change the views of the opposing coalition, it can have important impacts on policies – at least in the short term – by altering the views of policy brokers or other important government officials.
Over the past 40 years, education has never been far from my central concerns. For a decade after my undergraduate years, I worked as a high school teacher in government and non-government schools – in Australia and Canada. After a break for child-rearing, I worked for most of the decade of the 1970s as a consultant in community-based child care. In the decade following 1982, I was employed in senior policy positions in the Victorian Public Service – in the last third of that decade, as Chief Executive of the Victorian Ministry of Education. I then went to the Commonwealth, spending five years as the chair of the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training – a statutory advisory body to the Federal Minister for Education.
PART TWO: EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY COALITIONS AND REGIME DYNAMICS IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA

This part deals with a 'watershed issue' for the thesis: the Whitlam Years. Between 1972 and 1975, for the first time in Australian educational history, 'schools education' became a major focus for Federal policy. The best way of describing the resulting impact is to paraphrase Robert Hughes’ observation on Caravaggio: ‘There was public policy before Whitlam and public policy after him, and they were not the same.’ (Morrow and Power, 2004)

In order to accommodate the discontinuities at the State level when the policymaking process was so disturbed by the Whitlam innovations, Part 2 contains three chapters. Chapter 2 deals with the States before Whitlam; Chapter 3 with the Commonwealth from Whitlam onwards; and Chapter 4, with the States after the Whitlam eruption.
Chapter 2: - Political Cultures and Educational Traditions prior to the Whitlam Revolution: the 1850s to 1972

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a framework for exploring the ways in which a dominant advocacy coalition might emerge to influence the direction of policymaking and sustain this influence over a long period of time. This is the first of three chapters that will examine how this process has played out in the Australian context, both at Commonwealth and at State levels – as exemplified by NSW and Victoria – from the 1850s to the 2000s. By the time of Federation, the Colonies had had more than half a century of experience in education policy-making: the chapter identifies major policy developments and the roles of advocacy coalitions in promoting those developments within the Colonies up to 1900. It then outlines the experience of the fledgling States after 1901 and their maturation as the administrators of public education systems up until the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972. The implications of these historical developments for socially disadvantaged students will be identified in Chapters 3 and 4.

In this chapter, too, I shall attempt to apply the Advocacy Coalition Framework to the comparative study of policy development on secondary schooling in the States of New South Wales and Victoria. In particular, I will be attempting to explain why New South Wales was able to establish an unchallenged dominant advocacy coalition based on a lasting bipartisan consensus (exemplified by the continuing impact on that State of the report of the Wyndham Committee of nearly half a century ago) whereas Victoria has demonstrated a persistent pattern of a dominant versus an opposing, ALP- based advocacy coalition (although, as I note in conclusion, this may now be changing).
Regime Dynamics in New South Wales and Victoria

In order to explain the significance of the crucial differences between the two States, I will attempt to integrate the ACF with a more limited theoretical framework that has been developed in Australia – that of Regime Dynamics. Regime Dynamics had its origins over two decades ago when a group of Australian political scientists undertook a comparative study of the local government systems of Australia. (Power, 1981) The study revealed that there were distinctive differences between those systems where the ALP had been ‘the natural party of government’ (New South Wales, Queensland and - to a lesser extent because the ALP had never controlled the Upper House - Tasmania), and those where the Liberals had been predominant (Victoria and South Australia). (Western Australia was a unique case having been the one State that had never experienced a long period – ie. twenty years or more – of unbroken one party rule).

The distinctions turned on the degree of control that the State governments exercised over local government. As early as the 1870s, Victoria’s landowners had voluntarily covered their State with municipal councils. Liberal State governments, unconcerned about the conservatism of local government, established a permissive relationship with their local councils. Power et al described such a non-interventionist approach as ‘Constitutionalist’, the essence of Constitutionalism being that, once institutions are established, they should be left to enjoy the highest feasible level of autonomy (Power et al, 1981).

By contrast – and not until 1905 - the more numerous leaseholders of New South Wales had to have local government forced upon them. With the advent of the Twentieth Century came ALP Governments – who were also deeply suspicious of local government, with its property-based franchise. For a century, the State government regulated municipalities tightly, even refusing to give them the power to make by-laws. Power et al labelled this approach ‘State Interventionist’.
In subsequent work, Halligan and Power extended regime dynamics to cover the executive branches of State governments. (Halligan and Power, 1992). In New South Wales, dominant ALP governments developed ‘Bureaucratist’ regimes, in which the interests of clerical and manual staffs and their unions were protected. In Victoria, the Constitutionalist approach extended to managers in the public sector, to whom substantial powers were devolved through such devices as the statutory corporation - to the extent that this regime could be described as ‘Devolutionist’. In the Commonwealth, Liberal dominance led to a distinctive ‘Whitehall’ style of constitutionalism, which Halligan and Power labelled ‘Administrationist’ – defined as indirect rule through the manipulations of ‘Brahmins’ (senior public servants), who were able to offer incentives to those providing services on the ground.

![Table 2 - 1: Regime Dynamics: policy stances on governance in New South Wales, Victoria and the Commonwealth from the 1850s to the 1970s *](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant political party in the 20th century</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>Commonwealth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
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<td>Policy response to local government</td>
<td>State Interventionist</td>
<td>Constitutionalist</td>
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<td>Executive style</td>
<td>Bureaucratist</td>
<td>Devolutionist</td>
<td>Administrationist</td>
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* Although Halligan and Power subsequently described the Commonwealth as ‘Administrationist’, the earlier work by Power, Wettenhall & Halligan did not include the Commonwealth government in their formulation. But the Commonwealth’s traditional view that local government was not a Federal responsibility would classify it as ‘constitutionalist’.

Most recently, Keating (Keating, 1999) has applied Regime Dynamics to a study of education and training in the two States, and has demonstrated that upper secondary education in New South Wales historically has been much more tightly controlled than it has been in Victoria, where the characteristic Constitutionalist style has extended to a burgeoning private school sector:

(In) NSW... unlike Victoria with its Council for Public Education, its independent statutory authorities, and even the short-lived State Board of Education (1985-92), the educational administration has been able to consistently resist such dispersion of power and responsibility. (In Victoria) the only direct State contribution towards secondary education had been through the allocation in 1954 of 24,000 pounds for the establishment of grammar schools .. (of) the
four principal denominations: Church of England, Catholic, Presbyterian and Wesleyan …
These schools, together with associated private grammar schools, have dominated secondary
education in Victoria since this time. The State entry into secondary education in Victoria was
in the face of opposition from the private schools and from within the parliament. (Keating,
1999)

In parliamentary systems, the regime dynamics framework predicts that dominant
advocacy coalitions will bear the marks of long periods of one party rule. Strong
confirmation of this prediction has come from outside Australia. In the Canadian
Province of Ontario, a dominant advocacy coalition had developed through long
periods of Conservative control and conformed to a culture that was ‘ascriptive,
hierarchical, stable and restrained’ (Mawhinney, 1993, 68.) The values of this
dominant advocacy coalition in Ontario were very different from those of its more
liberal Australian counterpart in Victoria. For a long time, it strongly resisted moves
to secure appropriate arrangements for the schooling of Francophone students, until
‘external perturbations’, centred in neighbouring Quebec but with policy flow-ons in
Ottawa, forced its hand (ibid 77 ff).

Because this chapter will provide a general overview of more than a century’s
experience of education provision in Australia, it will be ‘broad-brush’ in its
treatment. No education historian has yet attempted to examine the roles of advocacy
calitions in education policymaking in the century following the advent of
Responsible Government, and it is not my purpose to remedy this gap in this thesis. It
is sufficient for my purposes to provide at the end of the chapter brief
characterisations of the differing dominant advocacy coalitions that were in place in
the two States at the end of the period that the chapter covers.

However, notwithstanding the absence of detailed comparisons of the actual
membership of advocacy coalitions in the two States, the chapter will identify the
shared policy concerns that, at each stage, brought the relevant interests together.
And it will conclude with a comparison of the profiles of the advocacy coalitions that
were dominant at the end of the Traditional period. My purpose in this and in Chapter
4 is to attempt to demonstrate how the differing histories of New South Wales and
Victoria help to explain the different balance of interests in the advocacy coalitions
that were operating in the two States by the beginning of the 1970s, and which largely continue to the present day. The differences that emerged between New South Wales and Victoria during the postwar years were the outcomes of lengthy prior histories, and it is necessary to explore these histories if the differences are to be satisfactorily explained. Contests about ‘schooling for adolescents’ may not have emerged until the 1950s and 1960s, but the manner in which they were framed was influenced to a significant degree by the ways in which contests about primary education had been determined in the colonial period.

The chapter deals first and most fully with the history of New South Wales, because it was the ‘Mother Colony’ that provided the clearest example of the typical Australian approach to the provision of schooling. The discussion of Victoria will be shorter and more selective. Like all the other Australian Colonies/States, Victoria initially conformed largely to the New South Wales model. It is possible to discern a gradually widening divergence between the two States from the 1880s onwards, but as late as 1972, the similarities between the two systems still significantly outweighed the dissimilarities.

The treatment of the theme of ‘Governance’ in the chapter embraces the assumption of public responsibility for the provision of schooling and the response of the churches to the progressively increasing ‘coverage’ of the States by the public systems, as well as the degree of centralisation or decentralisation of authority within each of the education systems.

Under the rubric of ‘Curriculum’, I will explore the historical beginnings of the stratification of school curricula, and the implications of such stratification for the structuring of school systems.

The first schools-oriented advocacy coalition to operate at national level was the Australian Education Council (AEC) formed in 1936. The Council comprised the six State Ministers, advised by a Standing Committee of their Departmental Secretaries. In its early years, the Council’s attempts to involve the Commonwealth in the development of national schools policy met with only sporadic and partial success. (Spaull, 1987, Ch. 3.) Parallel with the activities of the AEC – and no more
influential – was the Australian Council for Educational Research which had been founded in 1932 under the leadership of Frank Tait, who hoped it would become a forum prestigious enough to influence public policies on education (Selleck, 1982, 270.)

Advocacy coalitions at the national level remained in embryonic mode until political circumstances encouraged the Commonwealth to make a substantial ongoing commitment of funds to schooling. In the interests of clarity, my account will avoid shuttling between the levels of government in order to capture these first faltering attempts to involve the Commonwealth in schools policy. Instead, I will postpone consideration of events at the national level until the final section of the chapter.

The Colonial Period: the State Assumes Responsibility for Educational Provision

Despite Lord Castlereagh’s clear instruction to Governor Bligh in 1805 that 'Government should interfere on behalf of its rising generation … to educate the children of the Colony', for nearly the first century of its existence, New South Wales conducted its schools through a series of arrangements between Church and State. (Barcan, 1965) In the earliest years of the penal settlement, such schooling as was available was inevitably provided by the State. But the colonial government, eager to lighten its administrative load, was easily persuaded that the provision of schooling was a responsibility for which the State should subsidise the Church. Originally, only the Anglicans were involved, but, by the time of Governor Bourke in the middle 1830s, the number of churches that had succeeded in gaining State support had grown to such an extent that the colonial government sought to introduce a measure of rationalisation. Under the ‘Irish system’, the role of the churches would have been restricted to that of providing religious instruction as part of the common curriculum. The churches suspended their habitual warfare long enough to form a coalition to defeat this proposal. But as time wore on, it became apparent that the fragmented nature of religious schooling was rendering it increasingly inefficient when compared with the State system. The latter was steadily growing, especially in outlying areas, where it lacked competition from the churches. From the 1840s, a system of 'national schools' was set up alongside church-run schools.
Major reforms in 1867 resulted in a considerable strengthening of the government's regulation of all schools, through a new Council of Education. Seated on the Council were a University Professor and four MPs (including the Premier, as well as Henry Parkes - a future Premier who would play a central role in the 'Great Reform' of 1880). The Council was serviced by the powerful Undersecretary of the Department, William Wilkins. (If the membership of the new Council is any guide, the dominant advocacy coalition in the late 19th century was heavily populated by politicians). In the event, the reforms of 1867 proved how strongly the tide was running in favour of public education, so the introduction in 1880 of 'free, compulsory and secular education' came as no great surprise.

In contrast to New South Wales, Victoria was much less reliant on government for all services. As the remote settlement of Port Phillip, it had had to look after itself, and the voluntaristic ethos of its lonely establishment extended to the provision of schooling for its children. Even two decades after its founding, only 8 per cent of the Colony's schools were 'national'. The heavy influence of the privately established schools continued into the great reform period of the 1870s. Thus, George Higinbotham, the father of Victoria's 1872 Education Act, had originally opted for 'a State-controlled system of non-sectarian but religious schools' (Grundy, 1972.) Only when he failed to secure the co-operation of the Anglican and Catholic Churches with government attempts to 'reduce the wasteful competition between small schools receiving State aid' did he finally move to place church schools beyond the pale of the government system. Even so,

The 1872 Act which emerged from the aftermath of the 1867 failure was not a positive declaration of the principles of State schooling in a secular liberal society. It was rather a cautious extraction from the Common Schools System of arguments which could justify an extension of the State's powers over education against the powers formerly exercised by the Churches. Seen in this light the 1872 Act was pragmatic legislation to obtain a more efficient control over education policy and its administration. The expulsion of the church schools from the system and the formation of centralised ministerial control were the fundamental provisions. The principles of secular, compulsory and free schooling provided decoration which made the Act more popular (Grundy, 1972, 20).
Australia's public education systems were thus set up over the existing infrastructure of Church schools. In New South Wales, the Anglican Church had been a formidable opponent to the expansion of State education throughout the 1830s and '40s. In the 60s and 70s, it was the Catholic Church that became the most outspoken opponent of public schooling. Following the passage of the 1867 Education Act, the numbers of Church schools briefly declined during the 1870s, and the reforms bifurcated the religious school sectors:

While Protestants allowed their elementary school systems to wither and concentrated on secondary education, the Catholic Church developed its elementary system rather than secondary education. (Baecon, 1962)

But in contrast to the USA, Australian public schools never supplanted the private religious schools. (Turney, 1972) Representatives of these schools have always enjoyed seats in the dominant advocacy coalitions of both New South Wales and Victoria.

One tradition of educational history represents the motives of the founders of public education systems in the new settlements as a desire to ensure that these burgeoning liberal democracies could grow their own educated citizenry. According to Bessant, for example, the colonial government of New South Wales wished to 'respond to the aspiration of the enfranchised masses that every man should be given a fair chance in life'. (Bessant, 1972, 48.) Alternative accounts emphasise the disagreements over the nature of the public institutions being built in the new Colonies - disagreements that '...reflected fundamental value conflicts and alternative visions of social development'. (Katz, 1976, 385.) Speaking of North America, Katz linked the establishment of public school systems with the social and economic issues that emerged in the new capitalist societies:

Early and mid-nineteenth century schools promoters argued that public educational systems could attack five major problems, which, with hindsight, appear products of early capitalist development... (1) urban crime and poverty; (2) increased cultural heterogeneity; (3) the necessity to train and discipline an urban and industrial workforce; (4) the crisis of youth in the nineteenth century city; and (5) the anxiety among the middle classes about their adolescent children. (Katz, 1976 392.)
A notable omission from this list of purposes for public education is the development of cognitive skills. Katz explains that, 'In this context, the character of pupils remained of far greater concern than their minds'. (Katz, 1976, 399.) This historical formulation has the public school systems being 'imposed on the poor' by 'well-to-do and locally powerful people (who) represented, to use Gramsci's phrase, 'a direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group'. (Katz, 1976, 400.) Ultimately, the poor may well have been duped: even until the present time, the outcomes from public education have remained somewhat at variance with its ideological justification. Duped or not, the intended clientele of North American public schooling seem to have accepted its 'imposition' with general alacrity: 'Education became compulsory only after attendance had become nearly universal'. (Katz, 1976, ibid.) A similar mood of acceptance eventually pervaded the Australian Colonies: 'Once the central government took over, new schools were built and run without the public having to be persuaded of their value.' (Hirst, 1973) And yet the general readiness with which colonial and post-colonial societies everywhere welcomed State-provided education does not explain why the Australian model - particularly in New South Wales - was so tightly controlled by government. Part of the answer to this important question is suggested by the Advocacy Coalition Framework. As we have seen, Australia, unlike the United States, saw a dominant advocacy coalition form around the State government in the decades immediately following independence. Universal provision of schooling was centrally mandated, rather than growing 'organically' as it had in the United States.

**Centralisation and Standardisation in the New Public Education Systems**

J.B.Hirst revealed one critical aspect in which the North American arrangement differed from the Australian. In North America, through a strategy of localisation, the middle classes were able to avoid paying the bulk of the additional expenditure required for the education of working class children. Every local community, rich or poor, had to raise its own revenues for schooling. In contrast, between 1872 and
1893, each of the six Australian Colonies passed Education Acts that set up State systems of education that were 'unified and comprehensive, secular and compulsory' (Turney, 1969, 4.) – and, one could add – centralised. The centralisation occurred even in the convict-free Colony of South Australia, notwithstanding its early establishment of a decentralised system of district councils - initially with rudimentary schooling responsibilities - and its strong, yeoman class. It is interesting to contemplate why the Australian Colonies did not go down the North American path. R.J.W. Selleck, the educational historian, provides the conventional explanation:

As the official representative of the single government department in Melbourne which organized and controlled State education throughout the Colony, (Frank Tate) symbolised the decision taken first in Victoria in 1872 (and then swiftly in the other Colonies) to make a deliberate break with English tradition and to abolish the local committees which had been attached to each school and had wielded important powers. In so many other ways a product of the English tradition, Tate was an unhesitating supporter of this decision. No one knew better than an inspector in an outlying district that without a central authority many schools would not have been built or, if built, would have been without teachers. Schooling could not be entrusted to impoverished local groups dotted thinly round a large Colony, divided bitterly by religious disputes and lacking any strong sense of community. (Selleck, 1982, 101.)

Yet Selleck's account is at variance with that of Hirst, the political historian, who claims that, in South Australia, at least, '..there was enough local interest to belie the assertions of the historians of education that local administration was impossible in Australia in the early 1870s'. (Hirst, 1973) Hirst's explanation for South Australia's enthusiastic adoption of centralisation in the face of this local capacity is largely economic. The expanding metropolis of Adelaide had a desperate need for schools but its suburban communities had not managed to 'get their act together' to build vested schools in the way that had been achieved in country areas. Notwithstanding the existence of independent and church schools in these suburban communities, the South Australian government quickly persuaded itself that it should assume responsibility for the provision of elementary schooling throughout the Colony. Increased customs revenue and land sales accelerated the return to prosperity following the economic recession of the 1860s: put simply, South Australia established public education because it could afford it. (Hirst, 1973) The sources of revenue were different elsewhere, but, in every Colony except Western Australia, the
economic boom of the 1870s produced the necessary conditions for the expansion of State education. ¹

If decentralisation of schooling failed in the Colony with the strongest localist sentiment - South Australia - it could hardly have been expected to do better elsewhere. Although the specifics differed from one Colony to the next, in no Colony was local taxation for the support of schools politically feasible. In New South Wales, local revenue raising - and for a long time, local government itself - was 'swamped' by the determination of the Imperial government to place the responsibility for funding police and jails on local communities. (Larcombe, 1973, 203, 212.) Once the revenue for schools was found centrally, decentralisation was doomed. Then, 'State control of the purse ensured centralised control'. (Barcan, 1980, 177.)

But while each of the Australian Colonies opted for a centralised approach to their administration and curriculum, this tendency was 'most pronounced in New South Wales'. (Bessant, 1972, 50.)

In that Colony major steps were taken towards standardisation by specifying the minimum attainments expected in each subject in each class and by insisting upon a uniform daily timetable and a fixed programme of work for the year. Inspectors examined children in all subjects to ascertain the extent to which the teacher had adhered to the prescribed syllabus and the recommended methods of teaching. Prescription was at first less elaborately developed in the emergent national school systems in the other Colonies... (Bessant, 1972 loc cit)

Impressed by the English Revised Code of 1862 with its 'payment by results' system, New South Wales introduced visiting inspectors to conduct annual examinations of the pupils. ² The other Colonies followed suit with their own variations of this system. The performance of the students in part determined the payment of funds to the schools, and therefore to the teachers. Teachers, in turn, 'concentrated on bringing the maximum number of children up to the minimum level of attainment required by the examination... the examination system gave no reward or acknowledgement for ... extra effort', a fact that Bessant interprets as 'a commitment to the lowest common denominator in elementary schooling'. By the turn of the century, 'the worship of examination results and the uniform curriculum were upheld in the name of equal education for all' and the attempts of educators, like William Wilkins,³ to 'extend the
curriculum upwards' by introducing 'the higher branches of learning such as Latin and mathematics' were largely thwarted. (Bessant, 1972, 52-55.) (Such events set the context for the later attempts to stratify the curriculum that are discussed in the next section). Peter Board, following Wilkins as Director of Education between 1905 and 1922, made it his special mission to bring the private secondary schools under a measure of State control. He achieved this with consummate political skill by offering private schools access to the Government's Bursaries Scheme—on condition that they agree to register, to teach the State school secondary curriculum, and to inspection by W.J. Elliot, the Inspector of Secondary Schools. (Crane, 1957)

In Victoria, Frank Tate, Director of Education between 1902 and 1928, was as keen as his New South Wales counterpart to bring all schools in Victoria under the surveillance of the State. He began in 1905 by requiring all teachers and schools to be registered and by establishing a Council of Education that advised the Minister. But he was not given the political leeway that Peter Board enjoyed in New South Wales. Different patterns of development in the two Colonies produced different political and administrative environments for Board and Tate. The greater strength of the private school sector in Victoria, for example, helped to fortify resistance against the centralising tendencies of the education administration. These differences were to become even more pronounced as the 20th century unfolded. Following the emergence of the ALP, education policies began to wear the imprints of the political complexions of dominant governments. In New South Wales, the ALP became the 'natural party of government'; in Victoria, it did not.

By the latter half of the nineteenth century—in common with Anglo-speaking societies in other parts of the western world—the Australian Colonies (albeit with Western Australia lagging) were spending a considerable amount of energy and money setting up State-run public education systems. 4 Just after the turn of the century, the Commission inquiring into Technical Education in Victoria (the Fink Commission) was able to report that New South Wales was spending one million pounds per annum on education and that:
... in addition to the 185 superior public schools (in the State), 5 high schools were being maintained so that 8,510 pupils were receiving instruction beyond the primary stage in Department schools alone. (Badcock, 1966, 195)

Consequently, 'by 1901, the goal of universal literacy had been well nigh achieved'. (Barcan, 1980, 178). The advent of universal literacy, however, pressingly posed the issue of what sort of schooling should be provided for those not of an academic inclination.

In New South Wales, a parallel inquiry culminated in the 1906 Knibbs Turner Report, which drew conclusions similar to those of the Fink Commission:

Both reports anticipated the segregation of an intellectual elite whose members would be specially trained for their positions of leaders of society. The continuation schools envisaged in the Fink Commission's report were to be for the children of the working class, leaving the existing private secondary schools to continue to provide the entrants for the higher clerical positions, the universities and the professions. (Bessant, 1972, 91.)

These 'existing private secondary schools' were 'strong institutions on the model of English public schools'. (Hansen, 1971, 11.)

**Stratification in the new public education systems – with the university at the top of the 'ladder of learning'**

From the time of the introduction of responsible government, the Colonial government of New South Wales interested itself in the provision of education for the elite. An early example was the State-endowed Sydney Grammar School 5 which, along with the University of Sydney, was founded 'before the growth of a State system of elementary education was scarcely underway'. (Turney, 1969, 4.) The Reverend Dr John Woolley, the distinguished English educator, was prominent in the establishment of both these institutions. Between 1852 until his death in 1866, he simultaneously held the posts of Principal of the Grammar School and Professor of Classics at the University. As Principal, he 'endeavoured to promote a moral tone similar to that found in the leading English Grammar schools'. (Turney, 1969, 5) Like Sydney Grammar, Sydney University was non-denominational, though it did have:
'denominational, residential colleges affiliated to it for the purpose of offering religious instruction, custodial care and tutorial help.' (Turney, 1969, ibid.)

Dr. Woolley and his successor as headmaster of the school, A.B. Weigall, were both au fait with educational trends in Britain. They ensured that, as was the case in the English Public Schools on which it was modelled, the curriculum of Sydney Grammar School gave prominence to classical studies, along with mathematics, English and science. This became the 'gold standard' for secondary school curricula throughout the country; moreover 'the transplanted English tradition was widely accepted and seldom criticized'. (Turney, 1972)

It seems that the close association between the development of school and university curricula was entirely consistent with the expectations of the pioneers of public education in each of the Colonies. Charles Lilley, Queensland's former Premier and Chief Justice, was typical: he envisaged the foundation of a State University designed to '... crown the system, with all other primary, grammar and technical schools forming subordinate and auxiliary parts to it.' (Turney, 1972, 3.) But Blainey’s account of the development of the University of Melbourne reveals that, in Victoria, control over the secondary school curriculum by the university reached new heights. In the second half of the 19th century, Melbourne University greatly outpaced its Sydney counterpart because it was much more successful in obtaining significant donations and bequests. These came largely from substantial landowners, who were induced to support the University through a strong network of private school and university college principals. This gave both the private schools and the colleges great and lasting influence in both the Senate and the Council of the University. The University had always ‘used its matriculation examination to dictate to schools their educational objectives’ (Blainey, 1957). It was not until 1912, however – at the dawn of mass secondary schooling - that it was ‘carried to its extreme’ through the formal establishment of ‘a Schools Board to advise the government on school curricula and examinations. On this body the State education department, the private secondary schools, and the university had equal representation’ (ibid 134-5). In New South Wales, the balance of power between the department and the university was distinctively different.
New South Wales had to wait until the election of its first ALP government in 1910 to see serious educational reforms aimed at benefiting students not aspiring to a university education. An end-of-primary-years Qualifying Certificate and secondary Intermediate and Leaving Certificates were introduced, and bursaries were established to support students studying to gain these qualifications, which came to assume great significance for entry to the clerical grades of the public service. (Barcan, 1962, 53.) The Certificates were especially valued by Catholic schools which strongly encouraged their students to pursue employment in the public sector.

Peter Board was unapologetic about his conviction that education for the masses needed to be geared to the requirements of industry and commerce. (Bessant, 1972, 98.) In 1911, he attempted to arrest what he saw as the growing academicisation of the ‘superior public schools’ – the primary schools that had grown secondary, academic ‘tops’. He announced that they were to develop technical, commercial or domestic specialisations alongside their courses in civics, citizenship, and moral training – in Bessant’s view, thereby cutting off an important opportunity for intellectually bright children from working class backgrounds to win university places. For the children who left at the end of primary schools, Board set up Day and Evening Continuation Schools. The High Schools were for those who wished to go further with academic, commercial, domestic or industrial courses. But the vast majority of lower-ability students were deterred from entering either the pre-vocational super-primary schools or the State secondary schools, which ‘remained selective, some considerably so’. The deterrent comprised an examination at the end of primary school, a highly academic curriculum in the post-primary ‘tops’ of the superior elementary schools, and the practice of forcing low achieving children to repeat grades. (Barcan, 1980, 246.) Against the background of the economic depression of the 1930s, the deterrent was deadly.

Thus was established a ‘hierarchy of schools – selective secondary schools for an elite to train as the future leaders of society and vocational schools to produce the technicians to build up Australia’s industrial and agricultural base’. Board believed he was addressing the very deficiency that Bessant subsequently identified: the New South Wales system was meant to operate as a ‘ladder of learning’ that would ensure that the intellectually bright students from the humble ‘well-disciplined home’ could
reach the pinnacle – the university. But this was not to be confused with providing equal opportunity for all: Board firmly believed that secondary schooling should be reserved for those with intellectual promise, as ‘the State could not afford to waste money on secondary education for everyone’. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 99). And, like Dr Woolley half a century before, Board was convinced that the University should become ‘an integral part of the organised system of education’. The three stages of education – primary, secondary and university – should be ‘interlocked so as to provide continuity of progress’ (Turney, 1991) Significantly, though, Board retained departmental control over the administration of the instrument of university entry. In 1912, the new ALP McGowan government legislated to give ‘statutory recognition to the Leaving Certificate, administered by the Department of Public Instruction, which the University would accept for matriculation purposes ....’ (Turney, 1991) While Board had still to meet the University’s expectations in relation to the content of the Matriculation exam, it has to be said that, unlike Tate, his Victorian counterpart, he was able to insulate much of the secondary school curriculum from university influence.

Unfortunately, the overall impact of the new arrangements on students’ vocational choices was limited for the same reasons that apply to New South Wales’ specialist high schools today, viz. the incapacity of the system to establish all types of schools in every community. In 1926, the Institute of Inspectors of Schools, observing that boys from technical schools often went into business houses and those from the commercial schools sometimes ended up as mechanics, concluded: ‘Such misfits are inevitable so long as we segregate pupils at Year 12 into special schools according to the occupation they are to follow’. (Bessant, 1972, 101.)

Nevertheless, the system established by Peter Board was to prove extremely durable. It was not until the middle 1950s that the Wyndham Committee cautiously recommended some modest reforms. That Committee, which surveyed secondary education in New South Wales between 1953 and 1957, proposed that all students completing primary school should move on to secondary education without examination. There, they were to study a common core of subjects 8 ‘that did not vary greatly from the former academic curriculum’(Bessant, 1972, 175), but with teachers being encouraged to adapt courses to local conditions. In addition, they were
to be able to choose from a suite of elective subjects. Notwithstanding the misgivings of the Committee, when the ‘Wyndham Scheme’ was implemented in 1962, the external examination for the School Certificate at the end of form four remained, and the final two years of schooling were to continue to provide academic study for university entrance. A form of streaming was introduced – ‘a somewhat similar situation to that in those English comprehensive schools which retained their grammar school streams in the ‘A’ forms’. (Bessant, 1972, 175.) This satisfied the universities, who by now were requiring advanced level passes in at least three subjects – a requirement whose impact was felt even in the middle school forms.

In 1901, Victoria’s Fink Commission had recommended that State-controlled 'continuation schools' should be established to facilitate entry from primary to technical schools 'for children of the working classes (who) will ultimately have to support themselves by manual work.' For this reason, the instruction in such schools was to be 'distinctly different' from that in (general) secondary education, 'which has for its main object the training of young men for the professions'. (Badcock, 1966, 188)

Unlike New South Wales’ Peter Board, Victoria’s first Director of Education, Frank Tate, did not aim for a sharp academic/vocational divide in Victorian schooling, but wrestled - inside the same system - with the tensions between the two approaches. Tate was less enthusiastic about ‘stand alone’ technical education than was his New South Wales counterpart, but, technical education being the flavour of the decade, he was obliged to go along with the new trend. Following the model suggested by the 1895 Bryce Commission in England, he set up three grades of secondary schools: one, to educate a learned literary class; a second, for those entering commerce; and a third, to train those destined for the manual trades.

Thus, Victorian students entering secondary school had to decide between a common course (for those who intended remaining at school for the next four years) or an industrial course. At the end of the second year, the students would have to decide between a professional, agricultural, commercial or domestic arts course for their remaining two years. Junior technical schools (established in 1912) provided 13
year olds with a two-year preparation for senior technical schools. The results were problematical:

By 1914 it was clear that the high schools were to be academically orientated towards the professional course leading on to the public examination conducted by the university....Invariably the 'duller' pupils were streamed off into the industrial courses, which were neither popular nor effective. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 95-7)

Tate believed that by establishing a stratified system of post-primary schools under the rubric of the Education Department, he would put practical education within the reach of the vast majority of students, while at the same time, ensure their exposure to the liberal-humanist elements of the curriculum. It could be argued, though, that in taking this course – for which, it has to be said, he had enthusiastic and bi-partisan support from his political masters (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 96) - he was opening the way for the university to dominate the entire secondary school curriculum in a manner that became impossible in New South Wales, with its semi-autonomous vocational education institutions and its administrative control over the Matriculation examination.

Ultimately, - and in a curious portent of Victorian attempts in the 1980s to make senior secondary curriculum more relevant to students' vocational destinations - it was the aspirations of parents that thwarted the strategies of the reformers, for:

.....they did not see their children's advancement up the social scale through the technical and industrial courses provided in the new secondary schools. There proved to be a considerable gap between what the administrators and politicians saw as the needs of society and the real demand. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 106.)

Notwithstanding the preferences of parents, by 1914, both Victoria and New South Wales were attempting to stream their secondary students into State academic secondary schools that led to university education and professional careers, and vocational schools that led to employment in trade and industry.
Given the prevailing environment, it becomes easier to understand why, in Victoria, the Catholic schools sector soon identified its place in the emerging educational hierarchy in a way that was substantially different from that chosen by its counterpart in the neighbouring State. In New South Wales, entrance examinations to the Public Service retained great significance for ordinary Catholics. But in Victoria, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Dr Daniel Mannix, then a newly consecrated bishop, revealed his very different vision of the relationship between Catholic secondary schools and the university:

The progress and development of Australia is essentially bound up with the university. In this ...country...(it would be the) greatest danger if Catholics were to stand aloof from the universities. In the natural course, the men who will make their mark for good or ill will come from the universities ... leaders of thought and action ... the leaders of public life who will make or mar the well-being of the Commonwealth. (Greening, 1961-1962, 288-289.)

Dr Mannix pursued this theme from 1918, arguing for the establishment of an endowment fund to provide scholarships so that '...no Catholic man will be precluded from sending his son to the university, if only his son has the talent to avail himself of university training'. (Greening, 1961-1962, 291.) This was a significant departure from Catholic sector policy in New South Wales. Having established the Jesuits’ Xavier College as its version of Melbourne Grammar School, the Victorian Church now set about restructuring the Christian Brothers’ St Kevin’s College as a selective Catholic high school focussed on university entrance: its version of the public system’s Melbourne High School. The concept was similar to that underpinning Peter Board’s 'ladder of learning' for the students of State schools in New South Wales: 'The central theme (of the Mannix Thesis) was not secondary education for all, but opportunity for the growth of talent regardless of class.' It was a plan designed to produce an elite group of Catholic intellectuals who 'would gain a prestige that would make their ideas more acceptable in a liberal society'. (Greening, 1961-1962, 292.) To this day, the Christian Brothers in Sydney have never established an institution on the model of St Kevin’s.
The churches’ opposition to State education - particularly its planned expansion to the secondary level - continued well into the new century. But New South Wales resisted their vigorous campaign to pioneer the extension of elementary schooling to secondary level. As explained in the previous Section, its first step in this direction was taken in the late 1860s when it established 'quasi-secondary' education by introducing 'higher branches of learning' into the curriculum of the elementary public schools. From such beginnings, New South Wales grew a full range of secondary schools.

In contrast, the establishment of the Victorian public secondary education system was laggardly. In the face of the churches' sustained – and, in that State, successful - campaign of opposition, the Director-General, Frank Tate, had walked away from the need for public secondary schooling in the cities to concentrate, instead, on agricultural high schools in country areas where he could avoid open competition with church schools.¹ ‘At the end of 1925 all but seven of the State’s thirty-three high schools were located in country districts’. (Barcan, 1980, 252)

A comparison of the State systems from the 1930s to 1972

It is important to recognise that, for all the differences between NSW and Victoria, schools policies in the 19th century were more directly shaped by the similarities between the two States. Both had established strong central bureaucracies to administer their school systems. Both had substantial numbers of children being educated in Catholic schools. The elites of both Colonies attended non-Catholic religious schools. Both Colonies had founded universities long before public secondary schooling, so that academic influences on school curricula were always very strong. In both Colonies, the early pattern – with public involvement in both University and primary education – provided a sharp contrast with North America, where the expansion of education progressed in sequence – first, primary, then secondary and only last, tertiary. In contrast to the American pattern of ‘bottom-up’ development, the Australian Colonies positioned themselves for future contests around the curriculum and assessment arrangements for the middle years, where the ‘downward’ demands of the tertiary sector encountered the ‘upwards’ imperatives from the primary sector.
As the States recovered from the Depression, educational reform once more became a possibility, although, in 1938, "the curriculum remained the humanist-realist compromise established in the early years of the century. (Barcan, 1980, 268.) The significant feature of the Board of Secondary School Studies (BSSS) - established in 1936 by the Public Instruction and University (Amendment) Act of New South Wales - was that it diluted still further the influence of the University on the public examinations. (Barcan, 1980, 249) In the late 30s, the New Education Fellowship (NEF) propagated ideas about 'democratic' education, for example, child-centered schools, pupil activity, and the introduction of integrated subjects (such as 'social studies') to accommodate the increased number of students of varying abilities resulting from the raising of the school-leaving age. These ideas, referred to collectively as 'progressive education' were based on the work of John Dewey and W.H. Kilpatrick in the United States, although Barcan cautions that, '...one must not exaggerate the impact of progressive education in Australia'. (Barcan, 1980, 272.)

Although the BSSS did not go so far as to 'dynamite the examination system' as urged by a visiting international academic, (Barcan, 1980, 249) it did replace the Intermediate Certificate at the end of the third year of secondary school and the Leaving Certificate at the end of fifth year with a Leaving certificate at the end of fourth year and a Higher Leaving (or matriculation) Certificate at the end of fifth. The Primary Final Examination was abolished in country districts, though a High School Entrance Examination was used in Sydney and Newcastle.

Despite expenditure priorities shifting away from education during the Second World War, a series of minor reforms in the curriculum and the examination system rippled through the States. In New South Wales, these included the abolition of high school entrance exams (albeit replaced with an intelligence test); the gradual growth in the internally assessed element of the Intermediate exam and the reduction in the number of papers that had to be taken for the Leaving Certificate. New South Wales relaxed its University matriculation requirements in 1944 and again in 1948. (Barcan, 1980, 279.) (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 168)
In more conservative Victoria, however, the public examination reigned supreme. Of all the States, Victoria had the longest high school course—six years—with four external examinations in the secondary school. Almost as many children were enrolled in the four-year technical schools as in the district high schools. But overall, a low proportion of children proceeded beyond primary school: in 1938, 15 per cent compared to New South Wales’ 20 per cent. These figures were higher than for the other States but much lower than the number of students from the Church collegiate schools who continued beyond the minimum school leaving age. Victoria made cosmetic changes to its examination system throughout the 30s and 40s but, by 1947, still had four public examinations in secondary school. Overshadowing these was the separate Matriculation examination, reintroduced by the University in 1944. This was an external exam for candidates who had already passed the School Leaving exam. In the same year, Victoria delivered its main concession to progressive educational ideals: the abolition of tuition fees in all State schools.

In the fifties, the demand for secondary education began to grow. In Victoria, families rejected the 41 consolidated primary schools that, between 1941 and 1946, had been established to prepare rural children to enter the rural labour market at age fourteen or fifteen. They began to demand that the secondary schools be opened to all. In the two decades before 1965, enrolments in State secondary schools trebled. As a result, these ‘changed from elitist, academic institutions to schools that were open to all and whose courses were rapidly changing to meet the allegedly “non-academic” interests of the newcomers’. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 172). The post-war ‘baby boom’ and the immigration program meant that there were more children at school. Following the Depression, parents sought a more secure future for their children and began keeping them longer at school: in Victoria, in 1956, 75.6 per cent of students who entered form one were remaining till third year of secondary school—a 26 per cent rise since 1948. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 173.) The resulting pressure on the education systems was immense. Victoria, along with Queensland, had a school building backlog dating back to the 1920s: a flurry of ‘temporary’ classroom production ensued. A 1957 Victorian Teachers Union survey found that 64 per cent of primary school classes numbered more than forty students. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 185) To compensate for the years of neglect of teacher education, ‘the Education Department was forced to employ as temporary teachers anyone who
walked off the streets and had something in the way of qualifications, however meagre’. (Hyams and Bessant, 1972, 173.) New South Wales attempted to solve its teacher shortage by recruiting overseas, and both States offered teaching bursaries that bonded their recipients to the Departments for a period of time. In the meantime, multi-purpose, or ‘comprehensive’ schools offering a range of different courses in the early years of high school began to replace the single-stream model that had existed since the appearance of secondary schooling in New South Wales in 1880 and Victoria in 1902.

As already noted, the Report of the Wyndham Committee which surveyed secondary education in New South Wales between 1953 and 1957 proposed that all students completing primary school should move on to secondary education without examination. Victoria’s answer to the Wyndham Committee was the Ramsay Committee of 1960, which (possibly because of its Education Department-dominated membership) did not score a single hit on that State’s dual (ie. ‘technical’ and ‘secondary’) post-primary education system. Eleven year olds could attend junior technical schools (overwhelmingly for boys), higher elementary, or high schools. The latter provided two years of general academic subjects followed by a professional or commercial course. Students who were successful at the Intermediate Certificate exam could then choose between a humanities or science course with some opportunities to do general or commercial subjects. As in New South Wales, the fifth and sixth forms provided preparation for university entrance.

By the mid 1960s, then, while post-primary secondary education for all was a generally accepted principle across the country, secondary schools continued to display certain features that had pertained since colonial days: a curriculum dominated by the requirements of universities; academic elitism; and streaming of students according to ability:

The numbers of children entering the post-primary schools may have increased dramatically but the aims were still those of the nineteenth-century public school – the production of an elite. The success of the high schools was still measured in terms of honours at the matriculation examination. The students were still urged to emulate their contemporaries in the prestigious private schools. (Bessant, 1972, 178.)
In the meantime, the crisis in school accommodation and in teacher supply fuelled the establishment of an energetic parent movement which joined with the Australian Teachers' Federation to demand federal aid to education. Huge conferences held in Sydney in 1960 (3,200 delegates) and Melbourne in 1963 (4,000 delegates) gave voice to the Australian Council of Trade Unions, the Australian Council of Churches, the Australian Employers Federation, the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations and mothers clubs and parents and citizens associations. The federal parliament was represented by Mr W. McMahon and Mr. G. Whitlam—the former reaffirming the government's opposition to federal aid for non-government schools.

The Commonwealth 1901 - 1972: the incremental accretion of small measures

The 1901 Federal Constitution gave the Commonwealth Government no explicit power to act in relation to schooling. S. 96 of the Constitution enabled the Commonwealth to make financial assistance grants to the States for specific purposes on the terms and conditions it sees fit. This meant that the Commonwealth could intervene in areas that the Constitution had expressly reserved for the States—road transport, health and education, for example.

Various 'stand-alone' initiatives were taken from time to time. Usually, these were 'added-on' to functions that undoubtedly belonged to the Commonwealth. The most popular of these was defence. Thus, in the years after the 1st World War, the Commonwealth launched its first major educational initiative—which related to the needs of returning servicemen.

The first halting moves towards the formation of a national educational advocacy coalition were also linked to defence. When the Australian Education Council (made up of State ministers, advised by their departmental heads) was established in 1936, it immediately sought Commonwealth funding for an expansion of technical education on the grounds that such an expansion was needed for Australia to ready itself for the coming war. Although this request was initially unsuccessful, it
eventually bore fruit in 1940, when the national government agreed to fund the Commonwealth Technical Training Scheme (CTTS), to be run largely through the State systems. (Spaull, 1987)

With the end of the 2nd World War, the Commonwealth moved once again to meet the educational and training needs of returning service people, but this time had a sounder base upon which to work. The CTTS gave way to the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS), and this time round the States were heavily involved in the design and implementation of the Program. At the same time, the national government further formalised its role with the formation in 1945 of a Commonwealth Office of Education and the passage in 1946 of a Constitutional ‘benefits to students’ amendment to S. 51 (xxiii), giving it power to provide Commonwealth scholarships for university entrance.

The advent to power in 1949 of the conservative Menzies government resulted in a long hiatus. The Australian Education Council (AEC) fell into a deep sleep from which it would not awaken until the end of the 1950s.

The pattern of AEC involvement in the dominant advocacy coalition was established in these early years. It has never been a consistent ‘front-liner’. Party politics have seen to that. The history of the AEC reveals that this ministerial council does emerge into public consciousness from time to time, but only when two conditions are present:

an energetic Commonwealth Minister intent on change; and

a predominance of one side of politics across all Australian governments.

Such pre-conditions eventuated on two occasions during the period being intensively studied in this thesis and discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4 - in the late 1980s (the period of the Hobart Declaration and John Dawkins’ tenure of office as the ALP Federal Education Minister) and the middle to late 1990s (when Dr David Kemp, his Liberal successor, dominated the Council’s meeting in Perth). In between, the AEC/MCETYA (ie. the Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs) has played a latent role in the national advocacy coalition. While some
members have been active individual participants – like Victorian Education Minister, Joan Kirner – so long as the mainstream academic curriculum for upper secondary students was not disturbed, the State Ministers collectively took a back seat. The preconditions for the formation of a dominant advocacy coalition have thus never existed in the context of inter-governmental relations.

Between 1953 and 1962, primary school enrolments increased by 37 per cent, and secondary enrolments, by a massive 139 per cent, prompting the following somewhat over-optimistic assessment:

By about the middle of the 20th century, Australia could claim to have done a remarkably good job in providing equality of educational opportunity as all children had access to schools – even those in remote areas had correspondence lessons and/or ‘School of the Air’. (Haynes, 1997, 37)

Policy developments were not all within the public sector: in 1952, the payment of school fees at private schools had been made tax deductible, and in 1954, gifts to private schools’ building funds had been treated similarly.

As the Menzies era drew to a close, the national government took some minor initiatives which ultimately were to prove momentous, for in 1964 the Commonwealth assumed the function of direct funding to schools. Interestingly, early in his term, Menzies had opposed the suggestion of federal aid for schools on constitutional grounds - claiming that education was a States matter and that the ‘federalist principle should be respected’. But, since the Victorian ‘Split’ in 1955, the Liberals had needed DLP preferences to remain in government. In 1961, 241,000 people petitioned the Commonwealth to assist State schools. At the ensuing election, Menzies was almost defeated.

By 1963, Menzies was taking notice. He went to the polls promising Federal specific purpose grants for science blocks - in disadvantaged schools in both the public and the private sector (in which then, as now, the Catholic schools were the most numerous). He also offered Commonwealth Government Scholarships for the final two years of secondary schooling. In the 1963 election, his government’s
margin increased from 2 to 22 seats, and by the 1966 election (again won by the Liberals), both the major parties were promising Commonwealth aid for public and private schools (the ALP having adopted a policy of direct State aid to private schools at their 1966 Federal Conference). Menzies had simultaneously leaped two potential constitutional hurdles to federal intervention in schools policy. The first was the widely held view that the constitution had conferred on the Australian States exclusive control over education; and the second was the principle of the separation of Church and State.

With the establishment of the Federal Department of Education and Science (in 1967), the Commonwealth’s legitimacy to intervene in certain aspects of schools policy was a fact of Australian political life. Successive Liberal governments gradually extended the Commonwealth’s role in schools education policy. In 1968, additional assistance came in the form of grants for school libraries and Commonwealth-funded teachers’ colleges.

Notwithstanding these disparate measures, the 1960s are recognised in Australian education history as being a period of shameful neglect – a period of poor, badly resourced schools on the one hand and, on the other, narrowly academic curricula. The over-riding purpose of the secondary school curriculum was the selection of (a small number of) students for university. But the schools began to fill with students whose families had limited experience of secondary and tertiary education; and, under a regime of external examinations and standardised scores, school failure was endemic. (Teese, 2000, 141-2.)

At the 1972 Federal election, the major parties again promised Federal grants for both public and private schools, the only debate being whether or not these should be administered by a Commonwealth Schools Commission along the lines of that already set up to administer grants to universities. Malcolm Fraser and William McMahon expressed the view that Labor would use the Schools Commission to centralise schools policy at the national level. In the event, the Commission was announced - just a few days after Whitlam was elected in 1972 - when the Country Party finally backed the concept in exchange for Labor’s promise that the wealthiest group of private schools would not be excluded from the Commission’s largesse.
Although the precise composition of the advocacy coalitions cannot be detailed in a thesis of this nature, the overall – and persistent – pattern is clear enough. In New South Wales, the State Government and its department was from the outset predominant vis-a-vis both the university and the private schools. In Victoria, early reliance on voluntary – and especially religious – endeavours produced a more ‘balanced’ dominant advocacy coalition.

As long as the Commonwealth stayed aloof from schools policy development and funding, differences between States in the styles of policymaking had relatively little effect on levels of schools funding. In 1972, for example, New South Wales committed $350.00 per school student; Victoria, $353.00; and the average for all States/Territories was $342.00. When the Commonwealth dollars began to grow generously under the Commonwealth Whitlam Government, however, policy directions on schools funding began to diverge in ways that were significantly influenced by the differing State traditions.

**Conclusion**

As was argued in the Introduction to this chapter, regime dynamics had sharply differentiated NSW and Victoria, each bearing the marks of long periods of dominance throughout much of the 20th Century by one political party. In NSW, this was the ALP (most markedly in the period of unbroken rule, 1941-1965); and in Victoria, the Liberals (most markedly in the period of unbroken rule, 1955-1982).

In NSW, the Wyndham Committee, which reported in 1955 and whose recommendations were for the most part implemented in 1961, shaped a bipartisan consensus on secondary education which survives to the present day. The membership of the Committee sheds some light on the range of interests active in the dominant schools advocacy coalition:
Director-General of Education (chair)
Director of Secondary Education
Former Superintendent of Technical Education
President of the Teachers’ Federation
University of Sydney Professor of Education
University of Sydney Registrar
An industry training supervisor
Representative of the Catholic Church
Representative of the Anglican Church
Representative of the Presbyterian Church.
(Wyndham, 1955)

The striking of the Wyndham settlement was a compromise between two major parties with distinctively different value bases. While both sides were committed to the values of equality and liberty, they weighted these core political values differently. In the ALP, the balance was tilted towards equality, hence New South Wales’ characteristic mix of State interventionism (which is always needed to counter the inevitably inegalitarian outcomes of markets and structures of social privilege) and bureaucratism (which delivered equal opportunities for the non-elite to gain clerical employment). Thus, under Labor in NSW, a meritocratic system of secondary schooling evolved, where the public and the private sector competed for academic success.

Under the Liberals in Victoria, a more segmented system evolved, with academic success being skewed towards the private sector. Later in the same ‘Wyndham’ decade, a very different approach was adopted in Victoria. Upon taking office as Minister for Education in the Bolte Liberal Government, Lindsay Thompson applied himself to the task of writing a brief book on future directions for the State’s schools (Thompson, 1969). Not surprisingly, the book skirted contentious policy issues, and was soon strongly criticised in another short book by a rising ALP politician (Roper, 1970) for its avoidance of the issue of disadvantage. Roper’s book was to be highly influential with the incoming Whitlam Government, but apparently had no impact on the dominant advocacy coalition in Victoria. Two contending
politicians from opposing parties were unlikely to forge a Wyndham-style consensus. Not surprisingly, there was strong agreement between Ramsay and the Liberal Victorian Education Minister, Lindsay Thompson – with a dominant academic influence being part of their shared, assumptive world.

In Victoria, the dominant advocacy coalition had not needed to strike a Wyndham-type settlement. The ‘natural’ government of the Liberals tilted the balance towards the liberty of the elite to educate their children in private schools. This strategy alienated the ALP, which joined an opposing advocacy coalition. On occasions, the opposing advocacy coalition has seen its ally – the ALP – gain office in both Victoria and the Commonwealth, and, from time to time, has been able to introduce some policies that tilted the balance back towards equality. However, such policy initiatives have usually lacked ‘staying power’, because the dominant advocacy coalition has reversed them whenever the Liberals have returned to power. The characteristic style of the dominant advocacy coalition was constitutionalist (granting high degrees of autonomy to ‘subordinate’ bodies – both governmental and non-governmental) and devolutionist \(^{14}\) (facilitating the education of the elite by such autonomous bodies).

In the Bureaucratist system of NSW, the primary aim of the Department was to educate the mass of students up to a level – Year 10 or Intermediate – that would enable them to proceed to clerical and technical careers. The University, for its part, was concerned mainly to ensure that matriculating students were academically qualified. A *modus vivendi* was usually obtainable, because the disciplines required for the completion of Intermediate – such as literacy and numeracy – served well enough as platforms for more specialised studies in senior secondary school. In addition, the Wyndham agreement provided for the ‘progressive selection of elective courses’ for the minority of students who, ‘before reaching the School Certificate stage, will have begun to aspire to some form of tertiary education.’ (Wyndham, 1955, 97.)

In the Devolutionist system of Victoria, the concerns of Department and University were more intricately intertwined. For different reasons, both were financially stretched in the early years of the 20th century. Under a succession of
fiscally conservative governments, the Department found it impossible to expand along simple NSW lines. In 1901, the University was the site of a major financial scandal. (Selleck, 1982, 144). As a condition of its receiving a ‘bail-out’, the Government, as we have seen, persuaded the University to accept functions such as teacher education and agricultural education, which it would not otherwise have chosen at that time. The ironic outcome of this development was that the University’s initial position of weakness resulted in its ultimately gaining stronger influence than its Sydney counterpart over technical components of the secondary curriculum.

This chapter has demonstrated the existence of long-standing cultural differences between New South Wales and Victoria – differences that shaped policy-making on schools in the two States. The entry, in 1972, of a Commonwealth government with strong equity concerns was always likely to impact differently on these two systems. The consensual, meritocratic NSW system was less likely than the more pluralist Victorian system to produce a strong advocacy coalition opposed to the long-standing, dominant one. In the next chapter (Chapter 3), the development of new, initially radical Commonwealth policies will be traced. In the succeeding chapter (4), the impact of changing Commonwealth policy on the two State systems will be assessed.
Western Australia had to wait for its own boom – following the discovery of gold in the 1890s – before its public schools system followed suit.

NSW had a very direct link with the English system which had been designed by Robert Lowe. Lowe, an English barrister appointed to the NSW Legislative Council by Governor Gipps, was one of the founders of Sydney University. On his return to England, he became a Liberal Member of Parliament and, in the 1860s, a powerful voice for educational reform.

Senior education administrator in New South Wales from 1854 to 1884.

In 1901-2, the government of New South Wales devoted nearly 10 per cent of its expenditure from consolidated revenue funds to 'Education, Science and Art'. While this, of course, is a lower proportion than that which obtained in more modern times, it did represent a considerable advance on expenditures throughout the nineteenth century. *Australian Commonwealth Year Book, 1909.*

Not to be confused with Sydney Anglican Grammar School.

It should be noted that Weigall also 'reformed the modern or commercial side making it a respectable alternative to the classical course'. Turner, C. (1969) *Pioneers of Australian Education: A Study of the Development of Education in New South Wales in the Nineteenth Century.* Sydney University Press, Sydney.

This is the term often used to defend the highly academic 'A Levels' examinations held at the conclusion of Sixth Form in England and Wales.

For example, history, geography, languages, metalwork, woodwork.

Badcock (1966) reports that by 1925, Tate had located all but seven of Victoria's 33 high schools in country districts, despite the fact that in 1907, Tate himself had acknowledged that less than 5 per cent of the 14-17 age group were receiving a secondary education.

NSW raised its school leaving age from 14 to 15 years in 1940 (implemented in 1944). Victoria was one of the four remaining States (following Western Australia) that legislated for a higher school leaving age in the early 40s but whose Acts were not proclaimed.

Professor Hurt, from the Education Faculty of the University of California, visiting Australia to attend the 1937 NEF conference sponsored by the Melbourne-based Australian Council for Educational Research.

Federal Ministers of Education from time to time flirt with the idea of withdrawing from schools policy altogether, but, in sharp contrast to the United States, no politician of any Australian political party has ever purposefully pursued the issue of the separation between Church and State. This helps to explain why Australia has one of the largest and most generously publicly funded private schools education sectors in the world.
Further tacit and indirect evidence in support of my account of the differences between the Victorian and New South Wales cultures has come from an unexpected source: viz. Crawford, Ray (1981) A History of Physical Education in Victoria and New South Wales 1872-1939, with Particular Reference to English Precedent. Ph.D. thesis, Latrobe University. Crawford identified two traditions of physical education that had their roots in 19th century England: the sporting games tradition associated with the elite private schools, and the military drill tradition, which was deemed appropriate for the disciplining of working class children in government schools. From 1911-1931, the Commonwealth supported a national cadet scheme, which naturally gave a decisive edge to the second, ‘drill’ tradition in all Australian schools (Chapter 4). After the Commonwealth withdrew from the field of physical education in the Depression years, Victoria was quick to favour the ‘games’ tradition over the ‘drill’ tradition. By 1937 the Government had persuaded the University of Melbourne to commit itself to the introduction of a high status program, headed by a Director of Physical Education. Through most of the decade of the 1930s, New South Wales remained committed to the first, military drill tradition. When it did come to move in a progressive direction, the lead was taken, not by a University Director, but by a Departmental Director of Physical Education. Responsibility for the preparation of physical education teachers was vested, not in the University, but in the Departmentally controlled Sydney Teachers College. (Chapter 5).

I have here changed the Halligan/Power terminology from ‘Technicist’ to ‘Devolutionist’, because the Halligan/Power term causes needless confusion when applied to the field of education policy, where the distinction between the general and the technical sectors cuts across the Halligan/Power distinctions.
Chapter 3: The Commonwealth - the Whitlam Revolution and After, 1972-2003

Introduction

Chapter 2 traced the development of schools policies in New South Wales and Victoria from the 1850s - and in the Commonwealth from Federation - up to the election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972. It described the beginnings of dominant advocacy coalitions in those two States and the emergence of a further, embryonic, coalition at the national level. This chapter will focus on the Commonwealth in a period in which the embryo grew into a dominant national advocacy coalition.

