'Death by a thousand cuts': a History of the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Curriculum: 2000-06

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In 2000, Paula Wriedt, the Tasmanian Minister for Education, gave instructions for her department to begin the development of a K-10 statewide curriculum, soon to become known as the Essential Learnings Framework, or simply, ELs. The curriculum was an integrated one, doing away with traditional subjects, or disciplines, such as mathematics, science, English and history, and replacing these with an integrated, enquiry-based curriculum underpinned by constructivist pedagogy. This was the first attempt in Tasmania at a statewide K-10 curriculum, and the first attempt at major system-wide curriculum change for nearly twenty years.

Tasmanian Labor had been returned to power following a landslide win in the 1998 election. Following a process of massive statewide community consultation, the Bacon Government established *Tasmania Together*, a social, cultural and economic program intended to be the keystone of Tasmania's future over the following decades. ELs was the educational component of *Tasmania Together*. At no time in the history of Tasmanian education had a minister for education played such a prominent role in state curriculum policy.

During 2005 and early 2006, sections of the Tasmanian public began to express concerns about the educational value of ELs, as problems with its implementation brought an intensifying focus on the curriculum. These concerns came to a head in the March 2006 state election when Wriedt was returned with a drastically reduced vote in her electorate of Franklin. Premier Lennon 'stripped' her of the Education portfolio, and soon after, the

new Minister for Education, David Bartlett began the development of his Tasmanian Curriculum, formally signalling the end of ELs.

This thesis argues ELs was essentially a political act. It was born through the quest for the maintenance of political power; its eventual demise was through the democratically expressed will of the people. This thesis attempts to uncover and describe its history and the essential causes of its demise.

Using social conflict paradigm of historical analysis as a research methodology, and through a thematic approach, this thesis attempts to unravel the multiple nuances within the history of ELs. A central aspect of social conflict historical analysis is that concepts, such as 'progress' and 'advancement', are conceived of as being problematic terms to use in historical analysis.

This analysis is concerned with the political, educational and social conflicts and compromises underpinning the history of ELs, especially with describing and analysing the educational and socio-political forces that brought an end to the curriculum.

For system-wide curriculum developers and educational authorities, and students of curriculum change, there are many lessons to be learnt from the history of ELs. In 2000, following the decades of inactivity in curriculum development and implementation, when Tasmania embarked on this ambitious program there were many challenges facing the successful implementation of ELs. This thesis attempts to unravel some of these challenges, while at the same time recording some of the successes of the ELs program.

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

AARE	Australian Association for Research in Education
AART	Australian Association of Reading Teachers
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
AEC	Australian Education Council
AEU	Australian Education Union
ALP	Australian Labor Party
APS	Australian Public Service
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARF	Assessment and Reporting Framework
CC	Curriculum Corporation
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COPE	Committee on Primary Education
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DoE	Department of Education
ELs	Essential Learnings
HOG	Heads of Government
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KLA	Key Learning Areas
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory

OBE	Outcome-based Education
SA	South Australia
SARIS	Student Assessment and Reporting Information System
SOSE	Study of Society in Education
TASSP&F	Tasmanian Association of State School Parents and Friends
TCCI	Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
TEND	Tasmanian Education: The Next Decade
TESA	Total Employment Services Australia
WA	Western Australia

A NOTE ON NOMENCLATURES

The particular Tasmanian Government organization that has been responsible for the provision of schooling and at various times a wider responsibility for public education has had several name changes during the period under consideration in this thesis, depending on the Minister's responsibility. For example, it has been called the Department of Education, the Department of Education and the Arts, and the Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development. For the sake of simplicity, this thesis shall refer to it as the Department of Education.

INTRODUCTION

For twenty years the author of this thesis was a teacher and primary school principal with the Tasmanian Department of Education, leaving in 1987. The only involvement the author had with statewide curriculum development in the Tasmanian Department of Education was as a primary science consultant during the early 1970s. During the early 1980s he was an enthusiastic advocate of the Tasmanian COPE Curriculum (described below). In 1988, the author was awarded a PhD, with a thesis dealing with the influences of progressivism on the Tasmanian Department of Education (1904-39). The author returned to Tasmania in 2007, during the last months of the ELs saga. His experience with earlier research on the history of Tasmanian education, and his experiences as a primary school principal were motivation for this research.

This is the way Tasmania's new Minister for Education, David Bartlett, in an ABC *Stateline* program hosted by Airlie Ward in 2006, summarized the essential failings of the Essential Learnings (ELs) curriculum put in place by his predecessor, Paula Wriedt:

> 'I would say that there were issues around implementation, the complexity of implementation, certainly around the language that was used with the Essential Learnings and certainly issues around assessment and reporting' (Ward, 2006).

Despite having a rich and diverse history of educational change during the past century, the Tasmanian public rejected the ELs initiative at the 2006 state election. The re-elected Lennon Labor Government responded to the Minister for Education's vastly reduced vote in the southern Tasmanian seat of Franklin by replacing her in the portfolio with Bartlett. Not since the sacking of the Tasmanian Director of Education, W.L. Neale, in 1909 have Tasmanian teachers and the general public responded with such vitriol against an educational initiative. As with Neale's sacking, the ELs initiative became highly politicised, perhaps dividing Tasmanian society into two distinct camps – those who supported it and those who thought it had a destructive influence on children's learning and their future prospects. Particularly during 2005 through until the March 2006 state election, stimulated by massive media commentary, most Tasmanians had an opinion on ELs. Ross Butler (2008), who the reader shall again encounter in chapter four, was a taxi driver during 2005-06; he attests that many people who got into his cab during those years had an opinion on the curriculum. Butler had been President of the Tasmanian Teachers' Federation, the precursor to the Australian Education Union – Tasmanian Branch (AEU), a principal at Glenorchy's Cosgrove High School, and in 2008 was elected Labor MHA for Franklin on a recount following Premier Paul Lennon's resignation.

In media talk, for the years 2005-06 in Tasmania, ELs was 'a story with legs'. Most Tasmanians held a view about it, one way or the other. Many of those opposed to ELs complained it was bringing havoc to Tasmanian education. While those who supported it, spoke of in terms of an educational renaissance and a means to professional regeneration.

Many of those who were involved in producing ELs, following its dramatic demise, particularly at the higher levels of planning

and development, were distraught and filled with grief. Not surprisingly, this is a very similar emotion to that reported as being experienced by those people who have been closely associated with a school closure, or merger (Bathgate, 2005; Patterson, 1994). When the author of this thesis emailed a person who had a high level of commitment to ELs in early 2008, she replied, complaining 'nobody involved in the ELs feels like talking much, as we feel totally betrayed by our leadership, press and union for considerable misrepresentation' (anonymous: personal correspondence, 2008).

When past colleagues – teachers, principals and other professionals in the Department of Education – heard that I was researching the history of ELs, I received much correspondence from them on their opinions on its failure. The following extract from some correspondence from Geoffrey Ellis was as thoughtful as any that I received:

> To me it seemed like a good opportunity to think about and focus on 'content that is significant'. To some people the ELs was a distinct curriculum that overthrew the ancient curriculum gods of Maths and English, Science and History. Others thought it was simply a new way of looking at things.
>
> How the ELs would be assessed was never clearly spelled out. Those charged with introducing the ELs lacked a political maestro who could consistently sell the central message. Schools splintered and went off on their own tangents.
>
> Some teachers thought the DoE had come up with an idea and then expected teachers to construct the new curriculum. Other teachers were resistant to change… a Thermidor without a revolution (Ellis, 2008).

What were the underlying reasons behind these diametrically opposed responses to ELs? Was it due to the inherent nature of the new curriculum, or was it due to the manner in which it was implemented, or was it due to political influences, warping the

essential value of the initiative? The often vitriolic opposition to the curriculum was surprising, given Tasmania's proud history of educational change over a hundred-year period. During that period, Tasmania, *inter alia*, often was nationally in the vanguard in the development of child-centred early childhood education, rural education, the education of gifted and talented students, reforms in social science curriculum, open-plan education and school-based curriculum development (see, for example, Rodwell, 1992; 1996; 1997; 1998).

There was an avalanche of tensions in the history of ELs, but it is conceptualising these that provided an initial difficulty in this research. A reading of an article written by Harris and Marsh (2005) was germinal in the author's thinking about this thesis. They posit the argument that 'junctions' and 'dysjunctions' are a useful way of examining 'curriculum tensions'. The authors state:

> There are various ways of conceptualising the terms 'junction' and 'dysjunction'. One way of looking at these terms is in an oppositional manner. For example, the term junction refers to 'the shape or manner in which these things come together and a connection is made' whilst dysjunctions conveys 'an act of breaking a connection' (Webster, 2004). In the field of curriculum studies these simplistic oppositional definitions are limited as they presuppose a dichotomous relationship between two terms – a binary if you will. More broadly, junctions and dysjunctions can be defined simultaneously as an act and a state of being. An easy way of conceptualising this dualism is to consider the verbs join/disjoin (an act) and to consider junctions and dysjunctions as nouns (states of being) (p. 16).

Harris and Marsh (2005) concede there are problems in conceptualising this manner of curriculum change, and ask us to consider the spatial dimensions of this binary:

> For example, junctions and dysjunctions are frequently perceived as important moments or

> critical times, in which one must make critical choices and decisions (p. 17).

The authors go on to argue there is much value in conceptualising this way with curriculum change:

> At first glance the reader may well consider that these meanings of junction and dysjunction have little relevance to curriculum policy and reform. This is because curriculum texts often suggest a cycle of curriculum development – implementation – evaluation that fails to fully problematise just how it is that curriculum is mediated or translated into practice. To other readers, junction and dysjunction might seem logical descriptors of curriculum change processes. This is because curriculum researchers frequently refer to the theory/practice nexus and a lack of 'fit' (Fullan, 2003; Peshkin, 1992); the inevitable 'gap' between intended and enacted curriculum (Marsh & Willis, 2003) and/or curriculum policy dysfunctions (Reid, 2004). At a broader level there is a large literature concerned with the study of curriculum change and innovation (p. 17).

Bearing in mind the qualifications and cautions that Harris and Marsh (2005) have outlined, for convenience the analysis in this thesis shall conceive of junctions/dysjunctions as being a dichotomy: 'a division into two, especially a sharply defined one' and 'the result of such a division' (*Oxford English Dictionary, 1996*).

There certainly was a lack of 'fit' with the ELs curriculum. Harris and Marsh (2005) explain their concern is to explain the curriculum change process in terms of junctions and dysjunctions. To do this, they use curriculum diffusion theory and an alternative theory, in actor-network theory. Using this dichotomous system of analysis, they have established an interesting and powerful research paradigm, and one that shall be pursued in this thesis.

As with most curriculum initiatives, ELs did not suddenly appear in Tasmania in 2000. Its roots go back much further. During the 1980s, the curriculum known as COPE was firmly established in Tasmanian primary schools, while the curriculum in secondary schools was being guided by a policy document known as the TEND report. Chapter one is concerned with the way in which, in a space of ten or so years, ELs grew from these curricula. Indeed, many of the people with whom the author had worked during the COPE years were involved in the ELs initiative. And, not surprisingly, there was a close symmetry between COPE and ELs. But, unlike ELs, COPE had been praised for its pedagogical merits and its seamless implementation. What, then, had occurred with the history of the implementation of ELs to have caused such vitriolic and acerbic social, political and educational upheaval?

In the first place, this thesis is a historical study of ELs in Tasmania; it first searches for an historical theory upon which to research and write the history. It will be important to arrive at a research methodology that at once takes into account the intense political processes of the ELs initiative, and also searches for motive behind public and private actions being taken. Consequently, chapter two is devoted to this end.

Chapter three briefly examines Tasmania's history of curriculum change, beginning with Neale's arrival in Tasmania in 1904 through to the emergence of outcome-based education (OBE) during the 1990s. The latter epoch was, in fact, the immediate precursor to the advent of ELs.

For anybody, such as the author, who had left Tasmania in the mid-1980s and returned twenty years later, there were vast changes to be observed and studied in the Tasmanian education system. For him, the most dramatic and spectacular of these

changes came with the role of the Minister for Education in policy development. In 1987, it was barely imaginable a Minister for Education would be taking such a high level of personal responsibility for a curriculum initiative. Then, this was the responsibility of the Director-General of Education, or more directly, the Director of Primary Education, the Director of Secondary Education, or the Superintendent of Curriculum. But twenty years later, all of that had changed. Now, in 2008, the Minister for Education takes direct responsibility for curriculum policy, as, indeed, with all other policy in the gamut of his department. If anything goes amiss, he, or she, directly answers to the issue in parliament. Contrast this with what happened to Neale, almost a hundred years earlier. In Neale's case, in 1909, there were three royal commissions into the public concern about his administration, with the minister-cum-premier proceeding virtually unsullied to the next election. Chapter four of this thesis posits the view that the Department of Education had become politicized, sometime beginning in the 1980s. This thesis will then examine the implications of this on educational policy and of curriculum change.

Before the thesis proceeds to analyse the mass of information about ELs, it is necessary to provide some lens through which to analyse the history of the management of its implementation. To this end, in chapter five, the thesis provides and examines a literary review of the competing theories of the management of the dissemination of curriculum change. This thesis already has alluded to Harris and Marsh's (2005) study. This dichotomy of junction and dysjunction, from the perspectives of diffusion theory and actor-network theory, which the authors posit provides a starting point for the analysis of the twists and turns – the inherent tensions – of the ELs years in Tasmania. Then, flowing from actor-network theory is Weaver-Hightower's

(2008) ecology metaphor that provides further analytical strength for the thesis.

Chapter six undertakes a national perspective of the types of curriculum known as essential learnings. The reader is struck with the veracity and widespread appeal of this form of curriculum, now so firmly established in a majority of Australian states and territories. Moreover, the stark question is posed why this form of curriculum, ostensibly, was rejected in Tasmania, while it flourishes in other Australian educational jurisdictions. Clearly, something was drastically amiss in Tasmania. This point leads directly to a potted history of ELs.

Certainly, the Tasmanian political scene had undergone massive changes during the 1980s and 1990s. So, at the commencement of the development of ELs in 2000 the political backdrop for the curriculum change was very much altered from that, for example, that existed during the COPE years. Chapter seven attempts to survey the key stakeholders, and the political framework and underlying dynamics of the ELs project. Here, the reader becomes aware of the massive difficulties of attempting curriculum change in the twenty-first century. Such was the hostility towards ELs during these turbulent years, once diametrically opposed groups, in a political sense, came together, often in a form of a political symbiosis, to further their own objectives of dismantling, or significantly altering the nature of ELs. This was an epoch in Tasmania's educational history that demands the formulation of fresh paradigms and especially erudite research on behalf of curriculum developers and managers of educational change.

When a minister of education assumes direct control and responsibility for the management of education within a particular state or territory he, or she, has much to gain, both

personally and politically; conversely, he, or she, has much to lose, politically, if things go wrong and the voting public take exception to the changes. This is the chance ministers of education take – a chance, one assumes the nature of which the minister is fully cognisant. So, one assumes the minister places a great deal of faith in his, or her, educational/political advisors. Consequently, it is not surprising the minister puts in place in critical positions in the department professionals who he, or she, can trust in a political, as well as in an educational sense. These people usually have a proven political, as well as a professional, track record. Chapter eight researches and analyses the ELs change effort, using Harris and Marsh's (2005) dichotomy of function and dysfunction, from the perspective of the Department of Education.

As with other Australian states and territories, the Tasmanian education system is comprised of three distinct sectors of school organizations, or authorities: first, there are the state schools, the largest sector; then, there are the Catholic schools administered by the Catholic Education Office (CEO); then, there are the non-Catholic private schools – the independent schools, which range from elite schools, such as The Hutchins School in Hobart and the Launceston Church Grammar School, to smaller Christian schools, which are located in most regional centres. In Tasmania, these latter two categories of schools, while having requirements to comply with the Tasmanian legislation in respect to their broad curriculum, unlike the state schools, were not obliged by legislation to adopt the ELs curriculum. But what were the unique issues faced by these private schools when the Government 'ditched' ELs?

Those schools that did adopt it, or partially had adopted it, obviously, did so as an act of faith in what ELs stood for in an educational sense. Indeed, these schools may have been faced

with a much more problematic circumstance than their government counterparts, when the incoming Minister for Education publicly announced ELs was being abandoned. Presumably, the private schools needed to explain to the parents of their students why they were abandoning ELs. This was unlike the principals of state schools, who simply needed to inform parents the Minister for Education had instructed them to change the curriculum. Chapter nine analyses the history of ELs from the perspective of the Tasmanian non-government schools.

Academics and researchers either had the capacity to contribute to, or detract from, the ELs change effort. Tasmania has only one university. Its Faculty of Education is comprised of a single school. In part, the faculty can trace its origins back to the Hobart and Launceston teachers' colleges, which were developed into the Tasmanian Colleges of Advanced Education, with campuses in Hobart and Launceston in the late 1960s. Chapter ten examines the history of ELs from the perspective of Tasmanian academics and researchers.

School principals and teachers played key roles in the attempted dissemination of the ELs curriculum. Some of these professionals felt aggrieved about the timing of the ELs curriculum initiative, given it was coming on top of unresolved issues principals and teachers had been complaining about for, perhaps, a decade – namely, the government's policy of inclusion of children with special needs, particularly in the context of class sizes. Chapter eleven examines the manifold manner in which their response to the curriculum change was played out in the Tasmanian Parliament and the press. Perhaps, never in the history of Tasmanian education have Tasmanian teachers been so outspoken against a curriculum initiative; perhaps, never before have certain sections of the Tasmanian press been so proactive and eager in reporting what teachers

were saying about a curriculum change. Like sharks surrounding a floundering whale, as the 2006 state election drew closer, sections of the Tasmanian press sensed the ELs curriculum change effort was the Lennon Government's Achilles heel. To many observers of the Tasmanian political process, as the fateful day approached, Wriedt's seat in Franklin seemed to be, indeed, very problematic for Labor. Not surprisingly, in an attempt to appease hostile sections of the Tasmanian public, during the twelve months before the election, Wriedt rolled out a variety of measures, many of which had an air of desperation, and certainly of appeasement, about them. *The Mercury* continually would remind Tasmanians ELs was Wriedt's 'political baby', thereby in the popular mind firmly attaching the curriculum to the Minister for Education and her political ambitions.

Usually, a pro-Labor organization, during the history of ELs, the AEU found some unusual bedfellows in its drive to have its message heard and its policy on ELs adopted by the Lennon Government. Chapter twelve examines how this was played out. Perhaps, such was the strength of feeling about ELs, many in the AEU felt they had little to lose and much to gain by linking arms with conservative elements in Tasmanian society.

For many parents, a critical moment in the child's education comes with the school report card. Chapter thirteen is concerned with some of the events surrounding the ELs report card. Parents complained about the language in the ELs reports cards. Many said they had little understanding of the language being used. Evidently, for many Tasmanian parents, the ELs jargon was 'over the top'. But it was not simply an issue of jargon-infested report cards. When ELs was being rolled out into Tasmanian high schools, often at the complete disregard for traditional school subjects, parents had a genuine concern about how this would impact upon their future education and decisions being

made by prospective employers. Likewise, not surprisingly, employers had deeply felt concerns about the ELs curriculum. This chapter looks at Tasmania's chief employer body, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI), an organization which had traditional links with the Tasmanian Liberal Party, and one that had a strong concern about what information was included in the report cards of Year 10 school leavers. So, here was another example of how the ELs curriculum change effort stimulated yet another case of political symbiosis. Certainly, sections of the Tasmanian media also had close linkages with the TCCI, so this coalescing of political interests afforded a major point of opposition to the ELs curriculum designers and administrators. Chapter thirteen will show how these scenarios were played out.

But, to make things even more difficult for Wriedt and her ELs developers and managers was the fact that during the whole of the ELs years, the John Howard Federal Coalition Government, particularly under the ambitious Education Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson, himself a Tasmanian, who was fervently opposed to the ELs curriculum. At one level, this was because the ELs curriculum did not abide with much federal education policy. But, of course, at another level, the Howard Government saw that the ongoing ELs imbroglio might just bring down, what was for them, the troublesome Tasmanian Labor Government. Chapter fourteen describes and analyses how these moves and counter moves were played out.

Chapter fifteen is devoted to explaining the educational and political aftermath of the 2006 'ELs state election', wherein Wriedt held on to her seat in Franklin, courtesy of a handful of votes. The election result meant ELs was jettisoned, if in name only, along with some more contentious trimmings. Now, the Lennon Government considered it as being something simply

not being worth the political effort and the vast resources it was soaking up. The new Minister for Education, Bartlett, soon also to become Premier, was to make a fresh, and less controversial, mark on Tasmania's history of education.

Apart from shedding additional light on Tasmanian politics, society and education, the demise of ELs provides a fascinating study of attempted system-wide curriculum change.

CHAPTER ONE

A SHORT HISTORY OF ELs

Before this thesis embarks on a short and select history of ELs, it should first consider what Harris and Marsh (2005) have highlighted as being of significant importance to the study of curriculum development: that is, the way in which the use of language subtly depicts power interplays and positions of authority:

> Many terms are coupled with 'curriculum' to describe or label particular attempts at change. Indeed, the terms 'curriculum reform' and 'curriculum innovation' suggest very different understandings of, or orientations to, change. If we consider the nature of discourse – that is, that discourse is 'the means by which language, broadly understood, through the production, distribution, and reception of texts, conveys meaning (especially ideology, on a conscious and unconscious level' (Golberg, 1999) – then we must also recognize that the meaning making process (the discursive process) affects relations of power. For example, the term 'curriculum reform' and the meanings we associate with it, place those in control of curriculum reform in a position of power. After all, they are involved in the act of 'reforming'; the focus of which is often the 'reformation' of teaching and teachers (and learners). Similarly too, the labelling of 'new' curriculum initiatives as 'innovative', position change agents as innovators and their suggestions, as somehow 'cutting edge'. Further, the meanings we associate with the term 'curriculum innovation' have both symbolic and active significance (p. 16).

In this select history of ELs, it should be noted carefully the way in which language is used, consciously or unconsciously, to control the perceived meaning and the responses of those people receiving the message, of what was happening with the ELs curriculum. Certainly, readers should all be wary of the use of words such as 'reform' or 'renewal', because as later pages shall reveal, they are often value loaded and underpinned by powerful political motives.

COPE as Prelude to ELs

Of course, ELs can be traced on a continuum of integrated learning and progressive education stretching back to Neale's 1905 progressive curriculum. This thread runs through, for example, the Hobart Activity School and initiatives in rural education, such as the early area schools and Hagley Farm School, and later, in the many open-plan programs operating in Tasmanian primary and secondary schools. More recently, in respect to integrated learning paradigms, it had its antecedents in the COPE initiatives of the 1980s.

COPE was underpinned by Jean Piaget's developmental theory.[1] Astute and erudite teachers, however, during these years were making the paradigm leap to constructivist-inspired curricula,[2]

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[1] Phillips (1985, pp. 276-94) shows how Piaget's developmental theory had been introduced into Tasmanian primary schools in the early 1960s. A key advocate was Colleen Fahey, who was to become a member of the COPE Committee in 1977, and in 1982 she became Chair of that committee, advocating Piagetian learning theory.

[2] There are vast differences between constructivism and constructivist pedagogy. As a learning theory, contructivism goes back a number of decades. The exception is a form of constructivism that was transformed into pedagogy by John Dewey during the early twentieth century, although he did not call it constructivism (Richardson, p. 1637). Constructivist teaching (pedagogy) as a theory or practice, however, has only received attention for approximately a decade. Authors such as Richardson (2003) and Phillips (2000) have focussed on the many vexed issues associated with constructivist pedagogy.

especially in respect to using Seymour Papert's ideas associated with Lego and Logo, hallmarks of constructivist pedagogy (see, for example, Papert, 1993). As the principal at Mt Nelson Primary School in Hobart in the mid-1980s, the author recalls Penny Andersen's work in her early childhood classroom, and then her professional development with teachers in the school as being at the cutting edge of these developments. Rightly, Andersen went on to become a major contributor to the ELs curriculum. Just prior to the 2006 ELs election, she was a key planner in the ELs team.

The ELs curriculum was based on a constructivist model of knowledge: that is, a body of knowledge that is personal, subjective, perpetually evolving and non-absolute. Papert (1993) insisted engagement by the learner and manipulation of materials was the cornerstone to real learning. He championed the idea of manipulative materials to the idea that learning is

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Richardson (2003) contends that a major difficulty for constructivist pedagogy is in the shift from constructivism as a learning theory to constructivist pedagogy.

A constructivist classroom provides students with opportunities to develop deep understandings of the material, internalize it, understand the nature of knowledge development, and develop complex cognitive maps that connect together bodies of knowledge and understanding (p. 1628).

Richardson (2003) has mapped out a number of unresolved issues with constructivist pedagogy:

- Student learning: constructivist pedagogy typically is associated with enquiry-based learning and integrated subject matter, but we know that people learn in a vast number of ways: lectures, media, friends and peers, classrooms, and so on.
- Because constructivism is a theory of learning and not a theory of teaching, the elements of effective constructivist teaching are not known. There is a need for much research-based theory building here.
- Teachers' subject-matter knowledge. Not all teachers have in-depth knowledge across a number of disciplines: 'research within the last several years has indicated the importance of deep and strong subject-matter knowledge in a constructivist classroom, be it K-12, teacher education, or professional development'.
- Cultural differences: 'places constructivist pedagogy within a social constructivist frame ... It involves looking at constructivism, itself, as a concept that is constructed and practiced within our current cultural, political constraints and ideologies' (pp. 1629-32).

most effective when part of an activity the learner experiences as constructing a meaningful product.

