Teaching the Nation

Politics and Pedagogy in Australian History

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Abbreviations

Australian Broadcasting Corporation  ABC
Australian Capital Territory  ACT
Australian Education Council  AEC
Curriculum Development Centre  CDC
Curriculum and Standards Framework (Victoria)  CSF
Higher School Certificate  HSC
History Teachers' Association of Australia  HTAA
History Teachers' Association of New South Wales  HTANSW
History Teachers' Association of Victoria  HTAV
Languages Other Than English  LOTE
Learning Through the Historical Environment  LTHE
Man: A Course of Study  MACOS
New South Wales  NSW
Queensland History Teachers' Association  QHTA
Secondary History Education Project  SHEP
Studies of Society and Environment  SOSE
Tertiary Entrance Rank  TER
Victorian Certificate of Education  VCE

Note on the text

In this thesis, History is used with regard to the subject in schools and universities (as with Social Studies, or Geography). When describing the discipline or the past itself, history (in the lower case) is used.

Note on the sources

Between October 1990 and December 1995 the Sydney Daily Telegraph was merged with the Mirror and was known as the Daily Telegraph Mirror. Until 1994 Melbourne Studies in Education was classified by year only. From 1995 to the present (vols 29-45), it has been classified according to vol. and no. In 1984 Agora was given the volume of 19 for numbers 1, 3, and 4, but vol. 18 for no. 2. In 1985 it was given vol. 19 for no. 1, and vol. 20 for nos 2, 3, and 4.
Introduction

Our history, our children
The ‘politics of memory’ is a significant concept for understanding the powerful and contested nature of national narratives. Its origin may be located in memory studies more broadly, a body of scholarship that emerged in response to a boom in popular histories. Leading scholars such as Pierre Nora have described this historical interest as a contemporary impulse to create memory sites as the events themselves recede further into the past.\(^8\) (The growing popularity and awareness of the Gallipoli commemorations at Anzac Cove offer a noteworthy example here.) Others, such as David Lowenthal and Raphael Samuel, have sought to explain current interest in the past as individual and collective desires to reconnect with more intimate stories and identities found in unofficial histories, oral testimony and family narratives.\(^9\)

While these personal and popular expressions of the past contrast official histories and national narratives, memory studies include public and official narratives as part of a ‘collective’, ‘social’ or ‘public’ memory. Such research demonstrates that the contested construction of collective memory is inherently political. As Patrick Hutton explained in his recent historiographical survey of how shared experiences and understandings powerfully form identity, ‘collective memory is constructed’, and ‘the key to its influence is political power’.\(^10\) Jeffrey K. Olick has similarly noted ‘the fundamental connection between memory and the nation’.\(^11\) In her analysis of the politics of memory, the French historian Dominique Schnapper described the political imperatives that constructing national narratives entail: ‘Memory in political life obviously has a political function’, and as such, ‘Collective memory inevitably becomes political’.\(^12\) Examining the anxieties generated by competing national memories in Australia, the historian Paula Hamilton analysed the ‘tensions evident in the attempts to reconcile group memories into a single account of the national past’. There has been an increasing influence of memory in public historical understandings, she continued: ‘the past, its meaning and


\(^{10}\) Patrick Hutton, ‘Recent Scholarship on Memory and History’, \textit{History Teacher (UK)}, vol. 33, no. 4 (2000): 537.


relationship to the present, has been a central factor in the politics of memory played out in parliaments and the press'.

A number of historians have also commented on less overt aspects of collective memory's power and agency. Concomitant with the struggle to define official narratives is the capacity for official forgetting, as Chris Healy has astutely described. The longstanding exclusion of Aboriginal experience in Australian history writing, for instance, could only be attributed to a 'whiting out' or 'silencing' of their history, an active, 'violent task of memory-work'. Jenéa Tallentire explains this capacity in similar terms. 'How events are remembered, what commemorations are made, by whom, and for whom is an important inquiry for the study of any community', she writes. 'The concurrent processes of forgetting or silencing are also present whenever such publicly authorised social memory is made material, in monuments, museums and textbooks.'

Attempts to define national history and identity create considerable anxiety and unease around the world. Indeed, the historian James Wertsch has suggested that these commemorations constitute 'sites' of collective memory, where contrasting national narratives are proposed and contested. Debates over Germany and Japan's remembrance of World War II have offered scholars such as Ian Buruma significant comparative material to analyse how communities come to terms with their histories. Their divergent memorialisation of war experience frames his investigation into commemorative impulses and the construction of national narratives. Such studies of war experience and commemoration form a critical body of work on collective memory. Jay Winter has explored languages of bereavement and remembrance in sites of memory and mourning following World War I. The power of museums and war memorials as sites of contested collective memory have also produced important studies of

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2 Chris Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44-5.
remembrance, nation building and the construction of national memory. Other scholars reveal that commemorative moments such as national days or anniversaries are similarly compelling catalysts for debate. Such ‘outbreaks’ of historical dispute reveal how national narratives are contested in the historical domains of museums, history texts and school syllabuses. It is here, in this struggle to define national histories and narratives, that the politics of collective memory can provide a critical analysis of the nation itself.

As purveyors of the past, schools are an important site of convergence in memory politics. History syllabuses and textbooks, with their capacity to define the nation's past, are central to the development of national narratives and it is this capacity of history education to construct collective memory that makes it so contested and fraught. But beyond this expectation that it should to teach 'the nation', school History is very much bound by educational processes for which studies of collective memory provide little explanation. While history education is undoubtedly an important arena of debate over the nation's past, the so-called History Wars or critical memory studies cannot account for changing educational approaches to that past. Thus, problematising history education as a site of contested collective memory is the starting point for this thesis. My research remains firmly historical, but draws on shifts in educational approaches to analyse debates over history education. For the school subject of History, so bound in national memory, is also explicitly about teaching and learning.

There have been a number of key debates among historians and educators that point to this convergence of memory politics and pedagogical method, and provide critical material for the thesis. In 1999 the historian Alan Ryan published an article in the Bulletin of the Australian Historical Association titled 'Developing a Strategy to "Save" History', in which he outlined the reasons behind the subject's apparent decline in schools. The piece generated considerable interest, and a number of historians, teachers and educationists responded to Ryan's concerns. While several agreed that History was

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indeed threatened by declining standards and was being squeezed out of an increasingly crowded curriculum, others felt that the discipline had in fact never been stronger.²² Some teachers felt that the problem with History in schools was being compounded by academics ‘presuming to tell teachers how to teach’,³⁹ while others called for increased collaboration between academic and school education systems.⁴⁰ Despite their diversity, responses such as these reveal a professional anxiety over the state of the subject in schools that reaches beyond the public contest over the politics of memory. Teachers and academics consequently play an important and prominent role in the debates I examine.

A number of conservative educationists have maintained that the subject’s apparent decline is rooted in a retreat of academic standards and concerns. According to the Australian historian of education, Alan Barcan, progressive pedagogies have diminished historical knowledge and understanding.⁵⁵ Furthermore, educationists such as Kevin Donnelly and Geoffrey Partington see a growing historical ‘illiteracy’ compounded by the influence of critical history. They maintain that child-centred education and integrated approaches to the discipline combined with ‘Black Armband’ content in history syllabuses account for a drop in standards, educational rigour and national pride.²⁰ Their views echo criticisms from commentators in the United States such as Diane Ravitch and E.D. Hirsh, who considered falling educational standards and national knowledge to be the culmination of a brand of ‘political correctness’ in historical and

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flation of declining standards with critical history and is the growing sense of anxiety over history education, anxiety has become so pronounced.

The assisted the expansion of this research into the Halse's 1997 report into History in New South Wales significant concern by teachers over the subject in that publication of the National Inquiry into School History omplex intersection between historical and educational also provided critical source material for my study. As texts, an account of the nation. I critically evaluate a number of development and reception in order to distil their historical eir capacity to define the nation means they are a powerful eir capacity to define the discipline itself makes them an analyse history method and pedagogical approach.

I have read collections of journals from the History New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, as well as the History Teachers' Association of Australia. Education ed a critical historical and educational framework for this of pedagogical movements and theories, their impact and nd their application from the 1950s to the present. This been critical for developing a more complex analysis of the

This topic of history education came through previous research Australian history, which in turn revealed other arenas of such as the controversial Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian e inquiry into the National Museum of Australia in 2003, were


The State of History in New South Wales (Sydney: History Teachers' h Wales, 1997).

frequently cited in public debate. Anxiety over national anniversaries such as the Bicentenary in 1988 aroused similar levels of discord and debate. 30 ‘Our history’ generates significant collective anxiety; teaching it to ‘our children’ has intensified the wider concern over the past.

Analysing this historical debate in the schools arena in turn opened a whole new set of questions and concerns. In particular, I have struggled to incorporate pedagogical theory into what is essentially a History thesis. The challenges of interdisciplinary scholarship are obvious, but it was imperative to contextualise educational movements and methodology in order to understand history education over the last forty or fifty years. In time, the pedagogical research critically informed my approach to the subject, allowing me to see History as a discipline, as an approach to the past as much as any account of it. As such, my research into what teachers know as history method was combined with more traditional historical scholarship that included textual analysis of syllabuses and curriculum documents, oral histories from teachers, curriculum designers and education advisers, as well as archival research of newspapers, syllabus reviews and History Teachers’ Associations.

While the expansion of this research has pushed the field of history education beyond public debates over the past, it has led to another set of interpretive limitations: much of the education-based scholarship into history pedagogy has been cognitive and psychological in its disciplinary orientation. Such approaches return interpretations of ‘the past’ to the student and to processes of learning, but the dominance of quantitative methodology and a preoccupation with levels of cognition can obscure the public and political contest over national narratives. Sam Wineburg, a Professor of Education and History at Washington University, has commented that most of the research in history education ‘has been conducted, for better or worse (and it often is for worse), by psychologists.’ 31 His comments might be deliberately provocative, but point to the difficulty faced by historians when attempting to understand the methodology of their subject once it is embedded in empirical cognitive studies. Wineburg’s own research.

which is grounded implicitly in both disciplines, highlights the value of including method in any critical analysis of history education. As there has been no such study in Australia, my research draws on his important work, and seeks to complicate the politics of memory with pedagogical questions. It draws also on the work of Peter Seixas and Peter Stearns, who have conducted significant interdisciplinary scholarship with Wineburg. Their research on this topic is diverse, but at its core is an argument for the inseparability of content and pedagogy in debates over history education. There is 'a great deal of content embedded in the form', they contend.32

This thesis investigates a number of 'moments' when the political and pedagogical strands of debate intersect to reveal a growing anxiety about history education in Australia and abroad. I have a lot of these 'moments', for want of a better word. They include a dispute in Queensland in the late 1970s over the adoption of *Man: A Course of Study*, or MACOS, a Social Studies programme developed by the American psychologist and educational theorist Jerome Bruner. MACOS came under attack from religious fundamentalists in the United States and Australia for comparing human and animal behaviour and was eventually banned from Queensland schools by Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson's Cabinet during a Parliamentary recess.33 The moments also include the Japanese dispute, over how Japan's imperial history and role in World War II should be represented in textbooks. And they conclude with a History syllabus review conducted in Victoria in 2003.

Although I trace changing syllabuses from the 1950s, through the 'New History' movements in the 1960s and 1970s up to the present, the thesis concentrates on debates over the last ten or fifteen years. In particular, it examines disputes over history teaching during the Australian Bicentennial celebrations in 1988, as well as the growing contest during the 1990s over the inclusion of the word 'invasion' to describe European colonisation in Australian History syllabuses and in teaching resources. The thesis concentrates on the three Eastern states of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, but also includes syllabuses and discussions from the other States and Territories in

Australia, as well as comparisons with countries such as Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Japan.

This story is at once historical, political and pedagogical. Broadly, it traces the ideological and political shifts from the new history and pedagogy in the 1960s and 1970s and the backlash they generated. The emergence of more inclusive national narratives and child-centred learning practices have been under attack since the late 1970s by a ‘Back to Basics’ movement that dismissed progressive ideals as politically biased and educationally unsound. The politics that made up this challenge still dominate conservative and neo-conservative discourse on history education, but the progressive movements they rejected left an impressive legacy. Educational aims such as ‘learning how to learn’, the ‘development of critical thinking’ and encouragement of skills such as ‘empathy’ remain prominent in History syllabuses and teaching documents around Australia. The persistence of these child-centred pedagogies, moreover, tends to subvert the simple narrative of progressive idealism followed by conservative reaction implied by this conventional periodisation.

So the structure is both thematic and chronological, encompassing changing ideas about history and about history teaching, as well as tracking these moments that can be specifically tied to a time and place. My research was not envisaged as ‘a history of history teaching’: it set out to explore one arena of collective memory, the representation of a nation’s past in its History syllabuses. In so doing it had to incorporate discussions of history method and education beyond the established political and public debates over the past, and it had to acknowledge a series of fundamental paradoxes that have both obstructed and shaped my thinking on this topic. They too are integral to the structure of the thesis, shedding some light on the debate over history education as well as some of its inconsistencies. I have wondered why Australian History is consistently slighted as repetitive and uninteresting as a school subject, for instance, and yet anxiety about the state of the discipline arouses unprecedented levels of public discussion. A contrast between the divisiveness of the ‘History Wars’ discourse and the dominance of collective imagery in debates over school history also frames this discussion. It is further notable that this contest over the past has been realised through a symbol of the future, ‘the child’—a paradox the thesis grapples with throughout.

34 For example, History Study Design (Carlton, Vic.: Board of Studies, 1999), 9.
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34 For example, History Study Design (Carlton, Vic.: Board of Studies, 1999), 9.
Ultimately, I have kept returning to the question of 'what we teach our children', attempting to tease out the politics and symbolism of such explicitly collective imagery. The question also points to an acute anxiety about national histories and how they ought to be represented and passed on. In this sense, concerns over historical content begin to merge with methodological debates; the politics of memory become infused with educational discussions. Together, they shape the persistent and problematic urge to 'teach the nation'. Through an examination of historiography, pedagogy and an anxious public debate, my thesis explores that urge.

**The nation's story**

In 1998 Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen published the *Presence of the Past*, a book about the results of a survey they conducted across the United States. Some eight hundred people were interviewed to produce a revealing account of how Americans understood history, including their school memories. The results registered the variety of experiences that people remembered about their history education, but on a scale of interest from 1 to 10, interest in studying History at school rated a mere 5.7, a lower score than gathering with family (7.9), visiting a historic site or museum (7.3), celebrating a holiday (7.0), reading a history book (6.5), or watching a movie or television programme about history (6.0). While a number of people mentioned wonderful teachers they had had, 'boring' was the single most common word that respondents associated with History in school.

These findings were mirrored in a recent survey conducted by the Centre for Public History at the University of Technology, Sydney, which was based on the American study. The *Australians and the Past* project researched public ideas about history from interviews with hundreds of people from all over Australia. Respondents gave only moderate status to History teachers, for instance, in terms of their 'trustworthiness' and as 'people who feature in historical narratives and sensibilities', and they felt least

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9 Roy Rosenzweig, 'How Americans Use and Think about the Past', in *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History*, 273.
10 Paul Ashton & Paula Hamilton, 'At Home with the Past: Background and Initial Findings from the National Survey', *Australian Cultural History*, no. 22 (2003): 17–21.
connected with the past when studying History at school.\textsuperscript{8} These results echo the popular opinion that learning History in schools, and Australian History in particular, is repetitive and uninteresting.

Anecdotes stretching over thirty years repeat this perception. In 1975 a student commented in a Victorian survey that ‘We wasted too much time learning Australian history, about which there is very little of interest to learn. It is time we faced this fact instead of trying to pretend that Australia has had a very interesting history.’\textsuperscript{9} Twenty years later, responses to Christine Halse’s research into the state of History in New South Wales secondary schools seemed to match this sentiment. One student lamented that ‘we have done Australian history every year since Year 4. It gets pretty boring after a while.’ ‘We did Australian history in Years 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9’, responded another. ‘It was boring. I would rather watch paint dry.’ Others complained of being ‘continually forced to be interested in studying Australian history over and over and over again’.\textsuperscript{10} The National Inquiry into School History conducted by Tony Taylor in 1999 supported some of these more despondent student feelings: ‘Australian history in schools is characterised by lack of continuity, topic repetition and lack of coherence’, he concluded. ‘It seems generally unpopular with students.’\textsuperscript{11}

For a subject that seems so tedious, however, teaching Australian History arouses considerable public attention and unease. In an article for the Australian newspaper headed ‘Big Brother writes syllabus’, the journalist Paddy McGuinness reproduced a list of ‘politically correct buzzwords’ he found in the 1991 New South Wales History syllabus such as ‘invasion’ and ‘genocide’. The vocabulary, he concluded, was ‘not about understanding the past in order not to repeat it, but about controlling the future through indoctrinating our children’.\textsuperscript{12} This concern is not restricted to polemicists. In 2000 Robin Saville, a History teacher in Goulburn, complained to the Sydney Daily Telegraph that Premier Carr’s mandatory Australian History syllabus was politically biased and educationally unsound.


\textsuperscript{10} Halse et al., The State of History in New South Wales, 91.

\textsuperscript{11} Taylor, Future of the Past—, chapter 8.

I have taught the history syllabus for Year 10 students this year. It is a politically correct shambles as we have had to deal with content such as feminism, Aboriginal land rights and the stolen generation (yes, that is what the textbooks call it).

... Students are not interested in the politically correct agenda of the course designers.

I became a history teacher because of a love of the subject.

I could not get enthusiastic about this course and nor could my students.\(^{43}\)

In 2002, Tim Highland, wrote to the Melbourne Herald Sun that

Vocal minorities have hijacked the young and impressionable, using the Australian history curriculum being taught in our schools as a vehicle to spread their socialist propaganda.

By imposing today’s values on the events and personalities of the past, they are effectively rewriting history.

Teaching that Anglo-Saxon settlement was at best an invasion, that explorers raped and pillaged their way across the country and that there was a conspiracy to cull the indigenous population is not an accurate depiction of events of the past.\(^{44}\)

Such concern reveals how contest over national histories has become increasingly widespread. School History is a critical ground for this debate and points to a compelling contest over the past that spans national education systems. In 1995 the American historian James Loewen published *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, a critical exposé of twelve common US History schoolbooks. Loewen railed against the ‘story of America’ outlined in the texts, especially their depictions of Native Americans. The textbooks routinely presented stories as facts and were overwhelmingly Eurocentric and inaccurate. The term ‘frontier’ was used unproblematically, and while many Native American societies practised agriculture, Loewen continued, stereotypes of them as nomadic dominated the works, thereby helping to legitimise a narrative of dispossession. He suggested that the textbooks

\(^{43}\) Robin Saville, ‘Letter: Draining life out of history’, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 2002. The term ‘stolen generations’ has been used to describe the thousands of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families by governments and agencies until the second half of the twentieth century.

presented 'distorted and indefensibly incomplete accounts of our past' that ignored the violence of European colonisation: 'Our history is full of wars with Native American nations. But not our history textbooks.'

Similar critiques emerged in Australia. The publication in 1998 of the historian Henry Reynolds' autobiography, *Why Weren't We Told?*, demanded answers to an historical legacy of silence and misinformation. Reynolds recalled how in his study of Australian history there was a virtual absence of Aboriginal history, and he asked, 'Why didn't we know? Why were we never told? How did Australia itself forget the truth about pioneering around the vast frontiers?' Such questions about the nation's past unsettled, for some, the possibility of a fixed national narrative that might be taught in History classes. They represented a culmination of changing historical approaches since the 1960s and 1970s that challenged the traditional hero of Australia as enshrined in the Australian Legend: the Digger and the Anzac, once the everyman, became more questionable; his masculinity was deconstructed, the White Australia Policy that he flagged was demolished and his once-lauded pioneering heritage was reappraised as a destructive 'invasion'.

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47 Social histories of feminist, migrant and Aboriginal perspectives made up this challenge to the exclusiveness of traditional historical approaches. New methodologies such as oral history were used to present the 'histories from below'. Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1970) noted a pervasive racism and individualism within the Australian ethos. Books such as Anne Summers' *Damned Whores and Gods Police* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1975) and Miriam Dixson's *The Real Matilda* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1976) questioned and exposed the dominant myths about masculine, white Australian heroes.

Yet this growing critical re-evaluation of Australian history and Australian history writing eventually aroused considerable criticism of its own. A number of historians and commentators dismissed these new readings of the past for being too ‘negative’ and for representing the nation’s story unfairly. An historiographical paradigm of ‘black’ and ‘white’ emerged and persists to this day. The historian John Hirst reacted against assertions in the 1970s and 1980s of a pervasive racism in Australia’s history, and he described such approaches as the ‘black school’ of Australian history writing. They ignored aspects of Australia’s heritage that Australians should be proud of.\(^8\) The mining executive Hugh Morgan described critical histories being written on the eve of Australia’s Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 as a ‘Guilt Industry’, a ‘campaign which has been designed above all to delegitimise the settlement of this country’.\(^9\)

It was the historian Geoffrey Blainey who coined a phrase in 1993 to illustrate the apparent emotional darkness of such histories. Using a vivid mark of bereavement, Blainey labelled this history ‘Black Armband’: it reacted against the Australian Achievement with a dark mourning of the nation.\(^8\) With this image, Blainey gave the historiographical discussion a persuasive metaphor and new impetus. Since his original 1993 usage, the Black Armband debate has ranged widely, and it has been played out in various sites of Australian history: in the courts over Native Title and forced child removal, in the media, in politics and in the education system. While emphasising that the main culprits of the ‘Black Armband’ view were the historians themselves, and that some recent books by historians were propounding a bleak interpretation of history, Blainey added that ‘even schoolchildren are often the target for these views’.\(^9\)

A number of educationists have adopted Blainey’s imagery, and criticised teachers for emphasising the darkness of Australian history. Kevin Donnelly was the prominent director of the consulting group, Education Strategies, which had strong links with Jeff Kennett’s conservative Coalition Government in Victoria. In 1997 Donnelly’s speech to a Melbourne University seminar on Black Armband history was published in

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\(^9\) Blainey, ‘Drawing Up a Balance Sheet’.

Agora, the journal of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria. Repudiating current historical trends in Australia, Donnelly argued that the ‘national curriculum document describes early European settlement as “invasion” and belittles Australia’s Anglo/Celtic history and traditions’. He went on: ‘it is wrong to simplify the situation by making today’s students feel guilty about something over which they had no control’. The historian Patrick O’Farrell also strongly criticised what he called the guilt school of Australian history teaching. History education, he felt, had ‘fallen on evil times, both in schools and universities’. Such remarks indicated a pervasive fear that Australian history was being savaged or destroyed by overcritical readings.

In this way, concern over school History has become an arena of the Black Armband debate or History Wars, with similarly stark choices about approaches to the nation’s past. Nowhere is this more evident than in the continuing public discussion over the use of the word ‘invasion’ in History syllabuses. The debate has garnered significant media attention and first became prominent in Queensland in 1995 when a teacher sourcebook suggested words such as ‘settlement’, ‘explorer’, and ‘discover’ were value-laden terms because most parts of Australia had been ‘discovered’ and ‘explored’ long before Europeans arrived. While the Queensland sourcebook was published to replace discriminatory readings of Aboriginal people in an older text, and insisted that ‘invasion’ might be used alongside ‘settlement’ (rather than replacing it), the media campaign initiated by the Courier Mail (and taken up by other Queensland and national papers) gave the impression that terms such as ‘invasion’ were now being imposed as part of a rewriting of Queensland history education. Headlines run by a number of newspapers reinforced the perception that teaching Australian history demanded a choice between mutually exclusive versions of the past. ‘Explorers axed in “correct” syllabus’, read the Courier Mail. The Cairns Post ran with ‘Minister denies nation’s history being rewritten’. Other papers continued the theme: ‘Lies, lies and damned politically correct

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text-books' (*North West Star*); 'Invasion a distortion of history' (*Daily Telegraph-Mirror*); 'Conquered or settled?' (*Age*).\(^{16}\)

The multiple historical viewpoints advocated in the replacement sourcebook were simplified in the press as a contest between 'invasion' and 'settlement'. Media analysts such as Jennifer Craik describe this simplification as a form of 'headlinese', where complex ideas are reduced to basic terms of division. There is a distinct tendency for the media to divide its 'space' into 'opposing camps' in order to 'set the agenda of public debate', and to 'reproduce the sensation, conflict-driven framework of newsworthiness; construct moral panics; and reiterate common stereotypes'.\(^{17}\) The media has become a critical channel for the History Wars, reinforcing and exacerbating its polarised frame.

School History has become another site of contested collective memory alongside national commemorations or national institutions. We have seen debates over anniversaries such as the Bicentenary, over public institutions such as the National Museum, and in other public arenas. History education is similarly disputed in the press, in parliament, on talkback radio, as well as in syllabus development committees and Education Departments. Embedded within contrasting approaches to teaching 'our history', then, are the national-political emblems and ideologies of a much wider debate. While many students associate school History as the dullest period in the history of their lives, the subject seems more public and contested than ever.

**The future of the past**

Explanations of contested collective memory usefully posit history education in a wider political context, but are perhaps more limited within an educational one. School History is not simply one arena of the contest over 'our history', but also raises several questions of changing educational approaches to the past. The pedagogical element of these debates is critical to research into history teaching, but is frequently overlooked in more

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\(^{16}\) Cited in Craik, 'Was this an Invasion?'; Editorial, "'Invasion' a distortion of history", *Daily Telegraph Mirror*, 10 February 1994; Adrian Rollins, 'Conquered or settled?' *Sunday Age*, 13 February 1994.

\(^{17}\) Craik, 'Was this an Invasion?', 43-4. For an Australian history of journalism, see Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz, eds, *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture* (St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1999).
public discussions about what history, or whose history to teach. As Wineburg reminds us, contest ‘over which history to teach [has] so dominated the debate (falling out along predictable political lines) that the more important question of why teach history in the first place was lost’.

By problematising history education as a site of collective memory, I offer a more complex analysis of mounting public anxiety over the past and how to teach it. By problematising it with a pedagogical dimension, furthermore, the study moves beyond an analysis of contested national narratives to include intergenerational questions about ‘teaching’ the nation. For it is apparent that this contest over the past is being fought over a representation of the future, contained within the image of ‘the child’. Its political symbolism is obvious—the child-citizen is at once the nation and its future. Overwhelmingly, the child forms part of an anonymous, vulnerable collective that comes in all forms: youth, young people, Australia’s citizens of tomorrow—they are all ‘our children’. In the context of such divisive imagery associated with the ‘Black Armband’ debate or ‘History Wars’, this united future is indeed compelling. ‘It’s always amazed me how much educated Australians want to believe their country was and is evil’, the Melbourne journalist Andrew Bolt wrote in his *Herald Sun* column in June 2003:

> And we hear too how ‘generations’ of Aboriginal children were ‘stolen’.
> But if anything has been stolen, it’s our children’s pride in their country.
> ... So let me say it here. The ‘stolen generations’ is a myth. And it’s an evil one, which not only libels our past, but betrays our future.’

Lamenting the history being taught to his granddaughter after a visit to James Cook’s cottage in Fitzroy Gardens in 2001, Howard Hutchins wrote in to the *Age*: ‘Surely Australian heritage-destroying political correctness has gone too far? Our children—thus all our futures—are suffering from the non-teaching of our very recent history, and distortion of our early history.’ It is an image oft repeated in public discussion, and must be located as part of a wider conservative polemic. The campaign to teach a more positive ‘Australian story’ sits firmly alongside a similar political campaign against

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58 Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, xii.
60 Howard Hutchins, ‘Letter: Yes, we can thank God for Captain Cook’, *Age*, 31 December 2001.
Aboriginal land rights and native title, against the Stolen Generations, refugees and so forth.

It should also be noted that while a politically conservative argument against ‘political correctness’ has animated much of the debate over school History in recent years, anxiety over the past straddles the political spectrum. As James Loewen and Henry Reynolds clearly set out, ‘our history’ has been misrepresented, ‘our children’ need to know the truth.61 Eve Fesl, an Associate Professor of Education at Griffith University in Queensland, also used this collective invocation to describe the impact of the ‘invasion’ debate on Indigenous students: ‘Our (Koori) children do not like school because they know what happened, and what they are taught doesn’t match what they know’.62 The radical American educationists Michael Apple and Lind Christian-Smith likewise oriented contrasting approaches to history teaching towards the future: ‘The issues involve profoundly different definitions of the common good,’ he wrote. They involve ‘different views about society and where it should be heading, about cultural visions, and about our children’s future’.63 The pronouns here are critical. As education historians such as Linda Levstik and Peter Seixas have asked, ‘Who are “we”, and what is “ours”?64

‘The child’ also invited further consideration. Education, by its very nature, is focused on this discourse of the child—and the ‘future of the past’ is the outstanding paradox of history pedagogy. Meanwhile, theoretical interpretations of the imaginary child also importantly deconstruct its powerful association with the nation.65 Histories of childhood, such as Philippe Ariès’ famous study, have explored the emerging conception of the family, and the child in particular.66 Jan Kociumbas has provided a comprehensive political and social history of childhood in Australia.67 More symbolic, perhaps, is Peter

61 Loewen, _Lie My Teacher Told Me_; Reynolds, _Why Weren’t We Told?_
62 Cited in Rollins, ‘Conquered or settled?’
Pierce's research into the image of the lost child in Australian folklore and cultural history. 'Australia is the place where the innocent young are most especially in jeopardy', he writes, where 'Symbolically, the lost child represents the anxieties of European settlers'.

Unlike Pierce's children, the children in my study are not lost—in fact they are very present—but they are in danger, and the vulnerability that he notes is a useful comparison. Alongside a tangible pedagogical context, therefore, the overt symbolism of teaching 'our children' suggests that the national demands on education have become increasingly significant. This thesis analyses how the pedagogical and symbolic dimensions of 'the child' have come together in recent years in order to explain the educational and national imperatives to teach Australia's past.

It is an irresistible urge. In 1984, Prime Minister Hawke maintained that 'it is on the quality and reach of our education system that our future rests'. The prominent education theorist Alan Rowe explained that the goal of outcomes-based education is to 'Equip and empower students with the skills and understandings they will need for tomorrow and the rest of the world'. The collective image of the future is a powerful one that incorporates questions of pedagogy, implicitly asking how History should be taught. How can we learn 'the great lessons of the past, and pass our knowledge on to the next generation,' asked Andrew Roberts in the English Daily Mail in 1995, 'if modern educationists misinterpret history to our children?' In an editorial for Agora, John Cantwell argued for a stronger History presence in the school curriculum: 'After all, without history we are cheating our children of their heritage'.

So a professional anxiety over the state of the subject in schools has intensified and augmented this wider, public concern over the past. The discourse of history education reveals a convergence between the politics of collective memory and questions of method and approach. More than simply a contested site of national memory, debate over history teaching is paradoxically just as much about next generations as it is about

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90 Alan Rowe, 'Quality and Outcome-Based Education', Australian Curriculum Studies Association Workshop Report, no. 9 (1994): 1-35.
the representation of previous ones. Here, the discussion moves beyond a debate over the past to an educational context, which is no less political, but encompasses wider issues of pedagogy. This claim for the future does not simply reflect the parallel debates of politics and pedagogy, but their intersection. The 'moments' of controversy that I explore in the thesis support this idea of a convergence between anxiety over what history to teach and how to teach it.

**Teaching the Nation**

With this expansion of research and analytical focus beyond contested collective memory to include issues of teaching and learning, the thesis returns to its initial question: what are the political and pedagogical dimensions of 'teaching the nation'? Tracing the intersection of these two discussions is my objective here: the thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach to tease out the complex and pervasive anxiety over teaching national history in schools.

It does so in three sections. The first, comprising Chapters One and Two, examines the growing debate over history education in Australia and abroad. It introduces history education as a site of collective memory and suggests that concern over teaching the subject has manifested alongside a growing public anxiety and debate about national histories more broadly. Chapter One explores debates over history education in Australia and examines how they have come to be understood within wider contests over the nation's past. It points also to an educational context, signposting discussions and debates that are considered later in the thesis. Yet the chapter remains primarily historiographical—it applies the politics of collective memory to suggest that debates over syllabus content reflect a wider struggle over Australian history. It notes how changing approaches to Australian history have been played out in schools, and how this educational context has in turn intensified the collective anxiety over the past.

Chapter Two introduces an international dimension. It situates the schools arena of the so-called 'Black Armband' debate within a much wider context, exploring the recurrence of this anxiety over history education and national narratives around the world. Mirroring the contest over 'invasion' in Australian syllabuses, for instance, New Zealand debates over the language of colonisation have caused considerable disquiet and
alarm. There, the adoption of the word 'Holocaust' to describe Maori experience since European contact challenged how Indigenous experience was registered in national histories. The schools context also warrants comparison. Political interventions in History syllabuses and textbooks have been both public and widespread. In England, the establishment of a national curriculum in the early 1990s was initiated in response to government concern that teachers had too much curriculum control, and that students were not given sufficiently positive images about their nation's history. This international appraisal also includes discussions in Japan, the United States and Canada to place Australian debates within a comparative framework. It does so to suggest that the Australian experience is not isolated. While the thesis returns to concentrate on Australia, this international context acts as a reminder to the breadth and force of these debates.

Section II shifts the thesis to questions of pedagogy, and begins to analyse practices of teaching and learning History. While the first section of the thesis analysed history education as a site of contested collective memory, especially the public and political discourse it generates, its pedagogical dimension has an equally critical influence on the subject. Chapter Three examines how syllabuses are continuously re-evaluated and considers how syllabus documents come to define the nation and how it should be taught. It uses the 2003 Victorian History Syllabus Review as a case study to explore the process of syllabus development. The chapter notes how the nation's story is powerfully conceived in the syllabus, and seeks also to explore the methodologies behind this national conception. It thus opens up discussions of 'the nation' to related questions about how to teach it.

Chapter Four continues the consideration of pedagogy to explore two leading approaches to history teaching in Australia over the last forty years. Since the 1960s History has been taught either as a discipline in its own right or as part of an integrated subject such as Social Studies. The chapter provides an historical and thematic discussion of these contrasting methods. It examines the New History and Social Studies that were introduced from the 1960s and 1970s and demonstrates how such approaches influenced changing models of history teaching in Australia. In particular, it tracks the increasing rationalisation of history education in terms of its 'relevance', and suggests that this preoccupation shifted education values towards more tangible aims. It further analyses
the legacy of these progressive educational movements and considers the development and reception of changing approaches to history education. Whether to teach History within a discrete or integrated model still generates significant discussion in Australia. Many still consider that child-centred education and an integrated approach to the subject provide a more relevant and accessible study. It is also clear that ideological motivations behind the ‘new pedagogy’ generated a significant response from those who felt its progressive approach served a radical political agenda that surrendered educational standards and abandoned historical knowledge.

Section III explores some of these longstanding debates over History’s place in a contemporary context. It synthesises the material from the first two sections to integrate the themes of politics and pedagogy using a number of recent case studies. It demonstrates how pedagogical movements have increasingly influenced debate over history education, and how that influence has both intensified and augmented discussion of Australia’s past. Chapter Five examines the current status of History in the context of changing educational policies and methods. In particular, it analyses the increasing inclusion of Studies of Society and Environment in state and national curriculum documents, and the various responses this has generated. It follows growing calls for a national curriculum, and notes how they once more appeal to educational ‘relevance’ and student-centred learning.

In turn, Chapter Six analyses the shifting place of History within the curriculum and the contemporary debates about the state of the discipline, especially concern over ‘falling standards’ and a national illiteracy. The chapter examines a number of surveys into the historical and political knowledge of Australian school students and notes again a pervasive anxiety about core national knowledge. It further examines the National Inquiry into the state of the subject, and a growing civic concern that Australian schoolchildren are ignorant of the very history and institutions that provide them with citizenship and nationality. Thus, ‘the child’ emerges as tomorrow’s citizen; the future of the nation rests on a knowledge of its past; and a ‘relevant’ education demands accountability not only to the education system, but the nation itself.

So the thesis comes full circle and returns to the initial question of what history and how to teach it? History has become the future, the child a conduit for the nation. But this discourse requires explication and analysis. The conflict over Australia’s past has
been intensified by pedagogical imperatives, ideology and rhetoric. Likewise, educational trends, theories and approaches have become inseparable from the public and political debate over historical knowledge and standards. I trace the convergence of these discussions to explain how history education has become such a powerful and complex site of public anxiety.
Chapter One

The politics of history education
Introduction

On the Sunday programme on Channel Nine in 2003, Helen Dally produced a story on the debate over Keith Windschuttle's allegations of an orchestrated campaign by Australian historians of colonial violence that amounted to a 'fabrication' of history. Windschuttle reiterated his criticisms on the programme and contended that historians had deliberately misled the Australian public by overemphasising and manufacturing accounts of Aboriginal deaths on the frontier. In response, Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan angrily rejected Windschuttle's claims of historical objectivity and neutrality. While Dally's report outlined the escalating conflict on a historiographical frontier, the debate had resonance beyond the academy, she insisted, for it 'goes to the heart of what our children are learning in schools'.

The contest over Australian history is made up of contradictory readings of the past: conflicting views of what happened have been further complicated by contrasting beliefs in the purpose of national histories and the obligations of the historian. While some historians and commentators suggest that Australian history needs to ask critical questions to engage interest, others insist that the national story should be encompassing and affirming. At the heart of such discussion is an explicit merging of the nation with its history, where the national narrative becomes central to national identity itself. Such a capacity for history to define the nation is powerfully reinforced in the realm of history education, as the Sunday programme revealed, which shapes not only the nation but ‘our children’—the nation's future.

This chapter explores the politicised contests over teaching Australian history in schools. It begins the first part of my exploration into the political and pedagogical origins of a growing concern over history education, and offers a critical analysis of the debate over Australian History syllabuses. My initial concern is how school History is inextricably tied to debate over national narrative, and has consequently become such a contested site of collective memory. The chapter begins with an investigation of the Bicentenary in 1988, a national catalyst for historical discussion and disagreement. The

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1 Helen Dally, Sunday (Channel 9, 25 May 2003).
anniversary itself, on 26 January, presented absolute counterpoints of historical commemoration: Aboriginal 'Survival Day' protests starkly contrasted the triumphal re-enactments of European settlement. In the midst of the celebrations, even the Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke declared that 'All of us have a guilt and a responsibility for many of the injustices that occurred in those 200 years'. Such views were roundly criticised by those who felt that Australian history should be a source of pride, not shame.

The Bicentennial paradigm of Australian history understood in such polarised terms has continued to shape historical debate. Imagery in 1988 of celebration and survival would become a critical symbol of what we now term the 'History Wars' or 'Black Armband' debate. Such division was also visible in History curricula, where questions over what history to teach were immediately situated within historical debates surrounding the Bicentenary more broadly. Its dichotomy was further strengthened after the release of a Queensland Social Studies sourcebook for primary school teachers in 1994 that suggested teachers use words such as 'invasion' alongside 'settlement' or 'arrival' to describe European colonisation. Reaction was fierce. Only six years after the Bicentennial disputes over history syllabuses, controversy over the use of 'invasion' in syllabuses and texts once again triggered heated argument around Australia. I analyse the syllabus documents themselves and subsequent public debate, and trace this contest over 'invasion' as an educational case study of a wider dispute over the nation's past.