The Chapter will trace such changes as did occur in advocacy and other coalitions at Federal level throughout the period of the existence of the Commonwealth Schools Commission and after. The period covered by the Chapter is the most important of the three historical chapters in the thesis, because it is the period during which the Commonwealth’s Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) was developed: the DSP was the first program of any government in Australia designed explicitly to deal with social disadvantage in Australian schools.

The chapter’s period may conveniently be divided into five phases, three of them coinciding with discrete prime-ministerships and two dividing the ALP’s thirteen years from 1983 to 1996 in half.
Phase I: Whitlam, 1972-75
Phase II: Fraser, 1975-83
Phase III: Hawke 1, 1983-88
Phase IV: Hawke 2/ Keating, 1988-96
Phase V: Howard, 1996-present.

For each phase, I will outline the major program initiatives. Having done this, I will attempt to assess - however speculatively - the implications of these initiatives for governance, i.e. for the structure of governmental authority over schooling, and for the curriculum. The Commonwealth will be at centre stage in this Chapter; Chapter 4 will deal with the role of the States. Changes in Commonwealth education policy are best understood when placed in their financial and intellectual contexts. Figure 3.1 displays trends in the Federal Government’s funding of schools from the time of the election of the Whitlam Government until the present.

The story of Commonwealth funding of schools illustrated in Figure 3.1 has six main themes:

The Whitlam years of rapid expansion of 171 per cent p.a. were ones of unprecedented growth, especially in support for public schools, which rose (admittedly from a very low base) by 213 per cent p.a.

Since 1975, schools funding has settled into a relatively consistent pattern, with growth in real terms averaging about 3.4 per cent p.a. However, this overall average growth is composed of two very different rates for the two sectors, with private schools funding increasing at a rate of 4.8 per cent p.a. and that for public schools at 1.4 per cent p.a.
Figure 3.1: Commonwealth Per Student Outlays on Schools 1972 to 2002 — Constant 2002 $ (GDP inflated)

Sources: Several years of ABS 4221.0, 4224.0, 5510.0, and AEC (and successors) National Reports on Schooling, ABS dX database and unpublished ABS data.
In the Fraser years, private schools funding rose at the expense of the public schools, rising by 9 per cent p.a. through the septennium, while funding of the public sector declined by 0.4% between 1976 and 1983.

In the post-Whitlam ALP years, the rates of growth of both the private and the public sectors were held at roughly equivalent levels: 1.5 per cent p.a. for the former; and 1.7 per cent for the latter.

In the Howard years, overall school funding levels rose more sharply than they had under the ALP – by 5.5 per cent p.a. - largely because of substantial increases in the funding of private schools of 6.5 per cent p.a. In contrast, increases in the support of public schools were 3.2 per cent p.a.

As a result of these trends, the ratio of public to private Commonwealth school funding per student went from 60 per cent in 1975, to 25 per cent in 2002.

This summary sets the financial context for the discussion of Commonwealth policy and program initiatives throughout the three decades. Before going on to this discussion, it is also necessary to set the intellectual context by examining the changing climate of opinion in the years leading up to the election of the Whitlam government. The next sections of the Chapter therefore examine the Coleman paradigm of disadvantage in schooling that became dominant in the US – and to a lesser extent internationally – in the 1960s. The argument then proceeds to provide a description of the more diffuse climate of (education) policy opinion that prevailed in Australia when Gough Whitlam came to power. It will refer to theoretical perspectives – predominantly from overseas - that at the time, were becoming influential in the consideration of policies on schools. And it will necessarily devote considerable time to the consideration of the Karmel Inquiry that set the parameters for subsequent Commonwealth policy on schools.
The Coleman Paradigm

In the history of public policymaking in the modern world, there have been a few seminal works that have defined a field of inquiry for a generation or more: J.M. Keynes, The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money (1936), for example; George F. Kennan, 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', (Foreign Affairs, 1947) and Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (1965). For some 30 years, debates in the policy field with which this thesis is concerned have turned on differing interpretations of another such seminal work: James Coleman et al, Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966). It is common for works of this kind eventually to generate political contestation, but the controversy following the release of Coleman's research occurred very speedily. Just six years after its publication, Mosteller and Moynihan found it necessary to produce an authoritative volume of essays to review the spirited debates it had inspired. (Mosteller, 1972) What was notable about these debates was their immediate polarisation into camps of the Left and the Right, each claiming to draw support from the Coleman report (Mosteller, 1972, 7). In a world that was already beginning to experience the phenomenon now known as globalisation, this ideological structuring of debate on the equality of educational opportunity was to be reproduced in many other nations, including Australia. The character of the debates of course was distinctively different in Australia - in ways which will be explored in this chapter and the next - but the content was not dissimilar. This section of the chapter outlines the Coleman paradigm and identifies the issues it raised. Later in the thesis, I will attempt to explain how these issues were taken up by contending advocacy coalitions.

When, in 1965, James Coleman was commissioned by the U.S. Congress to survey educational opportunity for American children in the nation's then mostly-segregated schools, he expected to discover vastly different funding patterns for black American children when compared with their white peers - especially in the South. Instead, he discovered that the Southern States - presumably acting on the Supreme Court's decision in Plessey v Ferguson (1896) that black and white students could be educated in separate institutions as long as they were equally resourced - had invested roughly equally in educational provision for the two groups. The vast
difference that he did discover between the two groups was in their respective educational outcomes.

Historically, U.S. education policy had tried to achieve a balance between the principles of 'liberty' and 'equality'. (Coleman, 1990b, 604-5.) The principle of liberty had been pursued via the mechanisms of federalism and subsidiarity - public services being delivered at the lowest level consistent with principles of efficiency. The institutional expressions of these principles were decentralised local school boards, local taxation, and local autonomy - including over the curriculum. Certainly, different local communities had different levels of resources that they were able (or willing) to apply to schooling. So, whenever the balance had to be tilted in favour of equality, central government programs were meant to shift resources to the neediest areas - even at the cost of local autonomy. So long as the demography of the United States conformed to the requirements of Jeffersonian democracy - with small communities actively participating in their local institutions, including their schools - the traditional system of schooling performed tolerably well.

Coleman observed, however, that the traditional system for maintaining equality of educational advantage had, in fact, achieved only limited success. In practice, adherence to the principle of subsidiarity meant that such equality of opportunity that was attained varied greatly from one locality to another. According to Coleman, a school can be effective only when it is has a strongly functioning link to its community - the explanation, he believed, for the relative success of Catholic schools. With the decline of rural small town life, most American schools had lost that connection with their communities. By the mid-sixties, the balance between the core values of liberty and equality had been tilted decidedly in favour of the former, in part because:

... the American creed subsumes classical liberalism, which strongly distrusts the state and emphasizes competitive meritocracy. (Lipset, 1993, 224.)

Confronted with Coleman's analysis, American policymakers were forced to choose between two strategies. They could continue to give lip service to the notion of equality of educational opportunity while in fact resigning themselves to failure in
achieving it; attempting, instead, to establish different criteria for the effectiveness of American schools. Or they could view the breakdown of the system as an opportunity to develop new strategies for achieving equal educational opportunity - even if the new approaches required modifying the traditional academic curriculum and its associated standards of attainment. In the American context of race relations, such new approaches also entailed a courageous innovation: the busing of students from disadvantaged areas.

In the event, Coleman went with the mainstream that opted for the conservative, ‘resignation’ option. Calculating that the more radical option was unlikely to secure even limited support, Coleman abandoned the goal of ‘equal educational opportunity’ in favour of the more modest one of ‘reducing educational inequality’. (Coleman, 1990a) Subsequently, he went along with much of the New Right reform agenda (some of it quite radical): vouchers, magnet schools, payment by results for instructors (some of them external contractors). But because of his continuing concern for school-community linkages, he stopped short of the full ‘marketisation’ advocated by the more ideological right-wing theorists - like Chubb and Moe, 4 for example. However, for the reason already mentioned, he advocated public financial support for private (and especially Catholic) schools, as well as the establishment, where feasible, of schools in the workplace. 5

Coleman’s emphasis on the importance of the student’s family background and on the socio-economic composition of the school have been interpreted by some researchers in Australia and elsewhere as demonstrating his lack of conviction in the capacity of schools to improve outcomes for their students:

It (the Karmel Committee) updated the notion of educational opportunity, changing it to equality of educational outcomes, unaware of the Coleman and Jencks arguments which questioned the effect on educational outcomes of increased effort in schooling and increased schooling. (Spaull, 1979, 127.)

Early studies of school effectiveness such as those by Coleman et al (1966) and Jencks et al (1972) focussed on the extent to which schools equalised opportunities for different groups within the community. The results seem to point to the rather depressing conclusion that the influence of the school was insignificant compared with the influence of family background.
Using different methodologies and asking different questions, more recent studies have focussed on identifying common characteristics of 'good' or 'effective' schools (i.e. schools that are evidently performing much better than others with which they might legitimately be compared taking into account their student intake) and have come to the conclusion that schools do make a difference. (Hill, 1993, 3)

Yet, after demonstrating that social structures such as the family and local community were of prime significance for school effectiveness, Coleman went on to observe that skilled teaching, while of lesser importance than the social structural elements, was still important:

In terms of subsequent debates about the meaning of the report, it is interesting that one of its key findings was almost universally ignored by academic researchers and the press: that the quality of teachers showed a strong relationship to pupil achievement. And that the teachers' quality became 'progressively greater at higher grades, indicating a cumulative impact of the qualities of teachers in a school on pupil achievement.' The most important measures of teacher quality in the survey were the teachers' verbal skills and educational background. (Ravitch, 1993, 130-131.)

Ravitch's view is that this particular finding was overlooked, 'perhaps because it did not serve the interests of any of the groups that pounced on the report's findings.' And she reminds us that 'Coleman III was a careful analysis of the school policies that do make a difference in educational achievement.' (Ravitch, 1993, 140.) Contrary to Hill's view, a different group of school-focussed researchers found, in Coleman's research, the stimulus for the burgeoning 'School Effectiveness' movement:

It is difficult to pinpoint the 'start' of school effectiveness research exactly since many different sub-disciplines have studied schools and classrooms from a variety of perspectives ... Nonetheless, in the US and UK the chief catalyst seems to have been work by Coleman (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972). (Sammons, 1999, ix)

Those who chose Coleman's second strategy - a more radical option given its focus on modifying the curriculum - were always going to be a minority (though one that won some support from both the New Left and the New Right), but they had some limited successes in several ghetto schools. Programs were fashioned to support ethnic communities through such devices as the provision of public financial support
for public and private 'charter' and 'magnet' schools catering to parents who had strong conventional academic aspirations for their children. For the proponents of these programs, the needs of disadvantaged students of average or less than average ability were of a much lower priority, if they featured at all. The problem that remained was that of finding ways of lessening the dominance of the academic curriculum and its associated assessment regime for the majority of disadvantaged students who did not attend ghetto schools.

In summary, the argument underlying the Coleman paradigm ran something like this: schools could be treated as largely dependent sub-systems of community social systems. They enjoyed a common value base in which academic standards had always loomed large, even among communities with little direct experience of universities. So long as schools remained embedded in traditional communities - with their 'primordial' organisation - they would be effective. But with the rise of mass society and of 'purpose-built', 'constructed' organisations (Coleman, 1990b, especially Chapter 2) (typically established to further the purposes of those well removed from local communities), public schools had been steadily losing their effectiveness. Until new integrating normative structures could be developed, there was little hope of regaining the effectiveness of many public schools. Individual reformers could respond only to inducements offered by the institutional order, and appropriate inducements were no longer freely available.

For all the gloom which Coleman spread among progressive educational reformers, there was little doubt that he had raised issues of the greatest importance for evaluating schools' performance in providing for socially disadvantaged students. The particular importance of Coleman's work lay in the fact that he held out the prospect of a determined government making a difference in the educational outcomes of disadvantaged students. In this sense (as well as in certain others) he offers a contrast to the much more pessimistic Pierre Bourdieu, whose own significant theoretical contributions will be outlined in Chapter 4 of the thesis.

Two years after the publication of the Coleman Report, the United Nations celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To mark the occasion in Australia, the United Nations Association of Victoria set up a
Committee for Human Rights that conducted study groups on nine topics related to various Articles in the Declaration, including the Right of Education (Articles 26, 29 and 30). Work on the latter generated, inter alia, several authoritative papers on inequality in education – a field in which it was observed, ‘the amount of research in Australia, and more particularly in Victoria, is as yet lamentably small’. (Fensham, 1970, viii.) This initiative was to set the pattern for several succeeding years, writers in the ‘devolutionist’ States of Victoria and South Australia predominating in the shaping of the early discourse on inequality in schooling.

Nevertheless, the authors of these papers revealed that they were very much aware of relevant local and international research, and in particular, ‘the massive examination of equality of educational opportunity in the United States of America’ that had been undertaken by J.S. Coleman. (Hunt, 1970, 41.). 7

In the ’sixties and ’seventies, the findings of this ‘massive examination’, while allowing differing interpretations, nevertheless stimulated new lines of inquiry in Australian education and rendered ‘educational inequality’ a legitimate subject for research. F.J. Hunt noted the importance of resources (buildings, equipment, teachers and other pupils) to the educative process and the effects of schooling (measured by educational performance); the relationship between equal access to non-compulsory education and to equal opportunity to acquire academic ability; the pre-condition to the achievement of this goal being that schools ‘bring the performance of different groups of students up to comparable levels’ (Hunt, 1970, ibid.). John McLaren observed that

To use Coleman’s terms, there is considerable inequality of community provision, particularly in the numbers and quality of staff. There is inequality of social and national composition, and there would appear to be inequality of such intangibles as morale, expectations, and interest. Here is some suggestion that there is inequality of results, given equality of ability among the students at entry, but this may be explained by family rather than school factors. There is certainly an actual inequality of school results. (McLaren, 1970, 82.)

Such a multi-dimensional phenomenon was not likely to be countered by mono-dimensional strategies:
The Coleman enquiry puts paid to any simplistic notions that by spending more money on school facilities or providing more and better-trained teachers we will solve our educational problems. Coleman found that the least important factor in the school Achievement of the most disadvantaged American group, the Negroes, was the kind of facilities and curriculum offering.... The most important factor Coleman found was .... the background of the other students in the particular school. (McLaren, 1970, 67.)

J. Fensham noted differences in the number of tertiary Commonwealth scholarships going to children in Melbourne government, independent non-Catholic and Independent Catholic schools during 1964, 1967 and 1968. He observed that the ratio of tertiary scholarships to enrolments in Form 4 were lower for girls as a group, but that these varied depending on the socioeconomic group to which the girls belonged, with the girls’ index going up in independent schools but going down in government schools’. For 1967 and 1968, the index for independent non-Catholic girls was higher than that for metropolitan boys. (Fensham, 1970, 143 ff.)

Jean Martin thought that the qualifications of boys and girls might differ within different ethnic groups as well, but, writing in 1972, was unable to find supporting data for this proposition. (Martin, 1972, 107.) In her path-breaking research on sex and educational qualifications, she made several references to Coleman’s work. While hesitant to identify a direct causal link between access to resources and learning outcomes, she nevertheless observed the impact of differential resourcing – indicated, for example, by ‘expenditure per pupil’ and ‘variations in funds raised in different schools’- on the educational experience and the richness of the learning environment for children. (Martin, 1972, 108, 110.)

AR Trehewey was intrigued by Coleman’s finding that ‘the Negro student ... is more likely to perform on equal terms with the white student educationally when he lives on equal terms with him in everything else’. Trehewey identified six ‘social variables associated with opportunity for effective education’, viz. family-related variables (socio-economic status, family size, amenities in the home, parents’ educational level, parents’ attitudes and aspirations); neighbourhood variables (geographic location and the subculture of the neighbourhood community); ethnic variables (the level of education open to or aspired to by particular racial groups); religious variables (the level of education open to or aspired to by particular religious
groups); school-related variables (the system of education and educational policy, school facilities, staffing and programs); and peer group variables (the attitude of age-mates to schooling, to authority and to teachers). He was impressed by Coleman’s finding that education systems, schools and teachers are capable of contributing to educational inequality, but also observed that ‘...it is necessary to see the roots of inequalities in education beyond the schools in the deeper foundations on inequalities which exist in society at large’. (Trethewey, 1970, 171-185.) Like Trethewey and McLaren, Martin was especially interested in Coleman’s finding that, with socio-economic background controlled, the achievement of the individual pupil is more strongly related to the educational backgrounds and aspirations of other pupils than to variations in school facilities and curriculum or the quality of the teacher, stating that ‘the scattered local evidence’ collected by her own study was consistent with Coleman’s. (Martin, 1972, 119.)

In 1972, the Australian Prime Minister, William McMahon, announced the establishment of an independent Commission of Inquiry into Poverty to be chaired by Professor Ronald Henderson. Suddenly, ‘social inequality’ had become a legitimate focus for public policy development in Australia. By the early ’seventies, it had become possible for researchers to talk about ‘the accumulating body of material on educational inequality in Australia’. (Martin, 1972, 104.). ‘That accumulating body of material’ owed much to Coleman, whose influence on Australian researchers, first detected in the late ‘sixties, was to colour the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Karmel, 1973, 9.6) and to persist as a conceptual framework for one branch of schools-focused research on educational disadvantage right through to the current century.

In March of the following year, the then recently elected Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, announced a broadening of the terms of reference of the Henderson Inquiry – just three months after he had requested the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission to investigate the financial needs of Australian schools and ‘the priority within those needs’. The potential for cross-fertilisation was not lost on the Interim Committee, which, having developed its own ‘Socio-Economic Scales’, stated:
...it is expected that the work of the several Commissions responsible for advising the Australian Government on the needs of education, together with those responsible for questions of social welfare generally, will benefit from the exercise and its further refinement'. (Karmel, 1973, 9.29.)

The Whitlam Government (1972 to 1975) was to generate an explosion of new social programs and institutions that was disproportionate to the brevity of its tenure. Foremost among these initiatives was the early appointment of the Karmel Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission. Before this can be considered, however, I wish briefly to visit an earlier, state-level Karmel inquiry which was to set much of the context for the later national inquiry. And, in turn, I wish to locate the South Australian Inquiry in the context of educational opinion at the beginning of the 1970s. As we have already seen, that climate had been significantly affected by the Coleman paradigm, but by the early 1970s other influences were coming to bear as well.

**The Climate of Educational Opinion at the Beginning of the 1970s**

As explained in the conclusion of Chapter Two, the 'sixties ushered in 'an education boom to the extent that more children (were) staying at schools to enrol in higher forms'. (Martin, 1972, 101.) In Victoria between 1960 and 1967, the percentage of Form 1 enrolments that remained to Form 6 had increased from 34 to 46 per cent for boys and from 18 percent to 28 per cent for girls. Technical schools' Form 4 classes increased from 60 percent of their Form 1 enrolments to 81 per cent for boys. The percentage of Form 1 girls in Technical schools staying on till Form 5 increased from 22 per cent in 1960 to 39 per cent in 1967. (Martin, 1972, ibid.) Notwithstanding,

In 1967, almost one hundred years after the state assumed 'the responsibility of educating the lower orders', the Victorian Education Department indicated that it had no plans for providing compensatory education for the disadvantaged. (McLaren, 1970, 84.)
As a result, schools were overcrowded, buildings were inadequate; adequately trained teachers were scarce. In Catholic parish schools, the situation was even worse:

By 1969, it could be argued that there was little point in discussing the imminent breakdown of the Catholic school system, as it had already broken down. (Praetz, 1980, 51-58.)

By the early 'seventies, the situation was desperate indeed:

If resources cannot alone guarantee schooling of high quality, it was nevertheless the case that in 1973, those in public schools were unacceptably low. Conditions in the inner city areas of large cities, where poorer populations were then concentrated, were disgraceful in physical terms. (Blackburn, 1986, 2-3.)

Moreover, increasing enrolments brought with them a much greater diversity in the student populations of most schools. Groups of adolescents who, in the past, had conveniently exited schools to avoid the competitive academic post-compulsory curriculum were now staying on to present new challenges to teachers and curriculum designers. The gaps opening up between the outcomes for these new recruits and the 'traditional users' of post-compulsory schooling had begun to preoccupy Australian researchers.

Peter Karmel in South Australia 1969 – 1970

Three years before he was appointed by the Commonwealth to inquire into the needs of schools across Australia, Peter Karmel was commissioned by the South Australian Government to examine ‘the whole educational system of the State in order to determine the most effective use of resources available...’ (Karmel, 1971, vii.) The resulting report was described as ‘the most comprehensive and extensive report on education ever prepared in Australia’ (Bessant and Spaull, 1976, 172.)

In more ways than one, the South Australian inquiry was to prove a ‘dry run’ for the later and better known national investigation. In the mid 'sixties, Karmel, an academic economist, had served on the Vernon Committee of Economic Inquiry and
the Martin Committee on Tertiary Education, always promoting the relationship – never adequately analysed - between increased educational opportunities and increased national productivity. (Connell, 1993, 71.) The South Australian experience enabled him to explore, at state level, the concept of ‘equality of opportunity in education’. In this exploration, he was supported by the work of Jean Blackburn, Consultant to the Inquiry from April, 1969 until its conclusion. (In 1972, Dr Blackburn was appointed as deputy chair of the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission; then, between 1974 and 1980, she became a full-time Commissioner.) Not surprisingly, there is much overlap between the schools-focussed recommendations in both reports. (A schematic comparison of Karmel 1 and Karmel 2 is provided in Appendix 3:1 to this Chapter).

Karmel’s South Australian Committee found that, by international standards, the South Australian State system had ‘reasonably successfully’ attempted to achieve equal educational provision for each child. The vehicles for such equal provision were common curriculum offerings offered ‘to all comers’, the roughly equal provision of physical facilities, equal access to available teaching staff, the absence of fees and the availability of ‘considerable assistance towards the cost of school requisites’. (Karmel, 1971, 355.) More variation in the resources available to students was perceived in the non-government schools, which, despite government assistance, still relied on parental fees as their major source of income.

Notwithstanding, the Committee observed inequalities that existed ‘within the provision of apparently equal opportunities’ within the public system: differing physical standards between old and new schools, differences in the fund-raising capacity of different schools, differences in their capacity to attract staff to their locale, differences in the degree of access to ‘educational resources in the form of libraries, art galleries, museums, musical and dramatic performances or sporting facilities’:

Opportunities may differ, therefore, simply because of the locality in which the child lives, the interest of local parents in the school or the ability of his parents to contribute to the life and activities of the school. (Karmel, 1971, 355-6.)
While no ‘consistent’ relationship between low scores and low socio-economic areas was found, lowest-scoring schools (on tests of reading ability) were all in the lowest-ranking socio-economic groups of areas, and the school with the highest score was in the highest-ranking group of areas.

The observation that differences between individuals placed some students at a disadvantage in using opportunities ‘however publicly available (such opportunities) are’ (Karmel, 1971. 356.) caused the Committee to conclude that:

If equality of opportunity is to have real meaning for each child, positive action within the limits of the resources available is needed to compensate for the disadvantages which arise in the school, or in the home as an educational institution. (Karmel, 1971, Ibid.)

The home-based disadvantages greatly concerned the Committee:

Children are often born into homes where parents did not want them or are unable to care for them adequately. (Karmel, 1971, 368.)

It saw the need for special provision to overcome handicaps caused by: ‘deficiencies in language ...(and not only (in) those from homes whose native language is not English’); lack, in the home environment, of the sorts of mental stimulation that prepares children for schooling; and inadequate information about vocational opportunities and counselling to match the ‘direct and positive counselling and encouragement (of children) who have grown up in more informative environments’. Nevertheless, the Report was pessimistic about the capacity of ‘the school system alone for solving the problems of disadvantaged pupils’, citing a working party of the Schools Council of Great Britain on this issue:

Compensatory education will always be a poor second to good housing and the elimination of poverty, and (above all) to the security and affection in the home. (Karmel, 1971, 358.)

On the subject of the priorities that should be established within the public system for the allocation of resources, the Report appeared ambivalent, perhaps reflecting the fact that, in an Inquiry into the whole education system the views of the universities had to be accommodated:
If our criterion is personal benefit to the largest number and we choose the development of pre-schools and the improvement of conditions for the years of compulsory schooling, we have no greater certainty that this will be for the ultimate advantage of the majority than we would have if we chose to concentrate those same resources on the better education of an elite, since the increased contribution to society they would make by their better education might in the long run give a greater advantage to the community than any other kind of expenditure. (Karmel, 1971)

In the event, the Committee came down with a recommendation for a 7.4 per cent across-the-board annual increase in state education funding in South Australia, as well as for ‘more liberal treatment’ in staffing and schooling facilities for schools located in districts ‘which have in them an unusual number of children facing learning difficulties and social problems’. (Karmel, 1971)

The Five Phases Considered

Phase I:  Whittam, 1972-1975

Peter Karmel in Canberra, 1972-1973: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission

One of the first acts of the Whitlam Government following its election in 1972 was to implement a decision of the 1971 national ALP Conference to appoint an Interim Committee of the Schools Commission ‘to examine the position of government and non-government primary and secondary schools throughout Australia and to make recommendations on the immediate financial needs of those schools, the priorities within those needs and the measures appropriate to meeting them’. (Karmel, 1973)

Produced three years after the South Australian Report, ‘Karmel 2' was able to concentrate solely on the schools sector – albeit from a national perspective - and perhaps because of this, was rather less tentative in its recommendations for the alleviation of social disadvantage in schools. Released seven years after the Coleman Report, (and under similar time constraints), the Karmel Report bore the unmistakable imprint of the American research. Certainly, Karmel’s committee took seriously
Coleman’s view that the socio-economic status (SES) of students’ school communities had more effect on their achievement than any other measurable factor except the socio-economic status of the home (with which, of course, the school’s SES was inexorably linked). Indeed, several of the Karmel Report’s observations could have been taken straight out of Coleman; or, at least, were unlikely to have been made before it:

Out-of-school experiences, levels of aspiration and affective ties linking the individual to family and peer group are more powerful determinants of capacity and motivation for formal learning than anything done in schools (Karmel, 1973, 23)

The underpinning concept of what was to become the Schools Commission’s most high profile program – the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) - derived directly from Coleman. This was the idea of compensating schools that had concentrations of socially disadvantaged students:

Little is known about the processes by which the conditions of family and neighbourhood life affect educational performance, or about how patterns of schooling may sustain confidence and a sense of efficacy in some social groups more effectively than in others. Two highly significant facts, however, are known. First, there is a cumulative deficit whereby those children, whose progress in their early school years is slow, fall progressively further behind their age mates as schooling continues. Secondly, there is a compounding effect when, owing to residential patterns, there is a clustering in particular schools of children of common socio-economic background. The Coleman study in America indicated that the concentration in a school of pupils of comparatively low aspiration and achievement was in itself an important source of disadvantage. Both facts suggest that special measures are required to assist particular schools where there is a clustering of pupils of low average attainment, over and beyond those taken to assist all learners in all schools. The Committee is therefore recommending that special grants should be made available to improve the quality of educational services and of life in schools identified as being disadvantaged on the basis of characteristics of the neighbourhoods from which they draw pupils. (Karmel, 1973, 111 para 9.6.)

Such compensation for the possible deleterious effects of home and neighbourhood was needed to reduce the ‘inequalities within equal provision’ that Karmel and Blackburn had observed in South Australia: only by resourcing schools differentially would school systems be able to provide equality of opportunity. The DSP would
enable schools to define their need for special assistance 'in terms of the extent to which the school neighbourhood suffers socio-economic disadvantage.' (Karmel, 1973) Hence the need to develop 'an index of disadvantage on a neighbourhood basis' which would provide the basis for the selection of schools into the program. The components of disadvantage contributing to the scale comprised a measurement of the 'social and economic climate of a school's neighbourhood in terms of characteristics likely to be associated with educational disadvantage'; a measure of the extent to which a school was likely to draw its students from non-English speaking families, and the 'incidence of Aborigines in a school's catchment area' ('aboriginality and migrancy' being 'both correlated positively with socio-economic disadvantage'). (Karmel, 1973, 118, para. 9.23 ff.)

However, there were also some differences between the Australian and the American reports. For one thing, Karmel was rather more optimistic than Coleman about schools' capacities to expand opportunities for their disadvantaged students:

An acceptance of the view that the influence of schooling is limited does not imply that efforts to make schools more effective are futile, for it could be argued that we have not yet tried hard enough to assist disadvantaged children in their learning. (Karmel, 1973, 112, 9.8.)

And in one further – and vital - respect, the Karmel Report adopted a reform strategy which was very different from Coleman's, for it decided largely to ignore outcomes:

The Committee acknowledges the limitations of dealing with inputs of educational resources and ignoring outcomes...But knowledge of the relationships between inputs and outcomes is fragmentary at best...’ (Karmel, 1973, 5.11.)

This strategy was to have momentous long-term effects because the Karmel Report ended up setting the parameters for Commonwealth schools policy for the succeeding three decades. Had Karmel emulated Coleman in trying to get a grip on resources on the one hand and outcomes on the other, the history of the DSP might have been different. No-one familiar with the results of decades of disastrous neglect by Australian governments would refute Karmel's analysis of the urgent needs of schooling at the end of the 60s. But in dodging the issue of educational outcomes, the
Schools Commission left the way open for alternative policy initiatives—such as the favouring of private schools under the Fraser Government.

The Interim Commission reported in May, 1973. It proposed a six-fold increase in existing Commonwealth funding to schools—both government and non-government—to be disbursed through seven specific purpose funding programs: General Recurrent Resources, General Building, Primary and Secondary School Libraries, Disadvantaged Schools (defined as those schools having ‘an abnormal share of socially disadvantaged children’), Special Education, Teacher Development and Innovation. Priority for the allocation of funds from the DSP and Special Education Programs was given to children from low-income families, children from non-English-speaking background, geographically isolated children, and those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Commonwealth expenditure on the targeted programs was to be matched at state level. 12

In the short term, the funding recommendations suited the then current conditions, for the growth of student numbers had far outstripped the financial capacities of the state governments and the Catholic schools, which between them educated more than 90% of school students. Of the $660 million of Commonwealth funding recommended by the Committee, nearly 80 per cent went in block recurrent and capital grants to the States and non-government (mainly Catholic) systems. The remaining one fifth was divided among a number of smaller programs dealing with such areas of need as libraries and special education. The Disadvantaged Schools Program—with $50 million or 8 per cent—was the biggest of these small programs. Nevertheless, it is important to establish at the outset the extremely modest scale of this high profile Program—at its zenith in 1974, it accounted for only 2 per cent of government outlays on schooling.

Overall, the sums being provided by the Commonwealth were sufficiently large for the States and the churches to fight hard to retain them when times of fiscal austerity arrived. They fought hardest to retain the block grants in the mainstream programs. The smaller programs were at risk in times of austerity, especially if, in the meantime, they had been seen to succeed in eliminating some of the most serious deficiencies (eg libraries).
Perhaps the most lasting legacy of Karmel 2 was the ‘bedding-down’ of Australia’s ‘dual’ system of education, a process that ensured the continuing prioritisation of Commonwealth funding in favour of the private sector - and continuing disapproval from its critics:

By universalizing the crisis in Catholic schools to the public sector, and by including elite schools, as though all schools have the same role in society, the Karmel Report legitimated the increased ‘subsidising and underwriting’ of private education for private benefit from public funds - effectively the transfer and concentration of society’s resources into private hands. (Fomin, 1981)

The Schools Commission under Whitlam, 1972 – 1975

At the 1972 Federal election, both major parties promised Federal grants for both public and private schools, the only debate being whether these should be administered by a Commonwealth Schools Commission along the lines of that already set up to administer grants to universities. Malcolm Fraser and William McMahon feared that Labor would use the Schools Commission to centralise policy at the national level. In September and November, 1973, the Opposition-dominated Senate held up the passage of the Schools Commission Bill and the States Grants (Schools) Bill to protest the intention to withdraw Commonwealth funding from Category A (the wealthiest) private schools, as well as a collection of other matters, such as the Ministerial appointment of Commissioners, the lack of assured private school representation and the introduction of funding ‘programs’ rather than untied grants to the States. In the event, the Bills passed through the Parliament almost without amendment, courtesy of Country Party senators whose support was gained in exchange for Labor’s promise that Category A schools would not be excluded from the Commission’s largesse - thereby delivering a serious blow to the original intention to base Commonwealth schools funding on ‘need’.

The Interim Commission of the Australian Schools Commission had been announced on December 12, 1972 - just a few days after Whitlam was elected. It was given a wide brief. It had to:
... examine the position of government and non-government primary and secondary schools throughout Australia and to make recommendations on the immediate financial needs of those schools, the priorities within those needs and the measures appropriate to assist in meeting them. (Karmel, 1973, ii.)

The appointment of the Committee represented the beginnings of an important national advocacy coalition. While this initiative derived in the first instance from Labor Party policy, it had been shaped by advocacy coalitions at the State level.

The evolving dominant advocacy coalition

It has become commonplace to describe the Schools Commission as a mechanism for reaching consensus - especially on the question of state aid to private schools. (Smart, 1978, Ch. 7.) An alternative formulation sees it as a pragmatic coalition – ‘an alliance between separate groups which (had) differing long term goals’ and which, in its ideological differences, carried the seeds of its own demise:

The parties to the Karmel coalition included advocates of state aid for private schools, the government school constituency which advocated federal aid (that is Commonwealth money) for public schools only; mainstream educational experts and practitioners (including teachers, academics, librarians, etc. who were campaigning for specific or general resources ranging across the full spectrum from libraries and library books, to science laboratories, to funding for more teachers and hence smaller classes, to funding for teacher development, to money for desks and decent toilet blocks); radical education reformers who wished to change the role of schools from producers of ‘factory fodder’ to institutions of empowerment for individuals who could thus reform and redeem society; and those (particularly the party faithful of the ALP) whose concept of educational reform consisted more simply of enhanced social mobility for the disadvantaged through a more sophisticated conception of equality of opportunity.

(Dudley, 1995, 52)

Experience at the Commonwealth level in the middle 1970s casts an interesting light on the processes through which a ‘coalition of convenience’ – such as that described above by Dudley and Vidovich – ‘morphs’ into a dominant advocacy coalition made up of only some of the interests in an earlier coalition.
As explained in the previous section, the Chairman of the Interim Committee, Prof. Peter Karmel, and the Deputy Chair, Dr Jean Blackburn, had worked together on the South Australian Karmel Inquiry. By 1972, Karmel was also Chairman of the Australian Universities Commission and Blackburn was a Senior Lecturer in Education at Sturt CAE. The third academic on the Committee was Peter Tannock, who, at the time, was in the Faculty of Education, University of WA, and who, subsequently headed the WA Catholic Education Commission.13 Four of the remaining Committee members were public servants: Greg Hancock (Research) and M.E. Thomas (Guidance) from the NSW Department of Education; Edward T. Jackson (Technical Education) from the Victorian Department; and A.W. Jones, Director General of Education, S.A. One was a union representative: Wilfred White (former president of the ATF). Two represented private schools: Alice Whitley (former headmistress, Methodist Ladies’ College, Sydney) and Father F.M. Martin, (Director, Catholic Education, Melbourne) (Dudley, 1995, 41.) The members did not have representative status: they were to be regarded as ‘independent educationalists’, (Benson, 1991, 16.) ‘...many of whom’ according to Spaull, ‘were of the liberal Catholic and traditional Fabian mix that had dominated Labor thinking in the 1960s.’ (Spaull, 1979, 128.)

The following Table illustrates the way in which the composition of the Schools Commission’s membership changed over time:
Table 3 - 1: Membership of Australian National Schools Bodies (percentage breakdowns)

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<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (teachers unknown)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dates of the ‘snapshots’ have been chosen so as to illuminate the ‘state of play’ on the eve of the following important changes:
1975 the fall of the Whitlam Government
1983 the fall of the Fraser Government
1987 the demise of the Schools Commission
1994 shortly before the demise of the Schools Council

Six observations can be made:

The representation of the various interests was remarkably stable over twenty years.

State Departments were strongly represented throughout the period - despite the frequent tensions - mentioned by Spaul (Spaul, 1987 Ch.7, 196) between the AEC and the Schools Commission.

Academic influence declined as Karmel receded into history.

Teachers were never significantly involved - even when union representation is taken into account.
The business sector was brought into the policy community after Dawkins’ advent to power.

Contrary to the assertion of Dudley and Vidovich, (Dudley, 1995, 77), there was no significant increase in private sector representation or ‘political appointments’ under Fraser.

For a time, the policy of allocating increased funding to all schools helped to paper over the value differences within the Commission, but the fragile coalition was always going to be sorely tested by any competition for resources. The recession that followed the 1974 OPEC oil price rises provided just such a test. The Schools Commission was savaged by the 1975 Budget, sustaining, in effect, a 33 per cent funding cut, with government schools suffering a 17 per cent cut in recurrent funds compared to a 4 per cent reduction for non-government schools. (Dudley, 1995, 75) 1975 brought not only recession, but also the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. In truth, the Karmel Coalition was coming apart even before the fall of Whitlam.

As things transpired, an agreement based on vague and ambiguous principles proved to be an inadequate basis for a sustained, nation-wide assault on educational disadvantage despite the initial generous funding round.

The Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program under Whitlam, 1972–1975

For the concerns of this thesis, the Karmel Committee’s major recommendation was the establishment of the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) – the vehicle that the Schools Commission designed in 1973 to channel supplementary funding to schools – both private and public – that were deemed to have high needs, especially those having ‘an abnormal share of socially disadvantaged children.’ (Schools Commission, 1986) The DSP was the Interim Committee’s response to the second of the three ‘serious deficiencies in Australia’s schools’ that had been identified in the Report, viz.
Gross inequalities among schools – not only in the provisions of resources but also in the opportunities they offer to boys and girls from varied backgrounds. (Karmel, 1973)

The Report recommended a series of funding programs through which resources were allocated on the basis of need. The Interim Committee also explicitly articulated the values that were to underpin its funding decisions:

The pursuit of equality in the sense of making, through schooling, the overall circumstances of children’s education as nearly equal as possible. (loc cit).

A further policy goal was expressed as the need to ensure, for all students,

...the attainment of minimum standards of competence for life in the modern democratic industrial society. (loc cit).

In relative terms, the DSP remains Australia’s most heavily funded specific purpose program focusing on educational disadvantage, especially as its introduction was accompanied by an increase in Commonwealth general purpose grants for the States - with consequent additional funding support for schools. For all that, the ‘special redemptive treatment’ it provided to enable disadvantaged (low-income) students to stay at school targeted just 12 per cent of all pupils. It gave no assistance at all to socially disadvantaged students leaving school early as a result of their inability to cope with the secondary school curriculum. (Spaull, 1979, 128.) The Commission’s programs providing special assistance for migrant, handicapped, rural and disadvantaged school students amounted to less than 20 per cent of total Schools Commission funding. (Spaull, 1979, 135.)

**Phase II: The Fraser Years, 1975-1983**

The election of the L-NCP Government saw the continuation of the DSP – but with reduced resources for the remedying of the effects of disadvantage - both for the specific program and across the board. It also saw the emergence of alternative programmatic approaches - ‘Choice and Diversity’ for example - which jostled the DSP and exposed the value bases of the emergent dominant advocacy coalition. The resulting conflict generated a split in that advocacy coalition
The new policy directions that would be followed by the Fraser Government were foreshadowed in the language of the L-NCP’s election policy (Party, 1974), which was long on ‘freedom of choice in schooling’, ‘quality and excellence’, ‘assessment’, ‘evaluation’ and ‘rationalisation’, and short on ‘equity’ and ‘disadvantage’. New models of efficiency (increasing output for the same cost or maintaining output for less cost) were imposed on all public sector agencies, and effectiveness (whether the objectives of a program or policy were being achieved) began to be audited. Notwithstanding his generous treatment of private schools, Fraser’s overall aim was to reduce inflation by reducing Commonwealth and State spending, and ‘almost all discussion of education under the Fraser government must be seen in this context’. (Spaull, 1979, 134.) According to Spaull, ‘Economic management and political revenge were to shape national education policy’. (Spaull, 1979, ibid)

Fraser appointed Senator John Carrick to the Cabinet with the portfolios of Education and Federal Affairs. From these twin vantage points, Carrick was able to wind back Labor’s education programs, diluting the emphasis on ‘disadvantage’ by collapsing the Schools Commission’s eight categories of need to just three – a portent of the ‘broad-banding’ of Commonwealth specific purpose equity programs by Education Minister John Dawkins in the 90s. Under the rubric of ‘New Federalism’, specific purpose grants were replaced with new general taxation reimbursements in an attempt to cut Labor-initiated programs and to persuade state governments to lift their own contributions.

In these ways, Fraser established a process for cutting-back expenditure on public schools (among other areas). In so doing, however, he was still saddled with a Schools Commission whose creation the L-NCP had opposed in Opposition, and whose membership was closely identified with the former Labor Government.

But the membership of statutory authorities cannot be changed overnight. Thus Carrick turned to the Australian Education Council (AEC) – a regular meeting of State Education Ministers and committees of their departmental and curriculum branch heads - as an alternative source of policy advice on schools to that of the Commission. This action initiated an advocacy coalition pattern that was to persist
for the next quarter of a century. Under the L-NCP Coalition, the dominant advocacy coalition became largely invisible. Formal consultations were manipulated according to considerations of political advantage – sometimes with the Schools Commission; more frequently in a time of Coalition ascendency at both Commonwealth and State levels, with a largely compliant Australian Education Council. Under Labor, as we shall see, more serious attempts were made to give formal recognition to the major stakeholders in the dominant advocacy coalition.

By 1977, as Treasury proceeded to substitute real reductions in Federal schools spending for the Government’s 1976 commitment to a 2 per cent real growth in Federal funding, the relationship between the Federal Minister and the Commission broke down completely. Clearly, the cuts were a major cause of the breakdown. The 19 per cent funding cut delivered to the DSP made it one of the biggest losers from the activities of Fraser’s ‘Razor Gang’.

But it was the Government’s handling of redistributive processes – under its ‘Choice and Diversity’ policy – that reopened the divisions that lurk perennially beneath Australia’s dual education system. The implementation of ‘Choice and Diversity’ required that $13.8 m of Federal funding should be transferred from government schools and joint programs to non-government schools. In vain did the Schools Commission argue for the retention of $5 m. out of a total of $570m for needy government schools. In the following year, the Minister rejected the School Commission’s submission for a 5 per cent increase in Federal spending on schools. The Government granted 1 per cent increase only, and insisted on a concomitant increase for non-government schools:

By the end of the Fraser era, the 24.5 per cent of students in private schools were receiving 56 per cent of the Schools Commission’s recurrent grant budget. (Smart, 1989, 307.)

Not surprisingly, over the seven years of the Fraser Government, there was a substantial enrolment ‘drift’ towards non-government schools and away from government schools.
When, in 1980, the Commission shifted its policy emphasis from ‘disadvantage’ to ‘choice and diversity’, Dr Jean Blackburn, its Deputy Chairperson, left the Commission on the grounds that the new emphasis would strengthen the advantage of the already privileged.  

In its final phase (until 1987), the Schools Commission was to survive ‘by becoming the major funding agency for private schools’ (Dudley 1995, 68.). Indeed, when Fraser replaced Ken McKinnon, the Labor-appointed Chair, with the Catholic sector’s Peter Tannock, he became known as the ‘Commissioner for Private Schools’. (Smart, 1989, 308) As the Fraser Government proceeded to reduce education spending from 9 per cent to 7 per cent of total federal outlays, the status of Federal schools policy plummeted from its zenith in the Whitlam years. Notwithstanding, Federal funding to schools remained at higher levels than in the 1960s and the TAFE sector received real increases. What became apparent in the Fraser years, as the ‘grand Karmel coalition’ fractured, was that Commonwealth funding had helped to produce a new dominant advocacy coalition at the national level – that of the private schools. Just how strong this new AC had become was to be an early surprise for the Hawke Labor Government.

Phase III: Hawke 1, 1983-1988

The Hawke Labor Government took office against a background of federal budget deficits, a deteriorating current account deficit and historically high youth unemployment. Its election victory was preceded by Labor’s accession to power also in Victoria. In that State, as will be outlined in Chapter 4, the Blackburn Report generated the most serious attempt ever made at State level to introduce systemic changes to secondary schooling. In NSW, however, no such radical initiative was launched.

Under Hawke’s characteristic blend of political pragmatism and economic rationalism, Labor policies at federal level moved substantially to the Right. (Smart, 1989, 304.) Hawke’s one attempt to redistribute education funding badly backfired. This was Education Minister Susan Ryan’s bid to claw-back from the top 41 elite independent schools an amount of $4m – out of a total Schools Commission budget of
$1221m. Just as it had done in 1973, the less well-endowed Catholic sector closed ranks with the elite independents to defeat the Ryan ‘Hit-List’. The result was the expensive consensus-style long-term funding settlement of 1984 that guaranteed funding to all private schools for the ensuing 8 years – mostly at higher levels:

For the second time in a decade, the ALP in government discovered that the wealthy private school lobby and the Catholic Bishops in combination are a formidable opposition. (Smart, 1989, 311.)

The DSP remained on the books, in part, to support the Hawke Government’s emphasis on ‘social justice’ in the lead-up to the 1990 election, and no doubt, also because it was small, narrowly targeted, and fiercely protected by teacher unions and parents from DSP schools. Connell thought the low profile of the DSP ‘may have helped the Program’s acceptance in very different school systems’ (Connell, 1991, 272) though the price paid for such obscurity was the lack of public discussion about funding levels and the perpetuation of the myth that ‘educational disadvantage’ was a minority problem.

In its denouement, the DSP was overshadowed by Susan Ryan’s own programmatic response to the problem of social disadvantage in education – the Participation and Equity Program. The PEP was launched to generate increased secondary participation rates and transition to tertiary education and training – albeit at the same time as universities and colleges of advanced education were being subjected to strong fiscal pressures:

Hawke’s costly schools policies – especially the 1984 state aid ‘settlement’ and programs to increase upper secondary retention – have been implemented at the expense of sensible funding increases for tertiary education. (Smart, 1989, 310.)

**The Participation and Equity Program (PEP)**

Contrary to the recommendation of a national review that reported in 1984, when Susan Ryan became Minister for Education, she chose to introduce a new, parallel, ‘social justice’ flagship - the Participation and Equity Program – rather than to expand the DS. Announcing the new program in August, 1983, the Minister described it as
‘...the centre-piece of the overall framework of youth policies’. The new emphasis on government’s concern with the increasing decline of the youth labour market gave the PEP a target population and purpose that overlapped, and for a short time supplanted, those of the DS,

When it was introduced, the PEP was larger than the DSP, its initial allocation being $74m as against $50m for the DS, (See Appendix 3:2). At about 1.5 per cent of the expenditure on schools by all Australian governments, this did not match the performance of the DSP a decade earlier. Nevertheless, it was to represent the highwater mark in the resourcing of programs ‘badged’ for disadvantage for the next two decades. The PEP received bi-partisan support and was supported by a broad-based coalition of senior bureaucrats at Federal and State levels, thus engaging the system in a way that had eluded the DS, TAFE Colleges and schools and schools and teachers were also part of this coalition.

The formal purposes of the PEP were laid out in the States Grants (Education Assistance – Participation and Equity) Act, 1983. They were:

... to encourage all young people to continue in education or training to the end of secondary schooling or its equivalent in TAFE, and to ensure that the education or training provided offered equal opportunity for all young people to develop their talents and abilities, thereby ensuring as far as possible equitable outcomes in education. (Elsworth, 1988)

Smart has demonstrated that, while not able to be attributed directly to the PEP, there appeared to be a spectacular improvement in certain educational outcomes over the period of the life of the Program. Accelerating a trend that had begun prior to the PEP, Year 12 retention rates rose from 35 per cent in 1982 to 45 per cent in 1984 and, by 1986, were close to 50 per cent. The numbers of unemployed 15–24 year olds fell by 76,000. At the same time, 56,000 additional 15-24 year olds were participating in full-time post-compulsory education, causing the chairman of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission to observe that ‘the expansion of education has been a more important factor in reducing unemployment of young people than has improvement in economic activity.’ (Smart, 1989, 313.) (This represented a significant overall in crease in educational opportunities, but, as observed in the
Introduction to the thesis, the continuing upward trend in the aggregate statistic of apparent retention rates masked deepening inequalities between groups of students).

Despite the fanfare surrounding its introduction, and despite the coalition of support, the PEP enjoyed only one year of full funding. Its funds were cut in the 1985 and 1986 budgets, and, when Susan Ryan left the Ministry in 1987, the PEP was chopped.

How was it that a program so popularly-based did not survive? The answers have been suggested by Fazal Rizvi and Stephen Kemmis, who, as radical academics at Deakin University, evaluated the PEP in 1986. (Rizvi and Kemmis, 1987). They identify as a major cause of the PEP’s demise, its ‘non-controllable’ objectives. Unlike the DSP, the PEP enjoyed bipartisan support. This enabled it to be formulated in mainstream terms. But it also meant that the Program was vulnerable to assaults from the high priests of mainstream discourse – the ‘bean-counters’. Some of the State level ‘bean – counters’ were soon alleging that the wide scope of the Program was providing the Commonwealth with opportunities for cost shifting – as hitherto unemployed youth were now staying in school! While not directly referring to the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Rizvi and Kemmis’ identification of a further, major reason for the PEP’s demise goes to the major tenet of the Advocacy Coalition Framework: the program’s supporting coalition was based on shared institutional interests, rather than shared values. (Rizvi and Kemmis, 1987, 309.)

In the event, the disappearance of the PEP did not seem to create much of an impact: it turned out to be just one in a long sequence of programs concerned with the linkages between retention rates and student employability. Its disappearance should probably more accurately be viewed as a change of badging, rather than as a significant policy shift.

In the meantime, the Schools Commission had been mortally wounded by the Choice and Diversity policy and ultimately had to be put down. ‘Swept into oblivion’ in October 1987, (Smart, 1989, 316) its abolition was seen by some as ‘payback’ from the Walsh/Dawkins camp for Ryan’s success, in 1985, in defeating the ‘Economic Rationalists’ on the issue of the reintroduction of university fees. (Smart, 1989, 89.)
But the Commission’s modus operandi and the small scale of its signature program had also made it vulnerable, for it was unable to demonstrate the large, quantifiable outcomes that, from 1984, were demanded by the new ‘value-for-money’ (input/output) audits of the Hawke Government’s own Quality of Education Review Committee. QERC had the task of ensuring that Federal inputs to education were generating specific outcomes – and it had an implicit brief to evaluate the role of the Schools Commission. (Smart, 1989, 314.) Ironically, the Review Committee was chaired by Professor Peter Karmel, Vice Chancellor of ANU and ‘father’ of the DS,

A final factor in the Minister’s decision to ‘kill-off’ the Schools Commission was his perception that it had failed to dispose of the state-aid issue in a quiet and uncontroversial manner in 1984. In 1988, the Commission was replaced by the Schools Council, an advisory council with no programmatic responsibilities – one of the initial quartet of such councils that comprised the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. 16

The separate fates of the PEP and the DSP carry some lessons for policymakers who would deal with educational disadvantage by means of specially-badged programs. The Commonwealth Government is most likely to establish a new, badged, program following the emergence of a new bipartisan concern – perhaps expressed in the Ministerial Council. The notion of ‘declining literacy levels’ is a case in point. The likelihood is strengthened if the government of the day can attach to the new program an ideological ‘spin’ that reinforces the values that underpin its formal policies. This was later done by Federal Education Minister, David Kemp, who substituted ‘literacy’ for ‘equity’ in Federal Education policy on the grounds that ‘literacy and numeracy measures are the most effective social justice measures’ 17 and the pre-condition for ‘educational equity’. (Thomson, 2002 168-77.) Changes of ideological focus can carry several simultaneous benefits for a government. In the case of the Kemp campaign on literacy, it diverted attention away from the impacts of the Federal government’s controversial resource allocation priorities, and highlighted instead the deficiencies of students and their ‘failing’ schools. It forced educators to ‘sign on’ to the new policy thrust, in order to avoid criticism that they were more interested in ‘welfare’ than in educational outcomes. And it locked them into a ‘measurement of results’ regime that had not been possible when their focus had been
the apparently less-easily measured impacts of the socio-economic context of schools and students.

The DSP survived for so long because its benefits were much more concentrated than those of the P.E.P. Indeed, the DSP conformed to the ‘distributed costs/concentrated benefits’ program-type described by James Wilson: those that ‘attract the support of the organizations representing the benefited group without incurring the opposition’ of other groups. (Wilson, 1973, 333.) Even when such a program has been initiated during the period of office of a government’s political opponents, it will be in a relatively strong position because if it has generated its own, tightly focused, if minority advocacy coalition. (As will be demonstrated in Part 3, the DSP’s penetration into the consciousness of school-based personnel was deep and long-lasting: 15 years after the program’s demise, its ‘recognition factor’ among school principals was stronger than for any other government program.) In part, this may have been the result of the program’s success in alerting the policy community to something that most teachers had always known:

The Disadvantaged Schools Program represented a powerful challenge to the then prevalent view that educational achievement was exclusively a function of individual ability and effort. It asserted that inequality in education was strongly linked with certain background characteristics and thus was socially constructed. (Schools Council, 1992, 1.)

Education policy analyst, Pat Thomson, herself a former Principal of a large, R-12 ‘DSP school’ outside central Adelaide, has recently summed up the Program in a way that will resonate with its many practitioners:

The strengths of the DSP were its whole schools focus, the latitude it allowed for local schools to determine their own priorities, the emphasis on research and the production of new professional knowledge and practice and its networked sense of moral purpose. (Thomson, 2002, 175.)

The DSP’s hierarchical consultative structure meant that its advocacy coalition was additionally firmly grounded in a number of localities of special importance to Labor
governments. It was therefore no accident that when the program finally was abolished, the deed was done by the Coalition Government. Indeed, as late as the end of this phase, the Leader of the Opposition, John Howard, was prepared to go much further in scaling back the Commonwealth role. In an ABC radio interview in, 1988, Mr. Howard asserted that the funding of schools should be solely a States responsibility: ‘What you’ve got to do is abolish the function altogether’. (Howard, 1988). As we shall see, by the time Mr. Howard took office eight years later, the Liberal position had become considerably more liberal, especially in relation to the funding of private schools, but not in its approach to the disadvantaged.

We can note in passing (though will return to the point in later chapters) that the advocacy coalition of a sub-field of a policy domain is usually more complex than is portrayed in the ACF literature – which typically focuses on the role of ACs in macro policy development. But often, (and this was certainly the case for the DSP), a macro-level advocacy coalition will have an elaborated structure that extends down to the grass roots. The DSP’s advocacy coalition became the opposition, minority coalition – especially in New South Wales.

One of the most useful contributions to our understanding of Commonwealth education policy in the four decades after 1960 has come from Marginson, with his tracing of the subtle changes in major policy goals and their relationship, in turn, to changes in the politico-economic context. (Marginson, 1997, 149.) By the time recession struck in 1981-83, Commonwealth policy-makers had lost their earlier, '60s, preoccupation with ‘equality of opportunity’ through education, and were no longer talking of education as an investment in human capital. . The recession focused them wonderfully on economic issues, and, following the example of Britain, the United States and the OECD, they began to view education as a dimension of economic policy, so that ‘All other objectives in education, including social equity, were joined to and subordinated to the primary goal of economic competitiveness. (Marginson, 1997, 152)
Phase IV: Hawke 2 and Keating, 1988-96

Figure 3.1 shows that, throughout the thirteen Hawke/Keating years, there was remarkable stability in Commonwealth schools funding, which rose gradually and steadily, and also that there was stability in the relative shares of the public and private sectors. The major changes that occurred, therefore, were of a policy and program nature, like the restructuring that has been discussed under Phase III. Phase IV saw the beginning of the process to broad-band and re-badge the Commonwealth’s specific purpose equity programs, as well as a renewed emphasis on ‘employability’ as a goal of secondary education – referred to by its critics as the ‘vocationalisation of the curriculum’.

The third Hawke election victory in 1988 provided Australia with its first taste of market liberalism in the education sector and a new era in education policy-making partnerships. In the place of management by specialist ‘retainers’, John Dawkins’ public sector reforms ushered in portable, ‘generalist’ managers, most of them trained in neo-classical economics – and on contracts, to boot. An ‘Employment, Education and Training’ mega-department was established.

The broadbanding of specific purpose Equity programs

In the wake of the Schools Commission, the Commonwealth had replaced the original version of the DSP with a range of specific purpose programs designed to deliver benefits to ‘equity target groups’ as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
<td>$97.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>$65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged Schools</td>
<td>$58.04m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at Risk</td>
<td>$5.0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Areas</td>
<td>$16.0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostels for Rural Students</td>
<td>$1.4m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The $244m that the Commonwealth was then spending on these 'equity' programs together with its 'Literacy and Learning' Program, represented but a small proportion of States' own efforts in these same areas. But, as in the days of the former DSP, schools valued the Commonwealth programs less for their dollar value than for the discretionary nature of the funding. Such funding could be used to mount small, school-based initiatives in their curriculum and teaching practice. These experiments were aimed at boosting the educational achievement of their most disadvantaged groups of students.