With catchcries such 'Children don't get ideas, they make ideas' and 'Better learning will not come from finding better ways for the teacher to instruct, but from giving the learner better opportunities to construct', given the influence of Piagetian learning theory on Tasmanian curricula since the early 1960s, it is not surprising that the Tasmanian curriculum developers would be drawn to this pedagogy. With such a child-centred pedagogy, it is difficult to imagine the possibility of the deep authoritarian underpinnings that came to be associated with the administration of the ELs rollout. But, yet, as shall be shown below in this chapter, they did. First, this thesis should trace ELs back to its formative years.

ELs and the *Adelaide Declaration*

Devoid of any reference to subjects, such as mathematics, English and science, the ELs curriculum began development in 2000. This was the year following the *Adelaide Declaration*, a landmark in federal-state cooperation in education, and a topic which will be revisited in chapter fourteen. *Inter alia*, paragraph 2.1 of the declaration stated:

> In terms of curriculum, students should have:
> attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:
> - the arts;
> - English;
> - health and physical education;
> - languages other than English;
> - mathematics;
> - science;
> - studies of society and environment; and
> - technology.

- and the interrelationships between them (*Adelaide Declaration*, 1999, p. 34).

With the Bacon Labor Government having signed off on the declaration, there is little wonder the Howard Coalition Government would feel aggrieved with the shape the ELs curriculum was taking.

ELs is born: *Tasmania Together* and *Learning Together*

More directly, ELs evolved through a policy document called *Learning Together*, a Bacon Government initiative in 2000. *Learning Together* flowed from that government's initiative called *Tasmania Together*, which was instigated upon the government coming to power in 1998. Buoyed by strong electoral support and empowered by inclusionist thinking, less than two years after being elected in a landslide, the Bacon Government set off on a program of social and economic reform. There is no doubt *Tasmania Together* was a pioneering effort in community consultation. Its goals and achievements are summarized in its website, and recorded below:

> As a world-leading system of community goal setting and measurement of progress, it is enshrined in law (*Tasmania Together* Progress Board Act 2001) and used to guide decision-making in the government, business and community sectors.
>
> *Tasmania Together* is a vision for the state based on the wishes of the people. It includes 12 goals and 143 benchmarks that reflect the concerns people expressed during two of the biggest community consultation processes ever undertaken in Tasmania (in 2000 and 2005).
>
> It is an ambitious long-term plan – owned and driven by the community – that aims to change the *status quo*. Overwhelmingly, Tasmanians want to live in safe, clean communities, with jobs and prosperity for everyone and we want the world to be aware of our tolerance and compassion and skills in areas such as the arts, education and technology (*Tasmania Together: 2020,* 2006).

After the initial round of extensive consultations, the Premier established the Community Leaders Group. This group 'had primary responsibility for the development of the plan and consulting with the community to see what the people of Tasmania wanted the plan to contain'. This process included the identification of benchmarks. The group was drawn from the widest possible spectrum in the community, 'with every effort' being made to include representation from sectors of the community who may previously have felt they were excluded from decision-making processes. This ensured the Community Leaders Group was an independent body representing the Tasmanian community to 'the greatest extent possible' (*Tasmania Together, 2006*).

With Wriedt and Hanlon advising on the content of his paper, Watt (2001, pp. 12-13) described the development of the *Learning Together* document:

> In mid-1999, Wriedt held a series of meetings with Department of Education personnel and representatives from principals' associations, teacher and public sector unions and parents associations at which issues of concern were raised. Draft proposals for education, training and information provision, developed as an outcome of these discussions, were released for a two-month public review in February 2000. The comments from more than 160 submissions, obtained from the public review, were analysed to identify common themes. Five goal-based working groups then used the themes to establish concrete actions and strategies to achieve the goals. The work of each group was then consolidated into the policy statement, which was released by the Minister in December 2000.
>
> *Learning Together* was intended to complement *Tasmania Together* by presenting a long-term plan to transform Tasmania's education system by providing lifelong learning across childcare, primary schooling, secondary schooling, college education, vocational education and training, technical and

> further education, adult education and library and information services (p. 7).

The Tasmanian Government's *Learning Together Strategy* had five goals for education in the state:

> - continually improving and responsive services-that ensure that all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need;
> - to provide enriching and fulfilling learning opportunities-that enable people to work effectively and participate in society;
> - to provide safe and inclusive learning environments-that encourage and support participation in learning through all of life;
> - to have an information-rich community with access to global and local information resources, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society; and
> - to have a valued and supported education workforce-that reflects the importance of teaching as a profession (p. 6)

There was an impressive level of detail associated with the five goals. Appendix One details the achievement of the goals, as Wriedt presented them to Parliament in 2005. The ELs curriculum grew from the *Tasmania Together* initiatives, in particular, from Goal 2. Appendix Two provides a chart retrieved from the Department of Education's website illustrating *The Tasmanian Curriculum 2008 and the Essential Learnings Overview of Changes*. Appendix Three provides a copy of *The Mercury's* readers' responses to an article of 29 January 2008, dealing with community views on Wriedt and her ELs curriculum. It is included to illustrate the views that some Tasmanians held on Wriedt and the ELs curriculum, and the manner in which *The Mercury* presented this.

Paula Wriedt, Minister for Education

ELs will be forever associated with the young and ambitious Labor Member for Franklin, Paula Wriedt. Wriedt attended Howrah Primary School in the early 1980s. Her father, Ken Wriedt, was a former Labor Senator, Government Leader in the Senate, Minister for Agriculture, and Shadow Minister for Education with the Whitlam Government in the Whitlam-led Opposition. In State Parliament, he was a minister and Leader of the Opposition.

Only Paula Wriedt would know the influence her father's educational thinking had on her. But she does state Carmel Nicholas from Howrah Primary School and Robin Fox, her Social Sciences teacher at Clarence High School had a strong influence on her at school. Both teachers are imbued with 'hand-on', constructivist pedagogy (Brooker, Hughes & Mulford, 2000, pp. 45-47).

With politics in her blood, Wriedt cut her political teeth working for the Field Labor Government. She was elected to the seat of Franklin in 1996. In the new 25-member parliament, she was appointed to Cabinet in 1998, when she became Minister for Education. She was the youngest ever female minister. Her website continues her biography:

> Prior to the 2006 election, Paula held the Education portfolio for seven and a half years, during this time she was responsible for a significant number of reforms. Paula is a passionate believer in the importance of lifelong learning and was the guiding force behind Tasmania – A State of Learning, the state's first post year 10 education and training strategy. She introduced an Act to raise Tasmania's school leaving age, which from the start of 2008 will require all students to be engaged in learning, training or full time employment until they reach the age of 17.
>
> As a mother of two young children, Paula has also been a passionate advocate of the importance of the early years in a child's life. She worked closely with

> child care professionals on a new Act and standards for the sector and in November 2005 introduced an Act to establish the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.
>
> Following her re-election in 2002, Paula was appointed Minister for Women. In 2005 she initiated the Tasmanian Honour Roll for Women as a way of recognizing the significant contribution that women have made to the State throughout history. The Honour Roll is now a much anticipated annual event in the community (Paula Wriedt, biography, 2008).

Significantly, Wriedt's website biography does not mention her work with ELs, an initiative that almost spelt her demise as a politician.

ELs is introduced to schools

At the time ELs was being floated in the department, Butler (2008) was a senior high school principal. He recalls it was 'sometime in 2000', at a Derwent District principals' meeting when he first heard and read of the initial statements concerning ELs from the department. Following the past years of constant bombardment of policy changes from the department, there was little opposition from his colleagues to these ideas. The document Butler refers to is an undated document entitled, *Answering Questions: the Essential Learnings Framework*, that had considerable currency at the time in the department.

Further, Butler (2008) states:

> The overall philosophical statements of ELs were essentially unobjectionable 'apple pie' and 'motherhood' statements that seduced the audience into agreeing with the new jargon and arrangements of work in schools. I can understand how a young and inexperienced minister, such as Wriedt, was taken in by the overall philosophy of ELs.
>
> But in reality, these statements disguised highly complex and extremely time-consuming assessment regimes in a jargon that was to prove to be largely

> meaningless to parents. It all got too far away from the fundamental learning required of children in classes.

This, then, was one person's view of the context in which ELs was introduced to schools. But, as chapter eleven shall reveal, Annie Warburton (2005) in the second of her articles reprinted from the *Sunday Tasmanian* in the AART *Newsletter*, No 3, (2006) said much the same thing as does Butler (2008).

Watt's (2001) paper records the extensive consultation stages of the ELs document. And by 2003, the basic framework of ELs had taken shape. Rigorous monitoring had occurred before the second wave of twenty-two schools was incorporated into the initiative. Utilizing a cascade model of curriculum dissemination, which shall be analyzed in greater detail in chapter eight, during 2003, another sixty schools – twenty from each of Tasmania's three educational districts – began their ELs journey; in 2005, all Tasmanian state schools were involved, with assessment and reporting being phased in over a four-year period. As chapter eleven shall reveal, this stage of its implementation brought with it severe difficulties for the ELs rollout.

The ELs planners often referred to their thorough program of consultation. The Essential Learnings Curriculum Review Process page of the department's website showed:

Key Developments in ELs, 2000-05

Consultation - Values and Purposes of Education	2000
Values and Purposes Statement	December 2000

Learning Together	2001
Co-construction of Essential Learnings Framework 1	2001
Project Schools	2001
Project Schools	2002
New Essential Learnings for Consultation	2001-March 2002
Launch of Essential Learnings Framework 1	March 2002
Project Schools	2003
Outcomes Development	2002-2004
Launch of Essential Learnings Framework 2	March 2003
Launch of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide	April 2003
Launch of Essential Connections: A Guide to Young Children's Learning	March 2004

(DoE, Resources, *Essential Learnings Curriculum Review Process*, 2005)

The Essential Learnings for All

During the period 2003-04, Wriedt and her top planners decided to extend the ELs pedagogy to children with special needs. They commissioned the Adelaide-based Atelier Learning Solutions group to develop a report on this issue. The report became known as *The Essential Learnings for All* (Atelier) report. The report's recommendations can be found on the Department of Education's website (http://resources.education.tas.gov.au).

The Atelier Learning Solutions' webpage states the company,

> is a premium supplier of educational review, evaluation, performance measurement, action research, policy advice and consultation to the Commonwealth Government... and State and

> Territory education systems and sectors. Our aim is to provide creative solutions for our clients and their stakeholders (*Atelier Learning Solutions*).

In Tasmania, the Atelier report 'reviewed services for students with special and/or additional educational needs, and has triggered substantial change to the Department of Education structure, which has impacted on flexible learning professional learning and delivery' (*Specific Focus*, 2004). According to the Atelier statement of business capability and capacity, 'the then Education Minister in Tasmania [Wriedt] found our work clear and compelling, sufficient to accept all of our recommendations and create major change in her Department to set strategic directions' (*Atelier Learning Solutions*, 2008, p. 2).

Coming on top of the manifold other demands being placed on classroom teachers in Tasmanian schools, especially in regard to inclusionist policies, the report was the source of considerable angst in schools and school communities. Indeed, for many Tasmanian educators (for example, Andrew, 2008) the implications of the Atelier Report caused more anxiety among teachers than did the ELs curriculum itself. The Kersey group of principals (2008) supports this view. This point is further developed in chapter eleven.

The Department of Education responded by stating that it was engaged in extensive consultation with principals, teachers and school communities (see, for example, *Refining our Curriculum*, 2006, p. 11). But, by 2005, how much of this consultation process was being valued by teachers? Did Wriedt and her top planners consider, in fact, what was occurring was not at all genuine consultation, but rather, one-way instruction by the planners? These points shall be explored in greater detail later in this chapter, and again in chapter eleven.

So, by 2005, at a cost exceeding $12 million, the Department of Education had produced a mass of material, expending many tens of thousands of work hours in its production, and a vast army of school consultants spending many more challenging hours talking with teachers and parents. Then there were the tens of thousands of those people involved in education in the state who had invested so much energy and commitment to the curriculum.

The influence of the Commonwealth History Project

The Department of Education's report for the year 2004-05 showed that ELs embraced the Commonwealth History Project, an initiative 'to strengthen and enrich the teaching of history in Australian schools' (DoE, Annual Report, 2004-05). In 2004 the Tasmanian project was run as an adjunct to the *Discovering Democracy* project, a CC-sponsored scheme for Australian schools (Aus. Gov., Dept of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (1997). *Civics and Citizenship Education*).

The Tasmanian Government had appointed a part-time project officer 'to manage school grants, facilitate professional learning and develop online resources to support the project'. Nine project schools from all sectors around the state were funded to develop and utilise materials that explicitly linked the resources of the Commonwealth History Project with ELs (DoE, Annual Report, 2004-05).

Moreover, the Department of Education reported:

- Statewide professional learning sessions were run to enhance the use of project materials within the Essential Learnings and to trial online materials that were developed.

- Development of a plan for the next round of Commonwealth funding commenced.

- Further professional learning will be run to showcase the work of project schools.

- Materials from project schools will be submitted to the National Centre for History Education and considered for publication on the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide website (DoE, Annual Report, 2004-05: Initiatives to Improve Achievement).

The project was expected to continue until December 2006 (DoE, Annual Report, 2004-05).

Commonwealth leverage: accommodating history and the plain English report cards: 'parents are sick of left wing ideology'

Chapter two of this thesis referred to Clark's (2006) study of 'politics and pedagogy in Australian history'. Her concluding chapter stressed the influence of the Commonwealth in using financial policy levers to influence the shape of curricula in the states and territories. Chapter fourteen of this thesis records in greater detail the tensions that developed between the Commonwealth and the Tasmanian Government in respect to curricula. The purpose of this section is simply to record briefly how this impacted on children's report cards in respect to ELs. In particular, Clark (2006) shows how in,

> June 2004 the Prime Minister, John Howard, and federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson, announced a new $31 billion education package in which funding would be tied to a National Values Framework (p. 162).

Of course, this was not an isolated case of the Commonwealth attempting to shape curricula with states and territories.

In a revealing interview on the ABC *Insiders* program headed 'national curriculum push criticism "misguided" ', hosted by

Barrie Cassidy, of 8 October 2006, the new Howard Government Minister for Education, Julie Bishop stated:

> We can't be complacent when our universities are introducing remedial English classes for tertiary students and when we have debacles like the introduction of an outcomes based education system in Western Australia that lasted for several months. It was an experiment that failed, and it has now been trashed. Likewise in Tasmania, where they introduced an essential learning curriculum, decided it didn't work and junked it. Now who suffers? The students, the teachers and the taxpayer, and that is why parents and teachers are turning to the Commonwealth for leadership in this area...
>
> In the last funding round the Australian Government provided $33 billion to States and Territories to run their schools, and I believe that the Australian taxpayers would expect us to make the States and Territories accountable for that investment (Cassidy, 2006).

But this was not simply about accountability or 'improved' curricula. Cassidy put it to Bishop:

> You talk about a national board coming from the 'sensible centre'. Now there is a value judgment for somebody to make, if ever there was one.

Bishop responded with her real political intent on the Howard Government's curriculum push:

> Well, parents are sick of left wing ideology in curriculum just as I would suggest you don't need right wing ideology. Let's have a sensible centre in education and ensure our students have a common sense of curriculum with core subjects, including Australian history and a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy.

Not surprisingly, when the ELs development team refocussed the document in 2006 as *Refining our Curriculum*, the schema of the document on page 21 (as reproduced below in this chapter) included the word 'history' in that section that once

covered SOSE or Society. This was a direct response to Commonwealth funding leverage.

This was financial leverage by the Commonwealth. One such example of this involved the Howard Government's Australian History Summit. In 2006, Anna Clark worked with Tony Taylor from Monash University on a project preparing a background paper for the Howard Government's Australian History Summit held in Canberra on 17 August 2006. The authors detailed the way in which ELs had accommodated history into its framework, as described above, and then summarised the existing situation of ELs, and what may transpire in regard to the development of discipline-based pedagogy in Tasmanian government schools:

> This is a strikingly different curriculum approach to the more prescriptive or recommended content frameworks offered in some other jurisdictions, particularly that of New South Wales, and there has been some teacher, union, business and parental resistance to its apparent complexity. A new Minister for Education, David Bartlett, has promised (30/6/06) an overhaul of the Essential Learnings framework, including dropping the title but retaining the five ELs components. His view is 'we did not do a very good job (of ELs)'. The 18 Key Elements are scheduled for reduction and a more subject-based approach is on the cards (Taylor & Clark, 2006, p. 22).

Other than the Commonwealth History Project, there was one other attempt at financial leverage by the Commonwealth to influence the shape of ELs.

Cassidy (2006), in the nationwide ABC *Insiders* program cited above had asked: 'John Howard and his handpicked bureaucracy will decide what is taught in our schools?' A part of this leverage was the issue of Federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson's 'plain English' report cards. The Tasmanian

Government needed the millions of Commonwealth dollars-tied to the issue of the Commonwealth-inspired report cards. The result was that Tasmanian state school teachers would be required to write two sets of report cards for their pupils: the plain English report cards with their A-E ratings, and the ELs report cards. As Wriedt explained to Michelle Paine from *The Mercury*,

> 'Schools have been working with parents on the ELs report that will be distributed to parents through each school's normal process ...
>
> 'A plain-English report on ELs will also be sent home at the end of the school year.'
>
> She said that would translate the ELs result straight into A to E gradings (Paine, 2006).

The Tasmanian primary principals and assistant principals came out in opposition to this leverage. Tim Martain from *The Mercury* reported:

> At a meeting of the Australian Education Union's Principals and Assistant Principals Consultative Committee in Launceston last week, the group labelled the A-E report cards a failure.
>
> Committee chair Terry Polglase called on Tasmania's new Education Minister to immediately renegotiate the conditions linking the A-E reports to State Government funding.
>
> 'The profession condemns (the A-E report's) introduction as no child should be labelled, ranked or graded across schools,' Mr Polglase said.
>
> 'It is the firm view of the committee that the proposed A-E reporting of students mid-year should be dispensed with as it impinges on reporting agreements that schools had already negotiated with their communities and that they are detrimental to students' learning' (Martain, 2006).

Martain reminded Tasmanians:

> To receive Commonwealth funding, state schools are required to provide parents with report cards in

> 'plain English' with A-E grades for each student in addition to any school-based and Essential Learning reports...
>
> Education Minister Paula Wriedt, who will be replaced in a Cabinet reshuffle, said unless federal Education Minister Julie Bishop reversed the decision to require A-E reporting to parents, the State Government had to comply or lose more than $30 million in funding each year (Martain, 2006).

The CEO quickly fell in line with the educational funding imperatives. During Term 3, 2005, Catholic school principals, in association with the CEO, developed appropriate reporting templates that met the expectation of Federal Government regulations. By and large, with only minor refinements, it was felt that 'most of the current report cards in Catholic schools met the Federal Government expectations, particularly in relation to reporting student achievement on a five point scale (A to E)' (Catholic Education Office, 2005, p. 10).

Kevin Donnelly, who we shall encounter again in chapter eight, in his On-line Opinion piece, headed, 'report card fails postmodern student assessments', rejoiced at these developments, *vis-à-vis* educational jurisdictions falling into line with Coalition policy on reporting to parents:

> To date, NSW, Western Australia and Tasmania have agreed to both aspects of Education Minister Brendan Nelson's request for plain-English report cards. While Victoria and South Australia have recently agreed to implement A to E letter grades, parents will not automatically be given information about quartiles. The other states and territories have yet to respond.
>
> The benefit of the more traditional federally inspired approach is that parents will be given a succinct and easy-to-understand measure of student performance. Better still, where individual students are ranked against classmates, parents will be in a position to more realistically judge their child's ability and, if

> needed, to help improve performance (On-line opinion).

In chapter eight, readers will learn of Dr Donnelly's close association with the Coalition parties. And chapter fourteen shall reveal the manner in which this sad issue was brought to a conclusion.

A lighthouse school: Clarence High School

So what was the state of play with ELs in the schools and their communities? Lyndon Leppard, Principal of Clarence High School, was an ELs enthusiast and a contributor to ELs. He had established his school as an ELs lighthouse school, or as a priority school, as such schools were commonly referred to in the history of ELs. In a December 2004 ABC *Stateline* program, interviewed by Ward, he claimed the existing Tasmanian K-10 curriculum demanded change:

> It needed improvement and improvement's really been continual for 10, 15, even 20 years, but it needed changing to identify a curriculum that was guaranteed for all students and it needed to be more transparent and it needed to be based on what the community identified as things every student had to learn (Ward, 2004).

Leppard went on to explain that 'people need to understand the five essential learnings are not subjects, but umbrellas under which students do multiple disciplines.' For Leppard, conventional subject divisions did little for the development of children's understanding of real problem solving, which surely must be the essential function of any education system, or school. After all, he claimed:

> We don't have a separate maths, science, ethics and art section in our heads. When we're looking at problem solving, or having a conversation with somebody, we bring together information from all over our brains so one of the things we try to do with our curriculum organization is to give students a complex task. A real problem, like, 'would you build

> a tourist resort at Fortescue Bay?' [requires that we] investigate it, do a simulation around it, do an environmental impact study, that's the real work people do in the real world and they're the real problems people solve in front of their televisions every night. Everything is moving very fast for this generation. If you think about the changes you saw in your life and the change for your children in the past four or five years. Whether it's the ethics of gene modification, or the appropriate use of technology, this is coming on to them really fast. They have to make judgment calls and they have to understand what's going on, rather than use memory. The old knowledge base is important, but it's useless, it's ineffectual unless we have understanding and these children will have understanding. Previously it was a case of 'will I remember it?' And 'when can I afford to forget it?' (Ward, 2004)

Of course, Leppard was correct in stating human brains are not compartmentalized into traditional faculties of school disciplines. He failed, however, to address the vexed issue that society and culture have been based on these faculties, and these are the school subjects parents and employers understood and looked to, in order to assess a child's progress at school. This factor was to prove to be a fatal flaw in the development and dissemination of ELs.

In line with the cascade model of curriculum dissemination, the ELs planners placed great value on lighthouse schools in the curriculum change effort. There appears to have been an assumption these schools could perform a distinctive and pivotal role in the change effort. But, as chapter four has shown, this role was at best, problematic. Certainly, there was no evidence published by the Department of Education on the relative value of the role of lighthouse schools, or priority schools, in the management of curriculum innovation. Yet, there was a huge amount of effort in establishing these schools.

Ogilvie High School was another example of such a school. In post-ELs Tasmania, its website, 'Joining the Journey – Ogilvie High School' makes tragic reading, and one cannot but be touched with a sense of pity for the principal, staff, children and community who had collectively invested so much effort in establishing the school as a beacon for others. Its website printed out to seventeen pages, and now stands as a sad testimony to faulty administration by those who had responsibility of steering the innovation at a state level. The website catalogued a vast array of educational and pedagogical achievements, much of which, by the end of 2006, would be discontinued (Joining the Journey – Ogilvie High School).

Pushing ahead in the face of growing opposition

However, the government pushed ahead in the face of growing opposition to the curriculum change. In her ABC *Stateline* program broadcast, Ward confidently announced:

> The three Rs have long been a staple of education, but not any more. From next year, it'll be the five ELs. Essential learning is the new wave of education that will be compulsory for all Tasmanian State schools next year (Ward, 2004).

Ward (2004) explained from the beginning of 2005, all Tasmanian state schools were instructed to begin reporting and assessing for students from kindergarten to grade 10 according to the ELs framework, with full transition by 2008. For the first time, these students would be measured against the same standard. The Tasmanian public, however, was informed that many teachers were having trouble getting their heads around the changes, even the jargon being used. Moreover, apparently, the ELs conceptual frameworks of 'thinking', 'communicating', 'personal futures', 'social responsibility' and 'world futures' was beginning to cause considerable confusion amongst an increasing number of parents and employers. Added, to this, as

chapter eleven shall reveal, recalcitrants, laggards, malcontents, ethical resisters, and those who simply opposed it on ideological grounds began to capitalize on this disaffection and voice their own opposition to the new curriculum. In the December 2004 *Stateline* broadcast, Ward revealed 'there have been fears the ELs will spell the end of school as we know it.'

Yet, during 2005, there were some highlights and positive publicity for the ELs team. In October, an embattled Department of Education reported the long-established International School of Manila in the Philippines had adopted Tasmania's cutting-edge ELs curriculum. Stephen Dare, the Elementary School Principal of the school with 680 students and 86-year history, 60 faculty members and 20 teacher assistants, said his staff was impressed by the curriculum:

> 'We think that the Essential Learnings will best serve our needs in several respects, as it has evolved with current research,' he said.
>
> 'There is a strong commitment to help students understand themselves as learners and thinking and inquiry are at the heart of the program.
>
> 'Everyone was impressed by the clarity of how things were set out and the process that had been followed to develop the framework' (*payday, News,* 2005, 53, Oct.).

In July 2004, the school's assistant principal visited several Tasmanian schools and met with officers of the Department of Education. The department's School Education Division principal project officers, Mandy Gardner, spoke out on the international visitors: 'They were keen to see what the ELs looked like in practice in our schools', she said. Curriculum officers from Tasmania were invited to visit the International School to undertake a two-day professional learning program with the staff (*payday, News,* 2005, 53, Oct.).