'The Bicentenary: Celebration or Apology'  

In 1988 Australia officially celebrated 200 years of white settlement. Many unofficially commemorated 200 years of Aboriginal survival since white invasion. Contrasting readings of Australian history dominated the Bicentenary. Some were dismissed as apologies for a past that needed no apology. Others were criticised for ignoring the

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4 Morgan, 'The Guilt Industry'.
violence of colonisation and for failing to acknowledge its legacy.\(^7\) Reconstructions of the First Fleet and Australia's pioneering heritage contrasted public calls for a Treaty with Aboriginal people and acknowledgement of Indigenous dispossession. While some official histories were launched with significant fanfare, John Moloney's *Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia* was famously launched into Sydney Harbour by an Aboriginal protestor. The Bicentenary was a catalyst for historical engagement. It stimulated discussion and interest in the past and provided a public forum for debate. How to present this history in schools also became a central issue of contention. When a commemorative medallion of the first Governor, Arthur Phillip, was handed out to all school children in Australia, for instance, a number of Indigenous students controversially returned them to the New South Wales Department of Education. Concern over history teaching during the Bicentenary was part of the vexatious issue of whether Australian history should be celebrated at all.\(^8\)

A year out from the Bicentenary and with a State election pending, the New South Wales Opposition Leader, Nick Greiner, spoke out against a new History syllabus and argued that its thematic structure meant high school students could avoid studying Australian history altogether. 'It is entirely possible for students to complete six years of secondary school without doing any Australian history', Greiner alleged. 'Teachers may draw an Australian perspective for the HSC [Higher School Certificate] course but there is now no separate Australian option.' The acting Education Minister, Bob Debus, said the Opposition Leader was promulgating misinformation: 'Mr Greiner is indulging in the most superficial attempt to try to damage the credibility of a syllabus which in fact increases the amount of Australian history being taught'.\(^9\)

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In January 1988, amid growing public concern over possible Indigenous protest during the 'Celebration of a Nation', the Federal Labor government called a meeting of State and Federal education ministers to revise school curricula to encompass Aboriginal perspectives. The acting Federal Minister for Education, Clyde Holding, said contemporary racial tension was rooted in a lack of knowledge of the treatment of Aboriginal people and that overcoming such ignorance must begin in schools.\textsuperscript{10} Gerry Hand, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, acknowledged that 'the Aboriginal people have little or nothing to celebrate during the course of 1988'.\textsuperscript{11}

Teacher unions also threatened to ban school Bicentennial programmes that did not incorporate Indigenous histories. Defending the stance taken by the New South Wales Teachers Federation, its multi-cultural coordinator, Barbara Fitzgerald, stated that this was not just an issue about Aboriginal inclusion, but about history itself: 'One can go through school and university now and come across virtually nothing to do with Australia before 1788. Apart from being offensive it's non-historical.'\textsuperscript{12} The State Education Department responded by permitting Aboriginal teachers and students to boycott some Bicentennial activities.\textsuperscript{13} By contrast, the Federal Opposition Leader, John Howard, said Aborigines had a right to lawful and peaceful dissent, but hoped they would exercise that right prudently. White Australians were not responsible for events in the past, he added, warning that Aboriginal protest could set their cause back by decades.\textsuperscript{14}

A number of conservative commentators insisted that, above all, the Bicentenary should be an historical celebration. Concerned over what they felt would become a public vilification of Australia's past, some journals campaigned against the support and publication of critical histories. The editor of the IPA Review, Ken Baker, insisted that the 'function' of the Bicentenary 'should be to remind us of the achievements of the past 200 years, of our debt to our forebears, and our obligations to future generations'.\textsuperscript{15} Writing in Quadrant, John Carroll alluded to a 'Bicentennial din of whingeing

\textsuperscript{10} Cited in Kennedy, '1988 ban a matter of history, say teachers'.
\textsuperscript{11} Cited in Glen Milne and Tracey Aubin, 'Minister backs black protests', Sydney Morning Herald, 4 January 1988.
\textsuperscript{12} Cited in Kennedy, '1988 ban a matter of history, say teachers'.
\textsuperscript{13} Steve Burrell et al, 'Govt bid to head off black protests', Sydney Morning Herald, 8 January 1988; Kennedy, '1988 ban a matter of history, say teachers'.
\textsuperscript{14} Burrell, 'Govt bid to head off black protests'.
\textsuperscript{15} Baker, 'The Bicentenary: Celebration or Apology?': 175-77.
intellectuals, busily manufacturing episodes in the nation’s past to complain about’. Geoffrey Blainey reminded his readers in the *IPA Review* that ‘a sense of sympathy towards Aborigines should not prevent a celebration of all the gains that have come since 1788’. There was a danger, he added, that minority opinion was coming to dominate ‘how we should see our past and our future’.

There were similar warnings that critical Australian history teaching was going unchecked in schools. The educationist Geoffrey Partington contended that the crude politicization of Australian education, unscholarly dismissals of the mainline experience of the Australian people during the last two centuries, and the ruthless indoctrination of Australia’s children in the name of neo-Marxist versions of social justice, dominate discussion about history teaching as Australia approaches its bicentenary.

Excessively negative readings of the past were denigrating Australian history to its most vulnerable citizens: ‘our children’. Leonie Kramer, the Professor of English at Sydney University, worried that a new history text for schools promulgated an overly negative assessment of Australia’s past. It was a question of national cohesion, Partington later added, for ‘our schools must ensure that our children understand the common values’ of Australia’s nationhood. The teaching of such values was under threat from a ‘Far Left hegemony [that] is exercised over Australian education and cultural life’.

Teachers were also unsure about the historical approach they should be taking. Writing for *Agora*, Bob Lewis argued for a more sympathetic reading of Bicentennial rhetoric. ‘Celebrate’ meant historical acknowledgement, not simply glib praise, he contended. Both good and bad had happened in Australia’s past, but there was a need to recognise the Bicentenary because it was ‘our history’. In 1988 the Curriculum Development Centre in Canberra released an Australian Studies document developed for primary schools by the Bicentennial Australian Studies School Project. The project began

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with the question ‘what should we be teaching our students about Australia?’ Its
certainty revealed a struggle to define Australian history and the national memory that
stretched far beyond the scope of the education brief itself. Such problems of national
definition reflected the fluidity and tenuous nature of the ‘national story’, a constructed
collective memory fraught with anxiety and unease.

Some teachers rationalised the increasing controversy over history teaching in
the lead up to the Bicentenary as indicative of the shift from traditional teaching
approaches. ‘There was a time’, wrote John Slater, ‘when history was not controversial.
Then the content of most school history syllabuses was dominated by chronological
surveys of British history, based on shared assumptions which were rarely questioned,
much less publicly debated. New pedagogical approaches coincided with new
approaches to the past and contributed to the creation of more radical History
syllabuses. An increased emphasis on multiculturalism and ethnicity was certainly
noticeable in both syllabuses and teaching literature from the late 1970s.

There was also an increasingly progressive awareness and critique of Australia’s
past. Educators expressed unease about the inadequacy of much syllabus content and
available teaching methodologies. Their concerns reflected changing ideas about
Australian history, and their gradual inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in syllabuses
and school texts challenged the traditional national narrative and its transmission in
schools. Analyses of school texts and syllabuses similarly exposed the omission from
national narratives by Education Departments around Australia of Indigenous
experience. Such investigations revealed overwhelming silences about Aboriginal
people; they confirmed that national stories were intrinsic to History teaching, but

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22 Developing and Australian Curriculum (Woden, ACT: Curriculum Development Centre, 1988), 1.
24 For example, see Agora in the early 1980s. Teacher journals and Australia increasingly
published articles, teacher resources and even lesson plans about how to incorporate different
perspectives and approaches into their Australian History classes.
25 Graeme Davison, ‘Learning History: Reflections on Some Australian School Textbooks’, Agora,
Primary Schools (1940-1965)’, in Jan Kochiambas, ed., Maps, Dreams, History (Sydney: Department
of History, University of Sydney, 1998): 237-312. Moreover, the ability to deny Koori children
access to New South Wales state schools because of their Aboriginality persisted in teacher
handbooks until 1972: Davina Woods, ‘Racism, Reconciliation, Rights—The 3 Rs of Indigenous
questioned whose stories were actually being told. A teaching exercise in *Agora* from 1969 suggested students imagine themselves as a squatter in the 1840s. ‘By the 1840s squatters had taken up the greater part of the best grazing land in Eastern Australia’, it noted. ‘Because these men laid the foundations on which rests our staple industry, you are going to examine some aspects of the lives of these important pioneers.’

The dispossession and dispersal ‘these pioneers’ inflicted upon the Indigenous population was not mentioned. The Institute for Aboriginal Studies in Canberra noted in 1977 that units of Aboriginal history were still undertaken in isolation over one semester.

Despite an increasing historical critique, some representations of Aboriginal people remained deficient. A 1982 Victorian history text, *Discovering the Past*, included a section on Aboriginal culture as prehistory. After colonisation, their presence in Australian society was limited to an occasional skirmish or hostile encounter. Units of study including ‘The land is settled’ and ‘Exploration’ were (and remain) common topics of Australian history, but failed implicitly to specifically acknowledge Aboriginal prior occupancy and ownership. In 2000 Kathy Butler described the continuing dearth of Aboriginal perspectives as a ‘terra nullius mindset’, where ‘the spectre of terra nullius’ had been imbued in the entire education system.

Concerted efforts were made to overcome this lack of acknowledgement and incorporation of Indigenous history, and the growing critique of History textbooks and syllabuses reflected a growing critical interest in the stories that were being taught in schools. In addition to demands for greater historical inclusiveness in syllabuses, the enactment of Aboriginal perspectives into education policy was also significant. A rationale for Social Education from 1985, presented by the Victorian Education Department in *Agora*, included in its assessment criteria ‘the understanding of the history of Australia and appreciating the place of Aboriginal culture in that history’. According to the Department, Social Education also sought to communicate the

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28 Joe Eshuys et al., *Discovering the Past* (Elwood, Vic.: Jacaranda Press, 1982).

29 Kathy Butler, ‘Overcoming Terra Nullius: Aboriginal Perspectives in Schools as a Site of Philosophical Struggle’, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2000): 93-5. *Terra Nullius* implied that Australia was an ‘empty land’, and was the legal term that prevented Aboriginal people regaining access and ownership of their land within Australian law until 1992.
influence of gender, race, ethnicity, class and culture on contemporary Australian society. The Department of Education in New South Wales attempted similarly to provide adequate representations of Aboriginal people across the curriculum. Since 1982, Aboriginal perspectives have been included in all History syllabuses in the compulsory Years 7-10, and subsequently incorporated across all key learning areas.

Yet this critique of the exclusion of Indigenous voices in turn attracted considerable criticism. Some suggested that an old orthodoxy had merely been replaced by a new one—"political correctness". There has been a widespread view, moreover, that history education should promote national identification and belonging rather than guilt or shame, and that children should not be made to feel responsible for the 'black marks' in the nation's history. In the lead up to the Bicentenary, Geoffrey Partington railed against the dominance of what he felt was an excessively denigratory appraisal of Australia's past. It is 'entirely irresponsible, as well as historically false', he considered, 'to adopt the one-sided view of white wickedness, which is the new orthodoxy in teaching about race relations in Australia since 1788'. While the historian Patrick O'Farrell had earlier acknowledged that the history of Aboriginal experience in Australia 'should not be forgotten' in History syllabuses, he insisted that 'it must not be allowed to become a liability, a millstone on the present'.

The politics of memory

As this public debate over representations of the past has intensified, its battlefield metaphors have pervaded public discourse. Ann Curthoys has noted the 'warlike tropes' of historians such as Windschuttle, who published The Killing of History in 1994 as a defence of the discipline against postmodern, multicultural, politically correct betrayals
of history.\textsuperscript{35} In Canada, Peter Seixas observed a similar historiographical discourse of struggle and anxiety. There was an ‘outpouring’ of titles, he observed, ‘invoking metaphors of crisis and danger: on the edge of a cliff, into the abyss, a plunge into uncertainty, and the degradation and murder of history’. Meanwhile, he continued, ‘other volumes attempted to get the discipline back to the safety of solid ground with promises to “tell children the truth about history”, to mount a “defence of history”, or to “return to the essentials”’.\textsuperscript{36}

Seixas was referring to the work of historians such as Jack Granatstein, who had documented the historical death of the discipline in his country with his 1998 book, \textit{Who Killed Canadian History}? His work reiterated Windschuttle’s concerns about the declining state of history amid ‘postmodern’, ‘politically correct’ theories and approaches.\textsuperscript{37} It also pointed to an anxiety about history’s capacity to define the nation—and how critical history’s challenge to traditional Canadian historiography has been perceived as a national crisis.\textsuperscript{38} Such disagreement reflects the politics of collective memory, where the nation’s story is as contested and fraught as the nation itself.

Teaching History in schools has been a central site of this wider struggle over the nation and its past. While Bicentennial angst was not the first or last outbreak of historical controversy in Australia, it was both public and prevalent, and has become a critical symbol of domestic historical dispute. In many ways this very public contest indicated the power and influence of teaching national histories at a time when nationality and identity were themselves so contentious. In Benedict Anderson’s famous deconstruction of ‘nation-ness’, education forms an integral unit in the production of national identity and belonging. A ‘vast pedagogical industry works ceaselessly’, he wrote in \textit{Imagined Communities}, devoted to the instruction, remembering and forgetting of


national histories. The American historian James Wertsch invoked Anderson’s image of ‘nation-ness’ to examine collective memory. The reception of History syllabuses and textbooks form a ‘textual community’, he argued, a community of shared language and shared texts of historical understanding. Theorising further, Wertsch suggested that it is the existence of this textual community that gives history education such power and therefore such potential for conflict: ‘It is because the stakes are so high that disputes break out over the appropriateness and accuracy of various accounts of the past, raising the question as to whether the instruction involved is really about history or collective memory’.

These interpretations of history education in terms of national identity help explain contrasting approaches to history teaching in Bicentennial Australia as manifestations of memory politics. School History becomes another site of collective memory alongside national commemorations or museum exhibits, and is similarly contested in the public sphere: in the press, in parliament, on talkback radio. Public anxiety over whether to teach a history of ‘celebration or apology’ dominated the discourse of history teaching in Bicentennial Australia. To extend this political reading, we may see that embedded within contrasting approaches to teaching ‘our history’ were the national emblems and ideologies of a much wider debate.

In Australia the so-called ‘Black Armand’ debate accounted for this growing historical disagreement, although the American term ‘History Wars’ has gained increasing currency. While critical Australian histories had long provoked significant conservative disapproval, Geoffrey Blainey’s coining of the ‘Black Armand’ term in 1993 articulated a sense of disaffection with revisionist readings of the past. His article, ‘Drawing Up a Balance Sheet of Our History’ was an outline of Australian historiography that attempted to analyse the discord over critical history by differentiating two explicit approaches. Defining revisionist history as ‘Black Armand’, he argued that in ‘recent

41 Ibid., 70.

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years it has assailed the generally optimistic view of Australian history. While the ‘Three Cheers’ view of Australian history saw it as ‘largely a success’, the revisionist ‘Black Armband’ view was apparently more one sided than the history it rejected.

Balinsey’s imagery was adopted by a number of conservatives, who appropriated the categorisation of Australian history writing into negative and positive, black and white. Reviewing Blainey’s Shorter History of Australia in 1995, the historian John Hirst reiterated the contrasting historical approaches expressed by Blainey in his Latham Lecture two years earlier. He remarked that a dark vision of Australian history had ‘come into common currency during the past twenty years [which] was unimaginable before then’. Hirst went on to argue that anyone ‘who now writes the history of our country writes in the shadow of this view’. He decided that it was Blainey who had countered its darkness. John Howard has also been a key proponent of the ‘Black Armband’ label. His belief that an intellectual elite had silenced more positive, ‘balanced’ perspectives of Australian history was evidently influenced by ideas expressed earlier by Blainey. Outlining his approach to Parliament, Howard maintained that ‘I do not take the black armband view of Australian history. I believe that the balance sheet of Australian history is overwhelmingly a positive one.’ The following day, he elaborated further, suggesting a negative mood had come to dominate recent Australian history writing. ‘I profoundly reject ... the black armband view of Australian history’, he maintained. ‘I believe that the balance sheet of Australian history is a very generous and benign one. I believe that, like any other nation, we have black marks upon our history but amongst the nations of the world we have a remarkably positive history.

In this way, anxiety over school History can be located within a wider, public and political debate over the nation itself. The contest over the past involves a clash of national narratives that play out in various sites of national memory such as museums, commemorations and texts. Yet within this constellation schools have a special place

42 Ibid.
since they are thought to play a uniquely formative role. While the inclusion of this schools context has intensified the public anxiety over Australian history, it has also highlighted the paradoxical premise upon which these two dimensions of history education (of pedagogy and national narrative) come together: despite the overt divisions of educational and historical approaches (left/right, celebration/apology, content/process), teaching and learning are national concerns that speak 'collectivity' rather than 'division'. Whatever education policy means in practice, its rhetoric offers only universals: the nation, the children, the future. Increasingly played out through 'the child', debate over teaching the past rests on a discourse that commentators from various political backgrounds have adopted and reinforced. It is this discourse, this claim for the nation's future, that prompted my initial interest in problematising history education as a site of contested collective memory. It forms the focus of this beginning chapter, and a foundation of the thesis itself.

Three years after the controversy over Bicentennial history teaching, the Sydney columnist Paddy McGuinness warned that critical history had dire consequences for the state of the subject in schools. McGuinness claimed that the 1991 New South Wales Australian History syllabus was full of 'buzzwords' that were 'politically correct'. The terms included 'invasion', 'genocide', 'assimilation', 'integration', 'resistance', 'culture conflict', 'dispossession', 'racism', 'discrimination', 'Aboriginality', 'paternalism', 'terra nullius', 'civil rights', 'land degradation' and 'self-determination'. 'This reads like a jumbled index from a propaganda tract meant to imply that everything about white settlement of Australia has been bad and disgraceful', McGuinness deplored. 'This is not about understanding the past in order not to repeat it, but about controlling the future through indoctrinating our children.'

Three years later, McGuinness felt that the situation had not changed. 'The notion that Australian history should be taught, to little children and in schools and colleges, as the history of an invasion is the product of a political propagandistic version of history', he claimed. 'Our history does not belong to an undistinguished syllabus committee of pedants but to the community as a whole.' McGuinness must be read

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with a degree of circumspection. His strategy is alarmist and populist, and his use of 'our history', and 'little children' should be read in that context. Yet he is not the only commentator who has used those terms; as it has progressed, in fact, the debate has become precisely an historical controversy over 'our history'. Everyone, it seems, identifies with, belongs to, and has an investment in the teaching of Australian history in schools.

**What's in a word? the 'invasion' debate**

In 1994 a new Queensland Year 5 Social Studies sourcebook in a state-wide trial was 'exposed' by the Brisbane Courier Mail for suggesting that 'explorer', 'pioneer' and 'discover' are value-laden terms. The sourcebook had been introduced to replace an earlier text, removed in 1992 because it was deemed racist and discriminatory by the Education Department. A teacher information sheet in the new sourcebook outlined the views presented by the Department's draft support material:

Terms such as **discovery, pioneers** or **exploration** should be used in their historical context. With approximately **40,000 years of occupation** of Australia, **Indigenous** people had already discovered, explored and named all parts of the continent. Various parts were renamed by **European explorers**...

Many **Aborigines** and **Torres Strait Islanders** interpret the **arrival** of the First Fleet and the subsequent spread of **European settlements** as an **invasion**. Many **non-Indigenous** people, including a considerable number of historians, agree with the application of the term 'invasion' to some of the events which have taken place since the **transportation of convicts** and the establishment of the **penal colony** in 1788. Others argue that the terms **colonisation, non-Indigenous occupation** or **settlement** accurately describe the same events and actions.

Its release triggered a drawn out media campaign by the Courier Mail in which History subjects were condemned by a number of prominent commentators for their 'political correctness'. The State Opposition Leader, Rob Borbidge, said the book was a disgrace.

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59 Social Studies Units 1 and 2, Year 5 Replacement (Brisbane: Department of Education, Queensland, 1995), 10-11. Emphasis in original.
‘This is just the tip of the iceberg of the effort that’s underway to make our entire education system politically correct and many stupidities will have to be weeded out.’

Bob Quinn, the Shadow Minister for Education, simply stated that ‘White people came out here and settled and that is it’.

Responses from the Labor Premier, Wayne Goss, contradicted his own Education Department. He rejected the Department’s attempts to remove the offending representations of Indigenous people from the previous sourcebook, and argued that terms such as ‘invasion’ went too far. There was a need to present Australian history honestly and fairly, he said, but ‘this does not mean that we need to reinvent the language’. ‘I think that just about all Australians would not regard what happened in 1788 as an invasion’, he asserted. ‘There is a world of difference between the arrival of the First Fleet and what most people understand as an invasion.’ Goss was under political and popular pressure to distance himself from the revision his own government had commissioned. Editorials complaining of government attempts to ‘rewrite history’ ensured that the debate became a heated and controversial focus of public discussion.

Meanwhile, the bulk of correspondence to the Courier Mail displayed disbelief and anger that European colonisation could be construed as anything but ‘settlement’; ‘invasion’ was simply an unhelpful term of political correctness.

Geoff Temby from Hamilton complained of double standards: ‘what about the British people who were forcibly transported here in chains, and their descendants? Are they invaders? And what about the Europeans and Asians who have been encouraged and financially sponsored by governments to migrate here? Are they invaders?’ Another correspondent, Barry G. Shield, felt that the reluctance to use terms from a proud pioneering history was misplaced and ill-founded: ‘That Mitchell, Leichhardt, Stuart, Oxley etc. were going where countless other feet had trod does not detract from the fact

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55 Cited in Ketchell, ‘Explorers axed in “correct” syllabus’.
54 Cited in Koch, ‘Furore over “invasion” text’
96 Editorial, ‘Our History: It needs to be fully understood’, Courier Mail, 10 February 1994.
that, as far as the Europeans were concerned, they were exploring new territory, and were thus "pioneers". 58

A small number of letters supported the new curriculum document. It was telling that most came from teachers. Sandra Taylor questioned the objectives of those who attacked the Social Studies sourcebook. 'One wonders about the motives of those who attempt to trivialise the guidelines' of the sourcebook by characterising them as 'politically correct', she speculated. 'Do they wish outdated and biased accounts to continue to be taught despite evidence to the contrary?' 59 Max Quanchi, a Queensland teacher and curriculum writer, said that 'Prescriptive terms such as contact, settlement, invasion, discover, and occupation should continue to be used by scholars, teachers and history students ... We should applaud the Education Department's attempt to suggest to students in social studies classes that the past is problematic.' 60 Generally, however, the op-ed pages of the paper were dominated by the anti-invasion faction. 'History is best when viewed from every available perspective', argued one editorial. 'This requires judgement, and a high level of general knowledge of events and policies then current. It is not a discipline well served by populist simplicity.' 61

Meanwhile, Goss maintained that his intervention was designed to ensure schools would teach 'the facts' so that students could 'make up their own mind as to whether they regard the events of 1788 as an invasion or settlement'. 62 Yet his explanation ignored the premise of the new Queensland text, which was to open consideration of contrasting historical perspectives of European colonisation (invasion and settlement). Moreover, the debate overlooked the fact that the previous sourcebook, despite its significant shortcomings, itself had used the word 'invasion' to describe the establishment of the Australian colonies. 63 Goss had astutely identified how politically damaging the furor could become. By accepting the Courier Mail's populist attack on the sourcebook, he attempted to deflect the charges of prejudice and political

60 Max Quanchi, 'Letter: Other ways of telling the same stories', Courier Mail, 15 February 1994.
61 Editorial, 'Our History: It needs to be fully understood'.
62 Cited in Jennifer Craik, "Was this an Invasion?: Framing History in the Media", in Invasion and After: A Case Study in Curriculum Politics, ed. Ray Land (Griffith University: Queensland Studies Centre, 1994), 51.
63 Primary Social Studies Sourcebook Year 5 (Brisbane: Department of Education, Queensland, 1988), 21.
correctness levelled by the paper. In doing so, he effectively legitimated its tabloid scare tactics.

The *Courier Mail*'s campaign can be seen more clearly in the context of a wider political strategy to capitalise on anxiety about Australian history. This strategy has encouraged a conservative polemic. The discourse that dismisses critical approaches to history in schools for being overly bleak, naïve, and even dangerous appeals to the much broader claim that Australia's heritage has been 'hijacked' by a politically correct orthodoxy. The media campaign captured the public imagination by tapping into a popular perception that history had become polarised by diverging ideologies. Despite the division the conservative rhetoric identifies, the campaign has been held together paradoxically by a string of collective pronouns: 'our history is being misrepresented'; 'our children are under threat'. Yet conservatives are not alone in making this appeal. In an article for the *Courier Mail*, Susan Hocking questioned the sort of history that the paper was advocating. Should we encourage 'our children' to believe 'that when Capt Cook landed here there was no human habitation, that hundreds of thousands of people adhering to an ancient culture didn't count?'\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^4\) Defending the use of 'invasion' in debate six years later, the State Democrats Leader, Liz Oss-Emer, insisted that 'Our kids should learn about and come to terms with the real issues that they'll confront in life'.\(^6\)\(^5\) These collective claims to past and future would be repeated through the various outbreaks of this debate as it erupted around the country.

In political terms, the 'Black Armband' debate provided a significant framework for the dispute over 'invasion'. In fact, John Howard's crusade against 'Black Armband' history included a critique of recent history education, which he criticised for using 'invasion' to describe European colonisation. The Prime Minister spoke at length about his concern over the growing critical readings of Australian history and the negative impact these would have in schools. As a guest on the programme of the populist talkback radio host John Laws after his election in 1996, he denounced the 'Black Armband' curriculum. 'To tell children whose parents were not part of that treatment,' Howard contended, 'to tell children who themselves have been no part of it, that we're

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\(^1\)\(^4\) Susan Hocking, 'Honesty is always correct', *Courier Mail*, 11 February 1994.
all part of it, that we’re part of a sort of racist and bigoted history is something that Australians reject.\textsuperscript{66}

John Laws had already fanned controversy over ‘invasion’ in his column in the \textit{Sunday Telegraph}, where he wrote that ‘the very choice of the word puts a slant on history. There is nothing like a good dose of political correctness to drive even more wedges between sections of society.’\textsuperscript{67} As debate spread beyond the confines of the \textit{Courier Mail} it became clear that the concern over ‘invasion’ had resonances beyond Queensland. It pointed to a much deeper anxiety about Australian history and how it should be taught in schools. It also highlighted the powerful role of the media in publicising and generating debate.

Other papers also printed replies to the apparent excess of political correctness that this term suggested. In Sydney, the \textit{Daily Telegraph Mirror} offered in its editorial:

\begin{quote}
Politicians and community leaders are too often persuaded by the shrill demands of minority groups peddling narrow sectional interests at odds with broad community standards, and that process \textit{should} be resisted.

\textbf{A fundamental right in this society is the right to an education which holds that the truth should not be compromised. Teaching a biased version of history to fit a current politically correct fad threatens that right.}\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

There is a juxtaposition here of two histories. The first is politically correct, a slightly feminised (‘the shrill demands’), multicultural and biased interpretation of Australia’s past. The other encompasses an uncompromised, objective ‘truth’. This editorialising reinforced an increasing perception that Australian histories could be divided—moreover, that one was right and the other was wrong. The media became a critical arena for debate. The discourse it generated was the language of ‘headline and grab’, as Jennifer Craik has defined, a brand of ‘headline’ that forced historical simplification for the sake of maintaining public controversy and contest over the issue.\textsuperscript{69}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cited in Judith Brett, \textit{Age}, 8 November 1996.
\item John Laws, ‘... the invasion that never was’, \textit{Sunday Telegraph}, 13 February 1994.
\item Craik, ‘Was this an Invasion?’
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
An editorial in the *Weekend Australian* explained that it ‘is wrong for teachers to depict the 1788 arrival as an invasion’. Their tone of this editorial was less vociferous than other media commentary, but the language was similarly loaded. ‘Nobody doubts that killings and violence occurred as a result of the interaction between Europeans and Aborigines in Australia’, the paper acknowledged. ‘Nobody doubts that the full extent of the injustice done to the Aboriginal people must be recognised. But teaching our schoolchildren that the modern origins of this nation lie in an invasion, pure and simple, will only compound our difficulties.’ As the ‘invasion’ controversy extended into other states it became clear that larger national questions about Australian history were driving the discussion.

The timing of its development was also critical. Two years earlier the High Court’s *Mabo* decision had found that European colonisation had not extinguished Indigenous ownership of land in all circumstances.76 The ruling generated significant public tension as it gave judicial recognition of a continuous history of European colonisation and Aboriginal deprivation. Revisionist histories were used by the High Court to challenge the narrative myths of Australian settlement and progress. The majority judgements of Justices Deane and Gaudron determined that dispossession had left a ‘national legacy of unutterable shame’.77 Much of *Mabo*’s significance lay in the way it registered a wider reconceptualisation of Australian history. The grave legacy of colonisation was discussed widely in the media, framing and generating further debate in turn. The anxiety such problems provoked was particularly visible in a growing debate over teaching History in schools. Prompted by the Queensland controversy and contemporary issues such as land rights and Native Title, localised outbreaks of a much wider historical contest emerged in other states such as New South Wales and Victoria.

While the New South Wales media were initially preoccupied by the Queensland dispute, they soon turned to their State’s own syllabus anxiety. In its reporting of the growing controversy in the pages of the *Courier Mail*, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* noted that New South Wales schools also taught topics such as ‘invasion,
resistance, dispossession and genocide'.73 The Liberal Education Minister, Virginia Chadwick, was subsequently condemned at the National Party State Conference for allowing ‘invasion’ to be included in the new primary social studies syllabus in place of ‘settlement’.74 A delegate who initiated the motion said there was no need to change the way that Australian children had been learning for two hundred years: ‘The wording as is—settlement instead of invasion—portrays the idea white man came into Australia and settled without the idea of invading the country.’75

Only days later the New South Wales Ministry of Education came under fire for having recommended the removal of ‘invasion’ from the draft of an Aboriginal Studies course for primary schools. The Ministry had advised that the term ‘encroachment’ or ‘1788’ should replace ‘invasion’ in parts of the draft teaching supplement for the course. It furthermore directed that where the word ‘invasion’ was used it should be qualified by the addition of a less confrontational term. As an example, the Ministry suggested that a reference to Aboriginal claims of invasion could be amended to read: ‘what for Aboriginal people was the invasion and colonisation of their land’.76 A spokesperson for the Minister later stressed that the changes were only ‘suggestions’ and added that the response was due to the extensive criticism recently received when the Minister had defended the use of ‘invasion’.77

Aboriginal groups angrily rejected the proposed changes. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Dodson, argued that the proposed changes to the Aboriginal Studies draft were both ignorant and dangerous:

The historical reality for all of us, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, is the fact that the Indigenous lands of this country were invaded by a foreign force who seized and occupied them and slaughtered people in pursuit of that land.

If they want to, through semantics, deny the historical reality, then that is to their everlasting shame.78

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77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
Linda Burney, the President of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, said the use of 'encroachment' to describe European occupation had not been discussed with the Aboriginal community. The Ministry was attempting to 'sanitise' history, she said. 'Invasion' was not a distortion, Burney added. 'It is what took place.'

Threats were made by some delegates at the annual conference of the Teachers' Federation to ban any section of a syllabus that had 'invasion' removed from it. The conference also endorsed a recommendation that condemned 'escalating right wing interference in schooling'.

John Howard, who was then a member of the Shadow Cabinet, accused the Teachers' Federation of attempting to distort the past to make a 'contemporary political point' and accused its members of 'ideologically driven intellectual thuggery'. The description 'invasion', he later maintained, should never have been in the syllabus in the first place. In his view Australian history needed to be described more positively; Australian children should not feel guilty about events in the past over which they had no control. Those who took this position alleged that critical readings of the past had come to constitute an orthodoxy that was dominating Australian history and imposing an ideological agenda upon 'our children'.

In Victoria the controversy was less prominent but just as intense. In 1991, a new post-compulsory History syllabus was published. The culmination of four years development, the syllabus was part of the new Victorian Certificate of Education. As will be examined in Chapter Five, the Blackburn Report had made a series of key recommendations to widen the inclusiveness of post-compulsory education in Victoria. The History Study Design was written with such motives in mind. According to a key member of the syllabus design committee, the old syllabus contained staid, content-oriented curriculum parameters and design. As such, the new Study Design tried to incorporate the equity focus of the Blackburn Report as well as quite radical historical concepts such as deconstruction, power, voices, absence, gender, class and race:

At any point in Australian history established practices for the organization, control and distribution of power were accompanied by a set of values, beliefs and ideas that tended to legitimise such practices.

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70 Ibid.
72 Cited in Reynolds, Why Weren't We Told?, 160.
74 Maryellen Davidson, 'Interview with Maryellen Davidson' (Melbourne, 23 April 2002).
Social Darwinism and paternalism, for example, were used to legitimise the exclusion of Aboriginal people from political participation. Similarly, beliefs about the roles and capacities of men and women excluded women from formal political institutions.84

The syllabus was similarly orientated in the unit of Koori History. ‘In order to retain control of their unique cultural identity’, it stated, ‘Koori people have responded in a variety of ways to continuous pressures to disperse and assimilate since the European invasion’.85 Four years later, however, the last two words had changed, and the unit’s emphasis was markedly different: ‘In order to retain control of their unique cultural identity, Koori people have responded in a variety of ways to continuous pressures to disperse and assimilate since the British settlement’.86

Something quite drastic had happened. Maryellen Davidson, the Manager of the History Study Design, believed that the change to the syllabus was a direct consequence of the change of government in 1992 when Jeffrey Kennett led the Liberal Party into office. Soon after the new government took office, Davidson recalled, the recently completed History Study Designs were called for and it became clear that the reference to ‘invasion’ was no longer acceptable: as she put it, ‘we had to get the word out’. At the syllabus accreditation committee meeting, Government members argued for ‘settlement’ or ‘colony’. ‘It was seen that there was too much use of the concepts of class, gender and race—too much “kowtowing to political correctness”.87

This debate over ‘invasion’ reflected the growing separation of Australian historiography into competing historical approaches. Blainey’s Latham Lecture articulated a division that had been clearly apparent clear since the Bicentenary, and the ‘Black Armband’ metaphor he offered served to further polarise the discussion. Australian history had been broken into two ideological camps. The differences were magnified by a media discourse that tapped into the wider partisan political debate, further polarising the discussion.88 While the Queensland sourcebook acknowledged historical and educational complexities, the media had transferred its pedagogy into a simplistic story of ‘invasion’ versus ‘settlement’.

84 History Study Design (Carlton: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1991), 50.
85 Ibid., 76.
86 History Study Design (Carlton: Board of Studies Victoria, 1996), 97.
87 Davidson, ‘Interview with Maryellen Davidson’.
88 Craik, ‘Was this an Invasion?’, 43-4.
Yet the politics of history education are complex. Divisions over History syllabuses do not always follow Party lines. Indeed, the positions taken up by Goss and Chadwick run counter to the alignment of left and right with black and white viewpoints that was implicit in the attack by the Courier Mail and the censorship of the syllabus in Victoria. To be sure, the Labor Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, has also spoken out against the use of what he termed ‘politically faddish themes and problems’ in history syllabuses.89 Despite his protestation, each incursion by politicians into the curriculum reveals the political valency of history education. No politician can afford to be seen promoting unbalanced history to ‘our children’. While the invasion debate mirrored and reinforced the divisions of a wider historical anxiety and concern, a new, subtler pedagogical context became increasingly clear. The positioning of ‘the child’ in this debate over history education invites a pedagogical analysis and examination. History’s capacity to define the nation is bolstered with its claim over the child, but it demands analysis of educational method as well as the politics of collective memory.

Conclusion

In 2000, Keith Windschuttle published a series of articles claiming that the Australian public had been deliberately misled by ‘a major academic deception’.90 ‘Over the past twenty years,’ he wrote, ‘Australian historians have constructed a story of widespread massacres on the frontier of the expanding pastoral industry’. However, ‘when it is closely examined, the evidence of these claims turns out to be highly suspect’.91 His comments provided the latest instalment of the so-called ‘History Wars’, and again highlighted how contrasting readings of Australian history have collided in public discourse.

As James Wertsch and Benedict Anderson remind us, this discussion reflects a powerful contest over collective memory, a contest in which the politics of identity are inseparable from narratives of its past. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton describe

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89 Julie Lewis, ‘Carr calls for a return to educational basics’, Sydney Morning Herald, 6 June 1994.
this connection in similar terms: ‘Mythic narratives are explanatory, connecting the past to the present and providing a historical rationale for the existence of our society as it is now’. In this way, school history has become a critical site of contested collective memory. The disputes over the Bicentenary and then over ‘invasion’ provided graphic illustrations of this historical debate and also served to reinforce a powerful paradigm of division. Chapter Two will further explore how these debates over history education reach around the world. It notes how conflicting national narratives come together in this schools arena, and begins to explore how they have shifted the discourse of memory politics to include a pedagogical dimension.

Chapter Two

An international debate
Introduction

This protracted contest over the past is no peculiarly Australian phenomenon. The politics of memory are debated around the world—and school history provides only one epicentre of the storms that have increasingly broken over shrines of remembrance, museum exhibits, treaty commissions, history texts and so forth. When China resumed control over the British colony of Hong Kong, it wasted no time removing royal seals on anything from post-boxes to street signs in an attempt to wipe away the visible memories of the British colony. History books were rewritten after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991; new histories were created following the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s. The power of the past is by now a truism, but does not dampen the impact of shifting historical understandings and approaches.

This chapter broadens some of the ideas raised in Chapter One to an international context. It introduces a number of comparisons from Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States to contextualise experiences in Australia. (Examples from other countries are discussed elsewhere in the thesis.) This international element has been included for two reasons. First, it clarifies the Australian debates and points to a wider contest and concern over history and history education; it suggests an anxiety over history teaching that is not sporadic but reveals how school History is a critical site for the transmission of national narratives. Methodologically, too, this comparative element reduces the limiting tendencies that come with regionally and historically specific research. While I argue that the Australian material is substantial in its own right, I place this domestic anxiety over history education within a wider discourse of ‘teaching the nation’. History education is a critical site of collective memory around the world because it is inextricably tied to contestations of national identity.

These international moments are by no means uniform. Contradictions of nation and narration emerge as strongly in this chapter as they have in the Australian examples. The influence of these international debates on Australian history education is also difficult to quantify. While each dispute has its own meaning and context, taken together, they reveal a pervasive concern over national identity and history. Such
complexity forms the spine of this research. It reflects the interdisciplinary genealogy of the debate over history education both in Australia and abroad.