In November 1991, shortly before he became Treasurer and Kim Beazley replaced him as Federal Education Minister, John Dawkins instructed the Schools Council and his Department to provide him with joint advice on 'the shape and structure of a broadbanded equity program'. The stated reason for this move was to reduce even further, the detail of Commonwealth administrative controls in line with the devolutionary thrust of States' and Territories' own social justice programs. Dawkins' preference was to develop 'national framework' approaches (as distinct from detailed prescription) in areas such as the specification of goals for schooling, the development of curriculum statements and profiles, and the education of girls. The new program arrangements were to form the basis of 'national agreements for the pursuit of equity objectives'. (Schools Council, 1992, 2.) The new policy approach, informed by the research of Teese et al (1993a), encouraged school systems to be more sophisticated in their designation of 'disadvantaged targets'. Teese was critical of aggregated data that generated single, stand-alone indicators of educational disadvantage (such as 'retention rates' or 'non-English speaking background'). He encouraged policy-makers to disaggregate such statistics to discover how they intersected with other characteristics (such as 'parents' occupational group', 'language background', 'gender', 'type of school' and 'participation in the various areas of the curriculum') and to analyse these data by geographical area. In this way, the impact of the multiple characteristics of 'educational disadvantage' could be examined and their differential incidence across a State, region, or district could be mapped. Potentially this would render interventions more effective by enabling them to be tailored to the specific needs of schools and localities.
Central to the broadbanding exercise, therefore, was Dawkins’ determination that the new national frameworks and agreements would provide the basis for more effective monitoring of the outcomes of the Commonwealth’s specific expenditure on ‘equity’. In short, and to the continuing chagrin of DSP advocates, the Minister had been persuaded by criticisms that the former Program had been largely ‘unaccountable’. If those criticisms were simplistic, then it is equally simplistic to view Dawkins’ motives as being confined to the pursuit of new public management goals (such as ‘improved efficiency’) or to a naked desire to control the policy agenda. (Smart, 1990, 216.) Of course, his interest in ‘economic efficiency’ is well documented, as is his ‘determination that our education and training system should play a central role in responding to … major economic challenges’. (Marginson, 1997 153, 160 ff.). But his administrative and program reforms – including the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme - were also expected to increase access, especially to university. (Bowman, 1989, 161, 162-169.) His interest in educational disadvantage was genuine enough, but he was unimpressed by what he perceived to be the ‘waffly’ nature of conventional policy approaches to the achievement of equity. He was especially frustrated by the lack of useful data on whether or not the programs had made a difference to outcomes for the specified ‘target groups’. 18

In the event, the Government achieved a limited amount of broadbanding by specifying four broad expenditure areas:

Access (covering ESL, Special Education, Schools Support and Capital support for non-government schools);
Equity (incorporating the Disadvantaged Schools ‘component’ and the Country Areas component;
The National Priorities Element (including Students at Risk, Transition Support; a Non-Government component and Early Literacy; and An Incentives Element (that included Students with Disabilities).

The various targeted equity programs were now jointly referred to as the National Equity Program for Schools. (Department of Employment, 1996, 45-52.) A Taskforce had also recommended the adoption of an extensive monitoring framework,
but felt it politic to fold this into the Australian Educational Council’s troubled process for producing the Annual National Report on Schooling – a process that was firmly controlled by the state and territory systems and in which, at the time, the participation of non-government schools’ was optional. Subsequent events – described in Phase V below, were to show just how prescient Jean Blackburn’s advice had been, when she had warned the Schools Council on the dangers of broadbanding.

As it turned out, the School Council’s earnest consultations on the future of Commonwealth badged equity programs took place against a background of vigorous debate on a much wider question, viz. the economic role of Australian education and the potential importance of vocational education in the curriculum of the secondary school and beyond. That conversation was to be curtailed, and largely replaced – at national level, anyway – by the discourse on ‘choice’ that was ushered in by Federal Education Minister David Kemp, following the election of the Howard Government in 1996.

**Phase V: Howard, 1996 to the present**

As Figure 3.1 shows, in financial terms, Phase V resembled Phase II with the revival of the Commonwealth’s preference for private over public schools, leading to an overall increase in Commonwealth expenditure, but with the public schools not sharing proportionately in that increase.

From the point of view of policies on educational disadvantage, there was a genuinely new approach, as the term ‘disadvantage’ was all but expunged from the official policy lexicon, and concepts like ‘equity’ and ‘social justice’ given radically novel meanings. The DSP was replaced with the CLP – the Commonwealth Literacy Program – a move that generated great ambivalence in the education community. On the one hand, system administrators were relieved somewhat that, in contrast to their experience with the DSP, the national testing and benchmarking regime initiated by Dawkins had at least generated some tools that could now be harnessed to meet the CLC’s reporting requirements. (The growing acceptance of these requirements by school principals will be reported in Part 3). On the other hand, educators were affronted by the implication that they had not hitherto been interested in the literacy
outcomes of their students. Nor was the CLC the Commonwealth’s first venture into the realm of Literacy. In the 1994 Federal Budget, for example, Ross Free, then Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training had announced a 2-year allocation of $9 million to tackle the literacy problems of disadvantaged children from Kindergarten to Year 3. The major question in the minds of teachers and schools grappling with groups of disadvantaged students, however, was whether ‘equity’ is irreducible simply to ‘literacy’. (Thomson, 2002, 169-173)

David Kemp and the promotion of ‘choice and equity’

The really big initiative of the new Education Minister, David Kemp, was, however, to attempt to steer the funding of private schools in ways that furthered his unique conception of ‘equity’. This he did in a series of distinct stages.

Soon after the 1996 election, he abolished the New Schools Policy – the mechanism that had slowed (though not halted) the growth of new, non-government schools since its introduction by the second Hawke Government in 1985. This led to the subsequent proliferation of small, mostly fundamentalist religious schools, many of them in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

A further aspect of the ‘first stage strategy’ was the introduction of the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment (EBA). Using 1996 as the ‘benchmark’ year, the Commonwealth was able to claw back half the savings that allegedly accrued to a State when its enrolment increases were less in percentage terms than those in the State’s non-government schools. The benchmark enabled the cuts to be cumulative. According to Democrats Senator Lyn Allison, ‘The penalty for 1999 was double what was taken out in 1998 and 1997 combined... The EBA has taken $56 million out of Australian government schools in its (first) three years of operation’. (Allison, 2003) Its symbolic force – as the visible mechanism for diverting funds from the public to the private sector – was more powerful than its actual financial impact, although New South Wales suffered more than other States. In 1999, it sustained a cut of $16.9 million from a drop in enrolments of only 230 students. (ibid).
After a great deal of public criticism, the EBA was changed. The money subtracted from the Commonwealth's untied grants to public schools on the basis of enrolment shifts is now returned to the States - but with detailed instructions on how it should be spent! By 2005, public schools will 'lose' $185 million in untied grants in this way.

Kemp's second stage strategy, executed in 1999, was to replace the Education Resources Index - the old '12 categories of need' model for the funding of private schools - with the 'SES funding model'. The SES model ignored the socio-economic context of the school and its community, instead, rewarding a school for each student enrolled from a low SES suburb. This had the bizarre effect of ensuring that a school like Melbourne Grammar won more dollars from the enrolment of the son of a lawyer from low SES Sunshine than it did from the enrolment of the son of an unemployed cleaner from leafy Toorak. The SES model also had the politically awkward consequence for the Government of substantially increasing Commonwealth funding to privileged schools, although, as Kemp observed, the more disadvantaged the clientele of the school, the greater the funding it received. Recent evidence would suggest that Dr Kemp's reassurance has not assuaged even the non-government sector advocates of the poorest private schools:

...the new funding model has delivered significant funding resources to well-resourced non-government schools, but little or no increases to the poorer schools. For example, when the new model started in 2001, Worowa Aboriginal College received an increase of $23 a student, while Wesley College received an increase of $249, Haileybury $452 and Geelong Grammar $402. Most non-government schools in Melbourne's Western suburbs received no funding increases, as was the case for most non-government schools in country Victoria and most of the state's Jewish schools. (Tony Keenan, secretary, Victorian Independent Education Union, 'The Age' 16.6.03, 11.)

In 1998, Kemp raised the funding status of all Catholic schools to the second 'most needy' ERI category: Category 11. Interestingly, he was not subsequently able to persuade the Catholic system of the merit of his SES system, so a separate package was negotiated.

An ideologue is someone whose vision is so far removed from reality that he or she can disengage from the common task of policy-makers everywhere, viz. to
balance competing principles. Instead, he or she can take political action to favour some interests, and punish others, solely on the grounds that they represent – or oppose – the Utopia to which the ideologue is attached. When such an ideologue occupies a ministerial position, he is most likely to favour an invisible dominant advocacy coalition which shares his values without having to justify them in public.

On this understanding of the term, David Kemp is an ideologue. He does not believe that the provision of schooling is a proper function for government: ‘Parents must have the opportunity to discover the schooling which best reflects their particular value priorities and this will almost certainly mean a school system based on independently run schools’. (Kemp, 1986, 53.) As Minister, Kemp has had to confront the fact that two thirds of Australian families do not behave in ways that are consistent with his beliefs. In these circumstances, he has adopted the policy stance of taking whatever politically feasible measures he can to advance private schools over public. When the private schools have been performing poorly in comparison with their public counterparts – as in the provision of vocational education - he has chosen to ignore their performance, and provide funding on a per student basis, in the hope that laggards might lift their game. In instances where the private schools have been seemingly outperforming their public counterparts, as in growth in enrolments, he has decided to base funding on performance, as with the EBA. Critics of this preferential treatment are demonised as ‘a self-appointed elite which has adopted a radical position and which believes that it alone possesses true understanding of social processes’. (Kemp, 1986, 53.)

When it comes to the fundamental political claim for public schooling – that it is best placed to inculcate the values needed to ensure a consensual core to Australian civic culture - Kemp adopts a Panglossian stance: ‘In a nation which is not already deeply divided..., there is every likelihood that a system of schooling which is responsive to parental values will adequately perpetuate the bases of social unity’ (Kemp, 1986, 55.). As he busily went about the work of encouraging the proliferation of fundamentalist and creationist schools, Dr Kemp showed no signs of being aware that he might be introducing the deep divisions that he claimed to be wishing to avoid.
For this ideologue-in-office, equity was to be achieved via the reform of the favoured private sector. The establishment of low-fee private schools (almost all of them religious) in areas of low socio-economic status was the twin strategy to the introduction of his SES-based funding model. Of the latter measure, Dr Kemp claimed that ‘schools which extend their services to lower income communities will benefit financially’. (Kemp, 1999, 2.) While this was true, important questions were left unanswered. Leaving aside the impact of his privatisation strategies on the more fully-patronised public system, how much was Dr Kemp’s principle of equity within the private schools sector compromised by his endorsement of the parallel principle that all schools, no matter how wealthy, are entitled to a share of Commonwealth funding?

**Dominant Advocacy Coalitions in the Five Phases**

The five phases discussed above provide the opportunity to compare Federal Coalition and ALP governments on a further dimension of importance to this thesis, viz: the visibility – or otherwise – of the dominant advocacy coalition. It does seem that in periods of Labor government, the public face of the dominant school advocacy coalition has been visible, and usually has appeared in a loose coalition with other national interests, such as those representing public and Catholic schools. This had also been the case during the Fraser Coalition years, thanks to the survival of the Schools Commission. For a quarter of a century before David Kemp became Federal Education Minister, governments were concerned to receive the full range of views from the schools sector. They did not always take the advice they were given, but they wanted to have it. The Howard years have been very different. As a result, the private school advocacy coalition has not evaporated, but it has receded into the background from where it proffers confidential advice to the Minister.

Dudley & Vidovich argue that Dawkins’ dismantling of the education commissions (the Schools Commission and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission) after 1987 constituted ‘a fundamental change, not confined to education alone, in the practices of administration and the formulation of policy within Australian government.’ (Dudley, 1995, 34.) Yet while Dawkins did indeed
move programmatic responsibilities back into his Department, (where, it might be argued by admirers of the Westminster system, they more properly resided), he nevertheless retained a series of advisory councils within the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. Of the five NBEET Councils, only the Australian Research Council retained responsibility for the allocation of public funding. But the others (the Higher Education Council; the Employment and Skills Formation Council; the Australian Language and Literacy Council and the Schools Council, with the female members of the other Councils separately constituting a Women’s Education, Employment and Training Advisory Group) conducted consultations, commissioned research, and produced advice to the Minister that had to be tabled in the Parliament. Importantly, they were able to provide him with alternative views to those received from his Department and political advisers.

When he came to office in 1996, Dr Kemp lost no time in dismantling this group of external advisory mechanisms, and for the duration of his Education Ministry, did not find it necessary to replace any of them. (The single exception was the ARC, which survives to distribute research funding). The launch of the new SES funding model illustrated the new modus operandi. The Minister stated (Kemp, 1999) that he had had active consultations with the schools of the independent sector on the development of the new model. No mention was made of consultation with the Catholic sector (which admittedly had decided to opt out) and, despite the dramatic budgetary impact of the new model on government schools, the public sector was totally excluded from the discussions. The only remaining standing source of debate and negotiation at the national level – MCEETYA – (the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs) had totally changed its political complexion over the past six years; and the Ministerial members of the currently all-ALP body have shown little interest in trying to inhibit their Federal counterparts. It is this ever-changing political nature of this Federal institution which has prevented it acting as the foundation for a national, public education, advocacy coalition. Without such a foundation, the other diverse public education interests could never succeed in creating a coalition, because the State and Territory Ministerial members of MCEETYA are, after all, the providers of public education.
Having traced the development of programs over the five phases, I am now in a position to pull the argument together under my two major thematic heads: Governance and Curriculum.

**Governance**

The centralisation of authority over schooling is a much more significant issue at the level of the States than at Commonwealth level. Nevertheless, there are historical differences to be observed in the degree to which ALP and Coalition Commonwealth governments have tried to control the education policy agenda at the national level. ALP governments have appeared to favour categorical targeted grants, often implemented – as was the DSP – via submission-based funding. Coalition governments typically alleged that targeted programs are unduly centralistic, and that it is preferable for funding bodies to support largely untied global budgets at both the State and school level. With the rise of ‘political management’ in the decade of the 90s (Halligan and Power, 1992), however, these partisan differences have become more blurred.

Successive Commonwealth governments – irrespective of their party complexion – have tried to impose accountability by insisting on the collection of outcomes data. So far, these accountability exercises have been intended to satisfy managerial norms, as does the Commonwealth Literacy Program, the successor to the DSP. (The growing acceptance of these centralised requirements by state administrators and schools will be discussed in Part 3) The new accountability methodologies are still focussed outwards and upwards - on the need for the funding authority to demonstrate that it is reaching its own benchmarks and is confident that Commonwealth dollars are being spent on the purposes for which they were specified. We seem still, though, to be a fair distance from client-centred accountability – in which aggregate outcomes statistics can be unpicked to reveal variations between and within social groups and locations, so as to make them the focus of supportive intervention.

The ’eighties will be remembered by educational historians as a time of policy debate between traditional educationalists and the new education commentators– the economists, business sector representatives and the media who now were invited to
the policy table. One consequence of this ferment was the central imposition of
tradical Right, structural changes to school governance. The Reagan administration in
the United States had been warned in such reports as Nation at Risk (1983) that, in the
battle against the ‘rising tide of mediocrity’ public schooling would have to be
drastically re-oriented via market reforms: the devolution of administrative (though
not curriculum) decision-making; subjecting schools to competition for enrolments;
entrepreneurial school leaders, and performance management. The British system
was under similar pressure, and in the international education policy community,
‘Reaganism’ and ‘Thatcherism’ became code for the imposition of corporate reforms
and expenditure cuts. In the meantime, the OECD was exercising its influence
towards ‘the fusion of education and economic policy’ and the specification of the
‘development of human capital’ as a major goal of education. (Marginson, 1997,
Chapt. 7.) A second consequence of the international debate was the most serious
attempt yet by school reformers to gain equal parity in the school curriculum as
between the academic curriculum and practical skills.

Inevitably, this international conversation about the role and future of public
educating reached Australia. As in the US, Britain and New Zealand, new faces could
be seen at the education policy table. By the mid 80’s, schools educators were
becoming used to pronouncements on their performance from bodies such as the
Business Council (which, in a partnership with the Australian Vice Chancellors’
Committee, formed the Business-Higher Education Round Table), the Committee for
the Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), the Economic Policy Advisory
Committee (EPAC) and the Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC).
(Marginson, 1997, 158 ff.)

**Curriculum**

In 1986, the Federal Government sponsored a joint Australian Council of
Trade Unions and Trade Development Council mission to Europe. The report that
resulted, Australia Reconstructed, contained joint statements by the ACTU and
employers on the need for Australia to improve its deficient skills base. Full-time
teenage employment had dropped from 390,000 in 1990 to 260,000 in 1995 and the
Commonwealth by then was spending more on labour market programs than on
higher education and TAFE combined. The accompanying rise in expenditure on transfer programs – student assistance and unemployment benefits – caused the 1985 (Kirby) Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs to recommend a strengthened emphasis on employment-related education programs, especially those that taught the ‘generic’, transferable skills seen to be important in the growing services industry sector. In the same year, the Quality Education Review Committee (QERC) (again chaired by the ubiquitous Peter Karmel) identified five ‘competencies’ necessary for participation in adult society and recommended closer links between school and work. In so doing, it initiated a debate around ‘competency-based’ education.

The Vocational Education Revolution: broadening the curriculum to serve the economy and reduce educational disadvantage

The first national report to deal directly with the controversial issue of vocationally-oriented curriculum reform in secondary schools was that on Young People’s Participation in Education and Training, a review established by the Australian Education Council in 1991 (and thereafter always referred to by the name of its chairperson, Brian Finn – Chairman of IBM Australia). Not only did the Finn Review develop its own set of six work-related ‘key areas of competence’ (language and communication, mathematics, scientific and technological understanding, cultural understanding, problem-solving and ‘personal and interpersonal’ relations). This was not just a case of ‘decanting old wine into new bottles’. Now, the focus was to be not just on the acquisition of academic knowledge, but also on the demonstration of competence. The Review also established targets (‘the Finn targets’) for the participation of young people in education and training and for levels of attainment. The Finn Review’s main recommendation – oft-quoted and never achieved – was that by the year 2001, 95 per cent of nineteen year olds should have completed Year 12 or an initial post-school qualification, or be participating in education and training. (Finn, 1991). At the time, this target was not quite as heroic as it now seems, given that Year 12 retention had increased from 36 per cent in 1983 to 71 per cent in 1991, the year of the Review. Notwithstanding these impressive aggregate statistics, there was wide variation in retention and other education outcomes between and within States. So the Education and Training Guarantee was to be the mechanism for
ensuring that, after they had completed Year 10, all young people under the age of twenty years would be assured of a place in schools or TAFE for two full-time or three part-time years. (Refer Appendix 3.3). Dudley and Vidovich observe that the recommendations were accepted by the AEC and also endorsed by business and trade union interests, 'as might be expected given the composition of the committee'. (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995, 163) To support this conclusion, the authors extracted, from my own description of the Finn Review (of which I was a member), the phrase, 'a committee of business people' (though omitted the remainder of my description, viz. that '...it included a trade unionist and state and federal officials from schools education and TAFE systems from around the country'). (Morrow, 1991, 41).

The second was the Report on the Australian Vocational Certificate and Training System. Released in March 1992, this second inquiry emanated from the Employment and Skills Formation Council (EFSC) of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) which was chaired by Laurie Carmichael, former assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and an author of Australia Reconstructed, the unions’ 1987 blueprint for developing a more skilled and flexible workforce through the fundamental restructuring of industrial awards. He was also the architect of the incomes Accord – the foundation for the economic strategy of the Hawke Government. Carmichael’s educational reform project was to ensure that the education and training system properly prepared young people for contemporary changes in work organisation – changes that he maintained were as important as was the ending of serfdom under feudalism: ‘I look on the current changes - in skill formation, work process, education requirement(s), the convergence of general and vocational education, the emergence of personal relationship(s) (as an element of) skill requirements, a flattening of managerial structures, the devolution of managerial skills to the skilled workforce - as a capitalist restructure but an extremely progressive one. I look upon the replacement of a human robot by a real robot as an extremely liberating force’. (Bowman, 1989, 183)

The AVCTS Report recommended the introduction of a new entry-level training system that extended the Finn notion of competencies to industry-established skill standards that were designed to become ‘the “currency” of credentials, in the
modernisation of articulation, pathways and credit transfer between TAFE, schools and higher education'. (Marginson, 1997, 174.)

The Mayer Committee, also established in 1991 by the AEC and MOVEET (the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training), contributed the final report in this trio of Commonwealth-led explorations of new approaches. Mayer was another business sector Chair: the former Chief Executive Officer of the National Mutual Insurance Group and Chair of the Business/Higher Education Round Table. The particular task of his Committee was to refine the 'Finn competencies' as the basis for their inclusion in schools education curriculum. Its refinement saw the identification of 'key competency strands' of collecting, analysing and organising ideas and information; expressing ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; solving problems; and using technology. (Mayer, 1992)

The debate around employment-related curriculum temporarily played havoc with the some elements in advocacy coalitions, creating some strange bedfellows. The total opposition to 'neo-vocationalism' (Welch, 1996, 73) from what Marginson calls 'the cultural conservatives of the New Right' (some of the prestigious universities, for example, and the Australian Council for Educational Standards) was not unexpected. They argued that education should simply be an end in itself, free of specified requirements from either industry or government. That this group should perceive their role to be the protection of the (competitive) liberal arts curriculum from contamination by employment-related content and methods of assessment and 'lowest common denominator' standards (and no doubt, students) was entirely predictable. What was less predictable was that their ranks should be swelled by educators crossing the floor from the Left, led by education faculty academics:

Teachers and academics were the source of the strongest negative reactions to Commonwealth-inspired policy directions in the compulsory sector, as they were in post-compulsory and higher education. (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995, 159.)

The dissidents objected to John Dawkins' assertion of a 'leadership' role for the Commonwealth in education policy (a role they preferred to describe as 'control').
They were critical of the new emphasis on outcomes and of what they perceived as a shift of priority from equity to efficiency. But their most vitriolic attacks were reserved for changes which, to them, signalled a move of focus from general education to an increased vocational orientation, especially for 15 to 19 year olds—the students in the post-compulsory years:

The discourse of training is increasingly colonising education at the post-compulsory level, particularly through the notion of competencies. (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995, 161)

Some of the objections were couched in terms of contests between 'high status' and 'low status' knowledge, with critics from the Left, in particular, being justifiably concerned 'to ensure that working-class kids' access to university was not cut off.'

It was not always clear that the critics of 'neo-vocationalism' acknowledged the equity dimensions of the new thrust for the curriculum of the upper years of schooling to become more 'employment-relevant'. As the full-time teenage labour market declined, young people had little option but to try to stay on at school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathways of School Leavers in 1992</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in degree course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolled in other Further Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Schools Council, 1995, 3.)

As shown in Table 3., Stephen Lamb's analysis of data from DEET's Australian Youth Survey revealed the disadvantages suffered by early school leavers. Meanwhile, the full-time adult labour market had become characterised by job mobility and career change. The 'vocational modernisers' (Marginson, 1997, 178) believed that the implication for schools was clear. They had to 'provide broad-based vocational programs and higher levels of general education.' (NBEET, 1994, 2.). In other words, diversification was needed as well as improvement. The push for diversification could justifiably be interpreted as bending the education system to the needs of the economy. But it also carried strong equity dimensions. Data collected
by Teese et al demonstrated that in 1992, Year 12 students from intermediate or lower socio-economic status backgrounds in Melbourne’s south-eastern suburbs were twice as likely to be unemployed on leaving school as those from higher status backgrounds. Just over a third of students from the families of manual workers or sales and clerical workers were offered a place in university compared to 55 per cent from professional and managerial homes. Nor was this group saved by TAFE. Nearly as many high status students entered TAFE as did lower status students: 10 per cent as against 13 per cent. (Teese, 1993b).

In its December 1994 Report to the Minister, the Schools Council pointed out that achieving diversification would involve system-level structural changes to achieve smoother articulation between the various qualifications, appropriate professional development for school teachers, and – as always – more finely grained data on students participation and attainment. But, to the disapproval of defenders of the traditional upper school curriculum from both the Right and the Left, most of its recommendations involved changes to the curriculum in the direction of improving students’ vocational literacy and preparedness. As Don Anderson observed, a ‘utilitarian curriculum’ was part of the price that education has paid for greater equality of access. (Cited in Marginson, 1997, 176.)

Simon Marginson reports the results of the debate between the ‘vocationalisers’ and the defenders of the liberal arts curriculum:

On the question of whether education should be accountable to vocational purposes, the vocational ‘modernisers’ prevailed. Here governments were able to secure their objectives by indirect means. By incorporating business into programs and policies, and by introducing corporate reform and marketisation, strategies supported by the cultural conservatives, governments were able to insert vocational imperatives which if imposed more directly, would have been strongly opposed. (Marginson, 1997, 178.)

Notwithstanding, in 2002, 11 years after the publication of the Finn Review, just 44 per cent of Australian upper secondary school students (n=185,000) were enrolled in VET in Schools courses – those that are undertaken as part of a senior secondary certificate and which provide credit towards a qualification recognised within the Australian Qualification Framework. The figure represents a 28 per cent rise since
1966: evidence of a steady – but slow - increase in student demand for such courses. (MCEETYA, 2003, 2.)

Obviously, achieving better outcomes for the majority of upper secondary students who do not enter university straight from school is not simply a matter of introducing them to vocational studies. It requires the re-vamping of the ‘general’ education curriculum as well – in ways that make it more ‘teachable’ and more ‘learnable’. It requires a freeing up of the senior school curriculum from its still dominant purpose of choosing candidates for university entrance. This in turn requires the reform of assessment and accreditation processes. Teese has graphically revealed the injustices that were visited on matriculation candidates by the traditional assessment regime with its ‘all care; no responsibility’ examiners, (Teese, 2000, 12 ff) and its conversion of ‘a schedule of subjects approved by universities for matriculation into a hierarchical system of competitive advantage.’ (Teese, 2003b, 17.) He deplores the approach that separates curriculum control from pedagogical control, ensuring that the designers of curriculum are unaware of the characteristics of the learners. These issues were to be dramatically highlighted in the debate over post-compulsory curriculum reform in Victoria in the early 1990s – and in all debates about ‘content-centred’ vs. ‘student-centred curriculum’, and ‘knowledge’ vs. ‘process’. In fact, the preconditions for raising up the most disadvantaged students go beyond the curriculum. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, they include – for these groups of students - easy access to a comprehensive panoply of health and welfare supports. (Thomson, 2002, 55 ff.).

Vocational preparation has been described by its critics as ‘the master discourse’, who cast doubt on the claim, in part supported by this thesis, that it is ‘a zone where economic and social goals (meet)’. (Marginson, 1997 (a), 176.) The majority of the school principals interviewed for the thesis believed that vocational studies are keeping growing numbers of students in school. The thesis does not explore the extent to which this trend simply defers disappointment in a weak job market. But it is counter-intuitive to hold that young people who might otherwise join the ranks of unqualified early school leavers would not benefit from acquiring practical knowledge and skills. Nor should the ‘protectors of the culture’ be too
anxious. As Marginson points out, economic objectives did not subsume cultural objectives.

The production of culturally competent individuals remained central to the goals of education programs. What had changed was that cultural competence was now infused with economic content, so the tasks of education included the formation of market economic sensibilities ('flexibility', 'responsiveness'); and outcomes were now defined not only by the judgements of professional educators, but the needs of employers'. (Marginson, 1997, 176.)

Conclusion

It is probably fair to describe Gough Whitlam as the first Australian political leader to be seriously interested in comprehensive policy development on schooling. Under his leadership, governments tried, for the first time, to be proactive in meeting the needs of schools with concentrations of socially disadvantaged students. As education rapidly became the fastest growing component of the public sector, a national discourse began on the question of which values should underpin the new policies. It was during the period of the Whitlam Government that, for the first time, the core value of a normally opposing advocacy coalition — representing 'equity interests' — became temporarily prominent in education policy making.

It would be satisfying to be able to claim that the outcomes from the burst of equity-focused policy making during the Whitlam years were reflected in the rising retention rates and declining unemployment rates at the end of the period. But, considering the problematic nature of these statistics as measures of educational outcomes and the multiplicity of factors that contribute to the two phenomena, any conclusions must be very tentative. Moreover, notwithstanding the explicit 'equity' brief that had been given to the Schools Commission, its processes did not, in the end, lead to a substantially fairer system. According to at least one of their critics, they led to 'rather thoughtless hand-outs to the rich'.

Significant differences in overall educational outcomes for this period would not have been expected between NSW and Victoria because the flow of resources meant that those governments did not have to make hard choices between different
policy approaches. In such a favourable climate, the impact of differences in the two states’ political cultures would have been expected to lie dormant.

Once the most glaringly obvious resource gaps had been filled, the question of priorities for Commonwealth schools funds began to be contested. Developments described in this chapter raised questions about the precise nature of the Commonwealth’s role in schools education. Was it to be one of progressively upgrading schools in the most disadvantaged areas? Or was the national government to continue as the source of substantial funds for the private system, even though the worst resource problems had been solved? Put another way, Commonwealth schools funding could focus on one of two possible directions: it could continue to target ‘need’ – as argued by the two State opposition ‘equity and disadvantage’ advocacy coalitions, or it could focus on ‘choice and diversity’. The latter course was congenial to the conservative dominant advocacy coalitions in the three jurisdictions, who argued that, now that the playing field had been levelled, choices could be opened up, For progressives, even though the most blatant resource gaps had been filled, other forms of disadvantage remained, especially those caused by different groups of students making differential use of the secondary curriculum – a situation that exacerbated already widely divergent student outcomes.

When Commonwealth budgetary commitments over the entire period are examined, an interesting story emerges. After a brief surge in total outlays and in the relative share of those outlays going to public schools systems, the Fraser years introduced a public:private expenditure pattern which survived largely unscathed for the rest of the century. The only discernible influence of ideology was this: that Coalition governments tended to increase the share of the cake going to private schools, although this share never reverted to the proportion that it had assumed in the early pre-Whitlam years. The Hawke and Keating governments did no more than arrest that trend, so that the share of Commonwealth outlays going to public schools was the same in 1996 as it had been in 1983. Since the advent to power of the Howard government, the increase in the share of private schools has resumed, albeit with a stronger rhetoric on equity within the funding of the private sector.
An important part of the reason for this striking stability in the pattern of budget allocations over two decades was that the coalition of interests visible in the membership of both the Schools Commission and the Schools Council, remained much the same over the entire period. There was admittedly a tendency under Hawke and Keating for businessmen and union officials to be more prominent than they had been under either Whitlam or Fraser, but this gradual change of emphasis was hardly reflective of a major paradigm shift.

In ACF terms, then, the story of the past three decades reads as follows. In the Whitlam years, there was general agreement that the vastly expanded pool of Commonwealth funding should flow to remedy the greatest areas of deprivation. The ‘grand coalition’ of the Karmel years could cite the Coleman orthodoxy to justify this priority. With the reduction in funding of the mid 1970s, this grand coalition began to fracture, with a minority element hiving off—symbolised most dramatically by the resignation of Blackburn from the Schools Commission. However, as long as the Commission retained its responsibilities for making public budgetary recommendations, the rest of the grand coalition—and especially representatives of the Independent and the Catholic systemic schools—remained publicly visible.

With the replacement of the Commission by the Schools Council, which lacked budgetary clout, the involvement of these interests waned, but did not disappear completely.

Following the abolition of the Schools Council by the Howard government, the dominant advocacy coalition receded into the background. Representatives of the States were consulted by the Commonwealth through MCEETYA, and even after that body became dominated in the late 1990s by the ALP, a funding policy of ‘steady as she goes’ largely prevailed. Within the private sector, representatives of the Catholic systemic schools struck their own funding deals with the Commonwealth, while the Minister of the day concentrated his attention largely on consultations with representatives of the non-Catholic private schools. It remains to be seen how long the dominant Advocacy Coalition will continue its relatively latent existence. The Commonwealth Minister of the day has to continue to consult the major interests in the subsystem, and there would be considerable advantages in re-establishing a formal
mechanism to consult and to provide coordinated advice on Commonwealth policies and programs ‘across the board’.

The change of focus in public policy from physical resources to the curriculum inevitably shifted the locus of policy development from the Commonwealth to State and Territory level because, in the area of the curriculum, there were very limited things that the Commonwealth could do. This shift was beautifully symbolised by the trajectory of Jean Blackburn, who, in 1980, when the Schools Commission embraced a policy of ‘choice and diversity’, resigned her commission and moved to a new state Labor Government. In Victoria, she headed the most serious review of post-compulsory curriculum that had been attempted to date in any part of the country. That inquiry will figure prominently in the next Chapter.
## Appendix 3.1: Overlapping concerns in Karmel's two Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived deficiencies in the existing system:</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate pre-school provision.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Generally inadequate resources (human and material).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of inequalities 'within the provision of apparently equal opportunities'.</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Gross inequalities' in resources and opportunities offered to students from different backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Quality to be improved'.</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Quality of education leaves much to be desired'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curricula that ignored students' individual differences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Stated Goals:</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Equality of educational opportunities'</td>
<td>Non-authoritarian approach to education; concern for the individual child.</td>
<td>'Equality of opportunity' and 'greater equality of outcomes': aim is 'the pursuit of equality in the sense of making, through schooling, the overall circumstances of children's education as nearly equal as possible'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'Schooling as a way of life as well as preparation for life'. (ie. Students entitled to enjoy their school experience).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Priority for compensation:</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Socially disadvantaged groups' (incl. Aborigines and some migrant groups); Schools in disadvantaged localities.</td>
<td>'Handicapped children'; Pre-school for 'poorer socio-economic areas'; Country schools.</td>
<td>Students from 'populations that suffer grave socio-economic disadvantage'. 'Schools with fewer real resources have greater needs than those with more'. Schools with concentrations of disadvantaged Handicapped children;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards:</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>'Attainment of minimum acceptable standards of competence for life in the modern democratic industrial society' with supplementation for schools below the standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity:</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of educational institutions desirable. Experimentation with organizational forms, curricula, teaching methods to be encouraged.</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Diversity of structures, curricula and teaching methods'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decentralisation and devolution.</th>
<th>South Australia 1971</th>
<th>Interim Committee, Schools Commission, 1973</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eg. A series of advisory bodies recommended to 'diffuse decision-making'.</td>
<td></td>
<td>'Devolution, as far as practicable, of decisions to those working in or with the schools – teachers, pupils, parents, local community'. Critical of 'authoritarian and hierarchical atmosphere' of some schools and systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3.2: Countering social disadvantage in schooling: two Commonwealth Programs compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DSP</th>
<th>PEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dates</strong></td>
<td>1974-1996 (Commonwealth)</td>
<td>1984-1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Continues in NSW until the present, albeit recently re-badged as a Priority Schools Program)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Levels of funding</strong></td>
<td>In 1974, $50 m. (88% to public schools). In 1992, $58m</td>
<td>In 1984, $74m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Over the life of the program, approximately 2-3% of federal government expenditure on schools) (Dudley 1989: 50)</td>
<td>(About 3% of federal government outlays on schooling) (Smart 1989: 312)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prime purpose</strong></td>
<td>Compensating schools with high proportions of socially disadvantaged students. Reforming the relationship between schools and poor communities.</td>
<td>Increasing retention rates through curriculum reform and increased participation. Raising literacy, numeracy standards. Improved co-operation between schools and TAFE. (W.F. Connell 1993 345-6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target group</strong></td>
<td>Bottom 14% of students, rising to bottom 16% under the Hawke Labor Government. Public and private.; primary and secondary schools. (Connell 1993: 503)</td>
<td>Bottom 40% of students - virtually all of whom were in public schools. 40% of all secondary schools, plus a TEAC-administered TAFE stream. (Smart 1989: 312) Broader, less-targeted constituency than for DS,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Schools resources (specialist and additional teachers, consultants, teachers' aides.) Enrichment Activities for students (personal development, school camps, encouragement of individual talent). (Connell, 1993: 502)</td>
<td>Projects, devised in each participating school/TAFE to counter class, gender, cultural, language disadvantages. Alternative, employment-related Year 12 curriculum and assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchical, highly decentralised arrangements of system-level, regional, district and school-based committees with tripartite (teacher/parent/system) representation. Submission-based process.</td>
<td>Departmental Committee allocated direct grants: no submission process. State ministers and their departments participated. Outcomes data was supplied as required by the public service (eg. For Program Budgeting in Victoria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Coalition</strong></td>
<td>Left-inclined teachers, Academics, parents, activists. (Connell: 90.</td>
<td>Teachers, parents, Ministers, administrators. Academics more equivocal (eg. Rizvi &amp; Kemmis at Deakin).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3.3: The Interpretive Framework of this Thesis Subjected to a Provisional Test: A Critique of the Dudley and Vidovich Interpretation

The ultimate assessment of the merits of the interpretive framework developed in this thesis must await the concluding Chapter 9. In the meantime, it is possible to ‘benchmark’ the argument in this Chapter against the standard reference for Commonwealth policymaking on schools in modern times – the ACER- published study by Dudley and Vidovich (1995).

The Dudley and Vidovich interpretation divides the period 1973 – 1995 into two phases:

1973 – 1987:
The years of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, when policy making was dominated by educators and marked by a concern for the learning needs of concentrations of disadvantaged students.

Post 1987:
As the ideology of economic rationalism became dominant, there was a radical shift in the make-up of the coalition of policy-makers. Ministers, business sector representatives and union officials began to occupy centre stage, with the result that vocational education and training began to displace earlier educational priorities.

Policy-making was still motivated by concerns about equity but also by different views of how best to achieve it. Education policy was focused on economic goals, to be sure, but it is questionable as to whether government was the driver here or whether policy was simply recognising the inescapable realities – the collapse of the full-time labour market for unqualified youth, and rising long term unemployment-higher among the under-educated.

The demise of the Schools Commission did not mean the complete disappearance of equity goals in public policy. Yet it can be argued that a more
revealing guide to the motivation of national governments than the scrapping of programs that have ‘disadvantage’ in their title is the pattern of per capita expenditure on schooling – especially when those data are disaggregated into expenditure on public and private schools. (Bowman, 1989, 183)

A considerable difficulty with the Dudley and Vidovich interpretation is that it relies on different forms of evidence in support of its definition of the two phases. For the first phase it relies heavily on analyses of the worthy rhetoric of the Schools Commission. Other than noting at one stage (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995, 68) that the Commission’s Disadvantaged Schools Program from the outset received only a small proportion of the Commission’s budgetary allocations, Dudley and Vidovich do not attempt a serious examination of the effects of this worthy rhetoric on resource allocations. To the extent that the Commission departed from its adherence to ‘Karmel principles’ after the first couple of years, they are content to note this in passing and attribute it – without any supporting evidence – to the ‘political appointments’ that the Fraser government was alleged to have made to its board (Dudley and Vidovich, 1995, 77.)

When they come to the post 1987 phase, Dudley and Vidovich restrict themselves to their own ideological tenets, and allege that the reforms initiated by Minister Dawkins were no more than the application of the precepts of economic rationalism to education. The entire movement towards competency-based education and training they summarily dismissed as a manifestation of this apparently pernicious phenomenon.
Although James Coleman continued writing during the third of a century after the appearance of his seminal report until his death in 1997, his further conclusions were remarkably consistent with his original findings. It is therefore legitimate to present a Coleman 'paradigm' of inequality in schooling incorporating several of the insights that he provided over the years.

James Coleman produced three major reports on education - in 1966, 1975 and 1981. These are known, in the literature, as Coleman I, Coleman II and Coleman III. Coleman II dealt with school desegregation and Coleman III, a comparison of the performance of public and private schools. Because of its focus on Australian researchers’ developing interest in educational inequality following the release of Coleman I, the thesis deals only with this first Report.

In the discussion of Coleman's work, the thesis uses the same terminology to describe the predominant racial and ethnic groups in the US as is used in the Report, which explains that, 'These terms of identification are not used in the anthropological sense, but reflect social categories by which people in the United States identify themselves and are identified by others.'

The writings of Paul Chubb and Terry Moe have been the most widely discussed work that has fallen out of the Coleman paradigm. However, these writings, like those of an Australian follower, Mark Latham, (2001) are of little relevance to the concerns of this thesis because they do not seriously address issues of educational disadvantage, being content with a Horatio Alger approach to the educational barriers faced by disadvantaged students.

This is another example of the perennial tension in modern conservative movements between liberal, often libertarian, free marketeers (like Milton Friedman) on the one side, and social conservatives (like Coleman) on the other.

The Coleman Report found that the greatest gains made by minority class children were obtained by those who enrolled in predominantly middle class white schools. But it failed to explain the extent to which these gains were attributable to the integration of the social classes, the differences in the qualities and attitudes of teachers in the different schools, the superior resource levels of these schools or the general social milieu of the school. Burke, G. (1970) In Rights and Inequality in Australian Education (cd, Fensham, , J.) Cheshire, Melbourne, p, 191-208.

In the same volume, John McLaren, R.T Fitzgerald, and A.R Trethewey make extensive references to Coleman's work.

In the same year, McMahon set up the National Urban and Regional Development Authority to meet the needs of new towns.

Some examples: the Interim Committee of the Social Welfare Commission, chaired by Mrs. Marie Coleman, was exploring new ways of providing social services; urban and regional policy was being regenerated under a newly created Department of Urban and Regional Development; and the funding of public health was revolutionised when Deebles and Scottton created Medbank. Scotton, R.B. and Ferber, H. (1978).

In 1984, Dr Blackburn was asked to chair the Victorian Government's Inquiry into Postcompulsory Schooling. In a personal communication to the author (26.502) Dean Ashenden, who had been Susan Ryan's Ministerial Advisor, said that Jean Blackburn had travelled to the US to study the Head Start Program and 'was very impressed with it'. Chapter 9 of the Karmel Report footnotes other significant contemporary overseas research: the UK's 1967 Plowden Report; Jenks' research in the US on inequality, and a 1971 OECD Review of US Educational Projects for the Disadvantaged.

Henceforward, 'Karmel 2' is referred to as 'the Karmel Report' as it always is in the Australian Education literature.
In reality, the state versions sometimes provided little more than re-badged Commonwealth dollars.

Dr Tannock currently heads the Australian Catholic Education Commission.

The other two areas of identified need were the overall levels of resources, both human and material, and the quality of education – as exemplified by the number of inadequately trained teachers.

Discussion with author, 1998.

When the author became Chair of the Schools Council in 1991, Education Minister Dawkins’ warning was: ‘Don’t let the state aid stuff erupt again!’


When I chaired the Schools Council, I recall Dawkins asking in several discussions on ‘equity’ with advisors and departmental officers, ‘How do we know that the expenditure on the DSP (and the subsequent programs) has made a difference?’ ‘How do we know that we’re justified in conflating ’distance” or ‘non-English speaking background’ with ‘educational disadvantage”? And always: ‘ How can we do this more effectively?’

Bill Hannan, former head of the Curriculum Branch in the Victorian Ministry of Education, personal communication.
Chapter 4: The States in an Era of Economic Rationalism, 1972 to 2003

Introduction

The story of this Chapter is concerned with the different trajectories followed by the two State systems over the three decades that have followed the accession to power of the Whitlam government. The Chapter contains five main sections, the last four with much the same internal structure.

The first section contains a discussion of the work of another major theorist of educational disadvantage – Pierre Bourdieu. A brief outline of a dimension of his work that is particularly salient for this thesis is followed by a comparison of the interpretations placed on that work by a NSW academic – Robert Connell – and a Victorian – Richard Teese.

The second section examines experience during the decades of the 1970s and 1980s. In keeping with the twin themes that are threaded through the thesis, the discussion of New South Wales and Victoria during this period is organised under the heads of ‘governance’ and ‘curriculum’. The section concludes with a comparison of two works – one from each State – that were representative of thinking in that phase. I then repeat this procedure in the third section - concerned with the decade of the 1990s - and in section four, which focuses on the current decade.

The chapter also provides an account of the temporary impact of the progressive, but customarily opposition, advocacy coalition that accompanied the Labor Premier, John Cain, when he came to power in Victoria in the early 80s.
The Bourdieu Paradigm

The second of the two major competing theoretical perspectives on differing patterns of educational outcomes is that of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s profound contribution has been to trace the causes of inequality of educational opportunity. I can therefore assert — with due deference to Sabatier’s misgivings about the heuristic approach to policy analysis — that the ‘stage’ of policy making to which the work of Bourdieu most closely relates is undoubtedly that of ‘problem definition’. In contrast to Coleman, Bourdieu locates the problem of low academic achievement within a comprehensive account of structural inequality. ¹

Bourdieu has furthered our understanding of the roles played by schooling in the reproduction of all three of the famous Weberian structures of order — class, status and power. The specific role schools play in each of these three structures is different, but it is most straightforward in relation to social class: schooling prepares the children of the privileged classes for upper class occupations, and equips them with the social skills appropriate to an upper class lifestyle, ‘the practice of the games and sports of high society or the manners and tastes resulting from good breeding...’ (Bourdieu, 1977, 506.) Ironically, though, this lifestyle emphasis tends somewhat to devalue strictly academic pursuits (Bourdieu, 1977, 495.) As a result, while the occupation of educator enjoys reasonably high status, it cannot match the status of the leading professions, such as medicine and law. (Evidence of this is readily available close to hand in the differing ENTER scores required to secure places in the Faculties of Medicine, Law, and Education in the University of Melbourne, and in the relative salaries of teachers and academics — and the members of other professions.)

The role that schooling plays in the reproduction of power structures, especially those of business, is less direct. While the lifestyle effects of ‘superior’ schooling remain important, such schooling is of less importance in securing privileged employment:
The professional success of the former students of the Ecole des hautes études commerciales... varies far more in relation to the way in which they obtained their first professional post (i.e. through family relations or by other ways) than in relation to their position in the college-leaving examination. (Bourdieu, 1977, 506)

The 'old boys network' has been similarly significant in Australia, although it has been more noticeably embedded in elite schools rather than in the universities that are Australia's closest equivalents of the Grands Ecoles of France.

The argument underlying the Bourdieu paradigm – a single element from an enormous oeuvre - thus can be crudely summarised as follows. Through their participation in the reproduction of cultural capital, schools contribute to the persistence of ongoing structures of educational disadvantage. Simultaneously, by promoting the notion of the 'objectivity' of academic knowledge and standards, they are agents of the legitimisation of inequality of educational opportunity in the wider community.

I initially consulted the writings of Pierre Bourdieu because his analysis of how the education system acts as a mechanism for creating and sustaining inequalities has been applied and elaborated in the Australian context by Richard Teese. As I read my way into the most accessible of Bourdieu's works, I discovered that he also illuminated another part of my research project – the part that is concerned with the strategic behaviour of school principals. Although individual educational reformers face daunting opposition, they can make modest gains through skilful strategic manipulation of elements of the habitus they share with others in the educational field – a process that I discuss in Chapter 5. However, the ways in which they make such gains differ from one State jurisdiction to another. We can gain a good appreciation of these different jurisdictional contexts by comparing how representatives of the opposing advocacy coalitions in New South Wales and Victoria have reacted to the work of Bourdieu.
**Differing Interpretations of Bourdieu in NSW and Victoria: Connell and Teese**

Scholarship on educational disadvantage in Australia has been significantly advanced by the work of two leading contemporary social theorists of schooling who have made it their major focus: R.W. Connell, in New South Wales, and Richard Teese, in Victoria. Both have demonstrated how the mainstream hegemonic curriculum entrenches privilege and fails to meet the needs of disadvantaged students. Connell has written extensively on the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program, and his influence in New South Wales helped ensure the State’s retention of the Program at the time it was being re-engineered out of existence by the Commonwealth. The policy problem confronting both Connell and Teese (not to mention the writer of this thesis!) is as follows: how can a new secondary curriculum and assessment system be devised which will have the political strength to supplant – or, failing that, at least co-exist with - the existing hegemonic order?

It is at this point that the approach of Connell diverges from that of Teese – and it is at this point, too, where the opposing advocacy coalitions of New South Wales and Victoria part company. The durability of the dominant bipartisan ‘meritocratic’ consensus in New South Wales made it inevitable that any system of curriculum and assessment specially designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged students would inevitably be branded, in Connell’s own terms, a ‘second rate credential’. (Connell, 1991, 81.) As this is an unsatisfactory outcome for Connell, he sets his sights on a more ambitious policy goal:

> It is possible, in principle, to construct a comprehensive educational program, a common learning program, whose claim to preference over the existing academic curriculum is twofold. First, it follows the principle of social justice in education by embodying the interests of the least advantaged. Second, it is intellectually better than other ways of organizing knowledge (Connell, 1991, 41.)

Hence Connell’s interest in the DSP, despite the disparaging claim (which he repeats more than once) that its levels of funding were little more than ‘pin money’. For the
DSP did offer the rare opportunity for committed staff (and some parents) to experiment towards the design of such a ‘common learnings program’.

According to Connell, Bourdieu’s incomplete theorising of the class structure leads him to adopt too pessimistic a view of the potentialities of radical educational reform. In Connell’s view, the main source of Bourdieu’s theoretical inadequacies is his inadequate social psychology, which is overwhelmingly cognitivist in nature (Connell, 1983, 152.) Because of this alleged inadequacy – its neglect of the affective and emotional bases of human behaviour – Bourdieu is alleged to be incapable of appreciating the radical potentialities inherent in the educational enterprise.

Connell led the academic team that studied and advocated for the DSP intensively for over a decade. In the event, the group was ultimately unable to save the Program, in part because – with some justification - they shared the Program participants’ suspicion of the kinds of norm-referenced measures of student performance that were beginning to carry weight in Canberra. Lacking confidence in the measures being promoted, the Connell team nevertheless ended up with no firm alternative policy proposals to further their ambitious reform agenda. Nor, in his most recent book on the subject (Connell, 1993) has Connell turned his attention to possible public policy solutions. Instead of policy proposals, he devotes his Conclusion to a homily to academic researchers. There is a good reason for this. As a leading spokesman for the New South Wales opposition advocacy coalition, Connell ultimately remains within the academic paradigm. As the passage cited above demonstrates, he is hoping to develop an alternative curriculum and assessment system that is both socially just and academically superior. It is clear that he believes that this is the only way to avoid an equity-based system being branded as ‘second-rate.’ This may explain his almost total neglect of vocational education. He would have serious doubts about an approach that ceded the mainstream curriculum to the academic hegemony while it developed vocational options for students with non-academic dispositions. In fact, neither of the New South Wales advocacy coalitions would wish to lessen the sway of the academic hegemony – however differently they may define the content of that hegemony.
In the hands of the Victorian theorist, Richard Teese, Bourdieu’s cognitivist approach is turned to radical ends. He has demonstrated that, in this country, educational inequality results from the interaction between the organisation of schooling and the organisation of the curriculum: ‘(Parents) know that a hierarchical curriculum demands a stratified school system’. (Teese, 2000, 7.) The organisation of the school system thus ensures that different social groups of students - studying different groups of subjects - are brought together at different sites that generate ‘advantages or disadvantages that are large, persistent and predictable’. - Teese describes students with the weakest family advantages as the ‘new’ education populations or the ‘non-traditional users of secondary and tertiary education’ – and they are concentrated in the schools with the fewest resources. Increasingly, these are public schools, whose student populations are becoming progressively more diverse. Dominated by working class and migrant families, often with little or no experience of academic schooling themselves, public school communities in low socio-economic areas are now obliged to work within resource levels that are comparatively lower than those of schools in other sectors and geographical areas

Teese demonstrates how, in contrast, certain kinds of private schools and a small number of select public schools in Victoria segregate themselves both socially and academically by specialising in university entrance in preference to vocational preparation. His analysis is supported by enrolment patterns in the University of Melbourne. In 1994, of 820 students enrolling in the Faculty of Arts, 209 (25.49 per cent) came from Catholic schools; 214 (26.1 per cent) came from Government schools, and 397 (48.41 per cent) came from Independent schools. In a secondary school system that distributes rewards on the basis of relativities between students, Independent schools use their selection and dismissal practices to ‘generate success and export failure’ in order to preserve and extend their social advantage.

Government and Catholic secondary school principals interviewed for this study were often critical of the enrolment practices they believed were employed by grammar schools in their vicinity. It must be said that the headmasters of the grammar schools in the study areas commonly denied that their schools engaged in pronounced social selection over and above the de facto selective effect of the fee structures. But Chapter 3 of the thesis described current Commonwealth policy (the SES funding model) that seems to encourage such schools to maintain exclusionist selection
strategies while offering scholarships to small numbers of students from disadvantaged socio-economic areas, thus ensuring that the school qualifies for more generous Federal funding.

Teese et al contrast the socially powerful status of the private and public sector schools attended by ‘the most proficient users of the system’ with the weaker status of the schools that are obliged to accept all comers, and that therefore are ‘most exposed to failure’. In Victoria, at least, the latter have had to survive the massive slashing of state government expenditure during the 90s. Figure 4.1 demonstrates that pre 1990 funding levels have still not been restored to Victorian schools. Throughout the country, public schools in the 90’s have been subjected to ‘punitive’ testing programs and the requirements of public policy for greater contestability and transparency. (Teese, 2000, 33). The capacity of public schools to engage collectively in effective political activity to improve their resource situation is limited by the protocols governing the relationship between governments and the service organizations that are accountable to them. If one excludes the role of the teacher unions – commonly dismissed by politicians as more intent on industrial action than education policy change - there is no public sector equivalent to the independent schools associations that retain a formidable lobbying capacity at both State and Federal levels.

But if the organisation of schooling in Australia is hierarchical, then that of the curriculum is equally so. The competitive academic curriculum at the top of the hierarchy of the collection of subjects taught in our secondary schools consists of those that are, to use Teese's term, 'most prestigious'. These are the subjects that contribute most strongly to high TER scores (and thus to the likelihood of being offered a university place) - in particular, English, languages, mathematics and the physical sciences. Their prestige in part relates to their status as gateways to the private income professions (Teese, 2000, 85) – Medicine, Law, Architecture, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Veterinary Science. They are also the subjects that most easily enable external examiners to discriminate between students and to identify candidates who display the valued characteristics – those that require certain attitudes and behaviour modelled in the home - and to exclude those who lack such characteristics. The curriculum’s demands ‘weigh more or less heavily on different families’, with academic failure particularly high in ‘individual schools where families
lack the cultural and economic advantages to manage (its) intellectual demands'.
(Teese, 2000, 2.)

The finding by Hill et al that intake characteristics can be quite ‘curriculum specific’, in that ‘their effect on mathematics achievement is negligible’ (Hill, 1995b, 11-13) would therefore be contested by Richard Teese, who observed that:

Exposed to intellectual demands for which they often lack the necessary capital, working-class students frequently experience mathematics at its worst and are shattered at the exams.
(Teese, 2000, 192)

Teese’s data demonstrated that, in 1968, students living in working class-suburbs with large concentrations of non-English-speaking migrants in the west and north of Melbourne were nearly twice as likely to fail General Mathematics as were their middle-class peers in inner east and southern suburbs. By 1975, the General Mathematics failure rates of working-class students still hovered around the rates of the mid-1950’s, ‘when the average student could expect to fail four times out of ten’. (Teese, 2000, 145) The comparative success of their eastern-suburbs peers was in part a product of the same class-related facility in English that Hill had observed:

These were well-trained students, and their training by comparison with others’ had come easily. From early in childhood, they had been taught the precise and accurate use of words and constantly shown how to use the resources of speech to differentiate meaning ... Success at school and pleasure in learning conditioned them to accept the logic of remote meaning that governs progress in mathematics and to convert the labour of abstraction into a game of pattern and structure. (Teese, 2000,145-6)

Aptitude for academic tasks is heavily dependent on non-school variables, and the non-school resources a school student needs to do well at academic work are distributed in an unequal way. This produces a middle-class constituency for the academic curriculum - a constituency whose members Teese describes as 'the most proficient users of secondary education'. These are families that are able to purchase 'high quality' schooling, which they commonly consider to be guaranteed only in the relatively homogeneous environments of the elite secondary schools of the Independent sector, in the 'better' schools of the Catholic sector, or in the few selective
public High Schools. Over many years, elite schools and their school populations have invested heavily in teaching and other resources to protect the competitive, examinable elements of the curriculum that privilege their students. Of course, this is not a uniquely Australian phenomenon:

Most high-performing schools simply reflect the social capital of their students; they are primarily schools with students of high socioeconomic status. Most low performing schools also reflect the composition of their student populations. (Elmore, 2002)

In Victoria, this constituency is a vital structural support for the successful, conservative, dominant advocacy coalition. (The issue of the relationship of the advocacy coalition to its micro-level constituents is not satisfactorily explained by the ACF. This problem with the framework will be taken up again in Chapter 9).

The vehicle through which the successful users of the curriculum receive their rewards is the external examination system, with its associated assessment, reporting and certification practices. Integral features of the system include complicated (and to the uninitiated, impenetrable) scaling procedures that inflate the relative performance of physical science and advanced mathematics students, and punish even competent performance in the lower scaled vocational education and training subjects, such as Electronics. In 2001, at Monash University, an experienced teacher of that subject, Martin Cooke, formerly of Upwey High School, publicly debated the subject: ‘That the TER is doing a good job’ with academic administrators of the VCE assessment system:

(They) focused on the non-discriminatory nature of scaling and used concocted figures to back up their arguments and show that every student had an equal chance regardless of their subject choice. What rubbish!! The problem for the average person is that the scaling system is not understood and it is easy to produce figures that show similar TER scores for selected students who undertake quite different subjects at VCE....Following the debate, X and I exchanged a series of letters over a period of a few months and he eventually conceded that an examination system was not the ultimate method for selecting for success but was currently the ‘best’ that we have available, given the pressure to select students in a hurry’. (Cooke, 2001)
Since 1971, standardisation has been used to facilitate the comparisons of subjects across the curriculum as a basis for university selection. Elite schools have typically used standardisation to generate additional advantage for their strongest students by guiding them to select a narrow range of subjects that offer competitive advantage – in part facilitated by the overlapping content of some of those subjects.