Gardner believed the quality teacher support offered by the department's online LTAG was a major factor in the school's decision to run with the Essential Learnings (*payday, News,* 2005, 53, Oct.). She made this statement at a time when ELs and its assessment procedures were coming under increasing professional and public attacks. Therefore, it can be asked what, exactly, were the real motives for the *payday, News* article. Was the writing of the article, primarily, for local consumption in order to buoy a deflating level of confidence in ELs by principals and teachers?

In his formal and informal meetings with the ELs curriculum people during the history of the project, Williamson (2008) noted a genuine drive by the ELs planners to consult with teachers and the community, but when teachers and the community remained in opposition to certain aspects of the curriculum, there was a strong tendency by ELs planners 'to push ahead' and do what they intended to do, anyhow, despite not having teachers and the community on side. This thesis shall show in chapter twelve how Jean Walker from the AEU confirms this point.

Schools communicating the ELs message to the community

During the ELs years, individual schools worked hard at communicating with parents about what they were doing within the ELs curriculum. For example, in August 2005 the Claremont Times, a school supplement in *The Mercury*, reported:

> This year Claremont High School is offering a unit called Inquiry as part of the Essentials Learnings framework.
>
> This unit involves the investigation of understanding questions and how to ask them and finding useful information and presenting it.
>
> We have looked at World War 11, the Great Depression and the history of the Cadburys factory,

> Gardner's Multiple Intelligence and how different people learn (*Claremont Times*, 2005, 12 Aug.).

Other schools were less intelligible in their manner of informing parents of their work in ELs. Indeed, in reviewing the Orford Primary School website, parents would be excused for scratching their heads with the nonsensical use of jargon. No wonder, many parents across the state were outraged with some of the ELs language.

> **'Should we Preserve the Past for the Future?**
> This is a unit of work within the framework of the Essential Learnings and with particular reference to Maria Island...
> Focus Essential
> Social Responsibility
> 'understanding the past and creating preferred futures'
> Supporting Essentials
> Thinking: 'inquiry' 'reflective thinking'
> Communicating: 'being literate', 'being ICT literate'
> World Futures: 'understanding systems' 'creating sustainable futures' 'investigating the natural and constructed world' (Orford Primary School, 2007).

Bringing pre-schools and senior colleges 'on board' the ELs journey

During the early years of ELs, there was much optimism amongst ELs enthusiasts that it would soon become a K-12 curriculum. Apparently, the primary school sector was 'on board' and there was strong interest amongst certain secondary school (grades 7-10) leaders. What of the pre-school sector?

Pre-school education, for four year olds and younger – called 'kindergarten' in Tasmania – had long been an integral part of a primary school, mostly located in the school grounds, or nearby. In 1998, regulatory responsibility for Child Care services moved to the Department of Education. For the first time, this brought most aspects of childcare under the jurisdiction of the department.

Consequently, an early childhood review was conducted in 1998, to address both curriculum and structural issues in proposing future directions for early childhood education in Tasmania. Prepared by Dr Glenda McNoughton, the 1999 final report included recommendations for strengthening 'coordination and professional collaboration between early childhood practitioners in schools and children's services, forging stronger links with families in support of younger children's wellbeing and learning and revitalizing professional learning across the early childhood sector' (Davis & McNoughton, 1999, p. 11).

The report strongly supported a set of principles to guide curriculum development. It also recommended a curriculum consultant be appointed to develop a birth-to-8 years curriculum framework and support strategies, such as local partnership groups and cluster-based action research. At this point, it had strong AEU support. The AEU *Fact Sheet* described these developments:

> Essential Learnings is seen as providing exciting potential and its focuses on 0-16 and on deeper issues such as thinking, communicating and understanding, personal and global features and social responsibility (AEU *Fact Sheet*, 2002, no. 5, Oct.).

Could this same optimism for ELs curriculum expansion extend to post-secondary and post-compulsory education – years 11-12?

During the period late-2004 to early-2005, there was a series of meetings, albeit not all together, between departmental under-secretaries, senior college principals and academics from the University of Tasmania concerning an attempt to incorporate ELs into years 11 and 12 (Williamson, 2008; Andrew, 2008).

This development did not eventuate; Andrew (2008) considers it may have been a watershed in the history of the curriculum, in that had it eventuated, secondary school principals would have been greatly encouraged to work harder at implementing it in their year 7-10 classes, because they would have known there was a definite future for ELs, post-high school. But this is not a view shared by Williamson (2008), who considers other factors, inevitably, were going to overtake the curriculum.

The Student at the Centre

With a pending state election, the year 2006 was always going to be a critical year for ELs. Consequently, the department was responsive to suggestions and public criticisms, approaching a level that could be termed outrage, about its ELs curriculum. ELs underwent a major re-jigging during that year. The department issued a policy statement during the year detailing the changes to ELs that would follow a recently administered AEU ELs survey, and that of parents as expressed through the survey conducted by the TASSP&F. The 2006 policy statement was called *The Student at the Centre*, no doubt, much of it as a response to consultations with schools and other stakeholders, but also motivated by a drive to refocus attention back to children, and attempt to alleviate some of the public outrage the whole ELs initiative was fast becoming. The document began by praising the work that had been achieved by teachers and schools:

> This work and the extensive professional learning teachers have engaged in is an excellent basis on which to carry forward our continuing commitment to the best possible learning for students. That learning needs to be supported by a refined curriculum framework. The goal is a curriculum framework that is simpler to understand, clearer for parents and the community in the language it uses and more manageable for teachers and schools to implement (*The Student at the Centre*, 2006).

A policy statement entitled, *Refining our Curriculum,* accompanied *The Student at the Centre* document. Clearly, it, too, was a response to consultations at various levels, but also to the waves of criticism and public outrage echoing through Tasmanian society. The paper announced three basic improvements:

- Making the curriculum framework simpler and using language that is more explicit and more teacher- and student-friendly.
- Supporting this with scope and sequence (syllabus) statements, developed through much closer work with teachers.
- Having a simpler assessment approach (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Indeed, the tone of *Refining our Curriculum* suggests a sense of appeasement. It claimed:

> Through simplifying curriculum and assessment we can reinforce the central importance of teaching and provide a simpler structure that will provide greater opportunity for teachers to continue to work together to shape student learning. Working collegially for better learning outcomes was very strongly supported by teachers in the recent AEU ELs survey (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Refining our Curriculum went on to announce:

> *Student at the Centre* represents a clear and unequivocal commitment to ongoing transformation at school level. It strongly supports the values, purposes and main components of our curriculum framework with an emphasis on school improvement and on quality learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
>
> Over the next 18 months the *Student at the Centre* plan will align the full expertise and resources of the Department of Education to provide high quality support for teachers and schools through the four Learning Services (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Student at the Centre was concerned with 'building on success'. Schools, however, were assured that 'the existing underlying principles, values and purposes and the learning, teaching and assessment principles developed through the ELs remain[ed] the foundation of the Tasmanian Curriculum' (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Refining our Curriculum reminded Tasmanian teachers and the community-at-large of the very foundations of ELs: that was, 'community consultation'. Indeed, other than proclaiming a new-found effort to be more consultative, little had changed. This 'community consultative' approach had 'led to a set of values that continue to be an excellent basis for... teaching and learning'. Moreover, this community consultation had led to a 'set of values that continue to be an excellent basis for the teaching and learning we provide' (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006). At the heart of these values were:

- *Connectedness* - developing a sense of community through friendship, care, compassion, cooperation, acceptance, belonging and sharing.
- *Resilience* - developing self-confidence and self-respect, optimism, perseverance and wellbeing.
- *Achievement* - attaining success, pursuing excellence and being proud of personal achievement.
- *Creativity* - valuing original ideas and demonstrating enterprise and innovation.
- *Integrity* - acting honestly, ethically and consistently.
- *Responsibility* - accepting individual and collective responsibility and contributing to sustainable community development.
- *Equity* - developing tolerance, respecting difference and encouraging distinctiveness (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Again, 'our shared purpose continues to be that our students are learning to':

- Learn.
- Think, know and understand.
- Create purposeful futures.
- Act ethically.
- Relate, participate and care.
- Live full, healthy lives (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

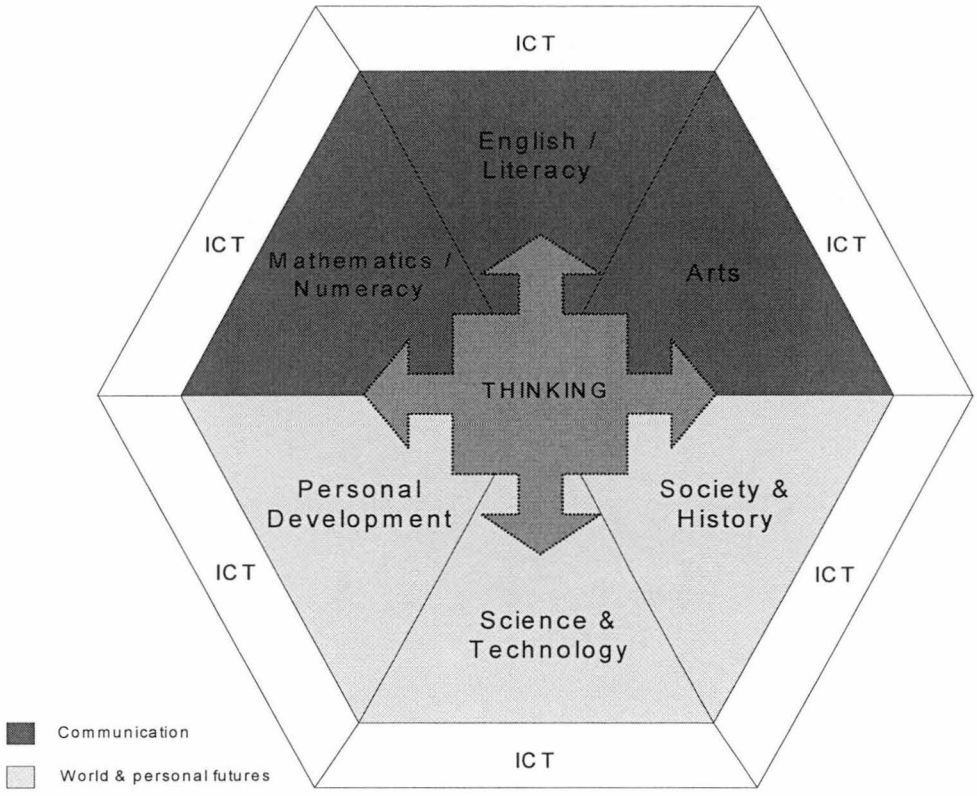
Moreover, just as it was before, ELs will ensure students:

- Are able to reason, question, make decisions and solve complex problems.
- Are able to create, communicate and convey ideas clearly and confidently.
- Have a positive vision for themselves and their future.
- Are well prepared to participate actively in our democratic community.
- Understand science and technology and can make thoughtful decisions about their application (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Again, the 'learning, teaching and assessment principles continue to provide guidance and support for teaching and assessment approaches based on learners' needs' (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

There was, however, a refined curriculum structure. And the new structure proposed was 'simpler and it uses clear well-understood language'. The central importance of the explicit teaching of thinking was 'reinforced within the framework, as was the use of ICT in teaching and learning'. Now, the framework was represented as:

Tasmanian Curriculum Framework



(*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006, p. 21).

But, it was with the scope and sequence (syllabus) statements where the most profound change came. Now, the comprehensive scope and sequence (syllabus) statements, 'explicitly including the teaching of thinking skills will be provided for these six curriculum areas':

- English/Literacy
- Mathematics/Numeracy
- Arts
- Society and History
- Science and Technology
- Personal Development (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

The seventh curriculum area – that of ICT – would have skills guides and checklists provided with 'information literacy' being incorporated into each of the curriculum areas. Moreover, the

curriculum areas within the Tasmanian Curriculum Framework would now explicitly incorporate the National Statements of Learning recently endorsed by all Australian Ministers of Education (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006). However, essential learnings remained as the organising framework, not the six subject areas.

But, now, there would be a simplified assessment procedure. This came about because now the simplified curriculum framework allowed a simplified assessment approach that distinguished between primary and secondary education. In the case of primary schools, there would be moderated assessment – assessment against state standards – in the following learning areas:

- English/Literacy
- Mathematics/Numeracy
- Science and Technology
- Society and History

Assessment in Personal Development and the Arts would be by comments, based on teacher's judgement. ICT would be assessed by a skills check at year 6 level (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

There also had been much appeasement at the secondary school level. Here, the curriculum areas would have moderated assessment – assessment against state standards. But, the traditional subject areas would remain:

- English/Literacy
- Mathematics/Numeracy
- Science and Technology
- Society and History
- Arts

Personal Development assessment would be by comments, based on teacher's judgement. ICT would be assessed by a skills check at year 10 (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

For both the primary and secondary levels, Languages other than English (LOTE) would continue to be assessed using the language proficiency outcomes as at present (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

And there were revised standards, in order to match the simplified curriculum framework. The smaller set of standards would continue to reinforce the continuity of learning across the years of schooling, making clear the aspirations the Department of Education had for its students, providing the basis for moderation and professional learning focussed on student's work (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

Clarity of communication was the new catchcry. A goal of the standards revision was be to make them clearer and simpler for teachers to use; reference groups of teachers would be directly involved in the work on refinement (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006).

In response to requests from teachers, more gradations for assessment would be provided. Moreover, teachers were assured this would not mean more work. This would be achieved 'without adding further complexity to the standard descriptors'. Moreover:

> The standards will continue to describe the same range of understanding, however, using their knowledge of the standards teachers will be able to judge whether a student has an emerging understanding of the given progression or whether the student has a well established understanding at that progression. This will double the number of assessment reference points available for teachers to use.
>
> Assessment as learning, assessment for learning and assessment of learning each contribute to teacher understanding of learners' needs. Support materials will help teachers to plan assessment tasks that can

> contribute information for all three purposes and will re-emphasise assessing just enough to accurately place students against the standard (*Refining our Curriculum*, 2006, pp.18-19).

Would teachers and the community-at-large now be satisfied with the changes in response to the many critics of ELs? There was still the overriding problem of SARIS!

SARIS

Dissatisfaction with SARIS was at the centre of teacher discontent with the electronic reporting. Following the AEU survey, as usual, *The Mercury* was quick to take sides on the issue. Heather Low Choy reported:

> The teachers tell of typing in remarks about students, only to have them vanish from the system when another teacher inputs additional remarks.
>
> The teachers asked that their names not be published for fear of losing the jobs [This was in response to the Department's media blackout for teachers] (Low Choy, 2005a).

Teachers reported how unstable the SARIS software was, and of how, after several hours on their computers, they would find their hard work had disappeared into cyber space. Consequently, now:

> Teachers said most of their colleagues now referred to SARIS as SARS, having renamed the system after the deadly virus.
>
> Teachers' frustration with SARIS is the latest in a string of problems surrounding the Education Department's new Essential Learnings (ELs) curriculum (Low Choy, 2005a).

But by now, teacher frustration was snowballing. There was a political opportunity here for the Opposition. Consequently, State Liberal education spokesman, Peter Gutwein, declared 'the

implementation of ELs had been a debacle on many fronts', so reported Low Choy, who went on to claim:

> 'Major teacher concerns over the operation of SARIS is just another worrying instalment,' Mr Gutwein said.
>
> He said problems with SARIS had been well known for more than a year.
>
> 'Even in light of this and the fact that, in May this year, a survey showed that over 70 per cent of teachers felt they weren't ready to assess and report on ELs, the Education Minister has been determined to implement ELs at any cost,' Mr Gutwein said.
>
> 'Paula Wriedt has shown little regard for any concerns or issues by teachers, parents and their children.'
>
> He said the problems with SARIS raised further doubts about information parents would receive at the end of the year about their children's progress at school (Low Choy, 2005a).

In the same article, Alison Jacob, Acting Secretary of the Department of Education, denied the accusations and said that where teachers had been trained in SARIS, the software was performing well for them.

A dearth of research

There was a dearth of research, commissioned, or undertaken by its own professionals, within the Department of Education associated with the management of the dissemination of the ELs innovation. This is despite the existence of many organizations, or groups, within the department – for example, the School Leadership Contact group, the Centre for Advanced Teaching Skills, the Tasmanian Educational Leaders' Institute, or, more particularly, its successor – the Office of Curriculum Leadership and Learning. The latter was more democratically conceived to embrace classroom teachers. It was the declared role of this office, established in 2003, to,

> encompass policy work in support of teaching and learning, curriculum development and support and professional learning provisions for teachers and educational leaders (*payday News*, 2003, 26).

Its foundation head was Hanlon, who later went on to become Deputy Secretary, Learning Services. He was in that position at the time of the 'ELs election' of 2006, which brought down ELs.

Moreover, there is no evidence that any of the above institutions were utilized to provide research to guide the ELs change effort. Yet, there were provisions available in the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program that could have been utilized. It seems as if the department simply did not have the capacity for developing a research base for the management of meaningful and sustained curriculum renewal. Where do readers look for answers to this inertia?

Criticism from a retired department bureaucrat

Larry Scott was a senior department bureaucrat during the early developmental stages of ELs. In summarizing his assessment for the failure of ELs, Scott (2008) adds:

> Firstly, let me state that I think a curriculum reform model like the ELs was long overdue. It was a good model, showing potential for real reform of teaching and learning. In my opinion, failure can be attributed to the following set of circumstances:
>
> 1. failure to involve key stakeholders early in the process;
> 2. a culture of compliance that saw criticism as dissent, and, therefore, dismissive;
> 3. inability of the model to address the key issue of the relationship between the ELs and basic subject areas;
> 4. diminishing resource support (money) as more schools came on line;
> 5. complex assessment models and procedures;
> 6. inability to communicate the worthiness of the initiative to the wider community; and
> 7. poor leadership.

Changes in political leadership

The year 2004 was certainly a critical one for ELs. When Bacon resigned early in the year and his deputy, Lennon, assumed the mantle of Tasmanian premier, the Labor government lost a great deal of its gloss. Lennon had a reputation as a union 'head kicker', and certainly his four years in office was marred with controversy, including the resignation of two of his deputies (Henning, 2008). On his resignation on 26 May 2008, and his handing over the office to his deputy and Minister for Education, Bartlett, it was claimed Lennon had left 'a bitter legacy' on Tasmanian politics (Henning, 2008). Admittedly, Lennon had gone on to lead Labor to victory in the 2006 state election, but by 2008, his was a government increasingly embroiled in controversy.

The final decision to bring ELs to an end is revealing, *vis-à-vis* the inherent authoritarianism and contradictory nature that at times underpinned the administration of the ELs rollout. The general tone of the mass of ELs literature suggests that the ELs planners sought a high-level and on-going consultation with the various actors in the ELs initiative. Yet, the final decision to end ELs was the antithesis of this: indeed, the decision was intensely authoritarian.

ELs comes to an authoritarian end

But the very political processes that 'finished off' ELs points to a fundamental weakness in the very processes that the ELs planners prided themselves on – consultation. There is simply no documented evidence on how the decision was made to end the curriculum. Anecdotal evidence suggests it came after the one of the 2006 Estimates Committee meetings where senior Department of Education planners were meeting with the Cabinet. On that same day, following some discussion

concerning ELs and alternative curricula, the Minister held a press conference on the steps of Parliament House, and announced ELs was a thing of the past. Although, perhaps, coming to no surprise to media-watching Tasmanians, the thousands of ELs enthusiasts, including most of the development and implementation team, people in schools and parents and children, were left scratching their heads. Tasmanians had learnt about the fate of ELs through the media, where so much of the drama had been played out. With such a dramatic closure, no wonder there was so much grief amongst the ELs supporters.

Conclusions and Analysis

Chapter three shall show even in the early 1970s Pusey had researched and premised his doctorate on an inherent failing of the department to break from a binding authoritarian influence. He first hypothesised the department was an organization comprised of three basic dimensions, but it was a system out of kilter, with the social system suffering, due to inordinate stress and emphasis placed on the formal structure (administration) and the technology. For him, this resulted in a breakdown in the community in the school. That precious relationship between student and teacher tended towards authoritarianism and not the mutual relationship of both parties towards a common task.

As Berry and Beach (2006, p. 12) have observed in respect to educational administration: 'the past begets the future'. In forthcoming chapters, certainly, readers shall see the authoritarianism Pusey noted in the early 1970s in the department has not diminished, and was as evident in this select history of the ELs curriculum, as it was back in the 1970s. Moreover, in Tasmania with ELs, it was as Berry and Beach have observed in the United States, 'the lack of a knowledge

base in educational administration has created consternation for fifty years' (p. 12).

The introduction of SARIS to the ELs policy network was critical. In chapter five, this thesis contends SARIS provided a means of control at a distance over teachers and schools. It asserted a massive influence over teacher behaviour. Control, however, is not – and never can be – perfect. In this respect it can be seen in terms of Weaver-Hightower's (2008) policy ecology as a non-human actor. Certainly, it was not simply a passive player in the ELs story. As following chapters shall show, SARIS was politically loaded and a critical player in the ELs story.

Was the ELs curriculum innovation failure based on other causes? This thesis will argue the essential features of ELs was not a matter of the Tasmanian teachers and society-at-large not being ready for the innovation, but rather a case of poor educational management and an inherent authoritarianism in the management of the curriculum rollout during 2005-06 when difficulties became most manifest.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY AND A SELECT LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE THEORY UNDERPINNING THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Through schools, the educational bureaucracy and the broader community, the history of ELs involved many actors and community groups over several years. It has a massive history, with strong feelings amongst the actors, for and against, the curriculum change, polarising many Tasmanian communities. Clearly, now, the ELs episode in the history of Tasmanian education warrants an historical analysis. But what sort of history should this be? An answer to this question brings the thesis into the paradigm of historiography.

Historical research in education

Historians have long since abandoned any attempt to catalogue all the facts of a particular event in an objective manner. Best and Kahn (1989) suggest this highlights one significant problem with historical research in education. Many people expect objectivity in research. Indeed, they expect in historical research the same certainty and objectivity they find in mathematics, or physics. Such concerns are usually stated in the following way:

> Although the purpose of science is prediction, the historian cannot usually generalize on the basis of

> past events. Because past events were often unplanned, or did not develop as planned, because there were so many uncontrolled factors and because the influence of one or a few individuals was so crucial, the pattern of factors is not repeated.
>
> The historian must depend upon the reported observations of others, often witnesses of doubtful competence and sometimes of doubtful objectivity.
>
> The historian is much like a person trying to complete a complicated jigsaw puzzle with many of the parts missing. On the basis of what is often incomplete evidence, the historian must fill in the gaps by inferring what has happened and why it happened.
>
> History does not operate in a closed system such as may be created in the physical sciences laboratory. The historian cannot control the conditions of observation, nor manipulate the significant variables (p. 61).

Moreover, this situation is made more problematic by the fact that pervading contemporary mindsets often befuddle members of society-at-large with vested interests close to the subject matter being researched. For example, in 1992, the author of this thesis outlined in a chapter for a book devoted to research methodologies in education, how difficult it was researching work, during the COPE years in Tasmania, where the subject matter of the research was contradictory to the child-centred pedagogy that at the time was dominant thinking in Tasmanian education. Indeed, for the author's research at that time, difficulties arose in researching a paradigm challenging the accepted general beliefs held concerning the Tasmanian Department of Education in the protection of children under its care. This research was concerned with eugenic-inspired activities within the department during the inter-war years, which urged the sterilization of intellectually handicapped children. At the time of this research the author was a school principal, employed by the department. When he requested a

week's leave without pay to research a particular aspect of this issue, he was refused on the grounds his work added nothing to the department's existing mission (Rodwell, 1992, pp. 108-111). Certainly, this dark aspect of the department's history, *vis-à-vis* the policy of sterilization of intellectually handicapped children, did not appear in Phillips' (1985) official study of the history of the Tasmanian Department of Education. Yet, despite these small setbacks, historical analysis of education proceeds as a dynamic research methodology.

Best and Kahn (1989) list five points that advance historical analysis in education against charges of being 'unscientific':

> The historian delimits a problem, formulates hypotheses, or raises questions to be answered, gathers and analyses primary data, tests the hypotheses as being consistent or inconsistent with the evidence and formulates generalizations or conclusions.
>
> Although the historian may not have witnessed an event or gathered data directly, he or she may have observed the event from different vantage points. It is possible that subsequent events have provided additional information not available to contemporary observers. The historian rigorously subjects the evidence to critical analysis in order to establish its authenticity, truthfulness and accuracy.
>
> In reaching conclusions, the historian employs principles of probability similar to those used by physical scientists.
>
> Although it is true that the historian cannot control the variables directly, this limitation also characterizes most behavioural research, particularly non-laboratory investigations in sociology, social psychology and economics (pp. 61-2).

It is, however, a kaleidoscopic world in which educational historians work their craft. Almost twenty years ago, Petersen (1992) commented that with the development of knowledge, the boundaries within which the historian of education legitimately

claimed to be able to operate had narrowed, or at least had dramatically changed:

> The world of learning represents a division of labour among scholars; by conventions, at any time, knowledge is mapped out into territories and scholars do not carry out raids over the border without impunity. However, the map is always altering as new areas of knowledge grow up and fight for recognition. Once upon a time, history of education claimed sovereignty, or was allowed to claim it, over anything to do with schools or children. Nowadays, there is the history of childhood, the history of family, women's history, Aboriginal history, sports history, history of popular culture – a host of other histories, all of which by convention, share frontiers as the case may be (p. 3).