The first part of this chapter examines the connections between historical debates and the ways they manifest in an international educational context. It returns to the ideas of James Wertsch to examine history education as a site of contested collective memory, especially its connection to wider public anxieties over the past. Germany and Japan’s divergent understandings of their respective national pasts are analysed here, as are debates over the development of the English National Curriculum.

In the United States, too, an educational contest over the past has aroused significant anxiety and complaint. There, the so-called ‘Culture Wars’ offer an explanation for the contest over national education. The term has been influential in Australia, where it has come to describe an apparent ideological gulf in understandings of the nation and its heritage. As such, the ‘Culture Wars’ and their historical invocation, the ‘History Wars’, have become an important model for considering the public contest and concern over the past.

In this context I then analyse the controversial development of National Standards in History education in the United States during the 1990s and note how debate over the Standards paralleled a very public, politicised and acrimonious dispute over the Smithsonian Museum’s Enola Gay exhibit. These simultaneous historical debates help illustrate how anxiety over history education has been understood as part of a longer public contest over American culture and history. They also point to a disjuncture between the ‘History’ or ‘Culture Wars’ and its educational dimension, which will be examined in Chapters Three and Four.

Whose history?

The politics of memory are played out over various sites of history. In ways similar to Australian debates about the use of ‘invasion’, public contention in New Zealand has arisen over the appropriate terminology to describe European colonisation. In 1996, the Taranaki Report of the Waitangi Tribunal used the term ‘Holocaust’ to describe the experience of the Taranaki Maori during the first and second Taranaki wars and
subsequent treatment by colonial militia and successive governments.1 Addressing a
meeting of the New Zealand Psychological Society in August 2000, Tariana Turia, the
Associate Minister of Maori Affairs, contended that Maori experience had been affected
by a 'post-colonial traumatic stress disorder', and reintroduced 'Holocaust' as a way of
explaining this trauma.2 Turia's comments attracted considerable publicity and
opposition. Hugh Laracy, an Associate Professor of History at the University of
Auckland, criticised her statements for being 'ill-informed' and 'crass'. He said they
reflected a 'superficial' understanding of colonisation, denying Maori responses to
European occupation. They were also a 'reprehensibly careless generalisation' that
misunderstood the nature of the Holocaust experienced under Nazi policy.3

In response to mounting public criticism, Turia stated that she 'did not mean to
belittle survivors of the World War II holocaust or those whose houses had been
invaded'. She went on: 'As a member of a group that has been marginalised I would never
deliberately belittle the horrific experiences suffered by other people. I sincerely
apologise to all those whom I have offended by these comments.'4 Like the contest over
'invasion', the 'Holocaust' dispute has been understood as a collision of contrasting
readings of the past. The New Zealand historian Grant Young analysed the origins of
this debate and suggested that it represented a 'clash of historical narratives' between the
tribunal histories and the public response they have generated.5 He considered this
concern over the language of New Zealand history in the context of a wider debate over
national memory, and suggested that Maori 'use of the word holocaust has particular and
special meanings in terms of the way they have remembered their past and the way they
have organised their remembering.'6

The patterns of such language are vivid. Concern over the use of 'invasion',
'genocide' and 'Holocaust' has characterised post-colonial debates in Australia and New
Zealand as the countries struggle to accommodate Indigenous experience in their
national narratives. The historian Dirk Moses has written extensively on the application

1 Grant Young, 'The Waitangi Tribunal and Gothic Histories of New Zealand' (paper presented
at the Antipodean Gothic Conference, Massey University, New Zealand, December 2002), 5-6.
3 Ibid.
4 Cited in Young, 'The Waitangi Tribunal and Gothic Histories of New Zealand', 7.
5 Ibid., 2.
6 Ibid., 8.
of the term 'genocide' to Australian colonial history. He notes that resistance to the 'g-word' is both political and historical: some who oppose these terms, such as Windschuttle, deny the impact and legacy of colonial violence; others, meanwhile, maintain that 'genocide' applies only to the sort of deliberate mass murder associated with the Jewish Holocaust. Teachers have also participated in these historiographical debates. In 2001 a Victorian History teacher, N.J. Clark wrote into the Herald Sun and wondered about the appropriate terminology of colonisation. 'In my own history teaching, I employ words such as “invasion”, “genocide”, and “stolen generation” to Nazi Germany, which executed a military assault on Poland, tried to kill an entire race of people and stole a generation to create the Hitler Youth', Clark considered. 'Are “invasion”, “genocide” and “stolen generation” really the words that apply to our history?'

The contested language of remembering occupies historical debates around the world. As Clark's letter shows, school History seems to attract particular attention, revealing a deep anxiety about expressions of national heritage and identity. The allusions to the Holocaust are nevertheless striking, and point to the influence of its historiography on creating a Jewish identity in particular, and restoring the experiences of oppressed peoples to historical narratives in general. Its critical legacy has been the emergence and theorisation of methodologies such as testimony, oral history and collective memory.

Analyses of the national memories of so-called 'perpetrators' of atrocities also comprise a valuable historiography. In particular, research into Japanese and German representations of World War II in history texts has attracted considerable public scrutiny and controversy, providing comparative studies of remembrance, commemoration and apology that are widely discussed. The Finnish educationist Sirkka Ahonen has analysed the cultural process of coming to terms with history in the former

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German Democratic Republic as a means of Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit, or 'facing up to the past'. In this process she notes that German people and institutions are still in the midst of coming to terms with years of historical silence and lies about Nazism, the Holocaust and communism following the fall of the Berlin Wall and demise of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

The historians' dispute that took place in Germany in the 1980s similarly highlighted the contest and controversy that 'facing up to the past' comprises. It began when a number of historians and commentators suggested that after fifty years the Holocaust needed to be historicised and placed within a longer history of war and trauma. Their critique of the Holocaust's 'uniqueness' generated significant response. Professor Jürgen Habermas insisted such historicism was little more than a 'revisionism' that was trying to sterilise and then 'shake off' Germany's shameful past. Others accused it of normalising victims' experiences, which were still in living memory.

The historical debate has since been situated within a larger political battle to define post-war West Germany. Josef Joffe maintained that the controversy was 'one of the most bizarre debates in the annals of German historiography'. 'It embroiled everybody who was anybody in the profession, and it refuses to abate.' Moreover, he continued, the historical debate was critically tied to contemporary German politics and identity: 'All history is backward-looking politics. And this is where the Battle of the Historians intersects with the battle over political legitimacy and domestic power.'

Others described the debate in similar terms, situating it within a distinctly contemporary political contest over national identity. Patrick Hutton argued that

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12 Cited in Joffe, 'The Battle of the Historians': 74.
13 Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History': 537-40. The historian Eberhard Jäckel also responded by arguing that while the twentieth century can be characterised by events of mass murder, perpetrated around the world, the Holocaust was unique because 'never before had a State ... decided and so declared that a certain group of people—including the old, women, children, and babies—was to be killed in toto if possible, while executing that decision with all the means available to a State', in Joffe, 'The Battle of the Historians': 75.
‘Contests over the use of such power—the politics of public memory—are the stuff of these histories of commemoration.’ As the process of coming to terms with the past in Germany was played out over its collective memory, concern over the contemporary responsibility of the German state and its citizens was tied intricately to its national expressions of history and identity.

Similar contestations of the past are also visible in Japan, where official national narratives have been criticised for an unwillingness to confront the past. Accounts of what is elsewhere described as Japanese imperialism during World War II have, in Japan, been heralded as part of a national process of Asian liberation. The debate is often centred on history texts, where wartime atrocities are ignored or rewritten, arousing significant criticism and alarm. The official stance taken by the Japanese Government over school history has been the subject of particular attention. The Ministry of Education was embroiled in a thirty-five year legal battle over the censorship of a history text written by a Japanese Professor and former high school History teacher, Ienaga Saburo, who wrote in his 1962 edition that ‘many of the Japanese officers and soldiers had violated Chinese women during their occupation’. The Ministry ordered the passage deleted, declaring that ‘The violation of women is something that happened on every battlefield in every era of human history. This is not an issue that needs to be taken up with respect to the Japanese Army in particular.’ Ienaga finally won his appeal in 1997. Yet only four years later a new Japanese textbook presenting this history more benignly was released. According to Nobukatsu Fujioka, a Professor of Education at Tokyo University and founder of the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform, ‘Japanese children are only taught their country has done bad things. They are not taught anything they can be proud of. The current textbooks only teach them how to apologise.’

Considerable research has been conducted into how Japan and Germany have dealt with their respective histories in school texts. Ian Buruma’s well-known examination of how both nations have come to terms with their roles during the war is a

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57 Hutton, ‘Recent Scholarship on Memory and History’: 537.
60 Ibid., 189-94; Bollag, ‘A Confrontation with the Past’: 22.
perceptive study of national identity and the expression of its heritage. His analysis of these post-war reconstructions is also a very personal account of contrasting beliefs and historical understandings. They come together over the question of what history should be remembered, as well as how its commemoration should take place. Buruma notes fundamental cultural differences that lead to different approaches to the past, especially the function of history in civil society. The failure to extract a Japanese apology for war crimes contrasts strongly with Germany's official reparations and apology for the Holocaust. Such discontinuity emerges not simply from contrasting public narratives of the past, he suggests, but contrasting beliefs in the purpose of history.\footnote{Buruma, \textit{The Wages of Guilt}, passim.}

Laura Hein's edited collection on German and Japanese historical acknowledgement provides a similarly astute analysis of contrasting approaches to this legacy.\footnote{Laura Hein, and Mark Seldon, eds, \textit{Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany and the United States} (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).} Alongside Buruma's, her anthology notes vastly different cultural and political understandings of history and its role in civic public life. Their writings implicitly ask how history is not only realised through the nation, but also bolsters the nation, reinforces its values and expresses them onto the future. Hein and Buruma's histories reveal a desire to examine this coming to terms with the past, what it means, and how it translates across countries and experience. Their historiographical inquiry into how history is approached and commemorated is an important influence on my thesis.

Returning to the writing of James Wertsch, we may look at these contested national narratives as a product of the politics of memory.\footnote{James V. Wertsch, \textit{Voices of Collective Remembering} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).} As we have already seen in the Australian context, national histories purvey powerful stories, and 'sites' of collective memory such as schools are the principal means through which national identities are realised and contested. The understanding that national narratives are an expression of the nation characterises these debates over the past. Perhaps invoking George Orwell, the historian Michael Stürner wrote that 'Whoever supplies memory, shapes concepts, and interprets the past ... will win the future'.\footnote{Cited in Joffe, 'The Battle of the Historians': 77.} This persuasive image is particularly true in schools, where 'teaching the nation' is so symbolically tied to the future.
In December 2002 the German Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Thomas Matussek, accused the syllabus writers of fuelling xenophobia by concentrating on Nazism. ‘I think it is very important that people know as much as possible about the Nazi period and the Holocaust’, he acknowledged. ‘But what is equally important is the history of Germany in the past 45 years and the success story of modern German democracy.’ Only three days later, it was England’s turn to lay accusations of apparent political bias and historical inaccuracy. History teaching in Scotland was accused of propounding excessively nationalist sentiments. According to the Daily Mail, the so-called ‘Braveheart’ approach of the Scottish History curriculum was fuelling ‘anti-English bigotry’.

This unease over national representations revived memories of the debate over the English national curriculum more than ten years earlier. Considerable tension arose over the development of the History National Curriculum by Margaret Thatcher’s Government in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There was a concern among conservatives similar to that voiced by John Howard that history teaching had become too ‘thematic’ and neglected the ‘facts’. Critics claimed that teachers were hanging on to progressive educational philosophies dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, that social history or ‘history from below’ was dominating the approach taught in schools. History teachers, they charged, had too much curriculum influence, and the subject itself was reinforcing an overly negative understanding of Britain’s past. Thatcher said it was ‘absolutely right’ for the new History Curriculum to concentrate on monarchs and decreed that ‘children should know the great landmarks of British history’.

Extensive Government effort was expended over the next few years to ensure the content coverage of the History Curriculum. The Secretary of State for Education, John MacGregor, ordered a greater emphasis on historical knowledge in the new National Curriculum. Educational targets set out in law what students should be tested on at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16, at levels appropriate to their ability. The National Curriculum Council agreed with educational rationalisations of a content-driven approach to historical study.

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35 Cited in Mary Braid, ‘Determined to make history a matter of fact’, Independent, 5 April 1990.
Duncan Graham, the Council Chair, maintained that factual orientation ‘provides the means of raising expectations and standards’.26

In detailed studies of the National Curriculum debates, Robert Phillips has maintained that a politicisation of History was driving much of the discussion over the National Curriculum.27 He argued that the Conservative Government’s initiation and direction of the curriculum was induced at least in part by their belief that teachers had too much syllabus influence during the 1960s and 1970s. Progressive philosophies of curriculum development in Britain were subjected to a protracted political campaign waged by conservative interests in the tabloid press. Thatcher’s government was convinced that school History did not contain enough strong, positive national images. Only by returning to the facts, Ministers felt, could the nation be treated properly through the curriculum.

The politicking was not one-sided. The Labour Education spokesperson, Jack Straw, insisted the Tory intervention was a conservative political strategy: ‘Factual knowledge is essential to the teaching of history, but reports of the PM’s interference in the history curriculum raise quite different questions with sinister implications’, he warned. ‘She appears to want to lay down what facts children should be taught, but the national curriculum can only work if there is wide agreement about it across the political spectrum.’28

The debate also raised methodological and pedagogical questions of historical approach. Kenneth Clarke insisted that students should not study very recent history because some of the actors might still be alive, and instead advocated a twenty year cut-off date which would roll on every five years: ‘My view remains that pupils should not be legally required to study contemporary events and people, many of whom are still living,

because of the difficulty of treating such matters with historical perspective’. 29 Others argued over the relative importance of a content or skills emphasis. 30 MacGregor ordered a greater emphasis on historical knowledge in the new national curriculum, influenced in part by the government’s ‘preference for facts’. 31 The British Schools Minister, Baroness Margaret Blatch, attacked the ‘silly sixties-based approach’ of progressive history curriculum. ‘Well-taught history is an interesting, intriguing and satisfying subject’, she insisted. ‘It does not need puerile exercises in role-playing, “empathy”, and “causation” to bring it to life.’ 32

In response, a number of teachers and historians expressed their disapproval of the traditionalist approach advocated by the government. Robert Medley from the Historical Association said MacGregor was obsessed with a false dichotomy between content and method: ‘skills are a way into facts’, he determined. 33 The National Union of Teachers said it believed the National Curriculum Council report had swung too far in favour of traditionalists. 34 Such arguments of teaching and learning infused the debate with questions and concerns beyond national narrative to include discussions of teaching method and historical approach.

The intervention by the Thatcher government highlighted the contested capacity of history education to define the nation. It also pointed to a pedagogical concern over the state of the subject in schools that was tied closely to political motivations, but had a different impulse. The Tory appeals to educational standards and core national knowledge mirrored contemporary concerns of Australian conservatives, to be examined in Chapters Five and Six, which dismiss historical ‘themes’ and ‘issues’ for being politically biased and pedagogically unsound. The call for return to the ‘facts’ in Britain, couched in terms of civic national sentiments, will also be compared with calls in the United States for ‘cultural literacy’.

30 Phillips, History Teaching, Nationhood and the State, Introduction.
31 Braid, ‘Facts and dates will form core of history teaching in school’.
32 Cited in Massay, ‘This history is bunk’.
34 Meikle, ‘Facts “hold key” to history teaching’.
The 'Culture Wars'

During the 1992 American Presidential campaign the Republican hopeful, Patrick Buchanan, maintained that the nation was engaged in a war 'for the soul of America ... a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as the Cold War itself'. His comments articulated a pronounced division in American public discussion that was beginning to resonate around the world. Throughout the 1980s an intense political battle was waged over the cultural foundations of America, over its national commemorations, public institutions, media, history and education.

The historiography of the 'Culture Wars' is varied, but its participants display a common tendency to link the cultural 'battles' over America in order to make sense of a wider contest over American identity. The controversy that followed the commissioning of the famous Vietnam War memorial in Washington, for example, provided a perfect case study for Lawrence Levine to begin his examination of these cultural debates. He maintained that the national monument was one site in a larger contest over preservation and commemoration of American national identity. It was part of 'a larger struggle over how our past should be conserved, how our memory should function, and where the focus of our attention should be'. In Levine's opinion, a number of targets had come under fire from conservative commentators that ranged from the challenging and radical Vietnam War memorial to policies of multiculturalism and university curricula. Universities, especially, were at the heart of this campaign that dismissed progressive ideologies for their lack of academic rigour and national reverence. Instead, critics insisted on the importance of an American history that upheld core national values and rejected multiculturalism and 'political correctness'—a central target of the Culture Wars.

This conservative critique was directed at the shift away from Euro-centric courses at universities across the United States. Since the Vietnam War, radical reaction had arisen against compulsory Western Civilisation in university humanities curricula. In particular, many students and teachers demonstrated against the parochial subject

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coverage, which they felt neglected and obscured cultural and historical movements outside ‘the West’. Their campaign against ‘Western Civ.’ was insistently ideological: they were challenging the mandatory prioritisation of Western culture because of the increasing diversity of the American population both generally, and in universities. A similar enactment of multicultural perspectives occurred in schools and universities in Australia at the same time.

Defenders of Western Civ. appealed to educational justifications, arguing that students ought to understand the major influences of the social and cultural systems in which they lived. A number of commentators dismissed the replacement of the subject by so-called ‘Oppression Studies’. The conservative opinion writer, Dinesh D'Souza, acknowledged that if ‘pursued as a complement to rather than as a substitute for study of the West, learning about the achievements and failings of other societies can help us better understand our own’. Yet he maintained that there was too much of a non-Western emphasis in which the study of minority groups was dominating the American university syllabus. Afro-American Studies provided an apt example: ‘Slavery seems to be the wound that never healed, the moral core of the oppression story so fundamental to black identity today’, he asserted. ‘No wonder that bitterness generated by recollections of slavery have turned a generation of black scholars and activists against the nation’s Founding—against identification with America itself.

Others maintained that the replacement of a Western emphasis was a natural curriculum evolution. Levine suggested that the move away from Western Civ. reflected changing educational values and understandings of history and education. The ‘Canon’ has always been contextualised by time and place, he argued, so that works now considered classics had once been contested and only included in syllabuses after considerable struggle. It was also misleading to assume that Western Civ. was a homogeneous influence, for the West has been formed by different peoples and influences. By placing the struggle over curriculum in a much deeper and broader historical context, Levine sought to explain a historical discussion over education and

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7 For example, Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, 68-91.
11 Ibid., 158.
inclusiveness, and the powerful links between history, education and the nation. 'Who we are, where our culture comes from, and what it is composed of, all help determine our educational needs and goals.'

Here was the seed of the so-called Culture Wars. Levine's critique expanded and contextualised struggle over American education as a longstanding contest between pluralism and homogeneity that was now represented by an American diversity on the one hand, and on the other by the political campaign that denounced multiculturalism as 'unAmerican' or 'politically correct'. This so-called 'war' over American cultural life provided an evocative metaphor that has gained currency around the world: culture is contested and history is a struggle. The Culture Wars was an expression of the contested nature of collective memory and national identity.

America's history and heritage were important battlefields in this cultural contest. The 'History Wars', as they have similarly come to be known, revealed strong divisions in historical interpretation and approach that dominated debate over American national narratives and identity. The extension of these 'warlike tropes' to include contests over the past reveals how anxiety over the 'nation's story' has intensified in recent years. The historical debates began as one theatre of the Culture Wars, but they soon became prominent in their own right, developing their own discrete battlefields in museums, commemorations and schools.

The school 'History Wars' have comprised an important element of this mounting 'struggle to define America', as the American historian James Davison Hunter has argued, a struggle over 'how and what American children will learn'. In an interpretation similar to Levine's, Hunter described this new historical front as a central site for the 'competing philosophies of American public life', a contest between 'orthodox' and 'progressive' cultural agendas. School History is critical not just because young people will eventually become social agents themselves but because 'this is the central institution of modern life through which the larger social order is reproduced'. The 'curriculum, the textbook literature, and even the social activities of the school

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43 Ibid., xiv, 101.
44 Ibid., xvii, 165.
46 Ibid., 108.
convey powerful symbols about the meaning of American life—the character of its past, the challenges of its present, and its future agenda.\textsuperscript{46}

Critical historians accused of ‘political correctness’ insisted that current educational sources and methods were overly nationalistic to the point of ignorance. As in Australia, where historical reviews of textbook and syllabus content became more prominent during the 1980s and 1990s, a number of American historians began to use schools as a starting point for critiquing traditional and patriotic histories. Much History taught in schools was exclusive and flawed, they maintained, and failed to question myths of American colonisation and its effects on the First Nations. In his study of twelve textbooks from 1974 to 1991, the historian James Loewen noted stories routinely presented as facts, and accounts that were Eurocentric and inaccurate. The texts themselves were excessively long, parochial and dull. Native Americans were consistently depicted as nomadic, landless hunters—images that failed to encompass the reality of the Plains cultures.\textsuperscript{47} Loewen noted that studies of cultural imperialism and its devastating effects on Indigenous populations were conspicuously absent from school texts. The ‘frontier’ was also used unproblematically, so that the attractiveness of native societies for many Europeans was lost in a simplistic account of ‘progress’ and the violence of the frontier was underplayed or ignored.\textsuperscript{48} In an angry riposte to the textbooks, Loewen attacked their educational methodologies and content.

Others also provided detailed critique of school texts in America. John Wills studied a number of History textbooks and observed the classroom practices of teachers and students. He claimed that despite shifts in scholarship and approach that endorsed more inclusive historical readings of the past, Native Americans were still overwhelmingly ‘mediated by a prevailing cultural narrative’.\textsuperscript{49} Representations of Native Americans as nomadic hunters dominated the textbooks, even though many farmed, and this misleading image implicitly justified settlement and expansion.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 174.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 307.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.: 287-9.
Such critical readings of textbooks fundamentally disrupted understandings of American school History. Like the critique of Western Civ. in universities, it constituted a growing reappraisal of national histories and education. As it would in Australia, such revision also generated hostile reaction. Rush Limbaugh decried what he felt was an unjustified denigration of America. He said that the critics were promulgating ‘a primitive type of historical revisionism’ that insisted:

Our country is inherently evil. The whole idea of America is corrupt. The history of this nation is strewn with examples of oppression and genocide. The story of the United States is cultural imperialism—how a bunch of repressed white men imposed their will and values on peaceful indigenous people, black slaves from Africa, and women.9

Others had already charged that critical histories lacked rigour and standards, that shifting emphases in content were irreparably damaging the education system. E.D. Hirsch described the shift to greater inclusiveness in American curricula as a ‘shopping mall’ approach to high school education. This ‘lack of shared knowledge across and within schools’ damaged the prospect of a collective national knowledge or identity: ‘It would be hard to invent a more effective recipe for cultural fragmentation’.10 Hirsch maintained that knowledge should be prioritised over skills, and that students needed to understand the ‘schemata’ before they could apply them.11 American schools had to devise an ‘extensive curriculum based on the national vocabulary and arranged in a definite sequence’. A sketch of such a curriculum formed the closing part of his book, and he ended it with a list of national terms of historical and cultural significance. Arranged in alphabetical order, the list forms an odd categorisation of knowledge rated in terms of national importance.12 The pedagogy is stark—memorisation is at the heart of a culturally literate, functioning nation—and it is inseparable from Hirsch’s political

11 Ibid., 62–5.
12 Ibid., 155–62. At ‘A’, for example, students should know: Auschwitz; Austen, Jane; Austin, Texas; Australia; Austria; and autistic. ‘C’ comprised a similarly eclectic knowledge prerogative: Churchill, Winston; chutzpah; CIA (Central Intelligence Authority); Cicero; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Cinderella.
agenda that dismissed progressive pedagogies for being educationally lax, politically biased, and dangerous to the nation.

In a similarly critical book on the state of American education, Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn published research that revealed parlous levels of knowledge of American schoolchildren. *What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?* was a report derived from the Republican Government education initiative, the 1981 Educational Excellence Network, and material from its conferences, *Against Mediocrity: The Humanities in America’s High Schools* (1984) and *Challenges to the Humanities* (1985). The report cited the influence of Hirsch’s argument for cultural literacy, and revealed apparently alarmingly low levels of historical and cultural knowledge and understanding. Almost 8000 students took the test on a vast array of questions on history, geography and literature. The authors concluded that the results were grave: only 24.7% placed Abraham Lincoln’s Presidential term in the correct twenty year period (1860-80); 52% assigned Franklin Roosevelt’s Presidency to the correct term; even more astonishing, they continued, only 63% of girls, 44.2% of African Americans and 54.2% of Hispanic students could locate Great Britain on a map. The authors described these students as ‘A Generation at Risk’. This generation and generations to come were ‘at risk of being gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entry into adulthood, citizenship and parenthood’.55

This neo-conservative concern over standards of historical knowledge and national literacy is indistinguishable from their criticisms of content. Knowing ‘the facts’ has become inseparable from knowing the nation itself, so that the school ‘History Wars’ have become imbued with an educational rhetoric of national comprehension and accountability. In time, this discourse of educational standards and core national knowledge would come to dominate the discourse of history education, and would extend far beyond the politically conservative critique of new historical and pedagogical approaches.

‘*Our children deserve better*’

The conflation of the History Wars with an educational rhetoric of standards was even more marked during the development of the National History Standards alongside

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debate over the *Enola Gay* exhibition at the Smithsonian Aerospace Museum in 1995. The exhibition was to showcase the plane that had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima to end the Second World War. It was to be a space where different perspectives would overlap, where veterans' beliefs that the bomb had ended the war, preventing further loss of life, would be juxtaposed alongside terrifying and tragic images of the city itself. For half a century these two stories, one 'of a weapon that brought peace and victory', and the other 'of a weapon that brought destruction and fear to the world', had sat uneasily together in the American imagination, suggested Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt. 'Now, the aircraft's fuselage was headed towards an exhibit that promised to bring those two narratives into a single museum space."

Before the exhibition even opened, opposition mounted amid charges of 'political correctness' and 'unAmerican' politics. An intense struggle developed at the Smithsonian between those who wanted to promote an image of historical complexity and competing narratives and the memories of the veterans, who felt the museum was violating their commemoration. Tom Crouch, the chairman of the Institute's Aeronautics Department, would eventually oversee the production of the exhibition script. He asked whether the museum was producing an exhibit that was 'intended to make veterans feel good' or 'an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don't think we can do both."

Linenthal described the mounting unease as the result of 'clashing historical narratives' and 'commemorative agendas':

As script after script deleted material about historical controversies regarding the decision to drop the bomb, added photographs both of mushroom clouds and of structural damage, and removed most photographs of dead Japanese, historians and peace activists met with museum officials to argue for what they believed should be restored or newly incorporated.

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He suggested that the exhibit scripts became ‘a kind of Rorschach test’, where people were motivated by ‘different questions, paid attention to different “facts”, and interpreted the same facts differently.\textsuperscript{98}

After a protracted and heated debate the exhibition was eventually replaced by a ‘blandly upbeat’ display of the Enola Gay itself.\textsuperscript{99} The Republican Leader of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, upheld the veterans’ resistance following the turnaround: ‘The Enola Gay was a fight,’ he said, ‘over the reassertion by most Americans that they’re sick and tired of being told by some cultural elite that they ought to be ashamed of their country’.\textsuperscript{60} According to Linenthal and Engelhardt, who edited a collection on the Enola Gay exhibit, the controversy became a new battle in a war over American cultural life. ‘The opening of a history front in the decade-old culture wars has been a genuinely shocking experience for historians committed to examining cherished national narratives.’\textsuperscript{61} The discord over the Enola Gay exhibit represented a particularly intense convergence of contrasting readings of the past and vastly different understandings of the role of history: whether it should be critical, complex and engaging; whether contrasting narratives can exist beside one another; or whether history is a function of national heritage. The point of convergence, the bomber itself, symbolised the massive gulf between competing versions of the past.

The historian Richard Kohn has maintained that the ‘battle’ over the Enola Gay exhibit needs to be located ‘in the wider culture wars’. He explained that those ‘involved in the battle connected the exhibition and the argument over it to the campaigns over political correctness’. Critics connected the exhibit to ‘provocative art, multiculturalism, equal opportunity programs, gender and sexual orientation, the national history standards and revisionist history, and just about every other divisive social and cultural issue rending American society’.\textsuperscript{62} The Enola Gay had become an important site of contested collective memory, a site where contrasting national narratives and identities came together and entrenched the historical debate as a ‘History War’ between two opposing approaches to the past.

\textsuperscript{60} Wallace, ‘Culture War, History Front’, 187.
\textsuperscript{61} Linenthal and Engelhardt, ‘Introduction’, 5.
\textsuperscript{62} Kohn, ‘History and the Culture Wars’: 1053-4.
The development of national standards in history education was another controversial site of struggle and debate. As the Enola Gay dispute was intensifying, and as the ‘invasion’ debate was gaining increasing publicity on the other side of the world, an equally intractable and politicised contest over history education was growing in American schools. This debate over the National History Standards in 1994 generated considerable publicity in the media as well as commentary from historians, educationists and politicians. The Standards had been developed to aid a more coherent historical education across the diversity of state-based systems in the United States. Replicating the accusations against the Smithsonian, a strident conservative campaign was mounted against the History Standards: American students were being let down by their own education system, a system supposedly dominated by left wing ideologues intent on destroying pride in their nation’s achievements.

In 1989 the Bush administration announced an initiative to develop national standards in education: ‘Today a new standard for an educated citizenry is required. Our people must be as knowledgeable, as well trained, as competent, and as inventive as those in any other nation.’ By 1992, the National Council for Educational Standards backed a set of benchmarks for five disciplines, including History. The Standards were established by President Bush’s National Committee of Excellence in Education and were continued by his successor Bill Clinton with his 1994 policy, Goals 2000: Educate America Act.

Yet the Standards’ development generated strong and often vitriolic reactions. The coincidence with the dispute over the Enola Gay exhibition in Washington was also telling: the anxiety, discourse and appeals to ‘our history’ were repeated frequently in these parallel controversies. Gingrich maintained it was necessary to return to ‘teaching the truth about American history, teaching about the Founding Fathers and how this country came to be the most extraordinary civilisation in history’. A year after the disputes over the Enola Gay and National History Standards, Bob Dole, the Republican Senate Majority Leader and Presidential hopeful, attacked the apparent political correctness dominating American cultural life. There were ‘government and intellectual

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55 Wallace, ‘Culture War, History Front’, 179.
elites who seem embarrassed by America', he said, insisting that the purpose of the Standards and the Smithsonian exhibit was 'to denigrate America's story while sanitising and glorifying other cultures'.

The controversy surrounding the development of the Standards was explicitly political. Critics admonished their apparent vilification of American history and society: students would be taught a history that was overly negative, ideologically biased and politically correct. By contrast, defenders claimed that the Standards reflected the great diversity of America's heritage: negative aspects needed to be understood as a matter of social justice; America's democracy enabled diverging interpretations of its past, and students should not be constrained into a narrow positivist version of their history.

The Standards debate was also inseparable from educational concerns. Here it moved away from the arena of collective memory and commemoration occupied by the Enola Gay to incorporate issues of pedagogy. As Chapter Three will examine more closely, educational standards outline questions of methodology, student outcomes and programmes of study. They demand educational accountability, and measure student performance against expectations defined in the standards themselves. The difficulty of the Standards dispute was that it involved a convergence of the politics of memory with a conservative pedagogical alarm over perceived declining historical knowledge of American students. Political ideology was infused with pedagogical discourse. Educational methodologies were politicised, and in this process, commentators of various backgrounds contested the relevance and objectives of the draft document. In the name of educational 'standards' each faction claimed to be acting in the interest of American students.

The National History Standards had been launched with a co-operative zeal that writers of the Standards, Charlotte Crabtree, Ross Dunn and Gary Nash, later described as 'the building blocks of consensus'. Yet the apparent bipartisanship dissolved once the document was released. When Senator Slade Gorton called for a vote admonishing the new National History Standards in January 1995, he argued that what was needed was 'a decent respect for the contributions of western civilisation, and US history, ideas, and

67 Cited in Nash et al., History on Trial, 159.
institutions, to the increase of freedom and prosperity around the world'.\textsuperscript{68} Lynne Cheney, the Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, which had helped finance the Standards' development, spoke out angrily against the new text. 'The general drift of the document becomes apparent when one realises that not a single one of the 31 standards mentions the Constitution', she determined. 'The authors tend to save their unqualified admiration for people, places and events that are politically correct. We are a better people than the National Standards indicate, and our children deserve better.'\textsuperscript{69} The educationist Diane Ravitch was equally appalled. The 'implicit theme' of the document 'seems to be the ongoing (and usually unsuccessful) struggle by the oppressed to wrest rights and power from selfish white male Protestants'.\textsuperscript{70}

The controversy became a media sensation. Four days after Cheney's piece, Rush Limbaugh told his radio audience that the Standards were part of 'an America-bashing multicultural agenda'.\textsuperscript{71} In the \textit{Washington Post}, Charles Krauthammer wrote that the Standards were fundamentally flawed by a leftist political agenda. The 'whole document strains to promote the achievements and highlights the victimisation of the country's preferred minorities while straining equally to degrade the achievements and highlight the flaws of the white males who ran the country for its first two hundred years'.\textsuperscript{72} According to John Leo, the Standards were wholly biased. 'By the allocation of the text America today seems about 65% Indian, with most of the rest of us black, female or oppressive.'\textsuperscript{73}

\textit{History on Trial} constituted Crabtree, Dunn and Nash's response to this conservative dismissal. The writers defended their creation of the Standards against the narrow interpretations of the American Right. New readings of the past were representative of, rather than inimical to, the American tradition; the critical scholarship embodied in the History Standards testified to the democratisation of the discipline. New historical approaches and the inclusion of traditionally excluded historical perspectives were the result of an historical understanding that better reflected American society and its ideals. As Nash later explained, 'Students may also come to

\textsuperscript{68} Cited in Symcox, \textit{Whose History?}, 137. See also Nash et al., \textit{History on Trial}.
\textsuperscript{71} Cited in Nash et al., \textit{History on Trial}, 5.
\textsuperscript{73} Cited in Nash et al., \textit{History on Trial}, 192.
understand that challenging a hoary set of meanings is not unpatriotic but in fact captures the richness of American history. Utilising the proud national discourse of American democracy, he attempted to shift the debate away from its conservative detractors. By associating the Standards with the established democratic trajectory of American history itself (and such landmarks as federalism, abolition, and Civil Rights), its authors attempted to legitimise the national History curriculum.

Nash had tapped into the same national discourse of American democracy that had driven the campaign against the Standards. In an interview during the controversy, he concluded that ‘it just indicates that history matters. The discussions are healthy and should go on, but we can’t expect complete agreement. This is a country where I hope we have no official history.’ By accommodating progressive values within a patriotic discourse, his comments highlighted the complexities of this debate, where political and ideological divisions are not always as clear-cut as they seem. The discourse of teaching ‘our history’ to ‘our children’ belied the divisiveness of the warring tropes that dominated this debate. In his analysis of the conservative reaction against multiculturalism and political correctness, Lawrence Levine framed America’s democracy in similarly collective terms. ‘An understanding of our past, our complexity, our diversity, and our cultural distinctiveness can free us from our problems and embrace the possibilities our history, our development, our culture have given us.’

It was clear that the issue had become part of the struggle to define America’s history. Cheney maintained that the Standards ‘present a very warped view of American history’. ‘They make it sound as if everything in America is wrong and grim’, she continued. ‘My overall objection is that they give us this warped and distorted version of the American past in which it becomes a story of oppression and failure.’ It was also clear that methodological concerns were generating considerable conjecture and alarm.

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55 Ibid.


79 Cited in Diegmueller, ‘Panel Unveils Standards for U.S. History’.
Diane Ravitch asserted that 'The reader who opens it [the standards] at random will find solid material; but the reader who peruses the entire book will discover a persistent strand of political bias that is unacceptable in a document that aspires to set national standards.' Nash suggested that Ravitch was confusing the role of standards with that of a textbook. The National Standards, he countered, were designed to reduce emphasis on dry textbooks and memorisation of names, dates and places, and dismissal was part of a conservative plea for more positive readings of the past.

While eventually upheld by two independent committees, the Standards had triggered a deeply politicised anxiety over American nationality and identity inseparable from understandings of its past. They also raised questions about method and approach. The argument was not simply one of content, but the role of history education: should it be valued for the intellectual skills it develops, the critical thinking it allows and the questions it asks; or should it serve essentially national purposes, requiring students on the verge of citizenship to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the country in which they would exercise citizenship? Such questions expand the school 'History Wars' to a more complex field of inquiry and suggest that 'teaching the nation' is as much about pedagogy as it is about the past.

**Conclusion**

On Constitution Day 2002, only a few days after the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, President George W. Bush announced massive increases in funding for national history teaching. (In February 2003 the 'Teaching of Traditional American History' initiative was budgeted at $US100 million.) In two speeches Bush declared the programmes essential for fostering civic and national awareness and pride. 'History is important for our children to understand, to give them a better sense of how to understand what we do and a sense of what it means to be an American'.

Our history is not a story of perfection. It's a story of imperfect people working toward great ideals. This flawed nation is also a really good nation, and the principles we hold are the hope of all mankind. When children are given the real history of America, they will also learn to

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80. Ravitch, 'Standards in U.S. History: An Assessment'.
81. 'Plan to Teach U.S. History is Said to Slight White Males'.
love America. Our Founders believed the study of history and
citizenship should be at the core of every American's education. Yet
today, our children have large and disturbing gaps in their knowledge
of history.  

In these two speeches, Bush managed 54 uses of the word 'our' (not counting the 'our' in 'courage', which was also considerable). Such language is a collective invocation, where 'our history' and 'our children' are presented as a unifying national ideal but contain an important paradox: within this imaginary collective past of 'ours', history is explicitly divided. It is riven by good/bad, truth/untruth, us/them and other antonyms.

The American dispute has in many ways defined the terms of this debate over the past. Concern over school History in Australia is now firmly located within the so-called 'History Wars'. As the American dispute over the Standards revealed, however, the battlefield metaphor has been complicated in history education, where concern over method and approach has augmented debate over national narrative and collective memory. The second section of this thesis moves to recover and incorporate some of these pedagogical questions. It notes how educational concerns have intensified this debate over the past, but there has been little analysis of their influence in Australia. Chapters Three and Four examine the process of syllabus development and some of the debates over methodology and teaching approach in order to more accurately trace this pedagogical dimension of history education.

81 George W. Bush, Why is History Important? (History News Network, 18 September 2002 [cited 19 September 2002]); available from http://hnn.us/articles/980.html. (I thank Peter Seixas for forwarding these speeches to me.)
Chapter Three
The syllabus in the making
Introduction

So far this thesis has concentrated on one aspect of curriculum development: how a curriculum or syllabus registers social movements, trends, ideologies and beliefs. In this sense 'curriculum is an idea, a construction of society. It is a statement of what society values: what it wants to continue, what it wants to change, what it wants to renew.' The first two chapters introduced this social aspect of History syllabuses and texts, and noted a mounting tension over history teaching that has both reflected and in turn intensified wider debates over the past.