In the face of such fundamental problems at the very core of the schooling system (i.e. within the curriculum, or in what schools teach and how learning is assessed) the technical and organisational 'solutions' that currently preoccupy the ideological conservatives on the far right of the political spectrum seem, at best, irrelevant, and at worst, a dangerous distraction. In 1998, Whitty, Power and Halpin reviewed the evidence linking organisational changes in schooling (such as devolution and choice) to student performance:

The best that Chubb and Moe's (1990) strident defence of autonomous schooling is able to demonstrate is that their data on particular 'organisational factors' explain only about 5 per cent of the variation in student outcome scores (Whitty et al, 1998, 113)

They concluded that while such changes may have a positive impact on some school processes,

…there is considerable ambiguity about how or whether these have positive consequences for student outcomes...... On the contrary, the English experience of self-management indicates that the devolution of financial and other decisions to schools is as likely to encourage attempts to conserve or reinvent the past, particularly in the areas of curriculum policy and delivery. (Whitty et al, 1998, 112).
The Three Phases Differentiated

The three decades under consideration can usefully be divided into three phases, using as a benchmark the *per student* expenditure on schools for all States and Territories:

Phase 1: the 1970s and 1980s
Phase 2: the 1990s
Phase 3: the current decade

However, ABS Catalogue No. 5518.0.55.001 provides the following snapshots:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998-99</th>
<th>2001-02</th>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5274</td>
<td>5008</td>
<td>5399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5862</td>
<td>6044</td>
<td>6420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data on which this Table has been based have been generously provided by Prof. Gerald Burke of the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training at Monash University.

It can be seen that the election of the Bracks government in Victoria has made a difference, as Victorian expenditures in the triennium following 1999 rose more sharply than those of New South Wales, and indeed of the average of all Australian governments. Despite these increases, Victoria still remains somewhat below the national average.

The periodisation used in this chapter has had to differ from that employed in Chapter 3. The reason for the difference is that here I am attempting to compare two jurisdictions whose changes of government – while always in the same direction - did not coincide. Thus the post-Whitlam ALP victories in the states were six years apart – 1976 in New South Wales, and 1982 in Victoria. Again, New South Wales led the way with both the Liberal resurgence (1988, compared with 1992 in Victoria), and the ALP revival (1995, compared with 1999 in Victoria). Nevertheless, it is possible to differentiate three phases common to both jurisdictions in this way: Liberals give way to ALP; Liberal resurgence; and ALP revival.
PHASE 1 (THE 1970s AND 1980s): in which NSW spent below, and Victoria spent above, the national average. For the majority of this period, the ‘natural’ party of government was in office in each State, although the election of an ALP government in Victoria in 1982 was to have important effects on curriculum in that State.

PHASE 2 (THE 1990s): in which NSW stayed below, and Victoria spectacularly dived well below, the national average. In both States, the agenda was largely set by Coalition governments.

PHASE 3 (THE CURRENT DECADE): in which both NSW and Victoria approached but did not reach the national average under Labor governments.

To what extent can discernible differences between New South Wales and Victoria be explained by the Regime Dynamics Framework outlined in Chapter 2? Figure 4.1 strongly indicates that there is a marked correlation between incrementalism in expenditure growth and consensualism in policy development. In New South Wales, where a bipartisan consensus continues to the present day, State expenditure on schooling has exhibited a largely unbroken pattern of slow, but steady growth. In Victoria, by contrast, political dissensus produced major discontinuities following changes in government in the 1990s.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show that the compositions of the respective dominant advocacy coalitions in the two States – as indicated by membership of Boards of Studies – have exhibited similarly differentiated patterns. In New South Wales, the pattern of membership was established in 1961, as part of the Wyndham reforms, and has survived relatively unchanged through four changes of government:
Figure 4 - 1: Two States' Per Student Outlays on Schools 1971-72 to 1997-98 -
Constant 2001-02 $ (CPI inflated)

Sources: Several years of ABS 4221.0, 4224.0, 3510.0, and AEC (and successors) National Reports on
Schooling, ABS dX database and unpublished ABS data.
Table 4.2: Membership of Boards of Studies in New South Wales, 1983-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Wran ALP</th>
<th>Greiner Lib</th>
<th>Carr ALP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body and Year</td>
<td>Board of Senior Schools Studies 1983</td>
<td>Board of Studies 1991</td>
<td>Board of Studies 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/principals – public</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and citizens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/unknown</td>
<td>Aboriginal 1</td>
<td>Aboriginal 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic Affairs Commission 1</td>
<td>Ethnic Affairs Commission 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Chair in this category. In New South Wales, the pattern of membership was established in 1961, as part of the Wyndham reforms, and has survived relatively unchanged through four changes of government:

Two features stand out in this Table. First is the great diminution of the influence of Academics and, to a lesser extent, the Department, following the widening of the remit of the Board in 1990. The lessening of academic influence may have been due in part to the entry of primary school interests into the Board. In addition, the disappearance of the Advanced Education sector (which had in 1983 contributed four of the Academic members) may have been a factor. The second feature is the great stability between the Greiner and the Carr years. However, it should be noted that the strong Independent influence under Greiner has substantially diminished.
Table 4.3: Membership of ‘Boards of Studies’ in Victoria, 1986-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Cain ALP</th>
<th>Kirner ALP</th>
<th>Kennett Lib</th>
<th>Bracks ALP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/ Principals - public</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and citizens</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/ unknown</td>
<td>3 MPs</td>
<td>3 MPs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chair in this category. NB: It has not been possible to observe an invariable pattern in the selection of years, because the library of the Australian Council for Educational Research, which contains the best holdings of annual reports, unfortunately has only broken series for all States.

When experience in Victoria is examined, the differences between Labor and Liberal are clearly much sharper. Under Kennett, the representation of public school interests temporarily dipped, and those of business temporarily rose. Once again, the influence of Academics waned in the 1990s, although they seem to have made a surprising comeback under the Bracks government. In contrast, one interest that has not recovered ground lost in the Kennett years has been that of the Unions.

Overall, the greatest difference between the two States has been the institutional volatility of Victoria. Each incoming government has proceeded to change the name and membership of its board of studies: from the Liberal Victorian Institute of Secondary Education to the Labor Curriculum and Assessment Board, to the Liberal Board of Studies, to the Labor Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

As indicated above, I shall organize the discussion of each of the three phases under the two sub-heads of ‘Governance’ and ‘Curriculum’.
Phase 1: the 1970s and 1980s: Business as usual followed by ferment in Victoria

New South Wales: 1972-1988

Governance

The progress of the New South Wales system in the 1970s and 80s was underpinned by the traditional themes of centralisation, consensus and stability. The Teachers’ Federation was at the height of its influence in the 70s, when assessment for secondary school credentials was decentralised. In 1977, assessment for the (fourth Year) School Certificate was almost totally school-based, and a school-assessed component comprised 50 per cent of the HSC examination. The School Certificate was abolished in 1987, and plans were made to replace it with a Senior Secondary School Certificate that could be awarded at whatever time the students decided to leave school. Notwithstanding, the Director-General of Education (DG) remained a powerful figure in schools education policy-making:

As the chief executive, the Director-General was effectively both administrator and policy maker, a tradition established under the first director Peter Board and continued at least until the reign of Harold Wyndham in the 1950s and 1960s. (Sherington, 1995, 172.)

As Fenton Sharpe, DG from 1987 to 1991, said, teachers in New South Wales ‘.. saw direction from the Department as something they had to do, but policy initiatives from the government, as something that would go away’. (Keating, 1999, 203) Moreover, in sharp contrast to their historical counterparts in Victoria, New South Wales Directors-General have commonly controlled the Board of Studies – the statutory board responsible for secondary school curriculum and assessment. The DG’s capacity to limit university representation on the Board to less than 50 per cent of its membership dates back to 1931. That was the year in which he began actually to chair the Board of Studies - something that would never have happened in Victoria. In 1988, when the radical Liberal Education Minister, Terry Metherell, finally relieved him of that responsibility, the response of the DG to this unexpected turn of
events was abrupt. He simply ceased attending Board meetings at all, and sent his Deputy instead. Meanwhile, he set about re-fortifying the Department’s own curriculum branch. The next DG, Ken Boston, initially appointed by the Greiner Liberal Government, went on to occupy the position until 2003. In fact, the Carr Labor Government actually increased Boston’s sphere of responsibility. This kind of stability and degree of control at the top has proven impossible to achieve in Victoria ever since the days of Frank Tait (who was Director-General of Education from 1902 to 1928)

The power emanating from the centre, however, seems never to threaten the consensus decision-making that is characteristic of the style of governance in New South Wales.

There is probably no other State in Australia where the forces of political convergence are so strong. Since the characteristic solution of disputes is a compromise, there is an expectation that intransigence on one issue will be balanced by concession on another. High status members of the system, like the Minister or the DG, usually hesitate before overusing the veto power lest they endanger the whole fabric of consensus. In New South Wales, formal and informal contacts reinforce one another to enable the education system to be informally governed by a “board of directors” whose members change slightly depending on the nature of the contemporary issues. This floating membership usually includes senior members of the Departments of Education and TAFE, the Teachers’ Federation and the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations (P & C) (Hogan, 1980, 92-3)

A decade later, Grimshaw’s observation showed how little things had changed:

When the public service refers to educational stakeholders, the NSW Teachers’ Federation, the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations and the Federation of School Community Organisations come to mind. It is easier for public servants to view these groups as representative of the community at large. (Grimshaw, 1991, 61.)

It is difficult to conceive of a Victorian senior public servant putting things in quite this way. Likewise, no study of New South Wales education policy-making could find the prominent roles played by university staff in Victoria. Studying the Victorian Education policy-making system, Muller and Headey discovered that:
... the field was dominated by educational administrators – notably Vice Chancellors – and individual academics used as consultants to reform the high school examination system and the administrative structure of the State schools. (Muller, 1996, 147.)

The New South Wales experience of attempting to introduce Victorian-style advisory or decision-making bodies at the local level is both an illustration of the ‘board of directors’ in operation, and of the stakeholders’ fundamental confidence in centralised administration. In 1973, a White Paper on Regionalisation had put forward the concept of community involvement in schools via local school boards. (Education administration had been regionalised in 1948, but ‘control (had) remained at the centre’. (Sherington, 1995, 172.) In 1973, the Coalition Government jettisoned the idea of school councils in the face of united opposition by the Teachers Federation and the parents’ organisations. Two years later, Victorian School Councils were given legal status and had their powers increased, but in NSW in 1978, the idea was again defeated, this time under the Labor Government.

Rod Cavalier, Labor Minister of Education in the mid 80s, achieved mixed success in attempting to balance his three goals of excellence, equity and efficiency. He retained the selective schools established by his political opponents, but tried to strengthen central curriculum planning and to de-centralise assessment. His attempts to audit teacher efficiency were thwarted by the Teachers’ Federation, and his Education and Public Instruction Act, enacted in 1987, was overtaken by the electoral victory of the Coalition in the following year.

Curriculum

These two decades saw tentative moves towards a slight lessening of academic influence on the New South Wales school curriculum. In 1975, the externally examined component was dropped from the (fourth Year) School Certificate in favour of moderated school assessment. Two years later, the moderated exam was held only in Maths and English.
The NSW Year 12 certificate is the Higher Education Certificate (HSC) (the government finding nothing politically incorrect in the certificate’s open association with university entrance.) Labor Education Minister Cavalier floated the idea of a new Certificate of Secondary Education, but the idea was then abandoned.

The version of the HSC that was in place during this period was very largely the ‘course for university matriculation’ that had been designed by the Wyndham Committee in 1957, after five years of deliberation. Provided for in the Education Act of 1961, the HSC was finally implemented two years later – more than five years after it was proposed. In 1984, Doug Swan, the current Director-General, and Ken McKinnon, the former Chairman of the Schools Commission, in their report on Future Directions of Secondary Education, recommended that the six years of secondary education should provide a well-rounded education for all students, not just preparation for university applicants. Notwithstanding their recommendations, and those of two other post-Wyndham reviews on secondary education in NSW, the basic, ‘tiered’ structure of the HSC was not altered. W.F. Connell (1993) points out that a variation of the Wyndham recommendations had been advanced by the Wallace Committee as far back as 1934. The aims stated by the Wallace Committee had been formulated by ‘a widely read American report’ in 1918. (Connell, 1993.) Change occurs at a civilised pace in NSW education policy-making!

In 1977, the HSC was for the first time awarded on the basis of 50 per cent external examination and 50 per cent moderated school assessment. In 1986 a further school assessment component was included. In 1987, the Board of Secondary Education (replacing the Secondary Schools Board and Board of Senior Secondary Studies) was given responsibility for both the Schools Certificate and the HSC. (NSW Dept of Education and Training, 1998, 238.)
**Victoria: 1972 – 1992**

**Governance**

In contrast to New South Wales, Victoria had already had a significant history of experimentation with devolution. The very Act that established the public school system in 1872 referred to ‘Boards of Advice’, and the 1910 Education Act authorised the appointment of ‘School Committees’ to promote their schools and provide advice on school management. Victoria proceeded to devolve significant advisory, program design and implementation responsibilities to quasi-autonomous bodies at local, regional and state level. In 1971, regions were established, ostensibly to bring schools and administration closer together. Victorian technical schools began to select their own principals and vice-principals in 1974, and School Councils had their powers increased and were given legal status in the following year. In 1975, also, the Liberals’ Education Minister, Lindsay Thompson, gave schools increased autonomy to develop their own curricula.

The 1970s and early 80s in Victoria will be remembered as a time of experimentation with secondary school curricula alternative to those recognised by the Melbourne University-dominated Victorian Universities Examination Board (VUSEB). Secondary technical schools for boys were established to provide five year courses that were less academic than those of the more prestigious high schools. It was also a time for trialling alternative methods of end-of-school assessment. A bewildering array of programs mushroomed into existence: Vocational Orientation Programs were undertaken by some post Year 10 students. The Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP) provided a TAFE alternative to the Year 12 route into colleges of advanced education and universities. The Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) was additionally recognised by some universities. In 1973, a VUSEB sub-committee began to plan a new assessment body that would distinguish between successful completion of schooling and requirements for university entrance. In 1976, the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education (VISE) was legislated into existence. For the first time in the admittedly short history of Victorian secondary
education, the formal control of the university over the public examinations system was diluted by the presence on the board of school teachers and administrators, and Ministerial nominees. (W. Connell, 1993.) This was considered a radical change in Victoria – though New South Wales’ various Boards of Examiners had had ‘non-university’ membership since 1912!

Running through the debates in both States was a familiar theme: the external examination system was imperfect, and even had some negative impacts on the secondary education system, but it was the best university selection system available. (W. Connell, 1993.) (Blackburn, 1984, 34, 4.12) Again lagging behind New South Wales, which had been reducing the proportion of school-based assessment since the 1930s, Victoria’s list of examinable subjects was now expanded to include internally-assessed ‘Group 2’ subjects, designed to attract students not intent on university.

When, in 1982, Labor took office in Victoria for the first time in nearly 30 years, the new government brought with it a fully-developed, ‘comprehensive, alternative framework for state education’. The three major elements of the policy were to be based on ‘collaborative decision-making in education, devolution of responsibility to schools and regions, effectiveness of educational outcomes, and the redress of disadvantage and discrimination in educational practice.’ (Spaull, 1992, 73.) In 1983, the Education Minister, Robert Fordham, issued the first in what was to be a series of six Ministerial Papers on the themes of collaborative decision-making, and redressing student disadvantage. In 1985, he erected representative boards of education in each of the pre-existing regions.

Spaull points out (1992, 75.) that, in the absence of localised funding and teacher employment, the scope of Victoria’s decentralising initiatives were somewhat limited. It has to be acknowledged that, while local school councils in Victorian public schools were largely left alone to get on with their tasks, their brief was quite narrow. Moreover, the Labor Government had no intention of dismantling its ultimate authority in relation to system-wide policy. ⁶

Nevertheless, under Labor, Victoria’s schools education policy-making arena became thickly populated with pressure groups and ministerial advisory committees.
Especially under highly consultative ministers (like Robert Fordham and Joan Kirner), a great many people were having their say. At State level, the advisory State Board of Education provided status in policy-making to what minister Cathie had described as 'the education club' - the teacher unions and parent organisations. At least, it did that before it later became absorbed by the department in what Spaull calls the 'process of ministerialisation' in the education portfolio.

The down-side of Victoria's Constitutionalist approach to governance was observed by Bessant:

This fragmented administrative structure was unique to the Victorian Education Department but was (and still is) a feature of public administration in Victoria. As in other branches of the Victorian public service, in education it has led to competition for and misuse of resources, overlapping, duplication and wastage of public money. (Bessant 1980: 10)

Bessant does not comment on the destructive nature of the politics surrounding the hierarchy of consultative bodies. As we shall see in the stormy history surrounding the implementation of the VCE, the implementation process presented opportunities aplenty for politically-motivated detractors to erode community support for the entire public system.

In fact, before its demise in 1992, the Labor government clawed back a fair bit of this devolved authority. In 1984, the experiment with school-developed curricula was finally laid to rest with the imposition of standardised curriculum frameworks for schools. The State Board of Education was reabsorbed into the department, and in 1988 Minister Joan Kirner disestablished the regional boards that, six years earlier, had been set up by her Labor colleague, Robert Fordham. Nevertheless, as will be shown, this re-engineering of formal structures neither reduced the level of contestation that characterises education policy-making in Victoria, nor did it diminish the power of the dominant conservative advocacy coalition.
Curriculum

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) was the vehicle for the implementation of the recommendations of the Blackburn Report - The *Ministerial Review of Post-Compulsory Schooling*, that had been set up in 1983 by the Labor Government's Education Minister, Robert Fordham, to investigate the changes that would have to be made to post-compulsory schooling in Victoria in order to increase the participation of 15 to 19 year olds. (The Report was named after its chairperson, Jean Blackburn, who, as explained in Chapter 3, was a former Deputy Chairperson of the Commonwealth Schools Commission.).

The work of the Blackburn review took place in the context of low apparent retention rates -36 per cent in 1984; (though, as the Discussion Paper pointed out, when all forms of education and training continuous with Year 11 were taken into account, ‘57 per cent of the cohort which entered Victorian secondary schools in 1977 were in a twelfth year of full-time education in 1982’). (Blackburn, 1984, 3.) The first impacts of globalisation on the Australian economy were being experienced in rapid technological change and the restructuring of the labour market. The new, ‘globalised’, labour market was one in which unqualified, early school leavers would not have a place. The Discussion Paper identified the need to reform the relationship between schools, post-school education and training as an urgent priority.

Consistent with its terms of reference, the review recommended changes in the curriculum, certification and organisation of post-compulsory schooling in the State. The major recommendations were:

To replace the existing plethora of Year 12 courses with a single Year 12 Certificate, covering years 11 and 12, that would be developed by a new Curriculum and Assessment Board. This became known as ‘the common framework’.
To use approved ‘program structures’ to encourage ‘breadth of study’, i.e. students were advised to pursue both academic studies and studies related to employability (‘work in society’) – a strategy through which it was hoped the latter would gain ‘parity of esteem’ with the traditional academic areas of the curriculum.

To distinguish between ‘completion of the VCE’ and the ‘TER’.

To base university selection on a mix of studies assessed at ‘levels 3 and 4’ (usually undertaken in Year 12). The basis for assessment would be ‘Common Assessment Tasks’ (CATs), at least one of which was to be administered under test conditions. Other CATS were to be subject to internal – though externally moderated - teacher assessment.

To abolish separate high and technical schools (in favour of comprehensive secondary education) and to establish a series of separate post-compulsory colleges or campuses.

Eight years in the gestation, the ensuing uproar over the implementation of the VCE during 1990-92 was to push political contestation in Victoria to new heights. Different elements of the proposal were opposed by different sections of what Minister Cathie described as the ‘Education Club’. State school parents’ organisations and school teachers supported the common framework, the compulsory Australian Studies unit, and the reduction of external assessment, but the teachers confused other sections of the supporting coalition when aspects of VCE implementation (eg the processing of CATS results) were delayed by industrial action. Some elements on the left (for example, former staff members of VISE) were dismayed, though, by the failure to more thoroughly liberalise university selection. Charges of excessive ‘vocationalism’ came from both the left and the right.

Keating contends that, while much of the conflict was predictably between ‘historically opposed factions within and outside the Victorian education community’, it is simplistic to attribute the political failure of the VCE to any one group (eg.
universities') or even coalition of interests (like 'universities and independent schools'), as the VCE found both supporters and opponents within individual interest groups (like, for example, some universities and some independent schools.) (Keating, 1999, 201.) Yet it is possible to more precisely identify the coalitions of interests around the new VCE – particularly those who were in opposition. The unchallenged leader of the government-opposing (and dominant) coalition was Professor David Penington, the highly influential Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, the State's most prestigious university. As Keating says,

He began ... in late 1989, and was the principal figure in the debate that followed over the next three years. ... Faced with Commonwealth and state governments with strong policies of increased levels of participation, greater equality of access to higher education, and the elimination of the binary system, it was natural that Penington should make his campaign political. In doing this, he recruited supporters who were anti-Labor. (Keating, 1999, 188-190)

Penington's campaign was motivated, in part, by his vision of Melbourne University as a 'world class university' i.e. one that, inter alia, would attract the best students. The Vice-Chancellor attacked what he saw as the fundamental premise of the new certificate:

Suffice it to say that there is no clear sign that our problems differ from those in many western countries, except for the preoccupation of many within the teaching profession with 'equity'.... A result of this philosophy in 'progressive education' is to .... choose educational content aimed at the interests of the majority of students - a trend presently being pursued vigorously by Victoria in the new Victorian Certificate of Education. (Penington, 1991, 184.)

No doubt because of his lofty ambitions for the University of Melbourne to become a 'world class institution', Penington objected to any proposals to change the established form of tertiary selection. He insisted on external assessment, and an extended grading scale, and opposed any non-graded descriptive assessment. He contended that the VCE experiment was based on the 'socialist ideology' of 'equality of outcomes'.

Australia fares very poorly when compared with the world's two economic superpowers, Japan and Germany, and to many countries that invest far less public money in education than
we do...There is no reason to suppose that Australian children are any less intelligent as a group than their counterparts in Japan, Germany or Eastern Europe'. (Penington, 1993)

But he did not apply the same logic to the question of the respective aptitudes of students in differing regions of Melbourne. Though it followed naturally from his international comparisons, he ignored the 'parochial' question of whether Australian children in the western and northern suburbs of Melbourne are any less intelligent as a group than their counterparts in Toorak or Camberwell. He and his supporters vigorously opposed student-centred curriculum, including the attempt to encourage breadth of study through compulsory Australian Studies – the new subject accused of 'dumbing-down' the curriculum. Just as vigorously, he promoted the notion of structural differentiation within the certificate via a classification of 'Group 1' and 'Group 2' subjects. (Keating, 1999, 190.)

While it is not possible to conclude that Penington was able to speak even for all faculties in his own university, he had no apparent trouble in rallying support, in his own and other institutions, from the Mathematics-based disciplines that were used to filter candidates for the high status professions. In this, in his opposition to the introduction of a 2 year certificate in place of a virtual 2 year preparation for Group 1 studies, and in his objection to any restrictions on 'the capacity of schools to maximise the TER by concentrating on the high scoring subjects - maths, science, languages,' (Keating, 1999, 191.) Penington's interests coincided with those of the elite Independent schools, several of which supported him. After the success of the Coalition at the 1992 State elections, they began to do so more publicly. Robert Rofe, the headmaster of Brighton Grammar School in Melbourne, deplored the fact that 'How pupils learn (has become) more important than what they learn; the process of thinking is more important than the final discovery', and that the system was now 'beset with and consumed by the sin of envy of anyone above the lowest common denominator.' In his view, the people who engineered the VCE were a 'loose coalition of Marxists, neo-Marxists, socialists of various degrees, utopian liberals and progressives of diverse groups'. (Boon, 1992, 1 ff.) Colin Black, the Headmaster of Camberwell Grammar, criticised the 'new wave geography' that had been 'injected into the curriculum in some schools in place of traditional learning about the world' – a development that would not occur at his own school, as 'Students at Camberwell
Grammar paid substantial fees to ‘benefit’ from the school’s academic ‘ethos’. (ibid)
(Reporter’s punctuation).

Through the Business-Higher Education Round Table, of which he was an active member, Penington was also able to launch his 'town and gown' strategy, aimed, particularly at 'the big end of town'. Since the 1960s, the universities have been able to count, as members of their very powerful networks, those people within the business sector who constitute an elite - managers with university degrees. (Karpin, 1995) Of the 24 Vice-Chancellors who were members of the influential Business/Higher Education Round Table, he and Professor Mal Logan from Monash University were on the Board. A survey of '28 key education and business leaders' conducted by the Round Table in 1992 concluded, inter alia, that:

Secondary education (in Australia) is regarded as not adequately equipping students for either work or higher education; it is thought to be a major factor limiting the attainment of the goal of excellence in university standards. (Table, 1992, 4)

While the Catholic systemic schools broadly supported the common framework, the VCE earned the displeasure of ‘old right’ commentators within Catholic ranks – Bob Santamaria and Babette Francis. The ‘new right’, especially through the conservative journals of the Association for Cultural Freedom (Quadrant) and the Institute of Public Affairs, were rabid about the experiment in ‘social engineering’.

The Parliamentary Liberal Party had had a member on the VCAB Board since its inception in 1986 and on the VISE committee before that, and its representatives, especially the Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Haddon Storey, had been ‘actively involved and helpful’. But Storey failed to attend the August 1987 meeting at which the Board endorsed the VCE policy, and thereafter attended less frequently and less actively. (Keating, 1999, 181.) In October 1988, shortly before the election, he was replaced by the shadow finance minister.

By the time the parties were in election mode, the VCE debate was thoroughly politicised. A media frenzy ensued, the ‘prize’ for the most lurid headline going to Piers Ackerman of the Herald-Sun, who referred to a teacher’s initiative in setting up a discussion between a class and official representatives of the sex industry as
'Hookers give VCE lesson'. Possibly for the first time in Australian education history, an attempt to reform the school curriculum became a serious election issue - one of the Opposition's three 'Guilty Party' campaign targets - along with the fall of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation and the loss of the State Bank! The campaign was greatly assisted by the fact that the Premier, Joan Kirner, had been Education Minister during the late 80s when the VCE was being implemented. When she came to the Education portfolio, she had not even been familiar with the details of the changes that were about to be made to the certificate: contrary to media reports, it had not been her 'brainchild'. However, left to defend it publicly, she issued a Ministerial Statement and followed it up with a (disastrous) $1m television advertising campaign.

Shortly after the Labor Government's election loss, the media were able to report that 'Professor Penington, who had been consulted extensively by the new state government on undoing the VCE experiment, said, 'I think we can restore the integrity of the system next year'. (Boon, 1992) No longer at loggerheads with the Victorian Government over the VCE, there was nevertheless no respite for him. For by now he was in conflict with the Commonwealth on Dawkins' plans to increase access to higher education by eliminating the binary university system, as well as on the Federal Minister's process for developing new National Curriculum Profiles for schools.' As a result, Penington's counsel was keenly sought by the Liberals in Opposition who reported that he:

has taken a keen interest in the Coalition's proposed (higher education) voucher system and forms part of the 'mauve circle' -- a group of leading higher education figures who have been advising the Coalition's spokesman on education, Dr David Kemp, and suggesting ways in which a deregulated higher education system, could be implemented. (Jones, 1993, 13.)

The lesson that Victoria could draw from the experience of the 70s and 80s is clear -- and it is one that has obviously been taken to heart by the Bracks Government: The constituency for the academic curriculum -- led, in Sabatier's terms, by the dominant 'advocacy coalition' - will tolerate 'compensatory' programs on the periphery as long as they are seen not to interfere with the integrity of the mainstream core. Any
sustained attempt at such interference - as we have seen in this chapter - will be met by bitter, and ultimately successful resistance.

**NSW and Victoria Compared: Hogan/West and Bessant**

Two 1980 monographs – written as part of a series on education policy making in the Australian States and Territories - provide an opportunity to examine the extent to which the 'Coleman' ferment of the preceding decade and a half, and the substantial Australian discourse that followed it, had influenced education policy making at the beginning of Phase I, in the years following the fall of the Whitlam government. (Hogan, 1980) (Bessant, 1980) In fact, such influence proved to be surprisingly slight. In terms of style and approach, the two monographs could well have been written a decade earlier. Both make only passing reference to the Whitlam experience. So which dimensions of policy making, and which policies, attracted the attention of Hogan and West (writing about New South Wales), and Bessant (writing about Victoria)? And why?

Both monographs devoted most attention to governance issues, in particular, to the institutional arrangements for the making of education policy. The resulting profiles of the two systems confirm the argument of this thesis. Possibly because of its greater degree of centralisation, New South Wales had led Victoria in machinery of government reform. The northern State had developed regional administration - without, however, weakening the centralisation of power. And in the 1970s, it had gone through great ‘flux’, as it restructured in order to functionally integrate the previously separate divisions of primary and secondary education. (Hogan, 1980, 28.) In Victoria, by contrast, restructuring had been messier, with the Department attempting to give organisational recognition both to the standard functions (through service directorates/offices of Planning, Administrative Services, Finance, Building, and Personnel) and to the Divisions of schooling (Primary, Secondary, and Technical Education, and Special Services and Teacher Education.) (Bessant, 1980, Fig. 1.)

Both monographs acknowledged, however, that Victoria had led the way on admitting parents into decision-making via the school councils.
On curriculum, Bessant devoted all his attention to the structure of upper secondary education which, because of the strong and continuing University influence in Victoria, was a much ‘hotter’ issue than it had ever been in New South Wales. Hogan and West, on the other hand, paid most attention to a case study of right wing responses to a ‘progressive’ curriculum innovation of the 1970s - the introduction of a Social Studies course called *Man, A Course of Study* (MACOS) - and gave little attention to the themes that had so concerned Bessant.

When compared with the later sets of reports (Carrick/Scott and Caldwell/Hayward; Vinson/Connors and Kirby) two gaps are obvious in the Bessant and Hogan and West monographs. First, neither pays any direct attention to the needs and interests of students in the school systems. Secondly, neither seriously concerns itself with issues of social disadvantage in schooling.

**Phase 2: the 1990s: The Coalition sets the agenda**

**NSW: 1988 – 1995**

Governance

Since Hogan and West wrote their monograph, the age of political management had come upon Australia, and the Director-General was able to report that Ministerial involvement in New South Wales education was no longer restricted to politically contentious issues (Sharpe, 1991, 81.) Nevertheless, Hogan and West’s ‘board of directors’ remained in place, continuing to function as the dominant advocacy coalition.

The election of the Greiner government in 1988 placed considerable pressure on the long-standing bipartisan consensus on schooling in New South Wales. As already stated, the Minister responsible for schools was the forceful and idiosyncratic Terry Metherell. The neo-conservative ideology of the new government – the first to challenge the Labor hegemony of the preceding decades – emphasised privatisation, downsizing and consumer choice.
Impressed by education reforms in Britain under Kenneth Baker, Thatcher’s Education Minister, Metherell, initiated a host of proposed changes to the NSW system, including the reinstatement of the School Certificate, dezonning (to facilitate parental choice of schools), devolution, a Board of Studies independent of the Education Department, a strengthening of direct ministerial influence over the curriculum, and the ‘minimising of state intervention’. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 June 1988 (Sherington, 1995), these reforms were accompanied by budgetary cuts resulting in the reduction of 2400 primary and secondary teaching positions and 800 support staff. As class sizes grew, so did opposition to Metherell. ‘Within a few months of coming to power, he had alienated almost every education interest group, including supposed supporters in the Catholic and non-state school sectors.’ (Sherington, 1995, 177.) On August 17, 1988, on the opening day of the new parliamentary session, 50,000 people demonstrated outside Parliament House against the Metherell reforms.

When Greiner realised finally that Metherell was a political liability, (and when Metherell resigned from the Parliament following charges being laid against him under the Taxation Act) the Premier installed Virginia Chadwick as Education Minister. A highly competent, politically savvy operator, she set about re-building the educational bridges burnt by her predecessor. Possibly in deference to the non-government school sectors, she permitted the newly independent Board of Studies to remain, but in other ways, she re-strengthened the centre. The Scott Report of June 1989 had seemed to have ‘successfully recommended’ that many administrative responsibilities be devolved to the 10 Regional Offices. (NSW Department of Education and Training, 1998, 240.) However, in 1995, it was announced that the Regional Offices would be abolished in the next year. Returning the Department to its historic home in Bridge St. after Minister Metherell had earlier announced the government’s decision to sell it was a further important symbolic signal of her centralising intent.

As Metherell had been unfolding his radical reform strategies, two major inquiries into curriculum and governance were developing their separate agendas for change. In 1989, the *Report of the Committee of Review of NSW Schools*, chaired by
the former Senator, and Commonwealth Liberal Education Minister under Fraser, Sir John Carrick, was released; and in the same year, Brian Scott, the principal of W.D. Scott - a private management consulting firm - undertook a management review of the NSW system, reporting under the title: *School-Centred Education: Building a More Responsive State School System*. These two reports were to shape New South Wales education for the succeeding decade. The 2002 Vinson Inquiry credited them with setting in train a whole series of important reform measures that included:

dezoning, an increase in the number of selective schools, the creation of a number of senior (post-compulsory) and multi-campus colleges (i.e. Yrs 7-10 campuses feeding into a senior campus) and changes to the funding and approval processes for non-government schools ..... It is clear that New South Wales has moved in the past 15 years from a state in which the vast majority of high schools were comprehensive, to one in which selectivity and specialisation have become more common. (Vinson, 2002, 1/xix and 2/5, note 6.)

In the event, the changes did not seriously threaten the hegemony of the Department and the Teachers’ Federation. In 1992, a limited amount of devolution was granted (though only within 10 of the former regions) in the form of ‘Clusters’, each containing about 14 schools, and each led by a Cluster Director whose task was to be a ‘change agent’.

Minister Metherell had committed himself to implementing the Scott report, including its recommendations for restructuring schools management on corporate principles and a genuinely radical devolution of power to schools and their local communities. Potentially, the most radical of these reforms were those which would have replaced the ‘transfer system’ for staffing schools (whereby teachers accumulated sufficient points to gain a transfer by teaching in remote and difficult-to-staff schools) with authorising schools to hire their own teaching staff. These staffing proposals were blocked by the Teachers’ Federation under the more accommodating Minister Chadwick, and Scott resigned in frustration in 1994.

The appointment in 1992 of Dr Ken Boston, Director General of Education in South Australia, to the top post in New South Wales, did nothing to weaken the centralising tendencies of the NSW administration, and in 1995, the Regional Offices were abolished. Following Dr Boston from South Australia was Dr Peter Cuttance,
who instituted a system of ‘quality assurance’ that required schools to examine their own performance with external assistance from local communities and businesses. (Sherington, 1995, 180.) In July, 1991, the Sydney Morning Herald published a series of ‘Report Card’ articles that identified schools affected by the ‘planning blight’ of competition from selective and other specialist schools. Not surprisingly, this and other ‘naming and blaming’ articles in the media had the effect of reinforcing the Teachers’ Federation’s historic opposition to the publication of ‘league table’ data on schools’ performance – an opposition that ultimately was extended to the scrutiny of teachers’ performance. 8

Curriculum

In the early years of the Greiner government, Minister Metherell had pursued ‘excellence’ in the curriculum via such measures as an expansion of the range of selective schools (such as ‘technology high schools’), and tried to encourage the creative arts and Asian languages. Metherell had also wanted to include the student’s Tertiary Entrance Score on his or her Higher School Certificate – whether or not the student had undertaken courses that qualified for tertiary entrance. (Sherington, 1995, 175.). But where the Department did not support a Ministerial proposal, it simply was not implemented - and the Department’s strong centralised control over the school curriculum was never seriously challenged.

The 1990 Education Reform Act replaced the Board of Secondary Education with the Board of Studies, which had its functions greatly expanded. The Board of Studies was given responsibility for curriculum development across the entire school system, i.e. from Kindergarten to Year 12 (K-12). In addition, it became responsible for the credentialling of students both for the School Certificate and the HSC and also for the registration of non-government schools.

In 1992, new patterns of studies began to emerge for both certificates. For the HSC student, a great deal more flexibility was granted. The HSC Pathways policy enabled students gradually to accumulate credits for the studies undertaken instead of requiring these to be completed within a specific timeframe. Repeating individual
courses to upgrade results became possible, as did accelerated progression, combining part-time study and work, recognition for prior learning, and credit transfers towards post-school education or training.

**Victoria: 1992-1999**

**Governance**

In Victoria, the broad policy agenda that the Kennett government brought to power in 1992 was similar to that with which the Greiner government had started four years previously, but it was able to be progressed much further. This was because it was supported by the preferences of the hegemonic institutional structure.

In the first three years of the Government, actual spending on education increased by 2.6 per cent – a dramatic drop in real money terms (Refer Fig. 4.1), while the rest of Australia averaged an 18 per cent increase. 11,600 education workers' jobs were lost including those of 8,000 teachers. In 1992, Victoria had the lowest teacher:student ratio in Australia: 15.8 for primary classes and 10.8 for secondary. By 1998, one third of the 1300 schools had class sizes of 30 or more, some with maximum sizes nearing 40. *(The Age, 10.3.98)*.

Possibly even more traumatic for public schools than the loss of resources was the fact that they were suddenly plunged into a fiercely competitive environment. Competition for ‘market share’ had always been thought of in terms of the three sectors of schools education. Now, though, public schools were forced to compete with each other. Though zoning had for long been honoured more in the breach than in actual fact, it now was abolished as a matter of policy. To level the playing field somewhat, school principals were granted the right to expel troublesome, hard-to-teach students. Students were assessed centrally (via the Learning Assessment Project tests) along with standardised measures of performance and reporting criteria. In this way, schools were subtly encouraged to redistribute resources away from students with learning difficulties or special needs to students with ability who could perform well in tests.
The ‘top’ 100 secondary schools’ (those with the largest numbers of highest-scoring VCE students) were publicly listed – a development that enabled schools in middle-class areas to hone their competitive edge, but which devastated many of their less well-resourced competitors. High achieving students were creamed off as a result of the increasingly aggressive competitive tactics of both public and private schools, resulting in a growing number of residual, ‘loser’ schools with deteriorating expectations.

In the meantime, the government confined its consultation and requests for advice to sources that could be counted on to support its policies – like the business representatives who were invited to become members of the Implementation Committee for Schools of the Third Millennium. The teaching union was dropped off the invitation list, as were those parent organisations that had been favoured by the previous Labor Governments. Funding was withdrawn from any groups that were critical of current policy directions. Teaching Service Order 140 tightened sanctions against whistle blowers. This was despite the fact that the Government in Opposition had benefited greatly from ‘inside information’ and public criticism of the VCE supplied by Kevin Donnelly, then a school teacher in the State Government’s employ, subsequently a candidate for Liberal pre-selection for the seat of Kew, and now education research officer for the conservative, Kemp-backed, Institute of Public Affairs. Expenditure on curriculum development and research conducted by the Department was cut in favour of this work being done by consultants (Donnelly himself was one who was exceptionally well rewarded), though there were no contracts for those perceived to be critical of the Government.

Some of the casualties of these drastic cuts bore directly on schools’ capacities to cater for their socially disadvantaged students. Truant officers to follow up non-attenders were dispensed with. ESL provision was diminished. Remedial teachers or teachers that could be released from their classes to give some special attention to small groups were cut – including 400 special education teachers. Student welfare cooperation was a serious casualty at school level. Eligibility for students with a disability was stringently tightened – 595 disabled children were refused extra help in 1989 (Herald-Sun 23.5.98), as was eligibility for the Education Maintenance
Allowance, which was now available only to holders of the Commonwealth Health Card. Late applicants for this assistance were automatically ruled out and schools were encouraged to retain half the amount allocated to each recipient family help plug gaps left by their own funding shortfalls.

The education flagship for the new government was the *Schools of the Future* program (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 47) which devolved much greater responsibilities to school communities than has ever occurred in New South Wales. Especially significant for the concerns of this thesis was the introduction of global budgeting, for this was the vehicle that the Liberal government claimed to be using to target additional resources to schools serving disadvantaged students.

The School Global Budget introduced in 1994 had six elements. The Core funding element covered salaries of teachers and non-teaching staff, and curriculum support. Four elements were designed to reflect ‘the special circumstances of students and schools’: Students with Disabilities and Impairments, Students with Special Learning Needs, Students from Non English Speaking Backgrounds, and Rurality and Isolation. The sixth element, Priority Programs, funded ‘statewide initiatives or special programs found in a limited number of schools’.* Premises funding*, included under ‘core funding’ in the 1996 School Global Budget, ultimately was handled separately. (Caldwell, 1996, 6.) However, no attention was paid to the issue of the further funding implications of concentrations of disadvantage. The closest the new system got to this concept was to develop an ‘index of poverty’ for the schools participating in the Early Literacy and Research Project. This was based simply on the numbers of families in receipt of the Education Maintenance Allowance. (Caldwell, 1996, 4) In support of Minister Hayward’s view that ‘the funding from both the Federal and State Governments should be attached to the student (and thus the family)’ a Student Resource Index (SRI) provided the formula ‘for allocating funds to each student’. (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 49.) This individualistic approach was born of the Minister’s scepticism in relation to the notion of structural inequality.

The Departmental leader of the group that developed the Special Learning Needs Index explained that Minister Hayward did not want to use census data because
it picked up on the characteristics of students' communities, rather than on their individual characteristics. (Hind, 2003) Having overcome the barriers posed by financial poverty during his own school days, Hayward was unwilling to be persuaded that students could be disadvantaged by their socio-economic status. He insisted on the index being based on the learning needs of individual students, even though this meant having to develop a new index and conduct a new census. The Department mounted a Co-operative Research Project with the assistance of Peter Hill and Phillip Holmes-Smith (both formerly of the Department, but at this time, working from Melbourne University). The SRI became the Special Learning Needs Index (SLNI). The variables it acknowledged were those of language background, Disability, and Eligibility for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

The question then became "What weight should be given to each of the variables?" Hill and Holmes-Smith used regression modelling to draw conclusions about the coefficients of disadvantage and learning. Following the collection of schools' data, 'every school was given a score on the index'. (Hind, 2003)

Hayward's direction to his policy-developers to focus, for the purposes of the SLNI, on the learning needs of the individual student rather than on the social milieu from which they came is a further striking example of the conservative reluctance to confront issues arising from structural inequality.

Curriculum

Critics of the Schools of the Future observed that the responsibilities that increasingly were devolved to schools were mainly of an administrative nature and did not extend to schools being able to adapt the curriculum in response to local needs:

Schools had to assume responsibility for many devolved administrative processes yet found that real devolution of decision making was circumscribed by central policy dictates. (Ellis, 1999, 2.)

All schools were required to adhere to the Curriculum and Standards Framework developed by the Board of Studies in 1995 - a development that Minister Hayward
attributed to his ‘discovery’, on taking office, that ‘schools taught what they liked’. (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 56) (Mr Hayward’s academic collaborator in the work from which this citation has been taken, Professor Caldwell, did not consider it necessary to correct this wildly inaccurate observation).

In relation to disadvantage, the government also stressed a curriculum theme which was becoming prominent at the national level – that the most useful contribution that governments can make to the reduction of educational disadvantage could be overcome through an effective literacy program. An Early Literacy Research Project, was conducted in 27 trial schools ‘that could demonstrate ‘a clear need in the literacy area and had nominated literacy as a school priority’.

In the meantime, in addition to schools closures and amalgamations, the loss of teaching positions, and budgetary cuts in other areas, schools personnel were confronted with a bewildering array of other government curriculum initiatives, administrative changes, and auditing instruments, including School Charters; the Keys to Life program; the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) (named by the Minister’s wife as she and her husband were walking one day in the Botanical Gardens (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 58)); the Principals’ Performance Management System (conducted at Principal Accreditation Centres); Computerised Administrative Systems Environment in Schools (CASES); the Personal Professional Development Program; and the Professional Recognition Program.

Notwithstanding, by 1997, Caldwell was able to report that surveys conducted as part of the Co-operative Research Project on the establishment of Schools of the Future demonstrated ‘...that principals, by an overwhelming margin, preferred the new arrangement to the old, even though there were issues to be resolved in implementation’. (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 100.) This finding was confirmed three years later by the Ministerial Working Party (the Connors Review), which found that there was ‘...strong support for self-managing schools’ and that ‘Self-managing schools have been a successful innovation for Victoria’. (Connors, 2000b, 6.)

The major curriculum thrust of the government was the restoration of academic control over the senior secondary curriculum. On October 13, 1992,
Minister Hayward explained his motivation to a meeting of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, and subsequently provided this account:

The VCAB members were somewhat wary of this meeting because they were extremely aware that I had been one of the harshest critics of the VCE. We made small talk for a while over coffee so that I could put them at their ease. I then gave it to them straight. I told them that I was gravely concerned about the VCE and I directed them to make immediate improvements to it. In particular, I told them they had to improve the quality of the study designs, to reduce the workload for students and teachers, to increase the amount of external assessment for students to at least 50 per cent and to establish an independent inquiry into the fairness and effectiveness of the assessment process. Especially the discredited ‘verification’ process. I told them that these improvements were essential to rebuild public confidence in the VCE. VCAB acted quickly and carried out my directions. To deal with the curriculum aspects of the VCE, committees with a strong university presence were established, and these reviewed, strengthened and re-accredited all the courses. (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 59.)

In this manner, was the VCE to be re-academicised. But, in reality, the process had begun even before the change of government in 1992. In the face of the relentless attacks from different sections of the dominant Penington-led Advocacy Coalition, the last Labor Education Minister, Neil Pope, approved a number of changes, outlined below by Howard Kelly, the senior Departmental Administrator in charge of the implementation of the VCE under both the Labor, and subsequent Coalition Governments:

Before the end of 1992, the Labor Government had commenced the modification of the Maths Study Design and had reconfigured and tightened it up; this was supervised by Professor John Mack from Sydney University. It had a review of English chaired by Professor Clive Probyn that abolished the oral (element of the examination and) increased the external assessment to 33 (per cent). It had reduced the number of texts (from which students could choose) from 60 to 40. It had decided to be rid of the Australian Studies course as a compulsory procedure. It had also started to move to tighten up procedures around Verification ...... abolished the study called Commerce in Society. (Kelly, 2003)

Kelly’s view that the ‘inclusivity’ of the Certificate had already been severely jeopardised before 1992 is supported by Jack Keating, Ministerial Advisor to Joan Kirner during the VCE implementation years and former staffer at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board before it became the Board of Studies (BOS). His
insights into the forces that actually bypassed the successive governments to work directly through the Office of the BOS are testimony to the operation of the dominant Advocacy Coalition:

The line has been that the VCE was fine until Kennett got his hands on it. But I think its flexibility had been compromised as much by the Office of the Board and (its) Field of Studies Committee – mainly through the heavy work requirements and the Curriculum Assessment Tasks (CATS). That is, there was never (and there still is not) an admission that the design had limitations. Victoria was the most reluctant of all states to accept VET in schools, and it wasn’t the government that was doing this: it was the Board, and especially the Office of the Board. (Keating, 2003b)

When the Coalition came to power, their attack on the VCE was in fact more muted than had been threatened. Certainly, they increased the proportion of external assessment to 50 per cent in most subjects (though not for Arts/Technology studies) and they replaced the Verification process with the General Achievement Test. However they did retain the work requirements in order to link the VCE to Vocational Education and Training through the Dual Recognition Program. Dual Recognition was a progressive step in the direction of integrated Certification arrangements, as recommended by the Schools Council which was urging state systems and their accreditation authorities to explore ‘the merits and feasibility of single or common Year 12 Certification arrangements. Such arrangements would incorporate both general and vocational education courses, as recognised through the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (the precursor to the Australian Qualifications Framework). (NBEET, 1994, 12-17) The idea was to make the Year 12 Certificate more accessible for students who wished to study vocational subjects while keeping alive the possibility of a university place:

Under the program, students in the senior years of secondary school could concurrently study for subjects that would earn them credits towards their VCE, and also subjects provided by a technical and further education (TAFE) college that would earn them credits towards the relevant TAFE certificate. Very importantly, part of this program incorporated practical ‘at work’ training in a business or industry for a number of hours each week. (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998,61.)
Ultimately, though, the potential of this initiative to expand the inclusiveness of the VCE was curtailed by the use of the universities admission process (in Queensland as well) to select Year 12 graduates into some TAFE courses - a development which the Schools Council thought 'could increase the influence of the university sector over the vocational and training sector, and further residualise TAFE options by publishing the lower TER scores required for admission. (NBEET, 1994, 16.)

**NSW and Victoria Compared: Carrick/ Scott and Caldwell/ Hayward**

The most striking observation that can be made about this comparison is that, while they extensively reviewed experience in a range of overseas countries, Caldwell & Hayward totally ignored the major initiative of their New South Wales Liberal colleagues – the Carrick report. This may well have been due to their perception that reform in the northern state had not gone far enough.

The very unusual character of the 1989 Report of the Carrick Committee illustrates the nature of the dominant New South Wales Advocacy coalition in times of Liberal rule. Normally, a government review will produce a relatively small number of recommendations. Typically, recommendations will flow from the argument of the report and will come at the end of each chapter. Their wording might be quite precise but they will usually be fairly general in scope. The Carrick Report is very different. It produced no fewer than 275 recommendations, most of them pitched at a high level of detail (for example Recommendation 7.6.27: ‘In the conduct of the Schools Appeals Tribunal, a written record of proceedings shall be kept’ (Carrick, 1989, 107.)

The distribution of the recommendations - among 11 of the 16 chapters – reveals the difficult balancing act that the Carrick Committee had to perform between acknowledging the issues raised by the public, and attending to the priorities of the Department.
Table 4.4: Distribution of Recommendations in the Carrick Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title of Chapter</th>
<th>Nos. of recomm’s.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Nature of Education</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Parental Role in Education and the Importance of Early Childhood</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Provision of Education</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Board of Studies</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Certificates of Education</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The School and the Teacher</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Equity in Education</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Evaluation and Assessment</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Administrative Structure</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the one hand, the Inquiry could claim that it had consulted widely. It succeeded in attracting an impressive 1200 submissions (Carrick, 1989, 2-3.) The concerns voiced by the public formed the basis for the discursive, often erudite, discussion in the chapters that did not produce recommendations. On the other hand, the extraordinary range of detailed recommendations came in the areas in which the Department - the centrepiece of the dominant Advocacy coalition – was most keenly interested: the provision of schooling in its vast State, the curriculum, schools and their teachers, creating the impression that the Department tolerated the erudite argumentation just so long as it got the ‘nitty gritty’ recommendations it wanted.

Coming nearly a decade later than Bessant and Hogan and West, the Carrick Report did devote a chapter (13) to ‘Equity in Education’. Much of the chapter, however, was devoted to the promotion of freedom of choice for parents. Within the public system, acceptance of this principle would lead to de-zoning. For the private system, it would lead to ‘as-of-right’ per capita funding for every student – though with full public financial accountability, adherence to the ‘needs’ principle, and allocated in a way that would not provide disincentives for private effort. The Inquiry stated its approach to educational disadvantage in the following way:
Clearly, the school on its own or even in close teamwork with other government agencies cannot be expected to resolve fully the educational handicaps of the disadvantaged child. Any further extension of limited teacher resources into community liaison work could further weaken the school’s essential purpose of education. And yet, the central dilemma remains: it is difficult to teach a child while significant disadvantage limits the child’s capacity and willingness to respond. (Carrick, 1989, 218)

While noting the importance of the effective coordination of government services that are needed to support school students, it opted for ‘the problem to be brought to the community itself’, suggesting that the churches, professions, community leaders, voluntary service organisations, and parents all have a role to play in reducing educational inequity. Significantly, the Report gives no indication that its authors understood the structural causes of educational disadvantage – the steady accumulation of resources by ‘the traditional users of education’, often to the detriment of those less privileged. Rather, its approach was individualist and voluntarist: with luck, sufficiently large quantities of volunteer effort might just have some impact in countering some of the effects of socio-economic disadvantage.

The Scott Review (New South Wales Education Portfolio, 1990) generated an instructive companion work. Like its Carrick contemporary, it advanced a large number of detailed recommendations – in this case, no fewer than 370! However, as the central devolutionary thrust of these recommendations was unacceptable to the dominant advocacy coalition, the government did not act on most of the recommendations and, as already noted, Scott resigned from his ongoing advisory post.

A contrasting case is presented by The Future of Schools: Lessons from the Reform of Public Education, by Brian J. Caldwell and Don K. Hayward. For much of the time (despite the co-authorship of Caldwell - a Professor at the University of Melbourne), this is a party political ideological tract. It is difficult to take seriously such sweeping and unsubstantiated propositions and generalisations as the following:

Under the previous government, a group of bureaucrats had been working away on ‘school reorganization’ for some years. We reviewed their work and it was abundantly clear that
about fifty-five schools should be closed immediately. In fact, the previous government had planned to close these schools, but had lacked the political courage to implement the plans.³

(41)

On the whole, these bureaucrats and administrative structures add nothing to the quality of learning of the student...(49)⁹

For a decade under Labor Party rule, Education in Victoria was run by teacher union officials. Under the centralized agreements, these officials virtually told the Education Department what it could or could not do...local union dominated committees could veto any decision by a school principal (p 73).

In Chapter 3, I characterised David Kemp as an ideologue because of his commitment to the view that the schools system should ultimately be fully privatised. Minister Kemp provides a fascinating contrast to his Victorian counterpart, Minister Hayward, who has claimed that his ultimate goal is the universalisation of the public system of schooling. Does this mean that the Liberal Party has been deeply riven on the question of schools policy, or is the difference largely one of semantics?

What Hayward means by a universal public system arises from his desire to obliterate the traditional distinction between public and private schools. In his view, any independent school that receives substantial funding from the public purse automatically becomes qualified as a public school. In this way, the traditional private school becomes the model for the public school of the future. So the difference between Hayward and Kemp is largely a semantic one.

The ‘Utopia’ that Hayward and Caldwell propose leaves no room for the kinds of balances that would be achieved in a New South Wales-type settlement about a proposed education reform. Hayward favours any changes that blur the distinctions between the public and the private. Thus, all public schools should become fee paying institutions. (Caldwell 155 ff). And governments should ignore the differing levels of ‘endowments’ of schools in receipt of public funding (Caldwell and Hayward, 1998, 151.) – an anticipation of Minister Kemp’s later reforms at the Commonwealth level.
The most striking observation that can be taken from this review of experience during the period of Liberal hegemony at the State level is this: Liberal approaches to the alleviation of socio-economic disadvantage are inevitably – for a combination of ideological and philosophical reasons – individualistic in nature. True, Liberal attempts to mitigate the effects of socio-economic disadvantage can include additional funding of collective bodies, such as schools, and such policies are to be commended. But such funding has always been confined to aggregating cases of putative individual disadvantage. The further step that Labor governments have been prepared to take for more than two decades – to provide additional resources to concentrations of disadvantage - which Rizvi and Kemmis date back to a seminal article by Bennett in 1982 (Rizvi, 1987, 51) – has not been one that Liberal governments will take. For those of us who see merit in this collective approach – though not necessarily or even philosophically on social democratic grounds – this partisan cleavage poses at least two dilemmas. First, it perpetuates a situation in which the schools that Jean Blackburn described as having ‘the hardest task’ receive the least support. These are the schools with the largest numbers of socially disadvantaged students. Invariably, they are located in socially deprived localities within which they will inevitably occupy the bottom rung of a local hierarchy of schools. They are the schools whose teachers Pat Thomson describes as having to cope daily with the ‘emotional and social time-order economies of discipline and welfare’. (Thomson, 2002, 49.) They are the schools Teese describes as ‘most exposed to failure’. Secondly, though less importantly, the partisan cleavage ensures that those who advocate policies aimed at reversing this inequitable policy direction are left open to charges of political bias.

Phase 3: the 2000s: Labor’s response to the new agenda

The work of composing this section has been made easier by the serendipitous appearance of two major statements on education policy – one in each of the two States I am studying. A little over a year ago, Professor Tony Vinson released the Report of his comprehensive examination of the New South Wales public education system. (Vinson, 2002) And in Victoria - in the week in which I began the final draft of this chapter - Minister Lynne Kosky released her ‘Blueprint for Government Schools’ with its seven ‘flagship strategies’. (Kosky, 2003) The documents are not easily compared, mainly because they have very different origins – and therefore
different status. The Vinson investigation was initiated from outside government, by
the New South Wales Teachers Federation and the Federation of Parents and Citizens
Associations of New South Wales. The Report’s recommendations were accepted in
early 2003 by the newly returned Carr government as the blueprint for system
development over the next decade The Government responded to the Report by
setting-up a Council of Public Education (on which the Director General sits). While
implementation of some of the Report’s key recommendations – for example,
professional development for teachers and the reduction of class sizes – is occurring,
received wisdom is that these changes have been made to mollify the teachers’ union,
and that detailed attention to Vinson’s other recommendations (although they have
been costed) is unlikely to occur in the current funding climate. The task of the Public
Education Council appears to be to map out long-range strategic directions for the
Department rather than to ‘implement Vinson’. Nevertheless, Vinson’s is a carefully
researched account of contemporary schooling in his State, and his Report is likely to
be used as an important resource for policy-makers for some time to come.