So, the parameters for the history of education are never fixed. The Society for the Study of Curriculum History was established in 1977 at Teachers' College, Columbia University. The event is a noteworthy benchmark for the history of curriculum. At the time of the writing of this thesis, there is a plethora of books and journals publishing research on the history of curriculum, much of it to do with the history of curriculum change. Often, there is little agreement over interpretation of events. An underlying reason for this is the ideological point of view from which the history is written.

The ELs initiative raises severe questions of historiography. The mass of facts associated with its short history, and the maze of competing views on its educational merits, are enormous. Of course, when researchers come to make value judgements about the historical facts worthy of discussion, they are entering the arena of historical theory; and when they discuss the various theories, they are engaging in historiography.

Evolutionary Idealism

In what was one of few research efforts into ELs, in 2001 Watt published a refereed paper, using historical analysis as his research methodology. At the time he was a curriculum employee with the Tasmanian Department of Education. This was a point he should have declared in his paper, because he was writing the history from 'the inside', always a dubious foundation for objectivity. Later to be Deputy-Secretary, School Education, but at the time heading up the ELs team in the department, David Hanlon assisted Watt in the compilation of his paper in respect to detail on consultation with the stakeholders in the development and implementation of the curriculum. Watt also had assistance from Wriedt. These two people were his bosses. Indeed, Watt was in very much the same problematical position as that in which Phillips (1985) found himself, a point that shall be described below in this chapter.

Watt's (2001) paper sought to:

> trace the historical pattern of change in the curriculum and assess the challenges posed to curriculum reform proposed in *Learning Together* by analysing the extent to which Tasmania's educational system provides capacity building and teacher development, accountability and public leadership needed to mount successful development and implementation of the new Essential Learnings Framework (p. 10).

This thesis referred to *Learning Together* in chapter one.

As a basis for its historical analysis, Watt's paper used 1969 research by Hughes, and 1985 research by Phillips. Watt did not analyse the historiography of either these studies, but had he done so, he may have had second thoughts about their applicability and academic integrity. Watt's study, and that by Hughes (1969) and Phillips (1985), conform with that kind of historical research often labelled evolutionary idealism, or at

times it may be referred to as a Whiggish account of history. Whatever, there is an assumption schooling as provided by the state is evolving into an ever-improving manner. The state is conceived as being essentially benevolent and good. Moreover, it is essentially wise, non-partisan and apolitical in its provision of institutionalised schooling for the masses. The title of Phillips' book reinforces this idea of munificence and generosity – *Making More Adequate Provisions*.

Phillip's (1985) study may even be more properly labelled a celebratory history, because it was published to celebrate a century of state education in Tasmania. The Department of Education paid for the research and production of the work; so bearing in mind people tend not to bite the hand that feeds them, it is not likely the reader will find anything too critical of the department in the book. Thus, its academic worth may have been compromised very severely from the beginning, and Watt should have recognized this fact. Consequently, his historical analysis of the ELs curriculum some would argue was off to a very unconvincing start.

Basically, evolutionary idealists conceive of the history of public schooling as the promotion of humanitarian interests and of social uplift. Typical of other evolutionary idealists' work, are the studies by Hughes (1969) and Phillips (1985). In these studies the reader has a sense of hovering above the events being described, never being completely engaged with the actors. Indeed, along with this, there is a sense that the researcher is describing events that inevitably lead to a gradual evolution to a better world, with education being an important ingredient in the process. By 'hovering above', it is meant that as one reads the work, one has a sense of not being fully engaged with what Hughes (1969) and Phillips (1985) consider to be the great and significant events in Tasmanian nineteenth- and twentieth-

century history of public schooling. This is so because of their use of particular primary sources, and because of their own particular worldview, which attracts them to certain kinds of evidence. For these researchers, ministers of education and other key political policy makers are unquestionably people of worth and integrity.

As evolutionary idealists, Hughes (1969), Phillips (1985) and Watt (2001) assume the providers of state schooling in Tasmania were convinced fully what they were offering was an unconditional good, and schooling benefited both the individual and society. This interpretation assumes a progressive historical development: for them, Australian and Tasmanian society is moving inevitably towards an ever-improving state. While there may be slight setbacks, generally, the momentum is well and truly forward. The particular theoretical point of view of these authors directs them to certain historical documents and artefacts. Their own values that they place on the role of schooling in society largely determine their choice of primary sources. Basically, these primary sources are government records, church records and private correspondence of notable identities, although Phillips (1985) does occasionally use newspapers as sources. Thus, for example, Hughes (1969) and Phillips (1985) perceive nineteenth-century Tasmanian educational history as an evolution of authority from church to state, and all achieved for the general good.

Indeed, Hughes (1969) based his study on Beeby's 1966 study of the supposed stages of educational development in Western countries, such as Australia and New Zealand; quite uncritically, Watt (2001) accepted these assumptions. Hughes (1969) and Watt (2001) contend educational history, as if Piagetian developmental theory, passes through five distinct stages of development. The first stage covers the period from first

settlement in 1803 through to the 1830s. During this period, denominational hegemony over education prevailed in Van Diemen's Land, as it did in the other Australian colonies.

Consequently, for Hughes (1969), Phillips (1985) and Watt (2001), the second period of Van Diemen's Land's educational history began in the late 1830s with the establishment of the first Board of Education. Blindly following Beeby (1966), they label this period the stage of the dame school. They highlight the failure of the churches to provide fully education in a frontier pastoral society during the expansive years of the period c. 1830s-1850s. With the expansion of the wool industry during this period, and the accompanying influx of overseas capital, along with the development of a small industrial base in Tasmania, there was a growing demand for public education.

Characterized as the stage of formalism, the third period commenced in 1865 with the issuing of the Standard of Instruction for reading, writing and arithmetic. Accompanying these were minimum standards of attainment for six grades. This period lasted through until the mid-1880s. This was the beginning of universal schooling. Since, for Hughes (1969), Phillips (1985) and Watt (2001), institutionalised schooling is conceived as being intrinsically worthwhile, these evolutionary idealists contend the provision of universal institutionalised schooling was a condition of the inevitable progressive improvement of society. For these researchers, the great opportunity for the working masses came with the discovery of gold in the colonies in the early 1850s. Democratic and secularist ideas gradually overthrew the old ideas of a church monopoly on education. The *Australian Colonies Government Act, 1851* created the separate colony of Victoria, with Van Diemen's Land having been made a separate colony in 1825. Now, the Australian colonies had a limited form of self-

government. This was a time when the rising tide of secularism and democracy brought the colonial governments to advance state-sponsored education, step-by-step, to the common people.

Beeby (1966), Hughes (1969), Phillips (1985) and Watt (2001) assumed refinements and extensions of the school systems were necessarily valuable for the individual and for society-at-large. Thus, for example, compulsory attendance, compulsory registration of schools, the extension of the compulsory age of attendance and a compulsory curriculum were the progressive evolution of an idea whose time had arrived. This assumption is central to the works of these historians. For these historians, the campaign for free, compulsory and secular schooling during the period 1867-85 are stories about the state gradually passing legislation that provided for a democratic system of public education in Tasmania. These events, often labelled as being 'reforms', ushered in another period in the supposed stages of development of Tasmania's educational history.

In Tasmanian, the fourth period, characterized as moving to a transitionary stage, began in 1904 with Premier W.B. Propsting's invitation to the South Australian educator, W.L. Neale, to write a report on the state of Tasmanian education. Beeby (1966), and the other educational historians who have clustered to him, proposed the fifth stage was characterized as the stage of meaning. For these researchers, this period in Tasmania came into being following World War 2.

Because of the particular view the evolutionary idealists take in interpreting Tasmanian educational history, this thesis will argue later in this chapter that they are forced to neglect what many researchers consider today to be some very important aspects of the history of Tasmanian education, or the history of the Tasmanian curriculum. Phillip's (1985) study is the lengthiest of

the three studies under question. Here, the word 'Aborigine' does not even appear in the index to his study. This is unforgivable, because even in 1985, when his work was published, education historians were paying Aboriginal education considerable attention.

Generally, evolutionary idealists take little credence of feminist perspectives in accounting for educational change. Certainly, considering the time in which Phillips (1985) wrote his history, readers would expect more attention to be paid by him to feminist issues with Tasmanian schooling. His seventeen index entries under girls' education and women's groups are pitifully small in a 391 page study. This neglect is not limited to Hughes' (1969) and Phillip's (1985) work. Other Australian evolutionary idealist educational historians – for example, Barcan (1980; 1988) – reveal no more regard for feminist perspectives in Australian educational history.

Moreover, generally, evolutionary idealists also take little notice of the political motivation underpinning decision-making in Australian history of education. Phillips (1985) totally neglects this perspective. His perspective tends to be from the 'big players' in the field of state education: that is, the executive of governments and leading politicians. One would have expected him to recognize the need to examine deeper underpinning of political motivations. It is important to mention here a point that shall be explored in greater detail later, namely, the process of the politicisation of the Department of Education bureaucracy, a process clearly underway by the time his study was published.

Evolutionary idealists also tend to equate schooling with education. However, it is obvious from references to home environments, families, neighbourhoods, peer-groups, churches, and so on, that schooling is only a part of a larger process

constituting an individual's education. Certainly, Phillip's (1985) study is about schooling as education. Maybe, one should expect that, because of the reasons behind the research being commissioned. However, when Phillips (1985) was researching his history of the Tasmanian Department of Education, another historical research paradigm was prominent in Australia.

Curthoys and Docker (2006) draw attention to the work done by Butterfield (1931) in drawing criticism to evolutionary idealism, or a Whig interpretation of history, which stated,

> History should not be written as a story of progress. Butterfield not only argued against triumphalist tendencies in historical writing, but also raised doubts about the possibility of objective history itself (p. 98).

Indeed, Bessant (1991) has described how the historiography of Australian education has been steeped in the Whiggish tradition of describing the great progress of Australian education. The 1970s were the halcyon years of this tradition, and was only challenged during the 1980s by a small band of revisionist and feminist historians. Amongst these educational historians was a group commonly labelled social control theorists

Social control theory

Popular during the 1960s, through until the late 1980s, were historians who wrote in terms of education as social control. Curthoys and Docker (2006) show that these historians were inspired by the work of such historians as E.P. Thompson's (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*. This work, according to Curthoys and Docker (2006),

> announced a new and very influential kind of Marxist history, interested in process and relationships as much as categories and structures, and deeply respectful of the ideas and aspirations, however mistaken or unsuccessful they turned out to be, of working people (p. 139).

These revisionist, or neo-Marxist historians, went on to articulate a powerful alternative account of Australian educational history. They were inspired by American histories such as Katz's (1971) *Class, Bureaucracy and the School* and Bowles' and Gintis' (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America.* Miller's *Long Division* (1986) is an extremely well researched and convincingly articulated example of the social control school of Australian history of education. For long, a wasteland for serious research in educational history, there has never been in Tasmania a social control history of Tasmanian education, or curriculum.

For the social control historians, schooling is not a progressive gain, but rather a means by which the masses are maintained in a form of social control in order to serve the ends of the political elite – the bourgeois, or capitalist ruling class. Indeed, class and class control are at the centre of their thesis. These historians write from the perspective of the working class. Miller (1986) begins her history with the sentence: 'One ordinary day in 1875, South Australia's children suddenly discovered school attendance had become compulsory' (p. 1). There is no view from above, or 'the big end of town', here, as with the evolutionary idealists, but, rather, history written from 'below'. The reader immediately engages with the lot of South Australian working-class children.

Social control historians are concerned with an analysis of the processes of decision-making in education. They seek to examine the level and kinds of decisions, their location within the educational machine, the participants in the process and the nature of the mechanism, affecting the daily lives of all children, for the better or the worse. From Miller's (1986) first page, the reader is asked to think about Aboriginal children; this is a

concern that reappears time and time again throughout the text. Witness the number of entries under 'Aboriginal' in the index of her book. The title of her work – *Long Division* – tells it all. Because, according to her thesis, that is exactly what the Australian colonial Education Acts did for Australian society.

For the social control historians, the essential purpose of popular education is to control the masses, and at the same time, to provide a control more complete and effective than ignorance and illiteracy and, consequently, more useful to the bourgeois state. Here, refinements and extensions of the school system are viewed as simply improvements in the mechanisms of control.

Consequently, social control historians postulate schools as being essentially institutions of training, socialisation and indoctrination, where children acquire proper personal and social habits. Children learn the 'truths' that justify habits and virtues, rendering articulate the concepts of the popular mind. The school curriculum is a vital agent of social control. Working-class children, especially, must learn the 'correct' knowledge, and develop 'correct' attitudes. Most importantly, they must learn to speak 'correctly' and forget any working-class slang they may have acquired from home.

From the last two points made, the social control perspective allows Miller (1986) to analyse in-depth issues associated with feminist education. Broadly, she contends that the political elite, the bourgeoisie who engineered the Education Acts sought to control the knowledge and attitudes of working-class children – and, for Miller, working-class girls, in particular. For example, she argues domestic science became increasingly important as an agent to ensuring working-class girls acquired 'appropriate' domestic knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thus, it follows from the last points, the social control model places schooling at the

centre of the educational process: the colonial Education Acts were about schooling the working class towards preconceived ideas about desirable behaviours and knowledge. Indeed, the Education Acts were concerned principally with schooling.

Postmodernists paradigms in the research of the history of education

Curthoys and Docker (2006) surveyed the monumental changes that swept over historical writing in the last three decades of the twentieth century:

> There was a remarkable flowering of innovative historical writing... gender history, micro-history, cultural history, history of sexuality, history of the body, and subaltern and postcolonial histories. Important for these new histories, in both content and form, were the twin strands of postmodernism and post-structuralism, modes of thinking that influenced all the humanities (p. 180).

'All the humanities', indeed – including the history of education. Since the 1990s, educational historians, while still interested in the control dynamic, have tended to look away from social control theory to postmodernists' paradigms. Here, control, either at a school level, or at a national level, is seen as a more subtle thing. In the wider conception of curriculum, a postmodernist interpretation conceives of such school rituals as assemblies and uniforms, and indeed, the school's very architecture, as asserting an all-embracing control over individuals. Here, researchers such as Ryan and Grieshaber (2005), Peters (1996) and McLaren (1995) have made considerable contribution to an understanding of the history of education. Moreover, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, any history of education is bound to touch on this paradigm in its research methodology, as indeed, this thesis does.

Iggers' (1997) discussion on the contribution of postmodernists to historical writing remains as one of the most thoughtful yet to be published. For Iggers (1997) 'postmodernism had raised important epistemological questions that radically challenged the possibility of objective knowledge' (p. 139), an issue that this chapter will develop further below.

Social Conflict Theorists

Another category of educational historians is the social conflict historians. These historians include elements of both the evolutionary idealists and the social control historians. In particular, social conflict historians agree with the evolutionary idealists in the essential value of schooling, but agree with those who adhere to the social control theory in the conviction the kind of education provided for the masses was intended to limit the participation of working-class children in society. Hyams' and Bessant's (1972) *Schools for the People*? provides an excellent early representation of a social conflict interpretation of Australian history of childhood.

Like the social control historians, the social conflict theorists are concerned with political decision-making underpinning educational change. They are motivated to expose and explain social conflict in education. As with the social control historians, this concern for decision-making in education brings the social conflict historians to examine the nature of educational change. The history of ELs, potentially, holds much fascination for this group of historians.

Social control historians and the social conflict theorists, but particularly the latter, tend to be suspicious of the educational designs of the political elite controlling the mechanism of government, and the effects of the professed ends of education. They tend to have little faith in altruism, seeing self-interest as

the major motivating factor of political power. They are concerned with educational outcomes of political issues. They premise their work on the assumption educational issues are generated by conflicting interests. Readers shall see that as the following chapters unfold, the appeal of ELs as a subject matter for research for social conflict historians becomes very obvious.

These two groups of educational historians believe the development of the colonial departments of education under the various Education Acts, the development of education systems that grew around these departments, the curricular they instituted, and the practices surrounding the schools need to be seen within the context of differing views and entrenched interests. Schooling, therefore, for the social conflict historians, needs to be considered as a series of issues that emerge amongst groups of all sizes and kinds. The ongoing process of the resolution of these issues is a political activity of debate and negotiation between interested parties, with varying degrees of power: public education, generally, and the history of ELs specifically, are the product of political compromise.

Social conflict historians are concerned with issues of social justice. Thus, there is a strong sense of moral tone throughout their work. They contend the fate of the less successful in the hands of the educational decision-makers well informs readers about the motives of the decision-makers. Consequently, the views of the Don College student revealed in chapter thirteen of this thesis, *vis-à-vis* ELs, are held to be as important as those policy makers at the 'big end of town'.

As with the social control historians, social conflict historians, are particularly concerned with challenging and revising the received traditions of Australian schooling, as expressed by the evolutionary idealists. Rodwell's *With Zealous Efficiency* (1992)

is a revisionist history of Tasmanian education, written in the social conflict paradigm. It explores 'vitalist' and progressive influences on Tasmanian state education for the period 1900-40 and challenged ideas that the Department of Education always was a 'protector' of children's rights, as measured by today's standards. However, it stands alone in revisionist accounts of Tasmanian educational history.

Contrasting with social control theory, the social conflict interpretation does not see the establishment of mass state schooling as primarily an imposition on the working classes by a bourgeois political elite. Social conflict historians see, for example, the process of the development of mass state-sponsored schooling, or the history of ELs, as being a much more complicated process, essentially involving political compromise.

With the social conflict historians, there is no question much of the theoretical underpinning for the pedagogical practices and institutional forms that mass state-sponsored education took came from bourgeois intellectuals and reformers. But, this theory also postulates an active and, at times, dominant role, for at least the advanced elements of Australian working-class society in agitating for, and actually securing, educational provisions. Here, the advanced sections of the working class, far from being thought of as the victims of the politics of public education, are seen as being the propagators of public policies advanced in their own interests. Hence, many educational developments – ELs, as an example – have been made under various state, territory and federal Labor governments.

Clark's recently published *Teaching the Nation* (2006) is a thoughtful social conflict study of Australian school curriculum and provides an excellent example of how governments seek

control over children's knowledge. She uses examples, ranging from actions by the Queensland Premier in the late 1970s to ban a social studies program, to Prime Minister Howard's more recent attempt to control what is taught in schools. The now-disgraced Queensland conservative Premier, Jo Bjelke-Petersen, banned the use of *Man: a Course of Study*, or *MACOS*, because, *inter alia*, it had come under attack from religious fundamentalists in the United States and Australia for comparing human and animal behaviour.

Of relevance to this thesis, as is detailed in chapter fourteen, Clark (2006) also shows in June 2004, Howard and his Minister for Education announced a $31 million education package in which funding would be tied to a National Values Framework. The increased Commonwealth support was contingent upon the states implementing several policy initiatives underpinning the Australian Government's national priorities, and shaping the nation's schools over the next decade. She shows these three requirements included a compulsory two hours of exercise for students every week, the adoption of a national safe schools framework, and the installation of a 'functioning flag pole'. 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 (pp. 162-3). Of course, the critical question in all of this is 'whose values'? Clark (2006) shows the intended values to be implemented in the nation's schools were those of the ruling political elite.

A critical assessment of the research methodology

Best and Kahn (1989) have written above 'the historian rigorously subjects the evidence to critical analysis in order to establish its authenticity, truthfulness and accuracy' (p. 61). This

thesis is founded on the well-established historical research methodology of, first, looking to primary sources (government documents, newspapers, professional newsletters and oral sources), and, then triangulating these in order to test their inherent veracity; these are, then, tested out with reputable secondary sources.

As Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008) have recently demonstrated, these primary sources all have their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Rightly, the authors point to inherent strengths and problems with government documents (pp. 68-69). From the point of view of this thesis, also associated with this are Government newsletters, such as *payday, News,* intended to be read by employees. These, however, all have their particular strength. The authors remind us that governments most always have an eye on a forthcoming election. So, any legislation, or indeed, any other government document, should be read in that light. The authors also point out that:

> [Government] laws and resolutions help show an official position on a particular issue that often reflects underlying tensions within society. An examination of laws may indicate emerging issues in a society, or may help to reveal power relationships during a time or place (p. 69).

Many of the following chapters will reveal that this was exactly the case with ELs, a fact that fully justifies the use of official sources, such as Government policy documents, *vis-à-vis* ELs.

Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008) alert researchers of the need for caution in the use of newspapers:

> Although these sources provide a popular view into a time period, the fact that newspapers often report on events based on the evidence a reporter has collected gives newspapers and magazines some of the characteristics of a secondary source (p. 72).

It is for this reason that this thesis examines and triangulates news items on ELs, for example, in *The Mercury* in the light of recent research on public discourse, the media and educational policy in order to elicit an understanding of possible political motives underpinning these reports. Indeed, the extensive use of newspapers as a primary source in this thesis is justified in view of what Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008) contend is another valuable aspect of the source: that is, their 'use to historians interested in examining language as a means to recover meaning' (p. 72). Consequently, this thesis is interested in the way in which *The Mercury*, used language to construct and maintain a public discourse that casts ELs in a particular light regarding, for example, the way in which it contributed to alleged falling standards in literacy and numeracy in Tasmania.

Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008) also claim much value for oral evidence as a primary source. Its value comes in the fact that oral interviews can be *constructed* to triangulate evidence advanced from other primary sources, such as official documents and newspapers:

> Because this source falls into the category of a created source – one intentionally generated through a planned and orchestrated oral interview – knowledge of the interviewer, intended audience, purpose, and point of view are critically important in weighing the value of the testimony (p.72).

The authors, however, insist that oral sources must withstand the rigor of a critical evaluation like any other source. That is, they need to be triangulated against other primary sources, and against secondary sources.

This methodology does not posit any greater value on any particular type of source: for example, reports from newspapers are considered to hold as much veracity as do oral sources. They

all possess a particular purpose in this thesis. Consequently, testing these primary sources out with secondary sources provides added meaning and veracity to the arguments advanced in this thesis.

Galgano, Arndt and Hyser (2008) point to some important considerations in the selection of secondary sources:

- Who is the author?
- Who is the audience for the work?
- When was the source written?
- Who published the secondary source?

In respect to the last point, the authors insist on the need for reputable peer-reviewed material. This, of course, is a criterion that posed severe question regarding the use of the Internet. They state: 'the egalitarianism of the Internet, one of its great strengths, can also be a weakness, because there is no peer review process' (p. 38). Hence, there is a need to triangulate evidence gathered from the Internet with peer-reviewed secondary sources.

The vexed questions of objectivity, and the relative value of various 'voices' and 'key players'

This thesis purports to be only *a* history of ELs, not *the* history of ELs. Thus, like all histories, this is a *select* history, and does not attempt to be a *comprehensive* history. Historians have long since abandoned any attempt to write a complete, or comprehensive, history of any event as broad in scope as the history of ELs. Indeed, in this respect, readers are reminded of how E.H. Carr (1964) draws attention the work of Professor Sir George Clark, in his general introduction to the second *Cambridge Modern History*, who commented:

> [Historians] expect their work to be superseded again and again. They consider that knowledge of the past has come down through one or more human minds, has been 'processed' by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms

> which nothing can alter... The exploration seems to be endless (*The New Cambridge Modern History*, (1957), pp. xxiv-xxv, cited in Carr, 1964, p.p. 7-8).

Simply put, it is most likely, that as with *The New Cambridge Modern History,* this thesis can only profess to be a point in what will probably be a long continuum of research associated with the history of ELs.[3]

As Best and Kahn (1989) show no history can claim to be *objective*. Even for a history to claim to be *balanced* is problematic, certainly offering a challenge for researchers. Allan Megill (2007) insists that a 'balanced' view of objectivity implies that 'objectivity is attained when all points of view are recognized, each finding its appropriate spokesperson' (p. 110). Megill (2007) shows that often this is an impossible ideal for an historian; certainly the attainment of balance for this study would be a challenge, where so many points of view concerning ELs were manifest.

Yet, in an attempt at balance, this thesis is organised so the large categories of stakeholders are represented in chapters ranging from, first, the Tasmanian Department of Education, the private education sector, academics and researchers, principals and teachers, the Australian Education Union, parents and employers and finally, the Federal Government.

Carr (1964) wrote much about the possibility of objectivity in history, and insisted there 'cannot be an objective fact, but only of relation, of the relation between fact and interpretation, between past, present and future' (p. 120). Moreover, for Carr (1964), 'the facts of history cannot be purely objective, since they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance

[3] For Carr's monumental contribution to historiography, see, for example, Curthoys and Docker, 2006, pp. 129-34.

attached to them by historians' (p. 120). Thus, for example, when this thesis looks for the reasons underpinning the demise of the ELs curriculum, these reasons cannot pretend to be anything more than the author's *interpretation* based on events uncovered through the value judgements underpinning the researcher's choice of particular primary sources. This thesis has more to say about causes and consequences below in this chapter.

This study does, however, aim at presenting a reasonably comprehensive array of 'voices', expressing their opinions, or recall, of what they consider to be facts, on ELs. However, as this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, social conflict theory does not place any greater value on one 'voice' over another: the Minister for Education's opinions on ELs has no greater authority in this thesis than, for example, the year 12 student from Don College, or the parent of the intellectually gifted student and head prefect in a Tasmanian high school. This approach certainly has gained the attention of Wilson (2005) who writes on how the democratisation has enriched historical writing, as well as raising fresh methodological issues. He makes the point that this has come about not simply because of some 'voyeuristic interest in its uniqueness' (p. 79). Wilson (2005) argues that George Rudé's publication of *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (1959) brought with it fresh insights into the causes and general movement of those social upheavals in France in 1789. In a much more humble way, the inclusion of the accounts of the year 12 student from Don College, and the parent of the intellectually gifted student and head prefect in a Tasmanian high school adds essential insights into the history of ELs.