Beyond the contested nature of the past, however, debates over school History are very much embedded in ideas about teaching and learning, about pedagogy, about 'the child'. For curriculum is also a practice: 'It is what we do intentionally in schools'. In developing this idea, I expand the initial historiographical analysis to encompass changing educational philosophies, with the aim of problematising history education as a site of contested collective memory. History syllabuses, their design and the responses they incite are important primary source material for the thesis. Section I provided moments of their reception, politicisation and controversial development—it showed how they constitute a powerful and compelling site of memory politics. This chapter examines the syllabus in its own right. It provides an outline of a syllabus, how it constitutes part of the curriculum and works as a document of teaching and learning. It also analyses how the syllabus forms part of a larger educational process, from curriculum design and intent to its enaction in schools.

History syllabuses define history at a point in time. They capture and represent contemporary attitudes and beliefs about the past. They also express what is deemed nationally 'relevant'—and thus prescribe what aspects of the past children should learn. Through the process of syllabus development, this captured image of the past is realised within the content and method of the syllabus in its final form. Syllabus committees, boards of study, assessment authorities and educational consultants are involved, their interests overlapping as the syllabuses are reviewed and re-drafted. Each has an investment in the production of the past. The first part of this chapter examines the

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2 Ibid.
construction of the nation through the History syllabus. This capacity to define gives the syllabus the power to ‘make history’—it has come to be a powerful mechanism and medium of government and interest groups intent on having their views, their history, represented and publicly sanctioned.

Thus the History syllabus, with its power to define the nation’s past, produces an account of the nation itself. Its methodological approach is also weighted with a history of contention and debate, which marks a critical turning point for the thesis: the second half of this chapter offers an analysis of the syllabus that moves beyond its capacity to define ‘our history’ to a consideration of how it constructs the discipline pedagogically.

Approaches to teaching History have shifted markedly over the past thirty or forty years. By prescribing certain historical and pedagogical methods, a syllabus authorises particular educational approaches to the past: the classroom may be assigned in a particular way, or assessment might favourably weight particular activities. Critically, the dictation of teaching approach reveals how historical content and method come together in the effort to teach the nation.

The research for this chapter was greatly strengthened by an opportunity to observe the 2003 Victorian History Syllabus Review. I was able to watch the review process and consider the complex ways a syllabus is constructed and implemented. This opportunity demonstrated that syllabus development is not simply a contest over the past—and the Review provided a point of departure to explore some of the aspects of history education beyond the public and political debates over content. The syllabus review became a case study to examine how the idea of the nation is conceived and perpetuated throughout these official learning documents; it further invited analysis of the methodological approach it advocated.

**Defining Nation**

Members of the 2003 VCE History Review Committee were worried that enrolments in Australian History were stagnant at the post-compulsory level. The VCE [Victorian Certificate of Education] is the post-compulsory qualification for Victorian secondary students. Its assessment results guide the rankings for university entrance, and unlike in Years 7-10, post-compulsory subjects ‘compete’ with each other for student numbers.
This competitive market highlighted an apparent irrelevance that Australian History seemed to hold for many students. Compared with fifteen thousand Victorian students who chose to study VCE Psychology in 2003, little over two thousand were studying the history of their own nation. All on the Review panel were obviously keen to see enrolments rise, and they struggled to develop a syllabus that would look ‘new’, ‘relevant’ and ‘interesting’ and still retain historical integrity. Despite the manifest concern over student numbers in the post-compulsory units of Australian History, there was considerable pressure from teachers and curriculum representatives to get the syllabus ‘right’.

The Committee faced a series of problems and perceptions about Australian History more broadly and the existing study design in particular. First, a number of teachers considered the coverage of the subject to be too large for students in their final year of school. Some complained that they had to race through two hundred years of history in only three school terms before the final exams. While the initial draft units of Australian History continued to break the subject into four sequential time periods from 1788 to 2000, teachers maintained that it was again ‘squeezing’ too much content into a one-year course. Australian History was frequently compared with other VCE Histories such as Revolutions, whose enrolments more than doubled after its introduction in the early 1990s. The second meeting of the Australian History Review Committee specifically asked why students selected ‘Revolutions instead of Australian History?’. The Committee discussed whether units such as Revolutions and Renaissance Italy attracted students and teachers because they were more prescriptive, and therefore easier to guide study and assessment tasks. ‘One option is to make Australian History similarly prescriptive and concentrate on the big ideas of Australian History’, the second meeting determined. ‘Can the committee design the study to be more prescriptive yet retain the

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1. In 2003 14,787 students were enrolled in VCE Psychology; 2042 were studying VCE Australian History (Data from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority).
richness in content?\textsuperscript{7} The pressure for a more clearly defined curriculum structure reflected concern over the volume of content that teachers felt had overloaded VCE Australian History. The desire for greater prescription also highlighted the increasing influence of assessment in final year study. Both students and teachers favoured a syllabus that would carefully and explicitly outline the assessable content and coverage of the subject.

The historian Mark Peel suggested that the Review might consider replacing the dense chronology of events in the existing unit with discrete turning points or ‘nodal points’ of Australian history.\textsuperscript{8} Rather than being rushed through two hundred years of content, he proposed, teachers might enjoy a fresh approach that examined in greater detail key historical periods such as colonisation and convictism, nation-making at the turn of the twentieth Century, or Australian cultural history during the 1950s and 60s. Yet there were reservations from some teachers that this would exclude topics such as the 1850s Victorian goldrushes, and would therefore disappoint many teachers. The quest for new content might alienate those who had spent years building significant teaching programmes, resources and research activities around traditional topic areas. Through the next series of Committee meetings there was considerable disagreement over how these nodal points could revive Australian History without losing the context important in the ‘national story’.\textsuperscript{9}

After pressure from within and without the Committee, Gold was restored to VCE Australian History, albeit with a different emphasis. Its restoration was expedient—teachers who had well developed courses threatened to stop teaching Australian History altogether if the topic area was removed. One teacher complained that ‘Every year I have been able to take students to Sovereign Hill to really get into the gold rushes. In a school that struggles to get students engaged in humanities subjects this excursion was a major incentive.’ Another worried that ‘many schools will find the resources they have built up over the years redundant’, and decided that after

\textsuperscript{7} Minutes of the second meeting of the VCE History Review Committee: Australian History, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 10 July 2003.
consultation with their school's History faculty, they 'would not offer Australian History from 2005 if this draft was implemented in its final form'.

Beyond that consideration, the argument over Gold also demonstrated how different factors determine what versions of Australian history are considered for inclusion. While the initial study design had attempted to create an historical approach without a strict chronology, the exclusion of Gold challenged many teachers' conceptions of that history. Such contention demonstrated how any attempt to revise and redefine the national narrative in a History syllabus is significantly mediated by the review process itself.

While there is a theoretical difference between 'syllabus' and 'curriculum' in educational literature, the distinction is rarely so clear in practice. As the educationist Murray Print has defined, a History syllabus outlines a course of study, its content and methodology, as well as guidelines for its assessment. The idea of a curriculum encompasses a whole learning document of intent, rationale and 'detailed learning activities and evaluation procedures'. It can be narrowly oriented or may comprise the educational direction of an entire department. A syllabus is generally a list of assessable content areas. It is 'clearly intended to be a subsection of curriculum and as such it is subsumed within the broader concept'. Increasingly, however, contemporary understandings of curriculum as subject-based have pervaded the public domain, and as such, 'syllabus' has become a generic term for subject documents of teaching and learning. In New South Wales, furthermore, it is the 'syllabus' that outlines the content and assessment of subject areas, rather than subject 'curricula'. In other states, such as Victoria, the curriculum framework is divided into areas of 'study design', rather than subject syllabuses.

The 2003 Victorian Review constituted one episode in a continuous process of syllabus design and enactment. It involved a re-evaluation of 'the nation', another stock-take to establish which stories and events remained relevant and essential to Australian History. The New South Wales Board of Studies has a similar process of review, writing and development, and implementation. The Board of Studies is committed to a syllabus

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10 Archive of schools' responses to the 2003 draft of Australian History (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority).
11 Ibid., 7.
12 Ibid., 5.
development process that provides opportunities for consultation, establishes achievable timelines and ensures quality syllabuses. Such reviews characterise the work of education departments and curriculum bodies around Australia. The process involves significant consultation between teacher representatives from government and independent schools, as well as adult education providers. Representatives from the education department, academic historians and syllabus writers also take part. Each have different constituencies (school, government, academic) with different responsibilities and understandings of History’s place in schools that can generate considerable disagreement during the review process.

The realities of constant revision thus paradoxically play against the apparently objective, static text of the syllabus documents as they appear in final form. Usually prescribed for about five years, a change of government or policy frequently returns public scrutiny to a syllabus document and it is rewritten accordingly. The growing frequency of such reviews is also revealing. The 1957 New South Wales History syllabus remained virtually unchanged until 1972. Yet its 1992 counterpart was replaced in 1998. As such, the apparent duty of the syllabus to define, the language of authority it propounds, is perpetually undermined by an increasing tension with demands for revision and review.

Far from being a final teaching or learning document, therefore, curriculum defines a process of development and realisation from its initiation and phases of planning, through to implementation and evaluation. There has been an increasingly inclusive interpretation of what curriculum comprises. The term has moved beyond a prescription of course content to encompass the effects of assessment, teaching, staffing and policy on learning. In this sense, as the curriculum theorist Garth Boomer has elaborated, curriculum is not a ‘prepackaged’ course or unit of study to be taught without

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13 *The Board's Syllabus Development Process* (Sydney: Board of Studies, 2001), 1-3.
15 Carmel Young, 'Historical Revivalism', *AHA Bulletin*, no. 88 (1999): 24. See also Richard Waterhouse, ‘Interview with Richard Waterhouse’ (Sydney, 22 April 2003); and Carmel Young, ‘Interview with Carmel Young’ (Sydney, 24 April 2003) for further discussion on the debate and discussion of that review process.
change, but 'a jointly enacted composition that grows and changes as it proceeds'.

'Curriculum is a process, beginning with the teacher's or the curriculum writer's
conception, proceeding through planning, and eventually reaching enactment and
evaluation.'8 The syllabus also constitutes a process in this way, where an analysis of its
design and implementation is considered, in addition to its subject content or coverage.9

An understanding of 'process' within syllabus and curriculum design has been
critical for this research. The continuous cycle of syllabus revision and rewriting,
manifest in the Victorian Review and in the public responses to syllabus documents that
were discussed in Chapters One and Two, are part of a political and social process of
national definition and articulation. There has also been considerable scholarly research
on the process of syllabus reception in schools and its cognitive effects on students.10
Such studies offer a longer analysis of curriculum from initiation to assessment and also
engage with empirical research on student learning.11 They further encompass research
that deals with pedagogy outside the stated curriculum, where 'hidden' meaning is
transmitted beyond the information stipulated in the teaching documents themselves. In
this way, as the educationist Jon Cook has revealed, the substance of the syllabus is
constructed in the classroom as much as in the document itself.12 'Stated' and 'enacted'
curricula thus reveal very different understandings of national definition: while a stated
curriculum produces an official account of the nation's history, students and teachers
simultaneously operate outside its prescriptions of content and method.13

9 Print, Curriculum Development and Design, 95-6. See also: Jon Cook, 'Negotiating the Curriculum:
Programming for Learning', in Negotiating the Curriculum, eds Boomer, Lester, Onore and Cook,
27.
10 For instance: Colin Marsh, Key Concepts for Understanding Curriculum (London: Falmer Press,
1992), 180; Print, Curriculum Development and Design, 3-10. For a further discussion on stated and
enacted curriculum see Tony Taylor, The Place of History in the School Curriculum (National Centre
for History Education, n.d. [cited 4 June 2004]); available from
11 See, for example, Peter Lee, Understanding History (Centre for the Study of Historical
Consciousness, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 2001 [cited 3 March 2003];
available from http://www.cshc.ubc.ca/viewabstract.php?id=5; Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby,
'Progression of Historical Understanding among Students Ages 7-14', in Knowing, Teaching and
Learning History: National and International Perspectives, eds Peter N. Stearns, Peter Seixas, and Sam
Wineburg (New York & London: New York University Press, 2000), 199-222; Sam Wineburg,
'Making Historical Sense', in Knowing, Teaching and Learning History, 306-335.
12 Cook, 'Negotiating the Curriculum: Programming for Learning'. See also Taylor, The Place of
History in the School Curriculum.
13 For more analyses of these central tensions between syllabus intention and enaction, see:
This thesis is not intended to evaluate the syllabus in the classroom or the curricular 'gap' between design and enactment. It examines syllabus discourse not for its hidden power, but its manifest construction of the nation despite the process of syllabus development. The language of these teaching documents is my immediate interest here. A 'static voice' dominates these texts. In the case of Australian History, each syllabus defines a point in time. Each attempts to encompass the past at that moment. The language is serene, objective, neutral—far removed from the controversy of syllabus committees or opinion pages of newspapers. According to the 1999 Victorian History Study Design, for example, 'The period 1850-1901 in Australia's history is characterised by expansion and consolidation. Expansion into new physical frontiers, new industries, new ideas and political forces and consolidation of political and economic ties with Britain.'

The language is both descriptive and didactic, and it is static, unselconscious of imminent review and replacement, with a tone of measured authority and knowledge. There is no sense of contingency or openness to challenge. The language of textbooks also employs an authoritative tone. Critiques of textbook discourse and content are particularly applicable for analysing syllabuses: the language of these two 'genres', in particular their overt connection of the nation to its narratives, expresses their powerful capacity to define the nation through its history. The critical education theorist, Michael Apple has highlighted this 'claim' to neutrality by educational discourse—'the language of learning tends to be apolitical and ahistorical, thus hiding the complex nexus of political and economic power and resources that lies behind a considerable amount of curriculum organisation'. He maintained that 'Schools do not only control people; they also help control meaning'.

Most scholarship on the politics of pedagogy has concentrated on textbooks. Especially in North America, where texts have significant sway, there has been

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Robert Phillips discusses this capacity for meaning to be constructed in the classroom (i.e. outside the syllabus) in relation to the enactment of the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom, where he argues that despite the stipulated national knowledge, the final document may be read as 'an open text... subject by the reader to interpretation': Robert Phillips, History Teaching, Nationhood and the State: A Study in Educational Politics (London: Cassell, 1998), 127.

History Study Design (Carlton: Board of Studies, Victoria, 1999), 111.

considerably more research into their content and historical emphases. Unlike those in Australia, North American textbooks have a powerful influence on the curriculum in many schools because of their richness of historical detail, the ease of their lesson plans, and their presentation of historical sources. Furthermore, textbooks are commodities. They are a market-driven commercial enterprise.\(^\text{6}\) In Australia on the other hand, syllabuses are funded by the government and produced under the direction of Departments of Education. These two educational formats nevertheless share a pedagogical approach to the past. The voice of both texts is objective, neutral and closed.

A deconstructive approach is useful here, and educational theorists such as Suzanne de Castell, Alan Luke and Carmen Luke have provided sustained examinations of the power of school textbooks. 'Each historical and contemporary genre of text has served particular social and cultural purposes, and correspondingly has generated varying literary conventions, discursive and linguistic forms and, for targeted audiences, interpretive strategies.'\(^\text{7}\) Such analysis begins to identify a distinguishable discourse of education texts, where the language, tone and meaning are not determined by content or origin. The authors contend that the power of the 'printed word' creates 'curriculum knowledge'.\(^\text{8}\) Textbooks use language that reflects a discrete discourse bound by unique educational and written conventions: 'It is our contention that the effectiveness of the textbook is, above all, dependent on its status as part of a comprehensive and rule-bound institutional order.'\(^\text{9}\) Like syllabuses, 'the form and content of school texts do indeed frame school knowledge in a form associated with neutral objectivity.'\(^\text{10}\)

Such discourse theory opens up analysis of textbooks beyond the content of their words to the authority such words purvey. The language of history texts represents more than 'history' itself; the tone of objectivity and apparent neutrality signify the role and function of these texts in a way that their content cannot. The textbooks comprise an educational genre where political or historical bias is absent, but still produces 'an

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\(^{10}\) Apple, 'The Politics of the Textbook', 5.


\(^{9}\) Ibid., 238.

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 247.
account of the nation. Through a stylised neutrality they normalise the nation. Its history becomes 'our history', and its contention is effectively erased.\(^3\)

Dan Porat has analysed the way history textbooks in Israel sustain a national heritage and identity. 'History textbooks communicate a contemporary past', Porat suggested, 'one which matches the prevailing social and political needs'.\(^2\) They serve a social goal of transmitting national identity and cultural heritage. Porat sensed that textbooks are essentially bound by their own discursive form: they cannot move away from an often narrowly nationalist narrative, or from a limited understanding of its history. Moreover, he continued, we should not expect them to do so. Rather than change the genre of the textbook, which is inherently constrictive, he concluded that history education itself should be expanded to include other readings of and approaches to the past. 'History textbooks communicate a contemporary past, one which matches the prevailing social and political needs'; they serve a function that does not need to be removed, but rather complemented.\(^3\) The American writer Frances FitzGerald has suggested similarly that the whole purpose of history textbooks is to promote national comprehension. 'History textbooks for elementary and secondary schools are not like other kinds of histories', she maintained. First and foremost, 'they are essentially nationalistic histories, they are written not to explore but to instruct—to tell children what their elders want them to know about their country'.\(^4\)

Such research suggests that despite a growing critique in the 1970s and 1980s, textbooks have continued to reinforce an exclusive account of the nation's past.\(^5\) It is this very function of defining the nation (and the expectation that they should do so) that makes them a contested genre. Debate over the power of textbooks, especially their language and vocabulary, has at times enveloped entire school and regional

\(^3\) Meanwhile, there has been a growing challenge by historians and educationists to bring such historical debate 'into the classroom', rather than producing an unproblematic and ultimately limiting account of the nation's history. Their argument will be examined in the second part of this chapter.


\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Frances FitzGerald, America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), 47.

Like Australian debates over the use of ‘invasion’ in History syllabuses and teaching documents, disputes over textbook content provide a compelling site of memory politics, and go to the heart of wider debates over the nation’s past. It is the power to define, in this case the nation, that sets schoolbooks apart from other texts. And it is in this power of national definition that makes both the content and discourse of textbooks equally pertinent to this discussion.

With this educational understanding of the nation in mind, we may return to the initial theme of the thesis, that history teaching is a site of contested collective memory. In his writings on history education, James Wertsch clarified the link between the textbook and collective memory. Wertsch maintained that the text was not collective memory itself, or even identity, but a cultural tool of the state, ‘the producer of official, obligatory narratives’. Textbooks are critical in this cultural transaction since ‘cultural tools that lie behind imagined communities are typically employed in order to create a collective that can be clearly recognised’. In her thoughtful examination of social memory, the Canadian historian Jenéa Tallentire has also looked at school texts as sources of collective memory alongside war memorials and museums. As these studies show, History textbooks constitute a discourse that reproduces national and political struggles and identities.

In this sense, textbooks are central to the development and expression of national identity. Their language is a means to understand the nation. De Castell, Luke and Luke have written of ‘the unique and significant social function’ of the school text. What sets the textbook apart from the ‘many kinds of text available to the modern reader’ is its purpose ‘to represent to each generation of students an official sanctioned, authorised version of human knowledge’. The authors argue that the school text is a valid, indeed a vital source for understanding the political motives of the nation. The discourse of school texts is ‘a text in [its] own right’ that retains ‘historically grounded,

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37 It is telling that public attention and argument seldom arise over History topics other than Australian History.
40 de Castell et al., ‘Introduction’.
culturally significant information in a durable and objectified form across time and space.\textsuperscript{41}

There has been no such comparable research to date on the syllabus in Australia, yet it too has invoked the vital connection between schooling and nation. In the preface to the Victorian SOSE Curriculum and Standards Framework II, Susan Pascoe, then Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, articulated that 'a curriculum embodies the aspirations a community holds for the next generation of learners'.\textsuperscript{42} In the words of Ivor Goodson, curriculum is 'this most manifest of social constructions',\textsuperscript{43} and understanding the connections between education and nation sustain the idea of an educational community with a shared knowledge and a sense of coherence and belief.

Discussing the importance of a national core curriculum for Australian schools in the 1980s, the Curriculum Development Centre put forward the view that 'a national curriculum policy was essential if schools are to effectively serve society and the students'.\textsuperscript{44} An Australian Studies syllabus for primary schools that was developed by the Bicentennial Australian Studies School Project as part of the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 also provides an apt example. The document, which outlined the importance of understanding the nation, had been initiated with review questions 'what should we be teaching our students about Australia?' and 'how do we go about developing an Australian curriculum?'.\textsuperscript{45} Twelve schools from New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory took part in the review, and local community and local environment became a major curriculum resource in the schools. The rationale of the syllabus, its affirmation of Australian identity, was defined in terms of civic and community belonging, citizenship and nationality:

It is a right for students to have the validity of their own life experiences confirmed through their education. An effective education must be founded on the security and confidence engendered

\textsuperscript{41} de Castell et al., 'Beyond Criticism: The Authority of the School Textbook', 246.
\textsuperscript{42} Cited in Curriculum and Standards Framework II: Studies of Society and Environment (Melbourne: Board of Studies Victoria, 2000), iv.
\textsuperscript{43} Goodson, Studying Curriculum, 16.
\textsuperscript{44} Ian Welch, 'In Support of Ian Gray, The History Teacher', Agora, vol. 17, no. 5 (1983): M16.
\textsuperscript{45} Developing an Australian Curriculum, (Woden, ACT: Curriculum Development Centre, 1988), 1.
by an acceptance of social and cultural identity as an individual, a member of a community and as part of a nation.46

In the 1999 Tasmanian History syllabus for Year 10 one of the outcomes of the subject was to ‘gain an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen both in the past and in modern Australia’.47 In his foreword to the 2001 curriculum framework in Western Australia, the State Minister for Education similarly situated students within a national set of understandings and objectives:

All Western Australian students need appropriate knowledge, understandings, skills and values to participate and prosper in a changing world and a new millennium. The embedding of civics and ethics within this framework is essential if we are to contribute to students’ sense of pride in themselves, their school, their environment and their country.48

In the 1999 Victorian History Study Design, a link was also made between ‘history’ and national identity. ‘Students learn about their historical past, their shared history and the people, ideas and events that have created present societies and cultures’. Moreover, the ‘study builds a conceptual and historical framework within which students can develop an understanding of the issues of their own time and place’.49 Australian History has a unique capacity to define and foster national identity because it ‘provides a framework in which to explore the experiences of men and women from the beginnings of European settlement until today’, the Study Design stated.50 ‘Changed patterns of migration, particularly in the post-World War II period, and the growth of social movements, such as feminism, Aboriginal civil rights and multiculturalism, have led to a reassessment of our past and to new understandings of what it means to be Australian.51

The urge to define the nation in the syllabus was further evinced in the 2003 Victorian Review, where the debate over the inclusion of Gold was conducted in terms of an appropriate representation of Australia’s past. Analysis of the syllabus as a political and national construct suggests that contest over History curriculum development is

46 Ibid., 87.
50 Ibid., 109.
51 Ibid.
animated by concerns that go to the heart of wider debates over national identity and collective memory. Such readings of syllabus and curriculum locate history education as central to the transmission of national narratives. I suggest, furthermore, that this capacity to define the nation is mediated by the educational process of the History syllabus, so that ‘teaching the nation’ is at once a political and pedagogical concern.

**Defining learning**

According to the 1999 Victorian *History Study Design*, History ‘is the practice of understanding and making meaning of the past’. The rationale in the History syllabus for Victorian post-compulsory students outlined the subject and expectations for its study:

This study builds a conceptual and historical framework within which students can develop an understanding of the issues of their own time and place. It seeks to extend students’ cultural, economic, social and political understanding while developing analytical skills and imagination.56

History is not simply an expression of the nation, identity, collective memory or a collective past. It is also a discipline. More than something we learn, History is something we do. The syllabus rationale is critical for this explication. It guides the principles of study in each syllabus and the reasons behind its inception. The rationale explains how the subject is understood and approached, and provides a definition of teaching methodology.

By outlining its historical and pedagogical approach, a syllabus frames the subject. It legitimates certain educational methods and interpretations of the subject. During a period of decentralisation and deregulation in Western Australia in the 1990s, for example, the new curriculum document specifically advocated choice and flexibility: it ‘is neither a curriculum nor a syllabus, but a framework identifying common learning outcomes for all students’. The framework ‘is intended to give students and teachers

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56 James V. Wertsch, ‘Is it Possible to Teach Beliefs, as Well as Knowledge about History?’ in *Knowing, Teaching and Learning History*, 38-50; Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*. See also Goodson, *Studying Curriculum*, 99, who wondered why History in the United Kingdom had ‘been embraced as a “foundation subject”, even though it is quite clearly a subject in decline within the schools’. He concluded that the subject had been reinvigorated ‘to revise and refocus national identity and ideology’.

flexibility and ownership over curriculum in a dynamic and rapidly-changing world environment. In Victoria, a wave of progressive political and educational reform swept through the Department in the 1980s after the election of the first Labor government in a quarter of a century. According to Maryellen Davidson, who worked on the History Study Design for the new VCE in 1991, this provided an opportunity to open up new approaches to teaching history that "asked students "to identify power, values status and position" and to "examine voice and absences" in documents. It introduced a study of historiography and questioned the distinction between primary and secondary sources.

The development of the Koori history unit in the same study design also illustrated how a syllabus can construct an educational approach to a discipline. In consultation with Aboriginal education groups, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority agreed that Koori people should be the subject in every sentence. "Since the European invasion," the unit outlined, "Koori people have been fighting for 'self-determination'."

Despite the many factors that have operated to inhibit this, Koori people have initiated and established networks and interlinking structures that effectively service community need and are culturally grounded in tradition and history.

The explicit Indigenous presence in the syllabus acknowledged the document's power of definition. The way it named, identified and analysed Koori people indicated shifting government concerns that included recognition of the power and authority of syllabus language. Koori education consultants identified a need for Aboriginal agency to be recognised and prescribed in the syllabus. In a move that drew on changing historical ideas, as well as the educational means to teach them, the study design stipulated the centrality of Aboriginal perspectives as an educational response to colonisation in Australia.

The organisation of content also reveals how historical and pedagogical approaches converge in the syllabus. Questions of content are raised in every syllabus: they cannot cover everything, so there must be ways of sifting and sorting the fragments.

54 'Background', *Curriculum Framework.*
55 Maryellen Davidson, 'Interview with Maryellen Davidson' (Melbourne, 23 April 2002).
of the past. For some, moreover, content is the most important element of this process. Geoffrey Partington has insisted that ‘selection of content is the most important decision to be made in the planning of an historical education’. Kevin Donnelly has similarly criticised progressive educational approaches for ignoring ‘the vital quality of content’. Their comments evoke educationists such as Ravitch and Hirsch, who have similarly insisted on the primacy of content for fostering cultural literacy and core national knowledge.

Meanwhile, there have been increasing calls for more open-ended approaches to history teaching so that alternative interpretation and an explicit historiographical dimension can be included in the classroom. Proponents of this approach also reveal how critical syllabus structure is to teaching and learning. Linda Levstik and Peter Seixas have both insisted that history curricula include different perspectives and approaches. Why is it, Levstik asked, that in the midst of such overt public historical disagreement, a multiplicity of stories is rarely taught? Seixas has been an equally adamant proponent of historical heterogeneity in the classroom: ‘it would be self-defeating to attempt to resolve these arguments before we get into the classroom, in order to provide students with a finished truth. Rather, we need to bring the arguments into the classroom.

A few syllabuses have incorporated and encouraged this element of debate. Their plurality and openness challenges assertions that ‘teaching the nation’ can only foster a prescriptive national identity. In the Australian History unit of the 1999 Victorian Study Design, advice for teachers included such examples as ‘discuss/debate whether the European arrival was a “settlement” or an “invasion”’. The New South Wales History Extension syllabus, a unit that has recently been introduced and is aimed at more

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advanced Year 12 students, similarly explores different historical approaches within the syllabus itself, and requires students to analyse historiographical issues through contrasting readings of the past.\textsuperscript{63} By accommodating such argument within the subject itself, these syllabuses provide an alternative approach to Australian History. Contrasting versions of the past are taught for their contest and diversity, rather than as one fixed national narrative.

The approach to history outlined in the syllabus, its method and its content, comes together through the articulation of the subject in the document. The importance of language has been analysed in a number of ways: how it defines the nation; how one word can become a spark of contention. In this second half of the chapter, the concern has been with how language can define learning itself: the explication of pedagogical approach is critical to how History is taught. While there are many curriculum approaches that reach across a spectrum from learner-centred and problem-based, to core-learning with explicit educational standards, a number of curricular conventions dominate syllabus documents.\textsuperscript{64} The syllabus rationales explain why history is important, why it is 'relevant' to contemporary society, and how it provides unique insights into cultures and times. The teaching approach advances Aims or Objectives that express desired student accomplishments, learning achievements and understandings such as developing 'an understanding of change, continuity, causation and evidence over time', 'skills in responding to historical evidence creatively and critically to make meaning of the past', and acquiring 'a broad historical knowledge, including a historical map within which to locate their detailed studies'.\textsuperscript{65} Explanations of expected student attainment are important for the way they structure syllabus intent and provide a broad outline of syllabus direction for students and teachers.\textsuperscript{66}

Such guides have an important historical context of their own, which demonstrates the importance of including method in any analysis of history education. The emergence of explicit educational objectives in History syllabuses in the 1950s and 1960s enabled teachers to articulate the increasingly influential pedagogical aims of

\textsuperscript{63} HSC History Extension (Sydney: Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999).
\textsuperscript{64} Print, Curriculum Development and Design, 99-104.
\textsuperscript{65} History Study Design, 1999, 9.
inquiry–based learning. In Australia, as elsewhere, Skills and Attitude objectives became the focus of History syllabuses that no longer emphasised fixed bodies of knowledge. In 1956 the American psychologist Benjamin Bloom edited with his colleagues a series on the *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. Their initial research on cognitive teaching objectives contained a comprehensive system of classification, whose aim was to clarify objectives in teaching documents for teachers and assessors. The editors felt that providing formal classification methods for qualitative values such as ‘understanding’ or ‘comprehension’ would give a helpful structure for curriculum development and assessment. The volumes registered a growing international shift towards the use of educational objectives to define and direct teaching and learning.

By the 1970s History syllabus objectives in Australia included fostering skills of analysis, comprehension and interpretation. Such objectives were influenced by pressure for educational practicality. Radical educational theory increasingly criticised the perceived exclusiveness of academic education that was irrelevant for students not going on to further study. As Chapter Four will examine more closely, a rapid expansion of secondary education in the 1950s and 1960s altered the student composition in Australian schools. The traditional emphasis on post-compulsory schooling as a preparation for tertiary studies was supplemented with a more progressive and inclusive orientation designed to prepare students for life and work.

This ‘new vocationalism’ brought with it a reorganisation of learning methods and educational priorities. History education adopted a greater emphasis on concepts and learning processes, and content became less prescriptive. Dorothy Bell from the Curriculum Branch of the Victorian Education Department argued that the development of intellectual skills such as decision-making, communication and research were essential if schools were to promote ‘individual development—with helping

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students to interact and function effectively as individuals.\textsuperscript{60} Knowledge acquired in school needed to have social as well as academic application.

Thus the achievement of cognitive skills became increasingly prominent in curriculum statements. Teachers and curriculum developers came to see memorisation and rote learning as antithetical to the personal development of students. The 'new' approaches to History teaching emphasised changing attitudes to the classroom, and to learning itself. In 1982 Henry Macintosh evaluated the British School Council's History 13–16 Project, which was a new and pedagogically progressive History curriculum developed for early secondary students. He described the Project's premise as one where secondary students 'should have history presented to them not as a body of information but as an approach to knowledge'.\textsuperscript{70} Dorothy Bell assessed developments of history teaching in Victoria in the 1960s and 1970s and likewise argued that they were influencing new patterns of syllabus development. This work had 'produced a syllabus framework which was not derived from chronology or content, but from consideration of two factors—the needs of students and contribution of history to those needs'.\textsuperscript{71}

Objectives encouraged a coherent application of new pedagogical theory. Some felt that as content-driven curricula were outdated, traditional modes of learning should be replaced with the provision of a more productive, student-focused classroom environment. In 1962 D.M. Bennett, the Chief Research Officer of the Australian Council for Education Research, asserted that content-driven curricula were out-dated, for 'Objectives rather than knowledge acquisition are important'.\textsuperscript{72} Others were less keen to do away entirely with content, but acknowledged that objectives should be central in curriculum organisation. For the prominent English education scholar Paul H. Hirst, adequate curriculum planning 'demands first a clear set of objectives that constitute the point of the whole enterprise, and then a programme of activities with an appropriate content as the means to the desired ends'.\textsuperscript{73} Hirst recommended that as expressions of educational direction, curricula needed specific objectives that brought together content

\textsuperscript{60} Dorothy Bell, 'The School Curriculum and History', \textit{Agora}, vol. 11, no. 5 (1977): 7.
\textsuperscript{71} Dorothy Bell, 'Trends in History Teaching in the 70s: A Reflection', \textit{Agora}, vol. 13, no. 5 (1979): 10.
and method.⁷⁴ 'We must set about finding practical and efficient means for achieving the full range of these objectives and we must find in every way to seek to assess the value of the means we use, being prepared to change both content and methods where these are patently not the best for achieving the objectives.'⁷⁵ Jerome Bruner, an influential American educational theorist, also advocated the centrality of objectives in encouraging students to 'learn how to learn'. More than simply teaching students a set of skills, learning itself was a skill that needed to be taught and outlined in the syllabus.⁷⁶

The historian and Social Studies advocate Edwin Fenton had similarly recommended the adoption of objectives-based teaching methods because of their 'democratic' tendencies: he felt that a scheme of differentiated objectives would better facilitate students' personal development.⁷⁷ Fenton strongly supported the structure that objectives brought to teaching. 'Without precise objectives teacher and students together will drift rudderless from September through June.'⁷⁸ Moreover, objectives provided the basis for assessing inquiry-based learning: 'an effective teaching strategy must be measured by an evaluating instrument'.⁷⁹ His understanding of education helped underpin the adoption of integrated subjects such as Social Studies.

Many supposers of Social Studies believed that History constituted an archaic approach to knowledge. They felt the academic discipline was unsuited to changing student needs and demanded that 'relevance' replace rote learning. A Social Studies programme in Victoria, titled 'Man in Society—An Approach Through History', was trialled in 1970. According to Bell, it was chosen because it emphasised history as a 'vehicle for broader understandings about the nature of human society'. The course promised a teaching approach independent of content and chronology—its aims were the concepts and skills development applicable to understanding other places and times.⁸⁰

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⁷⁵ Hirst, 'The Logic of the Curriculum': 145.
⁷⁸ Ibid., 4.
⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.
⁸⁰ Bell, 'Trends in History Teaching in the 70s.'
The trial of this integrated approach to history created significant discussion over teaching methodology. The iconic Victorian secondary teacher, Lloyd Evans, expressed a desire for history teaching to be structured by its methodology rather than its content, but was keen to maintain a disciplinary approach to the subject. Others criticised the breakdown of traditional disciplines and the shift from content to objectives. A number of Australian educationists alleged that such moves weakened the academic standards of school education and threatened History as a discipline. Detractors such Geoffrey Partington and Alan Barcan dismissed the 'new' approaches for lacking rigour and method. Partington criticised the 'tactics' of curriculum writers for using objectives that, by saying everything, said nothing. He claimed there were instances where objectives called for an end to students' ethnocentrism at the same time as emphasising the importance of their own cultural inheritance. Barcan worried that the new approaches to teaching and learning were too progressive. The decline in traditional humanist values sapped academic rigour. Such critics overlooked the significant preoccupation of the new pedagogy with standards and citizenship. Fenton himself demanded a high degree of educational accountability. 'We should be tough-minded and realistic about our expenditure of public funds for education', he maintained. 'We should insist that teachers and school administrators justify expenditures by demonstrating achievement through changed behaviour. The process is complex, and it involves a number of steps arranged in logical order. Objectives are only the beginning.'

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83 Partington, 'How Can Curricula beAnalysed?': 202.
84 Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education in New South Wales*, 239, 64-5.
This rhetoric was an early indication of the measurement and outputs orientation of outcomes-based education some thirty years later. Anticipating this, perhaps, a number of commentators were anxious about the potential limitations of stipulating objectives in syllabuses. D. Hogben expressed concern that the emphasis on objectives might not be a sustainable educational approach. It was necessary to ask ‘whether the requirement that all educational outcomes be translated into formal statements of highly specific behavioural objectives has been, or is likely to be, a profitable undertaking in the long term’.\textsuperscript{80} In 1981, the education scholar Brian Crittenden noted that curriculum design in the 1970s had become more expansive and less structured. He worried that this lack of content emphasis amounted to an anti-content and anti-elitist approach and could jeopardise academic standards.\textsuperscript{87}

Others had more divided opinions. Writing for Teaching History in 1972, T. Nash supported the introduction of objectives for the way they helped teachers understand the syllabus, and aided the direction of classes: ‘it is essential that History teachers know exactly what skills they are trying to teach and what attitudes and values they wish children to consider as well as the content they are imparting to their students’.\textsuperscript{88} Yet he remained doubtful. Although the objectives would be useful for teachers, he was sceptical of their theoretical premise. He considered them somewhat rudimentary; while helping to guide programmes of history teaching, the objectives were based on the assumption that teaching the programmes would lead automatically to their successful completion. ‘I have several doubts as to the validity of this behaviouralist approach as a model for educational practice’, he noted. ‘These draft objectives assume that the “input” of the objectives in lesson plans etc. will lead to the desired output.’\textsuperscript{89}

A few teachers warned that an emphasis on objectives might prescribe teaching methods and could lead to the prioritisation of quantifiable methods of assessment. David Kent, a frequent contributor to Teaching History, was particularly critical of the inherent tendency of assessment to favour measurable objectives. ‘Basic cognitive achievement has proved much easier to reduce to a taxonomy of objectives, and it is a


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
feature of objectives-based programmes the world over that they deal very successfully with the measurement of physical skills and the progressive hierarchy of formal cognition. Nevertheless, they were 'much less successful' when it came 'to attainment in the affective domain'.90

Overseas commentary raised similar concerns. Ian Steel, writing a British teacher's text in 1976, commented that the past decade had seen a proliferation of curriculum theory that gave increasing attention to the development of aims and objectives in history teaching.91 Like Nash, however, Steel had reservations about the utility of objectives: they favoured measurable results and tended to overlook complex, affective areas of student development.92

Such anxiety about the underlying limitations of objectives seems to have been reinforced by none other than the objectives expert, Benjamin S. Bloom, himself. In the second volume of the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, which classified affective educational goals, the editors noticed an alarming tendency for courses to drop or discontinue the assessment of affective educational objectives. 'We studied the history of several major courses at the general level of college', Bloom wrote. 'Typically, we found that in the original statement of objectives there was frequently as much emphasis given to affective objectives as to cognitive objectives.' However, 'as we followed some of these courses over a period of ten to twenty years, we found a rather rapid dropping of the affective objectives from the statements about the course to an almost complete disappearance of efforts at appraisal of student growth in this domain'.93

The findings of Bloom's team gave an early warning of how educational objectives can end up being prescriptive rather than liberating. This underlying tension between fostering student development and prescribing that development persists to this day. As emphases in curriculum design have shifted from the expression of educational objectives to a more defined series of outcomes, student expectations are increasingly bound by the need to quantify achievement. The child has been increasingly linked to

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92 Ibid., 30.
pedagogical aims and objectives in the syllabus, and this has facilitated a growing preoccupation with educational standards and expectations.