The much-awaited Victorian ‘Blueprint’ purports to: ‘outline the
Government’s reform agenda for the government school system, which includes the
implementation of the Department’s “Flagship Strategies” ’. (Kosky, 2003, 2). While
a slighter work than Vinson’s three-volume report, as the Minister’s own statement it
enjoys a higher status. In the following synthesis of my argument, when appropriate I
will cite these two contemporary documents - notwithstanding their considerable
differences - and draw comparisons wherever possible. Of the 87 recommendations
of the Vinson Report, the only one that seems to have been picked up by Kosky is the
provision of incentives to attract teachers to schools with significant concentrations of
students with acute learning problems. This apparent lack of overlap in the policy
concerns of the two States may have been due to differences in their politico-
administrative cultures. I shall speculate below on the possible reasons for Kosky’s
silence on several of the ‘Vinson-type’ issues that had previously been identified by
Kirby in a report to her, (DEET, 2000).
New South Wales, 1995 to the present

The independent auspice of the Vinson Inquiry enabled the report to say things that would not be found in a government-sponsored equivalent:

Since the 1990s, educational priorities have been much more influenced by political and/or economic considerations, and more subject to political mandate than in the past. (3/115). 10

As will be readily apparent, my own exploration of ‘Phase 3’ developments within the New South Wales system has been greatly assisted by the work of Professor Vinson and his colleagues.

Governance

In 1995, in a move that administrators and teachers furtively referred to as ‘re-centralisation’, regions and clusters had been abolished. One rural school principal submitted to the Vinson Inquiry that ‘The previous cluster model was starting to work well when it was restructured’ (Vinson, 2002, 3/111), while a shire representative ventured the view that ‘Bureaucracy needs to be brought back to the regional level’ (Vinson, 2002, 3/109) Stopping short of recommending the reinstatement of regions and clusters, the Inquiry nevertheless proposed the establishment at the centre of a new policy and planning unit to work to the Director-General (ibid, Recommendation 12, 3/122). This move back to more centralised administrative structures was not inconsistent with New South Wales’ slow march towards local decision-making—albeit on largely peripheral matters: by the end of 1997, the Department had been able to report that more than 70 per cent of schools now had School Councils. (NSW Department of Education and Training, 1998, 232). In contrast to Victoria, though, the School Global Budgets do not seem to have been a motivator in persuading parents to assume responsibility for the management of schools.

The Vinson Inquiry considered that, at $253 million in 2002 (Vinson, 2002, 3/141), they constituted only about 5 per cent of the total DET budget for schools of $5.5b (3/143). Their contribution to local decision-making had therefore been trivial:
(This figure compares starkly with Victoria’s, where ‘Around ninety per cent of the Department’s budget for school education is provided to schools via the School Global Budget’. (Connors, 2000b, 54.)

In the meantime, the organisation of New South Wales schooling continues to change – always in the direction of more differentiation and strengthening of the fundamentally meritocratic nature of the system:

In 2002, (New South Wales had) 28 academically selective or partially selective high schools, 2 additional schools that select their full student body (performing arts), and additional 30 specialist schools that select some students, 5 stand-alone senior high schools, and 33 multi-campus high schools (including 3 that are also selective), with two more to come. This makes a total of 98 secondary schools/campuses that are specialised in some way, leaving just under 300 comprehensive high schools. Overall then, 25 per cent or about one in four of all high schools in New South Wales are now specialised, with a significant number partially or fully selective. Another 30 are single sex. (Vinson, 2002, 2/11.)

This represents a dramatically different arrangement from that in Victoria, where the official position is that the public school system has only two schools that recruit students on the basis of entry examinations (Melbourne Boys’ High School and MacRobertson Girls’ High School). Families searching for academic specialisation in the southern State traditionally have been more likely to find it in the non-government system. However, many government high schools are now following the example of University High School and introducing accelerated programs and programs for gifted and talented students. All such activities involve a degree of selectivity. Chapter 7 describes the impact of this development on the public systemic schools.

Vinson characterises the continuing debate about selectivity in the New South Wales secondary schooling system in terms of the competing values of communitarianism and individual achievement. (Vinson, 2002, 2/30.) It is not the business of this thesis to be partial in this debate. My primary interest in the issue is to examine whether the presence of selective institutions reinforces or weakens structural barriers for disadvantaged secondary students in their localities – a question that will be addressed more fully in Chapter 7. A secondary consideration is that the State’s commitment to educational selectivity appears to provide further justification
for the regime dynamics framework’s characterisation of New South Wales education policy as 'meritocratic'.

A major aim of the Government’s largest structural change in recent times—the ‘integration’ of TAFE into the Department of Education and Training (DET)—was to bring the schools education and vocational education and training activities of the Education portfolio closer together. One of the organisational consequences of this restructure has been the establishment, since 1999, of ten multi-campus colleges. These:

...split secondary education into two stages, roughly covering the compulsory and post-compulsory stages of education, with some or all students moving from one campus to another for the senior years.. (Vinson, 2002, 2/38).

This is a trend that has also been visible in Victoria since the late 1980s, following Jean Blackburn’s interest in modernising secondary school structures and Tasmania’s successful experiment with senior secondary colleges. The aim has been to create more flexible, ‘adult’, learning environments for post-compulsory students that, for example, make it a more manageable proposition for students to combine school study, work and training. However, the Vinson Report reveals that the New South Wales multi-campus colleges have been controversial, as their impact on schools in a given area is much the same as that of specialist schools in the localities in which they are established, in that they quickly create ‘planning blight’ in the form of a ‘brain-drain’ of many of the most capable students and teachers. (Vinson, 2002, 2/36). The positional nature of much education provision seems impervious to equitable planning. Not all schools in a given area can be ‘selective’—this would be a contradiction in terms. Yet, what proportion of selectivity or other special status arrangements can be tolerated before the balance tilts towards inequity for the students who have not been able to make the grade as candidates for the specialist institutions? Disappointingly, Vinson also reports that the multi-campus have not yet resulted in greater parity of esteem between the two main, differentiated ‘pathways’ for senior secondary students in New South Wales.
At the other end of the spectrum, New South Wales has been unswerving in its determination to retain specific purpose programs that supplement resources for its most disadvantaged schools. In 1996, the Education Department took over the direct, specific purpose funding of the State’s disadvantaged schools, in doing so, preserving the name, ‘Disadvantaged Schools Program’ which had disappeared from the Commonwealth’s lexicon on the election of the Howard Government. Soon after the abolition of the regions, the Director of Equity Programs, Lyndsay Connors, initiated a review of the State DSP because it has been ‘entirely based on the regions: it had almost no systemic identity left, and was like nine separate programs.’ (Connors, 2000a) The purpose of the review, therefore, was to save the program by restructuring it ‘to correspond with the new system structure’:

As part of this ‘review’ of the program, we changed its focus for the first three years to ‘literacy’ (again this was a bit of a device, since it was pretty well focused on literacy anyway but much of the funding was being frittered in some regions on rather vague activities favoured by well-entrenched committees). It was probably a very ‘accidentally’ smart move, because (in) no time later Kemp took the DSP money along with ESL and re-badged them as literacy and our DSP program survives within his program guidelines, still focused on the schools with the highest concentrations of low SES students. (Connors, 2000a)

Two years later, the NSW-based Centre for Equity in Education, headed by long-term public education campaigner, Joan Brown, developed the concept of the ‘Full Service School’ to provide a ‘one-stop shop’ for adolescents whose school learning needed to be supported by a range of health, welfare and employment services. In 1998, the Commonwealth adopted the name – if not the concept - producing its own ‘Full Service Schools’ program (Vinson, 2002, 1/51, n. 81) though with a somewhat reduced scope. The Commonwealth version was targeted on students ‘at risk’, in particular, those who had been forced to stay on at, or return to, school following the withdrawal of Commonwealth benefits to unemployed young people who were not in full-time education or training.

In response to this situation, the Commonwealth directed resources, in the form of the Full-Service Schools Program, into ‘hot spots’ where the problem was particularly concentrated. (Vinson, 2002, 1/51).
The New South Wales Department immediately initiated the *Gateway* program that built on the Commonwealth initiative, providing services to students who were disengaging from school. Administered by the Equity Coordination Unit of the Student Services and Equity Directorate of the Department, *Gateway* enables teams of six education officers to work with principals and schools on locally-relevant responses to young peoples’ disengagement from mainstream schooling or training. (Vinson, 2002, 2/58)

Curriculum

When, in 1995, the Labor Education Minister, John Aquilina, announced the latest review of the HSC, he gave the reviewer (Dr. Barry McGaw of the Australian Council of Educational Research) very little room for manoeuvre, explaining that the review was to be ‘based on ... the retention of the HSC as a rigorous, competitive, externally-based end-of-year credential’. In that statement, too, is evidence that he had studied the public relations failure surrounding the VCE exercise. It is hardly surprising, then, that the McGaw review was regarded as ‘a bit of a non-event.’ Keating found that none of the major constituencies could identify any substantial reasons for the review other than the on-going problems associated with post-school transition. An air of ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ prevailed, with minor adjustments being made to the certificate that had substantially been in place for three decades. Some of the reforms attempted during the VCE exercise were explicitly rejected: the integration of academic and employment-related studies; tipping the balance towards school-based assessment; separating the award of the certificate from the TER. To quote Keating:

> The HSC is not strongly ideological, but is more an expression of community traditions or trust, reinforced by a political establishment....The stability of the HSC is one of the outcomes of the continued contract between the bourgeoisie and the state in NSW, and especially the Labor state. (Keating, 1999, 213).

The state acts as the powerful custodian of the settlement reached with the middle class and operates through its institutional links with the education community, and with the general approval of the media. Keating describes these relationships as ‘a
dynamic form of corporatism’. (Keating, 1999, 213.) Victorian policy-makers – whatever their persuasion – can only look on in envy at the resulting degree of consensus in NSW.

The Vinson Report dealt in considerable detail with curriculum issues in Chapters 2, 3 and 10 of its Report. Its discussion of the relationship between the Board of Studies and schools is an interesting variation – placed in the New South Wales context - of Richard Teese’s concern about the distance between the Victorian assessment and certification authority and the school as the source of pedagogical responsibility. (Teese, 2000, 102.)

(The) underlying structural problem .has its roots in the fact that a statutory authority (The Board of Studies) acts separately in generating curricula, leaving the relevant Department of State (The DET) responsible for finding the wherewithal – including the human resources needed to implement the Board’s decisions. These arrangements so obviously violate the requirements of good government and effective administration as to invite the straightforward ‘solution’ of re-integrating the Board of Studies and its administrative arm, the Office of the Board of Studies into the DET. (Vinson, 2002, 1/73).

Predictably, nothing so radical as the reintegration of the Board of Studies into the Department was recommended. Instead, a New South Wales-style compromise was suggested, viz. that the Office of the Board – whose staff would become public servants rather than retaining their status as statutory officers - be relocated back into the central Department, while the Board retain its authority in relation to curriculum development and assessment. The aim was to protect the independence of the statutory authority, while simultaneously ensuring that the Department remained firmly at the centre of the dominant advocacy coalition to protect the hegemonic interests. Relocating the Board’s Office would enable the Department once more to pick up the administrative reins and ‘question the practical feasibility and timing of proposed changes and act to raise or divert the resources needed for successful implementation, before ‘ signing off’ on curriculum processes that currently by-pass these processes. (Vinson, 2002, 1/73.)

The Inquiry also identified some continuing ambivalence about the location of vocational education within the curriculum:
While (some teachers) recognise that the HSC most cater to a range of students with diverse educational and career plans, they are worried that vocational training runs counter to the notion that the purpose of the HSC is to provide students with an intellectually demanding general education. (Vinson, 2002, xxiii.)

Elsewhere in the Report, the Inquiry questions ‘a narrowly conceived version of vocational education’ that focuses on technical competency, and expresses its concern that ‘the current VET curriculum in schools and TAFE is so tightly aligned with the template provided by the national Training Packages’. (Vinson, 2002, 3/71). This ambivalence seems to engender a certain conservatism in regard to new approaches to learning:

Apart from brief work experience programs and vocational-training course attachments to industry and community organisations…the Inquiry has (not) encountered much evidence of schools locating learning experiences in sites away from conventional school buildings (Vinson, 2002, 1/xv)

Such continuing scepticism surrounding work-related studies for school students must have implications for socially disadvantaged students. There is growing evidence that, given the apparently near universal interest of secondary students in gaining work-relevant skills, a system that enhances students’ capacity to gain productive employment goes at least some way towards challenging the undoubted cachet of the competitive academic curriculum. (Teese, 2003, 202.) As we shall see in the next section, Victoria has initiated further reforms, this time involving the introduction of a new non-academic qualification. Notwithstanding the limitations, (Teese, 2003, 207) the reforms illustrate the fact that - for reasons accounted for by the regime dynamics framework - Victoria is a State whose advocacy coalition structure is more likely to generate challenges – if only modest ones - to the established academic order.
Victoria: 1999 to the present

Governance

The critical decision taken by the incoming Labor Bracks Government about the governance of schools education was to locate mainstream schooling and post-compulsory education (including vocational education and training) under two separate Ministers – both within the education portfolio. Mary Delahunty was Education Minister, but she was obliged to share responsibility for the two post-compulsory years of schooling with Lyn Kosky, Minister for Post-Compulsory Education and Training, who combined her Education role with Ministerial responsibility for Finance. This unusual split created much speculation about the future of the VCE. But the dominant advocacy coalition that had fought so hard for the re-academicisation of the Certificate need not have worried. The Premier had no intention of re-visiting Blackburn. Instead, he was creating room for far-reaching reforms in vocational education – while leaving the VCE intact. This was his ‘outflanking’ strategy: one in which the continuities – at least in the mainstream - were at least as significant as the changes.

Each of the two Education Ministers commissioned major reviews – the mainstream schooling one chaired by New South Wales’ Lyndsay Connors and the post-compulsory vocational education one, by veteran youth training and employment policy analyst, Peter Kirby. The most visible and immediate result of the Connors Review was the establishment of the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission under the chairmanship of Barry Jones, former Federal Minister for Science in the Hawke Government. Of the two reports, the latter – with a markedly different brief - turned out to have a more immediate impact.

The Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria of 2000 (the Kirby Report) contained thirty-one recommendations. The implementation of just two of these – the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in the area of the curriculum, and the Local Learning and
Employment Networks - has the potential to radically change the post-compulsory landscape for students in Victoria. Kirby also recommended dramatic changes to the structure of the state level accreditation and assessment bodies. As depicted in Table 4.5, during 2001-2002, the Bracks Government embarked on a restructuring of the State’s central statutory authorities responsible for accreditation, certification and quality assurance. The Board of Studies (VBOS), responsible for the administration of the post-compulsory curriculum and examinations, was stripped of its accreditation and certification roles. These were bestowed on a new authority, the Victorian Qualifications Authority, chaired by Professor Helen Praetzel, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the RMIT University and former consultant for the Blackburn Inquiry.

Table 4 - 5: Changes to the administration of Accreditation, Assessment and Certification in Victoria, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Institutions (Pre 2000)</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>New Institutions (Post 2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Victorian Board of Studies (VBOS) | Accreditation  
Certification  
Quality assurance | Victorian Qualifications Authority |
| State Training Board (STB) | | |
| Adult, Community & Further Education Board (ACFEB) | | |
| Victorian Board of Studies (VBOS) | Maintenance of the Curriculum Standards Framework.  
Administration of the VCE.  
State-wide testing.  
Advice to the Govt. on institutional and program design | Curriculum & Assessment Authority  
Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (old State Training Board) |
| | Sub-regional level coordination to plan expanded options for students. | Local Learning and Employment Networks |

From the community’s perspective, the most ambitious element of the structural changes emanating from the Kirby Review has been the setting-up - toward the end of 2000 - of the Local Learning and Education Networks (LLENS) at the sub-regional or ‘meso’ level (one per 2-5 neighbouring municipalities, on the average). Informed by
overseas models (the OECD countries and especially Denmark and the UK), and building on a history of Australian attempts — especially that of the ‘Whittlesea Youth Commitment’ — to achieve lateral co-operation at the regional level, the Bracks Government allocated $27 million over 3 years to establish 31 LLENs, thereby ensuring state-wide coverage. The new ‘networks’ were charged with the responsibility of using ‘community-building’ approaches to link young people in their sub-regions into improved education, employment and training opportunities, based on the model of Specifically, their role was described as:

The development of innovative and distinctive partnerships and collaboration between education, training and employment providers and agencies that deliver improved outcomes for young people. (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission LLEN Performance Agreement, 2004 Schedule 1).

The LLENs are also required to contribute to the achievement of the Victorian Government’s stated target of ‘90 per cent of all young people completing Year 12 or equivalent by 2010.’ (Draft Wyn Bay LLEN Strategic Plan 2004-05). The formative evaluation of the LLENs, conducted in 2002, identified ‘widespread support’ for this ‘important innovation in education and training’ and recommended their further ‘endorsement, affirmation and support.’ (Centre for Work and Learning Studies, 2002, 23-24)

An early evaluation report on the LLEN scheme identified numerous ‘practical difficulties’ in the establishment phase: the lack of ‘fit’ between the LLEN boundaries and those of established community networks; the heavy reliance on voluntary labour; the perennial ‘culture clash’ between educators and employer and industry representatives; the conflict between Departmental timelines for achieving outcomes and the LLENs’ determination to ‘resist getting into action mode prematurely’ — to name a few. (Keating and Robinson, 2003). Notwithstanding such practical difficulties, there is genuine commitment — and intelligent strategising - occurring within many of the LLENs — my own WynBay LLEN included. Ours is a committee with a hybrid composition of school principals and teachers (n=3); TAFE/Higher Education representatives (2); representatives of private employment services (2); municipal youth workers (2); employer representatives (4, one of whom is the Chair
of the LLLEN); members of non-education community organisations (2) and one general ‘community member’. While it is impossible to attribute specific improvements to the LLLEN, we have observed ‘first-time’ collaboration in some areas (for example data gathering on students’ outcomes and follow-up of students who have exited school); as well as a high take-up of the VCAL (7 out of the 8 government schools, and two Catholic schools). These developments appear to be resulting in improved school retention among the ‘at risk’ students now undertaking VCAL, and a drop in the number of students leaving school before completing Year 12. New partnerships have been established, widening the circle of people directly involved in young people’s transition. And priorities for action have been able to be established. These include: stemming the increasing numbers of exiting pre-school leaving age girls; finding alternative ‘respite’ dispositions for students not coping with generic schooling; increasing the availability of local training places for young people; and investigating a decline in VET participation in one area of the sub-region. (Refer Appendix 4.1.)

On the positive side, after 3 years in the gestation, our local LLLEN is just beginning to envisage the possibility of an expanded role – in the co-ordination, not only of educational services for local youth, but also of the plethora of social support services that Pat Thomson and others have argued are needed by the most vulnerable students. On the negative side, there are early signs that the Government has already ‘lost interest’ in its sub-regional experiment and that funding is to be contracted. Although some business interests have been involved in the initial phase, at this stage there is little prospect of such interests being prepared to come up with the replacement funding that is likely to be needed. Of course, the LLLEN changes are still very new: however promising the auguries, it remains to be seen whether they will end up impacting in any telling way on outcomes for socially disadvantaged students – either the aggregate targets that the Government has imposed on the system for 2010 – or disaggregated outcomes for particular groups of students. Nevertheless, for the second time in a decade, Victoria has embarked on a brave experiment to reform the post-compulsory curriculum to make it more accessible for the two thirds of secondary school students who will not access university directly from school.
Curriculum

After the event, it was easy to see that the VCE (and the Labor government that promoted it) had paid the cost of not fully recognising the need for education policy-making in Victoria to accommodate the aspirations of ‘bourgeois culture’. The principles underpinning the VCE were broadly supported (‘increasing the access of working class children to secondary and university education’, for example). But, as Keating demonstrated, when the principles were codified into ‘greater equality of outcomes’, ‘parity of esteem’, ‘common frameworks and assessment tasks’ and ‘Australian studies’, the problem was interpreted as one of clashing ideologies. (Keating, 1999, 197),  Certainly, the VCE concepts clashed with a discourse that emphasised ‘differentiation,’ ‘individualism’, ‘merit’, ‘standards’, ‘standardisation’, ‘syllabi’, ‘percentage marks’, and ‘examinations’. ‘Equality of educational outcomes’ – a concept based on the belief that the same distribution of intellectual capacities is present in each social group of students, so that each group should also exhibit the same distribution of outcomes – was mischievously translated as an intention to graduate all Year 12 students with the same marks:

The crucial question is whether, at least to some extent, equity and excellence are incompatible. The Prime Minister asserts they are not. We suggest he is mistaken if ‘equity’ means not merely equality of opportunity, but equality of outcomes. The pursuit of excellence inevitably highlights the reality that in a particular field ……some students are more gifted than others.’ (Penington, Age, Feb 12 1993).

So the political lessons for Victoria seem to be: don’t ‘muck about’ with the university selection function of the Year 12 certificate, and when reforming upper secondary education, be careful to accommodate the aspirations of the middle class. And, in view of the fact that education policy now and forever is politicised, gaining bi-partisan support would seem to be an aim that, though difficult to achieve, is well worth pursuing. It will be interesting to see whether Premier Bracks (who seems impressed by Tony Blair and his ‘Third Way’ political consensus) is more capable than his predecessors in building a consensual environment for education policy-making in Victoria].
The major curriculum initiative of the Bracks Government has been the introduction of VCAL. (The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning)...This was a priority initiative of the new Victorian Qualifications Authority, which had been established in 2001. VCAL was trialled in 22 centres in 2002, and was available in 222 secondary colleges, TAFEs and Adult Community Centres in 2003. Standing alongside the more academically-oriented Victorian Certificate of Education, into which it is articulated, VCAL provides alternative pathways for Year 11 and 12 students to proceed into further education and training, and employment. VCAL has four compulsory strands of skills: Literacy and Numeracy, Industry Specific, Work Related, and Personal Development. The Certificate is awarded at three levels: Foundation, Intermediate and Senior.

It has to be acknowledged that the current Victorian strategy is of the kind that the Bracks Government no doubt fervently hopes will avoid 'frightening the horses': the supporters of the academic paradigm have been left, undisturbed, to continue with their agenda. The advantage of this approach is that Victoria may, this time round, avoid the disastrous battles that followed attempts by previous ALP governments to implement the major recommendations of the Blackburn report. The down-side is that, by leaving the academic dominance of the mainstream curriculum largely intact, the ultimate impact on structural inequity may be slight. (Teese, 2003b, 216-8.) The signs are not all that promising. As Keating reports:

...they're still at it. The Board (of Studies) made a decision to accept 'block credit' for some VET certificates – that is, accept them as full subjects in the VCE rather than putting them through a 'subject design grill'. But the Office of the Board is ignoring this by doing the traditional mapping exercises.

Hell, nothing has changed. I can remember VCAB and the BOS guarding the gates against VET in the credit transfer process – saying they could not conform to VCE requirements through the mapping processes.

And in the end, the results show: there are 5000 students doing VCAL in its trial year – when the Board claimed that the VCE suits all. We had to set up a Victorian Qualifications Authority to do this because we know that despite government policy, the Board simply would not do it. (Keating, 2003b)
NSW and Victoria Compared: Vinson and Kirby/Connors

In the previous section, it was claimed that the directions charted early in the Greiner years were to be influential in the decade following. For the most part, the style of the Carr years could be characterised as ‘steady as she goes’. What seems remarkable to a Victorian is not that the policy debates on secondary education reform in New South Wales are ongoing, but that they are conducted in an atmosphere of relative calm. Keating’s explanation for this is a political one: believing itself to be ‘the natural party of government’, New South Wales Labor has been careful to maintain a wide range of allegiances that go beyond its historic union and working-class networks, particularly in non-urban and provincial town electorates:

Unlike Victoria, (NSW) cannot afford to rely upon the urban vote. The mutual importance of the HSC to the non-urban bourgeoisie and the Labor Party is maintained under these circumstances....This is a formula for strict caution in education’. (Keating, 1999, 207.)

As we saw in the discussion above on Governance, there was a shift back to greater administrative centralisation, but other than that there were few initiatives.

The Vinson Report appeared two years after the two Victorian reports with which it can most usefully be compared. The differing emphases of the two sets of reports are discussed below, under the five themes identified in the Table. The differing auspices of the inquiries were clearly important. Having been commissioned by the State government, the Victorian reports were strongly concerned with issues of governance, while the NSW report, having been commissioned by teachers’ and parents’ organisations, revealed stronger foci on students and youth, disability, and teachers.
Table 4.6: Recent NSW and Victorian Reports compared: 
percentage of pages devoted to specific themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>NSW (Vinson)</th>
<th>Victoria (Connors and Kirby)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance, management, and planning</td>
<td>44 (chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability and disadvantage</td>
<td>17 (chapters 8 and 9)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>17 (chapters 2 and 10)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>15 (chapters 1 and 11)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students and Youth</td>
<td>8 (chapter 5)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Governance, management and planning**

Although the Vinson Inquiry noted widespread complaints about the strong centralisation of the system, it did not unduly disturb the existing hegemony. It noted the great passivity that characterised the State’s school councils. While citing specific examples of parent involvement in school affairs, the Review concluded that ‘The overall picture…is one of “Leaving academic matters in the hands of the experts”.’ (Vinson, 2002, I/xxii). Perhaps for that reason, it did not revive the revolutionary enthusiasms of the Scott Report of a decade earlier.

Connors, on the other hand, invoked the three decade history of devolution of responsibility to schools for various aspects of educational management, and concluded that ‘…self-managing schools as they have evolved in Victoria over time have been a successful innovation and constitute the cornerstone of the next stage of development.’ (Connors, 2000b, 26.)

As noted above, a significant innovation emerging from the Kirby Report was the establishment of a state-wide set of Local Learning and Employment Networks to foster collaboration between local schools, VET providers, businesses local governments, and community representatives.
Disability and Disadvantage

The Victorian reports paid surprisingly limited explicit attention to this topic. And, strikingly, the Vinson Report paid much closer attention to student disability than it did to social disadvantage. Nevertheless, Vinson did advance some proposals for reducing the problems of social disadvantage. It commended the Priority Schools Funding Program, demonstrating that the PSFP is having an effect on the ground – in no small part due to the redistribution of per student dollars from high SES regions to low SES regions. (Vinson, Table 8.2, 3/17-8.)

However, it provided no budget information on the Program (except for a sum labelled ‘Special purpose funding’), and – contrary to its practice elsewhere – no costed proposals for Program growth. On the contrary, it recommended (Recommendation 8.2, 3/16) that a proportion of PSPF funding be reallocated to relevant professional development for teachers and parent representatives.

The Connors Report re-stated that there should be only three elements of the School Global Budget, viz. core funding; funding for priority Government Programs, and funding related to the educationally significant characteristics of the schools. Funds in the latter category are, in turn, provided through the four equity elements: English as a Second Language; Students with Special Learning Needs, Students with Disability and Impairments; and Rural and Isolated Schools. The Report notes, en passant, ‘the tendency for the most experienced and highly paid teachers to be concentrated in schools in socio-economically advantaged areas, and suggests that ‘sustained research and development’ should be brought to bear on this problem. The enunciation of the principle that ‘No schools should have a funding advantage over another school where such an advantage is not related to the specific needs of students’ completed the Report’s treatment of equity. (Connors, 2000b, 54-5.)

Both Reports acknowledged the relationship between the wider environment and successful learning at school. Referring to the ‘several areas in Victoria where significant aspects of social inequality and disadvantage coalesce’, Connors observed that ‘the lack of community and development infrastructure is a contributing factor in
ongoing disadvantage ... in areas with an accumulation of social and educational problems’. The Report recommended (3) that the Government:

Identify areas of acute social, educational and economic disadvantage; examine the adequacy of the community, educational and development infrastructure in those areas; and work with those communities to develop flexible and workable strategies, including infrastructure investment, to achieve outcomes for children and young people. (Connors, 2000b, 32-33.)

The Report did not proceed to discuss the implementation of this recommendation. Fortunately, it was to achieve partial realisation in the Local Learning and Education Networks established as a result of the Kirby Review. However, the potential for the LLENs to reach beyond their education/training/employment brief to encourage the greater coordination of community services critical for the support of many young learners is yet to be realised. Except for its focus on rural and remote areas, the Kirby Review largely ignored the ‘geographies of disadvantage’ – ‘particular “sets” of life circumstances to do with education, health, housing, work and income, that are not only connected, but also spatially differentiated in the city’. (Thomson, 1999, 21.)

The section of its Report entitled ‘communities with special needs’, focused instead, on four specific social groups, the ‘target groups’ that conventionally feature in most such reports: rural, Indigenous, disabled and NESB students.

Vinson recognised ‘some neighbourhoods and local areas as being in need of intensive and well co-ordinated community strengthening’, but Recommendation 3.1, therefore, seeks to build on two initiatives of the Carr Government. The first, Families First, is a collaborative project of the NSW Departments of Education and Training, Community Services and Health to establish – in areas of social disadvantage – School and Community Centres. The 17 Centres (as their name suggests, based at schools) provide:

wide-ranging support for families rearing children. The goal is to build the human and social capital within communities by increasing skills, enhancing capacities and motivation, and changing attitudes and values’. (Vinson, 2002, 3/9.)

The second is the highly centralised Place Management program established under the auspices of the Premier’s Department (1/78-9; 3/6). Under this program, 25 locations
have been identified for ‘intensive and well coordinated community strengthening’. Citing the enduring educational benefits from pre-school, especially in the case of socially disadvantaged children, the Inquiry recommended that DET-run pre-schools, attached wherever practicable to primary schools, be located in these 25 and other demonstrably socially disadvantaged areas (1/79). Vinson also provided ethno-specific information on disadvantage: ‘...students from Arabic-speaking, Turkish, Maltese and Pacific Island backgrounds generally do less well in terms of educational outcomes and employment than other groups’ (Vinson, 2002, 3/24.) and, echoing Pat Thomson’s recent compelling account of the schooling of South Australia’s ‘rustbelt kids’ (Thomson, 2002), described the needs of disadvantaged students on the five campuses that comprise Chifley College at Mt Druitt:

Very low levels of basic skills in all secondary years;
A big NESB population, with many students coming from families with low levels of education and/or commitment to education;
High staff turnover, with few experienced staff, and many who are probationers and/or overseas trained, with no experience of teaching in Australia, especially in Maths and Science;
High absentee rates (up to 25% per day);
Significant levels of behavioural problems;
High levels of family dislocation and poverty, and a highly transitory students population; and
Poor retention rates at several points, including the transitions from Years 6 to 7, 8 to 9 and 9 to 10, as well as in the senior years. (Vinson, 2002, 2/39.)

The Vinson Report contends that a serious attempt to mitigate this array of educational challenges would start at kindergarten level, and involve small K-1 classes, more preschools, more reading recovery and Special Learning Needs teachers, and more welfare and discipline support. On January 8, 1997, the Daily Telegraph ran a front-page expose’ of Mount Druitt High School. Under the banner, ‘Class we failed’, and a photograph of the Year 12 class of ’96, the paper revealed that the highest Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) achieved was 44.4. Hastily conducted reviews of the area’s schools followed. Not surprisingly, they generated similar recommendations to those of Vinson, who ruefully observes that, except for some
extra pre-school teachers for one year, they were never implemented. (Vinson, 2002, 2/37)

Curriculum

Although the Vinson Report received a considerable number of submissions critical of the centralisation of curriculum design that had occurred under the Liberals, it did not recommend any significant degree of devolution.

Connors appears to have avoided the ‘hot’ issue areas discussed by Bessant, viz. the fragmentation of policy making, and the academic dominance of the upper secondary curriculum. This latter omission is all the more surprising considering that there was only one academic among the sixteen members of the Connors Working Party – Simon Marginson (who could hardly be considered a representative of the academic establishment.) The Connors report contained only two recommendations for new institutional mechanisms: an Innovations Council at the state level and, at the local level, ‘bureaux’ to provide administrative support to school communities.

In contrast, Kirby did address both these ‘hot’ issues. In what seems clearly a post-Blackburn tactic, Kirby recommended the establishment of new vocational pathways that would leave the academic hegemony in senior secondary schools largely undisturbed. However, as I have noted above, the achievement of even this modest ‘outflanking’ reform necessitated a complete restructuring of the qualifications and curriculum institutional arrangements, and the establishment of sub-regional networks - including local government representation - of a strength unimaginable in New South Wales.

Teachers

The Vinson Report placed heavy emphasis on the professional development of teachers, (Vinson, 2002, 3/13-14) an emphasis that would have been approved by Pat Thomson, given her concern about the impact of ‘staffing churn’ on disadvantaged students. (Thomson, 2002, 112.) The Report claimed that New South Wales was well placed to deal with prospective teacher shortages because of incremental growth
and centralisation of staffing. (Vinson, 2002, 3/94.) Although these chapters comprised a relatively small section of the Report, the Inquiry considered its recommendations on professional development to be at the core of its enterprise.

In a relatively brief section of its Report, the Kirby Review emphasised the need for comprehensive professional development of all teachers and other staff who would be involved in the implementation of its recommendations. In particular, it recommended (19) that the Institute of Teaching take the lead role in developing an appropriate cross-sectoral strategy for pre- and inservice training. (DEET, 2000, 138.) The Connors Report contains a comprehensive discussion on the subject of High Quality Teaching, noting the role of the new Victorian Institute of Teaching in ‘keeping relevant and timely the standards for teaching which it will be asked to develop for all teachers’. (Connors, 2000b, 6.2 ff.)

Students and Youth

Although the Vinson Report devoted only a single chapter to students, a concern for their welfare was a consistent theme throughout the report... As the strong emphasis in the chapter was on the education of the gifted, the Inquiry did not seriously disturb the long standing meritocratic consensus. The Report observed, for example, that Muslim girls ‘shared the ambitions of their fellow students to do as well as possible academically and to progress to professional or other rewarding careers’ (Vinson, 2002, viii). The Vinson report did suggest that dealing with behavioural problems may be better managed in Victoria – (2/79 on the Gatehouse project).

Investigating the needs of young people entering and exiting from post compulsory education and training, and the educational programs and services they need was the raison d’etre of the Kirby Review, and it delivered a devastating assessment:

Victoria’s and Australia’s education and training for young people is mediocre, by international standards. Our levels of participation are poor, and the patterns of outcomes are too strongly skewed against certain groups and geographical regions. The linkages between education and training, employment and industry, and other support and safety net resources are weak. There is a lack of coordination between the parts of the education and training
system, and there is a need for stronger and clearer vision. The system lacks accountability for all young people: many ‘fall through the cracks’. (DEET, 2000, 7)

A subsequent paragraph containing a list of ‘positive’ initiatives, most of which ‘have been generated at the local level’ failed to dispel the negative picture conveyed by this serious critique.

In general terms, Connors/Kirby provide much less historical coverage than Vinson. However, the overall pattern of recent Victorian history seems clear enough: the Kennett government picked up the policy agenda of the Greiner government, but applied it much more severely, in significant part because it was unconstrained by a strong bipartisan consensus.

**Conclusion**

Of the three phases reviewed in this Chapter, there seems little doubt that the middle phase – of Liberal dominance – was the most significant in policy terms. The Liberal thrust to ‘free up’ the system – with rezoning, devolution and increased support for elitist secondary schools (in New South Wales, public as well as private) – has not been countered by the ALP now back in power in both States. For the most part, the Labor strategy – epitomised in the Vinson Report – is to ‘hold the line’, rather than to attempt to reverse the Liberal reforms. Even in Victoria, where the Liberal thrust had gone much deeper, the response from the Bracks government has been moderate. However, the initiatives that emerged from the Kirby exercise have been important ones and potentially of benefit to disadvantaged students. Just how far these potentialities may be actualised is a central concern of the remainder of this thesis.
The discussion of this Chapter suggests that the most weighty cause of successful reform is the consonance between a climate of reform opinion and the interests of a dominant Advocacy Coalition. It was this consonance – when Thatcherite opinion reached Victoria – that provided the opportunity for Minister Hayward. The extent to which Blairite ‘Third Way’ opinion can lead to a revival of concerns about socio-economic disadvantage is an issue also to be considered in the succeeding chapters.

Improved outcomes in Wyndham-Hobsons Bay (WynBay LLEN area, Victoria) 2001-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase in Year 12 completions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government schools</td>
<td>66.36</td>
<td>71.67</td>
<td>+5.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>All schools</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>73.19</td>
<td>+2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>61.00</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>81.00</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
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**Decline in losses during transition** *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students leaving before Year 12 completion</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of unknown school exit destinations</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLEN Transition referrals to Jobs Pathway Program</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* May be some overlap with "Yr 12 completions" data.
I was excited to discover a 1991 volume co-edited by the two theorists who figure prominently in Chapters 3 and 4 – James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu, Bourdieu, C., James S (Eds) (1991) Social Theory for a Changing Society, Westview Press, New York. But my excitement was short-lived. I discovered that, in their respective short pieces, neither co-editor referred to the work of the other, and neither even mentioned educational disadvantage.

This work on strategising - which Bourdieu undertook largely as part of his ethnographic investigations Bourdieu, (1990b) The Logic of Practice, Polity Press, Cambridge. Bourdieu, (1990a) In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology, Polity Press, Cambridge. has only very recently been taken up by students of educational disadvantage. Thomson, (2002) Schooling the Rustbelt Kids: Making the difference in changing times., Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW. This is not surprising. The Bourdieu œuvre is not only intellectually demanding: it is also extremely wide-ranging and varied.

John Van Beveren, Course Careers Unit, External Relations, University of Melbourne: 'Enrolments (Percentages) from Catholic, Government & Independent Schools - for the Faculty of Arts.' Document available for inspection from the author of the thesis.

In personal correspondence to the author dated March 25, 2001, the same teacher said: 'Years ago, the highly inquisitive nature of the assessment process devalued what I was doing and contributed significantly to my decision to leave teaching'. These were: the Report from the Select Committee on the School Certificate, 1981 (ie. the State's Year 10 certificate); The Report on the Future Directions of Secondary Education, 1984; and the Report on teacher education: Teachers for Tomorrow: Continuity, Challenge and Change in Teacher Education in New South Wales (1980).

While the author was CEO of the Victorian Ministry, school councils were given powers to establish their own school uniform policies. But when one council barred a student from an excursion because of a breach of the school's uniform policy, the Department intervened on the grounds of its wider responsibility to ensure access to education for every child.

An experiment that Dr Brendan Nelson, the current Coalition Government's Federal Minister for Education, is about to repeat.

In 1997, the NSW Minister asked the author to chair a 'Professional Relations Forum' comprising the four most senior members of the Department and the Federation. A major agenda issue was how to deal with inefficient teachers ('expected to be a minority'). The Federation instead wanted the PRF 'to focus on how the status of the profession might be enhanced (ie. on the issues of standards and professionalism), and not to be narrowly preoccupied with how to 'do in' teachers.' (Professional Relations Forum, Notes from Meeting 2/97, NSW Teachers Federation, Sussex St., Sydney, Thursday May 22, 2.00 pm.)

In addition, the text contains one blatant untruth: '(I) started to draft up an advertisement (for a chief executive) which we would put in the newspapers immediately after the elections', 36). In fact, Mr Hayward, in possible clear contravention of Westminster principles, placed the advertisement, under the Parliamentary logo, in the papers, months before the elections.

The Report of the Vinson Inquiry was produced in three volumes, between May and September, 2002. The ensuing references refer, first of all, to the volume, then to the page number of the reports that had been published in this way. My references do not relate to the consolidated report that was subsequently published.
The Whittlesea Youth Commitment was a local government innovation. In 1998, the energetic Mayor of the City of Whittlesea (a practising government school teacher), discovered that nearly 35 per cent of the municipality’s students who were leaving school before completing Year 12 were going to ‘no known destination’. The City assumed responsibility for engendering a sense of collective responsibility for achieving better transition outcomes for its youth, attracting the attention (and resources) from State and Commonwealth governments, local businesses and VET and higher education providers.

As the Deputy Chair of the WynBay LLEN (a ‘First phase’ LLEN, now in the third year of its life), I have been a participant-observer in the attempt, in my own sub-region, to build a collective sense of responsibility for ensuring the successful transition from school to further education, training and employment, of every student in the two municipalities of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay.
PART THREE: - LOCAL STRATEGIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS

The three chapters that comprised Part 2 of the thesis provided – within a thematic framework – a historical account of the development of central government education policies that, intentionally or inadvertently, have helped determine the impact of social disadvantage within Australian schools. This was done for two levels of government – Federal and State – and for three jurisdictions: the Commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria.

As far as the Commonwealth is concerned, Chapter 3 demonstrated the severe political constraints that have limited the effects of equity initiatives at that level. Once it had been determined by the Karmel inquiry that all schools – public and private - were in principle entitled to Commonwealth funding, it became politically impossible to exclude any – even the most privileged - schools of the private sector from sharing in the funds that flowed. This ensured, in turn, that determining the respective shares of the public and private sectors became a matter of political decision – with Coalition governments strongly favouring the private systems and ALP governments seemingly able to do no more than hold the line. As time wore on, and the flows of substantial Commonwealth funding continued to favour the private schools, increasing proportions of disadvantaged students came to be concentrated in the public systems. Once all schools had claimed their respective shares, though, there were funds only at the margin to apply to the special needs of such students.
This penultimate Part of the thesis will provide an account of how the issue of social disadvantage plays out - 'on the ground' - in the lives of schools, principals, teachers and young people, for the research now moves closer to 'the whiteboard marker-face'. If we 'drill down' far enough into the structures of advocacy coalitions in the 'schools' policy sub-system, we inevitably find the actors who are primarily the 'consumers', rather than the producers of policies. Local principals and teachers 'consume' central policies in the sense that they use the resources such policies generate and try to cope with the constraints they impose. Simultaneously, these local actors design and execute strategies appropriate to their local circumstances.

In strategising to deal with central government dictates and to meet local priorities, principals and teachers interact daily with the students who are the raison d'être of public policy on schooling. This propinquity, (combined with their importance as simultaneous consumers of, and contributors to, public policy) means that the perceptions of education workers are highly significant. Potentially, equally significant data could have been obtained from students themselves. The 'client-centred' research of Teese and Polesel demonstrates the way in which aggregate data on student outcomes can be greatly illuminated by reference to students' own perceptions of their experience of schooling - its satisfactions and dissatisfactions. (Teese, 2003b, 137 ff) Unfortunately, obtaining systematic data from students in the two research sites was logistically beyond the scope of this thesis. For reflections from students, I had to rely on my random though frequent access to young people. *

* Those in the Public Housing Estate where my student-teacher daughter is a weekend-worker; those I meet in my capacity as Deputy Chair of the WynBay Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN); the young participants of 'Slingshot' - a youth self-employment project for disadvantaged early school leavers, where I am a member of the management committee - and finally, the refugee children in Victoria's Maribyrnong Immigration Centre for whom I have helped to arrange schooling.
Chapter 5: Investigating Local Strategies

I seize on any State initiative that seems to carry an opportunity for kids (PuN9)

Introduction

In this chapter, I will establish the context for Chapters 6 to 8, which comprise Part 3 of the thesis. Chapters 6 to 8 contain an examination of my respondents’ perceptions of disadvantage, as well as their accounts of the strategies they have adopted to meet the needs of the disadvantaged students in their schools.

This chapter explains how I have extended the theoretical framework employed in Chapters 1 to 4 to interpret the data generated by the interviews. It then describes the two study sites from which the bulk of the principal interviewees were drawn, explains the approach taken to the field study, and accounts for the particular foci - and limitations - of the research process.

Theoretical framework for the interpretation of the interview materials

Revisiting the ‘early chapters’ theorists

In the face of central policy dictates, how effective can principals be in mounting strategies relevant to their particular local circumstances? In asking this question, I am attempting to understand the reasons why school principals, sensitive to the needs of their local communities, select specific strategies over others, and to determine the policy implications of those strategies. The attempt to answer the question most clearly exposed the limitations of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. As already observed in earlier chapters, the ACF has paid little attention to the role of individual actors. Up to this point - as long as I remained at the ‘macro’ level - this has not
unduly limited the ACF’s usefulness. But as I moved from the macro level to the actions of individual principals – even though such actions are typically undertaken in consultation with staff and other members of the school community – other theoretical frameworks had to be invoked for an explanation of differences in approach.

I have therefore used my theoretical materials in two ways: prospectively and retrospectively. In planning the overall project, I relied primarily on the theorists who appeared in the earlier chapters, viz. Sabatier, Halligan and Power, Coleman and Bourdieu. Having gathered the interview data, new questions and needs for classification inevitably surfaced and I needed to supplement the writings of these ‘early chapters’ theorists in order to make better sense of the rich materials I had gathered.

I have also departed from the practice of previous chapters, in which I restricted the theoretical sections largely to exposition and criticism. In Chapters 6 - 8, I have inter-larded a good deal of interview material throughout the expository and critical argument. (As Albert Einstein said, ‘If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.’)

**The school in its community: Coleman, Thomson and Teese**

The later writings of Coleman on the relationship between schools and their communities enabled me to understand more fully why a principal’s understanding of ‘educational disadvantage’ is determined by the nature of the community in which his or her school is located. ‘Thisness’ (Thomson’s term to describe the particularities of each school’s situation) in turn shapes decisions about curriculum offerings, and about other strategies that are needed to meet the needs of each current cohort of students. (Thomson, 2002, 92-3). It is no accident that the scholar to have emphasised the importance of ‘thisness’ has been Thomson, herself a highly experienced school principal from the Adelaide ‘rustbelt’.
As Teese has graphically demonstrated, 'thinness' cannot be reduced to mere geography: it extends also to the school's position in the 'hierarchy' of schools that has emerged in a particular geographical area. (Teese, 2000, 203-220.) Schools at the top of the hierarchy are able to accumulate teaching and other resources, while those at the bottom struggle to provide comparable opportunities for their students:

...so meagre are their resources relative to the demands of the curriculum that they are unlikely to significantly raise the general level of their academic attainment compared to all other schools. Their place on the map is not likely to change. They will not move up the diagonal linking results with socio-economic status. (Teese, 2003b, 197).

This is the operation of structural inequality in the schools system. For socially disadvantaged students, it is the 'opportunity lottery'. However, as Teese has recently pointed out, socially advantaged students have removed themselves from the lottery and they now enjoy access to a 'fail-free zone'. (Teese, 2003a, 8).

**The *habitus* of the school principal: Bourdieu**

A useful concept for understanding the distinctively different styles of strategising by the principals I interviewed is Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* - a concept used also by Thomson (2002, 138.) *Habitus* is 'That system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice'. (Bourdieu, 1977) It is the combination of the order imposed on the local actor by his or her environment, and a selected *modus operandi* that enables him or her to construct coherent strategies for dealing with the constraints of that environment and for capitalising on the opportunities it offers.

In his ethnographic investigations, Bourdieu discovered how 'grass roots' actors can fashion strategies that enable them to further their individual purposes in the face of overweening social structures. He showed that the values and norms of traditional societies and cultures were not as determinative as most anthropologists had believed. Rather, individual actors in such societies were able to manipulate the normative demands of their cultures in ways that gave them a measure of personal freedom. If they chose to behave in ways that were consistent with these cultural
demands, well and good: they could claim legitimation for the course of action they had chosen. After drawing on the folk wisdom of their local *habitus* with its knowledge of the nature and limitations of possible sanctions for normative violations, if they chose to act otherwise, they accepted the consequences.

Now, it could be objected that the structure and rules of a traditional society are very different from the constraints imposed on an Australian school principal by central policy edicts. But are they all that different? Coleman makes a distinction between two forms of social organisation - the primordial and the constructed. (Coleman, 1990b) Behaving strategically in the face of the normative demands imposed by any form of social organisation is a necessity both for the actor in traditional society and that in modern institutions. (Bourdieu, 1991,1) Bourdieu makes the additional point that, even when acting strategically, the actor will attempt to 'dress up' the action to be consistent with accepted norms, for:

There is nothing that groups demand more insistently and reward more generously than this conspicuous reverence for what they claim to revere. (Bourdieu, 1990b, 109)

Of course the degree of effective constraint differs from one context to another. It is quite possible that modern 'constructed' organisations - being more consciously and explicitly designed than their 'primordial' counterparts - are capable of disciplining their actors more effectively. Few modern governments could tolerate non-compliance with their policy directives on the scale reported by Bourdieu who found that only about 5 per cent of Berber families observed traditional norms in the choice of marriage partners. (Honneth, 1986) In Australia, despite much recent rhetoric about ‘devolution’, if anything, modern systems of schooling are actually trying – if somewhat ineffectually - to tighten their control over what schools do. A public school principal from one of Victoria’s ‘self-managing schools’ gave an example of central administrators finding issue with his sense of ‘thisness’ in planning his curriculum offerings:

Every time I submit my annual report, they’ll say, ‘George! You’re not teaching LOTE at Years 9 and 10!’ (When I first came to the school, we had problems with LOTE classes. We spent 35 thousand on a language laboratory, thinking maybe a bit of technology will interest the kids and they’ll start to learn, but that died away as well.) We’ve got very good LOTE
teachers and we've made it – Indonesian and Greek – compulsory in Years 7 and 8 and an elective in Year 9, and we get only 4 students who want to do it as an elective. And if we force them to do it in Years 9 and 10, we'll have a revolt here. I tell (the Department) - quietly - to get stuffed. And every year I get a reply – after my annual report: 'You're not teaching the right mix of curriculum'. And then they say, 'You've got to teach PE up to Year 10. Well if we teach PE up to Year 10, we've got to chop somewhere else, so again, I'm not doing that at Year 10 either. I say, 'If you give us the resources, give us the time, increase the teaching time from 6 hours to 8 hours, I'll be able to do it all.' (PuV2)

The principal of PuV2 was not alone in his capacity to withstand pressure from central administrators. I interviewed several principals – including some in the centralist State of New South Wales – who confirmed that, within the inescapable constraints of the resources available to them and of system-wide requirements for accountability, they enjoyed considerable discretion in making strategic decisions for their schools:

State wide programs often call the tune in many ways but they still are written in so broad a sense that you (can) put your own interpretation on them. (PuN12)

Several principals admitted to creative budgeting to meet local needs. The principal of PuN8 did this to fund professional development for her staff:

We are using 'unfilled vacancy' money to fund the STLD (Support Teacher, Learning Difficulties,) plus pay for casual teachers, for when teachers are away – and we can have ten away per day, often...that's why we give weekends away for professional development. It's a bit of a bind when you can't release your staff (for PD during teaching hours) .... What we kind of do is rob one pile and then another pile and then another pile. (PuN8)

Principal trying to achieve change within their schools accorded a high priority to the professional development of their teaching staff. The principal of PuN9 was working miracles with the school timetable to make room for this important activity. He had instituted a cyclical timetable based on '100 hours of instruction in the year; 50 in each semester; 6 subject lines and 6 periods of 40 minutes each per day for only four days per week. In this way, he was able to give his teachers 'one day off per week – for work placement and job search and intense academic work.' (PuN9)
Another common area for the exercise of discretionary power by cash-strapped principals was in making trade-offs between class sizes and specialised teaching support for current priorities. A New South Wales principal, for example, wanted to release a teacher to properly co-ordinate the literacy activities that were the focus of the NSW DSP program.

The Year 7 Coordinator, say, would only teach 20 periods. 8 periods are spent being at every meeting of teachers: managing those meetings, preparing the literacy-based program and developing collaborative strategies. Money is pulled from other places to give people period loadings for them to do the extra work that is really demanded'. (PuN12)

And most were sanguine about the consequences:

Every now and then, you get audited and fined, and you just pass through that and you just go on; you just get on and do it. (PrN1)

Notwithstanding the apparent capacity of at least some principals to stare down their state administrators, it is important not to exaggerate the degree of strategising freedom enjoyed by school principals and teachers. Even in the most often cited area of discretionary power – that of the budget - principals were acutely aware of limitations:

If I needed to, I could throw the cash in to back up staffing, but there’s no question about (the computer grant): you can only use it for computers. (PuN12)

Generally, the *habitus* of each school principal I interviewed seemed to contain the following three elements:

Differing perceptions of *educational disadvantage* - leading to differing orientations and priorities.

Strategies for dealing with issues of *governance* (The thesis focuses on those aspects of governance which go to the schools’ relationships with its local community and with the central administration of its system.)
Strategies for delivering the *curriculum*.

For each of these three elements, comparisons will be attempted – in Chapters 6–8 – between New South Wales and Victorian schools; and between the schools of the public and the private sectors.

**The principal as ‘street-level bureaucrat’: Lipsky**

Notwithstanding the employment of *habitus* by the principals I interviewed, their position in the structure of State public services imposed important limitations on their freedom of action. But, as Bourdieu might have predicted, many seemed able to get around these limitations by having recourse to Lipskyan routines. In his classic study of ‘street level’ bureaucrats, Lipsky (Lipsky, 1980, 86.) had analysed the ways in which these officials had managed to stake out areas of relative work autonomy for themselves. They did this through the adoption of various ‘routines’, which he classified under three main heads (each of them broadly relevant to the strategies of school principals):

- Those that ration services
- Those that control clients
- Those that husband worker resources

Each of these categories of routines will from time to time emerge in the ensuing discussion of the interviews. Rationing services – for example to students with special needs – is a daily reality for principals. In the era of global budgeting, State governments have successfully shifted responsibility for meeting the specialist needs of specific groups of students from the centre to the school site. Parents complaining to central governments about the lack of specific services in their school were referred back to the principal for an explanation of the *school’s* priorities for resource allocation. For this reason, principals seemed to view most centrally imposed consultation mechanisms as cynical exercises in buck-passing:
Supposedly, there still has to be a dialogue between schools at the District level, but it’s managed by a District Committee so the theory would be (that) if anything goes wrong, the District Committee wears the criticism rather than the State Office, OK? (PuN12).

Schools’ attempts to control their primary clients – students – have for long drawn criticism from two distinct camps, neither very flattering. The ‘de-schoolers’ viewed schooling as an instrument for the reproduction of compliant members of society:

Schools, as compulsory channels for learning, (are) ... more repressive and destructive than anything we have come to know. (Illich, 1974, 32.)

Yet to this day, public school principals smart under criticism from the popular press that the disciplinary strategies of contemporary schools – particularly those of the public sector – are wholly inadequate.

Every time they research this, (people cite) the indiscipline of public schools.... because we take everyone and work with everyone; we have the ‘caring, sharing and awaring’ and everything else to help every single kid to achieve their best, because that’s our charter... The private schools have stuff like ‘expulsion’ for discipline. We have examples of kids who come here, having been invited to leave certain places to the south, and when we test them, they are IM * kids, aren’t they? And the private schools have weeded them out before the School Certificate because obviously they have said, “Oh, God! We’ve got a dead one here” and they deliberately say, “I am sorry, you are not achieving to our standards: you will have to go”. ... The indiscipline has flowed through to stuff like drugs. Like, all of us know that private schools have probably got the biggest drug problem in many ways because the money is there... But you have still got the talk-back radio, and it’s very, very hard, and we’re still in the trench trying to do the best we can ...(PuN12)

* moderately intellectually disabled

Amidst the contemporary rhetoric about student-centred pedagogy, one can see why the popular media believes that, in terms of discipline, schools are now light years away from the mythical ‘whipping machines’ infamously depicted in the ‘Coles Funny Picture Book’ of Victorian England. And yet schools are still required to act as the instruments of state control over many crucial aspects of young people's lives: what they will learn in a formal sense; how they will be taught; how their learning will be assessed; and their admission to routes to further education, training and employment. As we shall see below, the fate of young students who are not
prospering in ‘post-compulsory’ schooling lies predominantly in the hands of the school. The capacity of schools to meet the learning and transition needs of upper secondary students depends on their location in the local school hierarchy, for that location determines the nature and level of resources that the school can command.

There is, however, one important limitation in the Lipsky approach that should be noted here. Unlike Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrats, a school principal occupies an intermediate organisational niche, having to mediate between the teachers and head office, on the one hand, and between the school and its local community, on the other. The consequences of occupying such a niche were not considered by Lipsky, who paid no attention at all to the intervening structures of governance and management which lie between central policymakers and street level bureaucrats. This gap in his analysis has to be filled if we are to gain a proper appreciation of the governance roles of principals.

The street-level strategies of principals inevitably entail the management of complex sets of relationships. For this reason, principals are inevitably involved in fashioning governance arrangements for their schools – while simultaneously having to deal with centrally-imposed governance requirements that have a significant impact on the ways in which the school can operate. Here a useful secondary contribution has recently been made by Carver, in his influential work on policy governance. Although Carver is concerned with the governance roles of the boards of public bodies, rather than of school principals, governance for him has the same wide reach as it does in this thesis: ‘relationships with the staff, constituents and “other entities”, notably other schools and governments. (Carver, 1998) A vivid illustration of this was provided by a New South Wales principal:

The Commonwealth politicians love this school because, come election time, they can’t wait to get out to this place and get photographed for the ethnic groups. We have more visits per head of politicians than I’d suspect many schools have....It helps to have the ear of people in high places. I mean, if you’re putting in an application for a building grant or things like that that, you know – it’s not sort of going to be pushed to one side; you might not get it but you know at least Minister X has been out to the school in the last three or four years. The Member for Z has been closely connected with this school probably from its foundations, so
you trade on those connections and you play them for all they’re worth ….there’s no doubt about that. (PrN1)

The politics of ‘thisness’ are very evident in the above case. So it is appropriate now to establish some of the geographical contexts for such ‘thisness’.