But, critics may conjecture, that, for example, the Minister for Education had 'a more informed view' on the development of

ELs than did the year 12 student from Don College, or the parent of the intellectually gifted student and head prefect. That statement is only true in respect the Minister for Education would have 'a more informed' view of developments in respect to what occurred at 'the big end of town' – the Department of Education secretariat and the office of the Minister for Education – than would the student and parent abovementioned. But readers are reminded of the point made that will be made in chapter five by Dinan-Thompson (2005, p. 149), who insists curriculum change is like a football match. It has as much to do with all the other things associated with the match, as it has to do with the match, itself – the booing and cheering, before and after the match, and the commentary amongst the fans and in the media in the weeks following and preceding the match, and so on. That being so, similarly, the history of ELs has as much to do with, for example, the concerns regarding ELs by the year 12 student and those expressed by the parent of the gifted and talented student, as it has to do with the Minister for Education or her upper-echelon planners and policy makers from 'the big end of town'.

So, in a very important sense, the notion of 'key players' in the history of ELs is a very problematic term. As this chapter has attempted to establish, social conflict theory of historical analysis would have it that, for example, the year 12 Don College student and the parent of the intellectually gifted student and head prefect in a Tasmanian high school are as much 'key players' in the history of ELs as are the Minister for Education and her upper-echelon planners. To suggest the latter are in a sense more important in the history of ELs than, for example, students or parents, is to regress into evolutionary idealism. As we have shown earlier in this chapter, evolutionary idealism posits a hierarchy of importance of the players in any particular history. We have seen many historians believe this was a great

shortcoming by evolutionary idealists who wrote histories from the point of view of 'the big end of town'.

While not all upper-echelon planners were interviewed, and thus given a direct 'voice' in this thesis, the 'voice' of many these people came through newspaper reports, or journal articles. Of course, as has already been established in this chapter, no individual source can pretend to have any greater veracity than another. What is important is there is a fair balance between the various sources and voices.

Any approach to the writing of the history of ELs needs to be in accord with current views of the meaning of the word 'curriculum'. Cornbleth (1990), for example, alerts the reader to the fact that by the twenty-first century, the word 'curriculum' has taken on vastly broadened meanings. The meaning of the word has become contextualized to encompass a whole range of activity associated with schools, students, teachers and the process of learning, much of a highly politicized nature. Certainly, any history of ELs should not be concerned simply with a written document issued by the Minister for Education, and drawn up by members of her secretariat.

The vexed question of causes and consequences

Inevitably, questions are raised concerning the causes of the demise of ELs. In respect to causation in history, Tosh (1984) claims:

> The only uncontroversial generalization which can be made about causation in history is that it is always multiple and many-layered; it embraces situational or background causes and direct or immediate causes, and the complexity arises from the manner in which different areas of human experience constantly obtrude on one another (p. 97).

Obviously, a direct cause of the demise of ELs was Wriedt's poor result in the 2006 'ELs' election. Obviously, however, there were many other underlying causes for this. Consequently, in the general conclusions to this thesis, other possible causes are catalogued.

In regard to historical consequences, Tosh (1984) states:

> Consequences are important, too. Indeed, there are some grounds for arguing... that from the perspective of posterity they are more important than causes (p. 98).

With this in mind, this thesis allows for a chapter titled 'aftermath' that deals with the many political and educational consequences of the demise of ELs. This is, indeed, a telling chapter of this thesis.

Contemporary history: 'Many historical judgements are interim'

Remembering that when this thesis was commenced, ELs had been 'killed off' only a little over twelve months previously; some critics may contend that there are serious problems with researching a thesis on this topic when the research is so close to the actual event. McDowell (2002), however, considers that contemporary history may appear to offer the best opportunity to enhance our understanding of the past, be it ever so immediate. However, he poses one serious problem associated with this claim: it might be contended that sometimes events are too close to us to 'examine them with a sufficient degree of historical detachment'. For example, some may argue that feelings are still too highly pitched, 'the wounds too fresh'. For example, we are reminded of the anonymous correspondent in the introduction to this thesis, who wrote that she was still 'distraught and filled with grief' about what she considered were betrayal by

departmental leadership and politicians, and considerable misrepresentation by the ELs the press.

As we have seen above in this chapter, Professor Sir George Clark, in his general introduction to the second *Cambridge Modern History*, commented that historians expect their work to be superseded, time and time again. McDowell agrees, and goes on to state:

> Many historical judgements are interim, to the extent that there is always the potential for new evidence to appear or for new interpretations to emerge which might overturn or modify our existing knowledge of past events. Historians who study contemporary history do sometimes have the added option of being able to arrange interviews with participants of past events (p. 12).

This was certainly the case with this research, where oral sources were readily available, and positively responded to questions on their memories of ELs.

The interview process

A number of interviews were conducted with various ELs stakeholders, and the interview questions are included in Appendix Four. Transcripts of these interviews are not included because many of the interviewees wished to remain anonymous. It was unfortunate that the author could not interview Ms Paula Wriedt, because when the author was due to approach her with a request for an interview, she was experiencing a personal crisis and was unavailable for interview. Interviews were conducted with key Department of Education personnel, outside of their hours of duty; these people, too, wished to remain anonymous. Thus, they are referred to in the thesis as 'ELs planning officers'. It is acknowledged that not having direct information from several key participants, e.g., Ms Wriedt, is a limitation of the data gathering. This limitation will be reflected in the

discussion, particularly in the degree of confidence that can be placed in some aspects of the data set.

Conclusions

As will become clearer in the following chapters, for the purposes of this thesis, the social conflict paradigm of historical analysis is best suited to the history of ELs as conceived in this thesis. But that is not to denigrate the other two paradigms of historical analysis. They all serve a different purpose. What researchers should bear in mind when they are using these sources, are the motives behind the writing of such a work, and the audience for whom the work is intended. For example, a celebratory history (usually, a subset of the evolutionary idealist paradigm) is simply that. It seeks to celebrate a particular event, and institution, or period in history. Typically, reputable celebratory histories do not distort the truth, but they often withhold facts the author considers may be detrimental to the story being told, and the institution, association, or person, paying for the research – witness, Philips' (1985) centenary study of the Tasmanian Department of Education, and Watt's (2001) study of ELs.

Similarly, evolutionary idealist accounts of educational history serve a very important function in educational research and scholarship. For example, Barcan (1980; 1988) is just as entitled to his interpretation of the history of Australian education, as this author is to his. Barcan (1980; 1988) sees society and educational systems steadily evolving towards an ever-improving state, and politicians essentially being motivated by a sense of altruism, a desire to render the society a better place. To pit one paradigm against the other is simply a fallacious, erroneous and fruitless task, analogous to arguments about the inherent truths of various religions. Ultimately, one must argue from a foundation of underpinning motivation. In other words,

the reader must ask about the author: why is he/she writing this history, and why has he/she chosen to do so using this particular research paradigm?

The same applies to social control historians, or neo-Marxist historians. Some researchers conceive of society in terms of class conflict, of one class, seeking to control another. For them, educational institutions and schools are simply instruments in the age-long process of the subjugation of one class over another. In times of heightened social and political awareness, such as existed during the time of the Vietnam war during the 1960s and early 1970s, this paradigm had particular appeal. Here, readers need to recognize the motives of those educational historians who chose to work within this paradigm.

So, too, with the postmodernist academics who choose to search for the control paradigm in schools and educational systems. They perceive of school buildings, rituals and routines in schools, such as uniforms, school assemblies and alumni as being instruments, however subtle, in the Foucaultian tradition of control of the individual. This is a fascinating paradigm, and has furnished much valuable research and insights into education.

But, this thesis conceives of educational change as being the result of chaotic, individual, political and social imperatives. This is not to contend *progress* in education, as in history generally, is a fallacious concept. ELs may well have been progress for many people. But it was certainly chaotic. This is the social conflict paradigm of historical analysis. This thesis should now turn to a brief and selective examination the Tasmanian school curriculum and attempt to show how its history is best expressed in the social conflict paradigm.

CHAPTER THREE

A SELECT HISTORY OF TASMANIA'S CURRICULUM CHANGE: THE EMERGENCE OF OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION

The meaning of the word 'curriculum' has undergone multiple changes during the past fifty years, being vastly broadened. The following brief survey of curriculum change in Tasmania should begin with some analysis of the changes that have come over the word 'curriculum'.

The changing meaning of the word 'curriculum'

Tyler (1949) identified four questions underpinning the meaning of the word: what educational purposes should the school seek to accomplish? How can curriculum designers, educational administrators and teachers attain their desired objectives? How can learning experiences be organized for effective instruction? How can the effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated?

In the decades that followed, the definition of the word broadened. For example, Todd (1965) defined the word to mean 'the planned educational experiences offered by a school which can take place anywhere at any time in the multiple context of the school, for example, public schools as caring communities' (p. 2). During the next twenty years, the notion of 'curriculum'

continued to broaden from the idea of 'planned educational experiences' to that of:

> an ongoing social activity that is shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom and accomplished interactively, primarily for teachers and students. The curriculum is not a tangible product but the actual, day-to-day interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and milieu. The curriculum encompasses what others have called curriculum practice, or the curriculum in-use. Curriculum as product or object, the conventional view, is seen as one aspect of the context that shapes curriculum (Cornbleth, 1990, p. 11).

Thus, the meaning of the word 'curriculum' has become contextualized, encompassing a social process, embodying both subject matter and social organization and their interrelations. Social organization, including teacher and student roles, their values, attendant rights and obligations and patterns of interaction, now are considered necessary for a more complete understanding of the meaning of the word. Now, the word 'curriculum' often is understood to mean the provision of a setting for academic activities that can extend, or constrain, students' learning opportunities. Social organization and academic activities also communicate normative messages. Thus, a school newsletter, or a school assembly, with its accompanying rituals, or, indeed, even the school's entrance foyer, with its trophy cases and so on, display values and norms underpinning certain values, behaviours and knowledge.

This very broadened view of the curriculum, especially in the sense of its contextualized nature, encompassing social processes, and embodying both subject matter and social organization and their interrelations, is in accord with the social conflict theory of historical research. This is a research paradigm that seeks out motives for decision-making, especially

in the social and political sense, and seeks to describe the contexts that underpin these.

What, then, are the characteristics of a postmodernist curriculum? In his Introduction to Doll's (1993) perceptive study of the postmodern curriculum, Soltis writes of a curriculum that:

> will allow human powers of creative organizations and reorganization of experience to be operative in an environment that maintains a healthy tension between the need to find closure and the desire to explore. Such an open system will allow students and their teachers in conversation and dialogue to create more complex orders and structures of subject matter and ideas than is possible in the closed curriculum structures of today. The teachers' role will no longer be viewed as causal, but as transformative. Curriculum will not be the race course, but the journey itself. And learning will be an adventure in meaning making (p. 21).

Thus, the postmodern curriculum is about a child's personal growth. And this meaning has implication for curriculum designers. Could the ELs curriculum designers and managers of dissemination meet the challenge of the curriculum as being a journey, rather than an event? The challenge facing the researching and writing of this thesis is to describe the ELs curriculum not in terms of 'the race course', but 'the journey itself'.

With this particular view of the meaning of the word 'curriculum' the ELs curriculum must also encompass the values and organizations of the total organizational body known as the Tasmanian Department of Education, from the ministerial office, through the secretariat, to prescribed reporting systems used to communicate children's progress to parents. Moreover, the context of the political decision-making, and the associated media comments, associated with the curriculum development

and the management of its implementation, are also important ingredients of the meaning of the word 'curriculum'. This is the history of ELs that this thesis will attempt to describe.

The nineteenth-century Tasmanian curriculum

Of course, there had been a curriculum in Tasmania ever since children learnt from their elders, probably twenty or thirty thousand years ago. And as far as Whites are concerned, a curriculum came into being as children gathered around a teacher, probably sometime soon after non-convict settlers began to arrive in the British colony of Van Diemen's Land. But, Phillips (1985) chooses to begin his story with the establishment of a Board of Education in 1840 (pp. 38-42). Be that as it may, this thesis is concerned with the phenomenon of curriculum change and rejection, which begins with the arrival of Neale in Tasmania in 1904.

Legislation providing for the Tasmanian Department of Education was enacted in 1885. Due to the poverty of the state treasury, during the following twenty years, little was done to further educational development from its *ex-cathedra* early stages in the state (Phillips, 1985, chap. 5). However, by the early years of the twentieth century, a wave of educational renewal known as the New Education swept the English-speaking world, much the same as essential learnings, as a curriculum and pedagogy, was sweeping into vogue at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Eventually, following glaringly progressive developments in other states, in 1904, Tasmanians were called on to advance their system of education (Selleck, 1972; Rodwell, 1992).

Early twentieth-century Tasmanian curriculum change

Following some public concern, in 1904, Premier W.B. Propsting invited Neale to Tasmania to write a report on the

state of Tasmanian state education. Presented to parliament in 1904, his report was a stinging indictment on the circumstances and quality of Tasmanian state education. Consequently, the government appointed him as Director of Education in order to improve state-provided education; at the beginning of 1905, he set off on a program of educational change in the state. His curriculum was inspired by the writings of William James, a pioneering constructionist psychologist (Rodwell, 1992, chap. 3).

In retrospect, Neale's chances of success were, indeed, very slim. He was an outsider, who already had put many Tasmanian teachers and members of the general public off side with his critical assessment of the condition of Tasmania's state education system. Also, there was the issue of his bringing with him ten young and progressive male teachers from South Australia. Much of the manifest ill-feelings could have been alleviated, however, by some form of material support for the new methods the teachers were asked to employ, and, for Neale, a more sympathetic understanding of the change process (Rodwell, 1992, chap. 3).

Neale's curriculum innovations are relevant to this study because they hold considerable comparison with what occurred almost a century later with the ELs curriculum innovation. In both instances, *The Mercury* played a central role in the demise of the curriculum innovations. In both cases, the politics was intense, with the Teachers' Union playing a central role. But the one difference was that in 1909 it was the professional educator who was sacked, not any politicians, or department ministers (Rodwell, 1992, chap. 3). This was unlike what happened with ELs in 2006, where chapter one of this thesis has shown it was the politicians who were 'pulling the leavers' of the innovation.

W.T. McCoy, an inspector from New South Wales, was appointed as Neale's successor. He was well supported in parliament by J.A. (Joe) Lyons, an ex-teacher and a Neale detractor, who had been elected to a seat in the northern Tasmanian seat of Wilmot, following the Neale imbroglio (ADB: Lyons, Joseph Aloysius, 1879-1939). McCoy was to prove to be more interested and adept at educational management than curriculum innovation. Basically, his ideals for the curriculum, perhaps, were best described as populist, and were set at a much lower horizon than were Neale's (Hyams, 1983, p. 34). He made much use of the curriculum development done in other states, particularly from his home state and in the Victorian Department of Education under the directorship of Frank Tate.

McCoy resigned his directorship in 1919 to move to a similar position in South Australia. During much of his time in Tasmania, Australia was at war, and curriculum innovation largely was suspended. Most of his directorship was taken up with the state's Herculean efforts in assisting Britain in its war with Germany. During his directorship, profound and lasting changes began to emerge. Now, psychology began to impact on the lives of children in Tasmanian schools. H.T. (Psychy) Parker was the first psychologist with the Department of Education. He set about 'measuring' the intelligence of most of Tasmania's primary school children. The Director of Education was now G.V. Brooks, one of Neale's imported teachers from South Australian (Rodwell, 1992, pp. 87-96).

During the 1920s, Parker had often advanced the progressive ideal of a special school for intellectually advanced children. When he returned from an overseas Carnegie-funded study tour, with joint funding from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and Tasmanian Government, the Hobart

Activity School was founded in 1934 for thirty of the most intellectually advanced grades 5 and 6 children in the greater Hobart area. The school had an integrated, enquiry-based curriculum. Despite praise by parents and many educators, the school, however, was closed in 1938, following some political criticism that labelled the school elitist and neglectful of the three Rs (Rodwell, 1992, pp. 245-46). Implementing educational innovation for Tasmanian rural children would prove to be less problematic, and, certainly, more politically appealing.

During 1926, the year in which the Hadow Report was released in England, which recommended the establishment of centralised rural schools, the Tasmanian Government considered the same system of rural education. The onset of the worst economic depression in the state's history, however, caused the plans for this educational innovation to be shelved. Again, bolstered with Carnegie funding, the populist Ogilvie Labor Government in 1935 had Brooks establish rural area schools at Sheffield and Hagley. With progressive, Deweyist curricula, much of it similar to that used at the Hobart Activity School, these schools formed a model for the dozens that followed in the state through until the late 1960s. It has been argued, here in the Tasmanian farming environment, a progressive integrated curriculum was less likely to be challenged as it would have been in an urban environment. Here, in rural Tasmania, where few children were destined for university, or a competitive job market, prospective employers had less need to compare educational achievement. Moreover, Tasmanians were being provided with schools achieving national acclaim (Rodwell, 1992, pp. 233-38).

Post-Second World War developments in Tasmanian curricula

With the onset of comprehensive high schools in Tasmania during the 1960s, came major curriculum changes at the primary, as well as the secondary, level. In 1967, the Department of Education initiated a full-scale review of its policies and operation. This was the *School and Society Report* (1968). In his capacity as Deputy-Director of Education, Phillip Hughes chaired a 26-member committee. Hearings were held in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. On the basis of the information gained from these meetings, the committee presented sets of recommendations referring to the organization of schools, school programs, teaching and teachers and the provision of facilities and services (EdDeptTas, 1968).

The committee recommended all students should follow general courses in the primary school and the first four years of secondary school. Moreover, it recommended secondary schools should prepare students for university, or vocational education. In primary schools, the curriculum should consist of arts and crafts, English, mathematics, natural science, physical education, religious education and social science. While at the secondary level, students should be introduced to additional subject areas, including technical education, home arts, personal and human relationships, typing, commercial subjects and foreign languages.

The report brought considerable change to the primary school curriculum. By 1970, primary teachers were being asked to teach the new subject of social science, which had replaced history and geography. The changes came, not simply with the content, but also with the pedagogy. Social science required enquiry-based learning, often in group situations. Integration with other subjects, for example arts and crafts and English, was

strongly encouraged. This was also the beginning of the era of open-plan education. Tasmania's first open-plan, team teaching began at Warrane Primary School in 1971. Associated with the open-plan classroom architecture was an integrated curriculum (Rodwell, 1998).

Despite the climate of experimental curriculum and pedagogy existing in the immediate post-*School and Society Report* years in Tasmanian schools, the report itself held out little hope of the ability or persuasion of teachers experimenting in pedagogy, or curriculum:

> It must be remembered that the teachers as a group, shaped and surrounded by tradition, are conservative and resistant to change. This is not altogether a fault. There is some positive value in such a position. They feel a responsibility to the children in their care and knowing what they have been taught to do will serve the purposes they have accepted as worthwhile, they hesitate to attempt innovations where their lack of knowledge or conviction may let the children down (EdDeptTas, 1968, p. 32).

These comments may have been made almost forty years later and applied to the resistance measured out by many Tasmanian teachers towards the ELs curriculum. Certainly, imbued as he was in Beeby's (1966) model of educational development, in 1968, Hughes contended Tasmanian teachers had not yet reached the pinnacle of their professional development, the so-called stage of meaning. After all, his report was meant to facilitate this very development. Of course, were there any veracity in Beeby's (1966) thesis, one would suppose almost forty years later, the Tasmanian teachers, having moved through the curriculum resulting from the *School and Society Report*, they would have attained a higher level of professional evolution – the supposed stage of meaning. Consequently, they would have embraced more readily the ELs curriculum.

The new social sciences curriculum ushered in massive changes to the Tasmanian secondary and primary school curricula, along with the possibility of manifold changes to pedagogy. Marsh (1984) confirmed the pivotal role the new enquiry-based social science had on pedagogical practice during this period. Teachers who were looking for change in their pedagogy found it here in this new integrated and conceptual approach to teaching.

In order to meet the many emerging needs brought about by the introduction of comprehensive high schools, Education Minister, W.A. (Bill) Neilson had restructured the Tasmanian Schools Board in 1969. Now, for years 7-10, all subjects were moderated, rather than examined by the board. With the abandonment of external examinations, the organisational climate in Tasmanian secondary education was ripe for curriculum innovation.

Hugh Campbell had succeeded Hughes as the Superintendent of the Curriculum Branch in 1967; during the late 1960s and early 1970s, he did much towards curriculum innovation in Tasmanian secondary schools. The new social sciences curriculum resulting from the *School and Society Report* brought with it the 'newest and most far-reaching' of curriculum and pedagogical innovations (Campbell, 1969, p. 2). Following the changes to the Schools Board and the recommendations contained in the *School and Society Report*, teachers were given a much freer hand in what they taught. For Campbell, the shelving of detailed courses of study, external examinations and the acceptance by schools for their own curricula, gave rise to a great deal of experimentation (Campbell, 1972, p. 2).

This was certainly in accord with Marsh and Stafford's (1984) observations of the state of the curriculum in Australia in the late 1960s and 1970s:

> Teachers, for their part, showed some willingness to apply different theories to their teaching. An open education ideology at the primary school level encouraged more and more teachers to experiment with team teaching, integrated subjects and the use of informal teaching practices. At the secondary level, teachers offered new elective units and courses which incorporated theories based in social interaction. These developments may have been due to recent pre-service teacher education programs, which placed more emphasis upon pre-service teachers developing and understanding of curriculum theorising as well as planning and implementation skills (p. 54).

When Campbell wrote to schools requesting information on their school's organisational, pedagogical and curriculum details for his *Tasmanian Journal of Education* edition devoted to 'Changing Secondary Schools', he stated he was overwhelmed with responses. Consequently, he decided to exclude those articles dealing with subjects and more specific projects, and printing only those discussing the open classroom and innovative pedagogy, because they promised 'to be the most effective approach to the changing world of the seventies':

> It is a sign of the times that most of the teachers who appear here as voices of the future have themselves made the decision to change, sometimes in the face of considerable difficulty. The changes recorded here are not imposed. The represent the working out of a genuine desire to come to terms with the times (Campbell, 1972, p. 1).

These 'voices of the future' were much facilitated and amplified during the years of the Federal Whitlam Labor Government of 1972-75 and its massive injection of money into state education systems through the Australian Schools Commission (Connell, 1993, pp. 279-282.) Indeed, in the author's 20 years experience in the Tasmanian Department of Education, dating from 1966-1986, the years 1972-75 were the most exciting and innovative he had experienced. During the years 1973-76, the author was a science consultant with statewide responsibilities, assisting in

the design and implementation of the Tasmanian Elementary School Science curriculum, which was a pioneering effort in school-based curriculum development.

TEND and COPE

In 1976, the Director-General of Education, Athol Gough, established the Committee on Secondary Education (TEND Committee) to enquire into Tasmanian education, next decade. The committee held public meetings in Hobart, Scottsdale, Burnie, Smithton and Queenstown. It endorsed much of the curriculum and pedagogical innovations that had occurred during the past decade in secondary schools, particularly in matters of school-based curriculum development and core curriculum. But also it had acquiesced to demands from some teachers, principals and sections of the community for 'back to the basics', with the government promising to appoint more teachers in order to lessen teacher workloads.

A driving force behind the 'back to basics' movement was the Australian Council for Educational Standards (ACES), then headed by a University of Sydney academic, Professor Leonie Kramer. As Barcan (1980) shows, in the late 1970s, many magazines and newspaper became more critical of Australian education. For example, the lead article in *The Bulletin* of 15 May 1976 was headed 'Australia's Educational scandal: we're turning out millions of dunces' (pp. 298-9).

Moreover, in Tasmania the TEND Committee appeased demands from 'the back to basics' lobby group by recommending the raising of literacy and numeracy standards by monitoring these aspects of cognitive development through statewide testing (TEND, 1978). However, the curriculum policies espoused by the TEND report were much changed, due to the election of the Gray Government in 1982.

In 1977, the Tasmanian Department of Education constituted the Committee on Primary Education (COPE). Its brief was to review primary education, or more appropriately in child-centred terms, to 'investigate the needs of the primary school child', 'highlight the crucial importance of appropriate learning experiences' and 'confirm the high priority which educational research has convincingly demonstrated must accord to primary education if later developments are to occur'. The committee stated:

> The central concern of the primary school is the child. In order to achieve optimum development, the child should receive respect, care and love. This should be the basis of all relationships with the child of parents, teachers and the community. Every boy and girl should be viewed and accepted as individuals, needing appropriate stimulation and challenge. There should be an appreciation of their achievements and their potential, in order to help build their confidence and their sense of self-esteem (COPE Report, 1980, p. 1).

During its early years, Ken Axton, the Director of Primary Education, chaired the COPE committee. His close associate, Colleen Fahey, later chaired it, when she, in turn, became Director of Primary Education, following Axton's acceptance of a contract for the position of Director-General in 1983 under the Gray Liberal Government. With one exception, the committee's membership was drawn from departmental administrators and school principals. The author was a vice-principal and later a school principal during these years; it was a commonly-held belief amongst teachers and principals that membership of the COPE committee, or its sub-committees, guaranteed an individual's future in the department, particularly in the light of the fact that the chair of the COPE committee during these years was also the chair of the department's Promotions and Appeals Committee. Consequently, during these years, which ran until

the Gray Government was defeated in 1989, child-centred pedagogy rose to a position of dominance within the department.