Despite considerable criticism, the influence of inquiry and objectives methods on history teaching continued to grow. Educationists sought to include affective as well as more tangible objectives in curricula. While cognitive skills objectives were more easily defined and assessed, some, such as Fenton, were committed to the integration of attitudes and values in skills development.\textsuperscript{94} Coinciding with Bloom's second volume of the \textit{Taxonomy of Educational Objectives} in the affective domain, Fenton's research emphasised the importance of teaching and evaluating behavioural objectives.\textsuperscript{95} Writing for the \textit{Australian History Teacher} in 1980, J.R. Fraenkel reinforced Fenton's contribution, and commented that while there was a growing recognition of the values involved in teaching, their explicit enunciation in philosophies of education remained inadequate. He felt that teaching facilitated emotional growth as well as intellectual development, and this ought to be recognised in syllabuses.\textsuperscript{96}

The integration of cognitive and affective development was enacted more and more in History syllabuses in Australia. A 1975 History discussion paper produced by the Secondary Schools Board of New South Wales contended that the objectives of education should help realise students' potential and develop their attitudes and skills. The Paper maintained that History was integral to the achievement of all three aims.\textsuperscript{97} In the 1981 New South Wales syllabus, the aims and objectives attempted to integrate knowledge, skills and attitudes.\textsuperscript{98} Students were expected to learn the skills of History, but more importantly and more broadly, to achieve a set of behavioural objectives that contributed to an overarching framework of educational goals. From the History Teachers' Association of Victoria in 1981 came 'an introductory series of lessons in history emphasising the historian's craft and methods' for Years 7-10. The objectives encouraged students to get away from the idea that History is to do with only great


\textsuperscript{98} \textit{History in NSW Secondary Schools Years 7-10} (Sydney: Secondary Schools Board NSW, 1981), 4.
things or events, and appreciate that it also deals with the ordinary. By the end of the course, students should have the ability to develop a hypothesis and support it with evidence, and display willingness to accept that ‘conclusions’ are ‘tentative’. Syllabus objectives began to encompass much more than just skills development. They included an increasingly holistic pedagogical approach, where each subject area contributed to a broad set of educational ideals.

The impact of educational objectives has been significant in Australia, and they have been used to rationalise both discrete and integrated approaches to history education. Writing for *Teaching History*, Phillip Harvey explained that the 1986 History syllabus in New South Wales had been developed as a critical response to excessively content-based syllabus approaches, and was significantly influenced by Jerome Bruner’s key objectives for historical inquiry: ‘objectives, divided into knowledge, skills and attitudes, were bound together by the overarching aim of developing a sense of historical perspective’. Objectives provided a means to frame the discipline, and they remained influential as an outline for historical study and assessment. In the 1992 Tasmanian History syllabus for Years 11 and 12, objectives such as ‘analyse, synthesise and evaluate historical evidence’ were complemented by assessment criteria that included demonstrating the use of ‘specific historical terminology’ and ‘an understanding of how societies develop and change over time’. In the 1999 Year 10 syllabus, objectives required students to ‘empathise with people from the past’ and ‘acquire a sense of historical time’.

Objectives gave the syllabus direction. They also provided explication, articulating the shifting educational philosophy from teacher–oriented to student–oriented classrooms. Denis Shemilt, an architect of the British 13–16 Project, emphasised that the merits of objectives–focused history teaching lay precisely in the difficulty of its assessment and in its consequent break from traditional modes of student evaluation. Objectives–based learning, Shemilt considered, was more difficult to assess

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100 Harvey, ‘Teachers’ Use of Skills Objectives’: 47.
101 11/12 HS231 B History (Hobart: Schools Board of Tasmania, 1992).
than exams that tested knowledge of content, but was much more student-oriented.  

While the measurement of student attainment required more thought and effort on the part of teachers, it also enabled a move away ‘from the confines of a chronological syllabus framework’. Syllabuses began to reflect this shift away from content towards new methods of historical knowledge and learning. The adoption of thematic syllabus structures and learning methods such as the ‘survey and depth’ studies was a significant departure from the conventional reliance on chronology, narrative and content.

More recently, the pressure to articulate educational objectives has shifted to an outcomes-based approach and assessment framework, where students’ achievements are measured against prescribed learning outcomes. In Australian colonial history, for instance, this could take the form of a requirement for students to evaluate ‘the colonial experience in a region, district or colony of Australia’. Outcomes-based education signaled social demands for greater clarification and accountability of student progress.

Their expression in history education will be examined further in Chapter Five. Educational objectives and outcomes spanned entire curriculum documents, rather than individual subjects, and contributed to a growing rationalization of education as a demonstrable social resource. Research published in education journals in Australia has focused on debate over the economic rationale behind developments in education.

The place of History teaching within such debate has not been analysed in great detail and will be considered below.

The shift from the expression of learning objectives to the stipulation of educational outcomes revealed the growing influence of management theories on

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educational method. Discussion of this shift further demonstrated how educational method and approach shape the syllabus. Like educational objectives, outcomes provided direction for syllabus development and classroom practice. They also accommodated different educational capabilities. Educational theorists such as Howard Gardner broadened understandings of student achievement and intelligence beyond conventional teaching and assessment practices. 'Only if we expand and reformulate our view of what counts as human intellect will we be more able to devise more appropriate ways of assessing it and more effective ways of educating it.'

The influence of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory has been considerable. It has guided the development of outcomes-based learning in Australia and elsewhere, and helped teachers and curriculum writers to be more explicit about expectations of teaching and learning. Frances Tyson, a former President of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria and a proponent of Gardner’s work, praised outcomes for providing the ‘opportunity to allow our students to reflect on how successfully they have met the outcomes of a course.’ The recognition of ‘core intelligences’, Tyson contended, was a guiding strength of outcomes education: ‘Once students become aware that there is more than one path to learning outcomes, they become more open to negotiating responsible ways to achieve goals and more responsible for their own learning.’

Outcomes education reconfigured the periodisation of schooling. Rather than basing achievement on yearly advances, outcomes assessed progress according to completion of key markers of achievement. Education scholars Bernard and Walter Brogan described the shift to teaching outcomes as a move from a traditional emphasis on inputs, to an outcomes emphasis on performance standards for ‘all students’. Outcomes-based education, they argued, ‘challenges school communities to establish clear and special educational goals and reconsider their academic mission’. The teaching methodology comprised an understanding of ‘Education as a Journey, not a Destination’,

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‘Continuous and Benchmarked Assessment’, ‘Students Ready for School-Schools Ready for Students’, and ‘A Community Partnership’.\textsuperscript{112}

This discourse is by no means unproblematic. Its self-help rhetoric, its description of educational emancipation and its modish banality make it easy prey for anyone keen to deconstruct the pervasive influence of ‘management speak’ on contemporary education.\textsuperscript{113} William Spady, the Director of the High Success Network in the United States, was an influential advocate of outcomes education and a key figure in the adoption of outcomes in Australia. Spady supported outcomes for the way they approached teaching and learning and understood the social aspects of education: ‘Nobody can function in life unless they become a lifelong learner. We therefore look at the arena of life for which students have to prepare, so that they know what the world of work will be like. Students must learn how to learn.’\textsuperscript{114}

Commentators in Australia similarly outlined the pedagogical benefits of teaching to outcomes. Bill Hannan, an education consultant and previously the Chair of the Victorian Board of Studies as well as a member of the Australian Education Council’s Curriculum and Assessment Committee, suggested that defining students’ outcomes ‘gives us a chance to bring teaching into line with learning’. Most teachers ‘like outcomes’, Hannan advised, ‘because they set goals for learning’.\textsuperscript{115} The education adviser Geoff Emmett and academic Lois Kennedy described the adoption of outcomes education as a paradigm shift in teaching: teachers went from ‘what am I going to teach?’ to ‘what are students going to learn?’\textsuperscript{116} Outcomes-based learning guided curriculum development towards pedagogical methods that assessed student progress and development. ‘Teachers and those involved in curriculum need to revisit the question of whether the content of their current offerings is of relevance and promotes substantive and worthwhile understanding’, they suggested. ‘To this end outcomes can provide a


\textsuperscript{113} For a sustained (and desperate) critique of such discourse, see Don Watson’s, Death Sentence: The Decay of Public Language (Milsons Point, NSW: Knopf, 2003).

\textsuperscript{114} Spady, ‘Outcome-Based Education’, 2.


general framework and a means to review teaching and learning programs and their epistemological basis.\textsuperscript{117}

A number of teachers and syllabus designers adopted the multiple intelligences aspect of outcomes education, attracted by the way it encouraged various facets of development without privileging or precluding particular streams of student achievement. John Lambert, the Interim President of the New South Wales Board of Studies, wrote in 1990 that the ‘Course Performance Descriptors [in History syllabuses] should be seen as an aid to teachers because they will provide more information about different levels of student achievement and will assist teachers to target the needs of a particular individual or group’.\textsuperscript{118} Carmel Young, a lecturer in History method at the University of Sydney and member of the History Syllabus Committee, described the 1992 Junior History syllabus as a study design characterised by choice and flexibility.\textsuperscript{119} The syllabus itself explained the need to seek ‘a balance between content and skills,’ in which the ‘outcomes must be identified for all aspects of the syllabus: knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes’.\textsuperscript{120}

The Board of Syllabus outcomes are the intended results of teaching and learning expressed as a set of broad, comprehensive, accessible and observable indicators or benchmarks of student achievement at each stage of a course. [...] An outcomes driven topic permits greater flexibility in the selection of content because it emphasises competence rather than content.\textsuperscript{121}

Lynne Goodwin described the development of the National Curriculum in 1993 and considered that its educational ‘focus [was] on outcomes, on what students can know and do’. It sets out ‘a sequence of student outcomes, setting out in progressive order the knowledge and skills students typically acquire as they become more proficient in each learning area’.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{History Years 7-10: Part i Mandatory Australian History} (Sydney: Board of Studies New South Wales, 1992), 19-20.
Outcomes have taken an important place in History syllabuses around Australia. The 1999 Western Australian Curriculum Framework described how ‘each teacher goes through a process of coming to understand the outcomes and analysing his or her students' achievements’.\textsuperscript{133} Outcomes were articulated in each of the units of study in the 1999 Victorian \textit{History Study Design}. In Australian History, for example, students were expected to ‘evaluate the colonial experience in a region, district or colony of Australia’, and the requirement could be met through ‘learning activities’ such as developing a timeline, identifying ‘reasons for migration of different people and the changing nature of these reasons’ or considering ‘the role of women and children in the colony’.\textsuperscript{134} In the 2003 Victorian Review, student outcomes in the draft Australian History unit included being able ‘to explain the concepts and visions underlying the settlement and subsequent development of the Port Phillip District up to 1850’.\textsuperscript{135} After the re-inclusion of Gold, a later draft stipulated that ‘students should be able to explain the motives and hopes underlying the settlement and subsequent development of the Port Phillip District (later the colony of Victoria) up to 1860’.\textsuperscript{136}

The adoption of objectives powerfully recast the value of education towards more socially instrumental aims and objectives. The increasing adoption of outcomes in turn reshaped educational ‘relevance’ to include targets of educational accountability and national efficiency. The shift from the initial emancipatory purpose of the ‘new’ pedagogies to their contemporary market orientation indicates the importance of the pedagogical dimension of history education. Beyond the political contest over content that has dominated the disputes over the Bicentenary and the use of ‘invasion’, this change has recast the nature of school history.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has opened up discussions of ‘the nation’ to related questions about how to teach it. It defined curriculum as an educational process that operates beyond simple considerations of content to include questions of educational method and approach. The History syllabus itself provided a case study that problematised history education as a

\textsuperscript{133} Getting Started: Society and Environment (Perth: Curriculum Council Western Australia, 1999), 4.
\textsuperscript{134} History Study Design, 1999, 124.
\textsuperscript{135} Draft Australian History Study Design, 4 October 2003.
\textsuperscript{136} Draft Australian History Study Design, 21 October 2003.
site of contested collective memory by explicitly engaging with pedagogical method and approach.

The syllabus forms the core of what is stated about Australian History in schools, but is complicated by educational questions and issues: despite its power of national definition, the syllabus defines the nation within an educational process of review, revision, and implementation. This chapter is therefore a critical bridge between the political and pedagogical influences of history education. Through the syllabus itself, the study has begun to articulate the convergence of history and education onto the nation, and provide a framework for subsequent discussion about changing educational approaches to the past.
Chapter Four

Teaching and learning history
Introduction

Public anxiety about History in schools has been determined to a large extent by wider debates over the past. Discussion about what history should be taught and what stories Australian schoolchildren should know creates considerable concern over syllabus content. Yet the pedagogical question of how students learn the subject forms the basis of much history education research, providing the second theme of the thesis and the framework for this chapter. Admittedly, debate over teaching methodologies does not rest in isolation—its intersection with the political battles fought over the past sustains deep anxiety about teaching History. The previous chapter brought together these parallel concerns for the first time. Through the syllabus itself, it teased out the political and pedagogical elements of history education, and suggested how they come together to define the nation and its past. This chapter continues the examination of approaches to teaching and learning History.

While the politics of memory seem to dominate public debate over the past, studies of history education have mostly been cognitive, psychological and pedagogically based, rather than historical. Concepts such as ‘substantive thinking’ and ‘second-order thinking’ permeate these pedagogical examinations of historical understanding. In lay terms they denote a learning distinction between simple factual recall and more complicated historical analysis. Whereas knowledge of historical content or coverage is substantive, as the educationists Peter Lee and Rosalyn Ashby put it, the ability to critique and analyse evidence and sources from the past is a more advanced, or secondary, skill. The psychologists James Voss and Jennifer Wiley have similarly explained these terms as a qualitative difference between ‘learning’ specific information and ‘understanding’ the actual elements of a subject. Such distinctions form the basis of pedagogical assessments of history teaching.

A number of history educationists have pointed out the contrast between the overt politics of public historical discourse and less prominent, but no less important,

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questions of education methodology. Lee and Ashby argue that while public debates over history teaching are primarily concerned with substantive history, shifts in pedagogy have been just as influential. Peter Seixas is critical of the fact that the debate over content has not even been grounded in pedagogical research. He insists that the 'history curriculum must be developed not only with attention to what history students should know, but also with an awareness of how they think and learn about the past and their own place in time'. Sam Wineburg has asked similarly whether so much has been invested discovering 'what students don't know that we have neglected more useful questions about young peoples' historical knowledge. For example, what do students know about the past? Such approaches move from debates over what students should be learning (its content and coverage) to methodological discussions about processes of teaching and learning.

How History is taught and how students comprehend it are questions that underlie educational debates about the subject. This chapter examines two distinct methodological approaches to history education in Australia. Since the 1960s History has been taught either as a discipline in its own right or as part of an integrated subject such as Social Studies (alongside subjects such as Geography or Civics). Each approach has its own teleology and method, but the two ways of teaching also share significant pedagogical principles. The chapter provides an historical and thematic discussion of these alternative educational approaches to History. It introduces the 'New' History and Social Studies from the 1960s and 1970s in turn, and analyses how approaches such as these influenced changing models of history teaching.

The Schools History Project developed in the United Kingdom during the 1970s was at the forefront of new pedagogical theory in History and had considerable influence in Australia. This movement pioneered an inquiry method of history teaching but still advocated a discipline-based approach to the subject: students were encouraged to be historians, to read documents and sources, and to develop original arguments and analyses. Learning by inquiry prioritised historical skills over factual recall. It also placed

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3 Lee, 'Progression of Historical Understanding among Students Ages 7-14'.
the child at the centre of the learning process. Students' individual needs became important educational aims and objectives, thereby shifting the composition of the classroom, syllabus and focus of assessment. Content became secondary to less quantifiable outcomes such as personal development and learning how to learn. The premise of the Schools History Project was that teaching programmes could move beyond prescriptions of content and still retain historical integrity. The New History, with its new programmes, method and approach to history itself, had quickly assumed a significant presence in history teacher journals and syllabus development.

Integrated models such as the 'New Social Studies' were also influential in Australian history education at the same time. The work of Jerome Bruner and Edwin Fenton had a marked impact here, as traditional academic disciplines such as History faced increasing criticism from progressive educationists for being, precisely, too traditional and academic. Proponents of the New Social Studies envisaged a subject that would be more educationally 'relevant', less bound up in pedagogical convention, and more applicable to students from a variety of social and educational backgrounds. Like a number of Social Studies advocates from the early twentieth century, they maintained that a departure from more conventional, discipline-based approaches to education would enable students to learn more equitably.

The two approaches also shared a number of characteristics. Like the New History, the New Social Studies emphasised an inquiry-based approach to learning: students should learn the subject by using real sources and conducting real research; by being active in the learning process (rather than passive receptors) they would 'learn how to learn'. The methodological disjuncture between discrete and integrated approaches has nevertheless framed history education domestically, and remains an important and controversial divide. History teaching in Australia has appropriated elements from the discipline approach favoured in Britain and the largely North American ideas and programmes of Social Studies. As the third and final section of this chapter reveals, the ideological and pedagogical rationales of both methods elicited significant responses that still dominate discussion of the subject today.

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7 Ibid., 199-202.
The New History

The political momentum in the 1960s and 1970s favoured social justice and was receptive to increasing calls for educational equity and relevance. Some argued that the organisation and psychology of the traditional classroom needed to be shifted so that authoritarian models of instruction and content-driven syllabuses could be replaced.\(^8\) A steep rise in enrolments and retention rates after World War II meant that many students who had no intention of going on to university were enrolled in the middle years of secondary school. This rapidly changed the dynamic in secondary education, and its traditional academic emphasis was increasingly supplemented and replaced by more progressive ideals that prepared students for later life rather than further study.\(^9\)

In 1959 the education researcher, J.T.I. Gilchrist, suggested that the English curriculum remained highly formal. Gilchrist observed that 'When history is taught, the chronological method is the most common', which encouraged 'a stress upon the factual content of history' that was 'both bad history and bad teaching'.\(^10\) Similar critiques emerged in Australia. The educationist Sheila Spear argued that the Victorian secondary curriculum of the 1950s and 1960s 'remained narrowly selective, and still oriented towards university courses'. Many perceived an educational crisis, where "Irrelevant" was the word which many of those students used to describe their education.\(^11\) Their views influenced the growing critique of the traditional curriculum and contributed to a shift in educational values. Students who wanted to finish school but did not want to continue with further study needed to be accommodated, and these different student expectations required different models of education.

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Richard Pring, the Professor of Education at Exeter University, has characterised this call for more practical school education as the 'new vocationalism', since the pedagogical emphasis increasingly incorporated aims of vocational training and personal development, as well as academic achievement. Rather than preparing its charges for post-compulsory schooling and then tertiary study, compulsory education needed to be broader in outlook and application. Schools needed to be more 'relevant' than rigorous, more aligned with life after study than the application of academic standards.

Such views carried considerable political influence. Educationists increasingly insisted that learning needed to be inclusive rather than exclusive, and that the responsibility of governments was to educate students, not rank them. After a massive enrolment burst that began in the 1950s, the Victorian Director of Education F.H. Brooks warned in 1965 that schools were failing to meet the 'wide variety of abilities and interests' of students. Ten years later, R.A. Reed described Victorian education policy in the 1960s and 1970s as 'an earnest search for the true purpose of secondary education, as a phase of education in its own right and not merely as a preparation for tertiary education'. New assessment practices were developed, public education was greatly expanded, and 'relevance' became an educational ethos.

John Maitland contributed to a collection of essays on history teaching in 1977 and described how new educational methods had stimulated teachers to re-examine how the subject 'can contribute to the education of students' as they approached the end of the twentieth century. He went on: 'The curriculum objectives emphasised most strongly today are the personal development of the student and his preparation for participation in social life and history has a distinctive contribution to make in the achievement of both objectives'. In a 1980 report advocating the development of a national curriculum, the Curriculum Development Centre explained similarly that 'Society requires more of its citizens by way of common, universal understandings and skills than reading, writing and arithmetic'. It asserted that 'effective participation in contemporary life, which is an

13 Cited in Spear, 'Secondary Education for All': 77. She notes that between 1956 and 1977, Victorian secondary enrolments increased almost threefold, from 56,000 to 141,000.
14 Reed, 'Curriculum Reform in Victorian Secondary Schools in the Late 60s': 215-17.

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entitlement and responsibility of all individuals, depends on a wide, complex and interrelated set of learnings and experiences, well beyond the popular view of the "basics".  

Changing educational methods also influenced these 'new' pedagogical movements. Inquiry-based education gave students more responsibility for their own instruction and reflected the influence of progressive theorists of child development such as Benjamin Spock, who stressed the importance of child-centred care and education. Corresponding with this shift towards student-centred learning was a reconceptualisation of subjects and strategies for teaching them. Paul H. Hirst, a former high school teacher and influential Professor of Education at Oxford and then Cambridge, was in the vanguard of this rethinking of subjects and curriculum. Hirst contended that all understanding is located within a number of domains or 'knowledges'. Thus each discipline, as a distinct form of knowledge, contained a common vocabulary, a syntax to communicate this vocabulary, a shared methodology and its own form of inquiry.  

At the heart of Hirst's analysis was an understanding that each 'knowledge' could be understood by its methods and language, rather than its content. His theoretical approach to knowledge and learning was adopted by many teachers and syllabus developers, who wanted history teaching to shift from an emphasis on content towards pedagogy, especially methodology and technique. The British School Council's History 13-16 programme (also known as the Schools History Project, or SHP) was a critical example. Denis Shemilt, who was one of the founders of the Project, invoked Hirst when he stated that History 'has its [own] characteristic logic, methods and perspectives'. History 13-16 also drew on the ideas of developmental psychologists such as Jean Piaget,
who defined distinct stages of child learning. An outline of stages of student development, or conceptual stages of historical understanding, was integral to the Schools History Project, and suggested that curricula could be organised according to student ability. Shemilt discovered that historical skills such as empathy were developed in stages. The Project also contested Piaget’s specific periodisation of cognitive development, suggesting much earlier stages of formal thinking. This reflected the increasing influence of a progressive child-orientation in the syllabus and the classroom, for its supporters attributed to children a greater conceptual ability than had been previously assumed. YeEven sot the British Council did retain Piaget’s idea of staged intellectual growth: it shifted the lines of classification, rather than the structural model of student development itself.

Structure was critical for History 13-16’s method. The course approached History as a form of knowledge and as a means of learning how to learn. Structure was also critical to its content. The course’s original Study in Development, Medicine Through Time, looked at an historical theme from prehistoric to modern times. Taught over six to eight months to fourteen or fifteen-year-old students, it ‘was intended to promote understanding of change and development’. Shemilt argued that the new History syllabus arrangement would break from ‘the confines of a chronological syllabus framework’. Studying thematic units of history over time would better facilitate the understanding of historical concepts such as ‘continuity and change’; meanwhile, the inclusion of narrower, more accessible topics that were context-specific would encourage students to think about particular historical periods in depth.

23 Shemilt, ‘The Devil’s Locomotive’: 13. The stages were: 1, Acceptance of what is written; 2, then ranging through use of evidence and questioning reliability and authenticity; 3, understanding evidence as a means for inference about the past; 4, then the historicity of all sources. Peter Seixas, ‘Conceptualising the Growth of Historical Understanding’, in The Handbook of Education and Human Development, eds David R. Olsen and Nancy Torrance (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 770.
26 Shemilt, ‘The Caliph’s Coin: The Currency of Narrative Frameworks in History Teaching’, in Knowing, Teaching and Learning History, 101. Options dealing with energy and crime and punishment were later added.
History 13-16 had a significant impact in Australia. In New South Wales ideas such as learning through inquiry and syllabus organisation were visible in the new 1972 syllabus through the 'survey and depth' studies, which arranged the syllabus around a number of broad overview units.\(^8\) This approach to longer 'narratives' and wider 'slices' of detail was designed so that students might understand broad and continuing historical themes and issues as well as closely study the specific places and people around an event in the past.\(^9\) Students were encouraged in skills such as analysis of primary sources and empathy with different actors, as well as an understanding of historical concepts.\(^10\)

This was the first significant History syllabus change since 1957, and a number of teachers agreed it provided a radical break from the chronological, factual emphasis of previous syllabuses and texts.\(^\) The new syllabus was non-prescriptive, with content and methodology to suit teachers, students, and schools. The influence of History 13-16 was evident in its introduction of concepts such as 'change' and 'continuity' and also in the way the syllabus advocated skills of learning and personal growth, beyond the transmission of facts.\(^\) John M. Ward, a Professor of History at Sydney University and a member of the History Syllabus Committee, observed that the new syllabus was a culmination of changing approaches to history and historical inquiry.\(^\) In an outline of the 1972 syllabus, T. Nash commented that the survey and depth studies had injected new life into history teaching.\(^\) A number of New South Wales teachers felt that the Schools History Project generated greater historical engagement among students. 'There was a time when history was not controversial', wrote John Slater in *Teaching History.* 'Then the content of most school history syllabuses was dominated by chronological

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\(^9\) This approach was also pursued in the 1988 multi-volume history, *Australians: A Historical Library* (Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), where the justification was to bring to the fore historical snapshots of everyday life in Australia in a series of 50-year intervals alongside five reference volumes.

\(^10\) David Stockley, 'Empathetic Reconstruction in History and History Teaching', *Australian History Teacher*, no. 8 (1981): 7-17.


\(^\) Ibid.


surveys of British history, based on shared assumptions which were rarely questioned, much less publicly debated. History 13-16 emphasised the contested nature of the discipline and asked students to critically evaluate the historical material for themselves.

At the core of what James Fitzgerald and Tony Taylor have termed the ‘New History’ was the idea that students would work on actual documents, and thus participate in the process of historical inquiry and develop the critical skills of practising historians. Contributing to what Taylor has described as the ‘1970s school history revival’ was the establishment of the History Teachers’ Association of Australia in 1973. The Association held its first national conference at Sydney University in 1974, and within a decade had become involved in Australia’s national New History curriculum project, Learning Through the Historical Environment or LTHE. The LTHE project, noted Taylor, bore a strong resemblance to the evidence-based ‘History Around Us’ element in the Schools History Project and ‘was a major curriculum initiative at a time when history as a discipline seemed to be looking for a new direction’.

Victoria had its own Secondary History Education Project (SHEP) and this too reflected the broader historical and pedagogical principles of LHTHE and History 13-16. The relative ‘novelty’ of the course was an important rationale in history teacher materials. In particular, the merging of historical skills and methods of inquiry with more traditional knowledge and content was advertised widely. SHEP was to be student-centred, discipline- and inquiry-centred, as well as ‘Real World’-centred, contended Bob Neal and Dorothy Bell from the Curriculum Branch. ‘SHEP has endeavoured to develop a programme which provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for historical education, within which considerations of content, learning experiences, textbooks, resources, local history material, aims and evaluation techniques, etc., can be decided.’

This idea of the ‘new’ was certainly compelling. Through its own discourse the progressive educational movement distinguished itself from ‘old’ (or ‘irrelevant’) modes of instruction. These progressive pedagogies also drew on the image of the child. Child-centred learning, or inquiry-based history teaching, importantly placed the child at the

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37 Ibid.
centre of the learning process. Pedagogically, this was a radical realignment of the learning process. Hence Lloyd Evans spoke of an 'emphasis on learning by discovery under the teachers' guidance rather than by imposing a mass of facts about the past'. Child-centred education aimed to 'liberate' students from an education system that was thought to entrench social hierarchy and inequality. The placement of the child at the centre of the learning process was essential to the pedagogical foundation of the New History, and it became an important figure in discussion of the new pedagogy.

Concerns were also raised about the practicality of child-centred education. While a number of commentators in Australia agreed with the educational philosophy of the Schools History Project, they were concerned about the prospects for assessing such an approach. Peter Lee noted that the initial assessment guidelines for History 13-16 provided strong support for the Project in the United Kingdom, but others were worried about its implementation. Ward worried that while the new methods of inquiry-based teaching within the 1972 New South Wales syllabus provided a real break from earlier teaching methods, the final examination would continue to direct learning towards specific answers: 'The great difficulty with any New South Wales syllabus for senior schools is that it becomes the prisoner of the examination system'. There was also concern in Victoria. Writing for *Agora* in 1982, Henry Macintosh, who evaluated the History 13-16 project, questioned whether it was possible to assess the kinds of historical understanding that the Project aimed to develop. He noted the difficulty of assessing History as an approach to knowledge, rather than a body of knowledge. The constraints on learning imposed by assessment requirements, discussed briefly in Chapter Three, were clearly evident as educators tried to shift an entire pedagogical approach in their implementation of the New History.

In his evaluation of the History 13-16, Shemilt responded to some of these concerns and acknowledged the difficulty of measuring student attainment when it was

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42 Peter Lee, 'Information from Dr Peter Lee Regarding UK History Education' (paper presented at the Historica Council Meeting 2002: Teaching and Learning Canadian History, Toronto, Canada, October 2002).
concept-based. He was nevertheless keen to encourage teachers to persist with the Project. While he agreed that it made greater intellectual demands on the teacher, he claimed that the ultimate reward would be students’ attainment of complicated historical skills.46 He also argued that the emphasis on concepts and skills development, rather than content, enabled more stimulating teaching, and he maintained that the popularity of History 13-16 and the success of its trials proved that the New History could be taught effectively as a discipline. Thirty years after the development of the Schools History Project, Shemilt was still advocating this discipline- and inquiry-based approach. Its methodology was not simply a way of learning about the past, but about the discipline of History as an approach to the past.46

Concern was raised in Australia that History 13-16 was too progressive: it was too child-centred and by emphasising historical methodology neglected core elements of learning, especially content and narrative. Critics argued that the new approach sacrificed educational standards for ‘relevance’ and had contributed to a retreat of educational standards. Two years after the implementation of the 1972 History syllabus in New South Wales, Alan Barcan described a decline of academic standards.47 Explaining his concerns, Barcan later wrote that ‘Ten years ago I would have had no great trouble in stating the aims of history in the secondary school’, but ‘what is new history and what are its aims?’48 He continued:

History as citizenship training means little in an age where the state is too strong and the individual too dependent. History as a source of standards is undermined in an age of relativism. History as an intellectual subject is weakened in a period when education is increasingly concerned with personal development, entertainment of pupils, and physical movement about the classroom or outside the school.49

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46 Shemilt, History 13-16: Evaluation Study.
40 Ibid.: 10.
Geoffrey Partington criticised the Schools History Project for appropriating students’ 'needs' and for assuming to know what was best for student development. He also maintained that the new pedagogy lacked direction.⁵⁰

Underlying such criticism was a pedagogical anxiety that the classroom would lack organisation and that the absence of stronger guidelines endangered the learning process. This critique also took on political valencies: it portrayed new teaching approaches such as History 13-16 and its Australian applications as an educational progressivism that was motivated by inimical political and social values that were antithetical to 'good learning'. The child-centred approach of the new pedagogy came under increasing conservative criticism on the grounds that it was endangering 'the child' itself. The figure of the child, which had been a pedagogical focus of the New History, increasingly took on a political and national symbolism that would intensify dispute over teaching approaches.

The New Social Studies

While similarly progressive methodologies of teaching and learning were being implemented in the New Social Studies, the subject was fundamentally different from the discipline approach of the New History. Embedded within Social Studies as a wider unit of study, History could be taught discretely alongside Civics, Geography, Economics, or Political Science, or the component subjects could also be fully integrated and taught without being recognisable as disciplines. For this reason, the choice to teach History within an integrated subject framework was often a conscious decision to move away from the perceived conservatism of traditional subject delivery. Indeed, some felt that History 13-16 was itself still bound in this more traditional, discipline-based approach, and that newer more inclusive subjects would offer students greater flexibility and a more relevant education.⁵¹

Social Studies emerged in the United States in the nineteenth century and grew rapidly in the early twentieth century. A typical course could include elements of American History, World History, Civics or Government, Economics and Geography.


⁵¹ Cited in Taylor, 'Disputed Territory'.

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Because it is one of many subjects, History can be difficult to locate in Social Studies. According to David Jenness, who conducted an American national report on Social Studies in the 1980s, the two subjects are frequently indistinguishable: some Social Studies subjects are filled with historical issues and events; some History subjects have concentrated on Social Studies units of Geography, Legal Studies and Civics.\(^5\) This difficulty of definition persists in Australia, where some teachers insist that elements of the discipline are lost when History is taught within an integrated study, while others advise that the discipline can remain discrete within a broader framework.\(^5\)

The teaching methods of Social Studies subjects shifted in ways akin to the New History in the 1960s and 1970s. The 'New Social Studies', as it similarly came to be known, both reflected and reinforced a series of changing approaches to teaching and learning. Jerome Bruner, a Harvard psychologist and expert on cognitive child development, was a profoundly influential educational theorist whose works guided much of this pedagogy. Concerned about the state of the education system, Bruner sought to overhaul the status of the student-teacher relationship and the nature of learning in the classroom. He claimed that American education had 'failed to respond to changing social needs, lagging behind rather than leading'. Bruner had a particular interest in social outcomes and his 'work on early education and social class' convinced him 'that the educational system was, in effect, our way of maintaining a class system—a group at the bottom'.\(^4\)

Motivations similar to those in the History 13-16 project lay behind the New Social Studies. While the academic emphasis of that traditional education was held to be inequitable and authoritarian, enthusiasts also believed that the school could provide an opportunity for such class divisions to be overcome. It could remove the inequality that so concerned progressive social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Theoretical approaches to learning in the New Social Studies were also very similar to those in the Schools History Project. Bruner's programmes of study were influenced by Piaget, and

\(^5\) David Jenness, *Making Sense of Social Studies* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 57. Furthermore, as Peter Seixas has noted, in the 1970s wave of quantitative history research, the subject increasingly looked like a social study: Peter Seixas, 'Parallel Crises: History and the Social Studies Curriculum in the USA', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1993): 240.


like Paul Hirst's, were based upon a child-centred developmental pedagogy. At its core was an understanding that children at any stage of development could be taught any subject in some intellectually honest form. Structure was therefore crucial: Bruner believed that children could learn to generalise immediately so long as they possessed a theoretical model. For him, an educational approach to a subject included an understanding of its 'structure', as well as the 'coverage' of its contents. In an article entitled 'The Importance of Structure', he argued that education not only imparted skills, but that learning itself was a skill that could be mastered.

Again like Hirst, Bruner's understanding of subjects contained a structuralist, linguistic, and grammatical emphasis. He held that each subject was internally coherent and contained its own methods, structure and language: as he put it, every 'field' had a 'deep structure'. By comprehending the structure, the student could understand the subject more profoundly. This put an emphasis on the process of learning: the student would move beyond the mere content of a subject and grasp its very core principles. According to Jenness, that 'students can be taught to go beyond the facts was a cardinal value of the New Social Studies'.

The progressive social values of the New Social Studies were expressed in its inquiry-based and child-centred approach to teaching and learning. Proponents argued that education had the capacity to change society because it empowered students to learn. The child-centred orientation of the New Social Studies ensured 'the child' would be a focus of its educational discourse and like the New History, the New Social Studies developed detailed curriculum programmes that reflected changing attitudes to syllabus content and teaching methods. With the educationist Peter Dow, Bruner developed the programme, Man: A Course of Study (or MACOS). Funded with a $6.5m grant from the National Science Foundation, it began as part of a Presidential initiative to raise curriculum standards in the schools. (In 1958, largely in response to the Soviet launch of

55 Frances Fitzgerald, America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1979), 182.
58 Cited in Jenness, Making Sense of Social Studies, 131.
59 Ibid., 262.
60 Although they were without the same scholastic comprehensiveness of the Schools History Project, focusing on units of study, rather than an entire high-school curriculum.
**Sputnik**, President Eisenhower had initiated the National Defense Education Act.\(^6\) Using the 'discovery', or 'inquiry' method, and influenced by structural anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss, MACOS was designed to help sixth grade students think about what it means to be human. Introducing concepts such as the ‘lifecycle’, the programme dealt with life periods such as growing up, socialisation and transition between childhood, adolescence and adult life.\(^6\)

The unit compared the human behaviour of a remote Inuit tribe, the Netsilik, with other species such as salmon, herring gulls and baboons, and examined behaviour spanning culture, religion and geography. Its central pedagogy was that ‘students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning’,\(^6\) and it encompassed History, Geography, Anthropology and Biology. Bruner advocated a pedagogical shift away from discipline-based approaches to integrated studies and argued that while History was limited to the past, Social Studies provided a broader frame for learning and reflection. There was a 'need for studying the possibility rather than the achieved', he maintained.\(^6\) Bruner received curriculum development awards for MACOS from the American Educational Research Association and the American Textbook Publishers Institute. By 1974, approximately 328,000 students in 1728 schools had adopted the programme.\(^6\)

The influence of this New Social Studies in Australia was significant. In Queensland the entire MACOS unit was introduced for Year 6, and indicated the strength of new educational approaches in that State during the 1970s.\(^6\) The approval in Queensland for Bruner's programme built upon the recent system-wide implementation of a comparatively radical assessment approach, known as the Radford System, which had replaced external examination with progressive evaluation, and encouraged teachers

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\(^{63}\) Ibid.

\(^{64}\) Cited in Ibid.


\(^{66}\) In the Australian implementation of MACOS, Aboriginal people from the Western Desert were to be incorporated as the local anthropological element of the course.
to select topics that reflected their own interests. Yet only a year after Bruner was presented with his curriculum awards in the United States, his course was consumed in controversy. Religious conservatives objected to the threat MACOS posed to traditional American values: they strongly objected to graphic scenes of cultural practices, including infanticide, and the suggestion of common human behaviours irrespective of ethnicity or religion.

A backlash from conservative parents in the United States had begun by 1971. The Reverend Glenn from Citizens for Moral Education argued that the curriculum ‘advocated sex education, evolution, a “hippie-yippie philosophy”, pornography, gun control, and communism’. The National Science Foundation received letters of complaint that MACOS advocated polygamy and wife-swapping. In 1975 the leading Congressional advocate for religious conservatives in America, John Conlan, attacked MACOS on the grounds that it was ‘a vehicle for behaviour modification’. He claimed that many ‘blame Bruner for alcoholism, disregard for property rights, vandalism, uncivil behaviour, epidemic VD, disdain for the work ethic, callousness, cynicism and belief in the occult’. The controversy coincided with wider curriculum debates in the United States. The Californian Board of Education issued guidelines for the inclusion in its biology curriculum of a statement that the Book of Genesis presented a reasonable explanation for the origins of life and recommended that the concept of Creation be taught alongside evolution. It also echoed the heated controversy over the demise of compulsory ‘Western Civ’ courses in universities that was examined in Chapter Two.