**Sydwest’ and ‘Melwest’: a demographic snapshot of the two study sites**

**Melwest**

The Western Metropolitan Region in Victoria from which I selected ‘Melwest’, the Melbourne research site, has the lowest score on the ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage of any in the Melbourne Metropolitan area. (The ABS Index has been constructed from a weighted set of twenty variables - concerned with education, (un)employment, ethnicity, housing and income. In interpreting the Index, ‘bigger is better’: the higher the score, the better off an area is considered to be).

When comparing prospective areas for selection as research sites, I relied primarily on the Index. But I also inspected profiles derived from three of its variables that frequently are cited as having special relevance to disadvantage in schooling - ‘percentage of people born in non-main English-speaking countries’; ‘percentage unemployment rate’; and ‘household income per capita’. (Manning, 1986)

My choice within Western Metropolitan Region was also influenced by advice I received during the pilot phase. Principals and regional staff suggested that I should conduct my research in an area that exhibited some internal variations on the Index: such areas were more likely to reveal differences between schools in relation to strategies for meeting the needs of disadvantaged students. In areas of uniformly high disadvantage, such strategies as are pursued are less clearly differentiated. In fact, in the pilot interviews conducted outside the study region, I did discover a cluster of public schools in an area of high, concentrated disadvantage that claimed to be
collaborating on a co-ordinated approach for all the disadvantaged students in the area.

Ultimately, I chose as my Melbourne research site a school ‘cluster’ of the Education Department which spread across two municipalities, stretching from the inner to the middle west of the metropolis. It contains some districts that are below the Western region on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and some that are above it. Overall, the scores of the research site are somewhat above the Regional average, but a little below those of the State as a whole. In terms of my key variables – ethnicity, unemployment and income – the study site was quite close to the State average, although almost certainly having a smaller homogeneous ‘middle’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 - 1: Some characteristics of the Victorian Research Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MELWEST, March 2000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Scores for the research site have been aggregated from the three separate ‘networks’ that comprise the cluster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (000s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of people born in non-main English-speaking countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage unemployment rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income per capita per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sydwest**

The main problem I confronted when setting about selecting a matching research site in Sydney was the high degree of differentiation within the Sydney metropolitan Western region – a result of its greater size. In addition, direct comparisons were made difficult by the higher levels of prosperity (reflected in scores on most variables) in Sydney. Prospective research sites in the inner west - because they exhibited roughly comparable Index scores - were much higher than the Melbourne site on both
the NESB and weekly income levels. For this reason, my best ‘match’ was a large municipality in the ‘central west’.

### Table 5 - 2: Some characteristics of the New South Wales research site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYDWEST, March 2000</th>
<th>Sydwest</th>
<th>Inner-C’tral West Region</th>
<th>Metro Sydney</th>
<th>NSW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note: Scores for the research site have been aggregated from two separate sub-regional areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (000s)</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>3881</td>
<td>6205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of people born in non-main English-speaking countries</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage unemployment rate</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income per capita per week</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again, the study site ranked above the Western region, but was close to the State average. However, when compared with its Melbourne counterpart, the site displayed much higher levels of ethnicity.

### Table 5 - 3: The two research sites compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MELWEST AND SYDWEST COMPARED</th>
<th>Melwest</th>
<th>Sydwest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (000s)</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage people born in non-main English-speaking countries</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage unemployment rate</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income per capita per week</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index of Relative socio-economic disadvantage</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The field study

As indicated above, my main method for collecting school-level data was a series of interviews with 28 school leaders:

Table 5 - 4: Interviews of school principals in the 2 research sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sydwest</th>
<th></th>
<th>MeLwest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obtained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of refusals – particularly from New South Wales public schools was disappointing. While both States' public and Catholic education authorities gave permission for the interviews, and facilitated access, the decision to grant an interview was at the discretion of individual principals. The difference in responses between the two States might be the result of being better known in Victoria. In neither State did I cite my previous education history when requesting interviews.

The interviews were open-ended, though I used the following four questions to ensure a degree of structure:

What are the forms of educational disadvantage that you confront in this school?

What strategies have you put in place (or would you like to put in place) to deal with educational disadvantage?

To what extent do central government policies assist or hinder you in your task of lessening the impact of disadvantage in your school?

If you were in a position to make changes to central policy, what would those changes be?

Answers to the first two questions enabled me to make observations about schools’ approaches to the curriculum. The final two questions were designed to tap views on the nature of the relationship between the education systems’ ‘street-level bureaucracies’ and their central administrators; responses to these are reported in Chapter 7 under the theme of Governance.
The interviews with school principals were supplemented by interviews of administrators in state government regional and district offices and in Catholic diocesan headquarters. I also interviewed education faculty academics and central policy-makers.

**The Focus on School Principals**

I prepared for my research by interviewing individual teachers from schools outside my research site, as well as education administrators at State and regional level. But the major element of the fieldwork was to explore the views of just one layer of education workers from schools – the ‘street-level bureaucracies’ of the education policy domain. (Lipsky, 1980) I interviewed 28 school principals in two sub-regions of the school systems of New South Wales and Victoria. (Interviews were recorded and transcripts prepared).

In electing to interview principals rather than teachers, I acknowledge that I have bypassed the group of professionals on whose shoulders the success or otherwise of the school system most directly rests:

> We know that the most important and effective influence on students’ learning is the quality of the teaching that occurs in classrooms. What to many people has been intuitive about the relationship between good teaching and effective learning is backed by considerable recent research. (Connors, 2000b, 42.)

This deficiency in the thesis is all the more regrettable, given that, notwithstanding the centrality of their skills and commitment to the educational enterprise, teachers are typically the group least likely to be consulted about changes to public policy. But the logistics and protocols involved in circumnavigating principals to get to the teachers on their campuses were ultimately defeating in a small research project of this kind. This was especially true in relation to New South Wales, which is not my home state. I also considered that, on questions of the impact of public policy on schools, it was more time-efficient to talk to those with formal responsibility for its implementation at the level of the school.
Nevertheless, as Lipsky explains, the actions of ‘street level workers’, whether they are aware of it or not, do also contribute to the ongoing process of policy development:

Although (public service workers) are normally regarded as low-level employees, the actions of most public service workers actually constitute the services ‘delivered’ by government. Moreover, when taken together the individual decisions of these workers become, or add up to, agency policy. ... Most citizens encounter government (if they encounter it at all) not through letters to congressmen or by attendance at school board meetings but through their teachers and their children’s teachers and through the policeman on the corner in the patrol car. Each encounter of this kind represents an instance of policy delivery. (Lipsky, 1980, 3.)

I would not want to go as far as Lipsky has in arguing that public policy is simply the aggregation of what the ‘consumers’ of it do, but I am interested in the ways in which principals simultaneously ‘consume’ and shape policies in the strategic governance of their schools. And obtaining the views of ‘street-level’ education workers confronts what Richard Elmore calls ‘the noble lie’ of conventional policy analysis - the belief that policy-makers are (or should be) the determining influence in the implementation process, and that explicit objectives, specification of administrative responsibility and even outcomes measures will necessarily increase the chances of effective implementation. (Elmore, 1979-80); (Elmore, 1983)

**Analysis of interview materials**

When I came to analyse and interpret the materials gathered in my interviews, I encountered a problem that had resulted from the relative ‘open-endedness’ of my interviewing strategy. As can be seen from the interview schedule, I had imposed minimal structure on the interviews, not wishing to inhibit the flow of spontaneous -- and as it turned out, often original - opinions and judgments. Because of the wide-ranging responses that were given – especially to my first two questions - it was not possible, subsequently, to quantify the differences. And yet differences *did* emerge as I read my way through the interview transcripts. So, in order to capture these, I have proceeded as follows.
Within each of the three main themes that emerged from the interviews – 'definitions of disadvantage', 'governance strategies' and 'curriculum strategies', I identified the dominant focus of each respondent. I then 'aggregated' these to enable a rough examination of the main differences - where they seemed to exist - between the schools of different sectors and between those sectors in the two States. For example, while the majority of the respondents mentioned two of the principal dimensions of disadvantage – 'socio-economic' and 'ethnic' status – most of them stressed one dimension over the other.

Table 5.5: Dominant foci in schools’ strategies for countering social disadvantage: emerging themes in interviews with school principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NEW SOUTH WALES</th>
<th>VICTORIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Non-elite Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of educational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to</td>
<td>Vertical: Departmental</td>
<td>Mediated by Church structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central governance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum focus</td>
<td>Academic and VET</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy programs</td>
<td>Literacy programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 5.5 shows - differences under the head of 'Understanding of educational disadvantage' could in most cases be related to differences under the other heads. I say 'in most cases', because – at least for the purposes of discussing curriculum strategies, I found it necessary to divide schools into two groups – elite and non-elite.
Elite schools were non-systemic independent schools that had, comparatively, a very large resource base, and a reputation that was recognised across their States. But each research site also had its own selective public high schools. Typically, these were academically or socially selective schools that occupied the top rung of a local hierarchy of government schools. These are the schools that enjoy a relatively high status in their localities, notwithstanding the fact that the elite private schools with whom they compete (and whom, in some cases, they emulate) have much stronger resource bases and a more exclusive clientele than their public counterparts. Table 5.6 provides some data on the revenue of four different types of schools in the Melbourne research site.

Table 5.6: Revenue of four types of schools, Victoria 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>PrV6</th>
<th>PuV9</th>
<th>PrV4</th>
<th>PuV2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual revenue ($'000)</td>
<td>17,388</td>
<td>7211</td>
<td>4645</td>
<td>2771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>1249</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue per student ($)</td>
<td>13,922</td>
<td>6496</td>
<td>6831</td>
<td>7872</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Victorian Department of Education and Training Global Budgets and Budget Documents; Australian Securities and Investment Commission School Annual Reports; school principals.

These figures should be treated with caution. In particular, the figure for PuV2 is not of private contributions, and that for PrV6 is also certainly on the low side. However, the overall pattern is clear: the non-Catholic private school had nearly double the resources per student of the others.

In strategising to position themselves to be free to concentrate on meeting the needs of students from largely middle-class families, selective government schools set themselves apart from neighbouring public schools:

(The School Council) certainly want us to encourage people who’ve noticed that the school is trying – professionally – to do something ... we want to encourage them to come to the school – which in its own way is a piece of social – well, I won’t use the word ‘engineering’ – but it’s a form of social stratification that means you end up with a certain range of kids in the school. (PuV9). 1
In contrast, the strategies of the respondents from non-elite private schools more closely resembled those of their public school counterparts in their respective States. Non-elite private schools were typically religious schools with middle- and low socio-economic status student populations. Most of these were systemic Catholic schools. Recent research demonstrates that Catholic schools have significantly lower SES average scores than Protestant schools, but significantly higher family income levels than children in public schools. (Drummond, 2003, 7).

On the issue of how ‘disadvantage’ was to be defined, respondents from the elite and selective high schools differed from all other respondents by virtually conflating ‘disadvantage’ with (physical or intellectual) ‘disability’. And this difference transcended State boundaries. To a lesser extent it also transcended the divide between public and private schools. Other differences emerged between schools in the two different States, as well as between different groups of schools within States. Differences in schools’ reactions to central departmental requirements and policies will be discussed in Chapter 7, with its focus on ‘Governance strategies’, as will aspects of the differing governance strategies adopted within their schools. A final group of differences – directly generated by schools’ ethos – their view of themselves and their role within their local, regional or State schooling system – was revealed in the critical area of the curriculum: their subject offerings and how they were taught, and consequently, the type of students they attracted.

**Conclusion – with a brief consideration of the limitations of the interview materials**

The interviews provided some indication of the differing impacts – both facilitating and impeding - that different public policies have on the various strategies employed by school principals. But my expectation that Question 4 would generate knowledgeable commentary on the differing effects of different central government policies on schools’ strategies was largely unfulfilled. The question elicited few detailed responses. Perhaps this was not surprising: the advocacy activities of school-based personnel are quite properly focused on promoting the interests of their own students rather than on seeking to shape central policies. In fact, the interviews revealed a general lack of detailed interest among school principals in the actual
processes of central policy-making. This seemed especially to be the case in New South Wales. More than one NSW principal repeated versions of the old adage:

_Literacy Plus_ and things like that are funded probably by a combination of state and federal - I would imagine: I don’t pay very much attention to where the money comes from as long as it comes. (PuN6)

I soon discovered, for example, that to open an informal discussion ‘outside the interview’ about the merits of restructuring the schools system to amalgamate smaller schools in order to establish a better resource base for a larger number of students was anathema to the principals of any sector – at least to those who headed smallish schools! This was generally the case, even though interviews of the ‘campus principals’ of a recently amalgamated school in Melbourne revealed no complaints about their new status. Some dissidents offered persuasive reasons for their objections, based on the need for children to be in ‘human-scale’ environments and for adolescent students’ strong friendship networks to be supported by the structure of schooling. But the almost blanket resistance – especially in New South Wales (as reported by Vinson (Vinson, 2002,2/4) is disappointing, given Keating’s Victorian findings that the most disadvantaged students are concentrated in smaller schools whose resources are limited by their low enrolments and their weak revenue-raising capacity. (Keating, 2003a, ) Better-off students are flocking to larger schools – public and private -with higher revenue-raising prospects and therefore better facilities and a wider range of courses.

The husbanding of resources must become part of every principal’s armoury of strategies for ensuring the survival of his/her school. But resource differentials between schools are immense, with the schools that are able to generate significant revenue from fees, fund-raising and bequests being in the happy position of being able incrementally to accumulate a whole range of advantages (Teese, 2000, 7.). The financial capacity of such schools to attract teachers in areas of the curriculum where there is scarcity is a common example. Their equal ability to attract the easiest-to-teach students is another. At least one New South Wales principal whom I interviewed acknowledged the problems of small schools, and seemed to recognise that the solution might entail carefully thought-out organisational changes:
Well - the current system of having co-ed schools surviving, then eating each other for the remaining residual kids who haven't gone to private schools - I mean you can see the impact. If you've got only 200 kids, how can you give a good curriculum? So if something has to be done ... (but) it couldn't simply be to create a new co-ed school from the coalescing of three old co-ed schools who were all down in the doldrums. (PuN12)

Keating has shown that small Victorian schools are beset by a problem that goes beyond the inability to provide curriculum breadth, viz. the concentration – in those schools – of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The findings of researchers such as Don Anderson (Anderson, 1991, Anderson, 1994) on the negative effects of schools losing their social mix suggests that the socio-economic residualisation of small schools might ultimately be more damaging to their students than an impoverished curriculum.

Table 5.7 Victoria Government secondary school size by SES band enrolment percentages, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School size</th>
<th>Highest SES sestile</th>
<th>2nd sestile</th>
<th>3rd sestile</th>
<th>4th sestile</th>
<th>5th sestile</th>
<th>Lowest SES sestile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Impressed by the compelling findings of Keating's research, and by the success in Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT, and elsewhere of certain innovations in the reorganisation of secondary schooling, in the concluding Chapter 9, I have reached beyond the views of the 'street level bureaucrats' to make policy suggestions that, in my view, could improve our state-wide system of public schooling – at least in Victoria.
Chapter 6: Perceptions of Disadvantage

I would personally define disadvantage as something that blocks someone from doing what they really want to do. (PuV6)

Introduction

Having established the context for the field research in Chapter 5, we are now in a position to consider the major themes that emerged in the interviews with school principals. Probably the most important determinant of the habitus of the principals was their identification of the primary locus of educational disadvantage. This chapter will compare the differing understandings of disadvantage in schooling by principals in New South Wales and Victoria, and between public and private schools.

An important discovery was that principals’ differing understandings of the ways in which disadvantage impacted on their schools, and the strategies they devised to tackle the issue - especially those pertaining to curriculum and governance - were intricately interrelated in several ways. The nature of these inter-relations will become apparent as the argument develops in this and the succeeding two chapters.

I deliberately avoided presenting the principals at my two research sites with a single, specific definition of ‘educational disadvantage’. While my own focus was the sub-set of ‘educational disadvantage’ that is ‘socio-economic disadvantage’, I did not want to foreclose discussion on principals’ own local priorities. Interviewees were therefore invited to identify the particular forms of disadvantage that they confronted in their own schools. There was a good deal of variation in their responses. These variations were a key to understanding the strategies they had mounted to counter the negative impact of disadvantage on students’ learning. In the preceding chapter, I noted that Pat Thomson has coined the term, ‘thisness’ to describe the routine tendency of ‘rustbelt’ school administrators, teachers and parents and students to refer constantly to their particular, local circumstances. (Thomson, 2002, 72.) I discovered
that, in the development of strategies to counter disadvantage, ‘thisness’ is not confined to the rustbelt:

I don’t think the answers come from big picture programs you get from State Office. They come from really looking at your own school and at how you can do little things that will build up. (PuN3)

Public/Private comparisons: elite independent and selective high schools

No interstate differences could be discerned in the responses of elite private school principals to the question, ‘What forms of educational disadvantage do you confront in your school?’ Principals of elite schools on both sides of the Murray tended to conflate ‘educational disadvantage’ with ‘intellectual disability’ or even just ‘lower-than-average intelligence’:

All of us to a certain extent are disadvantaged in some shape or form (because) we aren’t strong in all those (i.e. Howard Gardiner’s) areas of multiple intelligence. (PrN10)

School PrN10 requires the parents of students enrolling at Year 7 to co-operate with its ‘sophisticated program of screening’. This entails agreeing to (and paying for) a comprehensive ‘psychological’ assessment of their child, at the time of enrolment. I discovered no evidence that Pr10 was actually using these assessments to screen out prospective enrolments. In fact, the principal explicitly denied this:

We are not a selective school – we have pipelines of students into the school for which entrance is almost automatic, irrespective of their ability. (PrN10)

As a result:

Twent per cent of Year 7’s are needing some form of help with literacy – higher than in many schools. (PrN10)

But the principal did confide that the ‘congenital thickness’ (sic) of some of the students was a continuing concern, as:
We are an academically oriented school and we make no apology for that. (PrN10)

Selective high schools were also worried about the literacy of incoming fee-paying students from overseas:

Who are the educationally disadvantaged in our school? The Asian students (with) their inability to read properly. (I look at them) and think ‘Wow!’ How did these slip through the net? (PuN7)

However, I gained the impression that the high level of motivation of the families in the groups of foreign students seeking entry to elite schools of either sector ultimately compensated for initial language problems:

If you know anything about Chinese culture or Asian culture, the thing that’s held near and dear is quality education, and that’s instilled into them from birth ... in their culture education is everything ....So they come over here with an indelible streak down their back, saying ... we will do anything, and I have had experience where some parents will impoverish themselves to spend their last 35 dollars for an hour’s tuition in English. (PuN7)

Family breakdown also figured strongly in elite principals’ definitions of educational disadvantage:

We have kids with broken wings. Some (come from) a most desperate family situation. One in two or three marriages are ‘on the rocks’. (PrN10)

Socio-economic disadvantage, however, did not figure largely in the responses either of elite independent schools or selective high schools:

In a sense, we don’t get a lot of economic disadvantage, because even though our fees might be half of what I would see at equivalent schools, still it means that the parents have got to have somewhere between five and seven thousand dollars plus the other things, so whereas a lot of parents make real financial sacrifices to send their children to this school, I don’t see there being an enormous amount of economic disadvantage compared to the wider community. We would have it in the school and we see it as a problem but it’s a relative thing...we have sister relationships with two schools in Japan, one in Germany and one in Indonesia, and each year there are opportunities for kids to spend time there ...now, they’re the things that the relatively disadvantaged child (may not be able to access). (PuV6)
Nevertheless, it is obviously not possible to claim that socio-economic disadvantage was completely absent from such schools; the financial sacrifices made by some parents – especially those born overseas – to send their children to elite schools were frequently mentioned:

If you look at the background and occupations of most of the parents, there are some who are fairly affluent – a fairly small percentage – and most of them (are) the sort of people who own their own business or who start off as tradesmen but run very big plumbing or electrical contracts or are into property development or housing construction, that sort of thing. The rest are parents who are in fairly ordinary jobs that can be very humbling but they rate education such a high priority ... no Australian family would consider devoting that percentage of their discretionary income to education. (PrV6)

There were fewer differences between elite independent schools and selective high schools in their identification of the forms of educational disadvantage in their school than there were between the selective high schools and their neighbouring public schools. The principal of a Victorian public school that is recognised as the highest status public school in its zone told me that his School Council is:

Predominantly made up of nice, middle-class parents who have their children's best educational interests at heart – good solid citizens who really care where things are going...They’re ‘small L’ Liberals in all the nice senses of that word and ... when it comes to the crunch, the thing that’s been strongest on that School Council for the last five or six years is the push to improve our VCE results – that comes through time and time again. (PuV9)

In New South Wales, too, the impact of low socio-economic status on selective high schools seemed comparatively slight:

We do have quite a large number of disadvantaged kids: in Year 9. I suppose I’ve helped a handful – say five – with canteen lunches. (PuN7)

The principal of a New South Wales non-Catholic religious school advised:

Our ethos tends to be middle class (so) disadvantage is not an important issue within the school. (But) we’re not selective. (PrN4)
Public/Private comparisons: non-elite schools

In New South Wales, an emphasis on students from Language backgrounds other than English

The responses of principals from regular public schools and non-elite private schools were markedly different from those of their colleagues in elite and selective schools. The higher proportion of students born overseas in the New South Wales study area was reflected in the responses of local principals. But they distinguished between different groups of migrants, focusing particularly on those whose non English-speaking background interacted with their refugee status and the low income levels of their parents:

What you see on the surface in our school is only half of the disadvantage story. You can talk about 99 per cent NESB ... and 40 or 50 different languages out there. But what you are not talking about and what isn’t recognised ... is that when a DSP survey says: “Please indicate your highest education level obtained: Schools Certificate/Higher School Certificate/Tertiary or whatever, that doesn’t recognise that ..., the bulk of our Arabic parents have come from a very poverty stricken area in (an Arabic country) ¹, and ... my guess would be that 15 to 20 per cent of those parents are absolutely illiterate in their own language, ...and probably sat on a dirt floor in (the country) until about the age of 9 or 10 .. before they became acculturated by village law which was a mix of Islamic guidelines and customs going back to medieval times ...and then they come to Australia and we say, “Why aren’t you keeping your kids (at school) to Year 12 and ..going on to uni and whatever else?” when twenty to thirty of my kids every year in Year 9 go overseas and come back betrothed and then marry in Year 11 and 12. (PuN12)

NESB is the main area of disadvantage in the school. My NESB parents vary from wealthy independent immigrants from Russia – a boy in the school speaks Russian, French and one other language apart from English .... he doesn’t bring with him educational disadvantage at all. ...But also, there are significant proportion of refugees from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, who bring with them, not only NESB, but quite often trauma associated with their refugee status. My Anglo background kids are generally of better socio-economic status perhaps, but then we have the small proportion of single parents and large families (who) are struggling to survive. In this school, I am able to focus more on educational objectives than in my last school where the 90 per cent NESB population were often illiterate in their own language as well as in English, though we’re not entirely (without) social welfare issues. (PuN6)
The principal of another New South Wales public school who said that 80 per cent of her 924 students came from a non English-speaking background had set herself an onerous task, believing, as she does, that ‘Every child deserves a credential’. Some schools had both large numbers of NESB students and a cohort of Australian-born students from low-status families:

We get a lot of children from the Intensive English Centre: immigrants, refugees. A lot of their parents are, you know, doctors from Iran – just wonderful people, but they’re having to work as security guards, so they’re really, really poor. But they have high expectations of their children. We also have a lot of very, very poor students from sort-of outlying ‘Johnson Park’… who come from really disadvantaged, um, I suppose I should say – Anglo - families, to differentiate. (PuN3)

We have a majority of NESB students in the school. Some parents born overseas have qualifications but they aren’t recognised in Australia. Of the parents born in Australia, I don’t think any have tertiary qualifications. (PuN9)

The presence of large numbers of migrant children caused New South Wales principals to identify a new form of educational disadvantage - ‘cultural’ disadvantage:

Cultural disadvantage is very hard to deal with and we don’t understand it very well either. It’s not just something you can throw money at….One of the Moslem students had a baby during the HSC but kept it secret (from the other students). She was a beautiful girl and very bright. The current Vice-Captain has problems. Every time her father goes back to (home country), her mother won’t let her go to school because she has to mind the children. She wants her to leave (school) and hits her …we intervene as much as we can, try our hardest … We often have problems with boys who don’t respect women. We try to work with the fathers for the son. We say, ‘Your Dad really cares so much’ and it often has some effect. (PuN3)
In Victoria, an emphasis on students from low socio-economic backgrounds

Victorian public schools also had a wide variety of migrant students, but their principals conveyed the impression that meeting the needs of low-income groups was a more difficult challenge. And in general, public schools in both States appeared to have to cope with a more diverse range of different forms of disadvantage than did their elite and high status counterparts:

We’ve got significant numbers of kids that come from overseas: a lot of Islanders, Maoris, Tongans, Samoans, a substantial number of Lebanese, substantial number of Vietnamese… Ten there’s a sprinkling of everything else – recent refugees from the world’s current crises….Then you’ve got a range of kids that are born in Australia – families with little income or split families, with low aspirations and very little self esteem. There’s another group that’s disadvantaged – those that come from supposedly a stable environment but (who) still struggle when they get into VCE, and it becomes a real stressful situation for them. (PuV4)

There are two categories of disadvantage, that we think about, and try to deal with. One, I suppose, would be cultural or social disadvantage which comes from the fact that a large percentage of our kids are from first generation migrant families….We have a large range of cultural groups... The parents are terribly anxious for them to do well, but the kids suffer from the disadvantage… they can’t get the sort of enrichment experiences which other kids get. (PuV6)

We have families that have known three generations of unemployment. A third of our students are Arabic-speaking Lebanese. But the group we deal most with are the kids that are disadvantaged emotionally - they’re a major problem. (PuV3)

Physical and intellectual disability - and learning difficulties

Physical and intellectual disability was a source of educational disadvantage for a minority in almost all public schools:
(In addition to the low-income migrant group) the other main group I suppose - and it’s very small - are those who suffer physical disadvantages or impediments to their learning, but they’re a fairly small group and in a sense they’re pretty specific and easier to deal with than the other group. (PuV6)

But some private schools – especially the systemic Catholic schools - said they were no strangers to disability. One New South Wales non-elite private school had a disproportionate number of ‘special education’ students (ie. those with learning disabilities) in its mono-cultural (but non-Australian) student population:

We have the highest number of ‘special ed’ students in the state: 8-10 students within each of the Year levels are classified as ‘special ed’ students and funded as ‘special ed’ students. In each of the Years we have roughly 70-80 students so you’re talking about anywhere between 8-12 percent of students within a particular Year classified as special ed, plus we have a significant number whose IQs are probably two or three points on the other side of the scale so are not classified as ‘special ed’. For (teachers whose classes contain) students who are in both of these categories, ‘educational disadvantage’ takes on a whole new meaning. (PrN1)

Non-elite private schools expressed concerns about a further group: those students who narrowly fail to meet the criteria for special (funding) assistance:

(Our highest priority) is the group of kids who are the kids in between: the kids in the regular classroom and the kids who don’t attract funding for whatever reason...who aren’t sort of ‘severe’ enough in their learning difficulties... (PrN6)

Before you came today, I went to my ‘Special Needs lady’ (to get a definition of ‘educationally disadvantaged’.) She said the next level down - lower than the average, but who don’t qualify for ‘Disadvantaged’ (funding): - that’s her greatest concern. (PrN4)

**Educational disadvantage caused by structural inequality**

But structural inequality in the school’s own locality – a situation over which schools have little influence – appeared to be at once the most worrying and the most intransigent issue for schools trying to educate disadvantaged students:
The needs of our families have become even more acute in the last 12 months: it’s really back to what it was 20 years ago. (From) research (we’ve done) with Social Security and Health (we see that) there’s a higher proportion of unemployment here than there’s ever, ever been before and some of our families can’t access money through social security any more, so I think things have tightened up there. So in knowing that was happening, we’ve re-surveyed our community and had about a 45 per cent response in support of a breakfast program again... a lot of our kids get themselves off to school ... The problem for us will be: will the parents pay the 30 or 40 cents for the kids to have their breakfast, and we might have to shoot that charge in the foot and just open it free. (Then) the problem is the people who don’t need it. But with Kellogg’s coming to the party now ... and we’ve almost got our milk supply and our bread supply – we’ve got to trial it and see what happens. (PuN3)

There’s a lack of motivation in students. But this is partly because the kids work part-time. (PuN8)

As revealed in Chapter 5, certain schools declined my requests for interviews. One such refusal came from a principal of a school in a semi-industrial corner of the ‘Sydwest’ study area that had been subjected to a failing local economy and increasingly high levels of unemployment over the last several years: one of Pat Thomson’s ‘rust-belt’ schools? The principal initially had agreed to an appointment, but had changed her mind by the time I arrived for the interview. The physical appearance of a school can often be misleading, but to say that this one looked ‘down-at-heel’ is an understatement. More important, it seemed to lack the characteristic ‘buzz’ to be found in the scores of well-functioning schools I have visited in the course of a career in education: the four staff members I spoke to – admittedly very briefly – seemed embarrassed by the change of plans, but perhaps they were simply demoralised.

Disappointed at the loss of a ‘DSP school’ from my interview schedule, I asked the Department if they could recommend a further DSP school as close to my research site as possible. I was referred to an inspiring primary principal whose school was achieving very respectable outcomes in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. Her description of the neighbourhood surrounding her school could easily have been applied to that of the school that refused the interview – and to others I visited (in both States). If these neighbourhoods were not ‘rustbelts’ in Pat Thomson’s economic sense, they certainly were ‘poverty belts’.

There’s … the reality of where we are in this community, and that’s in terms of the high proportion of drugs and alcohol and prostitution and several of our parents are involved in that. It’s not just the disadvantaged children either: it just affects the – probably the cultural environment of the community.

It’s what some of these families are really having to go through in terms of lack of resources and lack of ability, not just because they didn’t get very far through school themselves, but they were in very, very difficult family circumstances. And then there are other issues: there are a lot of families with one person in jail, there’s a lot of dysfunction in terms of rotation of parents and rotation of people within the family unit, and in the main, I’m talking about our white Anglo Saxon families.

The operations of the Housing Commission have a big impact on the school. From time to time, many of the families are ‘cleaned out’, i.e. ‘they have been made to go, so it’s been a recycling of similar, needy people but different people again. Things that a stable school would do at the beginning of the year and not do again, we do at the beginning of each term: a re-statement of the school rules; a re-statement of what happens in our school; a re-statement of our vision…(PuN11)

The principal told me the area had a ‘difficult public transport situation’ and instructed me to ring her from the railway station so she could describe the safest place in which to stand until she picked me up in her car. In the week in which I visited, the school had made 15 notifications of suspected child abuse.

That not even the most caring schools seem able to achieve successful outcomes for all students was a source of anguish for several of the principals I interviewed:

It’s not the retention from Yr 10 to 11 that bothers me: it’s the number of students we have that drop out all the way through and who quite clearly are at risk and who – it doesn’t matter what program we put in or how we – kind of – adapt them, these kids don’t manage to reach even the most basic credentialling. We’ve probably got about five in Yr 9 and 5 in Yr 10 and so on. They’re mostly male and they represent a significant disadvantaged group and I think we work very hard for them and yet somehow we never manage to get them through……they’re the kind of fringe dwellers in our schools…(PuN8)
It goes without saying that the impact of poverty on public and non-elite private schools went far beyond certain 'relatively disadvantaged' students not being able to afford overseas excursions to sister schools (PuV6): it affected the entire educational ethos of a school, encouraging teachers to lower their expectations of young people whose families were unable to support their formal education:

People who come from well-educated families – the discussion of issues in the home makes them aware of issues … their analytical skills, the more formal operational level of thinking, the ability to articulate complex ideas – (these) are very useful when working with text-based material. Many of our kids don’t have families that basically understand how the education system works and how the post-school system works. (PuN9)

All are at some kind of disadvantage because English is not spoken at home, and it’s not only that English is not spoken at home: it’s the availability of books and background material and things like that you would normally expect in an English-speaking home. You’re (also) talking about economic disadvantage in terms of either low paid manual labouring jobs or no employment at all, and the level of unemployment here is probably twice – if not more – than the general population. We also have some children of teachers, lawyers, small and large business people but overall, the economic background of the kids here would be certainly reasonably low on the socio-economic scale. (PrN1)

I discovered that in identifying forms of ‘educational disadvantage’ in their schools, the similarities between elite independent and selective high schools on the one hand, and between public and non-elite private schools on the other are stronger than the differences between the schools of each State. However, it was possible to discern certain nuances within this broad difference: New South Wales public and non-elite schools, confronted with higher numbers of migrant students, were forced to accord high importance to ‘non English-speaking background’ – although, as we shall see, their strategies for countering educational disadvantage were focused more directly on those migrant groups who were also low-income. Victorian schools, also dealing with significant numbers of NESB students, nevertheless seemed more constrained by the low-income levels of their student populations. A principal whose school ran a breakfast program for its students said:
The ESL factor is here: 40 per cent. We have Tongans - South Pacific Islanders - Macedonians, Serbians. Croatians, South-East Asians, Lebanese. but they’re not all disadvantaged in the SES sense -- only because of their poor language skills....Yet in terms of educational disadvantage, poverty is much more significant. When we run excursions, when we run camps, we always have to cancel the camps. We have them for the Year 7s: they're important for them. We can do them for around $90.00 for 3 days -- we make them as cheap as possible. The teachers fund-raise all the year to subsidise the Year 11 camps. We had a Thai girl staying at our house who attended Brookvale International College -- a private school. She had a $4000.00 lap-top on her desk. She didn’t even use it. If I asked my kids to buy a graphic calculator costing $200.00, the school community would be up in arms. How can I do what Birchgrove or Elmtree can do with their kids when I don’t have the equipment they’ve got? (PuV2)

The same principal had a clear view about how welfare support might best be provided for his students:

We need a one-stop sho, The LLEN (Local Learning and Employment Network) should not only be looking at vocational but also at the other social areas. It should be co-ordinating with different groups in the community -- the Anglicare and so on -- to work with kids in that way. There’s no use giving me money and telling me to do all those things because I wouldn’t be able to. I know there’s another school down the road that has the same problems we do -- and if a community group were able to help us (both schools) through the LLEN, that would be the way to do it. (PuV6).

**Conclusion**

The central message conveyed by this chapter is that the most intractable problems for schools are those that are embedded in structures of socio-economic disadvantage. They are the most intractable because they are not readily tackled with the tools most available to schools -- those of the curriculum. The other major dimension of disadvantage -- that deriving from the non English-speaking background of many students - is more tractable when tackled through sensitive literacy programs. But there are variations between different ethnic groups as to the extent to which “NESB” is a problem for schools. Clearly, wherever it is accompanied by low family income -- a common occurrence in non-elite schools in both States -- more comprehensive support is needed than that which can be supplied merely through the curriculum.
Principals such as PuV6 (quoted above) believe that for schools combating the problems arising from structural disadvantage, ‘joined up government’ is required to ensure that low-SES students get the range of supports they need before learning begins. In some cases, the principals I interviewed had had insufficient experience outside the education silo to recognise even those few limited opportunities that are gradually being opened up through such mechanisms as Victoria’s Local Learning and Employment Networks. The Victorian experiment – a new approach to sub-regional education governance – will be discussed in the next chapter.

1 Name of country not disclosed in order to protect the identity of the school.
Chapter 7: Governance Strategies

As Fullan had pithily put it in Britain: ‘The top is too distant, and the bottom overwhelmed’
(Vinson, 2002, 1/60)

Introduction

Chapter 6 revealed that - depending on their particular settings - school principals understand the term ‘educational disadvantage’ to cover a wide range of conditions that impede their students’ learning: from emotional, physical and intellectual difficulties, to the more common ‘learning difficulties’ (including lack of facility in English) through to ‘cultural’, social and economic poverty. In fact, there was a certain degree of overlap between schools’ definitions, with common agreement - even, to some extent, across the public/private divide - that the forms of disadvantage most difficult to deal with at school level are those resulting from structural inequalities in the community of which the school is a part: long-term unemployment, poverty, low education levels, crime - and the lack of facilities that, in better-off communities, encourage and facilitate learning among the young. (McCalman, 1993, passim.) But, as we saw in Chapter 6, there were also variations in the ways individual schools and their teachers define ‘disadvantage’, and these inevitably led to differences in the internal governance of schools as well as differences in how schools relate to their external communities and to central government.

The treatment of Governance in this chapter, when compared with treatments in the earlier chapters, will be restricted in one sense, but broadened in another. I have not found it necessary to undertake a detailed examination of principals’ internal organisation strategies. I have not inquired into their human resource management and accounting systems, for example. Educational disadvantage is generated by structural inequality in society at large, and my motivation is to explore the implications of this fact for central policy-making on schools. Thus, for the purposes
of the chapter, the notion of Governance has to take on a residual, ‘hold-all’ character, covering the range of the principals’ relations – both internal (staff, students, parents and school council) and external (neighbouring schools, other levels and agencies of government, regional and sub-regional planning mechanisms, and other segments of the wider community, such as employers). Governance also extends to policy decisions taken at the centre that significantly affect the organisation of schooling in a given area. In large part, the local strategies adopted by school principals represent schools’ own organisational responses to the kind of governance they receive from the State.

For each of the four groups of principals, (New South Wales and Victorian public school principals and New South Wales and Victorian private school principals) two dominant ‘Governance’ themes emerged:

The impact of competition between schools within the hierarchical system, and
Relations between schools and the central government.

In the main body of the chapter, there are four sections, dealing in turn with the public schools in New South Wales and Victoria, and then the private schools in those two States. While I expected the inter-State differences in private schools to be more muted, it is of considerable theoretical interest to discover that the differing State-level regime dynamics still shone through in a sector increasingly reliant on the Commonwealth for the funding of its operations.

**Governance strategies compared**

Chapters 2 and 4 characterised the politico-administrative culture of New South Wales as ‘State interventionist’ and the more devolved arrangements in Victoria as typical of a ‘constitutionalist’ State. The centralised approach of New South Wales had helped preserve the traditional model of the ‘secondary comprehensive’ for over a century, but in the late 1980’s, it also generated experiments in the diversification of schooling within the government sector. While still only a minority of the State’s
schools are selective or specialised in any way, the trend is sufficiently established to make possible the recent claim that New South Wales no longer has a system of comprehensive high schools, but ‘a comprehensive system of schools’. (Vinson, 2002, 2/12.) Variety within the Victorian system, on the other hand, is structured by the public/private divide in a way that does not occur in New South Wales. Perhaps surprisingly in the devolutionary state, there is greater uniformity among Victorian government secondary schools – several specialised academic interests being catered for largely by the private sector. This inter-state difference in part is the result of differences in the relationship between universities and private schools in Victoria – where the State Government has for long virtually abdicated its responsibility for administering access to the tertiary sector. In New South Wales, by contrast, the Department has always insisted on being heavily involved.

Yet, even though there is evidence that New South Wales schools do not take seriously many central policy statements (Vinson, 2002, 3/120) many teachers complained to the Vinson Inquiry about ‘the dominant control exercised by central authorities over curricula...’ (Vinson, 2002, 1/viii)

**Governance and Public School Principals: New South Wales**

**Competition within a hierarchical system**

In New South Wales, the most obvious manifestation of competition between schools was that between the schools of the public and the private sectors. In both States, principals were well aware of the bias in Commonwealth funding towards private schools, and their responses ranged from smouldering resentment to philosophical resignation. But it was the Commonwealth’s deregulation of the establishment of new, publicly funded, private (mostly religious) schools that has wrought the most dramatic change in the structure of schooling in New South Wales. The Vinson report quotes Board of Studies data that show that between 1991 and 2000, new private schools (including new campuses of existing schools) grew by 100. Admittedly starting from a smaller base than in Victoria - where, in 1999, 34% of all students and 38 per cent of secondary students attended private schools (ABS 4221.0 Schools,
1999) - New South Wales is now experiencing a marked ‘drift’ of students, particularly from secondary schools, to the private sector:

Between 1985 and 2000, student enrolments in government schools in New South Wales decreased by nearly 5% from 74.2% to 69.4%, with this fall more evident in secondary schools where enrolments fell by nearly 7% from 72.2% to 65.3%. This means that one in three secondary students in New South Wales now attend a non-government school. (Vinson, 2002, 2/12.)

This competition is a matter of growing concern for New South Wales public school principals. Nor would this concern appear to be misplaced: private school principals in both States – either overtly or covertly - are energetically marketing their schools as both ‘safer’ than public schools, and as academically superior. A Victorian independent school principal described – rather better than any public school principal - the public’s uncritical acceptance of the general superiority of private schools:

Very few of our parents have been to independent schools before so they have a sort of abstract concept that it’s better. Sometimes they can see results: they can contrast those with the local high schools’ (but that’s not really a fair comparison). Some of them think that they’re paying more money therefore it must be better, but for whatever reason, they’re convinced it’s better and they’ve determined their child will have that ...... (PrV6)

While ever the bulk of school funding is allocated on a formula based on numerical enrolments, the departure of students from one school to a neighbouring school can be devastating. Principals are quick to point out that the loss of a handful of students makes hardly a dent in the school’s expenditure on fixed costs (such as facilities and equipment maintenance, administration and pastoral care). Yet, the departure of just a few students can mean the loss of funding for teachers and other resources, thereby reducing a school’s capacity to offer a broad curriculum that accommodates a wide range of students, not to mention specialised assistance for those with learning difficulties:

The implications for students in a school with a low SES profile are severe. Peer group impact upon a student’s scholastic performance is well documented ... and small schools lack to capacity to offer the breadth of programs and the innovations that students with weak scholastic records need. Schools with declining enrolments are unlikely to have the high rates
of staff renewal that can help develop a culture of innovation and improvement. They are prone to cultures of low expectations and deficit views of students. These difficulties are compounded by the growth of voluntary fees, such that the larger schools with a concentration of high SES enrolments now have more funds per student than the small schools with high concentrations of students with greater learning needs. (Keating, 2003a. 14.)

As Keating has indicated, by far the most serious impact on schools of inter-school competition for enrolments is the segmentation of the student population. Segmentation occurs when the ‘easiest to teach’ students exit (especially at secondary school levels) to enrol in higher status schools, leaving a concentration of the ‘harder-to-teach’ in the schools left behind:

Teachers and facilities do make a difference, but they are minor compared to the intake. Cream off the able pupils and they will continue to do well, but, after a critical mass is lost, those who remain will decline. (Anderson, 1991, 164.)

New South Wales public school principals were acutely aware of this effect:

In (that) school on the North Shore, you’ve got a group of teachers who are used to teaching kids who can already read and write at two years above their age level already and so their whole teaching style and strategy and everything else is fired at this well-to-do group, not the kids down the back...’ Well, you kids, bad luck you didn’t make it in the hand-out of brains ‘... so that’s cool, whatever. ...I mean, we’ve had kids do well in Turkish and Arabic – first in the State in Turkish – ... but in the merit list for English, it doesn’t matter. In Year 10, parents with high expectations for their kids pull them out of here and head them towards the nearest private school or the nearest public girls’ school ... and we lose that band of really good kids and those who want to go through to the HSC. (PuN12)

Predictably, principals’ concern about the degree of ‘drift’ seemed less marked in areas of strong demographic growth:

In this part of the Westside District, government schools versus non government schools are not so much an issue because there’s still a very strong enrolment in government schools and it’s very stable, as is the enrolment in non government schools. So we’re not, perhaps, in the same highly competitive situation that might apply in other areas in the State, where non government schools are rising dramatically and government school enrolments are falling equally dramatically. (PuN8)
But the ongoing struggle for ‘market share’ between public and private schools was not the only form of competition encountered. While apparently less pronounced than in Victoria, competition from other schools within the public sector - especially from those that were formally designated as ‘selective’ - was an issue for some New South Wales principals of traditional comprehensive schools:

I think what the government is trying to say (about specialist schools) is that if you see something special about private schools … and you think you have this freedom of choice to go wherever you like, then what we want to offer you is an exactly similar, highly competitive structure here that will give the same outcome, provided as a State education. (PuN12)

In fact, all principals were feeling the need to ‘market’ their institutions, and to mount strategies for encouraging the ‘best’ students to stay in their schools. Such strategies ranged from entering publicity-promoting competitions, to deciding to specialise in a particular area of the curriculum - or in the education of girls.

There’s a need to talk up the school and how good we are …. So we go in for national awards and State awards which we win and I’ll show those to you afterwards. (PuN11)

You are judged on HSC results, and, right or wrong, we have deliberately created a class in Year 7 which is supposed to be the kids who … I mean, they don’t get called ‘the talented class’ but there is a real push, a question of ‘What extra are we doing for these kids that is going to help them?’ (PuN12)

You can see the impact of … the current system of having co-ed schools surviving and eating each other for the remaining residual kids who haven’t gone to private schools. And if you’ve got 200 kids, how can you give a good curriculum? So something has to be done. It can’t be to create a new co-ed school from the (amalgamation) of three old co-ed schools who were all down in the doldrums no matter how hard the teachers fought … to give quality stuff. (It was) parents’ perceptions, so away they went. And I think we could have easily been in that same situation here except that we are reviewed as one of two State schools in Sydney who are absolutely ‘the bees’ knees’ (or bringing) some girls through. So if they don’t send them to the Muslim private schools, it’s either us or Cherrytree Girls’, and (so) our numbers are swelled by kids who keep coming. (PuN12)
Relations with the central government

How do public school principals in the largest and most centralised of Australian school systems view their relationships with the New South Wales Government? As the Vinson report demonstrated, in such a vast jurisdiction, the centre-periphery conflicts are alive – and probably inevitable. Muted complaints of excessive central control were frequent, although, as demonstrated above, tempered by principals’ descriptions of the strategies they develop to ‘beat the system’.

We use the NSW Principals’ Council as an alternative policy group (to the Department). Amongst ourselves we tend to achieve more, really. I mean, you don’t go to your District Superintendent for advice about how you do things around curriculum ... you just deal with that and get your own expertise. (PuN3)

They had a big push on Schools Councils – I only had 3 parents – ‘the idea of creating a School Council was absurd, because you would speak to parents to come on to your little committees and you would never see them again because they didn’t want to do anything. (PuN12)

New South Wales public school principals did regard their system as ‘centralised’:

There’s been a re-centralisation following the departure of (Liberal Minister) Virginia Chadwick’ (PuN7).

This principal used the example of the professional development (PD) of teachers to illustrate the fact:

Berry Hill High School has 56 teaching staff and they get only $1,400 for Training and Development. In the devolved model under Chadwick, they could spend $14,000. Now they’re expected to use the Ryde Centre (instead of using Gumtree University, as they’d like to continue to do). That costs a school $4,800 per 3 teachers. Money for PD now has to be supplemented locally (PuN7)

But other principals acknowledged recent attempts by the State government – however modest – to return a modicum of control back to the schools, asserting that,
‘There’s a relative lack of centralism now’ (PuN8). Some acknowledged that, despite a degree of ‘re-centralisation,’ schools still had more discretion than at times in the past:

I had a talk to (a senior Education Department administrator) about these new accountability/evaluation documents .. and he said, ‘What do you think about that? That’ll really get them under control” and I looked through it and thought, “No: we could write anything we bloody-well liked here and, number one: you wouldn’t know if we were telling the truth, and number two: nobody comes and checks.” It was true! ... You know at the end of the year, you just do a couple of transfers, so the (final) print-out’s correct, isn’t it? We have audits, but they are not looking for that.....

I remember in 1989/90, when we had the regions, ... the school inspectors ... would come here and they would go through 1400 teaching periods, and say, “You are allowed to give out 22 periods as non-teaching periods to the whole of your staff: show me where they are, and what you’re using (them) for...you are only allowed to use them from Categories 1 to 6; what’s this class doing? It’s got so many students in it and there’s only one teacher” and whatever. Hey! I mean, you (went) through turmoil waiting for these people to come and do ‘the Royal Review’.

There was a real move to decentralisation in the early 90s and in the last five years until they pulled back, but they have left us with a whole number of functions they didn’t duplicate elsewhere. So they still retained Salaries and Employment, but we end up doing far more sort-of. Well we have got more freedom and we get money globally that you can play with....In 1989, the school had about $7,000 in the bank account and we could get $21,00 worth of entitlements – pencils and rubbers and stuff from the Government stores ... now any money we get comes to us and you decide what you want to buy and what you want to do. (PuN12)

Objectively, though, as noted in Chapter 4, the Global Budgets of public schools in New South Wales still contain a significantly lower proportion of the funds available to individual schools than is the case south of the Murray. Notwithstanding, and in contrast to their Victorian counterparts, New South Wales principals were more inclined to accept the fact of centralisation – and to grudgingly acknowledge its benefits:

I know that a number of principals say, ‘Give us the right to hire and fire’. I’m quite happy with somebody else doing it provided there are standards and you are assured of getting (good) people - and that’s the problem, isn’t it? (PuN12)
This ambivalence about the role and degree of control exercised by the Centre was nowhere more pronounced than in the area of the central collection of data on student outcomes – a recent development, though not only in New South Wales. One principal explained the process:

(Out of the process, we get 'value-added' graphs: your school's performance is compared with your performance in the District, then against State performance. (PuN12)

When I asked, 'Are those statistics made public?' I was told, 'They are if you've got positive results!' Some principals seemed to have been motivated towards improved performance by the information they were gaining from the centralised collection of data on student outcomes and were dismayed by perturbations at the Centre which threatened the continuity of their data-gathering:

I now need to get better at the 'value-added'... I want to get better at (collecting data on student outcomes) and our Superintendent was the leader of the School Improvement area: he was a superb strategist in collecting data (about) making a difference. He used to do the Quality Assurance Reviews, and we lost that. We were so disappointed because we all wanted to learn. It's not just the HSC results that we (analyse): we also do our ELA results, except we didn't this year because of the Teachers' Dispute, and that was disastrous, because we'd been doing that right from the beginning. (PuN3)

There was evidence that schools were changing their practice in response to the outcomes data:

Our external exam results (which are not a very good indicator) improved, then took a dive in 1999. The 'value-added' data for that year was awful and in fact we had kids in Year 7 who, by the time they reached Yr 12, basically hadn't done anything: they hadn't moved forward. Now we're sweating on the results for this year's Year 10 and 12 students. (We've concluded that) we're particularly good at teaching junior students - all the programs between 7 to 10. Then (we're making)... this kind of assumption that you're a senior now and you can do it on your own. The notion of really structured teaching drops away and the students flounder a bit. ...So we did a lot of research just in the last term about what the seniors were up to and what they wanted and what it actually meant to have study time and we think that will help us ... stop those problems. (PuN8)
But the perils of central data collection for small, poorly-resourced, or disadvantaged schools – especially when those data were made public - were also very obvious:

When they used to publish the UAI (University Admissions Index analysis), we had 35-40 per cent of our kids getting below 15, which is like, ‘Gee, why did we do the bloody test?’ sort of thing.

We value-added on lower and middle ability kids. But we don’t rate on ‘higher ability’ because you’ve got to have at least ten kids in your year to rate and sometimes we don’t even get a graph in that higher ability range. (PuN12)

In fact, a major complaint of New South Wales principals against the Centre was the perceived failure of the system – from the Minister down - to support its street-level personnel:

The Minister would say, ‘Those lazy teachers out there, they don’t deserve to get a cent’ and then they turn round, six weeks later, and say, ‘Oh, I was just talking about teachers’ funding. The education is really fantastic. I would really like to keep my job; I don’t want to lose any kids; I am really sorry I called every teacher in the State system ‘lazy’ and whatever’ – so that doesn’t help! People hear the Minister on ‘those bloody teachers are no-hopers – all of them are no-hopers’ and secondly, it doesn’t help to have a bloody-minded Union that is back in the 60s with its tactics …so it doesn’t matter what schools do, you have these forces so far out of control that you just get pushed around, and you try to create your own little whatever in your own community to think, “Well, my school is OK: it must be the others that are the problem,”, but again, that doesn’t work. (PuN12)

I find Ministers’ and Director Generals’ comments on teachers belittling. There’s a low level of industrial disputation in this school because as principal, I give (my teachers) support on (their) pay campaigns. (PuN7)

In other ways, too, the performance of the Centre fell short of principals’ expectations. Despite some recent reforms, one of those areas was dealing with ‘under-performing’ teachers:

(We’ve got) new efficiency guidelines after years of giving (‘non-performing’) people 432 chances and then saying, “Let’s give them another chance” or “We’ll move them to another school”. (In the new) system,… a Review occurs after a six week period of counselling etc but this new procedure (hasn’t) been fully challenged yet’. (PuN12)
I’m totally frustrated by the inability to get any action on inefficient teachers. (PuN3)

Another was in the area of the (now mandatory) notification by teachers of suspected child abuse:

We have a call centre now. You ring with your notification and – the schools have been told – if you’ve been holding on for more than two minutes, you send a fax, because sometimes you can be put on hold for an hour waiting for the call centre to contact you. You’re supposed to be informed within 24 hours of the status of your notification as to whether it’s going to be acted on or not, but mostly you don’t get contacted again. After a week, I try to guess which doctor’s office it’s gone to and ring them to find it’s been downgraded and not even going to be acted upon. It’s just because you can be charged that the teachers have got to do it. (PuN11)

A final call – especially from principals with large concentrations of socially disadvantaged students in their schools – would require action, not just from the central policy-makers of the Education Department, but from the state-wide co-ordinating mechanisms of the Government. This was the need for school students to have ready access to integrated support services ‘on the ground’.

I would like a Community Health Centre actually in the grounds of the school – social services on our doorstep – a one-stop sho. It’s finding the time; it’s having a sufficient level of resources to be able to release that teacher for half a day a week to go and actually talk to (the service). It all sounds so easy but it’s not at all. (PuN8)

Although the Vinson Inquiry recorded widespread complaints about the strong centralisation of the New South Wales system, its recommendations will not unduly disturb the existing hegemony. For example, even though it noted the great passivity that characterised the State’s school councils, it did not revive the revolutionary enthusiasms of the Scott report of a decade earlier. And, while citing specific examples of parent involvement in school affairs, the Review concluded that ‘The overall picture…is one of ‘leaving academic matters in the hands of the experts’. (Vinson, 2002, 1/xxii.).
Governance and Public School Principals: Victoria

Competition within a hierarchical system

As explained in Chapter 2 of the thesis, Victorian public schools have had a longer history of determined competition from the private sector than have public schools in New South Wales:

Most of the kids from all of my feeder schools go to the private system, which is interesting: send your kids to a government primary school because government primary schools are close, and keep tabs on them while they’re young, but when they’re old enough to go to secondary school you can send them ... to a private secondary school wherever you like. (PuV4)

Yet this historical inter-sectoral competition for enrolments seemed not to have prepared them for the deliberate introduction of inter-school competition within the public system – introduced as an aspect of public policy by the Kennett Government in 1992. A Victorian public school principal ruefully reported a loss of students to a neighbouring, more selective, public school:

‘Latteville High’ has developed a good name for themselves for whatever reason. I still have my concerns. I’m unclear as to why our kids go there, apart from the fact that it’s ‘Latteville’....it’s perceived to be that upper middle-class range. (PuV4)

Whereas New South Wales public school principals were feeling the impact of the relatively recent acceleration of competition from private schools, in Victoria, where the Kennett Government had actively encouraged the development of certain government sector schools at the expense of their neighbours, the public schools have turned in on each other:

There’s a particular school in the area- Riverbank - that’s promoting itself as a ‘school of distinction’. and it’s thrown its net for enrolments to cover what was traditionally our enrolment area and is now attracting parents from some of my feeder schools. They’ve only got one feeder school in their zone. So the process as set out currently entitles them to have a
select entry process and pick the eyes from the kids around here and then re-direct everybody else to the other schools - to the extent that they’ve redirected 50 kids to Gumtree Secondary College and 33 kids to their third preference of secondary school.

Gumtree’s enrolment next year for Year 7 is 286, and Riverbank’s been able to maintain theirs at 230. Ours is 190 and Hillside’s is 195. We used to have around 220 (new Year 7 students) per secondary school in this area and now it’s all skewed by that select entry policy. (There’s a new principal at Gumtree and he’s going to be pulling his hair out in terms of teacher resources, rooms and facilities to provide the best for his students.)

We’ve been a second-chance school and we’ve turned kids around. It doesn’t show up in the VCE records, but we’ve turned kids around and they’re going to have much better lives as a result. I’ve had kids sent here from Riverbank for biting teachers. So we take the kids who are biting teachers while they promote themselves as a select entry school. They’re talking about schools specialising in different areas, and (we’ve been told we should be) specialising in behaviour management. I could state that Ironbark specialises in behaviour management - but how would that go down in the community? (PuV6).

To a certain extent, the exclusionist strategies practised by elite independent schools at the post-compulsory level were more or less expected. I was less prepared for the frank admissions by principals of selective high schools (and the public comprehensives that emulate their high status neighbours) that they had adopted similar strategies for excluding students who are unable to cope with the competitive ‘end’ of the curriculum. This is Teese’s ‘export of failure’, the underlying logic of which he made clear:

The elimination of failure from ‘secure sites’ within the school system – private schools and other selective schools – can only be accomplished by intensifying the incidence of failure at other sites. (Teese, 2000, 209.)