One of the first tasks of the COPE Report was to fend off any fundamentalist push, in respect to the 'back to basics' movement gathering strength in the Tasmanian education system and Tasmanian society-at-large at the time. Consequently, it stated that:

> The 'movement' ['back to basics'], largely activated by pressure groups external to the school, has tended to put pupil performance in limited and specified curriculum areas before the individual needs and capacities of students and to represent a very limited view of knowledge. Thus, it leads to unrealistic expectations about universal performance and to a range of activities that is too limited (COPE, 1980, p. 41).

The COPE Report encouraged school-based curriculum development and integrated curriculum, developments that would be suited for an individual school's needs:

> It is precisely the diversity within the system which gives it its richness and stimulates growth. The Education Department had encouraged diversity, a policy endorsed by the committee on Primary Education (COPE, p. 46).

The quest for accountability and the arrival of competencies

As the COPE Report was being implemented, for the Gray Liberal Government, however, enormous changes were occurring in education, *vis-à-vis* the relationship between the various state and territory authorities and the Commonwealth. The latter, through the establishment in 1985 of the Quality of Education Review Committee, was determined to bring some accountability into the spending of state educational grants. The Hawke Labor Government had been in power in Canberra since February 1983; since then it had been 'tightening the strings' on

educational funding, and slowly dismantling the old Australian Schools Commission (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995, chap. 7). The establishment of the Quality of Education Review Committee occurred during the Tasmanian Department of Education's centenary year.

As a commemorative act for the centenary of its founding, the department convened the Centenary Conference on Secondary Education in September 1985. During the six months preceding the conference, in the department's three regional districts, community members, teachers and principals were selected to participate in discussions on a range of educational issues and submit topics for Centenary Conference. Here, 240 delegates heard presentations on current developments and issues in education and participated in group discussions relating to secondary education. The suggestions raised at the conference were taken into account and refined in a drafting paper on Tasmanian secondary education. This was released in March 1986 for statewide review. There followed a round of information conferences, involving community members, students, parents, teachers and administrators. Feedback and comment from these sessions were incorporated into a policy statement on secondary education (DoE, 1987).

The policy statement comprised a set of guiding principles on provisions for secondary education, the curriculum, students, teachers and parents and the community to guide secondary education into the future. Utilising an emerging word in education – competencies – issuing from Canberra now for several years, these statements showed that programs should be based on developing competencies in such educational processes as: acquiring information, conveying information, applying logical processes, undertaking practical tasks as a member of a group, making judgements and decisions, and working

creatively and solving problems within six fields of knowledge: language, mathematics, health and personal development, sciences, social education, the arts and technology (DoE, 1987).

Earlier, from the Hobart Matriculation College, Warren Brewer was appointed in 1970 to head the social science curriculum innovation. He was later to head the department's Curriculum Branch; in the wake of the Cresap Report of 1990, he retired from this position to become second-in-charge of the Curriculum Corporation (CC) based in Melbourne. For many Tasmanian teachers, Brewer was an inspirational leader in curriculum and pedagogy. But when he moved to the CC, except for Graham Fish, who had been appointed Director of Curriculum in 1985 (previously a Regional Superintendent), there were few personnel with any system-wide curriculum expertise remaining in the department. Soon after the Cresap cuts, Fish became Chief Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board, thus further stripping the department of curriculum experience.

Indeed, Brewer (2008) reports the Cresap Report reduced curriculum personnel from 77 people to a mere eleven. In Tasmania, the Cresap Report marked the end of an educational epoch. Here, and nationally and internationally, the old order was passing. With a premise of 'curriculum cannot ever be anything but a political means to entrench and promulgate a specific social, economic or political agenda', Ling (2005) summarizes these changes:

> The 1980s was a period of immense change in education... In the 1970s we could see if we study educational policy documents, that the curriculum was being seen as a tool for attempting to bring about social justice and to redress disadvantage. Disadvantaged Schools Programs, compensatory programs, remedial and extension programs, special needs teachers, teacher resource centres and regional

> consultants are all familiar initiatives and features of that era. This was a time when the government agenda was geared towards attempting to reform society by social means and thus schooling and the curriculum became part of that agenda (p. 3).

With the handing down of the Cresap Report and its acceptance by the Tasmanian Government, all of these programs and institutions in Tasmanian education had passed. As Ling (2005) shows, in the 1990s and into the 21st century, politicians pulled quite a different educational agenda into operation. According to Ling (2005), this,

> is the agenda of economic rationalism and is the New Right way to bring about reform of society by economic means. Hence, the curriculum becomes a tool for furthering and promulgating that agenda. Thus, we see a shrinking of resources to support teachers and schools, a move toward a privatization of public systems and to sponsorship arrangements between the private sector and schools, a return to a concept of standardised testing as a means to rank and sort people, schools and society accordingly, a clawing back of power to a shrunken bureaucratic central administration in the form of increased accountability, but reduced government funding (pp. 5-6).

As Ling (2005) shows this was the beginning of OBE, where curriculum became outcomes driven, so productivity could be more easily measured, and students themselves could be more easily ranked according to performance criteria and competencies.

In Tasmania, from the work of 27 working groups, comprising teachers, principals, parents and community members across the state, the department released a policy statement consisting of a five-part series of booklets, which were intended to be guides for developing educational programs in primary schools. In the third of these, the term 'essential learnings' first appeared and was defined to mean personal, linguistic, rational, creative and

kinaesthetic capabilities within seven fields of enquiry: language, mathematics, health and personal development, sciences, social education, the arts and technology (Tas. Dept of Ed. & Arts, 1991). However, while these developments were taking place, the Hawke Labor Government, under the imperative of fiscal accountability, was asserting new pressures on state and territory governments in respect to education.

Indeed, Crump (1993) contends at a federal level during the 1980s, 'curriculum eighties-style will go down in educational history as one of the most tumultuous and conflict-ridden eras'. In respect to curriculum development, Crump (1993) summarises the 1980s:

> Whether 'change' equates with 'progress', was the critical question of the 1980s. Financial restraint in Australia, first instituted by the national conservative Fraser Government in the early 1980s, cut into educational programs and the associated reforms across the nation. Since that time, Commonwealth and state governments (Labor and Liberal-National Party) have reclaimed control of what remained of these programs to such an extent that classroom practices and the working lives of educators in the 1990s are markedly intellectually and politically different to what existed in the early 1980s (p. 11).

The emergence of the influence of the Commonwealth on Tasmanian curricula: towards a national curriculum

Not surprisingly, the Howard Coalition Government in 2000 had its own view on the history of Commonwealth involvement in education. The 2000-01 Annual DETYA Report reflected on the history of Commonwealth involvement in education (DETYA, Annual Report: 2000-01). The report contended this involvement began as a wartime imperative in certain faculties of Australian universities, but the author of this thesis has demonstrated elsewhere that, in fact, it began back in 1905 when the Deakin Government legislated to fund volunteer school cadet corps, a move promoting much vitriol in Tasmanian

society, especially amongst the Peace Society, during the time of Neale's directorship (Rodwell, 1992, p. 85).

This fact has more than mere incidental relevance for this thesis, given the level of opposition by the public to the cadet corps in Tasmanian state schools. Of course, under the definition of curriculum as defined in this thesis, cadet corps activities in schools are a part of the curriculum; this may well have been the first public opposition to a curriculum issue in many Tasmanian schools. No doubt, many of the individuals who opposed the cadet corps, also opposed Neale's curriculum. In fact, however, in the light of the definition for 'curriculum', they were one and the same thing.

The 2000-01 DETYA Report shows that, as distinct from university education, the Commonwealth's involvement in Australian schools evolved as a result of a more expansive interpretation of the Commonwealth under the constitution. Initially, this involvement was during the mid-1950s with funding of non-government schools in the form of a building loan interest scheme. Then, this was extended during the mid-1960s, and included government schools, with specific funding in support of infrastructures, including libraries and science facilities (DETYA, Annual Report: 2000-01, chap. 1).

Educational developments during years of the Whitlam Labor Government years of 1972-75, which proffered major expansions in curriculum and pedagogy, were state-initiated, but Commonwealth-funded. The 2000-01 DETYA Report summarises the developments that followed:

> The Commonwealth's interests in schooling, however, have evolved to be broader than funding in the government and non-government sectors. For example, the National Goals of Schooling were defined in 1989 and revised in 1999. Equity issues

> and teaching quality have been a longstanding interest. Most recently, the Commonwealth has sought to strengthen accountability for education outcomes, including through legislated requirements to report performance against major goals of schooling and political measures to facilitate improved outcomes, in partnership with other jurisdictions (DETYA, 2001, p. 13).

Lokan (1997) has researched the history of the implementation of the Commonwealth-developed curriculum profiles in Australian schools during the period 1986-96. This was the beginning of a major push by the Commonwealth to influence curricula in Australian schools. This initiative came in two major phases: the first from 1986-93, which saw:

> unprecedented collaboration between all of Australia's states and territories as the nature of general content for an intended national curriculum was debated. As part of that process, documents (called 'statements') were formulated to present these national goals (p. iii).

For Lokan, the level of collaboration between the various state and territory departments of education and the Commonwealth was unusual, given the nature of this initial input in curriculum by the Commonwealth Labor Government. This was particularly surprising by today's standards, given the then mix of Labor and Coalition governments in the states and territories.

By mid-1993, the 'statements' (curriculum content descriptions) and 'profiles' (expected student learning outcomes) were complete in draft form for most of the eight areas, and were being submitted to the AEC – as the group of state and federal ministers of education and their chief executive officers was then called – for endorsement in mid-1993.

In researching the history of the implementation of the Commonwealth-developed curriculum profiles in Tasmanian

schools during the period 1986-96, Pullen (1997) reported the Statements and Profiles were the outcome of an 'excellent collaborative process' between reputable educationists (among whom were many of Tasmania's own education professionals). For Pullen (1997), they were a unique, valid and authoritative set of documents warranting 'intensive study and use by schools and colleges and will prove to be essential to them as curriculum planning tools' (p. 122). Moreover,

> Tasmania accepted the Statements and Profiles intact – that is, they were issued to government schools and colleges with no alteration to their published form. Two main reasons account for this decision, made late in 1993 by the then Minister for Education and the Arts. First, Tasmania like other authorities, had made significant contributions to the planning writing and endorsement of the document and felt that they represented a new curriculum resource which would be of value to the schools even if some relatively minor aspects of them might have been differently addressed had the development process been of longer duration. Second, Tasmania intended all along to issue the documents as required resources for school curriculum planning, assessment and reporting, but not as the sole, immutable and definitive underpinning of curriculum. Tasmania took the view that the Statements and Profiles as published represent an outstanding achievement in the creation of a new way of regarding Australian curriculum as the 21st century approaches (pp. 122-23).

'Intensive study and use by schools and colleges', indeed! Fish (2008) confirmed Brewer's (2008) statement on the few people with curriculum expertise remaining in the Department of Education following the Cresap Report. Although, Fish (2008) insists the principal curriculum officers who remained following the Cresap cuts had well-developed expertise in curriculum matters, there were few of them, with little support. Fish (2008) added, in his experience, this was another reason why the department so readily accepted the Australian Education Committee's Statements and Profiles document. This same

small number of curriculum people in the department also explains the drive from Tasmanian schools to purchase and implement curriculum material being produced by the CC. Brewer (2008) recalls massive sales to Tasmanian schools, particularly of the mathematic and English curriculum materials.

According to Fish (2008), with the slowing economic growth, such was the climate for accountability in Australian schools during the mid- to late-1980s that state and territory departments of education accepted the inevitability of a national curriculum, as they also accepted the emerging notion of Key Learning Outcomes. These developments were concomitant with other developments in the Tasmanian school curriculum that were precursors to the ELs. Watt (2001) confirmed Fish's (2008) and Brewer's (2008) observations, and further reported that:

> Establishing priorities among particular learning areas led to the conduct of several projects [in the Tasmanian Department of Education]. A perception that the national statements and profiles related more to the secondary level, led the Department of Education and the Arts to collaborate with the Curriculum Corporation on the Primary Project, in which 52 units, using commonly presented topics in primary classrooms, were developed as an integrated on-year program and published in three volumes by the Curriculum Corporation (1996). Two projects on literacy and numeracy led to the development of sets of key intended literacy and numeracy outcomes derived from the national profiles (p. 11).

The arrival of OBE

A corollary of the drive towards accountability in education systems during these years was a paradigm shift from input-oriented assessment and reporting procedures to reporting in terms of student learning outcomes. Inspired by Gagnè, *et al.*, the idea of behavioural objectives had been around since the early 1970s (Bigge & Shermis 2004, chap. 2), but had often came under considerable challenge from teachers and

curriculum designers. But the imperatives of accountability of the late 1980s ensured the concept would be revisited. And this came in the form of OBE of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

OBE is most commonly associated with the work of the American, William Spady. In a paper that reads more like pages from a hagiography, Killen (2004) has outlined Spady's contribution to education. He equates Spady with educational pioneers such as 'Dewey, Piaget, Bloom, Vygotsky and the many other famous names that are sprinkled throughout the educational literature' (p. 85). According to Killen, 'Those who read a lot in this area probably see the name so often that "Spady" and "OBE" are synonymous.'

Acharya (2003) agrees with Killen, and goes on to contend:

> In recent years greater attention is being paid to evaluate the outcomes of education to account for the returns of investments made in education (particularly public education). These increasing calls for accountability were a major reason for the rapid spread of various forms of outcome-based education in countries such as USA, UK and Australia during 1980 and 1990s (p. 89).

According to Acharya (2003) 'OBE is a method of curriculum design and teaching that focuses on what student can actually do after they are taught'. For Acharya (2003), OBE addresses key curricula questions such as:

a) What do you want the students to learn?
b) Why do you want them to learn it?
c) How can you best help students learn it?
d) How will you know what they have learnt? (p. 90)

Thus, the instructional planning process of OBEs is the reverse of traditional educational planning. The desired outcome is selected; the pedagogical method, materials and assessment are then created to support the intended outcomes.

As Acharya (2003) stated, OBE was not limited to Australia, nor was the wave of public criticism that followed in the wake of the new paradigm limited to Australia. In 1993, Schlafly (1993) reported:

> [OBE] is sweeping the country in the name of school 'restructuring'. OBE calls for a complete change in the way children are taught, graded and graduated, kindergarten through 12th grade. Since the American people seem ready to accept drastic surgery on our failed public schools, state departments of education are seizing this opportunity to force acceptance of OBE as the cure. But OBE has parents even more agitated than they are about explicit sex education. Crowds of a thousand or more parents are known to have gathered in Pennsylvania, Oklahoma and Ohio (p. 56).

Schlafly (1993) then gave examples of public concern for OBE in the United States:

> OBE is packaged in a deceptive language that appears to be mischievously chosen to mislead parents. Public school administrators have an obligation to present their 'reform' plans in plain English so that parents can easily understand the objectives, the methods, the content and exactly how OBE is different from traditional schooling.
>
> OBE advocates continually use double-entendre expressions that parents assume mean one thing but really mean something different in the OBE context. When they talk about 'new basics', for example, they are not talking about academics such as reading, writing and arithmetic, but OBE attitudes and outcomes. When they talk about 'higher order thinking skills' or 'critical thinking', they mean a relativistic process of questioning traditional moral values (pp. 61-2).

Indeed, as later chapters of this thesis shall reveal, it was the public concern for OBE, *inter alia*, which proved to be one of the undoing of ELs. This was a nation-wide concern. Australians interested in education and opposed to OBEs, generally, quickly

formed into pressure groups. As Alderson and Martin (2007) contend:

> Outcomes and outcomes based education (OBE) have almost become terms of abuse in some Western Australian education circles and amongst sections of the public in WA after sustained attacks by the lobby group PLATO (People Lobbying Against The Outcomes) and the local newspaper, *The West Australian* (p. 37).

PLATO led an unremitting attack on OBE. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the website was awash with articles, many gleaned from national media outlets, opposing OBE education (PLATO, 2006, 10 July).

Indeed, the history of the OBE imbroglio in WA is well documented (Berlach & McNaught, 2007; Berlach & O'Neill, 2008). A point made by Berlach and O'Neill, *vis-à-vis* the underpinning reasons for the failure of OBE in that state had to do with a lack of epistemic activity – a program seeking common understanding of vocabulary and terms being used – prior to the development and implementation of the curriculum policy. This point, of course, is closely connected to the point made in chapter seven of this concerning the lack of a situational analysis prior to the development and rollout of ELs.

Berlach & O'Neill (2008) argue that a base cause for the failure to roll out successfully the OBE-based curriculum policy in WA came because 'epistemic imperatives' were not sorted out at the planning stage: put simply, there was little agreement or common understanding about essential terminology embodied in the curriculum. Moreover, the authors show that this same failure to adhere to 'epistemic imperatives' at the curriculum planning stage led to the demise of similar curriculum change efforts in New Zealand, South Africa and the USA (Berlach & O'Neill, 2008, pp. 49-50). Here they refer to 'the construction of

formal models of the processes – perceptual, intellectual and linguistic – by which knowledge and understanding are achieved and communicated' (Longuet-Higgins, 1988, p. 279, cited in Berlach & O'Neill, 2008, p. 49).

Pusey, authoritarianism and the Tasmanian Department of Education

This thesis should now reflect on an event that took place in Tasmania that was to lead to a rare insight into the administration of the Department of Education. During the early 1970s, a young Tasmanian secondary school teacher journeyed off to Paris, to the Centre de Sociologie to research a PhD under its Director, Michael Crozier. Back in Tasmania, with Campbell's support, Michael Pusey did much of his research while being employed at the Curriculum Branch. When the doctorate was awarded, Campbell had multiple copies of it done and distributed to key personnel in the department. It was later published by John Wiley & Sons as *Dynamics of Bureaucracy: a Case Analysis in Education* (1976). Few studies are more revealing of the retarding and impeding forces existing, albeit, at times, latently, within the Tasmanian Department of Education.

Pusey (1976) first hypothesised the department was an organization comprised of three basic dimensions: the formal structure; the technological; and the social system. But, it was a system out of kilter, with the social system suffering due to inordinate stress and emphasis placed on the formal structure (administration) and the technology. The result, for Pusey (1976), was a breakdown in the school community. That precious relationship between student and teacher tended towards authoritarianism, and not 'the mutual relationship of both parties towards a common task':

> The brutal truth of the matter seems to be that school is a rather joyless place for most of its inhabitants.

> They may find some satisfaction in the extrinsic rewards of their work – examination passes and salary cheques – but I found little to suggest more than a small minority of students, teachers and principals found any enduring *intrinsic* satisfaction in their daily work – things, such as a sense of personal confidence, a sense of self-esteem, or simply pride and enthusiasm, were missing [emphasis in original] (p. 89).

Of course, this was one of the great challenges of ELs: the curriculum initiative sought to enhance the intrinsic value of learning and the relationship between the teachers and student. But, as shall be shown in following chapters, interestingly, in a dramatic and paradoxically manner, the very humanism and progressivism that ELs set out to achieve, partly, was brought undone by its own latent authoritarianism – an inherent malady of the Department of Education, and something Pusey (1976) had flagged.

A question of 'progress' in Tasmanian curricula

This brief and select survey of the history of curriculum innovation in Tasmanian schools illustrates the chaotic nature and manifold contradictions of curriculum innovation in the state. The process of curriculum innovation is anything but linear in its development; while the general momentum is certainly towards general change and progress, often there is little or no *apparent* progress, but rather, confusion, disarray, anarchy and turmoil. But, surely, any observer would insist Tasmanian education generally, and curricula, specifically, has advanced considerably since, for example, Neale's time in Tasmania.

Carr (1964) devoted a chapter in his famous book to the question of 'history as progress' (chap. 5). Among other things, he insisted:

> No sane person ever believed in a kind of progress which advanced in an unbroken straight line without reverses and deviations and breaks in continuity, so that even the sharpest reverse is not necessarily fatal to the belief (p. 116).

So, when readers ask questions about the demise of ELs as being progress, or regression, in the history of Tasmanian education, the answers they arrive at will need to be based on the evidence as it is presented in this study, and their own values concerning history and education.

Conclusions

The similarities between the political fate of Neale's curriculum of 1905-09 and the ELs curriculum of 2000-06 is a tantalising and fascinating one. Both were curricula that challenged the *status quo* in Tasmanian schools in respect to the values and knowledge they sought to develop in children. As with ELs, almost a century later, the press, especially *The Mercury*, helped 'sink' Neale's curriculum. But its message would have lacked credence and authority had not there been so much dissatisfaction amongst the teachers.

The corporatization of the curriculum and the arrival of competencies marked an important milestone in the lead-up to ELs. This thesis will later contend the ultimate affects of the Cresap cuts were not fully manifest until a decade later when local expertise in system-wide curriculum development and implementation was called upon. When the ELs rollout was placed under pressure in 2005 and 2006, the affect of the absence of expertise in the management of statewide curriculum implementation was starkly apparent.

The influence of the Commonwealth on Tasmanian curricula, in the light of the decade of curriculum neglect and the

accompanying reliance on material developed by the CC, found expression in the run-down of local curriculum expertise. Later pages of this thesis will contend the Tasmanian Department of Education eventually would have severe questions put to it when it once again embarked on a program of system-wide curriculum development.

The arrival of OBE to Tasmanian education marked yet another instance of accountability and corporatization influences on Tasmanian curricula. There was not a universal acceptance of OBE, and when other curriculum issues associated with the ELs rollout surfaced in Tasmania during 2005 and 2006, it is, perhaps, not surprising many Tasmanian stakeholders in Tasmanian education would also call into question OBE.

Pusey (1976) had signalled an underlying authoritarianism in the Tasmanian Department of Education. Readers will not be surprised to read in later chapters how authoritarianism once again surfaced during 2005 and 2006 when the ELs rollout began to experience difficulties.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POLITICISATION OF THE TASMANIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The politicisation of government educational bureaucracies has long captured the attention of curriculum researchers. For example, in 1980, Lawton (1980, p. 28) wrote of his observations in this respect in Margaret Thatcher's United Kingdom. While the bureaucratic setting and the roles are different, the issue of the politicisation of the curriculum and the impact of this process on schools, *vis-à-vis* the ELs curriculum initiative, is remarkably similar to that described by Lawton (1980). This thesis will contend the processes of the politicisation of the upper-echelons of the Tasmanian began in the 1980s.

The beginning of upper-echelon contract appointments to the Tasmanian Department of Education

To understand the full nature of these changes, this thesis needs to go back to the early 1980s. Winning over considerable traditional Labor support, the Tasmanian Liberal Party Leader, Robin Gray, was elected to office in 1982 on a platform of state development and job creation. Spearheading this political agenda was the proposed building of hydroelectric dams, including the controversial dam on the Franklin River. During

the early years of the Gray Government, the Labor Opposition was in disarray, split between pro-development supporters and environmentalists. During this period, Dr Bob Brown led the Tasmanian Greens to political prominence.

With the Greens now a significant political force in Tasmanian politics, in 1989 the Gray Government lost the election by one seat. With five seats in the 35-seat Legislative Assembly, the Greens formed an unlikely alliance with Michael Field's Labor Party. Gray refused to resign and tried to secure a fresh election. A Royal Commission later found prominent Launceston businessman, Sir Edmund Rouse, had attempted to bribe a Labor backbencher to cross the floor, and, consequently, give Gray the majority he desperately needed in order to govern. Although Gray denied any knowledge of the attempted bribery, the Royal Commission criticised his involvement, and the allegations severely tainted Tasmanian State Liberals for years to come.

The Gray Liberal Government had brought massive changes to Tasmanian state education. Throughout the state education system, accountability became a touchstone for educational administrators (Macpherson, 1992). Axton's contract appointment as Director-General in 1983 under the Gray Liberal Government was the first of its kind in the Tasmanian Department of Education (Phillips, 1985, p. 337). The drive towards accountability, the corporatization of many aspects of Tasmanian public education and the accompanying rise of the New Right, were accompanied by the politicisation of the managerial levels of the Department of Education. Clearly, however, the notion of 'politicisation' calls for some analysis.

Politicisation of the APS

Parker (1989, pp. 384-5) contends politicisation is an imprecise concept and needs carefully to be defined. In the Australian

context, a comprehensive discussion is that by Weller (1989). For Weller (1989), politicisation is the opposite of political neutrality. There are two aspects of the notion of politicisation, which can contradict the notion of neutrality: the first is the use of the public service for party political purposes. This is in contrast to the principle of neutrality that stipulates public servants should not be used for party political purposes. There has been no evidence of this within the Tasmanian Department of Education and, therefore, this is not a concern in this thesis. The second aspect of the notion of politicisation concerns the appointment, promotion and tenure of public servants through party political influence. This is in contrast to the principle of neutrality that prescribes appointments, promotion and tenure should be independent of party political influence. This concern centres on the appointment, promotion and tenure through party political influence in order to advance the interests of the government of the day and, in particular, the administration of state education in Tasmania. There have been no studies undertaken of the politicisation of the Tasmanian Public Service: so, this thesis, therefore, dependents upon studies undertaken on the Australian Public Service to understand better this process.