A similar outcry erupted in Queensland in 1977 after an American ‘textbook watcher’ was invited to Australia by the Brisbane-based pressure groups CARE (Campaign Against Regressive Education) and STOP (Society to Outlaw Pornography). A major public debate followed in the Courier Mail, the Australian Women’s Weekly and on the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Under somewhat dubious circumstances, MACOS was banned from Queensland schools by

68 Cited in Lutkehaus, ‘Man, A Course of Study: Situating Tim Ash’s Pedagogy and Ethnographic Films’.
69 Cited in Fitzgerald, America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century, 204.
70 Ibid., 193.
Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen’s Cabinet during a parliamentary recess in January 1978. The State Government’s intervention in the MACOS project indicated its conservative and autocratic style of government and also inhibited teachers from further experiment. According to Kathryn Kelly, who worked in the Curriculum Branch in the early 1980s, the episode ‘had the effect of widespread self-censorship amongst the teaching ranks’. While opposition to the MACOS text had not been widespread, she suggested that this had been ‘a time when the Queensland Education Minister banned peace studies and political education’ from state school curricula.

Aside from the fervour of religious fundamentalism, there was also criticism of the educational methodology MACOS adopted. According to the Chief Research Officer of the Australian Council for Educational Research, D.M. Bennett, the ‘underlying principles’ of Bruner’s Social Studies approach did not adequately resolve the problems raised by situating History in an integrated curriculum. He was also concerned that the task of implementing these new educational approaches went far beyond the simple replacement or reordering of content within existing curricula.

A pedagogical concern similar to critiques of the New History drove much of the more moderate reaction to Bruner’s educational philosophy in Australia. Some felt that the child-centred instruction he advocated, learning by inquiry, as well as the structuralist approach that framed disciplines and was key to their understanding, threatened the integrity of the curriculum. Alan Barcan defined Bruner’s approach as part of a ‘New Cultural ideology’. Its increasing relativism and subjective morality, he worried, had negative effects upon curriculum and led to uncertainty in educational standards and values. Writing for Quadrant in 1981, Dan O’Donnell criticised MACOS

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for being a ‘mickey mouse’ subject that undermined teacher authority. The course ‘involves twelve months of films, simulations, role playing and interminable discussions about the lifestyle and the sexual proclivities of seagulls, salmon, baboons and Eskimos, guaranteed to resolve many dilemmas for young Australians forever—or so the experts claimed’.

Linking MACOS with other progressive educational materials in Australia, O’Donnell’s concern was couched in the rhetoric of the child: ‘Is it any wonder that children, as well as taxpayers, despair when teachers themselves permit the image of a consistent, predictable, responsible profession to be so debased?’ He warned that ‘Worst of all, education has become a political football’. O'Donnell's criticisms equated progressive educational approaches with a radical political agenda that was infusing Australian schools and endangering ‘our children’. Thus the child-centred underpinnings of the New Social Studies were met with an equally child-oriented response, where pedagogical questions of approach became increasingly inseparable from a political debate over Australian education. This early conflation of progressive political values with lax educational standards would be repeated in Queensland debates over Social Studies twenty-five years later, and is examined in Chapter Five.

Other educational programmes also contributed to the New Social Studies and likewise generated a variety of response. The work of Edwin Fenton, an historian and co-director of the Social Studies Curriculum Development Centre in the United States, was particularly influential. Fenton's approach, again in ways very similar to New History teaching methods, advocated learning by inquiry, which he believed was essential to discovering the process of History, and therefore key to its understanding. ‘A student who learns facts and generalisations about the past without becoming involved in the process of inquiry—and most students in American schools do exactly this—does not study history’.

Fenton’s background was considerably different from Bruner’s. His focus on the New Social Studies was from a history-oriented humanities perspective, whereas Bruner worked from a scientific—a biological and anthropological—understanding of the

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77 Ibid.: 40.
78 Ibid.: 41.
subject. Yet their pedagogical approaches overlapped at many points. And, like Bruner, Fenton's understanding of learning processes centred on the belief that students could approximate the logical process of historical inquiry as conducted by historians if they were equipped with the right methods, suitable material and good supervision.  

Their engagement with learning by inquiry was complemented by a similarly structuralist approach to subjects. Fenton argued that old teaching methods had only offered students a list of facts and weak generalisations they could not retain. Rather, students needed 'a context for information and a way of dealing with it: they needed to know how to think'.

Fenton also developed an approach to History, which, in the words of Jenness, broke 'into a chronological pattern by looking in depth at the structural aspects of a period or topic or set of events, from a generalising rather than a particularising point of view'. Such an approach seems to have mirrored the survey and depth studies that emerged from the Schools History Project. Fenton's curriculum emphasis also included the teaching and assessment of attitudes and values, which were clearly aligned with methods of student-centred teaching. While coming from an historical background, Fenton's work was nevertheless geared to the existing Social Studies curriculum in the United States, and he published a number of books on the New Social Studies. His inquiry method was considerably influential in that country, and his ideas did not escape the sort of controversy generated by MACOS. In Fenton's collection of essays on the New Social Studies, Ruth Benedict reflected on controversies in education in recent years that were repeatedly linked to the transmission of American cultural heritage: 'There have been those who have blamed the schools for every "un-American" trait they believed to be increasing in our society'.

The adoption of what was termed the ‘Fenton Programme’ was also significant in Australia. In Victoria, the Programme was widely supported throughout the Secondary

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FitzGerald, America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century, 184.
Ibid., 183.
Jenness, Making Sense of Social Studies, 129.
History Committee of the Education Department in the late 1960s and 1970s, and was used to advance the dual content-process emphasis then being advocated. Through the work of Hilda Taba and Edwin Fenton, according to Bob Neal in *Agora*, the development of attitudes and values was added to teaching of knowledge and promotion of skills. These were the objectives of personal development that critics such as Barcan and Partington complained had led to the deterioration of standards in Australian curricula. Winston Lamb from the Victorian Education Department insisted that ‘Traditional interpretations have been supplanted, while a new emphasis has been given to “inquiry” methods’. The Fenton Programme’s advantage was that students could be ‘led by the structure of the programme to active inquiry, skill development and group interaction, rather than concentration on facts alone or interests alone’. A number of history educators saw in the discipline approach to the subject a continuation of ‘old-fashioned’ approaches to the past, and pushed for the New Social Studies. ‘It might even be suggested that the New Social Studies movement established itself in opposition to the study of history’, suggested Tony Taylor in 2001. ‘In the late 1960s and early 1970s, New Social Studies supporters still regarded school history as traditional and conservative.’ There was a perception, Lloyd Evans wrote in 1974, that the subject as it stood traditionally was simply out of touch. The ‘most crushing argument against history as a separate study is its supposed “irrelevance” compared with the relevance of the social sciences’. The educationist Ken Elford added a year later that the ‘attack by some academics on the educational value of teaching along the lines of disciplines and by educational theorists who argue that learning should be concept and not subject orientated has left History somewhat exposed’. By positioning itself further away from traditional academic programmes, the New Social Studies appeared even more ‘relevant’ than the New History.

In November 1976 the Director of the Canberra-based Curriculum Development Centre, Malcolm Skilbeck, addressed the annual conference of the History Teachers’

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87 Ibid.
88 Lamb, ‘Planning a History Course’: 12.
89 Taylor, ‘Disputed Territory’.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Lloyd Evans, ‘History—Where Next?’: 4-8.
Association of Australia and advocated an integrated approach to the subject. Skilbeck rejected the claim that History ought to be taught discretely and contended that 'the teaching of separate, distinctive History courses and units is but one [way of dealing with history]—and for many pupils—not necessarily the best one'. In a later document for the Curriculum Development Centre in 1980 he reasserted that a 'redefinition of core curriculum is needed because our traditional way of packaging knowledge into required subjects no longer satisfies either society or students'.

Historical understanding, by contrast with knowledge of the classics, does not depend on the mastery of esoteric skills. Given some interest, a minimum level of literacy (which presupposes a very minimal capacity for rational thought) and application, anyone can understand history.

More conclusive arguments would be needed for teachers of History 'to maintain and strengthen the place of historical study in the school curriculum'.

The move towards relevance was realised in varying degrees in most States in Australia. After mounting pressure on the New South Wales education system from increasing enrolments since the 1950s, the Director General of Education, H.S. Wyndham, overhauled junior secondary education and introduced what was later termed the 'Wyndham System'. The 1961 Education Act provided for the phasing in of the new system from 1963 till 1967. High school education was extended to six years and areas of study were generalised. History in Year 7 was amalgamated with Geography to produce a compulsory Social Studies course. A discussion paper from the New South Wales Board of Studies in 1975 revealed the rationale behind the subject amalgamation: 'History's place in integrating studies can be best understood if it is perceived not merely as a subject but rather as a mode of thought through which students can gain a wider perspective about all aspects of society'.

These changes corresponded with the shift towards broader thematic study, which the New Social Studies represented, and which some have criticised for destroying

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93 Cited in Taylor, 'Disputed Territory'.
94 Cited in Ibid.
95 Cited in Ibid.
96 Barcan, 'A History of History Teaching', 44-5.
the discipline of History. It reflected changing approaches to education and children’s capabilities, changing composition of the student body, and a democratisation of classroom and curriculum. As retention rates increased, Wyndham said that education needed to accommodate students’ varying capacities and prepare them for further study or work: ‘whatever their differences in general ability, in special aptitudes, or in scholastic attainment, all these adolescents are going to be citizens’.  

The integrated subjects that were created for the Wyndham System repositioned disciplines such as History within the secondary curriculum. John Maitland argued that it forced History to consider ‘how it can contribute to the education of students in the last decades of the twentieth century’. The New South Wales Inspector of Schools, C.W. McLaren, similarly saw objectives for History as part of a broader curriculum emphasis: by the ‘end of their course in Form IV, those studying history will have been brought up to date with at least the basic history of Australia and its institutions as well as its relations with other countries’. As a result, ‘these students will leave school much better qualified as men and women of the future to appreciate what is going on around them and according to their ability to make critical assessments of events and motives for action’.  

Some worried nevertheless that Social Studies might engulf the discipline. By 1967 the editorial in the first edition of Agora warned that ‘whether we like it or not, History as a subject in the schools appears to be under threat’. This idea that Social Studies menaced History might be based on a false dichotomy; as Tony Taylor has suggested, the contest between ‘curriculum “traditionalists” on the one hand and curriculum “progressives” on the other’ was to a large extent a ‘phony war’. History 13-16 was certainly not content-oriented, and the New History teaching and New Social Studies had much in common. Nevertheless the debate has been constructed along lines of content and process, where History-as-discipline was seen as old and conservative in its alleged attachment to content.  

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102 Taylor, ‘Disputed Territory’.
A number of critics also worried that Social Studies would lower educational standards. Alan Barcan has argued that by 1950 the subject was regarded in many Australian states as a suitable course for the increasing number of lower ability secondary students. While it was ‘valued as a means of teaching citizenship’, he maintained, it was not widely regarded for its academic emphasis. Driving Barcan’s critique of progressive education is a critical association between radical politics and progressive pedagogy: the methodological disjuncture between the Schools History Project and the New Social Studies are indistinguishable in his analysis of the new pedagogy.103 His response forms part of a wider pedagogically conservative reaction to inquiry-based learning and student-centred education, which is examined below.

The Legacy of the ‘New’

A number of commentators questioned the overall impact of these ‘new’ approaches. In particular, some teachers and educationists doubted whether the influence of History 13-16 was durable. Realising John Ward’s earlier fears, perhaps, Peter Lee contended that the aims of the Schools History Project were eventually circumscribed by increasingly standardised testing.104 Others wondered whether the Project was ultimately restricted by old teaching methods.105 Nevertheless, the approach to history teaching it advocated, its insistence on inquiry-based learning, and its influence in terms of teaching concepts such as continuity and change, source-based analysis and the survey and depth studies, persist to this day.106

Others speculated about the impact of the New Social Studies. In her comprehensive examination of American History schoolbooks in the 1960s and 1970s, Frances FitzGerald suggested that the New Social Studies eventually ‘failed’. The subject was overly abstract, and Bruner and Fenton’s ideas were not sufficiently grounded in the practice of classroom teaching. The New Educationists ‘did not know very much about the schools, but it seemed obvious to them that the system was backward and reactionary’.107 Ultimately, the 1700-odd schools that adopted MACOS paled in

104 Lee, ‘Information from Dr Peter Lee Regarding UK History Education’.
105 Goodson, Studying Curriculum.
106 Taylor, ‘Disputed Territory’.
107 FitzGerald, America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century, 184.
comparison with the 58,000 that did not. The progressive educational values of MACOS and other programmes also grated with political and religious conservatives in America: Christian fundamentalists evoked images of children running wild with their Social Studies textbooks.  

Such moral alarmism was supplemented by a more educationally grounded critique of the new pedagogy. The 'Back to Basics' movement that gained momentum in the United States from the 1970s and 1980s was a direct reaction against the progressive trends of inquiry-based learning and student-centred curricula. Its insistence on quantifiable educational standards and assessment followed on from its claim that the new educational methods lacked academic rigour. Its demands for educational accountability, transmission of core knowledge and standardised testing was also an ideological and educational response to the progressive social aims of the New History and Social Studies. Concern over the emphasis on attitudes and values, rather than content, was just as prominent in Australia. In 1976 the Bulletin ran the cover story, 'Australia's Education Scandal: we're turning out millions of dunces', and a number of education commentators outlined the grave scholarly deficiencies of the new pedagogies.  

Yet the influence of these new pedagogies continued despite the slowing ideological momentum behind them. Above all, they generated an important debate over methodological approaches to history education in Australia. The two distinct methods, whether to teach an 'integrated' or 'discrete' model of History, remain contentious to this day. Historians and educationists have regular lengthy and public debates over the best and most legitimate approach to teaching the past. Some maintain that integrated subjects such as Studies of Society and Environment (or SOSE, which is Australia's current version of Social Studies) continue to offer valuable perspectives for History. Others worry that History might be annexed by an integrated approach. Chapter Five will explore some of these more recent debates in greater depth.

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108 Ibid., 182-218.  
109 Jenness, Making Sense of Social Studies, 43-5.  
The breadth of this methodological discussion has been considerable. A number of notable historians of varying political persuasions and jurisdictions have warned that the subject is indeed in danger of disappearing within an integrated approach. Their disquiet cannot be isolated from wider debates over the politics of collective memory, but demonstrates how educational concerns also affect anxiety over ‘teaching the nation’. In North America, for example, there has been considerable pedagogical concern over the place of History within an integrated curricular approach. Peter Seixas has frequently discussed the difficulty of ascribing a place for History within the Social Studies. Educational skills objectives in Canadian Social Studies curricula included ‘problem-solving’ and ‘decision-making’, rather than historical practices.\(^{103}\) Education Ministry documents exhibited little thought ‘about the epistemological, pedagogical and curricular problems entailed by escalating contradictory demands for curricular integration’, he continued.\(^{103}\) ‘Thinking in Social Studies is too often defined in terms of generic “critical thinking” or “information processing” approaches. What is left that is specifically historical are facts about the past.’\(^{104}\)

The debate has also been characterised by complexity and paradox. Despite the clear methodological divergence between History and Social Studies, there are many similarities in the outcomes of both discrete and integrated approaches. Like the New History and Social Studies a generation earlier, contemporary SOSE and History syllabuses share a common pedagogical vocabulary: students can avoid being ‘present-minded’, they will learn concepts such as ‘continuity and change’ and should develop a sense of historical ‘empathy’.\(^{105}\) In spite of recurrent public and vocal contention, any ‘divide’ between History and Social Studies seems problematic. The difficulty of defining ‘Social Studies’ led David Jenness to regard them as essentially indistinguishable for all practicable purposes in the United States.\(^{106}\)

The shared characteristics of the New History and Social Studies have shaped the way they have been defined in recent educational debates. By self-consciously

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\(^{102}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{103}\) Peter Seixas, ‘The Place of History within Social Studies’, in *Trends and Issues in Canadian Social Studies*, eds Ian Wright and Alan Sears (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 1997), 128.

\(^{105}\) See, for example, *History Study Design* (Carlton: Board Of Studies, 1999), 9.

repositioning themselves away from old, traditional and didactic approaches, the progressive pedagogies have been increasingly interpreted in opposition to conventional educational standards. Commentators such as Barcan insist that the adoption of progressive pedagogical approaches led to a commensurable loss of academic rigour. 'Is it possible to restore history to the mainstream of schooling if there is considerable disagreement over the content of courses?', he asked. 'Is there much point in strengthening history if it concentrates on content-free skills or concepts? Is there any point in having a history syllabus if there is no way of checking—by examinations, by inspection—whether teachers are, in fact, teaching history?\textsuperscript{177} The identification of new educational approaches with progressive political movements has fuelled the connection of politics and pedagogy. As such, this educational discussion about teaching the nation's past helps drive public concern over history more broadly, and has been intensified by a growing anxiety that 'our' students' knowledge of 'our history' is worryingly low.

Others insist on the importance of the disciplinary approach to maintain educational standards and a cohesive national identity. Progressive educational approaches are inseparable from a progressive, 'politically correct' ideological campaign in Australia, argued Kevin Donnelly. 'Subjects like history and civics are rewritten to embrace a politically correct, black armband view and feminists and left-wing advocates of the gender agenda argue for the rights of women, gays, lesbians and transgender people', he maintained. 'Across Australian schools, in areas like multiculturalism, the environment and peace studies, students are indoctrinated and teachers define their role as new-age class warriors.'\textsuperscript{18} Such views maintain that the new pedagogy has become indistinguishable from political radicalism. Moreover, it has become an 'orthodoxy', of sorts, and the methods maintained in such subjects have come under increasing attack for being 'politically correct' and academically lax. The views hold that 'our schools' are under threat from educational approaches that derive from a politically radical agenda out of the 1960s, but they confuse the methodological disjuncture such approaches represent. Consequently, the educational debate over how best to teach History in schools has been increasingly circumscribed by a critique that engages with the


\textsuperscript{18} Kevin Donnelly, \textit{Why Our Schools are Failing} (Potts Point, NSW: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2004), 126, 48.
ideological progressivism of the new pedagogies, rather than the substance of their educational philosophies and approach.

**Conclusion**

The New History and New Social Studies fundamentally reconfigured history education in Australia. They marked a turning point in educational approaches, where traditional academic emphases were increasingly replaced by child-centred, inquiry-based methods of teaching and learning. These two progressive approaches to the discipline were also explicitly ideological, reflecting a growing belief in the capacity of education to both reinforce and change social inequality. The reaction they generated was equally ideological. While some maintained that the new pedagogies essentially promoted educational inadequacy, others have been equally adamant that child-centred learning and inquiry-based teaching are the most effective approach to history in particular and education more broadly.

This debate over how best to teach History in schools established an educational discourse that increasingly took on political valencies. The discourse of child-centred educational approaches and learning by inquiry placed the child at the centre of the educational process. Yet the critique they generated also mobilised this educational emblem to support their arguments. This shifting educational discourse will be examined in a contemporary context in Chapters Five and Six, which examine how questions of educational 'relevance' and citizenship have become so bound up in standards of teaching and learning and national accountability.
Chapter Five

History in a national framework
Introduction

The current discourse of 'relevance' in history education has a complicated genealogy: undoubtedly influenced by radical theory from the 1960s and 1970s, it is also profoundly shaped by contemporary trends and demands for 'efficiency' and 'excellence'. The language of increasing choice, once a means of increasing social equity, now implies choice for the student as customer. The progressive social goals of education have been merged with an ideology of the utility-maximising individual derived from neo-classical economics and rational choice theory. As such, contemporary debates over the provision of History are contextualised by discussions over the New History and Social Studies as well as current concerns.

The seemingly perpetual anxiety about the state of the subject is the focus of my research, which asks: Why such anxiety? What do these investments in the past mean? The first section of this thesis explored debates over history education generated by a public concern over the past in Australia and abroad. The second section then turned to pedagogical considerations, and saw in changing educational approaches to History a set of discussions and concerns beyond the politics of contested collective memory. By looking at a number of contemporary debates, this final section returns the thesis to some of its initial inquiries and concerns about how to 'teach the nation'. It notes that professional debates over the state of history education have intensified the wider concern over the past. By examining the growing controversies over SOSE (Chapter Five) and the teaching of Civics and Citizenship (Chapter Six), it explores how the political and pedagogical trajectories of history education have converged.

Broadly, this chapter provides a contemporary account of history education, offering a complex narrative of shifting political trends and educational methods. The radicalism of progressive educational approaches of the 1960s and 1970s has retained considerable influence in Australia. The child remains its focus, as ideals of personal development, professional relevance and community growth continue to define educational values. The rhetoric has also taken on significant contemporary meanings, however, so that equity has come to include excellence, relevance now incorporates the global market economy, and personal development is inseparable from mandating the accountability of both student and teacher.
Shifting government commitments in the 1980s and 1990s contributed to the reduction of public provision alongside increased central monitoring and accountability. Education, including the formation of History syllabuses, was swept up in this process: syllabus reviews noted the need for increased authenticity of students' work;¹ students were to be instructed in the 'key values' of 'efficiency', 'enterprise' and 'productivity'.² Meanwhile, teachers were increasingly sidelined in syllabus committees, working parties and within consultative processes by the contraction of curriculum power from schools. Thus the paradox of economic rationalism was replayed in syllabus development: a discourse of deregulation was in fact accompanied by a heightened and far more systematic monitoring of performance at all levels (from student development to syllabus provision).

The move to outcomes-based learning and the development of national standards in education reflected the increasing influence of economic indicators in education as well as the continued presence of child-centred learning objectives from the new pedagogies. The market orientation of outcomes was mediated by an education discourse in which 'the child' remained central. If efficiency and accountability were guiding principles of curriculum reform in the 1990s, the public rationale remained 'relevance'.

This chapter discusses the persistence of protracted historical debates in a contemporary pedagogical context of outcomes-based learning, increasing economic imperatives and national goals in education. It first analyses the development of a national curriculum in the 1980s and 1990s. The move to standardise the State school systems into one overarching framework of curriculum coverage and assessment highlighted the potential of education, at least discursively, to define the nation.

It then examines the new national curriculum frameworks and their impact on History using reactions of teachers and educators to the shift towards SOSE and outcomes-based learning. Despite the significant debate over SOSE, teachers increasingly adopted the rhetoric of relevance to describe the status and justify the importance of History in schools. In order to meet the challenges of SOSE, therefore, History teachers had to use the very language that defined History as old-fashioned,

¹ Maryellen Davidson, 'Interview with Maryellen Davidson' (Melbourne, 23 April 2002).
traditionalist and 'irrelevant'. This discourse now pervades history education, and points
to a growing pressure for accountability not only within the schools sector, but to the
nation itself.

Finally I look at the widespread perception that History is in a state of 'crisis'. A
heated debate in the Australian Historical Association Bulletin in 1998 and 1999
highlighted the fears and aspirations that teachers, academics and curriculum designers
felt for the discipline in schools. Protagonists argued that the inclusion of History in
SOSE outcomes cemented its place in schools. By stipulating aims, objectives and
syllabus efficiency, they contended, the subject was brought within a new, stronger
curriculum framework. Antagonists replied that once History was subsumed into
integrated programmes it ceased to be History, and that to maintain a significant
presence it had to be taught as a discrete discipline. The subsequent campaign against
SOSE waged by the Courier Mail in Queensland drew similarly on contrasting opinions
about the state of the subject, but the public nature and political intensity of this latter
contest illustrated how such anxiety could extend beyond professional debates: it is
notable that despite its inclusion within curriculum frameworks that demand
accountability and relevance, SOSE has come under increasing criticism for being
politically progressive and educationally unsound. Such heated discussion tapped into
both a professional concern for the discipline, as well as the pervasive national anxiety
over teaching 'our history'.

From equity to excellence: a national education

The development of a national curriculum was given increasing prominence in the 1980s,
when the shift to promote a national direction in education was a significant addition to
the State-based arrangements for school funding and curriculum development. The drive
for greater consistency had been a recurring policy initiative since the late 1960s and
early 1970s, with the creation of three national committees. The National Committees
on Social Science Teaching (1970–78), English Teaching (1974–78) and the Asian Studies
Coordination Committee (1974–78) were the first significant attempts to develop a
Federal syllabus design. The establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre
(CDC) in Canberra in 1976 was intended to absorb such committees. While cut back

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under the Liberal Fraser government in 1980–81, it remained active and in 1984 was recreated under the new Hawke Labor Government.3

The Curriculum Development Centre worked towards the development of a broad curriculum framework that encompassed subject areas within an outline of seven 'Learning Processes' and nine 'Areas of Knowledge and Experience'. This subject demarcation mirrored the division of the curriculum into learning areas advocated by the state-based inquiries into education such as the 1985 Victorian Blackburn Report.4 It also highlighted the orientation of curricula towards objectives rather than content coverage. Jim Fitzgerald, a teacher who has written extensively on developments in history education since the 1970s, described the document as supportive of integrated studies and multidisciplinary approaches to curriculum design and critical of 'our traditional way of packaging knowledge into required subjects'.5 The suggestion that disciplines such as History were too 'old fashioned' and not sufficiently oriented to the contemporary needs of students was a powerful but problematic image: while some progressive educators worried about discipline's entrenched academic conservatism, others were just as keen to emphasise the importance of History as a potentially progressive subject in its own right. The contrast between the New History and the New Social Studies exemplified this, and led to an unlikely coalition of progressive advocates of the discipline approach and their conservative counterparts, who were keen to discredit integrated subjects for their progressive social agenda and for lowering academic standards.

The Curriculum Development Centre's programme reiterated the child-centred approach characteristic of the new pedagogy, although its definition of educational equity suggested a new national emphasis. Ian Welch, the Centre's Principal Education Officer, commented in 1980 that the CDC held 'a view that a national curriculum policy was essential if schools are to effectively serve society and the students'.6 Its proposal for an Australian curriculum in 1988 confirmed this view. 'It is a right for students to have

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the validity of their own life experiences confirmed through their education', it stated. ‘An effective education must be founded on the security and confidence engendered by an acceptance of social and cultural identity as an individual, a member of a community and as part of a nation.’

In addition to access and equity motivations, the promotion of a national curriculum was firmly based upon social and economic theory that linked education with national growth. The Blackburn Report noted the widespread benefits of boosting retention rates: education had the potential to reduce unemployment, increase social equity and the human resources of society. Subsequent inquiries and reports also revealed the growing interpretation of educational skills in terms of core competencies or standardised expectations of learning achievement. Committees chaired by Brian Finn and Eric Mayer published their reports in the early 1990s, which urged that targets be set for 15-19 year olds that outlined expected skills attainment. According to Susan Pascoe, the Mayer Competencies advocated teaching students ‘generic competencies that would equip them for effective participation in initial employment and in the broader community’.

The moves for a national approach to education in the 1980s also indicated a concern with increasing efficiency and entrepreneurial capacity: the shift towards a national curriculum with an emphasis on outcomes facilitated the trend towards greater specificity in statements of educational intent. Beyond such curriculum initiatives, national attempts to coordinate policy in a range of areas such as energy and transport also reflected this drive to reduce duplication and inconsistency between the Commonwealth and States. Educational relevance was not only student-centred, but increasingly critical for the nation’s growth.

The Federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins, expressed the growing national and economic rationalisation of education along the same lines his Government had already applied to industry policy. For Dawkins, national standards were imperative to the success of any national curriculum. In 1988 he published a report on future

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7 Developing an Australian Curriculum (Woden, ACT: Curriculum Development Centre, 1988), 87.
8 Blackburn, Ministerial Review of Postcompulsory Schooling, 14–16.
10 Laurie Brady, Curriculum Development, 5th edn (Sydney: Prentice Hall, 1995), 92.
directions of schooling, which emphasised the need for national standards in the context of economic and social change. *Strengthening Australia's Schools* stressed the importance of a comprehensive, national and relevant curriculum. 'The Government is now considering the role of schools more broadly, in the context of a society undergoing significant social and economic adjustment', the report stated.

Parents, young people themselves, and the community generally have a right to expect schools to provide young Australians with the knowledge and skills they will need in life. We must continually look for ways to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of schools throughout Australia."

Dawkins' national education agenda cited the policy of his predecessor, Susan Ryan, who had announced in 1985 'a change in emphasis in the Government's approach to schooling issues, with less focus on the resources which are put into schools and more on gaining improved educational outcomes from schooling in selected areas of high priority.'

These two reports signposted the extension of objectives in curriculum documents to the adoption of outcomes. They were developed at a point when accountability emerged and grew strongly in educational expectations, discourse and practice. Explaining a shift in education policy beyond state legislatures to a national concern, Eileen Sedunary noted a corresponding shift in education discourse as an expression of the nation. She maintained that Prime Minister Hawke's ideal of the 'clever country' was a 'vision' dependent 'on a citizenry whose productive capacities, necessarily grounded in formal education, become a key mode of identity with and commitment to nation'. Her comments provide a critical analysis of education discourse as a growing component of national definition. They also offer a strong point of departure to consider the convergence of pedagogy and politics in the commitment to 'teach the nation'.

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12 Ibid.
The publication of the Hobart Declaration in 1989 was the first public statement by all State Education Ministers on explicit national goals. The national goals for schooling will, for the first time, provide a framework for cooperation between schools, States and Territories, and the Commonwealth, it stated. The goals are intended to assist schools and systems to develop specific objectives and strategies, particularly in the areas of curriculum and assessment. Aims included the provision of an ‘excellent education for all young people, being one which develops their talents and capacities to full potential and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation’. The Hobart Declaration also advocated the achievement of ‘high standards’, ‘equality of educational opportunities’ and development of literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills. The creation of the Department of Employment, Education and Training portfolio in 1987 highlighted this growing belief that education and the workforce needed to be integrated, that national education was linked with, and indeed integral to, national economic growth. ‘If our schools are to become the places of fulfilment and relevance which the Government believes most Australians want them to be then we must encourage and permit them to maximise their potential.

The rhetoric of co-operation, of a national effort in schooling, reflected the Federal Labor Government’s commitment to consensus. It also served the Government’s programme of economic deregulation and marketisation. The quest for national standards and requirements of educational accountability demanded increased centralised authority and decentralised syllabus development. A number of states adopted this policy direction. In Victoria in the 1980s the Cain Labor Government established an administrative framework that, according to the education scholar Bob Bessant, ‘ensured effective political direction and accountability by using a corporate management approach’. Accountability and efficiency became the order of the Victorian public service: quantifiable objectives, corporate objectives and monitoring of progress was intensified by a rhetorical shift that redefined government services as ‘products’ and

16 Ibid., 169.
17 Ibid., 169.
18 Ibid., 168.
19 Dawkins, Strengthening Australia’s Schools, 2.
its recipients as 'consumers'. The subsequent Liberal Government in the 1990s accelerated the aggressive corporatisation of the public sector and radically altered the composition and operation of the Victorian state school system. The Kennett Government's *Schools of the Future* initiative forced the departure of 7000 teachers and amalgamation of 300 public schools.

A series of reports and legislative measures in New South Wales in the late 1980s and into the 1990s also advocated and subsequently enshrined economic rationalism in the Education Department. In 1989 the Carrick Report, commissioned by Nick Greiner's Coalition Government, called for greater flexibility in course and syllabus structures to allow for greater individual progression. It also urged that student progress be tracked using learning outcomes rather than the chronological period of tuition. The report called for the 'vigorous promotion of excellence and the vigorous promotion of equity' in New South Wales schools. It considered the current curriculum was not accountable and was excessively centralised. There were also inefficient management structures within the Department of Education, an absence of systematic testing and 'disturbing deficiencies in the quality, content and development of curriculum'. Critically, the report insisted that an important 'link between education and the general economic well-being of the nation' needed to be established. 'Australia must have a well-educated community with the skills to underpin our national development.'

In 1990 the Scott Report further recommended the delegation of regional operations while retaining centralised policy control. The 1990 Education Reform Act in New South Wales, which established the Board of Studies, legislated the recommendations of the Scott and Carrick Reports. The creation of the Board enshrined outcomes in schooling and confirmed the growing dominance of economic discourse in educational theory. Subsequent legislation reinforced this position. In 1995 the Quality Assurance School Review Program was introduced in that State for

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23 Ibid., 10.
'benchmarking' purposes and reiterated the prerogatives of outcomes-based learning and educational best practice. By 1997, the Education Amendment Bill stressed 'rigour, standards and relevance' with the policy document, *Securing Their Future.*

The meaning of 'relevance' had certainly changed. From earlier ambitions of making education more child-centred, more accessible, and more practical for a growing student population, relevance had become imbued with a market orientation. 'Relevance' constituted effective learning; a 'relevant' education demanded efficient delivery and comprised a growing association of education provision with productivity. Such policies demanded increased accountability from all sectors, and their rigour was matched by harsh rhetoric. While 'efficiency' and 'productivity' were initially economic terms for employment relations, as Simon Marginson has suggested, they became increasingly integral to education policies across the political spectrum. The futures orientation of this discourse also invited attention. The *Schools of the Future* and *Securing Their Future* policy statements displayed an increasing preoccupation with accountability that extended to schooling; the nation's teachers and students were not only accountable to Treasury, but to the future of the nation itself. It was through History, moreover, with its capacity to transmit the national story and foster national identity, that this preoccupation with the future would be increasingly realised.

**Enhancing History**

Studies of Society and Environment is one of eight key learning areas that emerged from the National Collaborative Curriculum Project initiated by Dawkins in 1988. In 1989 the 'Hobart Declaration' was signed by all Australian Education Ministers and provided the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia. More recent education bodies such as the Australian Education Council, made up of State and Federal

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38 Ibid., 43.
Education Ministers, also worked towards a national curriculum. In 1992, the Council outlined four major educational and economic advantages of a national collaborative curriculum project. They included the benefits gained through sharing curriculum expertise and initiative, reducing the problems faced by students who moved interstate, and the development of a more consistent approach to student reporting. The shift towards an explicit national education statement indicated the desire for clarity in education outcomes as well as the economic pressures for greater efficiency and effectiveness in curriculum design and national consistency in education policy.

SOSE is the broadest of the key learning areas, and includes subjects such as Business Studies, Geography, Politics and History. It has also grown in some states to incorporate driver safety awareness and drug education. The SOSE learning area in the national profile comprises six 'conceptual strands' that direct the considerable array of subjects towards specific outcomes (such as recognising 'that Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children are Australian children', or examining 'how gender, race and socio-economic status influence an individual's identity'). The conceptual strands consist of 'Time, Continuity and Change', 'Place and Space', 'Culture', 'Resources', 'Natural and Social Systems', and 'Investigation, Communication and Participation'. History is located primarily in 'Time, Continuity and Change'. In this sense it can be taught as a discrete unit, meeting the outcomes of Studies of Society and Environment while remaining a subject of study in its own right. In a speech to the History Teachers' Association of Victoria in 2000, for example, the State's Minister for Education, Mary Delahunty, outlined her intentions to mandate History within the Victorian adoption of the Curriculum and Standards Framework. There are no specific requirements for this, however; Delahunty never did mandate the subject, and neither the National Goals nor the Victorian Curriculum Standards Framework require History to be taught as a discrete discipline. The outcomes for 'Time, Continuity and Change' can in fact be met through any SOSE unit.

99 The Australian Education Council was moved into the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 1993.
11 Ibid., 190.
12 Ibid., 179.
Pedagogical ideals influenced this curriculum design. Reiterating the justifications of the New Social Studies a generation earlier, student development was linked to a set of standards and objectives across the curriculum, rather than the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge. The Hobart Declaration was also a milestone in the national adoption of outcomes-based learning. While the move to a 'relevant' education based on competencies was central to the development and promotion of the key learning areas, the stipulation of increased choice and flexible subject delivery demanded a multiplicity of subject possibilities and enabled students and teachers to be more aware of the outcomes and objectives towards which they were working.

The Common and Agreed Goals also complied with budgetary objectives. The overarching goals of the curriculum framework could be met in a variety of ways, allowing States and Territories to keep their existing subjects and avoid expensive changes. Moreover, as outcomes for 'Time, Continuity and Change' could be met from any number of subjects, the absence of History from curricula did not prevent the satisfaction of assessment requirements. Consistency in curriculum development across the country was linked to educational standards and national growth, but the parameters of change were limited. Education discourse became national, but as long as the States could demonstrate that their subjects met the Goals from the Hobart Declaration, minimal syllabus change was necessary. Ignoring the guidelines altogether has also been permissible. In 1995 the New South Wales Board of Studies undertook to link outcome statements from the national profiles with its existing syllabuses. After a change of government, however, a commissioned report on that State's education policy reaffirmed the prime role of New South Wales in prescribing curriculum content. As such, it has largely ignored the national profiles for Years 7-10.

The push for efficiency in all sectors of government was a major force in the instigation and implementation of the National Curriculum. Education was redefined in line with economic imperatives, and Dawkins' insistence on national standards was a realisation of this. Yet the economic benefits of a national curriculum were not to be exceeded by the cost of mandating it: the drive for a national curriculum framework was

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contained by the limitations of change permissible across the different States' educational systems and the pragmatic realisation that a degree of flexibility was needed for its implementation. Standardisation across the years of compulsory schooling (K-10) emphasised an integrated approach to History, but the discipline approach was still favoured at a post-compulsory level. Advocates for the national provision of History within SOSE at the junior level felt that a variety of jurisdictions and student backgrounds could be better accommodated by the more flexible educational approach of SOSE.