Relations with the central government

Already experienced in the partial governance of their school by elected councils (since 1975) and the local selection of school principals (since 1985), Victorian public schools were given even more administrative devolution by the Kennett Government.
A public school principal recalled the glow of governmental recognition – and the disappointments:

Kennett made principals feel important - there's no doubt – by listening to them, but when (his government) didn't like what was said, they tended to ignore it, so the level of cynicism was very strong, especially when you saw good bureaucrats being chopped along the line – that was unbelievably distasteful. (PuV9)

Notwithstanding the reported cynicism, Victorian principals are unlikely now to trade-off a lighter workload for less administrative power. In 1998, while nominating 'increased work load/time demand on the principal' as one of 'seven problems of greatest magnitude' generated by the devolutionary policies of the Kennett Government (Department of Education, 1998, 59), 81 per cent of the 504 principal respondents nevertheless said they preferred the current arrangements to those that existed before 'Schools of the Future'. (op cit 15).

If anything, Victorian principals would like the Centre to cede even more power. Principal PuV5, for example, would like to see disability and impairment funding put into the Global Budget, i.e. he wants the dollars allocated directly to the school 'rather than have (specialised) personnel directly allocated to us', but he believes

...the critical factor is the vested interests at central level and whether they're prepared to let go of the purse-strings'. (PuV5)

While I was carrying out follow-up interviews with some of the Victorian principals, the Department was in turmoil: 300 central office administrators had been targeted for sacking by the Bracks Labor Government, and a senior bureaucrat who had been working closely with the principals had suddenly resigned. (PuV5) In contrast to their New South Wales colleagues, Victorian principals were viewing their State Department less as a source of overarching power than as weak and ineffectual:
I have nothing to do with them — nothing. Only when I’ve forgotten to tell them (in the Building Plan) where we’re going to put our computer pods. I find it difficult even to contact people there. (PuV2)

Instead, their contact with the State administration seemed to be in a lateral direction — with the Regional office and - despite inter-school competitiveness causing some fractures in local networks - with their neighbouring schools:

Western Region is an innovative region and has trust and confidence in the schools to run with the dollars because they know the schools will spend it appropriately’. (PuV5)

Our two local primary schools are down (in enrolment numbers). They weren’t able to employ a business manager. I got together with the two principals and said, Look, my business manager should be able work together with your schools and do your books… The Region was very happy with that and now we wanted to become a ‘bureau’ for public schools in the area. ‘John Smith’ (pseudonym) said he’d give us $5000 to get the thing started and we contacted the centre because they have a special (computer) program you need to access data from other public schools in the area (rather than going over there) and it took us 6 months to get a reply! They’re up in the clouds in there. I rang the Regional Office and ‘Frank Regan’ gave me an on-the-spot ‘in-service’ on the telephone, showing me how to do it. I would never have got that from the Centre.

In the time of being principal, I’ve felt pretty much deserted by the way you’re supported by the Centre. Rarely have I felt that the Centre was on the side of schools. We’ve always been seen to be a nuisance — ‘tolerated’ as much as anything. We’ve had quite good relationships with a number of regional managers. (PuV9)

They should rotate people with expertise on schools in and out of the bureaucracy — and they should make them send their kids to government schools (to give them an interest in improvement). (PuV9)

And, to the extent that principals did have a quarrel with the Centre, it tended to be on the issue of insufficient resources for physical infrastructure — or with the failure of Government co-ordination:

We’re being serviced by old bus services and the demographics have altered dramatically. Kids have to use public transport to get to us and we don’t have a very good public transport system- something I’m fighting with the Department of Infrastructure and the Department of
Education about – as well as the local bus lines and the local council. Buses drive past us to service schools in the Greenbanks municipality. A parent will send their kids there because they can basically get picked up at the door and dropped off at the school. So I’m fighting for an equal playing field here: we have parents down at Gumtree Primary and Wattletree Primary who’d love to send their kids here. We have a lovely transition program .... (PuV4).

**Governance and private school principals: New South Wales**

**Competition within a hierarchical system**

The private schools I visited in Sydney were such a disparate lot that issues of competition did not arise in the interviews, except for this revealing observation by a Catholic principal:

> We haven’t marketed our school but we don’t have to. We’ve got the highest fee-paying schools in Australia up the road. Four applications from senior students have come from that school in the last two years. I say to them, “What are you currently studying?” They say, “I’m studying these things” and I say, “Well, you can’t do them (in this school, and they say) “Well, I’ll change”. It’s not the curriculum: we’ve got to look at it in terms of a safe environment’. (PrN6)

**Relationships with the central government**

New South Wales private school and high status public school principals seemed equally dismissive of the Centre. Halting the ‘great tide of administrivia’ (PrN10) was a typical response I received from most Independent schools in answer to the question: ‘What could the Department do that would be most helpful for your school?’ The principal of a high status public school had a cynical response to newly announced policies from the Centre, regarding them merely as ‘alphabet changes’, and reported that he was considering refusing to allow his school to participate in the State’s Literacy Testing regime. But by far the greatest source of frustration for Principal PrN10 was the cuts that Premier Carr had made to State funding for private schools – a 30 per cent cut in the case of elite schools. In the same vein, a non-elite private school observed that the State Government’s withdrawal of State funding for correspondence courses was ‘dumbness’. (PrN1)
A Catholic sector administrator was critical of Premier Bob Carr’s ‘hands on’ mandating of compulsory examinations in History and Geography (a decision that was seen to raise ‘centralisation’ to new heights – even in New South Wales). This jaundiced view was balanced by the recognition of benefit from some central initiatives (if indifference to whether the funding source was the Commonwealth or State Government):

Some top-down policies have made a difference: Indigenous Education and Students with Disabilities, for example – usually where there is a narrow clientele. (NSW Catholic Diocesan Administrator).

Private school principals were also looking to the State Department for assistance with professional development – for ‘practical nuts and bolts assistance to teachers’ and for support in instituting the kind of four year basic degree that was mandatory for most other professions.

In the early 90’s, I had experienced, at Commonwealth level, resistance from the National Association of Independent Schools to the collection of data for the National Report on Schooling. I was therefore surprised to discover that principals of non-elite private schools in my research site welcomed the State collecting data on student outcomes. One Catholic school principal confided that the data had strengthened his hand in getting rid of ‘non-performing’ teachers:

Before we started to collect (these data), we had teachers that were basically untouchable. (PrN6)

Principal PrN1 was critical of his teachers for ‘sort-of filing the data’, when ‘if only they’d just shift their focus’, they’d most probably find them useful. Notwithstanding, his endorsement was not without a tinge of ambivalence:

Basic Skills Testing at Year 5 followed by ELA testing at Year 7 does help us make the case that improvement is happening. But I don’t think we need to have the rod held over us saying, ‘You will do this’ (in order that we) do it. We know what we’re doing; we’re professionals.
And I suppose it would be nice if sometimes Ministers of Education would recognise that.

(PrN1)

However, the enthusiasm of the Catholic School principal was not shared by his Diocesan administrators, who were critical of the State-imposed ‘Excellence and Standards in Education’ on resource grounds:

The Diocese pays half a million (dollars) a year to conduct the mandatory government testing -- that’s what it pays! So it’s money we don’t get! (NSW Catholic Diocesan Administrator).

Even the principal of an elite independent school that specialised in the competitive academic curriculum claimed there was ‘..too much emphasis on basic skills testing’:

The accountability agenda sets the benchmarks for performance (but) it does nothing for the kids who are not going to reach that (benchmark): there’s very little done for those kids. So the Commonwealth Government’s Numeracy (Testing Program) arrived here recently and it was almost as if ... ‘So what?’ (PrN10)

A different manifestation of private schools’ general criticism of centralised policy-making was their antipathy to the Teachers’ Federation. The union was blamed for the ‘de-professionalisation’ of teachers, exemplified by the failure of the ‘Leading Teacher’ concept - purportedly because unions had wanted such awards to be automatic: ‘Unions use the same tactics as they would for brick layers and ship builders’. (PrN10).

**Governance and private school principals: Victoria**

**Competition within a hierarchical system**

All the principals I interviewed were acutely aware of the hierarchical organisation of both the curriculum and schools in their localities. I spoke with some who had decided to position their schools on the top rung of the local school hierarchy. The implementation of such a decision requires a number of supporting strategies. First, the curriculum must be narrowed and focused on the ‘competitive end’ of the academic range of subjects – those which Teese identifies as the most ‘lucrative’ for the achievement of high TER scores. The headmaster of one Victorian private school
was very conscious of the need for careful curriculum planning to maintain the status of his school:

Look, the curriculum (here) is fairly traditional: I mean, maths, science, commerce; it’s quite strong in art and music as well, so I think we offer – out of 42 VCE subjects, we offer 27 – so we don’t offer a lot of the trade subjects or the subjects like media studies or anything like that... We offer (only) two VET subjects: Design and Food Technology. (PrV6).

The consequences for elite school students who do not manage to make the grade in an academic sense are plain: they are ‘encouraged’ to seek education elsewhere. The ‘export of failure’ is an essential strategy in the considerable armoury of the principals of elite independent and selective high schools:

They’ll often go into a TAFE course, or they’re the ones who will often go into the workforce and it’s amazing how often the feedback you get on those kids from employers (will be):
‘Have you got any more like that?’ It startles me: ‘Oh, you’re kidding!’ But the fact is the kid’s shown they’ve got the determination and the perseverence, and they’ve picked up a lot of other social skills on the way because we’re fairly traditional in other ways and they know how to speak to people and things like that and a lot of parents are aware of that. (PrV6)

Asked what happens to students who are not succeeding at Years 9-10, the Principal said:

We put a lot of emphasis on providing regular feedback to the parents so they are absolutely clear on it. I think where the problem arises is if you get to Year 11 and you suddenly say, ‘Look, your kid can’t go on’. (PrV6)

The same principal quibbled at the suggestion that non-academic post-compulsory students were excluded, and indeed, it is probably more accurate to say that such students are ‘discouraged’:

There is a widely held belief in the community that we expel kids in Year 10. I mean, the fact is that if you’re breathing and you’ve got a pulse, you can satisfy the requirements for the VCE. But you won’t get a very high TER. Now we’re sort of up front with the parents and we’ll say, ‘Now, look: your child is not going to be looking at a huge range of tertiary options
because they’re probably going to be looking at a TER around 40, but they will have a secondary qualification and they will get something.

There were two kids last year (about whom) I said to the parents, ‘Look, your child’s attitude is such that they shouldn’t go into Year 12, therefore your option is to repeat or leave.’ We have a Careers Councillor who hopefully has been working with them before that, but in one case, the parents said, ‘Well, you never told us’ and so on... That wasn’t the case: there were meetings going back forever, so we spent about a week on and off talking in January, and in the end his options were explained: he was most welcome back here but he’d have to do Year 11 again before he could do Year 12 and have to show he was keen, or, I said, there are some schools who will accept you into Year 12 if that’s what you want. What we finally recommended and what he did was to do a VCE type course in a more adult environment. He’s doing the RMIT sort-of TAFE Certificate level because the kid will probably do better in that kind of environment. (PrV6)

Relationships with the central government

Just as there was a paucity of comment on inter-school competition from private school principals in New South Wales, there was an equal lack of comment from private school principals in Victoria on relations with central governments. The head of a group of Victorian Catholic schools explained:

We leave all that to the Diocese. (Sr. Brigid Arthur, Brigidine Secondary Schools Council, Interview, September 14, 2003.)

To the extent that centre-periphery observations were made by private school principals, these were largely confined to New South Wales. (The exception in Victoria was the head of a Victorian Islamic school, who inquired as to ‘why the government should insert itself between the teacher and the child needing discipline’).

Schools’ relationships with parents and the local community

One of the most surprising findings of my research into school governance was that many of my respondents appeared to attach relatively little importance to parental involvement in the decision-making of the school. This was unexpected in the light of
recent government rhetoric about the importance of parental choice. It was also contra-indicated on the basis of the findings of earlier researchers in the United States.

For example, Coleman’s account of the nature of relations between schools and their communities focuses on ‘intergenerational closure’ – the existence in all functional communities of informal networks of ‘sentinels’ that provide parents and other community members with rich varieties of information about the school and its relations with its students (Coleman, 1990a, 319). In Coleman’s view, fully-functioning local communities had been declining in importance in modern America but, where they did continue to exist, they were valuable resources for schools lucky enough to be embedded in them. And of course local schools are not necessarily passive in this respect, for they can act as catalysts for the invigoration of their surrounding communities. Important strategies to look for, therefore, seemed to be those directed at strengthening the relationship of schools with their local communities – and indeed, I found several examples. The principal of the disadvantaged primary school I interviewed explained that:

It starts in the front office. When a parent walks in, they are greeted by one of the clerical staff – a lady who also lives in the community – they break down the barriers between home and school very quickly for that parent. The ladies will know if the parent comes in really stressed; they can quickly communicate to the teacher, ‘It’s a hard day today’, the teacher knows that sort of thing, we can get a phone call that will let us know the Police have been round the night before… that sort of thing. (PuN11)

Although this particular strategy was unusual, other schools were building relationships with parents by offering basic literacy education in the guise of computer training. One school in particular was investing a great deal in this activity:

We have 60 representatives of Aboriginal, Samoan, Tongan families come in to help us in the school each day and they say ‘I am learning to read at the same time’. …...they need support in literacy and numeracy, and because the computers are so common in the classrooms, (we can teach them) word processing and how to send email and access the internet. We run Homework Centre twice a week – (and are) planning to move it into the computer lab. Whilst the teachers are working in the library, the parents would be allowed to use the computers. We want to get Red Cross back here to run a reading program for parents. We’re seriously considering the Workers’ Club (as a location) because the parents can get themselves there to
As indicated in Chapter 4, Victoria has a strong history of parent councils. After a long period of experimentation with school committees, Victoria’s School Councils were given statutory recognition in the Education (School Councils) Act, 1975. (Fitzgerald, 1978) Yet my interviews generated little evidence to support the contention of the Vinson Inquiry that the Victorian system had benefited from a ‘tighter prescription of governance roles for (school) councils’ (Vinson, 2002, 3/115, 132.) This may have been because my interview subjects were principals – often criticised by parent organisations for resisting the sharing of their power with school councils. It may also have been because many parents in disadvantaged areas simply do not have the spare resources and energy – or the confidence – that parent decision-making demands. Whatever the reason, the main legacy of Victoria’s statutory formalisation of school councils seems to have been the erection of a state-wide scaffold of experienced parent bodies to which the Kennett Government in the early 1990s could attach greatly increased financial and administrative responsibility.

It is certainly not the case that New South Wales, with its more centralised history of school management, lacked parental involvement in its schools. While not as universally present as in Victoria, school councils do exist, and where they do not, other forms of participation by parents have sometimes been devised. While it did not seem typical, PuN7, which lacks a school council, has parents on all its committees, which the principal thinks makes for higher levels of participation:

We’re setting the school’s vision for 2005, and everyone is involved. The Finance Committee’s membership is a third students, a third staff and a third parents. We had 130 at our (last) meeting. And we have a politically strong SRC (Students’ Representative Council). (PuN7)

In the event, Victoria’s current attempts to involve non-education interests – particularly business and industry - in the planning of post-compulsory education and transition at the sub-regional level may well bear more fruit for socially disadvantaged secondary students than have nearly three decades of statutorily-recognised school councils. Before analysing the views of my respondents, then, I will provide a brief
overview of recent initiatives at the sub-regional level in the two States because these provide some important contexts for some of the principals’ statements on Governance.

**Victoria’s Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs)**

The Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria of 2000 (the Kirby Report) contained thirty-one recommendations. The implementation of two of these — the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) in the area of the curriculum, and the Local Learning and Employment Networks in the area of governance, has the potential to radically change the post-compulsory landscape for students in Victoria.

Informed by overseas models (the OECD, especially Denmark and the UK); and building on a history of successful and unsuccessful attempts in Victoria and other Australian States to achieve lateral co-operation at the regional level, toward the end of 2000, the Bracks Government allocated $27 million over 3 years to establish a State-wide system of LLENs at the sub-regional (one per 2-5 neighbouring municipalities, on the average). The purpose of the LLENs is:

The development of innovative and distinctive partnerships and collaboration between education, training and employment providers and agencies that deliver improved outcomes for young people. (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission LLEN Performance Agreement, 2004 Schedule 1).

More specifically, it is to contribute to the achievement of the Victorian Government’s stated target of ‘90 per cent of all young people completing Year 12 or equivalent by 2010.’ (Draft Wyn Bay LLEN Strategic Plan 2004-05). The formative evaluation of the LLENs, conducted in 2002, identified ‘widespread support’ for this ‘important innovation in education and training’ and recommended their further ‘endorsement, affirmation and support.’ (Centre for Work and Learning Studies, 2002, 23-24)
As the Deputy Chair of the WynBay LLEN (a ‘First phase’ LLEN, now in the third year of its life), I have been a participant-observer in the attempt, in my own sub-region, to build a collective sense of responsibility for ensuring the successful transition from school to further education, training and employment, of every student in the two municipalities of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. An early evaluation report on the LLEN scheme identified numerous ‘practical difficulties’ in the establishment phase: the lack of ‘fit’ between the LLEN boundaries and those of established community networks; the heavy reliance on voluntary labour; the perennial ‘culture clash’ between educators and employer and industry representatives; the conflict between Departmental timelines for achieving outcomes and the LLENs’ determination to ‘resist getting into action mode prematurely’ – to name a few. (Keating, 2003c). Notwithstanding such practical difficulties, there is genuine commitment – and intelligent strategising - occurring within many of the LLENs – my own WynBay LLEN included. Ours is a committee with a hybrid composition of school principals and teachers (n=3); TAFE/Higher Education representatives (2); representatives of private employment services (2); municipal youth workers (2); employer representatives (4, one of whom is the Chair of the LLEN); members of non-education community organisations (2) and one general ‘community member’.

While it is impossible to attribute specific improvements to the LLEN, we have observed ‘first-time’ collaboration in some areas (for example data gathering on students’ outcomes and follow-up of students who have exited school); as well as a high take-up of the VCAL (7 out of the 8 government schools, and two Catholic schools). These developments appear to be resulting in improved school retention among the ‘at risk’ students now undertaking VCAL, and a drop in the number of students leaving school before completing Year 12. New partnerships have been established, widening the circle of people directly involved in young people’s transition. And priorities for action have been able to be established. These include stemming the increasing numbers of exiting pre-school leaving age girls; finding alternative ‘respite’ dispositions for students not coping with generic schooling; increasing the availability of local training places for young people; and investigating a decline in VET participation in one area of the sub-region. (Refer Appendix 7.1.)

On the positive side, after 3 years in the gestation, our local LLEN is just beginning to envisage the possibility of an expanded role – in the co-ordination, not
only of educational services for local youth, but also of the plethora of social support services that Pat Thomson and others have argued are needed by the most vulnerable students. On the negative side, there are early signs that the Government has already ‘lost interest’ in its sub-regional experiment and that funding is to be contracted. Although some business interests have been involved in the initial phase, at this stage there is little prospect of such interests being prepared to come up with the replacement funding that is likely to be needed.

Of course, the LLEN changes are still very new: however promising the auguries, it remains to be seen whether they will end up impacting in any telling way on outcomes for socially disadvantaged students – either the aggregate targets that the Government has imposed on the system for 2010 – or disaggregated outcomes for particular groups of students. Nevertheless, for the second time in a decade, Victoria has embarked on a brave experiment to reform the post-compulsory curriculum to make it more accessible for the two thirds of secondary school students who will not access university directly from school.

School-community links in New South Wales

Interviews with New South Wales principals revealed that several of their schools are also investing a great deal of effort in the establishment of links with local employers and community organizations, and the Vinson Report contains many examples. The major difference between arrangements in the two States is that links with non-school interests are less formalised in New South Wales – often being confined to contacts made with and by school alumni or parents. In contrast to Victoria, New South Wales has not embarked on the same kind of multi-faceted structural reform of transition arrangements for post-compulsory students as have characterised the experiments with the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs):

While most States are now embarking on similar reforms (to those of Victoria), New South Wales is clearly the odd one out, not having even felt the need for a policy review of its post-compulsory outcomes and arrangements. All the other major jurisdictions have signalled that existing school qualifications, transition support, and local community arrangements for youth engagement are inadequate. Yet NSW, with a level of teenage disengagement from learning
and work 50 per cent higher than Victoria, has not acted. (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Papers for the Board of Trustees Meeting, October 31, 2003, 50).

But the reality is that schools experience very differential success in making connections with their communities. A lack of success in this area can have many causes. The Kennett government attributed failure in the area of community relations to the low entrepreneurial energy levels of the school principal. But it is difficult for principals — especially in disadvantaged schools - to be both entrepreneurs and educational leaders. As explained to the ‘People Together’ Inquiry into Public Education by the principal of a public secondary school on the border of my Victorian research site

There is very little doubt that the Principal has been taken away from performing perhaps the most important aspect of a Principal’s role; that is, providing leadership on purely educational matters. Distractions abound. The Principal must balance issues of employment, marketing and so on. Educational issues have on occasions taken a ‘back-seat’. (Written submission to ‘People Together’ Inquiry into The State of Public Education in Victoria, Nov.12, 1999.)

It is true that a school’s failure to strengthen school-community relationships can be the result of a lack of imagination on the part of the local school governors. It can equally be the result of the low level of resources actually on offer in the local community, or of the school’s lowly status in the local hierarchy. Principals whose schools are located in areas of concentrated disadvantage are forced to be realistic about the limitations of entrepreneurial strategies in their localities:

Business links are usually personal links: you know – where a person in a company and a person in a school have a link….If (either one of those people) moves on, quite often the link will slip away. Because most of our students are non-local and most ... come from low socio-economic backgrounds, we don’t have many of our parents in the position (of being able to) establish links for us. (PuN9)

Earlier chapters have demonstrated the complex nature of the policy environment in which school principals operate, and in particular the nature of their relationships with their respective education departments – each of which, as the regime dynamics framework illuminated, possesses distinctive politico-administrative cultures.
Conclusion

When compared in the most general of terms, the greater predisposition towards formal devolution in Victoria is apparent. Whether the local and sub-regional bodies that are the recipients of such delegations are relatively powerless (as with the school councils) or still in early stages of development (such as the LLENs), at least they have been formally established. And formal establishment would appear to be a necessary, if far from sufficient, condition for such bodies to begin to play a role in developing, at the grassroots, civic capacity for the support of schooling.

Competition

All schools face an increasingly competitive environment. As explained in Chapter 3, Minister David Kemp’s abolition of the New Schools Policy in 1996 has led to a substantial increase in the numbers of Federally-funded private schools, most of them, small religious schools. Of course, Federal decisions to fund new private schools are not made in a vacuum: funding flow-on effects to the States mean that no already established schools are immune from the impact. The ceiling on this kind of expansion has been effectively removed, and there are no signs yet of a slowing in the growth of new schools.

On the ground, the shape of inter-school competition in one State differs significantly from that in the other. In New South Wales, conversations about inter-school competition inevitably turns to the falling enrolments in public schools and the ‘drift’ of students to the private sector – a comparatively ‘new’ experience for the northern State. Yet competition between the private and the public sectors in New South Wales has been complicated somewhat by the much greater spread of selective high schools in the public system than is the case in Victoria.

In devolutionist Victoria, long accustomed to competition between the public and private sectors, there is, however, a new dimension to the contest. The Kennett Government’s introduction of the self-managing ‘Schools of the Future’ transformed
inter-school competition into a goal of public policy, and ever since, the competition for enrolments between schools within the public sector is being fought with renewed vigour. It manifests itself even between neighbouring schools in local areas. While the actual state of play lies somewhere between the suspect reminiscences of a long-lost ‘golden age’ of collaboration and claims of a ‘cut-throat’ contemporary environment, these ‘geographies of competition’ are nevertheless very evident. At the very least, they consume schools’ energies and predispose them to resist secondary school amalgamations that could produce larger, better-resourced institutions with broad curriculum offerings that would attract a range of students with diverse backgrounds and interests— even where this might be geographically feasible. And they distract them from the consideration of the possible benefits of ‘building a new concept of public schooling’ as envisaged by Keating:

a model of governance in education and training (that) can best facilitate a more robust and equitable public system that accommodates a diverse range of providers with different relationships with government. (Keating, 2003a, 18.)

Some enlightened economists (Hirschman, 1970) have shown how increased competition is not an invariable agent of greater efficiency. In one way, competition resembles cholesterol – there is a good form, and there is a bad form. The problem confronting schools policymakers is this: how can constructive competition (between schools of roughly equal resources) be encouraged, without generating the debilitating effects that disadvantaged schools suffer from the continued ‘creaming’ of their more able and better-resourced students? As we shall see in the concluding chapter, the most recent Victorian government ‘blueprint’ for schools has at least identified this as a crucial issue.

Relations with central governments

The most striking finding here is the continuing importance of the differing politico-administrative cultures in the two states – not only for public school principals, but also for their private school counterparts. The greater centralisation in the New South Wales system found its strongest expression in the performance measures that received considerable comment (by no means, all negative) from the New South
Wales respondents. In contrast, the Victorian principals made little comment on such measures.

There are, however, two other less immediately prominent consequences of the centralisation in New South Wales that deserve notice in this thesis, even though they did not attract much comment from the principals I interviewed. The first of these is the continuation of a small, separately badged program of financial support for socially disadvantaged schools. Although this program received little notice from the majority of respondents who were not participants in it, it was highly valued by the small minority who were. And the second consequence is the lesser level of staff ‘churning’ plausibly attributed - in a submission to the Vinson Inquiry (Vinson, 2002, 3/94) - to centralisation. This also received scant notice from my respondents, but, as already noted in Chapter 4, staff ‘churning’ is a serious problem for disadvantaged schools (Thomson, 2002, 112). It is disadvantaged students who arguably are in most need of stability in their relationship with their teachers, so that any diminution of the occurrence of ‘churning’ has a benign effect.

However, the most important difference between centralised New South Wales and more pluralist Victoria is yet to be discussed: their very different approaches to the design and implementation of curricular structures. These are considered in the following chapter.
Chapter 8: Curriculum Strategies

...um...we're a classical academic education school. (PrN10)

Introduction

In my exploration of the ways in which central policy impacts on the school (and of how at least one level of local actors 'reads' and acts on central policy), I have tried to maintain the two major organising themes that have been used throughout the bulk of the thesis, viz. 'the governance of the school system' and 'the post-compulsory curriculum'. For these are the two elements that interact in ways that make it possible for conservative, dominant advocacy coalitions to impede equity-based reform in Australian schooling. However, at the local level, while the distinction between the two elements can be sustained for analytical purposes, empirically that distinction becomes very blurred. As we have seen in Chapter 7, 'street level' governance becomes the school's organisational response to the way the centre administers the system and distributes resources within the region, district or cluster. That is why, within specific geographical areas, the hierarchical organisation of the post-compulsory curriculum plays out in the stratification of school organisation:

...a hierarchical curriculum demands a stratified school system, containing fortified sites where the advantages of education and culture can be deposited, pooled and pedagogically multiplied, and exposed sites where failure will and must accumulate to balance its eradication from the strangleholds of selective schooling. (Teese, 2000, 7)

In Chapter 7, we observed how differing perceptions of 'educational disadvantage' help to colour schools' attitudes to the governance of their system by the State, and, in turn, influence principals' approaches to certain aspects of the governance of their own schools. The connection between perceptions of disadvantage and the curriculum is even more obvious. There are both curricular and non-curricular components in schools' strategies, but the first of these was dominant: the central component in the habitus of every school principal is the nature of the curriculum
offerings of his or her school. As we shall see, the most obvious difference between the curriculum strategies of the secondary schools whose principals I interviewed was the extent to which they have embraced vocational, or other curriculum innovations as de facto ‘alternatives’ to the competitive academic curriculum. A further and equally important difference was the importance attributed to specialised literacy education. Those who defined ‘educational disadvantage’ as a concept that was specially relevant to their non-English-speaking background students were investing heavily in literacy programs and emphasising the role of English as a Second Language in the curriculum of their schools – strategies that did not require them to stray too far from academic orthodoxies. The curriculum strategies of principals who stressed structural factors - such as socio-economic variables - were more likely to emphasise the importance of vocational education programs and the ‘non-curricular’ strategies of connecting to external sources of support for such programs, requiring them to move outside the education ‘silos’ to engage with local government, community service providers and local businesses.

The interaction of the organisation of schooling with the organisation of the curriculum

The strategic curriculum decisions of individual schools are made within a broader socio-political context over which they have very little influence. Understanding that context – and the geographies of disadvantage that it produces - is the key to understanding schools’ priorities when it comes to the curriculum, and illuminates the background against which different schools seem to produce different outcomes for their students.

Education analysts remain in furious disagreement about the extent of the influence of this broader context. Scholars of the Effective Schools movement have tended to emphasise the input of the individual teacher and classroom in the educational outcomes of students, and to downplay the impact of class, background, and local socio-economic context. Thus, in his 1995 inaugural professorial lecture, Peter Hill advanced sweeping claims:
... it is not so much what students bring with them but what they experience on a day-to-day basis in classrooms that really matters. Unfortunately, far too much credence continues to be given to various outmoded forms of biological and social determinism which assume that individual children do poorly or well at school because they are 'dumb' or 'smart' or come from 'disadvantaged' or 'advantaged' backgrounds. The empirical evidence suggests that variation due to differences in student background and ability is considerably less important than variation associated with school and class membership. (Hill, 1995a, 13)

By the middle of the 1990s, extreme enthusiasm for the Schools Effectiveness movement had diminished to the point where most academic proponents had come to acknowledge the limits of what schools could accomplish. Thus David Reynolds, in his own inaugural professorial lecture in 1995, tactfully avoided citing any of the earlier extravagances of the movement and seemed to suggest that more moderation might be in order in the future:

We have been instrumental in creating a quite widespread, popular view that schools do not just make a difference, but that they make all the difference' (Reynolds, 1995, 59.)

Research on educational outcomes that reveals significant – and growing - differences between Australian schools and between different groups of students along socio-economic lines (Teese, 2000); (Teese, 2003b); (Rothman, 2002) encourages more careful scrutiny of the broad context in which schools operate.

As long as a school's funding is tied to its number of students, rather than to the level of social disadvantage within the school (measured on such indicators as family income levels or the educational qualification of students' parents), its very survival may depend on the principal's capacity to boost enrolments. Strategic planning to attract enrolments has long been part of the ethos of elite independent schools. But now that inter-school competition and consumer choice have been promoted as public policy goals, the principals of non-elite private, and public institutions alike must create a marketing image and constantly search for ways of honing their schools' competitive edge. As is the case throughout the world of advertising, schools' marketing strategies are designed to promote the kind of image and ethos that will attract the desired clientele.
Curriculum and school ethos

Schools’ curriculum strategies—the range of courses offered to students and decisions about how those courses would be taught—reflect the ethos of individual institutions. The ethos of a school derives from its view of its particular identity as an institution of teaching and learning, illustrated by a statement from a New South Wales selective public school:

I don’t know if you know about our school: we are very, very successful. We are three standard deviations above the zero level, which means we’re right off the map, so not only do we get good kids ... we get them all the way through. (PuN7)

When I asked the same principal, ‘And can you add value to those (already) good kids?’ he replied, ‘We’re just so far off the scale that it’s irrelevant’. (PuN7)

But a positive school ethos was by no means the monopoly of elite independent and selective high schools. Public and non-elite private schools, too, were able to maintain a level of optimism, often against the odds:

You can make a difference here. I mean, we don’t make as much difference as I’d like, but I know we are (making a difference) (PuN3)

We have grown from 320 to 510 students in four years: that’s (because of) what the teachers are doing in the school; we’ve actually had parents walk in (off the street) (PuN11)

The values that underpin a school’s ethos are established in an iterative process in which the participants are principals, teaching staff and parents (and in the case of several private schools, past students and external benefactors). The curriculum strategy still being followed in one New South Wales public school had been established in 1966, when the then principal had persuaded the staff to follow Bernice McCarthy’s ‘4Mat’ teaching and learning system for the middle years. The school still runs formal training for its teachers, with sessions held on Saturdays—as the principal rightly said, ‘an indication of the strength of the desire to make change and difference within the school’. (PuN11) Another New South Wales public school principal was happy to maintain an ethos that pre-dated his arrival in the school,
which had committed to an adaptation of William Glasser’s approach to ‘choice theory’ as ‘a way of encouraging both teachers and students to take responsibility’ (for their decisions) and to ‘teach students that their choices have consequences’:

The previous Principal, about six years ago initiated a reform process to really change the culture of the school (back to) a coeducational, comprehensive local school … exactly as it was designated. Here was this place, it was coeducational, comprehensive, it accepted all kids from all backgrounds. (PuN8)

Because the notion of school ethos is most vividly illustrated in the minority of schools catering to elite students, I begin the discussion of different curriculum approaches by presenting material from my interviews of principals in elite and selective schools from both private and public sectors. The similarities in the attitudes of these two sets of principals transcended State borders, and thus, can be dealt with simultaneously. This discussion sets the scene for the body of the chapter that follows, which is concerned with the approaches most relevant to the central concerns of this thesis – those aimed at meeting the needs of disadvantaged students.

**Post-compulsory curriculum in elite independent and selective public schools: New South Wales and Victoria**

The public promotion of a school’s underpinning values attracts particular groups of families and actively discourages others, thereby establishing the school’s position in the local, and - for elite independent schools - even the State, hierarchy of schools. Elite independent and selective high schools were strongly focussed on the competitive end of the academic curriculum - the courses calculated to attract the easiest-to-teach students, and which offer the strongest chance of a tertiary place – especially one leading to employment in one of the high-status professions.

We have about 150 kids in Year 12 each year and I don’t think we’ve ever in the last ten years had more than four kids who didn’t go on to tertiary study … it’s almost automatic. (PrV6)

In such schools, it became clear that vocational education had a lower status:
We have a strong academic curriculum but also a strong strand of the practical: We have three TAFE partnerships and offer Agricultural Science, metal work, wood work, industrial arts, computing—(subjects that are) important for boys going on the land. But we’re not a school for country bumpkins. (We offer) Visual and Performing Arts. Of course the status of Voc Ed subjects in a school where 80 per cent go on to university inevitably is …..um…we’re a classical academic education school. (PrN10)

We offered VET Electronics for a couple of years but closed it down because of lack of demand…We offer a VET subject called Music Industry Skills because we have a huge music program here and a lot of the kids will go on and do Music in Year 12. We also offer Monash University First Year Music as part of music enhancement, but a lot of the kids are so advanced and interested that they do the Music Industry and Skills Certificate Level VET course in Year 9 and 10. Because of our laptop program (laptop computers are compulsory) they can all do the Year 11 VET IT course without (actually) doing it, and about half of them do that and they just think it’s an interesting extra qualification to have, and then they go on to the normal Year 12 one. Many of the students are interested in combining VET Hospitality and Tourism with a Bachelor of Business but we don’t have the resources to provide a kitchen at the level that a TAFE College would. We could access a local College but they usually prefer school students to be released on block release - it’s just not workable because if they have to be out of the school for a day, it probably means they miss one class in each of the other subjects they’re studying as well….We are thinking of introducing Horse Studies because there’s a demand and we have the facility here - land that stretches down to a local creek and an old stables that could be renovated, perhaps in partnership on a sort of profit-sharing basis. (PrV6)

Elite and selective schools invest a great deal in literacy programs and remedial assistance in an effort to ensure that lower secondary level students experiencing literacy and numeracy difficulties will be brought up to speed before the demands of the post-compulsory years overtake them.

We need a Special Needs teacher for Years 7 to 8 because by Years 9 and 10 ‘the battle’s lost’. (PrN10)

We have (withdrawal) groups - who receive extra assistance on English through (our) working through their assignments with them - really from Year seven to nine …and I suppose we work on the assumption that they have to be pretty much right by then otherwise they’re not really capable of mastering Year 12. (PrV6)
While early identification of learning difficulties and early intervention seemed to be somewhat of a preoccupation in elite independent and selective high schools, some public schools, too, were making this a high priority, though with less emphasis on the need for students to make the grade before reaching the post-compulsory years.

It's really (a question of) the individuals being able to be identified right back in Year 7 and needing to put in appropriate programs to try and support those students and maintain them within an educational setting. (PuN8)

Post-compulsory curriculum in non-elite New South Wales public and private schools

Literacy – especially for students speaking languages other than English

The area of decision-making that most of my principal interviewees identified as the one where they most desired to exercise discretion was that of the post-compulsory curriculum. In New South Wales, this was the area most often identified as the strongest argument against centralisation: I heard frequent complaints that central curriculum authorities - both inside and outside the Department - did not understand schools' local conditions. The Vinson Inquiry uncovered great resentment at the role of the Board of Studies and its lack of sensitivity to ‘thisness’:

The whole idea of professional educators giving away the curriculum to a non-teacher body is ludicrous. We all sit here and complain, and I do too, about the incredible pressures this situation puts on us as professionals. We are asked to try and teach someone else's recipes that don't fit our particular students, our particular communities. There is a continual mismatch because we are trying to do something that our profession knows we can't do properly. (Vinson, 2002, 1/2.)

The New South Wales principals of non-elite public and private schools whom I interviewed echoed these sentiments:
We're (now) teaching the curriculum, not kids. We're making the teachers report. Parents are only interested in the UAI.* We've been shaped by that whole agenda... it's what drives us. (PrN6)

(* University Admissions Index)

The New South Wales public schools whose principals I interviewed were very focussed on literacy. In part, this seemed a natural consequence of large numbers of their students coming from non-English speaking backgrounds:

Our literacy results are terrible, our HSC results are appalling, because English isn't their first language. English is compulsory and they don't think it matters. But our Maths results are excellent. I'm working on a strategy to try to build up literacy and give English a sort of parity of esteem. In fact, I'm even going to probably introduce a grammar text book for Year 7 coming in, and make them do exercises in the book the way the Maths people do, because they value it. (PuN3)

Below, I quote extensively from the interview of another principal, whose account fleshed out the multi-dimensional nature of the education task in such schools - a task made immeasurably more difficult by the fact that many students were not only non-English-speaking, but were coping with the traumas of the refugee experience:

We had an Afghani girl who was 'trigger-happy'...(and who) went off like a rocket at even minor antagonisms, and who - the school later found out - had had to stand and watch her mother and father and her brothers shot in front of her. And now we have the Iraqis coming through, who've escaped, and on top of that, we've got the Tongans and the Islanders. The Samoans are different from the Cook Islanders. (PuN12)

The school vigorously protects the diversity of its student population:

In two seconds flat, we crush any racial stuff, and you have got so many kids from so many nations...The message given out all the time is that we are one family here; forget what's going on out there. Anybody who wants to come in and ruin this family is going to get it...and you just try. (PuN12)

But in such schools, to say that the educational task is challenging is an understatement:
We've got parents withdrawing their kids from Health Ed, Sex Ed.; won't let them read novels for English that include boy-girl relationships. (That's) OK, because every parent has the right to decide how to bring up their kids. (But) I tell them it's their daughter's responsibility to leave the room, not the teacher's.

But it goes beyond this, sometimes, to music or PE. Studying Music in Yr 7 is a School Certificate requirement. And then I say, 'Well, if you are going to insist that your daughter not be in music — ever — I have to tell you that I cannot sign the Statement that says she is qualified for the School Certificate because the Board says she has to do music ... I have to be carefully assertive. But I have also done things like ring the Mosque and ask the Imam to speak to these people. (PuN12)

The school tries to teach the students that, irrespective of cultural diversity, they are united by common citizenship:

But a lot of them couldn't give a rat's, so every Monday morning, for good or bad, we sing both verses of the Australian National Anthem and if it isn't loud enough we do it again. (PuN12)

However, a twin motivation for the curriculum focus of schools like PuN12 was the 'literacy' goals of the State's version of the Disadvantaged (now 'Priority') Schools Program, as discussed in Chapter 4:

The Centre was calling the tune and there was this really strong message when the Howard stuff came in: "Literacy! Literacy! Literacy!": there was nothing else...(PuN12)

The fixation on improving literacy levels caused PuN12 to expect every teacher in the school - irrespective of subject specialisation- to contribute to the achievement of this goal:

We have got 2.6 ESL* and 1.9 LD # teachers, but the policy of the school is that any teacher who has a spare (period) is going to be a support teacher either for ESL or LD. The normal teacher has to be on deck for 28 periods (per week) plus sport, but if they don't do sport, you can negotiate with them to teach 30 — and that's the standard teaching load of any State teacher. ... In the end, you just stand up at some stage, when the going is really tough, and say, "Look, unless we all pull together, we are not going to do this: I have to ask you to just be
ready to take whatever we have. So...(if) naughty classes (are) playing up, we will put some extra support in there... It's a disadvantaged school... if things weren't so challenging, you would have all these people saying, "I don't want to do that, I just want to teach Art" or something....we have moved way past that a long time ago. (PuN12)

(NB: * English as a Second Language. # Learning difficulty)

Other schools, too, were trying every trick in the 'literacy book' and were obsessed with their state-wide testing results:

A lot of our kids are fairly comfortable with numeracy but not with literacy so we're engaging in extensive literacy programs and our 'value-added' in English is gradually improving.

(PuN6)

The disadvantaged primary school I visited had invested a major portion of its resources in developing its own reading levels scheme and assisting parents to become more informed about the school's strategies for their children. The principal described how parents had been 'turned round from an “A – B – C – D” reporting system' to one that gave much more precise information about students' progress:

'Your child’s reading level is 18 months behind what it should be':

We've built (our own) data system so that from the day the children walk into the classroom, the teachers are observing them socially and in learning situations, and starting to collect data straight away. So by the end of the week, those young teachers you met this morning can tell you what reading level their students are reading on, what outcomes they believe they've achieved and not achieved, what strategies they need to implement with those students, what they know socially and behaviourally about them, where the kiddies' limitations are, where they're starting from. Because if you miss - within a week - what this kid's about, you've probably lost them. Then they can sub-group the kids in the classroom, (PuN11).

In the hands of imaginative school educators, information technology - where it could be afforded - was being seen as 'the revolution in the classroom.' (PuN3):

We had 21 teachers at a PD weekend doing web-page design! Students don’t just do the boring stuff: they do all the multimedia web page design and I'm pushing (this) because I think it's the future... Our students received a $35,000 grant for doing a touch-screen history of Blaxland for the local council. (PuN3)
A principal whose school was trying to do assist boys adjudged ‘ineducable’ in their previous settings was also trying to do especially ‘clever things’ with technology and the curriculum:

We’re driven by the needs of the kids and the fact that we’re a small school trying to maintain the breadth of the curriculum – that’s what drove us. We’ve given a high priority to the use of technology: a difficult thing when very few of our parents provide finance to the school. We’ve done it by being very parsimonious – eliminating ‘black hole’ expenditure, i.e. expenditure that provides no on-going benefit. We look for an outcome for our expenditure, or, if it’s on infrastructure, it has to be infrastructure that will generate an outcome. Eg we’ve just completed financing – through our own resources – a computer network with fibre optic cabling. (PuN9)

I was fascinated to learn that, in order to increase the exam prospects of his disadvantaged students, this principal had also adapted a strategy that is common in elite private schools wanting to maximise the proportion of high UAI/ENTER scores, viz, encouraging students to choose subjects with overlapping subject matter

In Years 9-10, students are encouraged to take English, Maths and Science, with vertically integrated electives … instead of unitising the curriculum, we follow an intense pattern that doesn’t allow for forgetting and allows them to capitalise on subject material common to more than one curriculum area. (PuN9)

The principal described this kind of curriculum strategy as ‘multiple options with a dose of realism’. (PuN9)

The principal of PuN3 had a whole raft of initiatives aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged learners in the school. An After Hours Homework Centre was proposed, despite the lack of funding for such a project:

They’d have to pay, but I sort of think they probably would, especially the parents of children in Year 7 who work in Bliaxland and want after-school care. (PuN3)

Mentors for students needing intensive support were found through the ‘Do Little’ Project:
A thrice-retired teacher takes a couple of students at a time, looks at their results, gets them practising and writing, doing intensive work on exam results and work samples with 5 students who, had they been left, would probably have got a UAI of 30. This works with some of the students but some of them aren’t coming. (PuN3)

**Vocational Education and Training (VET) – especially for those not heading for university**

In New South Wales, the long-standing consensus on the meritocratic approach to the secondary school curriculum appears to persist to the present day. Even the most recent investigation into public education reported continuing misgivings about the relationship between TAFE and schools, including the perception by some teachers that:

> Vocational training runs counter to the notion that the purpose of the HSC is to provide students with an intellectually demanding general education; (Vinson, 2002, Vol I, xxvii.).

But teachers are not alone in their scepticism. A principal explained that:

> The greater difficulty is being able to convince parents and students that these are worthwhile courses and that they do lead students somewhere, and they’re not dead end – they’re there for everyone and students should consider them as part of a broad and balanced program. (In some schools) the majority of students … would be expecting that they would go to university and that’s not realistic and not what happens in practice, but that is certainly a very strong expectation on behalf of the community. (PuN8)

Hardly surprising, under these circumstances, that the Vinson Inquiry discovered that, for academically strong students, there is a

> ... trend, in New South Wales, towards the segmented provision for students with special abilities (Vinson, 2002)

Notwithstanding its residual status, there is evidence of growing demand for VET courses among students.
It's becoming a more significant factor – certainly in the education of a target group within the schools who are not going to tertiary education and need to access these types of courses to increase their employability. (PrN1)

The marketing task is greatly assisted by some relaxation by the Board of Studies of its rules governing access to the Year 12 credential:

One industry course may be included in the calculation of the UAI, so a student who wants the University Pathway can still do that and access vocational courses. (PuN8)

Yet this modest concession seemed hardly to merit the claim, by another principal, that:

Voc Ed has remained integrated in the HSC in NSW. (PrN6)

When I asked interviewees whether VET subjects were counted for university selection, I was told that the universities were refusing to give Category A status to such subjects, but that some faculties were prepared to do deals.

Chapter 4 described the impact of scaling on vocational courses undertaken in the context of Year 12 studies – an impact which greatly reduces the chance of a ‘vocational’ student gaining entry to the most prestigious courses in the most prestigious higher education institutions. Nevertheless, New South Wales principals seeking useful pathways for their students are developing strategies to make vocational options more attractive:

(What's needed is) more careful planning and guidance, and more careful packaging. Students don’t need to access the vocational courses, but by careful selection in combination with Board of Studies courses (they) can get credit and advanced standing in TAFE leading to advanced standing in universities. It’s that concept. (Though) that implies they’ve got some sort of sense of direction and purpose and maybe that’s an area where we need to be working more with the students. (PuN8)

What we’re looking at doing is trying to provide a service to the kids. We will manage their curriculum (in a way that) will best enable them to fit into the post-school environment…One of the things we’re constantly trying to do is to get them to have multiple options and to have
an element of realism built in: “Alright, this is The Dream; what happens if The Dream
doesn’t eventuate? What’s the fall-back?” Or alternatively, “This is The Dream – but there
might be multiple pathways to it” – you know what I mean. (PuN9)

This effort to include vocational courses in their post-compulsory curriculum
offerings is undertaken by schools despite the fact that they face a plethora of
logistical, financial and pedagogical difficulties. For example, a debate rages on the
question of whether VET courses should be provided on the school campus or
accessed via TAFE Institutes (in New South Wales – through the Joint Schools
Secondary TAFE Program). While more New South Wales schools are now trying to
provide VET courses on campus, the predominant practice in that State – unlike
Victoria - has been to allow post-compulsory VET students to attend TAFE
institutions. Certainly, this is seen to be the only option for the small, under-resourced
schools:

A few of my colleagues are desperately trying to run voc ed programs in their schools.
Because we’re small, I’ve said, “Look, we can’t. It’s a much better option to run them
through external providers such as TAFE; it gives the kids better options.” At least I’ve got
the staff for English, Maths and Science, you know. (PuN9)

The external providers charge fees, raising the spectre of ‘user pays’ for students –
often those who can least afford it. In both States, funding restrictions on the TAFE
sector – and the fact that the sector has to provide initial training and re-training, not
only for school students, but also for adult learners, means that schools can expect few
financial concessions:

We couldn’t offer Joint Schools TAFE courses and courses in the vocational area if it weren’t
for government funding: they’re prohibitively expensive ....The cost to the kids (of JSST) is
$150.00 (on top of up-front fees of $350-450 per term. In comparison to schools around the
place it’s not that great, but in terms of the economic background of a lot of the parents, it’s a
significant cost’. (PtN1)

Moreover, as the Vinson Inquiry discovered, there remains continuing resistance to
allowing students to leave the school grounds to study elsewhere. Private schools
commented on the difficulties of maintaining a school’s ethos when its students are
scattered. They also commented – often – on the difficulties of students attending work placements, given the constraints of school timetables:

We tolerate that aberration (but then have to work hard) …catching up on what’s been missed by the kid who shouldn’t be absent in the first place. (PrN6)

Public schools worry about losing teaching positions owing to a resource model that, when senior secondary school students enrol in TAFE Institute courses, has the dollars following the student. For these various reasons, but principally for the one that leads to funding and teacher cuts when a critical mass of students enrol in off-campus VET courses, New South Wales schools are increasing their efforts to provide VET courses themselves:

Within campus we have a band of vocational courses – so Hospitality and Computing, Business Courses and Building and Construction courses – which students do with staff who are trained to industry standards: it’s all done within the school; it’s accepted by industry as well as accepted by universities. (PuN8)

From the point of view of the student, by far the most serious issue is the actual shortage of post-school places in TAFE (including for those who have qualified while still at school) and – much more serious - the continuing prospect of unemployment following completion of their vocational courses:

There’s nothing worse than a kid who hasn’t been able to achieve being counselled into a vocational course that doesn’t get you a job. (PrN6)

Post-compulsory curriculum in non-elite Victorian public and private schools

Equity and student welfare

In Victoria, following the arrival of the Kennett Government in 1992 and that of the Federal Howard Government in 1996, the notion of ‘equity’ was, as we have seen, dropped as an organising concept for public schooling. Even so, despite the Howard
Government’s policy shift after 1996 from ‘disadvantage’ to ‘literacy’, literacy was never harnessed to the service of ‘equity’ - in the sense of making disadvantaged students the focus of literacy programs - in the same way that it had been in New South Wales. One can speculate that this was because of the absence, in Victoria, of a separate Disadvantaged Schools Program. Perhaps precisely because of the weaker connection made in Victoria between literacy and equity, the interviews with Victorian principals revealed an apparently greater preoccupation with questions of student welfare than I had encountered in New South Wales.

As in many schools, when they come to school, all kids get put into a home group and they have a Home Group Teacher. And we expect the HGT to be like Mum and Dad at school. As far as possible, that HGT follows those kids through, at least to the end of Year 10, so that over those four years, they would have had a lot to do with the child and their family, and often the family will start to see the teacher as part of their (own) family. We encourage the teachers to phone home and talk to parents, and stuff, so that’s how we pick up on the different sorts of things that I would term ‘disadvantage’. (PuV9)

One principal explained how he ‘hung on’ to students that left school for a period to attend ‘Create’ – a non-government organisation that provides an alternative learning setting for troubled youngsters:

Some kids need a different environment – but they still need the umbilical cord. They need emotional – even physical – support. When the kids want to return (to school), they should return to the school they previously attended – though, unlike us, some won’t have them back. Then you get this stuff thrown in your face that you’re not getting the VCE results that perhaps other schools do .... (PuV6)

It is possible that this ‘preoccupation’ may have been the product of principals’ bitter memories of the first impact of the ‘Kennett cuts’: the loss of Student Welfare Coordinator positions in their schools:

One area where current policy has changed is the funding of the student welfare position – which we used to have. We still have to pull (the funding) from our curriculum program to fund the student welfare position to the level that we want it. (PuV4)
VET and VCAL in the post-compulsory curriculum of Victorian schools

There has always been – and continues to be - more ‘on campus’ VET provision in Victorian schools, compared with New South Wales, though the quality of some of that provision is frequently questioned – at least by TAFE personnel – on the grounds that it does not achieve industry standards: exactly the same charge levelled at TAFE institutes by some employer organisations and private providers. Increasingly, though, as student demand and the costs of provision rise, Victorian schools have been forced to follow the example of New South Wales, and look to external providers – predominantly TAFE. And there, similar difficulties are encountered. The unsustainable expense of off-campus VET provision for schools is being passed on to the students in the form of user-fees. In view of the current VET student demographic, this is arguably the portion of the student population least able to afford such fees. Victorian principals also talked about the different culture encountered by school students attending TAFE institutes. Undoubtedly, many students enjoy the non-school, adult, environment of TAFE. But it is not without its confusions:

One minute, the (TAFE) teacher is inviting the kids to call him by his first name. The next minute, the mate thing’s dropped, and he’s yelling ‘Out! Out!’ because the kid’s not wearing the regulation boots – even though the session’s only in a classroom. The kid doesn’t know what to do. He leaves the room – and the TAFE – but he doesn’t return to school or home because he feels stupid. It’s true – they’re not funded to do pastoral care. And they haven’t got time because they’re all casualised. (PuV5)

Nevertheless, the pressure for vocationally-oriented and applied studies in the curriculum is being felt across the board – in private as well as public schools:

Well, can I say that I’ve been here for eight years now: this is my ninth year. One of the great ironies of when I first arrived at was then called St Peter’s College was that it had, theoretically, the most academic curriculum I’d come across...I invited the staff to comment and make proposals about changing the curriculum ...and (they proposed) that we double the opportunities in terms of time for students to be enrolled in arts, visual arts, performing arts or technology subjects...we have several subjects now on offer and they’re going well – hospitality, automotive, electronics and a couple of others – office admin and info tech... (PrV3)
Victoria has recently introduced a new certificate for less academically-oriented Year 11 and 12 students: the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. The new certificate is described by the Chair of the Victorian Qualifications Authority as:

... a new qualification directed towards those young people who seek applied and practical studies and who leave school before completing Year 12 or its equivalent. (Pracht, 2003, 189)

Student demand is strong in some schools, and teachers, bracing themselves for yet more change, are also ‘coming round’:

I almost had to talk Bill* into VCAL. Now, he could stand up at any state-wide meeting and convince people. Next year, we’ll have kids doing 2 days out of school at their pre-apprenticeships. For those kids, VCAL has a really appealing aspect. The parents whose kids were bastards in class have seen that their kids have stayed at schools and actually made progress. This might not have been the progress they wanted earlier on, but (now) they’re so pleased the school went down the (VCAL) track. At parent information nights, it’s the VCAL parents who stay back. We’ll have 69 EFTs next year: 78, counting part-timers. (PUV6)

* The teacher co-ordinating VCAL studies in the school.

It is too early to tell whether the express objectives of VCAL – ‘to increase the pathways for young people into training and work’ (http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au) - will be met. But data reported in Appendix 4.1 (from an area that overlaps the area of my Melbourne research site) would give rise for optimism – especially if it were possible to identify the specific source of particular improvements. The more effective co-ordination of transition programs in schools as a result of the activities of the LLEN, as well as changes in certain areas of the local economy, would have to be factored in to any assessment of beneficial outcomes from participation in VCAL. Statistics also need to be disaggregated to identify the impact on particular groups of students.

And what prognosis can be made for the future of the new qualification? Interviews with principals in the research site, it has to be said, threw up an ominous reminder of the way the previous attempt to reform the Victorian post-compulsory curriculum had been defeated. One public school principal observed:

I have talked to principals who feel that VCAL detracts from their marketing profile of VCE success and they say they are not interested in ‘that market’. Even in my school, people have
said in meetings, 'We do not want to be seen as a VCAL school'. There is certainly a negative perspective of VCAL as second-rate, a 'vegie-VCE', or an option for at risk kids (that) some schools just don’t want: they are for the academic, more motivated, 'less discipline-hassles' VCE students. (PuV4).

**Conclusion: Curriculum strategies in the two States compared**

Once again, the New South Wales and the Victorian systems display divergent approaches, at least as far as the public schools were concerned. In New South Wales, the great emphasis on equity-based literacy programs was not in any way inconsistent with the academic hegemony of the dominant Advocacy Coalition. Most participation in vocational education was safely ‘insulated’ in TAFE institutes. In Victoria, by contrast, the equally strong emphasis on vocational education in schools and the introduction of the new Applied Learning Certificate represented a bold attempt to ‘outflank’ the dominant Advocacy Coalition. The notion of ‘VET for all’ certainly has its advocates among practitioners, but, in both States, the overall impression to be gained from talking to principals is that it is more commonly seen as the ‘second chance’ option for senior secondary students who do not consider themselves (or who are not considered by their teachers) to be good prospects for university entrance.

The role of VET in the school curriculum also carries implications for opposing coalitions on the Left. Since the 60s when he was involved – with Terry Irving – in an experiment to establish an open university, Bob Connell of New South Wales has wanted to radicalise the whole of education, i.e. to improve the academic performance of students by empowering their teachers. He has always entertained the possibility that academic orthodoxies could be transformed so as to further the objectives of ‘progressive’ education.