Weller (1989) found evidence of only a few partisan appointments at the secretary level by the Hawke Government. Writing two years following the Howard-led Coalition victory over the Keating Labor Government, Mulgan (1998) concluded:

> Politicisation of the APS, in the sense of appointments to suit the preferences of the government of the day has been gradually increasing over recent decades. The process has been given added impetus by the growing insecurity of tenure among secretaries and by the sometimes uncritical adoption of private sector management models. Though the great majority of public servants, including secretaries, still see themselves as politically neutral professionals, capable of serving

> alternative governments with equal competence and loyalty, incoming governments may be increasingly tempted to appoint new management teams as a means of imposing new policy directions on the bureaucracy. Such a convention, if it becomes entrenched, will erode the principles of a professional service with damaging long-term consequences (pp. 3-4).

Were Mulgan's fears vindicated? Not so, states the recently-retired Peter Shergold, one-time Head of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra. Shergold (2004) contends the APS is as true now to the Westminster virtues, as ever:

> The current view is that 'accountability and responsibility Westminster-style no longer exists' and that the public service has been tarnished by, intimidation and demoralisation'... Instead, behind layers of secrecy, has been built a rotten edifice of 'plausible deniability' designed to protect ministers from unpleasant truths (p. 6).

Shergold states that, despite these manifold and scurrilous accusations of politicisation, the APS continues in the fine tradition, exemplified by people such as Sir Roland Wilson. However, many do not hold with Shergold's opinions. For example, Pusey (1991) had warned about this very thing back in the time of the Hawke Government in 1991.

The *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas)*

To understand the process of the politicisation of the public service in the Tasmanian context, this thesis needs to look to the year 1998. Then, the political landscape underwent massive changes when Tasmanians elected the first majority Labor government since 1972. Moreover, the Greens leader was defeated, as three of the four Green MPs were removed in the greatly reduced House of Assembly (Bennett, 1998a, p. 3).

Since 1989, both of Tasmania's major political parties had attempted to govern with Green support – Field's Labor Government in 1989-92 and Tony Rundle's Liberal Government in 1996-98. In both instances, it was an impossible alliance; both Liberal and Labor agreed desperate measures were needed to reduce the perceived undue disruptive influence of the Greens. Consequently, in late July 1998, the two parties combined against the Greens to support legislation to reduce the House of Assembly from 35 members to 25 members. In the Hare-Clark system, the quota for election was, thus, increased from 12.5 per cent to 16.7 per cent, a vote the Greens were likely to have difficulty in achieving. Of course, this would also mean some sitting members from major a party also would not be elected (Bennett, 1998, pp. 3-4).

By mid-1998, Labor and the Liberals were in different political shape. Rundle's Liberal Government was said to be well behind in the polls. Indeed, in May there had been rumours of a Liberal leadership spill; three ministers decided not to re-contest their seats, always a bad sign for any political party. By contrast, Labor brimmed with confidence and seemed much healthier than any time since its 1979 victory, which put Harry Holgate into the premier's office. Labor's vote had been creeping up during the 1990s; and there had been an amicable leadership change from Field to Bacon (Bennett, 1998, p. 5).

For years prior to the 1998 election, the Tasmanian economy was in a dreadful state. It had long been marginal, due to many long-term weaknesses. The Nixon Inquiry into the Tasmanian Economy (1997) highlighted the state's projected population decline. This was a factor that had major ramifications for educational planning. The inquiry also reported on the state's poor jobs growth, declining levels of services, massive and increasing state debt, a weakening export performance, a drain

of skilled workers and the running down of capital stock. The report concluded 'Tasmania has failed to develop an economy which can compete effectively nationally' (*Nixon Report*, 1997, pp. v-vii). This was the backdrop to the 1998 Tasmanian election campaign and the basis for planning for the victorious Bacon Government.

Arguably, the process of the politicisation of government bureaucracies continued in Tasmania. This process may have been accentuated by the lack of public scrutiny for government policy brought about by the reduction of the House of Assembly from 35 to 25 members resulting from the *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas)*. During the years 2006-08, there has been a considerable amount of public discourse on this issue in Tasmania. And, indeed, during 2008, there had been much public discussion on finding ways of increasing the size of the House of Assembly once again to 35 members.

Richard Herr, political scientist from the University of Tasmania, had long been a critic of the legislation reducing the size of parliament. In 2005 he also spoke out on an ABC *Stateline* program devoted to the effects of the reduction of the size of Parliament:

> A smaller number of ministers trying to cope with the workload that was done by a larger group of ministers previously means that they're had more minders and we've indeed over the last several years or more now seen the influence that minders have on decisions and the way government generally works in Tasmania...
>
> People are not elected, not accountable directly to the people being more influential, super-size departments – that is departments that have been combined in order to make it easier for ministers to meet their ministerial roles and that means, again, senior civil servants and minders making critical decisions about what goes forward to the minister and from the minister into cabinet. So there are a lot

> of reasons why accountability, transparency and public access have all been diminished (Ward, 2005).

Further, Herr has claimed that:

> The creation of super-departments has shifted decision-making downward from the cabinet into senior executive levels of the bureaucracy since disparate interests that once would have been brought to cabinet by separate ministers are now settled within a department and presented to the minister as *fait accompli* (Herr, 2005, p. 3).

Through until the time of the writing of this thesis, Herr continued to speak out on the perceived disastrous effects of the *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas)* (for example, Herr, 2006). He has been particularly vocal through the ABC *Statewide Mornings* radio program where he is a regular contributor.

Tasmanian discourse on the *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas)*

There was much discussion of the *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas)* and its affect on good governance in Tasmania in 2005. For example, on the eve of the 'ELs election', Ward, from ABC *Stateline* program cited above, reminded Tasmanians they were heading into an election year. It would be the third election of the smaller 25-member House of Assembly. She began her program by stating the smaller parliament was designed to hinder the election of the Greens and assure majority government. 'But it hasn't worked.' Then, she asked:

> Does the smaller parliament work effectively? Has it been good for democracy? Or has it led to unelected public servants doing the work of MPs?
>
> The Labor Party had a tumultuous accord with the Greens in the early 1990s and Tony Rundle's Liberal Government was frustrated in its bid to govern in minority with Green support. In 1998, Jim Bacon, as the then leader of the Opposition, put forward

> legislation to cut the number of parliamentarians and create a 25-member House of Assembly and 15-seat upper house. The cut was partly to placate public anger over a 40% pay rise that politicians had voted for themselves. But the major parties made no secret of the fact that they hoped it would get the Greens off their back and out of the parliamentary system...
>
> It almost worked. In 1998 the Greens were reduced to just one member... But in 2002 the Greens got three more seats and the Liberal Party was cut to just seven members. So, for this term the Opposition has had just seven members (Ward, 2005).

Wayne Crawford, long-time Tasmanian political commentator, spoke on the *Stateline* program. He began by asserting the consequence of the reduced size of the Tasmanian parliament was actually a diminished Opposition to the Government, because the Liberals and the Greens also were opposing each other. Crawford continued:

> Jim Bacon played on this to a great extent. After the last election he said he would recognize the fact there were now two Oppositions and he would give Peg Putt [the leader of the Tasmanian Greens] a car and the Greens some staff and so forth. What that did was not to make the Greens stronger, but to mean that the Greens were competing directly with the Opposition for media exposure, for public exposure. So it's divide and conquer. But the Government is dividing the Opposition and conquering it. It's not the Opposition dividing the Government (Ward, 2005).

What was the possible result of all this, and its effect on the ELs program in schools? In the same *Stateline* program, Crawford claimed:

> [The result for open and transparent government] has been disastrous, to be honest, for a number of reasons. One is that there is just not the critical mass of members to draw on now for all sorts of things, including Cabinet, including committees. You've got no backbench on the Government side to speak of, which means that if Cabinet makes a decision, Cabinet, plus the Government leader, plus the parliamentary secretary have a majority in the

> Caucus. So any Cabinet decision is going to be rolled through the Caucus without any dissent. So you're really got Cabinet running the parliament without any Opposition to speak of (Ward, 2005).

So, according to Crawford, contentious government programs, such as the ELs curriculum, under the reduced parliament, did not receive adequate parliamentary scrutiny, particularly from within the Parliamentary Labor Party.

Ward then commented the Liberal Party had estimated the cost of parliament had 'increased by about $5 million a year since 1998, about a million of that for Government spin doctors' (Ward, 2005).

It was not, however, simply a matter of cost, relative to the reduced size of parliament. This issue also involved the employment of 'political cronies as staffers'. Crawford went on to contend:

> About a year ago, I suppose, I went through and counted up the number of journalists that are employed by the Government. I think that it came to about 65 or something. This Government has more spinners than any other government, in my experience. They're not all press secretaries, they're not all overtly spinners, they're not all people that we see. Some of them are hidden deep in the departments (Ward, 2005).

Of course, commentators need to ask if this was having any influence on ELs curriculum policy.

The politicisation of government educational bureaucracies and the quest for market accountability

Nothing changed with the 2006 (ELs) state election, from the conditions that were being lamented on the 2005 *Stateline* program. Despite the 'hammering' Wriedt received at the polls,

party numbers remained the same – 14 members for the ALP; seven for the LP; and four for the Greens.

The issue of accountability has particular resonance for this thesis, because, apart from it underpinning the development of OBE and curriculum profiles, it also occurred along with the politicisation of state educational bureaucracies, described later in this chapter. Butler (2008) concurs with Herr in the difficulties the reduced Assembly is having on sound governance in Tasmania.

There appears to be a linkage between the politicisation of government educational bureaucracies and the quest for market accountability in these bureaucracies. Indeed, Vidovich and Slee (2000) have researched this topic. They argued:

> Increased accountability is at the centre of widespread educational reforms which feature the rhetoric of deregulation. Not only have educational systems, institutions and practitioners been required to be more accountable, but arguably the nature of accountability has also changed from professional and democratic to managerial and market forms. In particular, within the hegemonic discourses of the market ideology, market accountability to paying customers has been foregrounded. However, the hegemony is not complete. Governments have often positioned themselves as 'market managers', creating complex and often contradictory relationships between new forms of market and managerial accountability, layered on top of more traditional notions of professional and democratic accountability (p. 7).

Not surprisingly, this surge towards accountability was associated with the rise of the New Right ideology. Marginson (1993) argues two major strategies of New Right ideology have been 'privatization' and 'corporatization' of the public sector; these have had different implications for the predominant form of accountability policies. In the manner of the restructuring of

the Tasmanian Department of Education, following the Cresap Report, privatization involved the transfer of either assets or production from the government (public) sector to non-government (private) sector. Privatization and corporatization also involved a wide range of strategies, from the outright sale of previously government-owned facilities, to increasing private equity in public enterprises, to contracting out public services to private companies. Of course, privatization and corporatization ideology does not exist solely in conservative politics. After all, it was the Field Labor Government that 'pulled on' the Cresap developments.

The Cresap Cuts

Macpherson (1994) reported that with Axton as Director-General, and John Beswick as Minister for Education in the Gray Liberal Government, accountability issues were vigorously pursued during the years 1986-89. But with the fall of the Gray Government in 1989, and the consequent immediate resignation of Axton, interest in the issue of accountability abated for a short period. The drive for fiscal stringency within the department, however, soon resurfaced under another guise. Many within the new Field Government believed drastic structural changes were needed within the department in order to reduce expenditure. Consequently, faced with an inherited and massive financial crisis, the new Minister for Education in the Field Government, Peter Patmore, commissioned Cresap Ltd to identify $18 million savings in the Education budget for the 1990-91 year.

Cresap's Final Report (1990, p. 26) attempted to justify the cuts by listing the inefficient areas of the department. Vast areas of department were closed down. The Curriculum Branch, the Research Branch and Teachers' Aids Branch were closed down, and the inner-Hobart real estate housing these properties was

sold off. Consequently, professional development in curriculum areas within the department was drastically cut.

MacPherson contended that 'Tasmanian's history of 'reforms' in state education administration was an inspired, yet pragmatic, response to social, political and economic crises' (MacPherson, 1992, p. 32). A progressive devolution of managerial responsibility to schools and colleges between 1982 and 1989 resulted in little movement of governance powers. Moreover, the Gray Government had left the state in an economic 'black hole'. So, when Gray lost the 1989 election, astute observers were predicting the changes that were to follow.

With Patmore as Minister for Education and the Arts, the Tasmanian State Public Service was rationalised. In his first Annual Report, he stated:

> The Department of Education and the Arts was created to include the Education Department, the State Library, the Archives Office of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board (DofEd&Arts, 1990, p. 6).

Significantly, the corporate restructuring of the old Department of Education, now had as its head a secretary, with a deputy secretary in charge of each of the three major sectional organizations: Education, Culture and the Arts, and Corporate Services. Bruce Davis, the Departmental Secretary had come to the new and enlarged department from a career in architecture.

In tune with corporate thinking and what was already occurring in other government departments across Australia, the new department now had a corporate plan, along with a mission statement. This was to:

> Provide the Tasmanian community with educational services of the highest quality possible; services that

> will help all students to develop intellectually, socially, emotionally, morally and physically in a stimulating and supportive environment (DofEd&Arts, 1990, p. 11).

In reality, there were major changes afoot. For example, there was a director in charge of Curriculum Services (combining the old Curriculum Branch and the Teachers' Aids Branch) whose responsibility it would now be: 'To increase the marketing of educational services and locally developed educational resources' (DofEd&Arts, 1990, p. 11).

Cresap, Tasmanian curriculum and a changed culture in the Department of Education

Following the Cresap Report, and the subsequent move by Brewer to the CC, *inter alia*, Fish had responsibility for curriculum matters in the Department of Education. He attests despite these cuts the department's curriculum development activities now were only a fraction of what they had been. Moreover, of special concern for this thesis, he recalls during the early 1990s, following the full impact of the Cresap cuts, on his move to the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board in 1993, in the department,

> there remained a nucleus of sound operators, some of whom were heavily involved in the national developments. This interaction with curriculum officers from elsewhere in the nation was quite beneficial (Fish, 2008).

At this point in this select history of the department, Fish (2008) recalls people in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy simply assumed any major curriculum initiatives would come from the CC, and schools and colleges would purchase the materials. In regard to the statement and profiles, Fish (2008) continues:

> The department provided copies to schools, and there was a sequenced implementation plan, but it was clear towards the end of my time in Curriculum that those at 'the top' were beginning to lose their

> commitment to any long-term implementation program. Anyone with experience in curriculum matters knows that materials development is the easy step; implementation is much more difficult. Administrators with no background in school classrooms or school management have little appreciation of this fact.

The resounding truth of Fish's last two sentences, repeatedly, was to echo out across the Tasmanian education system, with the fury of a summer storm during the latter part of the ELs era.

Cynicism in the schools towards the Department of Education

But the full impact of the Cresap changes did not simply stop with curriculum development. Exactly what did all of this restructuring and corporatization of the department mean for teachers in schools? First, of significant relevance for this thesis, according to anecdotal evidence from one retired school principal, there was an increasing cynicism towards the members of the upper echelons of the department. Many teachers and principals now considered the first loyalty of these senior bureaucrats was now to the government, a political body, rather than to the schools and the community they served. This is a view that certainly accords with the evidence by Edwards (2005, p. 74) gained from Victorian schools and cited in the following chapter of this thesis.

The same person who spoke about the perceived 'increasing cynicism' by teachers and principals within the Tasmanian Department of Education also alerted me to the rumors of alleged corruption rife in Tasmanian schools during the late 1990s and early 2000s involving senior departmental bureaucrats. Whether, true or false, they signify a deeper malaise within the Tasmanian education system. There is some evidence of an increased cynicism by professionals in schools

concerning the motives of planners making curriculum decisions for schools. Perhaps, there was a whiff of corruption within the department; maybe, this became manifest, maybe, in an attitude of disrespect, particularly in regard for bureaucratically determined policy, generally, and, specifically, in regard to falling in line with departmental curriculum policy. This is also in accord with what Edwards (2005, p. 74) describes in the following chapter of this thesis, in respect to Victorian schools.

The CC and Tasmanian curricula

Changes were occurring rapidly, not only at a state level, but also at a federal level. Located in Melbourne, the CC is a company limited by guarantee and owned by the Australian Ministers for Education. It was established in 1990 by the former Australian Education Council (AEC) to support national collaborative approaches to the improvement of school education in Australia.

The board of the corporation comprises directors-general of education (or their equivalent) from Australia and New Zealand (or their nominees) and representatives of peak national organizations of the non-government school sector and parents and teachers.

The work program of the corporation is made up of the following three areas, supported by a business and administrative structure:

- curriculum development and related activities;
- publishing and marketing of high-quality teaching and learning materials;
- provision of bibliographic and curriculum information for schools (CC website).

Not surprisingly, the establishment of the CC coincided with the corporatization of most Australian government bureaucracies

during the late 1980s. This process involved the restructuring of the government sector to mirror more closely private business corporations, with a strong focus on an input/process/outcome model of production. In particular, corporatization involved the apparently contradictory directions of centralizing goal setting by a managerial elite, but the concurrent decentralization of processes to create a 'lean and mean' organization (Bessant, 1995). There is not always a clear delineation between these strategies of privatization and corporation, because often these were occurring at the same time within the government bureaucracy; but, there were clear tensions between these two 'solutions', related to differences within the coalition of competing interests.

Conclusions

If not a clear connection between the drive towards accountability, the rise of the New Right ideology and the politicalization of government bureaucracies, there is at least some concomitancy between these occurrences. Loosely associated with these developments in Tasmania, was the 'gutting' of the Department of Education and, *inter alia*, the departure of many of its curriculum people through the Cresap Report. This was to have dire, long-term effects for local curriculum development in the state.

The years during the late 1980s and early 1990s were ones of massive changes in education, not simply in Tasmania, but throughout Australia. Perhaps, no other period has witnessed the same changes. Certainly, it was anything but a period of consolidation, a settled period that may have been necessary preparatory to the curriculum changes that were to occur under the new Bacon Government in the name of ELs.

This thesis next examines how curriculum change might be analysed.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPETING THEORIES: DISSEMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION: LENSES FOR ANALYSIS

Harris and Marsh (2005) remind curriculum researchers there has been 'a good deal' of research directed at identifying and explaining patterns associated with curriculum change and the multiple layers of factors contained therein. For example, the authors show that researcher should take into account,

> the types of individuals involved in the change, the nature of the change, and the contexts in which the change occurs. Terms such as change agents, change cultures, capacities, stages of concern about change, managing change, micro and macro influences and contexts of change, or their variants can be found in many publications concerned with educational change (p. 17).

These are all terms, or categories, that may be encountered in innovation diffusion theory, a theory dating back to the 1960s, during a time of vast curriculum innovations, especially in the sciences, as nations competed for international supremacy in aerospace technology.

The introduction to this thesis alluded to the analytical value of the junctions/dysjunctions paradigm proposed by Harris and Marsh (2005) in respect to analysis of curriculum tensions. On the one hand, this paradigm involves diffusion theory, and on

the other, it involves actor-network theory.

Diffusion theory

Sarason (1971) argued nearly forty years ago understandings of educational change are flawed unless the issue of power relationships is addressed. Indeed, as will be described in the short and select history of ELs, introducing, sustaining and assessing an educational change are political processes involving keenly contested power relationships. This is particularly so, because educational change inevitably alters, or threatens to alter, existing power relationships, especially if that process implies, as it almost always does, a reallocation of resources, be they, technological, or human. Few myths have been as resistant to managing a change effort as that which assumes the culture of the school is a non-political one; and few myths have contributed as much to the failure of change efforts (p. 71). Indeed, in its short study of the select history of ELs, this thesis shall attempt to explain the issue of power relationships as a central dynamic in this particular educational change effort. There was, however, more than simply power at stake here. There was also a political dynamic, which sought the maintenance of political power at the highest level in the state.

So, diffusion theory of the implementation of curriculum innovation dates back to the early 1960s when researchers were concerned with the fate of the many science education innovations, or at least their value for money, that occurred in the United States following the massive injection of federal money into school systems in an attempt to narrow the gap in the 'space race' with the Soviets. This theory is most closely identified with E.M. Rogers. It dominated the theory of the management of curriculum innovations from the 1960s, through until the 1980s in a postmodernist world, a time when actor-network theory surfaced to answer some of the perceived

emerging shortcomings associated with diffusion theory.

Beginning with his first publication of *Diffusion of Innovations* in 1962, Rogers' work continues to be used widely as one way of thinking about the way in which innovations are introduced and adopted. He defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. Stemming from this framework for studying innovations, are the key concepts of innovation, communication channels, time and social systems.

A tight definition of innovation is of key importance to Rogers' theory. In his theory, the term 'innovation' refers to an idea, practice or object, which is perceived by an individual as being new. It must be new to the individual – called the adopter – although the innovation may not be new, *per se.* The rate at which an innovation is taken up by a group of potential adopters is influenced, first by characteristics of the innovation itself. These include: relative advantage – the degree to which it appears superior to an existing product or practice; compatibility – the degree to which it matches values and experiences of individuals in the community; complexity – the degree to which it is relatively difficult to understand or use; trialability – the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis; and observability – the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others.

Secondly, the rate of adoption may be influenced by characteristics of the adopter. These include level of education, social status and 'cosmopolitanism'. Finally, organizational issues such as organizational structure, size and degree of decentralization or centralization may also influence the rate of diffusion (Rogers, 1962).

Diffusion theory employs a number of categories for individuals. One such group is that of opinion leaders. These individuals influence adopters of innovations, either positively or negatively. Their influence varies in accordance with their level of technical competence, social accessibility, level of conformity to social norms and their degree of support for the innovation. The role of the change agent is critically important to diffusion theory. According to Rogers (1995), a change agent is 'an individual who influences clients' innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency' (p. 335). Change agents have to ensure a need for change is fostered amongst the target group. Usually, they establish an information-exchange relationship, creating intent for change in the client. This intent must then be translated into action, and the adoption stabilized to prevent discontinuance of the innovation. A 'critical mass' of adopters is essential if the innovation is to be stabilized into the system (Rogers, 1995, p. 112). When enough individuals have adopted the innovation, the rate of further adoption becomes self-sustaining.

Of critical importance to diffusion theory is a comprehensive understanding of the nature and motivation of the adopters. Thus, in researching the characteristics of adopters, Huberman and Miles (1984) wrote:

> Educational innovations are not introduced into a vacuum. School people have gradually built up a history of relationships among themselves and with the institutions they work in. Each educator builds on that history as a function of his or her own personal set of goals and career trajectory. This process makes for a complex, sometimes tangled web of relationships, initially invisible to the outsider. That web can be intensified or shifted when an innovation enters the scene. With innovation often come added funds, possibilities for promotion, opportunities to resolve nagging problems, chances for professional growth and revision in patterns of institutional influences (p. 43).

Not surprisingly, the timing of the implementation of educational innovations is considered to be of critical importance. Indeed, Hargreaves (1998) indicates research should focus on the political nature and timing of educational change. Brewer (2008) insists that of all the ingredients for successful curriculum change, the timing of the innovation is of critical importance. He contends that to attempt a major, system-wide curriculum change during a time of unresolved problems in an education system is 'sheer lunacy'.

Closely related to the issue of timing is that of context. At this point, Harris and Marsh (2005) remind readers to consider the role diffusion theory places on the context of an educational innovation. They show many diffusion theorists have argued curriculum initiatives are in fact diffused, or mediated, through various contexts:

> The contexts of teachers' work are physical and abstract in nature, and historical, socio-political, psychological and cultural in origin... Broadly, the more localized contexts of teachers' work are seen to encompass multiple sectors: educational systems (Government, Independent and Catholic), regional networks, individual schools, subject departments, individual classrooms, professional associations, unions and communities (Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). These various and interrelated contexts are imbued with different meanings by teachers working within them, and are dependent on a variety of values (p. 18).

In the vexed question of the management of curriculum innovations, the issues of timing and context converge in respect to teachers' workloads. Of course, this is not a problem confined necessarily to the teaching profession. In focusing their research, and following from the research by Helsby (1999), Williamson and Myhill (2008) report:

> This intensification which is central to the change in

> teachers' work may well reflect more general workplace trends, from which the education sector is not immune or protected. Trends such as increasing demands and constraints on workers, the pervasiveness of a business-orientated framework with a focus on – 'marketization' and 'managerialization' have all been cited as impacting on teachers (p. 25).

Many of these trends have direct linkages with the ELs curriculum. According to the Williamson and Myhill, (2008) research, teachers' increased workloads were due to: the computerization of teachers' work; the demands for increased collaborative teaching; constant demands to implement new pedagogies; inclusionist policy; accountability and control; reduced resources; involvement in decision-making; and the lack of a supportive workplace environment. With direct implications for the management of the development and implementation of ELs, Williamson and Myhill (2008) conclude their research by stating:

> At a system-level there needs to be more thought given to the number and size of the innovations that are introduced to the schools. In Tasmania, for example, in the 5 year period 1995-2000 it has been calculated that 80 major policies were announced and schools were expected to implement all of them. This amount of change would suggest it is clearly beyond the scope of any organization to achieve implementation fully and successfully. Rather than creating situations where teachers will inevitably fail to implement all policies as decreed by the policy makers it would make more sense to have fewer but more meaningful innovations (p. 42).

This, then, was the situation in the Tasmanian Department of Education on the eve of the development and implementation of ELs. It was, at least, the 81st policy change in five years.

Harris and Marsh (2005) draw attention to the research done by Dinan-Thompson (2005, p. 149) in respect to curriculum changes. For her, curriculum change 'is a process not an event'

(Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 1995; Sarason, 1990 cited in Dinan-Thompson, 2005, p. 149). Dinan-Thompson (2005, p. 149) and insists curriculum change 'is open to trial, error and challenge'. For her, curriculum change is not like a football match that begins and concludes with a whistle, or siren. In analogous terms, it has as much to do with the booing and cheering, before and after the match, and the commentary amongst the fans and in the media in the weeks following and preceding the match, as it has to do with the match, itself.