The adoption of SOSE as part of a national drive for more consistent educational delivery and reporting attempted to standardise subject delivery and educational discourse. Education Ministries, curriculum officials and teachers increasingly rationalised the adoption and implementation of the national strands and profiles for History as an issue of educational standards and accountability. Personal or unquantifiable aspects of education carried much less weight than rankings and results in the discourse of verifiable learning, which included expectations of accountability for the implementation and reporting of outcomes. In the second Victorian Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF II), these expectations were made clear. 'The community expects schools to aim for high standards for all students and requires easily understood information on student performance', it stipulated. 'Standards must be measurable to assist good decision-making by educators, students, parents and policy makers. The CSF is the basis for standards-based assessment in Victoria.' Within the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the national model of outcomes, standards and assessment was realised. The division of the curriculum into key learning areas such as SOSE, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), and Mathematics corresponded with national curriculum emphases and accorded levels of attainment for student development. The profiles of

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8 Curriculum and Standards Framework II: Studies of Society and Environment (Carlton: Board of Studies Victoria, 2000), 2.
9 There are eight KLAs in Victoria: The Arts, English (including English as a Second Language), Health and Physical Education (HPE), Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), Technology.
each key learning area also contributed to the development and provision of a common language and framework for monitoring student progress.\(^4\)

In Western Australia the literature for implementing that State’s outcomes-based learning curriculum framework employed the language of student choice in the context of standards of assessment and accountability. *Getting Started*, the Western Australian outcomes implementation programme of 1999, explained that the shift to an outcomes-based curriculum framework was about ‘making changes to learning, teaching and assessment strategies’.\(^4\) It also provided choice, because it was ‘neither a curriculum nor a syllabus, but a framework identifying common learning outcomes for all students’. The framework was ‘intended to give students and teachers flexibility and ownership over curriculum in a dynamic and rapidly-changing world environment’.\(^4\) Far from reducing the scope and benefit of History, according to the Western Australian framework, integrated studies such as SOSE enabled the incorporation of knowledges from different disciplines because they were ‘connecting different perspectives’.\(^4\)

Choice and flexibility might have become the new expressions of equity, but they did not stipulate the maintenance of History as a discrete subject within the schools. Indeed, as History enrolments continued to cause anxiety among educators and historians,\(^\text{44}\) altruistic, romantic or traditional reasons for maintaining the discipline became increasingly tenuous. Other States were not immune from the discourse of educational ‘enhancement’.\(^4\) The Queensland SOSE syllabus adopted ‘a learner-centred approach’, and claimed in its rationale that outcomes-based learning was essential to ensure the relevance of the learning area. The integrated nature of the curriculum framework was held to be more beneficial for students. A 1999 draft of the Queensland


\(^{42}\) *Getting Started: Society and Environment* (Osborne Park, WA: Curriculum Council Western Australia, 1999), 9.


SOSE syllabus maintained that its cross-curriculum priorities created ‘occupational pathways’ for its students. The syllabus designers maintained that if History teaching was better aligned with wider educational curriculum goals, the subject would be a more thorough and widely applicable field of study. When designing a course of study, it should be acknowledged that History is not restricted to any one of the strands used to organise the Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment core learning outcomes, the authors asserted. ‘Historical knowledge and skills are embedded in all of the core learning outcomes.’

The idea of relevance was integral to the realisation and justification of the new educational approaches that outcomes comprised. The 1995 Queensland Senior History syllabus described the value of the subject as a beneficial, rational subject choice for contemporary students. ‘Studying history can help us live more effectively as global citizens’, it reasoned. ‘To live purposefully, ethically and happily with others, we must be able to make wise decisions. Studying history can help us develop the knowledge, skills and values needed to make those decisions.’ Directed at the compulsory years of schooling, however, SOSE syllabuses were able to present their subject within a national framework. The SOSE design in Western Australia’s 1999 curriculum framework gave particular attention to the (flexible and dynamic) instrumentalism of the subject.

Students explore the values of democratic process, social justice and ecological sustainability, enabling them to exercise judgement on moral and ethical issues, and to develop a commitment to the core values shared by most Australians.

Empowered with this knowledge and these skills, students will become better thinkers and better decision makers. They are then able to take action in a socially-responsible manner to contribute to the achievement of more desirable futures for all.

46 Studies of Society and Environment, Years 1-10 Draft Syllabus, 31 May 1999, 16.
47 Brian Hoepper and Max Quanchi, History in Years 1 to 10 Studies of Society and Environment Key Learning Area (Brisbane: Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2000), 1.
Rationalisations of SOSE asserted that it made History more contemporary and socially relevant. At a time when subjects such as Business and Legal Studies threatened the standing of traditional disciplines, 'relevance' gave History a vital legitimacy.

History teachers anticipated the impact of SOSE in a variety of ways. Some felt that it posed a significant threat to History as a discrete discipline within the curriculum. During negotiations in the late 1980s for the new post-compulsory education qualification in Victoria stimulated by the Blackburn Report, the History Teachers' Association of Victoria defended the need for History in its own right within the new Victorian Certificate of Education. A prelude to the SOSE debate, the concerns of teachers were part of a continuing discussion over the status of History in integrated studies. After considerable struggle, the Association claimed it had 'won the battle' against what was to become a growing movement to have History subsumed into Social Education.50 Again in 1991, the Association's executive was promoting ways that History could be maintained, even strengthened, in an integrated curriculum: 'History is an acceptable and effective way of working within the Social Education Framework'.51

After the eventual implementation of SOSE in Victoria, the History Teachers' Association was still concerned to defend the position of History within the new curriculum framework. In an editorial in Agora, John Cantwell advocated the mandating of Australian History similar to the arrangement recently introduced in New South Wales. 'Perhaps if we can generate the same concern in Victoria we can have a similar outcome in Victoria which would serve to significantly lessen the impact of SOSE and serve [as] a springboard to the valuing of history in the rest of the school', he argued. 'After all, without history we are cheating our children of their heritage.'52 Here Cantwell meets the threat of a weakened History by utilising the language of relevance. This is not just a defence, it is an adaptation that acknowledges relevance is a key to the History teachers' cause, and it invokes heritage as a birthright of the child. Teachers' appropriation of the rhetoric of relevance has been one of the notable features of their defence of History against the restructuring and rationalising impulses that SOSE and outcomes have established.

Others accepted the integrated treatment of History for the way it made the subject stronger and more relevant. The President of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria, Rosalie Triolo, encouraged teachers to ‘Audit pedagogical goals in your teaching of history’ in the areas of ‘knowledge, skills, values and attitudes’. Triolo’s advocacy was partly an implicit acknowledgement of the increasing dominance of outcomes-based learning and its associated methods of measurement and accountability. It also acknowledged the popularity of outcomes-based learning among teachers that was noted in Chapter Three.

Responses in New South Wales to educational developments such as outcomes-based learning have ranged similarly from cautious critique to a positive embrace of standards and outcomes. Albert Marchetto, the Board of Studies’ History Inspector, responded to the Greiner Government’s 1989 report, Excellence and Equity, and encouraged teachers to understand that the changes implied by new departmental initiatives in education could strengthen History’s standing. The ‘initiatives related to History in Excellence and Equity should not be seen by teachers as a threat to the survival of the subject’, he argued. ‘The initiatives provide for the mandatory inclusion of History in the curriculum; a proposal which has the potential of enhancing the value of history in the face of mathematical mania. And as all History teachers know, only History can provide the background and perspectives for growth.’ By contrast, the History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales criticised the underlying educational approach of the report. The teachers argued that it was based on the dubious assumption that an increase in testing and reporting would benefit education. They suggested that ‘the quality of secondary schooling will be improved through an expanded core curriculum, regular testing and public reporting, and increased emphasis on student credentialling’.

In order to maintain their position History teachers have adopted the very discourse that has come to dominate education policy and politics. There has been an explicit appeal by teachers to this new orthodoxy to preserve the standing of their...
subject in the face of increasing curriculum pressure. Concerned that the Greiner Government’s proposed emphasis on Maths, Science and LOTE would crowd History out of the curriculum, the History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales adamantly defended the integrity and utility of the subject: ‘History places before students the recognition that they are the students of tomorrow and has provided them with the skills to deal with such an awesome responsibility’. 65 Judy King, an Ancient History teacher and former Syllabus Committee member, provided a particularly pertinent example of the rhetoric History teachers adopted to prove the relevance of their subject. ‘Teachers of Ancient History face special challenges in the 1990s’, she stated. Ancient History ‘offers significant opportunities for the development of skills’, which ‘are relevant to the needs of all students who will be living, working and studying in the 1990s and beyond’. 67

Some went even further. The History Teachers’ Association of Victoria maintained that History was an ideal subject for maximising final year marks: ‘Students should keep in mind when selecting VCE History that not only will it be enjoyable, informative and offer them a range of “life skills” but that it can also provide them with a vital advantage in selection for some courses’. 68 The Queensland teacher and curriculum designer Ian Gray, noted in 1995 that History needed to become more work-oriented in order to regain popularity. Subject advocates needed to make people aware of how relevant history is for employment. 69 Mark Anderson, a teacher and later regional cluster manager for the Department of Education New South Wales, said that History ‘would be a prerequisite to be “tomorrow’s educated person” and an effective global citizen’. 70 In 2000 Jacqueline Hollingworth, the Education Officer of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria, promoted History as the pragmatic subject choice for those students keen to maximise their final year results: ‘For 97% of tertiary courses there are no prerequisites. Choose History for its interest. It can count as one of your best four subjects in determining your TER.’ 71

69 Gray, ‘The Decline of Senior History’.
This concern over History's perceived irrelevance continues to influence teachers and syllabus documents. In his report of the National Seminar on Teaching Australian History in Schools in 2001, the organiser Brian Hoeppner noted that one of the greatest concerns of teachers was to make History more 'vocationally relevant'. It is a language that has come to dominate understandings of History's value in education and society more broadly.

A crisis?

Despite the discourse of relevance and accountability, and despite the move to standardise the provision of History through Studies of Society and Environment, SOSE has created significant concern among History teachers and academics who fear it threatens the integrity of their discipline. The continuation and reinvigoration of this debate over the status of History within an integrated curriculum has created public attention and anxiety. Chapter Four explored the significant concern among educators over the status of History within the New Social Studies. More recently, a number of prominent commentators have criticised similarly the tendency of SOSE to overwhelm History, and for dampening the appeal and interest of the subject. Historians such as Stuart Macintyre have argued that the impact of SOSE has influenced the declining attraction of History. Discipline defenders hold that because SOSE encompasses a number of different subjects, teachers with no history background still teach the History units within the subject programme. Because outcomes are curriculum-wide, moreover, they can be met through a number of different subjects and some teachers may avoid teaching the subject at all.

While undertaking the National Inquiry into School History, Tony Taylor later related the story of a teacher who entered his History class, put his books on the table and said, 'I'm a geography teacher, I hate history'. In its study of current historical practice in schools, the Inquiry examined how History is best taught, especially its status

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in integrated subjects such as Studies of Society and Environment. The professionalism of teachers aroused considerable concern amongst teachers. Taylor admitted that ‘there are huge numbers of teachers in Australia who are teaching history more or less miserably’.65 The History Teachers’ Association of Victoria also publicised its concern that teachers were being trained in SOSE rather than History.66 In its submission to the Inquiry, the Australian Historical Association maintained that History’s status in schools was dependent on whether it stood alone or was taught as part of an integrated study. The Association argued that where History remained a discrete discipline in the compulsory years of secondary school (as in New South Wales), it remained strong, but when absorbed into Studies of Society and Environment there had been a tendency for the subject to disappear altogether.67 At a conference of the History Teachers’ Association of Australia in 2001, the Queensland Curriculum Council representative, SOSE designer and History teacher Ian Gray, explained the provision of ‘elaboration outcomes’ for teachers new to History who were teaching SOSE.68 They provided teachers with no background or experience in the subject a set of attainment standards and objectives for students. Undoubtedly a teaching aid for SOSE teachers who had to teach History with no grounding in that subject, it was also a clear admission that non-History teachers were teaching History. The findings of the National Inquiry suggested that it was not SOSE in itself that weakened History, but whether the subject was able to maintain its integrity within the SOSE framework.69

Historians and educationists raised significant concern because the discipline appeared to be waning in Australian schools. Despite vast efforts in national curriculum policy and rationalisations that History (or units of ‘Time, Continuity and Change’) was more ‘relevant’ than ever, enrolments in post-compulsory units steadily declined during the 1980s and 1990s. History Teachers’ Associations, the media and politicians documented striking shifts in numbers away from History in the post-compulsory years:

66 Ibid.

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in Victoria in 1972, 42% of Year 12 Students took Australian History. In 1993 the figure was just 6%.\textsuperscript{70} In Queensland in 1989 16.5% of students took Modern History in Year 12. By 1995, the number had declined to 12.7%.\textsuperscript{71} In South Australia, students taking year 12 Australian History fell from 1,649 in 1990 to 552 in 1997.\textsuperscript{72} The perception was oft repeated and tied to concern over an apparent decline in levels of national knowledge among students. Some argued that the drop in the proportion of students studying History could be explained by increasing retention rates.\textsuperscript{73} Others were adamant that the subject was ‘in decay’ because it was no longer ‘history’.\textsuperscript{74} Concern about declining enrolments formed part of the cliché that students and schools were dropping History, particularly Australian History, in droves, but debate about the subject had never been so great.

The anxiety about this subject has been repeated time and again: ‘History is in crisis’, came the cry; ‘what is to be done?’ others asked. In 1998 the historian Alan Ryan published an article in the Australian Historian Association’s \textit{Bulletin} called ‘Developing a Strategy to “Save” History’. ‘The teaching of history in Australia is in crisis for a number of reasons’, but the simple fact was that ‘children’ were ‘being introduced to history by people who know nothing about it’.\textsuperscript{75} Ryan’s article generated an enormous response. Many agreed with him, and also demanded a greater connectedness between the academic and school History practitioners and educators. Others were outraged that yet another academic was telling teachers how they should be doing their job.

Don Garden, a historian at the University of Melbourne and former President of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria, acknowledged the remoteness of academic historians from school history and the need for collaboration between the sectors.\textsuperscript{76} Peter Price, a secondary History teacher and curriculum adviser in South Australia, and Jan Bishop, an academic in the School of Education at Murdoch University, also advocated increased interaction between history departments in

\textsuperscript{70} McPhee, ‘The Historical Profession and Public Discourse’: 7-8.
\textsuperscript{71} Gray, ‘The Decline of Senior History’: 15.
\textsuperscript{72} Price, ‘History in Schools’: 31.
universities and schools. Others were keen to emphasise the distinctions between History teachers and academics. Carmel Young, a member of the History Syllabus Committee in New South Wales and lecturer in History Method at the University of Sydney, distanced herself from Ryan’s article. She argued that unlike academic History, History in schools was not a discipline. ‘The failure to comprehend the distinctiveness of school history is often the source of conflict between teachers, historians, policy makers and politicians over what history should be taught in schools, how it should be taught and who should control the reform agenda.’ Young’s comments also indicated the continuing concern by History teachers that academics assumed they knew how a school classroom should be run. Kate Cameron, the President of the History Teachers Association of New South Wales, agreed that there was a need for a positive relationship between teachers and academics, yet was critical of Ryan’s apparent assumptions: ‘Historians could do much to help strengthen the position of school history, but not by presuming to tell history teachers how to teach’.

Some disagreed with the claim that there was any crisis in History. Indeed, they considered, the subject had been strengthened by integrated studies such as SOSE. From the History Teachers Association in the ACT, Julia Ryan asserted that contrary to Ryan’s article, SOSE was not all bad. In many ways, in fact, it had ensured the place of History in current curricula. Louise Finch, the Principal Education Officer in the Social Education Curriculum Branch of the Northern Territory, argued that Ryan’s crisis was rhetorical. She maintained that History remained an identifiable component as ‘Time, Continuity and Change’, either as a discrete discipline or an integrated study. In response to Ryan’s apparent ‘doom and gloom’, Max Quanchi, the Queensland academic, teacher and curriculum adviser, said that SOSE framed History rather than destroyed it.

The Ryan debate highlighted a number of contrasts. First, it revealed the different experiences of History between the States. While some teachers and

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curriculum advisers supported SOSE’s provision of History units (as in Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory), others felt that SOSE had weakened the discipline. Furthermore, New South Wales commentators, speaking from the only State not to adopt the national profiles and strands, were keen to show the strengths of History as a discrete discipline within that State. Kate Cameron commented that there was a strong professionalism amongst History teachers in New South Wales, and enrolments were on the rise. In time, the debate would also reveal the disjuncture between the educational concerns raised in the Association’s Bulletin and the subsequent political campaign waged against SOSE in the media.

A number of common themes can also be discerned. In particular, much of the defensive anxiety displayed by teachers, reacting to a ‘History under threat’, was understood in terms of the subject’s perceived relevance. Describing the situation in Tasmania, Peter Wagg suggested that student numbers in the subject had declined because of ‘the far greater range of subject choice available’. There was also a ‘perception’ that while History was an interesting subject it was ‘not relevant to a specific career path compared, for example, with Legal Studies and Psychology’. Representing the History Teachers’ Association in the Australian Capital Territory, Nick Ewbank hinted in his response to Ryan that History might have to be more vocationally and economically oriented: ‘Yes, we must campaign to arrest the slide in the importance of history. But we must consider the wants, needs and capabilities of the market to which we are trying to sell.’ Elsewhere in Canberra, the Education Director of the National Museum of Australia, David Arnold, said that increasing numbers of vocational subjects were crowding out History in school curricula.

The discord expressed about the state of the discipline in the Ryan debate highlighted the level of pedagogical concern for history teaching and the degree to which this anxiety has been understood in terms of relevance. Concern about the state of History in schools and universities and concern from some teachers about their changing role in syllabus development was overwhelmingly presented in terms of its perceived

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83 Cameron, ‘School History in NSW’, 18-19. Cameron revealed that from 1992 to 1998, History enrolments went from 46% to 60% in New South Wales (although she did not specify the school years this enrolment rise applied to).
86 Jackson, ‘Academic condemns history teaching’.
utility. Scrutiny of this apparent crisis also manifested in conservative analyses of curriculum design. The professional concern over teaching History within SOSE has been cited by a number of educationists and commentators as proof of the pedagogical limitations of an integrated approach.

Dominating the discussion has been the assertion that History within Studies of Society and Environment is too progressive: it is overly student-oriented pedagogically and biased politically. Alan Barcan, ever critical of new teaching methods that move further away from more traditional, content-oriented courses of historical study, suggested that a lack of rigour in integrated studies such as SOSE had been a significant cause of History's decline. Barcan said that the origins of SOSE, including its approach to History and organisation of teaching methods, could be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, when new approaches to history teaching led to lower educational standards. 'Traditional inspection ceased, maintenance of Lesson Programs and Registers became optional; external exams at the primary and junior secondary level were abolished; state-prescribed syllabuses were discarded; textbooks became more varied.'

Barcan contended that school-based curricula 'became fashionable' and that 'Radical and neo-progressive education was dominant'. Yet he treats progressive methods of History teaching and more inclusive approaches to historical scholarship as indistinguishable: the discipline has become overly subjective, and the aims of secondary education emphasise personal rather than wider concerns. The educationist Kevin Donnelly likewise dismissed more progressive elements of History curricula in Australia for lacking educational rigour and argued that SOSE was ultimately limited by its origins in the politically radical, child-centred education movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

A similar conservative conflation of progressive teaching methods with critical and inclusive readings of the past was evident in curriculum debates in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. With its argument for cultural literacy, Peter Seixas has suggested, such critique was strengthened by the proponents' ability to demonstrate

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87 Barcan, 'History in Decay'.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
91 Kevin Donnelly, 'What the rest of the world could teach us', *Courier Mail*, 15 July 2000.
empirically low levels of factual knowledge among American high school students. Studies such as Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn's Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature, What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, as well as E. D. Hirsch's warning of America's cultural illiteracy presented grave claims about the historical knowledge of 'America's children'. They insisted that history education was too thematically based (on issues of race, class and feminism, for instance); units of Social Studies did not engage rigorously with the facts of history. As Seixas contended, these claims rejected progressive and inclusive elements of historical scholarship in the name of pedagogy. Utilising the rhetoric of educational standards, such critics implicitly attacked not only progressive educational methodologies but the historical content within such approaches.

The more recent controversy in Queensland over a new SOSE syllabus contained a similar dynamic. Criticism of the syllabus, raised and sustained by the Courier Mail, and initially restricted to its content and apparent political bias, was subsequently bolstered by the paper's assertions that the syllabus was academically deficient: SOSE was politically partisan and pedagogically irrelevant for 'today's' students; the syllabus was unscholarly as well as 'unAustralian'. The Melbourne journalist Andrew Bolt accused the Queensland Government's 'education experts' of launching 'the most radical attempt in Australia to indoctrinate children in key Left-wing values'. Such concern was prominent and widespread. Ted Wilson's letter to the Editor illustrated the deep anxiety that the syllabus provoked:

To omit people such as Captain Cook, Robert Menzies and many others from the teaching of history is ludicrous. We are trying to instil national pride and feelings of self-worth in our youth but are denying them the most important part of their heritage. The settlement of Australia was not an invasion but an extension of man's eternal quest for expansion. This is part of our history and should be taught to all, without political or religious bias.

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Only through a complete knowledge of our heritage can we understand our past and so improve our future.\(^{95}\)

While the *Courier Mail*’s apparent alarm over SOSE in Queensland initially utilised the populist headlines of the debate over ‘invasion’ in History syllabuses it covered six years earlier, its concern subsequently shifted from a political to a pedagogical argument.

Research on the syllabus commissioned by the paper had tried hard to find the communist links and shameful expositions of Australia’s past: ‘Captain Cook and Sir Robert Menzies do not feature in a new Queensland schools syllabus, but Eddie Mabo and Ho Chi Minh do’.\(^{96}\) Yet as the discussion developed, the *Courier Mail* became more concerned that the syllabus’s apparent lack of solid educational foundation was letting down Queensland schools. In a naïve, even sinister curriculum agenda, students were being denied the facts. While the pro-syllabus faction thought its opponents were motivated by a ‘right wing perspective’, argued one editorial, criticism of the new syllabus rested on concern that it was not focused on ‘the right of each Queensland student’ to be educated as ‘an individual in a fiercely competitive economy. This stance is pragmatic, not ideological’.\(^{97}\) The paper’s initial concern over syllabus content was surpassed by criticism that the teaching methodology itself was gravely inadequate in preparing students for the future.

Business leaders, invited by the paper to comment on the new syllabus, pointed to an overemphasis on progressive concerns, such as sustainable industry and ethical obligations. Andrew Craig, the CEO of the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry, worried that the syllabus did not adequately accommodate market principles.

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\(^{96}\) Martin Thomas, ‘School syllabus swings to the left’, *Courier Mail*, 10 June 2000. Captain James Cook (1728-79) led a series of exploratory and scientific journeys to the Pacific in the eighteenth century. The first, on the *Endeavour*, included mapping the East coast of Australia and the North and South islands of New Zealand. On 20 August 1770 Cook claimed possession of the East coast of Australia for King George III. He is frequently cited as the ‘discoverer’ of Australia. Eddie Mabo (1936-93) was a traditional owner of land in the Torres Strait Islands off Northern Australia. His land rights claim helped overturn the legacy of *terra nullius* in 1992—that Australia was deemed unoccupied before European colonisation. As a result, Aboriginal people who can claim a continuous link to crown land are able to apply for title to that land through the Native Title Act.

Robert Gordon Menzies (1894-1977) was Australia’s longest serving Prime Minister. After serving as Prime Minister from 1939 to 1941, he formed the Liberal Party, and in 1949 won a massive election victory against the Labor Government. He held office until retiring in 1966.

Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) was the communist leader who founded and became President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Steve Wilson, a stockbroker and business leader, was similarly critical: ‘Our children are being exposed to an anti-business bias, a reality that will reflect nothing of the real world they will be sent into’.\textsuperscript{98} Kevin Donnelly insisted that the limitation of SOSE was its focus on outcomes. ‘Those who have followed the debate in Queensland about the Studies of Society and Environment document would realise that outcomes are, on the whole, vague, politically correct and lacking in content.’\textsuperscript{99} This conflation of outcomes with integrated studies and an insistence that they constituted a progressive orthodoxy ignored the profound influence of the ‘new managerialism’, along with outcomes-based learning and an increasing focus on standards and accountability. It was a stance, furthermore, that reiterated the argument of relevance. The \textit{Courier Mail} insisted that the syllabus’s political correctness meant it was plainly irrelevant. ‘The problems with SOSE are quite fundamental; it seems intent on delivering the values of those who wrote it, at the expense of delivering useful knowledge for the children to whom it is directed’. The newspaper concluded that ‘Our children need knowledge that ensures they are as smart—or smarter than—children from the US, Singapore or Japan’.\textsuperscript{100}

By exposing the curriculum as ‘irrelevant’, the paper and its contributors had tapped into a significant professional debate over the status of History in integrated studies such as SOSE. While such critics appeared to be concerned with the utility of the SOSE syllabus, rather than its political values, they also revealed the political anxieties exploited by the education critics: namely, that ‘Queensland parents’ were worried about teaching a brand of ‘political correctness’. The Queensland SOSE debate highlighted the public interest in this professional anxiety over the state of History in schools. SOSE had become a central political and pedagogical concern. Various interpretations as progressive and neo-conservative, as child-centred and corporatist, this integrated study revealed how debates since the 1960s and 1970s over the relevance and status of History have influenced contemporary concerns about the utility of the discipline in a contemporary education.


\textsuperscript{99} Donnelly, ‘What the rest of the world could teach us’.

\textsuperscript{100} Editorial, ‘Trouble with syllabus is fundamental’.
Conclusion

The radicalism of progressive education approaches from the 1960s and 1970s retained considerable influence in Australian education policy. The child remained its focus, as ideals of personal development, professional relevance and community growth continued to define educational values. Many have defended the teaching of History in an integrated framework with rationalisations that it makes the subject more relevant in a rapidly changing global economy; others worry that the subject is under threat, neglected and squeezed out of an increasingly crowded curriculum. History has been under attack since at least the 1960s, as the previous chapters have revealed; appeals to ‘relevance’ go back just as far. Yet in recent years, rationalisations of History’s worth have become even more contingent upon this rather abstract notion. Indeed, relevance has become such an integral assumption of educational value that it has shifted unconvincingly from a justification of moves away from teaching ‘the facts’ to an explicit cry for their return.

The persistence of ‘relevance’ continues to shape these debates, drawing on values from the new pedagogy as well as contemporary demands and policies of economic rationalism. The move to incorporate SOSE developed out of progressive pedagogical aspirations, but was also shaped fundamentally by the shifting value of education within the economy and its relationship to the nation. In this way, pedagogical debates over history education have become politicised: questions and concerns over methodological approaches have become imbued with national significance; the status of History impinges on the status of the nation itself. As such, the growing question of accountability in teaching and learning has intensified anxiety about historical literacy and core national knowledge. The increasing connection of history education with the nation through the child, tomorrow’s citizen, will be the subject of the final chapter.
Chapter Six

Tomorrow's citizens
Introduction

The anxiety over SOSE has been intensified by a growing public and political concern that students are leaving school without adequate knowledge of their nation, its institutions, or its past; the ‘citizens of tomorrow’ barely understand the rights and responsibilities of Australian citizenship. Recent surveys indicate that children have conspicuous gaps in understandings of their nation’s past, and this has strengthened assumptions that the nation’s civic capacity is deficient. The survey results have produced considerable alarm as teachers, parents and education commentators struggle to comprehend the effects of this apparent historical ‘illiteracy’ on Australia’s future. Their mounting concern over students’ knowledge of Australian history and civics has been subsumed into the discourse of standards and outcomes. Anxiety over a lack of political and historical awareness is understood as a failure of instruction: standards simply have not been enforced; the education system is letting down the nation. Thus the new educational ‘relevance’ has come to incorporate values of citizenship as much as any economic or social utility of education.

This chapter explores a growing public and professional concern over the civic knowledge of Australian schoolchildren. It first tracks this anxiety by analysing surveys of student understandings of Australian history and politics. The results have generated considerable unease, with some politicians and educationists demanding increased instruction in Civics and Citizenship. They fear that without this education students will enter the world unprepared for its challenge and complexity. Others have been less keen to prescribe the form of History students should learn, but advocate the promotion of civic understanding and comprehension among students.

The chapter then examines the image of the citizen and notes how the nation's future, expressed through the child, has become intrinsically linked to historical knowledge and understanding. The 1999 Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling and its Hobart predecessor both expressed the importance of ‘active and informed citizenship’. The link between schooling, citizenship and the future was made

explicit: 'Australia’s future depends on each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society', it stipulated. 'High quality schooling is central to this vision.' The push to mandate Civics and Citizenship education reflected broader pedagogical demands for educational efficiency, accountability and national coherence.

Finally, the chapter examines political and educational responses to this apparent deficiency of national understanding among 'our' young people. State and Federal initiatives have variously attempted to arrest the worrying results. A mandatory Australian History syllabus encompassing Civics in New South Wales, and Federal initiatives such as the Discovering Democracy programme and the National Inquiry into School History, have received mixed responses from teachers. Anxious about the perceived decline of History, some anticipated Civics and Citizenship positively and saw it as a means to strengthen their subject. Others feared that mandatory civics content would drive students away from the discipline. It effectively constituted a return to rote learning, they suggested, and the only strengthening any prescribed unit could achieve would be the perception of History as boring and irrelevant.

Surveying ignorance

Research by the Sydney University academic Murray Print revealed in 1994 that New South Wales schoolchildren had alarmingly low comprehension levels of Australian political processes. The students lacked basic civics and citizenship awareness, Dr Print reported, and in-depth interviews had found that many of those eligible to vote at the previous year's Federal election had failed to register. Furthermore, many of the respondents did not have an adequate awareness of State and Federal governments. 'One of the reasons for the research is that we are concerned about the lack of political knowledge among students.' The survey generated significant interest and reinforced a growing perception of a 'civics deficit' among Australian school students. George Winterton, a Professor of Law at Macquarie University, spoke on behalf of the Australian Republican Movement and maintained that the failing was inherent within the school curriculum rather than the students themselves: 'I really don't think students

3 Adelaide Declaration.

are apathetic. They just haven't had the chance to learn.' Echoing his sentiments, the Federal Government outlined a plan to introduce a kit on the nation's constitution and Australian political system into schools.4

Published the following year, Print's research report tabled apparently grave levels of civic ignorance among the survey group. Only 30% of students in Years 9 and 10 knew the name of the Lower House of Parliament. Less than 2% could name any four members of Federal Cabinet.5 Print contended that such worrying figures could threaten the state of Australian civic public life. To 'function effectively as a citizen in a democracy and to participate in or understand political discourse, individuals require a basic level of understanding of political processes and structures', he argued. Democratic societies 'rely for their survival upon the active participation of an informed citizenry, the newest members of which come directly from our schools'.6 Most worrying was the fact that 'remaining largely ignorant about political and parliamentary structures appears, for students at least, to be perfectly acceptable'.7

Such results reinforced the findings of another, more prominent investigation into the political literacy of Australian school students. The Civics Expert Group, which published its report promoting citizenship awareness in 1994, comprised the historian Stuart Macintyre as well as educationists Susan Pascoe from the Catholic Education Office in Victoria and Ken Boston, the Director-General of the New South Wales Department of School Education. The Group drew on a survey of popular understandings of Australian history and politics conducted by Rod Cameron's polling organisation, ANOP, and was established as the result of 'various expressions of concern about the levels of knowledge that Australians gave about the Constitution, its history and our system of government'.8 In Macintyre's foreword, he suggested that while 'tolerance and inclusiveness have made diversity into a national strength ... a civic

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4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 39-40.
8 Civics Expert Group, Whereas the people ... civics and citizenship education (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1994), 10.
capacity depends on informed and active citizens', and there was 'disturbing evidence that many Australians lack the knowledge and confidence to exercise their civic role'.

Again, criticisms of the civics deficit fell not on the respondents themselves but the curriculum content and approach that clearly lacked both interest and impact. Students had not been turned off 'active citizenship'—they simply did not have the opportunity to learn it. In his research, Print intimated that while 'levels of political literacy are generally low', attitudes 'towards political processes and institutions are quite positive'. The Civics Expert Group argued that the 'great majority' of students approaching 'the threshold of full civic responsibility' were being denied civics and citizenship education. In fact, they were struck by the way most informants emphasised the need for greater knowledge and civic pride in Australian politics and history. The Group also suggested that the low level of civic discussion in Australia might have been due to the quiet assuredness of Australian democracy. The 'undemonstrative nature of Australian citizenship might be seen as demonstrating that Australians are comfortable with their civic system'. Their report nevertheless expressed alarm at some of the surveys conducted on their behalf. Of the respondents, some 87% lacked adequate knowledge of what is covered by the Constitution. Only 50% understood the High Court was the 'top' court in Australia.

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet had commissioned Cameron's research company to conduct some two and a half thousand interviews for the Civics Expert Group with respondents aged 15 years and over. The overview presented a 'high level of community ignorance about Australia's system of government and its origins'. 'While there are pockets of reasonably informed people, knowledge about governmental, constitutional, citizenship and civics issues is generally very low', Cameron concluded. 'The community readily admits scant knowledge about these issues, and actual understanding is often considerably lower than claimed knowledge. In some cases there are significant misconceptions.'

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9 Ibid., 3.
10 Print, Political Understanding and Attitudes of Secondary Students, 1.
11 Whereas the people ..., 13, 39.
12 Ibid., 143, 50.
13 Ibid., 132.
Responses to the Group’s report were largely bipartisan. The Labor Prime Minister, Paul Keating, maintained that learning the ‘privileges and responsibilities of being Australian does not mean an exercise in ideology but lessons in democracy and history’. He went on: ‘Civics education properly taught is more political than Math or English or Woodwork. And it is just as fundamental in a society like ours. It is just as important.’ The Commonwealth Government committed $25 million over four years to the Discovering Democracy project, which emerged from the report. While the Group’s recommendations also suggested the promotion of Civics and Citizenship in technical and adult education and in public programmes, schools initiatives remained central. In New South Wales, the Liberal Government announced in 1995 that school students would take compulsory lessons in Civics and Citizenship from 1997 to help them understand the parliamentary system. The move, announced by the Education Minister Virginia Chadwick, built on the advice of the Civics Expert Group that Australians had a limited understanding of the workings of government and the responsibilities of citizenship. The State Labor Opposition was similarly supportive. Before the State election, Bob Carr promised that a Labor Government would overhaul the curriculum in New South Wales to identify key historical and political events and concepts: ‘There is a core of knowledge that each citizen should have as a result of his or her schooling.’ Once he became Premier, Carr not only maintained the mandatory Australian History strand but strengthened its requirements and introduced a compulsory test at the end of Year 10.

In time, the incoming Federal Coalition also continued the civics momentum initiated under Keating. While Prime Minister John Howard had accused Keating of overemphasising republicanism in his comments on civics, he was supportive of Discovering Democracy, and eventually committed to implementing the Group’s recommendations for teaching Australian history and politics. Alarmed at the report’s revelations of low civics knowledge, moreover, the Federal Government announced plans

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in 1997 that would mandate Civics and Citizenship for all school students in Years 4-10 as part of a public push to increase knowledge of the nation’s history and political processes. Unveiling his plans to a Curriculum Corporation conference in 1997, the Minister for Education, David Kemp, said that any implementation of civics education would build on existing State curricula. Kemp was adamant that an understanding of the civic sphere was central to national identity and a functioning democracy, and advocated a more traditional, content-driven and affirmative historical approach than the Civics Expert Group had recommended. ‘Young Australians must gain a sound knowledge of the evolution of our pioneering democracy if its success and vigour is to survive in the next century’, he insisted. ‘We want young Australians to be in the best position to make informed decisions.’

Concern over civics was linked directly to the state of History in schools and the historical knowledge of Australian schoolchildren. Knowledge of Australian history was related time and again to the civic responsibility of citizenship. After the Group’s report was published, Macintyre called for the return of Civics to History curricula. ‘I want to see a retrieval of the civic dimension in history, a joining together of the changes in our public life, the ways we live together, with the enlarged understanding of diversity and difference.’ He said that while Civics and Citizenship was once closely linked with History in schools, more recently the History curriculum had ‘retreated from civic concerns’.

Such links between History and Civics had already been extensively expounded. In 1975 a Discussion Paper from the New South Wales Schools Board on the *Role of History in the Secondary Curriculum* outlined History’s suitability for civics education. Schooling was to ‘facilitate the individual’s entry into the group life of his society, or, in more traditional terms, to make him an effective citizen’. Moreover, History had ‘a distinctive contribution to make’ to this outcome. A 1978 survey of history teachers in the Victorian Secondary History Curriculum Project found that 48% of those

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18 Cited in ‘Canberra sets politics for years 4-10’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 May 1997.
interviewed regarded the subject as an ‘effective training for citizenship’.\textsuperscript{22} Outlining the benefits of the Victorian Social Education framework in 1985, an Education Department statement explained that one of its objectives was that students be prepared to ‘participate in the democratic processes through which our society regulates its activities and changes its institutions and laws’.\textsuperscript{23} A report on the development of Australian content by the Curriculum Development Centre in 1988 also contained substantial commentary on the importance of national knowledge for schoolchildren who would soon become citizens: it asserted that ‘Australian students’ needed to understand national areas of government, history and geography as well as social issues such as diversity ‘in order to operate as citizens’.\textsuperscript{24}

Such views reiterated the tradition of citizenship education integrated into the curriculum via History. The eminent Melbourne civics educator Alice Hoy commented in her 1934 report into History and Civics that the two were being taught in conjunction in all Victorian secondary schools except the Technical colleges.\textsuperscript{25} In Australia, History had long been considered a natural host for fostering civic awareness and the responsibilities of citizenship. The increasing placement of Civics into SOSE in recent years was also notable, mirroring the experience of the United States where Social Studies has been the established medium for Civics education.\textsuperscript{26}

Nevertheless, the push for Civics in the 1990s was unique for its comprehensiveness and publicity, with backing from State and Federal governments and History Teachers’ Associations. The renewed alignment of Civics with History during this period was also notable for its futures rhetoric: the two subjects were not only integral to students’ potential, but also national success—through the nation’s history, ‘our children’ were explicitly linked to its future. ‘History is everybody’s story’, insisted Gary Johnston in \textit{Teaching History}, ‘a vital part of the cultural and social heritage of every

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Developing an Australian Curriculum} (Woden, ACT: Curriculum Development Centre, 1988), 87.
\textsuperscript{25} For a history of Civics in Australia, see Julian Thomas, ‘The History of Civics Education in Australia’, in \textit{Whereas the people ...}, 161-71.
The History teacher Mark Anderson contended that the subject was integral for 'tomorrow's educated person', for becoming an 'effective global citizen'. Syllabuses also expressed this futures orientation that Civics imparted to History. The 1995 Queensland Modern History Senior Syllabus stated that 'Studying history can help us live more effectively as global citizens' and enables us to 'develop the knowledge, abilities and ethical commitment to participate as active citizens in shaping the future'.

The initial response of teachers to the support offered by governments was to embrace the promise that Civics seemed to provide for their ailing discipline. Concern through the 1980s and 1990s that objectives in citizenship were not being met by the curriculum led to its inclusion as one of the Agreed National Goals for Schooling in 1989. Civics and Citizenship would be embedded throughout Studies of Society and Environment.

A number of syllabus documents made the link between Civics and SOSE explicit. The 1999 draft Queensland SOSE syllabus clarified the importance of including civics education: it could enable students 'to participate effectively in society, and to contribute to the creation of positive social and environmental futures for themselves and others'. Integration of civics units into History and SOSE syllabuses could strengthen a subject facing serious questions over enrolments and 'relevance'. The President of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria, Rosalie Triolo, argued that History was not only interesting for students and teachers, with Civics and Citizenship Education it would also be practical.

The inclusion of compulsory Civics and Citizenship in New South Wales, where History retained its discrete status in schools in the compulsory years of secondary school (Years 7-10), was also seen by some in the History Teachers' Association to have the potential to arrest any decline in the subject. The addition of Civics and Citizenship suggested that History might become a compulsory subject for students in those years.