In this respect, Connell may usefully be compared with Victoria’s Richard Teese – one of the architects of the most recent Victorian reforms. If anything, Teese is even less sanguine than Connell about universities, being sceptical of their willingness to change: there being strong constellations of interests with an investment in universities continuing to behave in the way they do.
No doubt the contribution of universities to the relief of failure in our schools could go beyond the knowledge we produce about student achievement and the education and personal development of teachers. But in these two areas a university can have major system-wide impact .... The larger the university and the more research-oriented, the larger the impact it should aim to have, given the potential breadth of its influence and the more determined it should be to make community impact part of its mission and strategic plan. (Teese, 2003a, 17.)

For schools with high concentrations of disadvantaged students, it seemed clear that the curriculum strategy schools found most promising was that of encouraging the post-compulsory cohort to try vocational education. In the early 90’s, both at Commonwealth level (NBEET, 1994) and in Victoria, (Practz, 2002) policy-makers had attempted to persuade governments and curriculum designers to integrate vocational options for all students into a general curriculum. In fact, no attempt to dislodge the academic hegemony of the post-compulsory curriculum in the interests of disadvantaged students has ever fully succeeded. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the political interests protecting the competitive academic curriculum could not be swayed. Practz points out, too, that the attempt to incorporate VET studies into schools by using the VCE as the only instrument has also drawn recent criticism from VET practitioners, who describe them as unacceptably narrow - constrained, as they are, by having to ‘sit within the context of the pathway from school to higher education rather than industry validated outcomes’. (Practz, op cit.)

Unfortunately, the anti-VET interests – from both the Left and the Right - have been very effective: a major task that remains for schools to this day is that of ‘selling’ the concept to their school communities, most of whom, apparently, still prefer their school’s reputation to be based on achievement at the Year 12 external exams rather than (or even alongside) the effective retention in education of students who prefer applied and practical studies. Researchers who are the cutting-edge of curriculum studies have a much wider view of the curriculum debate than is indicated by the tired ‘vocational vs. general education’ discourse. They are looking for ‘four interrelated shifts in pedagogy’ that have been evolving slowly but that are yet to impress themselves on the community as having equal importance to the acquisition of high UAI/ENTER scores:
These four shifts are:

1. The shift from fast, surface learning (e.g. unreflective studying, memorising without understanding, fragmented knowledge etc.,) to deep learning ... (undertaken in what Entwhistle et al (2003) term 'powerful learning environments’ for students).

2. The shift from overly individualised, narrowly psychologised, and child-
centric accounts of teaching and learning to increased opportunities for interaction,
communication, collaboration and community-building...

3. New forms of teacher, student, and school leadership, governance, and
management (as distinct from old compliance and accountability models that can
neuter the agency of teachers, students, and school communities).

4. The shift from schooling as a stabilising, conservative and reproductive force
in society to (an institution for ) facilitating successful transitions at the individual life
course level (e.g. from primary to secondary school, from secondary to further
education and future employment); at the organizational level (such as whole-school
reform and change) and, ultimately, at the societal level (toward a teaching and

It may well be that the long-time opposition Left advocacy coalition has begun
to fracture in the Bracks era. By no means all those who supported the thrust of the
Blackburn report, which aimed to overthrow the academic hegemony, have gone
along with the ‘outflanking’ strategy represented by VCAL. However, a significant
part of the old Blackburn Coalition, including Minister Kosky herself and some of her
closest academic advisors, such as Professors Keating, Praetz and Teese, may have
moved into the mainstream dominant Advocacy Coalition, perhaps with the intention
of realigning it. But this move may have already begun to exact costs, such as the
current decline in government support for earlier Kosky reforms – especially the
LLENS and VCAL. One might speculate that Minister Kosky may have been forced
to strike a Faustian pact with the Treasury - one that delivers grudging mainstream
recognition of new forms of vocational education, so long as the new institutions
designed to implement the Kosky curriculum reforms are progressively watered down.

If such a realignment is occurring, the Advocacy Coalition Framework requires us to seek an explanation for it, and a cause readily suggests itself – the ‘external perturbation’ of the 2002 landslide victory of the ALP Bracks Government. Of course, no observer can be confident that such a realignment has actually occurred until it survives another external perturbation, such as the election of a Liberal government.
PART FOUR: - POLICY ON EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE:
WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The original motivation for this research was the author’s frustration – nursed over a three and a half decade-long career in teaching, educational administration, and policy advisory roles – at the failure of Australian education systems to narrow the gap in attainment between the most successful users of the school system, and those deemed to be its ‘failures’. Consequently, my major interest is a public policy one: what actions can central governments take to support the role of schools catering for significant concentrations of socially disadvantaged students? In this final Part of the thesis, I return to address this question directly.

The final section of this concluding chapter contains an attempted synthesis of the two major theoretical frameworks used in the development of the argument.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

Ending failure in our schools will require an integrated use of policy tools. (Teese, 2003a, 15.)

Introduction

This concluding chapter will contain two main sections – one concerned with practical policy considerations and the other with theoretical constructs. Drawing on the outcomes from the research, the first section will use three main heads, viz. ‘Disadvantage’, ‘Governance’ and ‘Curriculum’. Inevitably, this will be a selective treatment that concentrates, in the main, on issues raised by the school principals I interviewed. The section also draws on relevant proposals from commentators with system-wide perspectives.

Under ‘Disadvantage’, the focus will be on funding. What kind of funding regime would most strongly assist schools in disadvantaged areas? Under what circumstances might the need for a supplementary, targeted program, such as the New South Wales Priority Schools Funding Program, be indicated? The Victorian Government has just announced that it plans to move away from a funding model that is based largely on enrolments in a number of different student categories to one that takes account of the relative learning needs of students. (Kosky, 2003) Could such a model remove the necessity for a supplementary – ‘DSP-type’ funding program?

Under ‘Governance’, the focus will shift to the need, so strongly emphasised by Thomson, for new, ‘joined-up government’ coordinating mechanisms at the regional/subregional levels. Do the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) have the potential to evolve into ‘across-silos’ mechanisms for the planning and provision of comprehensive services for youth? And could such a strengthened LLEN mechanism be successfully inserted into the New South Wales system? If such strengthened LLENs should emerge, how would the central machinery of government most appropriately support them? With the arrival of the
new millennium, issues of further restructuring of the public secondary schools system have begun to surface in both States, and these issues require at least some attention in the chapter.

Under ‘Curriculum’, the focus will be on the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The unexpectedly early popularity of this new qualification among students raises serious questions about the adequacy of TAFE funding to provide post-school pathways for young people whose education has been ‘rescued’ by VCAL. And could VCAL come to serve as a ‘back-door’ way of realising the Blackburn dream of integrated post-compulsory courses and credentials for all students? What prospects, if any, are there for a version of VCAL to be introduced into New South Wales?

The second section of this concluding chapter will provide a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks that have been employed in the successive chapters of the thesis. Obviously this synthesis owes a great deal to Sabatier, but the version of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) that it includes has been substantially modified in some respects – and extended in others. The modifications were rendered necessary by the reform thrust of the argument. The demands placed on the ACF become more challenging when one moves on from theoretical analysis and interpretation (in the Sabatier mode) to recommendations for change in the education policy system. Earlier chapters of the thesis have identified the formidable barriers to educational reform in Australia posed by entrenched interests and beliefs. To take account of these, the ACF needs to be augmented with features capable of comprehending structures of privilege. In their different ways, the regime dynamics framework and the Bourdieu paradigm offer such features.
Policy directions generated by the research

Social disadvantage in education

Funding

Teachers, alone, cannot hold back the creeping, systemic inequality that penetrates schools to impede the learning of their most socially disadvantaged students. What is needed, according to Teese, is a system-level

.... integrated approach, based on a theoretical grasp of the system of inequality, without which improvements are likely to be negligible and initiatives contradictory. .....The fate of compensatory programmes in the United States during the ‘War on Poverty’ is a reminder that policies aimed at individuals can offer no long-term relief if they leave untouched the structures that shape outcomes for groups. (Teese, 2000, 224.)

In the unlikely event that the political will for such an integrated assault on structural inequality in Australian society were ever to emerge, public policy would have to be trained on each phase known to be critical to people’s well-being – from pre-natal to post-retirement; and on every area of policy – economic development, health services, access to life-long learning, housing, transport planning. Even the more limited project of countering the effect of structural inequality within the education policy domain would have to tackle the institutionalisation of inequality at all stages of the formal education system from pre-school, through primary, secondary and post-compulsory schooling, to post-school training, university, and, as is increasingly the trend, post university and mid-employment training. It would have to examine the role of all the attendant institutions that operate in ways that prevent the system as a whole being described as ‘socially just’.

As explained in Chapter 1, however, the specific focus of this particular thesis has to be much more limited. It is confined to the policy sub-system of secondary schooling, with a bias towards the post-compulsory stage of that secondary phase. Given the scale and complexity of that very limited reform project, I am still forced to
be selective. The thesis therefore deals only in the most cursory way with some of the areas most urgently in need of reform: the education and professional development of teachers, for example, or the efficacy of particular kinds of pedagogical practice for particular groups of disadvantaged students. Instead, the focus here is on the relationships between schools and the central governments that administer, regulate and fund them. This is the path that leads me to concentrate on the things that central governments might do to support schools in their hardest task: that of educating socially disadvantaged young people. The most important and fundamental area of central government support is funding.

When, in the mid 1990s, the Victorian Government introduced global budgeting, it claimed that the equity needs of the system would be met by the inclusion, in the formulae, of:

...student level indicators of background characteristics currently used by the Department of Education to calculate additional funding for students with special learning needs (educational disadvantage)....The indicators consist of an index of poverty (Educational Maintenance Allowance), non-English-speaking background, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and transience ... (as well as) the disability and impairment ... and ... critical events that may have significantly affected the child’s progress ... (Caldwell, 1996, 94.)

On the whole, this rhetoric ran counter to the lived experience of teachers, principals and schools, who, overwhelmingly, experienced the new budgetary changes as radical expenditure ‘cut-backs’:

There were seen to be some very real advantages for schools in the efficient allocation of resources. However, the critical question was whether the resources were sufficient to begin with and in many instances they were not...The notions of equity in resource provision and that the same degree of access must be available to all schools irrespective of social background appeared to be seriously threatened. (Ellis, 1999, 2.)

While ever State governments feel politically obliged to rein-in public expenditure in order to accumulate budget surpluses, the proportion of States’ budgets going to schools is unlikely to increase significantly. Under these circumstances, if marginal schools are to receive the assistance they need, serious consideration has to be given
to substituting redistributive resource allocation policies for the current formula-driven, enrolments-based model. State education departments might look to the Catholic system as a model of such redistributive practice, especially in Victoria, where all schools, with the exception of the elite schools like Xavier College, belong to the scheme. The scheme works in the following manner. A global budget for each school is determined, in which considerations of staff:student ratios and the nature of particular school populations loom large. While there appears to be no explicit provision for additional staffing of schools in disadvantaged communities, a ‘school deduction factor’ of approximately 20 per cent overall is identified, and is to be met by schools from fees related to putative capacity to pay. The remaining 80 per cent - derived from the Commonwealth and the State in the rough ratio of 3:1 – is allocated to schools, with the largest shares going to the schools with the lowest putative fee paying capacity. The most disadvantaged schools receive nearly 100 per cent of their budgets from this source; the most advantaged about 20 per cent. Some schools have banded together (often under the banner of a particular religious order, such as the Brigidines) to provide small amounts of additional financial support for especially disadvantaged students. (Sr. Brigid Arthur, Personal communication, 14.9.03).

The Victorian Government seems actively to be considering modifications to the current resource model for schools. The Minister – while still at the very general level of her ‘Flagship Strategies’ – has announced that:

A new resource allocation model that is less complex and more transparent than the existing one, and which is flexible, equitable, efficient and student-focused will be developed and implemented. (Kosky, 2003, 2)

While studiously avoiding the politically inflammatory term ‘redistribution’, she has promised, nevertheless, that the new model will ensure that ‘funding more closely reflects the relative learning needs of students’ and embodies the understanding that ‘the system should not fund all schools in the same way’.

The minority advocacy coalition in both States has resisted recommending funding formulae that take into account the fee-raising capacity of a school’s parents, because to accept parent fees as part of the resource pattern for public schools is tantamount to jettisoning the ideal of ‘free’ education. Governments aligned to both minority and dominant
advocacy coalitions have preferred to maintain the fiction of ‘free’ education by refusing to allow schools to make their fees and levies compulsory. To do otherwise would signal their acknowledgement that the ‘free, compulsory and secular’ ideal is mythical and would be an open admission that public funding for schooling is inadequate. But the practical reality is that governments cannot stop middle-class parents contributing to their children’s education – whether by voluntary fund-raising or the payment of fees. The practice – for good or bad – is now entrenched. Some States have even introduced legislation that enables schools to sue parents who default on ‘voluntary’ contributions!

Under these circumstances, it could be argued that it is time to give formal recognition to the privately-raised revenue in public schools. Continued failure to do this would render very difficult the introduction of any ‘needs-based’ funding model. An additional inducement for the public sector would be the distinct possibility of such a model becoming the foundation for a new accountability regime for private schools: no government has ever seriously pursued the issue of including the (as yet undeclared) bequests and other privately-raised funds in the eligibility criteria for government grants to elite independent schools. Introducing such a regime for public schools would establish a precedent for the private sector that might then lead to some equity-based funding adjustments within that sector. More seriously, though, the failure to include privately-raised revenue in funding calculations condemns ‘poor’ schools to a continuing resource regime that is totally inadequate. What to do about the schools that face real difficulties in achieving parental compliance rates of even 50 per cent for ‘voluntary’ fees and levies? I visited at least half a dozen such schools. They clearly required more generous subvention by government. As Thomson says:

The (funding) formulas must be more finely tuned to individual schools and their capacity to raise additional funds.... their specific enrollments and neighbourhood assets. (Thomson, 2002, 186.)

If ultimately the resource model for schools proves inadequate to the task of automatically and adequately funding disadvantaged schools, then the alternative option is the introduction of a targeted program that at least ensures additional resources for the ‘worst off’ schools. New South Wales public schools have had an experience – unbroken since the early 1970s - of a continuing, if periodically re-badged, ‘disadvantaged schools’ funding program. It has to be said that such targeted initiatives are not without their problems. These include: resentment on the part of
schools that ‘just’ fail to meet the funding criteria (notwithstanding their similar student populations); the perceived irrelevance of programmatic ‘performance criteria’ to satisfy the accountability requirements of the Centre; the disappearance of the targeted fund when a recipient school’s ‘demographic’ changes – to nominate a few. And yet such supplementary programs are often the simplest methods of assisting schools to achieve their specific equity goals.

Certainly, New South Wales principals whose schools have large numbers of disadvantaged students greatly value the extra resources they receive through the Priority Schools Funding Program – not only because they are ‘extra’ but also because their use is, to a large extent, discretionary – and they seemed to accept with some equanimity the fact that such funding is available only in periods when their student profiles meet the eligibility criteria. There is also something to be said for ‘naming the problem’ of disadvantage and keeping a public focus on it through a targeted program. As already noted, in 1992, when John Dawkins was attempting to ‘broadband’ its specific-purpose equity programs, Jean Blackburn wrote to the Schools Council 2 expressing her criticism of ‘the proposed association of programs’, saying that she feared that such an action:

... could dilute rather than extend the support and funding given to attempts to equalise somewhat the totality of family and school resources supporting student learning. (Blackburn, 1992)

She supported the continuation of distinct programs that attempted to ‘redress socially constructed inequalities’ for the same reasons as she had supported the original DSP, which had been

...the first Australian attempt to vary school resources according to the private family support which children have in their education, (and which) asserted in a minor way, restricted by its coverage and funding, that equal educational opportunity involved more than equal resource provision in public systems. Accepting that nothing in public systems could equal the consolidation of class advantage represented by the existence of high fee private schools, it nevertheless introduced the principle that ‘equity’ within public provision required positive resource discrimination favouring schools in socially disadvantaged areas. (Blackburn, 1992)
Education policy analysts who are concerned about the impact of structural inequality on the learning outcomes of young people in disadvantaged areas are in furious agreement that, however it is accomplished, such positive discrimination remains necessary:

Schools representing the ‘exposed sites’ in the education system need targeted support – to reduce class sizes in line with the greater dependence of lower working-class and migrant children on individual attention, to provide more continuous global supervision of the work of senior students (who are merely supposed to be self-directed learners, to run tutorials in the subjects where failure is rife, and to develop integrated programmes that base cognitive growth on vocational benefits, not illusory academic advantages. (Teese, 2000, 228.)

Central governments that tolerate huge resource disparities between schools, and blink at the incremental accumulation of resources by the schools that enrol the most privileged students, cannot be deemed to be serious about tackling social disadvantage in education. As the Vinson Report states:

Funding is not simply an issue of limited resources….it is an equity issue, and the reduction in funding to public schools is seen to have affected the most disadvantaged schools disproportionately. This in turn has implications for the .extent to which education can continue to offer avenues of real opportunity to students in need. (Vinson, 2002, 1/xxxix.)

Staffing

School reformers on the left of politics are constantly told by those on the right (Hanushek, 1996) (Friedman, 1980) as well as by some writers from the School Improvement movement (who seem not to disclose their politics) that resources make but a marginal difference to student outcomes, and that, except for very small classes, teacher:student ratios are equally insignificant. I did not interview a single principal (nor have I ever met a practising teacher or a parent) who supports this view. Principals of elite independent schools – the most lavish users of educational resources - are most vehement of all in their dismissal of this argument (even if they do not go so far as to agree to a redistribution of public funding in the direction of schools that are less well-resourced than their own). Public school principals both in Melbourne and Sydney universally preferred global budgets for the extra flexibility they gained from this method of allocating funds to schools. But only those schools
capable of raising significant levels of private funding (through fees and levies)
conceded that a global budget compensated adequately for significant social
disadvantage confronted in their schools.

Thomson reports that ‘the issue of the total number of teachers is named as
‘the single most important issue by rustbelt principals and staff’:

If schools are to deal with increasingly diverse families, many of whom are struggling to cope
with escalating costs and diminishing supports and services, at the same time as they are to
change their curricula and pedagogies and become more ‘effective’, then staffing is the key.
(Thomson, 2002, 110-117.)

It follows from this that one of the major problems faced by rustbelt schools is
staffing turbulence:

The magnitude of ‘turnover’ in disadvantaged schools is considerable... Staffing churn is no
simple problem to resolve, since the needs of teachers as well as children and the schools must
be balanced. (Thomson, 2002, 112.)

The fact that the situation is even more desperate in the United States, where the
hiring of uncertified teachers is still common and ‘urban schools are twice as likely as
non-urban districts’ to do so (Henig, 1999, 3) should not be allowed to obscure the
seriousness of the problem, which exists not only in South Australia’s ‘rustbelts’, but
in disadvantaged localities across the nation:

According to a number of teachers and parents, one important way in which the education
system can ‘mitigate educational disadvantages’ is by ensuring that able, experienced staff
teach disadvantaged students. However, a number of schools serving disadvantaged areas
testify to the shortage of such teachers in the localities where arguably they are most needed.
(Vinson, 2002, 3/13)

Of all possible proposals for changes to schools policy, increasing the number of
teachers is the one to which State Education Departments are most resistant. This is
not hard to understand: to increase the staffing of each of Victoria’s 320 secondary
schools by just one teacher would cost in the region of $21 million – in the first year.
It is hardly surprising that even apparently modest across-the-board increases in
staffing numbers, or in the salaries of existing staff, are typically fought - tooth and nail - by Education bureaucracies. (O'Halloran, 2003)

But, for most of my respondents, the linchpin of a reform agenda for disadvantaged secondary schools is staffing. Each school in a disadvantaged locality needs staff who thoroughly understand, and are proficient in, the contexts in which they are teaching. Ideally, these should comprise a mix of highly experienced and younger, energetic teachers, and of teaching para-professionals. Disadvantaged schools need such staff in sufficient numbers to allow for the provision of a broad, challenging and attractive set of curriculum offerings for students who, in such schools, are increasingly harder to teach. They need sufficient numbers of teachers to make possible a flexible configuration of classes according to the particular needs and issues of different groups of students; for more ‘do-able’ discipline regimes; for specialised assistance for students requiring intensive help. They need continuing professional development opportunities and a chance to participate in action research on priorities identified by the school. The teachers need support in the form of administrative help, as well as for building specialised curricular and teaching teams. Last of all, they need occasional respite, time for reflection and planning, and for establishing useful linkages with students’ families and communities.

In the ideal world, all schools would have such a staffing regime. But for schools with concentrations of hard-to-teach students, this is a fundamental necessity. It is indefensible that the schools with the hardest task typically lack the staffing strength they need to most effectively discharge their responsibilities. State governments that are serious about combating social disadvantage in education would be well-advised to review the current formulaic, ‘enrolment numbers’-based school staffing allocations, and consider the more substantial weighting of such allocations according to school need. In such an exercise, the schools whose students require more teachers – and teachers with particular kinds of experience - should receive priority.

The Kosky Blueprint clearly acknowledges this need and emphasises the importance of ‘high performing’ principals accepting placements in ‘challenging schools’. (Kosky, 2003, 3.) But it does not explicitly acknowledge that there are
certain schools that, on any measure, simply need a more generous staff:student ratio than do others. It may well be that the most effective way of gaining the needed extra staff in schools serving disadvantaged communities is for Victoria to move part of the way back towards New South Wales, where the allocation of staff has remained a Departmental responsibility. Vinson has attributed New South Wales’ relative success in avoiding teacher shortfalls to its centralised practices. (Vinson, 2002, 3/94) And as Thomson says,

...one of the more common but not universal issues in the rustbelt schools...has to do with staff turbulence. This may not be resolved by placing responsibility for staffing at the local level and may well require other forms of systemic policy response.....a policy priority of stabilising staffing may well do more for students’ literacy attainment than many other interventions. (Thomson, 2002. 184.)

Facilities

Unfortunately, the comparatively poorer resource situation of schools at the bottom of State and local hierarchies is not limited to the need for more staff. As Thomson explains:

Lack of funds in rustbelt schools means less money for computers, copiers, projectors, tape recorders, televisions. It means less money for art materials and basic classroom materials, such as paper and pencils. It means less funds for copying, internet access, visits by performers, excursions and professional development programs for staff....The disparity in income, equipment and plant is repeated across rustbelt schools and their more wealthy counterparts with multiple variations – a shifting differential of numbers of novels, footballs, laboratory chemicals, cleaning equipment, play equipment and numbers and ages of tables and chairs....A spatial economy is manifested in bank balances, buildings, equipment and consumables, and it all too neatly maps onto other maps of privilege and disadvantage.
(Thomson, 2002, 105-6.)

Keating’s findings that low SES students are concentrated in small, poorly resourced schools with limited capacities to provide their charges with the range of curriculum options they need must be taken seriously.
The approach that is proposed would mean that both the centre and the schools would need to cede some governance to regions or the collective. This would not have to be done by fiat, but could be through a shift in planning and resourcing to the regional or local areas, and through linking resourcing to programs, which in turn are linked to student needs. (Keating, 2003a)

Inevitably, the adoption of such an approach would lead to a restructuring of the secondary schools system, probably under the auspices of regional bodies.

Of course, the bête-noir of State Treasurers is the funding of schools and hospitals: institutions that are seen as rapacious beasts that instantly devour whatever funds are thrown to them, often leaving no visible trace to enable governments to capitalise - in a political sense - on the expenditure. Yet perceptions in the community that the quantum of schools funding is inadequate are very strong. Such a perception was palpable during the Kennett years in Victoria. (Project, 1999, passim). Chapter 4 of the thesis reports the recent belief of Professor Vinson that the public schools system in New South Wales had been under-funded ‘for a considerable amount of time’. However, it is difficult to establish an operational definition of ‘under-funding’ adequate to persuade expenditure review committees – particularly when – as explained in Chapter 4 - governments’ expenditures on schools have in fact trended upwards (in real terms) for the last three decades.

In the meantime, Adult and Community Education Providers – located in the least well-resourced element of TAFE - which is itself the least well-resourced sector in the education system (Dumbrrell, 2004) - are grappling with new clientele like early school leavers and emotionally disturbed adults that they were never set up to serve. Moreover, following the passage of the Commonwealth’s new Higher Education legislation, there are likely to be further restrictions even on the limited access that a minority of disadvantaged school leavers currently gain to higher education. Ominously, as this thesis nears completion, some of the ‘second tier’ Victorian universities – those that enrol the largest proportions of working-class students – have just announced that they intend to raise their HECS fees by 25 per cent to take full advantage of the Commonwealth’s December 2003 liberalisation of HECS fee-setting by tertiary institutions. (Rood, 2004b) (Rood, 2004a) A thorough-going national
review of funding arrangements for further education, training and higher education seems long overdue.

**Governance**

**Competition within the school hierarchy: State issues**

The Vinson report uncovered, among New South Wales principals of comprehensive public schools, a well of resentment against the State’s nominated selective and specialist schools and, to a lesser extent, against schools that had established senior campuses. My own field experience – rather more limited than Vinson’s - did not reflect his findings. While it was impossible to visit neighbouring schools in a sub-region of New South Wales without becoming conscious of the hierarchy in schooling provision, the principals I interviewed seemed less exercised by rivalry between public schools than were those reported by Vinson – or, for that matter, the Victorian principals. They were rather more outspoken about the impact of Commonwealth funding, and the loss of their students to better-resourced (and largely Commonwealth-funded) private schools – an experience that is comparatively more novel in New South Wales than it is in Victoria. The existence of inter-public school rivalry south of the Murray, however, is sufficiently marked to draw from the Minister a welcome recognition that students from disadvantaged schools may very well be the casualties of such competition:

> Unfettered competition between schools may not be conducive to meeting the needs of all schools and all communities, nor to the provision of a full range of programs for the more diverse range of students now staying on at school. (Kosky, 2003. 10.)

While the Kosky statement is short on implementation detail, the Minister expects that the self-management put in place by the Kennett Government will now be tempered by a ‘shared responsibility and co-operation between schools’ in preference to schools that ‘work and plan in isolation’. (Kosky, 2003, loc cit). Before turning to the mechanism already put in place by the Victorian Government to engender co-operation and co-ordinated activity at the sub-regional level, the Commonwealth
Government’s contribution to destructive rivalry between the schools of the public and private sectors cannot go unremarked.

**Competition within the school hierarchy: Commonwealth issues**

The ‘SES Funding Model’ put in place by Dr David Kemp when he controlled the Education portfolio (which is discussed in Chapter 4) is as significant for its symbolic message as it is for its impact on the financial status of public schools. The Commonwealth no longer perceives that it has a major responsibility to the schools of the public sector: parents who can afford to pay private school fees are expected to do so – and will be rewarded for their ‘effort’. Those who cannot should no longer look to the national government to try to level the playing field as between different taxpayers and their children. They should instead rely on their State governments to substantially fund the activities for which they have constitutional responsibility. The Commonwealth now spends more on private schools than it does in an area it has specifically claimed as its sole responsibility: the funding of higher education.

Any attempts by State governments to massage their funding regimes in more equitable directions and to re-kindle inter-school collaboration will therefore be taking place against a background of Commonwealth funding processes that are increasingly biased in favour of private schools. Thus, the residual rivalries between public schools have to be comprehended in the context of re-ignited – and Commonwealth-encouraged – rivalry between the public and private sectors. The case for re-jigging State funding models to provide stronger support for disadvantaged schools – in both sectors - is very pressing. The case for the Commonwealth to do the same is overwhelming. And yet, following the passing on of Dr Kemp from the Education portfolio, there is as yet no discernible revival in Canberra of any latent interest, either in funding equity, or in the successful community-supported models of student transition from school to further education and employment. ³

**Relations between schools and the Centre: ‘Joined Up Government’?**

In both of the study States, the respective governments are attempting to bring administrative support (and, no doubt, central scrutiny) closer to schools. New South
Wales, with its 2,300 public schools, and 40 school districts, has reintroduced its Regions. It has also begun to trial UK-style central place management. Vinson provides several examples of the informal, pilot approaches of NSW in this issue area, raising the question as to whether it is now time for these initiatives to become regularised and institutionalised.

Victoria, regions still intact, has, as we have seen in Chapter 7, established a mechanism at the sub-regional level to stimulate co-ordinated planning of school-to-further education and employment transition opportunities for young people. A major recommendation of the Victorian Kirby Report (DEET, 2000), the vision for the Local Learning and Employment Networks is that sub-regional communities will, over time, assume collective responsibility for ensuring that such opportunities are available for all school students in their locales. The model comes close to Thomson’s prescription for the type of ‘holistic’, ‘interactive’, ‘joined-up’ government at the regional level that is needed to support students ‘on the ground’:

A holistic policy framework must get below the level of the region to smaller and more sensitive geographies. The creation, support and strengthening of vertical and horizontal social, economic, cultural and political networks is important. Community development processes that link together the local and the regional are necessary. (Thomson, 2002, 185.)

Early indications are that the LLENs are being largely spurned by well-resourced and selective schools (PrV6; PuV9), but appreciated and being used by principals of disadvantaged schools. And there is anecdotal evidence that the mechanism established for co-ordinated transition planning is beginning to reanimate some interschool collaboration:

I’ve invested a lot in the LLEN because I know it’s going to help us...The LLEN will grow. It can’t happen all in a year. Now we’ve got so many employers coming in and giving up their time. At least now – all those employment groups that are around – they contact us. Before, everyone was working on their own. Now we’re pulling together. (PuV2).

It is too early to tell whether the LLEN is, in fact, the most appropriate institutional mechanism to deliver optimal outcomes for disadvantaged young people. An obvious limitation is that it is confined to the Education portfolio. The ‘joined-up’ element at
State Government level – the Department of Victorian Communities – supports eight Ministers and includes the portfolios of Employment and Youth Affairs, Local Government; Sport and Recreation; Aboriginal Affairs; Multicultural Affairs and Women’s Affairs – but not Education and Training. If the LLENs could be persuaded to widen their remits to cover a wider range of young people’s needs – an extension of their brief that would, of course, be impossible without concrete support from State government - they might add to their growing education, training and employment networks by forming partnerships also with the ‘joining-up’ State Department and with community service and health providers at the regional level. There is room for them to strengthen their embryonic relationships with local government, and with the Commonwealth - a process that has begun in my own LLEN with the constructive participation of a Centrelink representative, and the beginnings of a good working relationship with the (partially Commonwealth funded) Western Melbourne Regional Economic Development Organisation (WREDO).

Without such a widened brief, though, attempts to open up useful transition opportunities for the area’s young people can easily be thwarted by factors outside the ambit of education services: when the young person cannot take up an apprenticeship opportunity because of the lack of public transport; when continuing domestic violence in a young worker’s family robs her of energy for her new course; when depression or homelessness or both makes it impossible for a young man to function in the job market; when ‘entry-level’ workers, having exited the education system, cannot find the continuing literacy and numeracy support they need.

It must be said, though, that LLENs are unlikely to be persuaded to extend their reach beyond the education and training silo while they have neither the authority nor the resources fully to discharge their current responsibilities – let alone increased ones. Having embarked enthusiastically on the data-gathering and network-building tasks associated with the attainment of the government’s new performance targets – and, in some cases, achieving apparent improvements in their direction - they now find that the State government has begun to retract essential funding. 2004 LLEN budgets have been cut by differing amounts, allegedly based on Departmental judgements of how effectively they have used their funds so far. (The WynBay LLEN will drop $20,000 to $218,000 – apparently one of the less severely affected).
A non-government organisation on which the WynBay LLEN was depending to provide temporary, alternative respite settings for ‘unteachable’ students has had its funding drastically chopped. Further funding cuts in the future have been signalled — and the program itself may not survive the review that is to take place in 2005. First phase LLEN participants — overwhelmingly volunteers — had signed on to achieve, by 2010, a 10 per cent increase in the education and training participation of young people to Year 12 or equivalent — all within existing resources. In a reduced resource environment, reaching that goal becomes improbable.

One reform scenario that could bring Victoria and New South Wales closer together would be the selective establishment of well-resourced LLEN-style mechanisms. Curtain, for example, has identified five variations of ‘area-based partnerships arrangements’, that could be trialled in differing locations. (Curtain, 2002, 8). However, it is difficult to be optimistic about any of these attempts to emulate British initiatives in ‘joined up government’, given the extremely modest achievements of most of these overseas initiatives. (Power, 2001) Power does note, though, that there have been a few successes among the British cases, so a central government strategy of backing those who are becoming winners may be feasible.

Ominously, the LLENs — along with the Kirby report that had successfully recommended their establishment to her — have been ignored in the latest Kosky statement. All the signs are there that the LLENs — notwithstanding the ‘primary conclusion’ of the formative Evaluation that ‘LLENs should be endorsed, affirmed and supported.’ (Centre for Work and Learning Studies, 2002, 24) are unlikely to retain government support. Without it, they are unsustainable. Should they prove to go the way of other promising regional experiments that preceded them — such as the Commonwealth’s Australian Assistance Plan or the Victorian Government’s Family and Community Services Program — yet another generation of regional volunteers will have lapsed into cynicism and another generation of community members — in this latest case, school personnel — will once more be thrown back on their own devices.

If, then, as seems likely, the Victorian government is moving to abolish the State-wide ‘wall-to-wall’ coverage of thirty-one LLENs, it might still be persuaded to continue to support the minority of LLENs that have been performing best, and
indeed to widen the remits of that minority. Anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some of these are operating in areas of greatest disadvantage. Such a selectively targeted scheme could also have attractions in New South Wales, where, as Vinson has reported, there have been a number of promising but under-institutionalised LLEN-style initiatives, such as that at Windale. However, in the New South Wales context, the lead agency at the State level for a project in 'joined-up government' would probably have to be the Premier's Department – notwithstanding the misgivings that my own experiences have led me to hold about the wisdom of central agencies trying to maintain a 'service delivery' role. A State government that was planning a serious trial of area-based partnerships - or, in the case of Victoria, seeking the sustainability of any or all of the thirty-one such mechanisms it has already established - would do well to consider relevant research findings from overseas.

Of particular relevance in the present Australian context is the major US Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project of Stone, Henig and their colleagues (Stone, 2001, 17-18); (Henig, 1999). Stone et al conceptualised civic capacity as policy-focused social capital. It is stably institutionalised, but is seldom attained through the restructuring of existing institutions alone. Rather, it is the outcome of the extremely difficult work of institutionalising cross-jurisdictional networks. A necessary but insufficient part of this work is the mobilisation of interests into strategic coalitions. In addition, participants in those coalitions must share common orientations. And the most original finding of the US project was that the orientation most conducive to civic capacity building was one said to be most commonly encountered among representatives of business interests – preparedness to recognise the breadth of problems being confronted, together with a strategic capacity to prioritise measures to deal with at least some of the most pressing of those problems.

There is thus a central lesson to be drawn from the US research, and that is that the seemingly intractable problems of meeting the needs of disadvantaged students can be overcome only through the development of politically sustainable coalitions. To be sustainable, such coalitions must be based on institutionally secured rewards for the participants, including, especially, business interests. To this end, an appropriate auspice (government agency, university) should be found to conduct a disciplined assessment of experience to date with the LLEN scheme. What, to date,
have been the barriers to more effective engagement of business interests in the scheme?

**Curriculum**

**Vocational Education and Training**

The cost of Vocational Education in Schools (VETIS) to schools is a highly controversial issue: the per student cost of a one year Pre-Apprenticeship course in Construction is, on average, $1,500.00. Even at the ‘bargain basement prices’ offered by several TAFE institutes, the cost to schools is still in the region of $900.00 - $1,000 per student.) Thus, schools have had to provide vocational studies largely on a ‘user-pays’ basis. This turns VETIS into an elite program for students whose families can afford to pay for it. (Worryingly, participation in VETIS has recently fallen significantly in part of the WynBay zone.)

And what happens at the end of the VETIS ‘pathway’? TAFE representatives on the WynBay LLEN predict that, given the parlous funding situation in their own sector, not all VCE graduates – let alone VCAL holders - will be able to find places in TAFE Institutes. Students who do win TAFE places, given their likely substantial representation from disadvantaged communities – may not be able to pay for them. Some TAFE institutes claim that this is not just a funding issue: even were additional funds made available to improve access for school students or early school leavers, these TAFEs claim they don’t have the physical room for them. ‘A hoax on kids’ is how one WynBay representative describes the situation. 4

**Confronting the Hierarchies**

Earlier chapters of the thesis have explained how the hierarchical organisation of schooling in any given locality is inextricably bound up with the hierarchical organisation of the upper school curriculum, with its primary focus on preparing some students for entry into higher education institutions. Other purposes for the secondary school curriculum – such as facilitating the transition from school of the roughly two thirds of Year 12 candidates who either do not aspire to, or do not succeed in
accessing university places, are largely subordinate to its primary one of selecting students for university. (Keating, 1992, 3.) Chapter 4 explained how attempts to ‘integrate’ vocational courses into the general curriculum have received, at best, a lukewarm reception, and have actually led to the extension of the reach of universities and boards of studies over the vocational elements of post-compulsory students’ study programs, in addition to their more theoretical studies:

VET studies within the VCE sit within the context of the pathway from school to higher education rather than industry validated outcomes. Optional scored assessment is available in eight VET studies, with the scaled score of one VET study able to contribute to the calculation of an individual entrance rank for higher education and any remaining studies contributing incrementally to the total... (Praetz, 2002, 7.)

Praetz reminds us that the research of Polesel and others revealed that:

While positive outcomes for VET in the VCE students were apparent, 17.7 per cent of the Year 12 school leavers in 1998 ended up in part-time work, unemployed or repeating or completing the qualification. (loc cit).

As a somewhat battered veteran of the highly successful political campaign waged against the new ‘common certificate’ in the lead-up to the 1992 Victorian State Election, I can sympathise with the Bracks’ Labor Government’s desire to create the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning as a separate stream to ‘outflank’ the VCE. For, under the protection of the dominant advocacy coalition, the VCE continues unabated as the vehicle for the attainment of high TER/ENTER scores by a minority of candidates. Praetz explains that:

Reopening debates around the VCE and undertaking another review would have delayed and diverted reforms directed towards the participation of young people who were presently leaving schools either without any qualification or without a pathway into work or learning. When confronting the issues inevitable raised around setting up an option which might be perceived as second rate, the lack of options for those young people was at the forefront (loc cit).

The question to be asked is that, in the absence of those peculiarly Victorian political constraints, would this have been considered the most desirable strategy?
In 1992, Keating compared the earlier ‘integrated’ approach to the provision of Vocational Education and Training in schools with ‘binary’ approaches that effectively separate students of applied studies from those undertaking academic studies. The most frequent consequence of binary programs, he said, was ‘the tracking of ‘non-academic’ students into what are perceived as ‘lesser options’:

Under these circumstances the status of applied studies will remain at a low level, and there is unlikely to be an integration of vocational and general education. Entry-level arrangements will remain a by-product of the university oriented academic curriculum. (Keating, 2003a, 5)

Interviews with principals of schools in my Melbourne research site demonstrated that these were prophetic words indeed. At the same time as parents and students are discovering that VCAL offers an opportunity for young people who favour applied learning methods as the key to succeeding in school, some principals are deliberately limiting VCAL enrolments to avoid tarnishing their record as ‘VCE schools’. Moreover, as indicated above, because of funding constraints, successful transition to TAFE cannot yet be guaranteed for VCAL participants. This situation contrasts sharply with the more integrated and flexible arrangements to be found in a number of European countries:

...where people might move into training courses after – or in combination with – a degree course, or where pathways had some real attraction for students by providing real and valued employment as part of the pathway. (Keating, 1992, 8.)

Education systems that aim to cater for post compulsory year students seeking to move quickly to acquire work-relevant, practical skills face a public policy dilemma: either they progressively broaden the coverage of a single ‘capstone’ qualification like the VCE in the hope that the need for practical learning will be met in the context of general and academic studies, or they introduce a separate qualification – such as VCAL – to sit alongside the ‘capstone’ qualification, thus protecting its strongly academic character from the pressure to accommodate vocational interests.
Praetz has clearly indicated the reasons why Victoria has taken the second of these choices. The main reason arises from the nature of the VCE. Not only is its content highly academic, but its time demands, even for those students opting for the vocationally oriented subjects, make it virtually impossible for such students to find the space to participate in accredited learning on-the-job or in other community settings. (Something similar may have been the reason for the alarming New South Wales trend, reported but not explained by Vinson (3/68), for the numbers of school students taking VET subjects falling dramatically in recent years).

Supporting the New Credential

The overriding need that the Victorian Qualifications Authority perceived for a more flexible mechanism that would allow vocationally-oriented students to continue learning led to the establishment of the VCAL, even though Praetz seemed to be taking for granted that this new qualification would be generally considered to be second-rate, and that nothing could be done about that. But this second assumption could be questioned, for it is clear from Praetz’s own paper that, in a dynamic technical environment, VCAL may rapidly become a better vehicle for life long learning than the typical university degree.

The immediate advantages that the VCAL credential seems to have over the VCE is that it is not limited to the prescriptions of a single education sector; it makes room for the continued strengthening of literacy and numeracy; it provides the opportunity for extended, structured workplace learning with outcomes based on ‘industry-validated standards’, and it leaves the door open for students to continue with their VCE studies. (Praetz, 2002,8.)

However, if VCAL is to realise its full potential as a vehicle for the advancement of students whose interests are not primarily academic, then it needs to be strategically promoted by a new advocacy coalition. Against a background of a new TAFE funding regime that would guarantee continuity for VCAL life-learners, this strategic promotion should aim to exploit any competitive edges that VCAL could be developed to enjoy over the VCE. It could for example come to be seen as being closer to the cutting edge of technological development and the acquisition of up-to-date technical skills by the workforce. Such a conception of VCAL would attract
business interest, together with that of those universities with TAFE components (RMIT, VUT, Ballarat). The objective should not merely be parity of esteem with the qualification that leads to the traditional professions, such as medicine and law, but the possibility of attaining superiority of esteem in a globalising and ‘technologising’ economy. For too long, reformers have been trapped in a mind set that defines technical education and training as ‘second chance’. In view of the increasing traffic from university to TAFE, it may be time to change that image. (Vinson, 2002, 13/83)

Indeed, the upgrading of VCAL might prove to be the gateway to serious commitment to school reform by business interests in all States – as reported above, a necessary precondition, in the opinion of Henig and his collaborators (Stone, 2001) for the establishment of sustainable improvements.

While they are beyond the scope of this thesis, strategic changes of direction should also involve securing the cooperation of at least those higher education institutions that are trying to serve socially disadvantaged students. In Victoria, Teese identifies the three University/TAFE institutions mentioned above as likely candidates to experiment with the restructuring of courses in ways that would guarantee continuity for the population of VCAL graduates and other school leavers currently excluded from higher education.

The Theoretical Frameworks Re-visited

My primary purpose in this research has been to identify policies that assist schools to improve outcomes for their socially disadvantaged students: policies that – even where they do exist - have proven extremely difficult to implement effectively. There appear to be two interrelated sets of reasons as to why these difficulties have arisen. First, the actors involved in policy formation and implementation may have had interests opposed to the thrust of the policies in question. Second, irrespective of the contending interests, there may have been significant structural constraints on action.

Across these two sets of reasons, the Advocacy Coalition Framework has offered the best, if still inadequate, coverage. The ACF furthers our understanding of the ways in which policy formations persist through time and how they change. The
account of policymaking given by the ACF and, with some reservations supported by the findings of this thesis, was summarised in Chapter 1 along the following lines:

Policy packages in any given sub-system are promoted by long-standing, stable coalitions of actors drawn from a variety of organisations, but sharing common value- and often policy- commitments. Usually, but not invariably, such a coalition will be opposed by another contending coalition, and the more powerful these opponents are perceived to be by the members of a particular coalition, the more united those members are likely to be. Established policies will be altered significantly only when there are new perturbations external to the policy subsystem.

It is now time to consider the ways in which the ACF might be modified in order to provide a more suitable framework for formulating equity-based reforms to schooling. The force of the ACF approach has recently been demonstrated by a prize-winning book on schooling the socially disadvantaged in the United States – that of Henig and his colleagues (Henig, 1999, 285 ff) – even though the Sabatier framework does not rate an explicit mention! After noting the seeming intractability of problems facing school reformers, Henig et al outline the strategy that they consider most likely to succeed. Like that of the LLENS, it is a coalition-building strategy. It has four components:

An initial focus on winnable victories;

Involvement of individuals and groups that have reputations for reliability and loyalty;

Securing guarantees that reform measures will not be covers for disguised budget cuts;

Defining genuine performance measures.
(It has to be said that the third component certainly does not pertain to the Victorian initiative!) Although Henig et al do not use the Sabatier terminology, their strategy appears to be aimed at the establishment of a dominant advocacy coalition!

There are, however, two areas in which the argument of this thesis has shown up inadequacies in the ACF. First, and of lesser importance, there is an assertion in the ACF about the styles of participants that appears to be unduly culture-bound, viz. that administrative actors and actors from purposive groups will be more moderate and constrained than most other participants in an AC. In a quasi-Westminster system – especially one being transformed by ‘political management’ - the ‘natural’ reticence of public servants may be replaced by a desire to do the bidding of political masters, and representatives of ‘purposive’ groups may feel less, rather than more, constrained when compared with their more instrumentally motivated colleagues. Second, and more importantly, the argument of the thesis has demonstrated that there have been five dimensions of policymaking that have been inadequately covered by the ACF:

- The processes of regime dynamics whereby lasting ACs can become dominant, as has happened in both New South Wales and Victoria.
- The key roles of political parties as policy drivers in Westminster systems.
- The ways in which long periods of one-party rule in neo-Westminster systems may leave a lasting impact on the politico-administrative culture of the jurisdiction and inevitably on the internal culture of dominant ACs.
- The particularly strong barriers to reform which are presented when bipartisan consensus grows up within a dominant AC.
- The varying degrees to which the apparent policy dominance of an AC may be weakened by the very interests charged with implementation in the policy field in question.

When these missing dimensions are taken into consideration, the final account reads something like the following:
Policy packages in any given sub-system are promoted by long standing, stable coalitions of actors drawn from a variety of organisations, but sharing common policy – and often value – commitments. Usually, but not invariably, such a coalition will be opposed by one or more contending coalitions, and the more powerful these opponents are perceived to be by the members of a particular coalition, the more united that particular coalition is likely to be. Of the contending coalitions, one will normally be dominant. It will be embedded in a hegemonic institutional structure encompassing both public and private interests. The balances established in a dominant AC between public and private interests – including those of the public service itself - will be shaped (in Australia) by long periods of one party rule. Where public interests are especially weighty in a dominant AC, bipartisan consensus is most likely. Conversely, where private interests are especially weighty, bipartisan dissensus is most likely. Established policies will be altered significantly only when there are new perturbations external to the policy subsystem. However, some policy modifications of substance – such as those going to disadvantage in schooling - are most politically feasible when an opposing AC allies itself with a party in government which is not integrated into the sort of bipartisan consensus that morphs into a dominant – but compromising – Advocacy Coalition.

The above account delivers what I believe to be the central theoretical lessons that can be learned from the experience reviewed in this thesis. The argument of the thesis has moved a long way from the orthodox Sabatier presentation of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. But I have tried to return to Sabatier’s more orthodox form in an Appendix to this Chapter, which re-presents these ‘theoretical lessons’ as ACF-style hypotheses.
A final comment

At the beginning of this thesis, I set myself two major tasks:

The identification of a set of measures for countering the effects of social disadvantage on the outcomes of secondary school students;

The specification of the constraints standing in the way of implementing an equity-based reform agenda in differing schooling systems.

Interviews with principals and State level policy-makers who are concerned about the negative impact of disadvantage on the outcomes of young people have led me to identify the following elements of a possible program of reform:

A central funding program, based on a redistributive model, that is focused on schools with concentrations of disadvantaged students. Depending on the adequacy of such a model, this may or may not be supplemented along the lines of a disadvantaged schools program - such as the NSW PSFP;

A central ‘joined-up government’ place management initiative to integrate services to disadvantaged youth in particular geographical areas, driven, as it has been in some NSW pilots, by a powerful central agency. (Such an initiative, as has been recommended by Vinson (2002, 1/78) should ideally focus on the whole education system, beginning with pre-school).

A devolutionary strategy involving - at the regional/sub-regional levels - local governments, NGOs and the business and industry sector in co-ordinated planning to increase productive transition options for young people and to provide them with other necessary supports- such as could be achieved by an expanded LLEN.

A central curriculum initiative designed to provide a qualification for students interested in applied and practical studies - such as VCAL – with ongoing pathways (eg. to TAFE) supported by adequate funding. Such an initiative should
take account of cutting-edge research into new pedagogical approaches to the
acquisition of ‘deep learning’, and be freed from the restrictions of university
entrance requirements.

As will be quite obvious, the first two elements in the reform program have been
drawn from the New South Wales experience, and the latter two from the Victorian.
Will the logic of regime dynamics block the implementation of the full program in
either State?

The case of New South Wales appears the more straightforward. The
centralist and consensual politico-administrative culture would seem to preclude the
introduction of a VCAL type qualification, and may severely limit any devolutionary
initiatives. However, Vinson, after having noted a few recent pilots – such as
Windale in southern Newcastle (Vinson, 2002, 3/10-11), the Shoalhaven Student
Support scheme (op cit 1/51) and the Warialda and Bingara Industry and Education
Links Committee (op cit 2/112-3) - that have involved local governments and often
local businesses as well, advances the following modest but worthwhile
recommendation:

The experience of the DET’s District level and local involvement in Windale, and another
similar projects now underway, must be incorporated into the consciousness of the
Department rather than remain at the regional level. (Vinson, 2002, 3/12)

To date, there is little evidence that the consciousness of the Department has been
expanded in this way. And Vinson himself remarks that ‘attempts at school
improvement are sporadic and not well secured into the future…they generally have
occurred without a great deal of direct support from either District Offices or
Directorates within the DET’ (op cit 1/56). Indeed, as already remarked, there seems
to be greater awareness of issues of disadvantage in other New South Wales
government agencies than in DET – witness the promising Priority Regional
Communities Project, led by the Department of Housing (op cit 3/6).

The case of Victoria is somewhat more complex. The Victorian initiatives
identified above were the products of an opposing Advocacy Coalition allied with a
newly elected, minority Labor government. It may not be accidental that these initiatives are beginning to languish under the second Bracks government – a government that is in so powerful a position that it seems actively to be contemplating the introduction of a new centralising regime in schooling. The overall thrust of the Minister’s *Blueprint* is strongly managerialist, with a strong focus on the need for strengthening the powers of principals, and little attention given to issues of community governance. If such centralisation comes about, Victoria may come to adopt some parts of the New South Wales elements in the reform program (a Priority Schools Funding Program, and central agency-driven joined-up government place management), even as it may be moving to scale down its own previous initiatives (such as the LLEN and VCAL).

As the term ‘social disadvantage’ appears to have dropped out of the recent policy rhetoric of both the New South Wales and Victorian governments, it is difficult not to be pessimistic about the prospects for equity-based reform in these two systems. Nevertheless, it may be premature to abandon all hope of progressive change: disappearance from official rhetoric need not signify that equity concerns no longer have practical salience. The re-badging of the New South Wales’ Disadvantaged Schools Program’ as the ‘Priority Schools Funding Program’ (PSFP) does not seem to have much policy significance, and Vinson was very supportive of the PSF. He demonstrated, for example, that State government resourcing of schools in disadvantaged areas was significantly above that provided to schools in higher SES areas (by a margin as high as 20%, on some indicators), and he attributed this state of affairs in substantial part to the PSF. In the same way, it is possible that equity concerns remain important for the Victorian Government despite some surprising gaps in the Kosky *Blueprint* – gaps that make the future unclear for some of her own most innovatory programs.
Postscript

I wrote most of the above Conclusion before the appearance in November 2003 of the Kosky report, *Blueprint for Government Schools*. As we have seen, that report had a decidedly ‘New South Wales’ feel to it – with its strong interventionist thrust, combined with an array of rewards for leaders deemed to be performing. This development suggests that a new dominant advocacy coalition may have been emerging while I have been writing. I began this project at the height of the Kennett dominance, and wrote most of the thesis during the transitional period of minority ALP government in Victoria. Since the 2002 election, however, Victoria now has for the first time a Labor government with prospects of long term rule without an obstructionist Upper House. As a result, it may well be that a bipartisan consensus is now emerging for the first time in Victoria.

Halligan and Power (Halligan and Power, 1992, 250-1) had suggested a decade ago that, in the new era of political management, there was in any case a measure of convergence between the State Interventionist and Constitutionalist regimes. Which is not to say that the two State systems are becoming identical, for strong historical residues are likely to remain. The Victorian consensus will retain the traditional autonomy of the academic mainstream, but alongside it, the vocational pathway is likely to win its own ‘place in the sun’. The hitherto opposing advocacy coalition is now being incorporated into the dominant coalition, and compromises are being made on both sides.

This sea change in Victorian policymaking on schools has been nicely epitomised by the career of Minister Kosky. Serving initially as Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment in the minority Bracks government, she has now emerged as the Minister for a newly united portfolio of Education and Training in the second, majority Bracks government. Influenced by advisors such as Richard Teese and Jack Keating, she may well succeed in introducing a regime that would until recently have been considered impossible – a bipartisan managerialist Bourdieuan schools system! Which is not to suggest that Bourdieu himself necessarily would have been impressed by the new regime: not if
the formation of the new dominant advocacy coalition involves striking compromises that mean that, from now on, the interests of disadvantaged students will receive less attention than during the period of the minority Bracks government.

As I composed this concluding Chapter, my own theoretical orientation shifted. The primary purpose of the thesis has been to understand the reasons why the problems of social disadvantage in schooling have been so intractable. In this journey, the work of the theorists – such as Sabatier – have been very valuable. In the Conclusion, as I have inevitably come to focus on scenarios for reform, I have become attracted to a more proactive theoretical orientation, like that supplied by the work of Stone, Henig and their colleagues on the building of civic capacity. As the sketching of scenarios for reform has not been the primary purpose of the thesis, I have not been able to do full justice to the concept of building civic capacity. However, submission of the thesis will not mark the end of my interest in policy reform. Having demonstrated the power of past advocacy coalitions, I hope, through the WynBay Local Learning and Employment Network, and in other forums in which I work, to be involved in the collaborative task of forming a new reform coalition. The purpose would be to try to ensure that, in the future, opportunities for lifelong learning for our most vulnerable young people are provided more equitably – and on the basis of a guarantee for all young people, rather than the ‘lottery’ that currently exists.
Appendix 9.1: The Advocacy Coalition Framework Hypotheses revisited

In an Appendix to Chapter 1, I presented a consolidated list of thirteen Advocacy Coalition Framework Hypotheses. I discovered that six of these related most closely to the concerns of the thesis, and, that in a Westminster system, these needed to be modified – as I have done below. The hypotheses not listed ('Coalition' 4, 5; 'Learning' 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13) are ones that have not proven very relevant to my project, for the most part because they relate to areas of policy that are dominated by technical discourses. But the revised list of six hypotheses could help to orientate future research on the issues explored by this thesis.

1. Coalition Hypothesis 1
   On major controversies within a mature policy subsystem, when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the line-up of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so. In parliamentary regimes, the most stable coalitions are those that have been fashioned during long uninterrupted periods of one party rule.

2. Coalition Hypothesis 2
   Actors within an advocacy coalition will show substantial consensus on issues pertaining to the policy core, although less so on secondary aspects. In parliamentary regimes, consensus on policy core issues will be most stable and conservative when enjoying bipartisan support.

3. Coalition Hypothesis 3
   An actor (or coalition) will give up secondary aspects of his (its) belief system before acknowledging weaknesses in its policy core. In federal regimes, what may be a secondary aspect at one level may be a core aspect at another level.
6. Coalition Hypothesis 6
Actors who share policy core beliefs are more likely to engage in short-term coordination if they view their opponents as (a) very powerful and (b) very likely to impose substantial costs upon them if victorious. Opposing Coalitions typically engage in such coordination in attempts to gain non-mainstream, niche programs.

7. Change Hypothesis 1
The policy core attributes of a governmental program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instituted the program remains in power within that jurisdiction – except, in some but by no means all cases, when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction.

8. Change Hypothesis 2
Significant perturbations external to the subsystem (e.g., changes in socioeconomic conditions, public opinion, system-wide governing coalitions, or policy outputs from other subsystems) are a necessary but not sufficient, cause of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program. Changes are most likely when they are consistent with the value bases of a dominant Coalition.
These are important components of a reform package recently advanced by Richard Teese in his Inaugural Professorial Lecture (November 3, 2003). Teese's package was however directed primarily at an academic audience and the higher education sector and thus ranged much more broadly than I propose to do.

The Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (then chaired by the author) was given a reference by the Minister to provide advice on the broadbanding of the Commonwealth 'equity' programs which were a mixture of measures designed to alleviate the impact of poverty on school students (the DSP and Students at Risk) and initiatives that 'targeted' particular groups in categories not associated with inequalities in family income, viz: non-English-speaking students, rural and isolated students, and students with intellectual and physical disabilities.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum is a private foundation established by the Founder of the Lendlease Corporation to promote useful school-to-work and training transition (and on whose Board of Trustees, I am a member). It has been trying, for nearly 3 years, to lobby the Federal Government to set up a 'National Youth Commitment' that would be based on successful, community-supported transition pilots projects on the Gold Coast, the Northern Sunshine Coast, Macarthur, Tumut and the Central Coast. The model involves the use of 'transition brokers', business mentors, and data management – all co-ordinated by a local project manager. So far, the Government has shown no interest.

I understand that the State Government has recently established a working group to examine this problem.
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