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28 Modern History Senior Syllabus (Brisbane: Board of Secondary School Studies, Qld, 1993), 2. 4.
29 Pascoe, 'Civics and Citizenship Education'.
30 Studies of Society and Environment, Years 7-10 Draft Syllabus, 31 May 1999 ( Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1999), 5.
Writing in *Teaching History*, James Dickson related an initial anxiety about plans to prescribe Civics in New South Wales History syllabuses, but argued that it should provide an unexpected positive windfall for the status of History. In her report for the History Teacher’s Association into the state of History in New South Wales published in 1997, Christine Halse recommended that ‘Civics education be integrated into the mandatory study of Australian History to provide students with a foundation in the content, processes and issues of citizenship within the context of the historical development of contemporary Australia’. Carmel Young agreed. ‘Obviously, the linking of history with citizenship education is viewed as imperative’, she said, and the key to cementing support for Civics and Citizenship education was a strengthened History curriculum nation-wide.

Professor Tony Taylor summarised this mood in the report of the National Inquiry into School History, which was funded through the Discovering Democracy programme and released in 2000. He revealed that teachers overwhelmingly supported Civics and Citizenship education mandated throughout the curriculum, rather than through the prescribed units that characterised its teaching in New South Wales. University historians also provided a rationale for tying Civics to Australian History. Mark Peel argued that the aims of national history ‘are to encourage active rather than passive citizens’. They should ‘provide some of the materials for awareness of and participation in the debates which animated or will animate public life, and to imagine the young citizen as someone who might reinvent and reshape national institutions, national identity and, indeed, national history’.

The possibilities for History enrolments presented by compulsory Civics and Citizenship were significant. Many teachers felt keenly the need for a curricular strengthening of History in schools, and citizenship education had long been associated

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18 Christine Halse et al., *The State of History in New South Wales* (Sydney: History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales, 1997), 89.
with the subject. Yet core civic knowledge was not the only reason that History teachers and students gave to justify their interest in the subject. In the 1978 survey, while 48% had seen the importance of civics within History, 95% of secondary History teachers said that the values and aims of the subject should be to 'develop an attitude of respect for the opinions, ideas, aspirations and way of life of other peoples in other times and other places'.37 In a survey published by the New South Wales History Teachers' Association in 1997, 44% of secondary students chose History for 'interest' or 'enjoyment'. Only 3% said they studied History to understand society—fewer than the 5% who chose it for timetable reasons.38 Teachers rationalised the inclusion of Civics and Citizenship education in History syllabuses as 'relevant' and 'essential', even though many felt a wider interest and appeal was what attracted students to the discipline.

The overwhelming public concern among the 180 submissions received by the Civics Expert Group had been that civics knowledge was 'in decline'.39 In response, the Group saw Civics and Citizenship education as a way of reviving Australian History and citizenship awareness in schools.40 Teachers tapped similarly into a popular concern that students were not learning enough about their heritage, that History was in decline, and national knowledge needed to be strengthened. Young insisted that the discipline would have to be allocated more hours for Civics and Citizenship education to be included in History and be taught adequately.41 In an editorial for Agora, John Cantwell asked whether a strengthening of History in Victoria might not be achieved with a mandatory component of Civics and Citizenship in Australian History along the same lines as New South Wales: 'We need to remind curriculum co-ordinators, parents and the general public that it is a national disgrace that while we have compulsory LOTE and drug education in Victoria there is no compulsory Australian history (never mind the history of other countries).42

Others were more sceptical. Denis Mootz, a History teacher and member of the History Syllabus Committee in New South Wales, was adamant that 'the big push for

37 Cowie, 'History in Schools'.
38 Halse et al., The State of History in New South Wales, 59.
Civics and Citizenship came from the federal government. Its incorporation in History syllabuses was advocated by some and tolerated by most, he argued, because ‘History gets funding by having Civics and Citizenship tagged on the end of it’. Mootz’s comments indicated a retrieval of History education by teachers and curriculum officials using a strategic argument of civic necessity. Despite the longstanding and perhaps natural association between History and Civics, teachers also displayed an opportunistic awareness that Civics and Citizenship education could be a major boost for a subject that faced criticism for being politically progressive and pedagogically lax, and was regarded by many students as uninspiring and irrelevant. In time, once the mandatory Civics syllabus was released in New South Wales, such pragmatic support from teachers would decline.

The citizen

Considerable anxiety was aroused by the surveys into levels of public understanding of Australian politics and history. Students’ comprehension generated most concern. Children were consistently positioned in terms of their civic responsibilities as future citizens. Such a hold on the future by ‘the child’ is captured in the public rhetoric over history education: the future of the nation depended on the understanding of its cultural and political heritage. Now a similar argument was employed for the ‘civics deficit’.

In her analysis of the civics debate in the 1990s, Joanna Wyn unpacked the image of the child as a conduit for this national discourse, where young people’s experiences ‘are negotiated through institutional and cultural frameworks’. Youth is not simply a biological or cognitive stage of development, she argued, but a cultural experience that is given meaning and value by cultural understandings. As such, the expression of ‘our children’ enabled ‘the positioning of youth in terms of the future’. ‘Youth is seen to occupy a space which is a “vital image” of the real thing, but is not real in itself.’

This emblem has been increasingly mobilised in recent years: as tomorrow’s citizens, ‘our children’ are a conduit for the nation and its past.

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4 Denis Mootz, ‘Interview with Denis Mootz’ (Sydney, 9 June 2003).
Concern over ‘our children’s’ levels of knowledge has not been restricted to Australia. In a collection of articles analysing history education, Sam Wineburg reproduced the results of a civics survey conducted in the United States in 1917. Professors J. Carleton Bell and David McCollum tested 668 Texas high school students and published their findings in the Journal of Educational Psychology. More than a third could not identify 1776 as the date of the Declaration of Independence, and more than half could not name Jefferson Davis as president of the confederacy. ‘Surely a grade of 33 on the simplest and most obvious facts of American history is not a record in which any high school can take pride’, declared the testers. Wineburg rightly speculated that the test and subsequent dismay could have been quoted from any number of similar, seemingly endless surveys of students’ knowledge. ‘The whole world has turned upside down in the past eighty years but one thing has seemingly remained the same: Kids don’t know history.’

A publication of findings seventy years later by Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn led to similar outrage and anxiety in the United States. The authors situated their study in the context of E. D. Hirsch’s research into the state of education standards in America. Hirsch’s description of a crisis in cultural literacy, had warned that ‘our children’s lack of intergenerational information is a serious problem for the nation’. He suggested that ‘American schools should be able to devise an extensive curriculum based on the national vocabulary and arranged in a definite sequence’. Ravitch and Finn’s report, What do Our 17-Year-Olds Know?, attracted considerable attention and remains an influential text. Almost 8000 students took the general knowledge test covering world and American geography, history, politics and literature. Only 24.7% of the survey group placed Abraham Lincoln’s Presidential term in the correct 20-year period, and 52% assigned Franklin Roosevelt’s Presidency to 1929–46. The authors warned that this was ‘A Generation at Risk’; the present generation and generations to come were ‘at risk of

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48 Ibid., 139.
being gravely handicapped by that ignorance upon entry into adulthood, citizenship and parenthood'.

In 1997 the Dominion Institute in Canada published similar results from its Canada Day History Survey. They declared that Canadian youth aged 18-24 had ‘failed’ the 30 questions drawn up by a panel of seven distinguished Canadians comprising academics, public and national opinion leaders. According to the Institute, those with higher levels of education and income received better ‘marks’, but all segments of the youth population ‘failed’ the exam. The media publicised concern over the apparent dearth of historical knowledge among Canada’s young people. ‘How can young people survive without celebrating its past, without pride in its achievements, without its own national mythology?’, asked an editorial in the Edmonton Journal. Rudyard Griffiths, the Institute’s Director, explained that the results were a national impediment and that citizens’ ability to confront an uncertain future was largely the product of sharing a common past. ‘Finding new ways to enhance the common memory that defines our collective sense of self is essential if we are to overcome challenges to our security and identity.’

Such surveys and results routinely provoke anxiety and outrage over the state of the nation and its future. In 2001 the British Daily Telegraph reported a review of students’ historical knowledge, revealing that the ‘First World War is a mystery to two thirds of secondary school children and some think Adolf Hitler was Britain’s Prime Minister in the Second World War’. According to the educational publishers, Osprey, who undertook the survey, British schoolchildren’s knowledge had hit a ‘shocking low’. While anxiety over core national knowledge seems to be perennial, in recent years it has taken on new meaning as a locus for collective memory and pedagogy: the transmission of national identity has become increasingly tied to national standards in education.

The apparent deficiency of historical knowledge is frequently blamed on untrained teachers and inadequate resources. The discipline is not taken seriously enough; teachers and students are being let down by poor curricula and a lack of professional training and support. In her explanation of the state of History teaching in

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51 Editorial, ‘Canada’s history is being lost’, Edmonton Journal, 2 July 1997.
52 Liz Lightfoot, ‘Children who think Hitler was British’, Daily Telegraph, 10 January 2001.
North America, Diane Ravitch revealed that according to the United States Department of Education 53.9% of History students in Years 7-12 were taught by someone who did not even have a History minor (36% of public school teachers had neither a minor nor major in their main assigned field of teaching). She detected a commonly held view that ‘anyone can teach history’. Peter Seixas also complained that in his home Province of British Columbia, teachers were not being trained with subject-specific qualifications. A significant number had no Social Studies background, let alone one with History. In Australia, too, significant alarm has been expressed that teachers with no background in the discipline were being forced to teach History. A study conducted by the Australian Education Union in 2000 found that 57.9% of schools had teachers teaching outside their area of curriculum expertise. In rural districts this figure was as high as 77.1%. Jacqueline Hollingworth, the Education Officer of the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria, related how she frequently had teachers who had never taught History ringing up to ask the difference between a primary and secondary source.

These concerns were not simply responding to progressive pedagogies from the 1960s and 1970s. Bruner himself described education as a means for ‘training well-balanced citizens for a democracy’. Edwin Fenton also maintained that ‘Several of the social studies curriculum projects have been designed to encourage the development of good citizens’. In the midst of the Wyndham system, Wyndham attributed to History the means of providing ‘a background for competent citizenship’. The New South Wales Inspector of Schools, C. W. McLaren, maintained similarly that by the end of Form IV ‘those studying history will have been brought up to date with at least the basic history of Australia and its institutions as well as its relations with other countries’. As a

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56 Ibid.
result, he continued, 'these students will leave school much better qualified as men and women of the future'.

These views justify History in terms of civic public life. They rationalise History's role in contemporary society, and they became stronger in the syllabuses of the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1999 Tasmanian Year 10 History syllabus, an aim for students included gaining 'an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen both in the past and in modern Australia'.66 In the Year 9 syllabus, they were 'also encouraged to develop a better understanding of Civics and Citizenship and why certain things are as they are today'.66 This collective futures invocation has become pervasive. In his Ministerial Statement for Discovering Democracy, Brendan Nelson asserted that 'Civics and Citizenship education is an important national priority. Our democracy depends on informed participation.' The importance of schools was paramount: 'Young people need to understand the workings of our political and legal system and our history as a democratic nation so they can take their place as confident and open-minded citizens in a twenty-first century Australia'.67 Nelson further stipulated that the relevance provided by a civics education also demanded accountability: 'As Australians we have rights which also come with responsibilities'.66 In Victoria the requirement of the citizen was also made explicit: 'The knowledge, skills and values students acquire in this study enables them to participate as confident, responsible and active citizens in a democratic society which functions in a global context'.64

Such discourse revealed the multiple meanings behind a growing educational obsession with relevance and rigour. Civics and Citizenship had long been viewed as essential for fostering national knowledge, ethics and civic understanding. Now, these values were tied to calls for the nationalisation of school standards as well as the promotion of national heritage and identity. 'Tomorrow's citizens' were linked to the nation and its future. Through History, moreover, this insistence on galvanising

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61 C.W. McLaren, 'Introductory Remarks', in Workshop in Form IV History, 11.
65 Ibid.
66 Curriculum and Standards Framework II: Studies of Society and Environment (Melbourne: Board of Studies Victoria, 2000), 5.
collective identity and core national knowledge could be strengthened by educational demands for national standards and accountability.

**Mandating Civics**

Despite the initially positive receptions from many teachers, the implementation of Civics and Citizenship education aroused considerable criticism and alarm. Notwithstanding the potential for Civics to strengthen the place of History in schools, and despite a traditional association between the two subjects, the pressure to mandate ‘active citizenship’ by curriculum authorities was poorly received by some teachers and their professional bodies. The historians of civics, Denise Meredyth and Julian Thomas, maintained that there was a lukewarm response from teachers to *Discovering Democracy*. Many felt it emphasised a traditional historical approach and suggested there was a core of Australian democratic values, rather than a plurality of perspectives. Some teachers considered that the approach was unsuitable to History at all and was consequently under-utilised in schools. Denis Mootz related that the implementation of Civics and Citizenship through History had dulled the subject. ‘I would have let the Geographers or Commerce have Civics and Citizenship. *Discovering Democracy* books are sitting around being eaten by silverfish all over New South Wales.’

The adoption of Civics and Citizenship in the 1998 New South Wales 7-10 History curriculum was one of the most controversial and heated periods of syllabus development in that state. The design of the 1992 Australian History Syllabus had also been very tense. It advocated a politically and historically contentious approach to the subject, and its emphasis on concepts such as race and gender was perceived by a number of historians and education officials as a shift away from chronology and content. Some on the Committee felt its insistence on the use of ‘invasion’ and concern with Indigenous, women’s and children’s perspectives had been at the expense of essential historical knowledge. The Board of Studies rejected a series of drafts presented by the

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66 Meredyth and Thomas, ‘A Civics Excursion’.
67 Mootz, ‘Interview with Denis Mootz’.
Committee and the syllabus attracted criticism from some conservatives that it was politically biased and educationally unsound.\textsuperscript{69}

Premier Carr's subsequent insistence on a prescribed curriculum must be understood in this context. His election criticism of history teaching that presented the past as a 'series of neat, discretely packaged socially relevant politically faddish themes and problems' was in direct response to some of the populist opposition to the 1992 syllabus for being too 'politically correct'. 'We ought to favour literacy above political correctness', he said. 'We ought to treat with suspicion abstract theories on education emerging from universities.'\textsuperscript{70} In 1997 he gave a speech in Heritage Week that ended with some comments on the 'teaching of history in our schools'. 'For a long time there has been a decline in the proportion of students studying History', yet 'I think History is worth protecting in our school system.' Carr wanted to 'see that a rigorous approach to the teaching of History—History as I think all of us would understand it—is protected and enhanced in the syllabus'. The Premier concluded that a 'sense of patriotism will really work for us if people emerge from our school system with what I would describe as an educated sense of the past'.\textsuperscript{71}

In 1997 the New South Wales Board of Studies formally decreed a mandatory one hundred hours of History in Years 7-8, and one hundred hours of Australian History and Civics in Years 9-10. It also instructed that key competencies and literacy initiatives must be incorporated within an outcomes-based framework.\textsuperscript{72} The placement of Civics and Citizenship in History was justified by the Government in terms of core national knowledge educational standards. It was also understood by teachers as a political response to the perceived radicalism of the previous syllabus. A former President of the New South Wales History Teachers' Association maintained that the 1998 syllabus 'was a really reactionary statement' against the political and historical emphases of the 1992 syllabus and the controversy surrounding the History Syllabus Committee.\textsuperscript{71} In reaction


\textsuperscript{70} Cited in Lewis, 'Carr calls for a return to educational basics'.


\textsuperscript{72} Catherine Harris, 'History Teachers and Syllabus Change: Examining the Middle Ground of Curriculum' (PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2002), 34.

\textsuperscript{71} Anonymous, 'Interview' (11 June 2003).
to the intractable relationship between the History Syllabus Committee and the Board of Studies that had emerged during the development of the 1992 syllabus, the Office of the Board reduced the drafting power of the Committee and increased its own influence. Board control was centralised while responsibility for syllabus provision was devolved.\(^\text{74}\)

History teachers expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the Civics and Citizenship components of the 1998 mandatory Australian History syllabus. Of the 301 teachers surveyed by the History Teachers' Association in New South Wales, 45% disagreed with the way Civics and Citizenship education had been integrated into the syllabus because it would restrict historical skills of inquiry and analysis. Denis Mootz contended that the 'writing brief and the draft syllabus have failed to understand how students learn history and develop historical understanding. It is not by skimming across the surface of a string of uncontested facts.'\(^\text{75}\) Four days later New South Wales teachers were threatening to block the new History syllabus. Jennifer Leete, the Deputy President of the Teacher's Federation saw 'this change as very much being a step back to the past'. 'The content of the history syllabus has always been to some extent a political issue', but 'what we have got is a draft syllabus that seems to really be about the transmission of facts so that children can regurgitate them in an exam.'\(^\text{76}\)

Representatives from the History Teachers' Association had warned that the assessment of mandatory Australian History with Civics and Citizenship would 'be a "trivial pursuit" type test which will not have the same status as English, Maths or Science.'\(^\text{77}\) After its implementation, Carmel Young described the document as a political, event-filled and content-laden syllabus' heavily influenced by the priorities of Civics. The embedding of Civics and Citizenship in History meant that 'History had to be twisted to fit in with the Civics and Citizenship imperative'. There was 'no time for people' in such a syllabus, she continued, and 'kids love the gossip and narrative aspect of history'. Its prescriptions of core knowledge and its content emphasis indicated that this

\(^{74}\) Mootz, 'Interview with Denis Mootz'.

\(^{75}\) Cited in Nadia Jamal, 'Changes to history course fail to reassure teachers', Sydney Morning Herald, 7 September 1998.


was ‘an adult version of a child’s syllabus, a child’s learning experiences’. Such views contrasted with the initially more receptive response from teachers who thought compulsory Civics and Citizenship might embed and strengthen the position of History in schools.

The results of the first cohort in 2002 seemed to confirm teachers’ growing concerns. Of the 82,682 students who took the exam, only 13% scored more than 80. While some teachers complained that the subject was a ‘politically correct shambles’, most felt the limitations of the course were exacerbated by prescriptions of content. ‘There is simply no time’ to teach the course properly, complained one teacher, and this was ‘leading to boring teaching and bored students’. A number of teachers reported that their students, particularly boys, found the focus on Australian political history dull and uninteresting. Another complained that they were ‘forced to move through Australian history at breakneck pace and have no time for the wonderful, innovative and creative activities that we should (and would love to) deliver’. Teachers contended that post-compulsory History enrolments were declining as a result of the mandatory curriculum in the junior years. Speaking on behalf of the History Teachers’ Association of New South Wales, Kate Cameron said that ‘a lot of damage’ had been done. ‘Most teachers hate [the syllabus] because it is impossible to teach well.’

Carr was shocked by the results. His strengthening of the mandatory Australian History strand had been ‘very much a Civics and Citizenship push coming from America’, contended the former History Teachers’ Association President. ‘It was based on an American model. He wanted content—definite things the kids should know.’ But the assessment was constraining classes: ‘A lot of people thought, “mandatory History—fabulous”. But once you’ve got kids that don’t want to be there’ the perception changed dramatically. Carr responded in 2002 by promising to overhaul the syllabus.

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78 Carmel Young, ‘Interview with Carmel Young’ (Sydney, 24 April 2003).
81 Kathy Lapiri, ‘Our children know what this Digger did ... but not much else’, Daily Telegraph, 18 December 2002.
82 Cited in Noonan, ‘Carr’s history lesson too boring, teachers say’.
83 Anonymous, ‘Interview’.
'We're going to make the teaching of Australian history more interesting so they'll continue to learn about Gallipoli but it will be more vivid and more interesting.'

An insistence on the vital importance of knowledge and citizenship drove Carr in his implementation and subsequent defence of the mandatory subject. He maintained that core national 'facts' such as Gallipoli or Federation were essential for educated citizens. As this thesis has already explored, such associations between a nation's past and its citizens have been central to understandings of national identity in the recent histories of Germany and Japan. They return also to the ideas of the historian James Wertsch on the importance of national histories and collective memory, and the critical place of schools in the promulgation of this identity. Carr acknowledged the teachers' concerns about the effects of the mandatory syllabus, but by restating the importance of studying Gallipoli in public discourse, he simply reinforced the powerful connection between prescribed historical knowledge and identity.

The establishment of the National Inquiry into School History in 1999 further highlighted this continuing tension between History as a means to foster core national knowledge and as an approach to learning. Politically, the Government situated the Inquiry in terms of a lack of historical knowledge—even more damaging, apparently, on the eve of the Centenary of Federation. Revelations of the grave historical and political understandings of Australians was made into a serious issue in the lead up to the celebrations of 100 years of Federation. The Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee had warned in 1994 that 'Ignorance of Australian history and our Constitution is seen as the greatest obstacle to meaningful celebration of the Centenary of Federation'. As the Centenary approached various surveys showed that more Australians knew the Presidents of the United States than Australia's own leaders, that only 36% of respondents could identify Edmund Barton as an Australian politician, and fewer than 45% could respond when asked what Federation meant. In response, the Federal Government funded a public awareness campaign to counter Australia's...

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84 Cited in Lapiri, 'Our children know what this Digger did ... but not much else'.
apparently whole-hearted lack of civic knowledge. 'What country would forget the name of its first prime minister?' the advertisements of the Council for the Centenary of Federation demanded.

The Civics Education Group recommended the establishment of the National Inquiry and noted the need to promote Australian political history.\textsuperscript{88} David Kemp added that he commissioned the Inquiry because he 'was concerned that, as we approach the Centenary of Federation, the study of history was declining in our schools'. The Inquiry aimed to 'develop best practice in history teaching' and the government committed to $2.3 million for National History Project.\textsuperscript{89} His argument was adopted by some sections of the media. 'Bored kids are shunning history classes,' said the Melbourne \textit{Herald Sun}, 'prompting fears they know nothing about Australia's past'.\textsuperscript{90} The \textit{Courier Mail} in Brisbane later maintained that Kemp supported Taylor's research 'after alarming evidence national enrolments in history subjects were falling'.\textsuperscript{91}

Again, this apparent lack of national knowledge was framed in terms of the nation's potential. Kemp wrote a letter to Brian Hoepper, who organised a seminar of history educators as part of the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations. He asserted that 'We need to enthuse school students with the excitement of studying the story of the Australian nation in all its dimensions so that they can take their place as confident citizens in a twenty-first century Australia'.\textsuperscript{92} The inclusion of Civics and Citizenship in Queensland History syllabuses was explained in similar terms in 1993 by Robin Sullivan, the Director of the Studies Directorate in the Queensland Department of Education: 'I believe as teachers we must ground the encouragement of our students' engagement in the political process in a sound knowledge base developed through an historical perspective'.\textsuperscript{93} Such rationalisations were widely propounded. The Civics Expert Group noted that a community concern over the perceived decline of civics

\textsuperscript{88} The Civics Expert Group became the Civics Education Group when Discovering Democracy was revived in 1997.
\textsuperscript{89} David Kemp, 'Media Release: History Takes Centre Stage' (K192, 15 October 2000).
\textsuperscript{90} Nicola Webber, 'Bored kids shun history classes', \textit{Herald Sun}, 16 October 2000.
\textsuperscript{91} Martin Thomas, 'History at risk, warns uni report', \textit{Courier Mail}, 2 September 2000.
\textsuperscript{92} Cited in Brian Hoepper, Cheryl Sim and Martin Mills, \textit{Final Report on the National Seminar on Teaching Australian History in Schools} (Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001), 35.
knowledge in Australia characterised the public submissions for their report. In a letter to the Courier Mail in 2000, Merryl McKay maintained that schools' 'overriding responsibility is to focus on fact-based curricula to ensure students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of employment and lifestyle choices.'

Others worried whether Civics propounded in terms of national necessity might be at the expense of effective teaching and learning. Teachers' unease with mandatory History was also a significant factor in the National Inquiry, especially among the New South Wales respondents, who alone had experienced its effects. Taylor revealed that while teachers supported History as a discrete discipline with significant timetable allocation, they held serious concerns about the 1998 syllabus and the Civics exam at the end of Year 10. One teacher remarked that 'You can actually teach this [syllabus] from texts written in the 1960s'. Another responded that the syllabus 'removes the creativity of the dedicated teachers'. Such concern matched similar resentment among teachers that Christine Halse revealed in her 1997 report into the state of History in New South Wales. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers who took part in the research (71%) strongly agreed that 'History contributes to citizenship'. Nevertheless 'the mandatory Australian History component of the 7-10 syllabus attracted more intense and uniform criticism than any other aspect of secondary school History'. Teachers explained that topic repetition and a dull syllabus would cost enrolments in senior History (Years 11-12): 'Students don't like the mandatory Australian History course so they do not tend to pursue this subject any further'. Students also found the unit tiresome, and one insisted that they were 'continually being forced to be interested in Australian History over and over and over again'.

Beyond the pragmatism displayed by many history educators in their initially positive response to compulsory civics education in New South Wales, and the motivations displayed by politicians anxious to be seen to promote Australian History, the implementation of Civics and Citizenship education aroused significant criticism. Students and teachers found the mandated subject uninspiring. The rhetoric of 'stronger

94 Macintyre, 'Teaching Citizenship', 10.
History in schools did indeed strengthen the subject, but once implemented, the reality of a prescribed curriculum caused considerable concern.

Mounting claims that ‘tomorrow’s citizens’ were being denied an understanding of their own nation generated a variety of response. For some, civics became a question of national literacy; students on the verge of citizenship had a responsibility to understand the society in which they would live, work and vote. Others were more cautious, and worried that by mandating History with a Civics orientation, the intangible qualities of historical imagination would no longer be encouraged in classrooms. History’s potential for critical inquiry and analysis would be significantly limited by a return to core knowledge and prescribed learning. This debate was confirmation that History education had become tacitly located in a wider struggle over national narratives and, further, that a methodological discussion of History’s place in schools had become imbued with anxiety over collective memory. A discourse of core national knowledge and standards in history education had come to constitute a contest over national heritage and identity.

**Epilogue**

In June 2004 the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, announced a new $31 billion Federal education package in which funding would be tied to a National Values Framework. The increased government support would be contingent on the implementation of several policy initiatives ‘that will underpin the Australian Government’s national priorities, shaping our schools over the next decade’. These requirements included compulsory two hours of exercise for students every week, adoption of a national safe schools framework and installation of a ‘functioning flag pole’ to fly the Australian flag. This is a major investment in Australia’s future, promised their joint media release. ‘It will leave us better equipped to

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face the global future and help us build on our long traditions of innovation and technical excellence.\textsuperscript{100}

While it was not made clear how the teaching and learning of such values might be undertaken, their importance was obvious: they would educate the nation, there would be reporting measures in place to ensure schools were being held accountable, and they were intrinsic to 'Australia's future'. The initiative was designed to support 'Greater national consistency in schooling' such as a standard school starting age and the promotion of educational standards. 'Better reporting to parents', 'Transparency of school performance', and 'Making values a core part of schooling' framed the policy. Moreover, 'Every school must have a functioning flag-pole, fly the Australian flag and display the values framework in a prominent place in the school, as a condition of funding'.\textsuperscript{101}

The 'core values' and 'flagpoles' push came five months after the Prime Minister had criticised state schools for being 'too politically correct and too values-neutral'.\textsuperscript{102} He claimed that students were leaving the public school system because it failed to promote 'mainstream' Australian values. The acting Minister for Education, Peter McGauran, reiterated Howard's views: 'There is a growing trend that is discernable to parents that too many government schools are either value-free, or are hostile or apathetic to Australian heritage and values'. 'Parents, a great many of them, are worried by a trend within some government schools away from the values that they want imparted to their children.'\textsuperscript{103} This framing of national education issues with the values of the nation itself echoed concern over the 'civics deficit' and was the latest debate over the teaching of Australian heritage and identity in schools. The nationalisation of strategies to tackle obesity, unify the school starting age and coordinate standards would go hand in hand with the nationalisation of so-called 'values'.

Many supported the Government's public commitment. On the ABC online forum, 'husky05' maintained that the move would encourage Australian patriotism. 'I

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Cited in Chee Chee Leung, Orietta Guerrera, with Annabel Crabb, 'Private, public schools hit PM', \textit{Age}, 21 January 2004; Riley, 'Backlash over PM's attack on public schools'.
don't see a problem with giving proud Australian kids a chance to express that pride. I can see why a bitter, leftist teachers union would be opposed to such a basic idea though.\textsuperscript{104} Another, 'proudly aussie', agreed the initiative was a positive one: to dismiss this great idea is moronic. I totally support the concept and am proud to be Australian and show our symbols with pride.\textsuperscript{105} Robert Buick wrote to the \textit{Gold Coast Bulletin} and complained that 'Some Australians object to the flying of the nation's flag within government precincts including schools. To them I say this, “What's your heritage and why live here if you don't support our national emblem?” All nations fly their flag proudly and so should we.'.\textsuperscript{106}

Others were far from convinced. Polly Price wrote into the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} and suggested that the Prime Minister 'make the overweight kids shin up the flagpole daily. That should do it.'\textsuperscript{107} Fiona Buchanan was more critical in the Melbourne \textit{Age}: 'John Howard, education should not have conditions. It is essential, with or without a functioning flagpole.'\textsuperscript{108} In Canberra, the Capital Territory's Minister for Education, Katy Gallagher, and the Federal Democrats Senator, Aden Ridgeway, claimed that regulations on flying the national flag would prevent schools flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to promote reconciliation. A spokesperson for Brendan Nelson responded that while the Commonwealth would contribute $1500 for each school to receive a single flagpole, multiple flagpoles would have to be paid for by the school.\textsuperscript{109}

In New South Wales, Premier Carr responded to the values debate with reference to his Government's recent revisions of the mandatory Australian History syllabus. The State Government had been forced to listen to teachers' concerns that the previous syllabus was loaded with content, he admitted, but together they had committed to conveying 'to our young people in schools the allure of history'. 'Patriotism comes from a knowledge of your country's history and geography', Carr continued. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Fiona Buchanan, 'Letter', \textit{Age}, 26 June 2004.
\item \textsuperscript{109} 'Too few poles to go round under protocols', \textit{Canberra Times}, 23 June 2004.
\end{itemize}
Federal Government would foster more patriotism by funding a 'core library' in every school of history, geography and culture 'than buying a flagpole'\(^{110}\).

This was certainly a remarkable shift from Carr's earlier attempts to prescribe core historical and civic knowledge in New South Wales schools. Carr had previously asserted that History teaching should include a 'rigorous analysis of a narrative of unfolding major events'.\(^{111}\) He now demanded plurality and perspective: 'No-one wants to read boring tomes about civic progress', Carr maintained. 'Our history is not a single story. They comprise many stories. Many stories comprise the Australian experience.'\(^{112}\) Had he simply responded to the demands of the History Teachers' Association, who pleaded for a more interesting and engaging syllabus? Was it a personal shift in historical ideals or a political maneuver? How we make sense of the Premier's changing views may depend on how we make sense of the debate over history education more broadly: Carr's response reveals how the lines between politics and pedagogy have become so blurred in this contest over Australian History.

Education is the future of the nation, as this debate over values and flag-poles has again affirmed, and as the rhetoric of 'relevance' has increasingly insisted. Through subjects such as History and Civics, the insistence on mobilising collective identity and prescribing core national knowledge has been tied to mounting demands for national standards in education. The 'citizens of tomorrow' have become inseparable from contemporary debates over the nation's past. Growing concern over educational standards, accountability and 'relevance' are now inseparable from a wider anxiety over Australia's history.


\(^{112}\) Carr, 'Welcome Address'.

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Conclusion

Inheriting the nation
In 2001 the South African History Project was launched in Johannesburg with the aim of expressing 'the importance of the value of teaching history and the creative nurturing of historical consciousness'. The programme announced that 'A History of Apartheid will appear on the 10th anniversary of Freedom Day for use in schools so that our children can never say “we did not know”.' After generations of racial segregation, violence and oppression, South Africa was coming to terms with its past; it was also reviewing how that past should be taught in schools.

As this thesis has explored, debate over 'teaching the nation' is no recent phenomenon. Since the 1960s and 1970s history education has generated increasing public and professional concern. I chose this period because of its 'change and continuity', to paraphrase the language of syllabuses. It offered a distinct narrative of shifting historical and educational methods alongside emerging political and ideological movements. It has also been characterised by significant repetition, where anxiety over the state of the subject and concern over 'standards' and 'relevance' continue to shape the discourse of history education.

The new pedagogies forced historical and educational approaches in schools to become more inclusive and relevant. A belief in social justice was a foundation of these child-centred education movements. Proponents insisted that the traditional subject orientation towards university entrance was narrowly academic and failed to accommodate growing numbers of students from a variety of social and educational backgrounds. Schools needed to prepare students for work and social participation as well as tertiary study.

Education and cognitive development were increasingly linked with wider social philosophies of equity and emancipation. The new, 'relevant' education was to be student-centred and life-centred: children became the focal point of the learning experience, their opinions needed to be better valued and understood, and personal development became an important educational goal. The ways in which the New History and Social Studies prioritised the child and its development revealed how their pedagogical instrumentalism was inseparable from progressive social and political beliefs.

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These initial connections between the political and pedagogical valencies of history education formed an important base for further discussion and debate. Many felt the social ideals of the new pedagogies were detrimental to educational process: they would diminish academic standards and endanger the nation's most vulnerable citizens. Others maintained that new approaches to the past needed new approaches to teach them.

Since the 1960s and 1970s child-centred pedagogy has been read by a number of conservative critics as a 'new orthodoxy' inimical to educational standards and core national knowledge. The reaction of this 'Back to Basics' movement conflated progressive teaching methods with radical politics and was bolstered by repeated surveys that exposed the apparent historical ignorance of Australian students and a mounting civics 'deficit' among its citizens. This meant that while pleas for a more rigorous and accountable approach to history teaching shifted the meaning of 'relevance', the term continued to dominate public discourse of the subject.

Over the last ten or fifteen years the intersection between education and the national narrative has become more pressing. Disagreement over what history to teach and how to teach it generates considerable conflict in Australia and around the world. Following the publication of damning reports of young people's historical knowledge in Canada, the Globe and Mail (a Toronto broadsheet) worried that 'it is not students but Canadian history courses in our high schools that have failed. And it is that failure we as a nation cannot afford.' Writing for the Calgary Herald, Charles Frank contended that 'Our young people know virtually nothing about the history of the country they are about to inherit.'

History teachers have also recognised the power of this rhetoric of national relevance, and their adoption of its discourse ties the subject to the nation more closely than ever. Many have responded to mounting anxiety about the state of history in schools by locating it within this discourse of national accountability and academic rigour. Mark Anderson wrote in Teaching History that History was relevant for the student and the nation. 'As the need for global effectiveness in education gains

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1 For example, Kevin Donnelly, 'The New Orthodoxy in English Teaching: A Critique' (PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1993).
3 Charles Frank, 'Does anyone know what it means to be Canadian?' Calgary Herald, 28 June 1997.
momentum, History has the potential to shake off its tweed coat status and become one of the glamour disciplines’, he considered. ‘Students should see History as being as vocationally oriented as Business Studies.’

These debates over the importance of a relevant national literacy may be understood as part of the continuing struggle to define the nation’s heritage and legacy. The capacity of History syllabuses and textbooks to convey national narratives to ‘our children’ makes them critical in this process that deems learning the nation’s story essential for understanding and belonging to the nation itself. In this way, conflicts that emerge over history education reflect similar disputes over museum exhibits, national anniversaries and commemorations. Each is a powerful site of historical contest and controversy.

The polarisation of these historical debates is captured and reinforced by the metaphors that have come to describe them. The ‘History Wars’ and ‘Black Armband’ imagery pervade public discourse and are the primary signifiers for this mounting anxiety over the past. The language and content of History syllabuses has been just as contested, so that disputes over the use of ‘invasion’ or ‘settlement’ frame history education within the increasingly familiar paradigm of historical opposition.

A number of historians have explained such conflicts in historical interpretation in terms of the politics of memory. Contrasting readings of Australia’s Bicentennial celebrations and the protests they provoked in 1988 provide a noteworthy example here. The heated debate over the Enola Gay exhibition in the United States revealed similarly how interpretations of the past are so fraught with anxiety and unease. Such analysis highlights how contested and difficult the process of defining the nation’s heritage and identity can be. It also begins to theorise the process of coming to terms with that past,

and explains why the construction of national narratives is so powerful and contested. With its similar capacity to define the nation’s story, history education is another critical site of contested collective memory.

This thesis also contends that ‘teaching the nation’ is a pedagogical concern, that contrasting readings of the past are further complicated by questions of historical method and approach. The editorial in the first edition of Agora in 1967 lamented that ‘whether we like it or not, History in the schools appears to be under attack’. In 1974 the History teacher Lloyd Evans worried that ‘the most crushing argument’ against the subject was ‘its supposed “irrelevance” compared with the relevance of the social sciences to the students’ interest in contemporary history and their needs as future citizens’. The continued level of professional discussion over History’s status and how it should be taught demonstrates the substance of this educational engagement. Teachers have been prominent in debates over whether to teach History as a discrete or integrated discipline, and their responses to the provision of History within SOSE act as a reminder to the professional concern over the subject’s standing in schools.

The provision of compulsory Civics and Citizenship in History aroused even greater reaction from teachers and educationists. They acknowledged its potential to strengthen History’s status but were concerned that any mandating of the subject would reduce its appeal and signal a return to rote learning. Teachers’ contributions to Christine Halse’s 1997 report into the state of History in New South Wales and Tony Taylor’s 2000 publication of the National Inquiry into School History highlighted this pedagogical alarm. They confirmed that disagreements over what stories to include in

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syllabuses and textbooks were complicated by questions of educational and historical approach; the anxiety over the past has been intensified by anxiety over how to teach it.

While the politics of collective memory provide a framework for historical disagreement and dispute, anxiety over teaching the national narrative in schools is also characterised by concerns that operate beyond its established partisan political divide: the History Wars are complicated in the schools arena, where 'our children' have become the focus of debate.

The various motivations for the introduction of child-centred teaching provided a useful point of departure to consider how political and educational philosophies come together. Further research revealed how reaction to the new pedagogies drew similarly on its potent imagery. Even more striking is the way this compelling emblem has been increasingly mobilised in recent years as an active bearer of national identity. The 1989 Hobart declaration made the links between education and the nation explicit. Advocates of mandatory Civics and Citizenship education in the 1990s also expressed the nation's future through the 'citizens of tomorrow'. Relevance and accountability became central to teaching the national story—and the child would act as a conduit.

I have sought to unpack these images, these assumptions about 'our history' and 'our children', to better understand anxiety over teaching the nation's past. My approach has been of necessity an interdisciplinary one. By drawing on a range of historical and educational sources I have expanded discussion of history education beyond the politics of collective memory to identify the way questions of pedagogy have influenced debate over the subject. I am not suggesting that these strands of debate can or should be separated, for 'teaching the nation' is at once a political and pedagogical concern. Rather, I have tried to map their convergence as a way of showing how history education has become a site of such profound and continuing anxiety. Understanding the dimensions of this debate makes possible a more expansive conceptualisation of the nation's place in the process of history education.
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