Continuing the contextualizing theme of curriculum change, Gardner and Williamson (2005) suggest state education systems are powerful contextualizing agents. Closer to home for this thesis, Gardner and Williamson researched the implementation of Tasmania's 'Key Teacher (Behaviour Management) Program concerned with reviewing and expanding programs and practices employed by schools as part of their Supportive School Environment (SSE) Programs' covering the period 1993-96 (Gardner & Williamson, 2005). This was a problematic curriculum initiative; the researchers concluded:

> This account of one policy's varied paths testifies to the many gaps that frequently emerge when rhetoric interfaces with reality. These gaps are symptomatic of conflict between political agenda and education agenda and respective timeframes. Politicians typically work with a view to re-election; educators work with a view their students' futures. Normally, several years are required to embed change (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978); institutionalization does not occur in a short time even with the best of intentions and plentiful support. Intensification of the teaching role poses ever-increasing demands on those who make and influence education policy to heighten outcomes of initiatives by, in part, devising ways to enable teachers to reduce aspects of their current workloads in some appreciable way. The expectation that teachers must deal with change, yet not dispense with older practices, cannot be sustained (p. 100).

The researchers added: 'There needs to be a critical mass of staff

to lead change' (p. 100).

Clearly, teachers in a school setting play a critical role in any curriculum change effort. As Edwards (2005) shows, this has been broadly recognized as crucial by a number of curriculum change researchers (Hargreaves, 1994; Blasé, 1998; Day, 1999, cited in Edwards, 2005, p. 63). In reviewing two examples of curriculum change in Victorian schools, Edwards (2005) showed a list of teachers' views on their employer – the Victorian Department of Education:

- I find the DofE distant and irrelevant.
- I don't have much to do with them except what comes out in print or what comes down to us through the school Admin. The DoE is my employer but really irrelevant.
- The Department is well-meaning but uniformed and ignorant... they're still dictatorial.
- I imagine every Minister for Education wants to leave his stamp. 'I'll leave my mark on the system.' But we are a lower priority in the scheme of things.
- I regard the DoE as my adversary because I believe they have two main aims for me: i) get rid of me, or ii) get me to do a lot more work.
- A new government seems obliged to change things but because it's new. So, I'm pretty cynical about it...
- Gone is the old Public Service – without fear or favour. Now it's political cronies...
- They (young teachers) are not being looked after and any collective sense of teachers working together is being destroyed.
- The people running various parts of the system used to be teachers. Now, they're public servants and I'm putting them down but in some cases, they seem to have little understanding of how schools operate (p. 74).

The following chapters shall illustrate that Edwards could well have been writing about Tasmanian teachers during the ELs

years of 2000-06. As in Victoria, during these years, the following chapters of this thesis will reveal that cynicism and distrust of the ELs planners were rife in Tasmanian state schools. Indeed, chapter eleven shall show how some Tasmanian teachers, while being sullenly silent in the company of departmental planners, were reported in *The Mercury* as being totally opposed to the ELs curriculum because of the damage they perceived it was doing to the pupils in their care.

Clearly, innovation adopters are motivated, positively, or negatively, by complex and manifold reasons. But what of the people who carry the message of the innovation to the schools: the change agents, or curriculum consultants?

More recently, the socio-political obstacles facing change agents has attracted researchers. Oakes, *et al.* (2000) looked at ten racially mixed schools in the United States where 'change agents took the call to restructure their schools as a mandate to equalize schooling' (p. 69). Their research centred on attempts to do away with tracking, or ability grouping, in ten racially mixed mid-west schools. In order to overcome these entrenched socio-political obstacles, change agents needed to be exceptional people. According to Oakes, *et al.*, (2000), they were,

> reasonably well versed in the change literature and, understandably, fairly optimistic about their reforms' prospects for success. Depending on their fluency with the literature, these educators knew that change would likely not go forward precisely as planned (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Sarason, 1990); that school reform is a process, not an event (Fullan, 1991); that change involves mutual adaptation (McLaughlin, 1976; Tyack & Cuban, 1995); that reforms will differ depending on the unique culture of each school (Sarason, 1982); that the change process is non-rational and non-linear (Louis & Miles, 1990; Wise, 1977); that successful policymakers set the conditions for effective administration but refrain from predetermining how these decisions will be made and, instead, change

> local practitioners with the development of solutions (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; Firestone & Corbett, 1989); that schools are 'bottom heavy and 'loosely coupled' (Elmore, 1983; Weick, 1976) and, of course, that we cannot mandate what matters (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988; McLaughlin, 1976) (pp. 90-1).

Moving on to the second element cited by Oakes, *et al.* (2000) as being necessary in a change analysis – that of communication channels – this process is the means by which information about an innovation is exchanged between individuals or groups of individuals. They may include the mass media, as well as face-to-face exchanges. However, the age of ELs was the age of the internet and the world-wide web. This is a potent and politically powerful information and communication technology for teachers who are seeking information on curriculum innovation. But, as the Williamson and Myhill (2008) research has shown, the computerization of teachers' work, for some teachers, actually can increase and problematize workloads. What of the factor of time in curriculum diffusion theory?

Time is seen to affect the diffusion process in three ways. First, in the decision-making process, it involves the passage of time through which the adopter passes from, first, knowledge of the innovation, to the decision to adopt, or reject. The degree of innovativeness of the individual is the second factor with early or late patterns of adoption, equating to the innovativeness of the adopter. Rogers (1995) uses five categories to describe adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The overall rate of adoption within a community is gauged within a time period. Hence, if the number of individuals adopting a new idea is plotted over time, it usually forms what Rogers (1995) terms, a basic S-shaped curve.

But labeling a professional as being a laggard, or an ethical

resister, or whatever, is, as Apple (1990, p.134) pointed out, to 'disguise relations between people as relations between things or abstractions'. Who decides, exactly, who is an ethical resister, or a laggard? To label somebody in this way is to adopt a political position, and a position of power. This is a very similar act to labeling somebody a terrorist, and somebody else labeling them as a freedom fighter. This very act of labeling, points to a weakness with Rogers' theory. It is not sensitive enough to motives and power relationships.

According to Rogers (1995), the social system refers to the bounded community in which the innovation diffuses. The social system is made up of units. These units represent potential innovation adopters. They can be individuals, groups of individuals, or organizations. For example, in studying the diffusion of the specific innovation such as the ELs curriculum, the statewide education system represents the social system; individual schools are the units within that social system, for example, including such organizations as the University of Tasmania, the AEU-Tasmanian Branch, employer bodies, parent organizations and the growing number of non-government schools.

In diffusion theory, in the case of the ELs curriculum, teachers and schools were the target group; much emphasis in the theory is placed on the need for a well-considered timetable for change. There is a general consensus that teachers and schools should not become repeated targets for change and innovation to the extent that individuals and schools are overloaded with change. The research by Williamson and Myhill (2008), cited above, shows Tasmanian state school teachers were 'bombarded' with policy change during the five years prior to the beginning of the development of ELs in 2000. Chapter twelve shall explain how researchers found many Tasmanian teachers, while

implementing the ELs initiative, were performing 'juggling acts' with their perceived precious time. This is a theme taken up by Edelman and Panton Walking-Eagle (2000) in their research into the use of time by teachers during the implementation of educational innovation:

> The implementation stage – whether it comes right away or after a decent interval for planning and practice – has its own perils. This is the time when reform enthusiasts may go too fast, try to do too much and wear themselves out. It is also the time when change and innovation go public whether or not practitioners have had the opportunity to polish their performances. It can be a dangerous time, but it does not have to be. Reform seems to have a better chance of staying on track when the pace of change and the expectations or standards that teachers set for themselves are kept reasonable (p. 108).

Indeed, many of the following chapters will reveal that the ELs planners, through ignorance or enthusiastic naïvety, in the management of the ELs rollout, turned a blind eye to this kind of advice.

Rogers (1995) uses the term 'homophily' to indicate the degree which individuals, within the social system, share the same, or similar interest. He argues the more similar the individuals, the more likely that effective communication will occur. Some 'heterophily' is necessary to ensure new ideas and practices are able to diffuse from individual to individual. The structures and norms of the social system are also recognized as important components of the social system. For example, in bureaucratic organizations, higher-ranking officers, generally, would assume their directives are followed when deploying a directive regarding the uptake of an innovation. Unsuccessful uptake of the innovation, then, would be framed in terms of attributes of the innovation, or attributes of the potential adopter, or adopters, who are organizational subordinates. Homophily is important in respect to change agents. It is argued the change agent should

reflect the individuals in the target group in such attributes as age and gender. For example, for the ELs consultants to be accepted and listened to in Tasmanian schools, they needed to reflect the age and gender makeup of the Tasmanian teachers.

Chapter one referred to the central place Clarence High School had in the ELs initiative. This was a lighthouse school, with a cluster of primary schools. Its principal and the majority of its staff were ELs enthusiasts. Thus, in essence, and in diffusion theory language, the school becomes a change agent. Finks (2000) suggests schools such as Clarence High School may not be the centres of change, but rather the object of change. But, their role in the change effort is at best, problematic:

> When educational authorities establish 'model' schools to 'scale up' larger systems, they inevitably undermine the sustainability of the school's innovative ethos. Conversely, when educational authorities take steps to protect the leadership, the teaching staff and the advantaged position and profile which sustain a model school, they invite overt and covert opposition from members of other school settings towards the model school's philosophy, policies and practices...
>
> Not only does the professional community present an obstacle to sustainability, but a model school's parents and larger community can create an even thornier problem for the school... If a 'break-the-mold' school is to succeed, its staff must share an image or vision of a 'good' school which is usually quite different from its community's conception of a 'real' school. If these two images become too divergent then a school faces... backlash...
>
> These two interrelated dilemmas suggest that to sustain innovation in a model school while using it as a catalyst for change in the larger system, the systems leaders must adopt a very deliberate low-profile, long-term 'scaling up' strategy... Leaders need to talk about pilot projects and experiments and allow natural distribution of leaders and ideas to influence the system... the things that count in education – teaching, learning and caring – require a reculturing process in schools... which takes time,

> sensitivity to people's concerns and leadership which invites change (pp. 47-9).

With the ELs initiative, communication channels were developed through the production of texts and through the appointment of educational advisors and nominated specialist contact personnel associated with the various projects and initiatives. Some of the initiatives – for example, lighthouse projects, such as Clarence High School – were developed specifically to open up avenues of communication between teachers within schools and school clusters. But this kind of communication is, as has just been argued, is highly problematic.

A select history of the ELs curriculum initiative in chapter one possibly made informative reading through the lens of diffusion theory; at first glance, it would appear to be a suitable lens to understand the history of the innovation. In diffusion theory terms, for example, the provision of professional development and the work of change agents in schools can be read as an attempt to reduce the degree of difficulty associated with adopting and using the innovation: in simple terms, to make it easier for users to take up the innovation. Using Rogers' (1995) concepts of complexity, compatibility and relative advantage, as discussed above, the professional development programs can be read also as a means of increasing the compatibility of the innovation: the degree to which it matches the values and experiences of the individual adopters. By delivering professional development in which teachers are instructed and given many examples of how ELs could be used in schools, the promoters of the innovation aimed to make the innovation more compatible with the experiences of teachers. Professional development programs also were meant to reduce the complexity of the innovation. Instructional examples of ELs

curriculum applications, assessment and reporting to parents attempted to make the innovation easier for teachers to use. Chapter one explained that early in the history of the innovation process, in statewide television broadcasts enthusiastic teachers and school principals spoke about ELs as being a panacea for regenerated classrooms and schools.

Professional development also can be seen in terms of addressing what Rogers (1995) terms, relative advantage: the degree to which the innovation appears superior to an existing product or practices. Through professional development programs, websites and media campaigns, teachers were made aware of what was argued as being the superior pedagogical merits of ELs, as well as allaying fears that the adoption of the innovations was not as difficult as anticipated. Such an approach assumes to know in advance what would teachers' major difficulties be in taking up ELs in their classrooms and in the whole school; the approach also assumed teachers would understand ELs was an improvement to existing practices.

In diffusion theory terms, teachers, as potential adopters, are influenced in several ways. One of which is the assumed shared values of teachers as being caring educators, wanting the best for their students, is evident in the following words from Elkind (1997), who addresses the values and knowledge of parents and children in the postmodern world. The fact is that families and schooling are vastly different in 2006 than that which existed some twenty of thirty years earlier, when the term 'postmodern' was a vague term, and certainly in the minds of many people, not clearly distinguishable from the term 'modern'. But it was more than simply understanding the meaning of the term. Dating from somewhere in the late 1970s, Tasmanian society had moved from the modern to the postmodern. Curriculum innovation in 2006 was set in a vastly different social

environment than it was some thirty or forty years earlier. As Elkind (1997) explains:

> Collectively, challenges to the foundation beliefs of modernity, which are in keeping with the new social and scientific realities of the last half of the 20th century, have been called *postmodernism*. Post-modernity stresses difference as much as progress, particularly as opposed to universality and *irregularity* in contrast with regularity. It is not that postmodernists deny the existence of progress, universality and regularity, but they do not contest the notion that these concepts are applicable to all of reality. It should be noted that there are as many postmodernities as there are postmodern writers. This fact is, in itself, a reflection of the postmodern emphasis upon difference, particularity and irregularity.
>
> Postmodern ideas are bringing about tectonic changes in many scientific disciplines, as well as in mathematics, industry and the arts. They are also finding their way into education, which however haltingly, is itself becoming postmodern. However, the transformation of schools, unlike other social institutions, has been, in part at least, mediated by changes in the family. Therefore, in chronicling the movement from the modern to the postmodern in education, it is necessary to distinguish between those changes attributable to post modernity in general and those that came about as a direct response to changes in the family [emphasis in original] (p. 30).

But teachers come from the same postmodern socio-cultural world, as do parents. Thus, any theoretical discussion of educational innovations needs to take this fact in account. This is simply another reason why this thesis needs to juxtapose diffusion theory with actor-network theory as explanatory tools, *vis-à-vis* the search for tensions in the ELs curriculum initiative: actor-network theory being closely seated in postmodernist paradigms.

The missing elements, from a diffusion analysis, are the underlying reasons and motivations for these actions. Diffusion

theory is unable to provide a compelling argument as to the reasons behind the actions of individuals, beyond those concerned with attributes of the innovation or of the adopters. Working on the assumption the innovation possesses enough momentum to diffuse through the social system of its own accord, the analyst becomes concerned with answering what factors it was about the innovation, or adopters, that resulted in successful diffusion. Or conversely, a key question is: what were the attributes of the innovation, or adopters, which impeded successful diffusions? Diffusion theory appears to be unable to weave political elements, or other factors to do with the underlying motivation of the various actors into an explanation of the dissemination of an innovation.

At this stage in the analysis of curriculum implementation theorists, however, the thesis should examine an alternative theory, other than diffusion theory, a theory that places a greater emphasis on the political, the problematic, the motives of the actors, and indeed, the chaotic nature of some educational innovations.

Actor-network theory

Actor-network theory takes quite a different perspective in its treatment of innovations. It is a distinctive approach to social theory and research, which originated in the field of social science studies. Although it is best known for its controversial insistence on the agency of nonhumans, actor-network theory is also associated with forceful critiques of conventional and critical sociology. Two leading French Science and Technology Studies scholars developed it: Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. Callon defines the theory as being,

> based on no stable theory of the actor; in other words, it assumes the radical indeterminacy of the actor. For example, neither the actor's size nor its psychological make-up nor the motivations behind

> its actions are predetermined. In this respect ANT is a break from the more orthodox currents of social science. This hypothesis has... opened the social sciences to non-humans (Callon, 2008).

The theory is characterized by tracing the complex interplay of influences that impact upon the innovation. Many actor-network theory scholars assume such actor-networks are potentially precarious. Relations need to be repeatedly 'performed' or the network will dissolve. They also assume networks of relations are not intrinsically coherent and may indeed contain conflicts. For example, in this respect, chapter eight shall attempt to explain the central role the computerized Student Assessment And Reporting Information System (SARIS) Project had on the ELs rollout.

Emerging from social constructionist studies of scientific knowledge production in the 1970s (Brey, 1997), the assumption emerged that the production of knowledge is not an objective exercise, but one laden with socio-cultural and political nuances. These assumptions underpin actor-network theory (Latour, 1988a). Indeed, for example, there were considerable political motive in the use of SARIS in the ELs curriculum initiative.

Connecting closely with social conflict theory of historical analysis, a core assumption of actor-network theory is that:

> Napoleons are no different in kind to small-time hustlers, and IBMs to whelk-stalls. And if they are larger, then we should be studying how this comes about – how, in other words, size, power or organizations are generated (Law, 1992, p. 2).

In other words, actor-network theory recognizes that the Minister for Education's opinions on ELs has no greater authority in an analysis of ELs than, for example, the year 12

student from Don College, or the parent of the intellectually gifted student and head prefect in a Tasmanian high school.

Other than the obvious desire for educational change, socio-cultural and political factors influence curriculum innovations (Law, 1987). In adherence to the principles of generalized symmetry and free association (Callon, 1986b) actor-network theory offers a mode of analysis that perceives of binaries, such as the social and technical, as something to be explained, rather than as an explanation, *per se*. It does not make *a priori* assignments of attributes to humans or non-humans, but rather, seeks to trace the mutual negotiation of roles. Rather than viewing innovation as a linear process, moving along a predicable and visible path (for example, philosophical, educational and pedagogical principles → to the planning of an educational innovation → to implementation → to evaluation), 'right from the start, technical, scientific, social, economic or political considerations have been inextricably bound up into an organic whole' (Callon, 1986b, p. 201).

At a base level, an actor-network theory approach to the study of an innovation involves 'following the actors', human and non-human (Latour, 1996, p. 112), tracing the moves, counter-moves and compromises that go to make up the negotiation of any innovation. Network building, or making alliances, involves a mutual negotiation of roles for actors, which is typically seen in terms of recruitment, negotiation of roles, policing of roles; then, once the alliance is firm, being able to speak on behalf of an alliance and represent the alliance in a space and a time removed from the actors.

The negotiation and stabilization of roles applies equally to human and non-human actors. Indeed, much effort is required to ensure non-humans remain true to their negotiated roles. For

example, the computer systems require constant work to ensure they remain true to their role of providing effective information technology to a system. This example has a poignant resonance, *vis-à-vis* the chaos surrounding SARIS in the later stages of the ELs rollout.

Some negotiations with actors are easily achieved, while others may require much persuasion, or even coercion, within the process of negotiating roles. In essence, network building, and then ensuring actors remain faithful to their role, is a story of the relations of power. Here, Callon (1986b) indicates the significance of network building:

> [It] is the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form. The result is a situation in which certain entities control others. Understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances (p. 224).

The stability of networks is never assured. The network builder must continually ensure the actors remain true to their negotiated roles. In some situations, it is possible to delegate roles in such a way they require minimal policing. Control at a distance, which is a common feature of many innovations, is then made manageable. This thesis shall argue when SARIS was put in place, in effect it also provided a means of control over teachers and schools at a distance. Control, however, is not – and never can be – perfect.

In chapter one this thesis detailed more about SARIS in respect to teacher stress with reporting and assessment with ELs and the general community imbroglio associated with reporting to parents on the controversial innovation. But this was not a controversy, *vis-à-vis* reporting to parents, which was peculiar to

ELs. As Earl and LeMahieu (1997) have observed:

> Around the world, assessment is becoming an extremely 'high stakes' activity for students, teachers and schools. At the same time, there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the available assessment procedures. Assessment reform, like other educational change, is caught in a maelstrom of rapid change and uncertainty. The political reality of powerful constituents clamoring for immediate assessment data has districts, states, provinces and nations furiously experimenting with myriad approaches to assessment without enough time as the assessment procedures are being implemented in what amounts to high stakes field tests. These developments have pressed and stimulated many assessment specialists to move outside of traditional assessment approaches and to imagine something different. The search is on for the *right* assessment system [emphasis in original] (p. 150).

Actor-network analysis would set out to trace the Department of Education moves in attempting to assemble a large network of actors to support the innovation. Specifically, the department negotiated roles with various texts, advisory personnel, the Tasmanian Association of State School Parents and Friends (TASSP&F) – the umbrella organization for school parents and friends groups – the AEU - Tasmanian Branch, various umbrella organizations for employer groups, principally, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI). Via these actors, the department attempted to negotiate certain roles with teachers, roles supporting the adoption of ELs in a school, and the acceptance of it by the school and its community.

An actor-network theory framing draws attention to the non-human elements in the department's network. For instance, SARIS had a critical role in the innovation. Indeed, the success of the entire innovation hinged on this software being adopted by teachers and schools, and having it work. Simply ensuring teachers behave in a particular way is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the network to be stabilized, as the

department so desired. Thus, actor-network theory is particularly interested in how actors are recruited; what negotiations take place to arrive at roles that are mutually agreed; then what mechanisms are put in place to police the various heterogeneous actors as they perform their negotiated roles.

The Tasmanian Department of Education, of course, in actor-network theory terms, is itself a network of actors. Thus, it recruits and assembles actors into a network, which in turn, can work to recruit other actors and extend the network. Importantly, in actor-network theory terms, it is important to pay attention to both human and non-human actors, which are configured into this network. A number of people (such as the ELs planners), things (the AEU Award, computers, software such as SARIS, and so on) and texts (policy documents, teaching guideline texts and others) are assembled and perform roles in teachers' and schools' adoption of ELs.

An actor-network theory perspective views the department as assembling a network to ensure teachers actively integrated ELs into their classrooms. The department, however, does more than simply ask teachers to teach in this new way. It consulted and worked with the AEU – Tasmanian Branch, and put in place a set of minimum standards. It offered incentives through promotions and bonuses for successful adopters and change agents. It published and distributed papers, deployed support people, put computer software into schools. The department assembled a network of actors, human and non-human, to persuade teachers to do a specific task: namely integrating ELs into their school's curriculum.

An actor-network framing of this innovation draws attention to the processes by which the department assembled, and then attempted to stabilize a network to deliver its educational goals

for all of its students. While being seemingly a part of a democratic process marked by consultation and negotiation, especially through the use of SARIS, as was shown in chapter one, Tasmanian teachers were pressured heavily to adopt ELs, and be successful ELs teachers.

What is less clear, however, is how such innovations such as ELs are developed and, in particular, who were the specific individuals who develop the ideas of the innovation and how it might be implemented. Particularly, there needs to be an understanding of the motivation of these key players. Exactly who judges the complexity or compatibility of an innovation? Who decides if a person is a change agent, a laggard, an opinion leader, or an ethical resister? Diffusion theory-based studies assign these roles after the event. So, for instance, if a person is a positive influence on the adoption of a particular innovation, then they are labeled a change agent. Ambitious teachers politic and jockey for positions in the change effort, while recalcitrants, malcontents, laggards, ethical resisters and the disaffected will tend to disown the innovation, and speak of it and its enthusiasts in negative terms. Also, they have a tendency to gather about them people – parents, community members and other professionals – of a similar mindset.

On the other hand, actor-network theory searches for individual motivation. The actors involved in the negotiation of an innovation are motivated by a variety of factors, ranging from self-interest, to a sense of professional fulfillment, to a genuine desire for social justice. This means judgments about what a particular actor can, or cannot do, come from tracing their engagement in the negotiations of the network, not from any *a priori* judgment they are good at, or predisposed to do something. Actor-network theory sees any innovation as fundamentally contingent, as idiosyncratic, as something that

could have been otherwise had the individuals and their individual motivation been different.

What is of interest is how the network or assemblage is made durable over time. Actor-network theory does not always seek to explain why a particular innovation succeeded, or failed. It is well suited to tracing out the complex, negotiated and contingent processes associated with the ordering that any innovation requires. In this way, it offers a means of telling a different account of an innovation than does diffusion theory. Actor-network theory stories do not portion out and distinguish the non-humans; rather, it requires, in terms of analysis, all actors be treated in the same way.

Rather than the cause-and-effect approach of diffusion theory, because actor-network theory focuses so strongly on individual motivations, it traces the maneuvers, compromises, twists and turns of a negotiation as it changes, or is translated, during the process of adoption.

There is, however, a danger in perceiving, *a priori*, the ELs curriculum innovation to be highly desirable, or, indeed, highly undesirable. To the best of the researcher's ability, while obeying the principle of agnosticism, actor-network theory can provide a means of avoiding this pro-innovation bias. Thus, instead of being blinkered in a research approach of ascertaining why things did, or did not, happen in a particular way, an actor-network theory approach is primarily concerned with tracing the complex and contingent factors involved in the overall innovation process.

Actor-network theory avoids an essentialist notion that innovations possess an essence, which is responsible for successful or unsuccessful diffusion. While diffusion theory

examines attributes of the innovation and frame the innovation's success, or failure, in terms of those attributes, actor-network theory does not make the judgment the innovation is inherently good or bad, but simply reveals the influences, especially the political influences contributing to the fate of an innovation.

Of central importance to this thesis, is the question of what happens to curriculum innovation in an educational system that has experienced rejection of an innovation. Fullan (1981) explains:

> The more that previous attempts at change have been painful and unrewarding, the more skeptical people will be about the next change that comes along. This variable operates relatively independently of the innovation, because it stems from a general belief people have acquired through experience; the belief that subsequent changes will follow the same ineffective pattern as previous ones. We might wish that this belief did not exist, but it does for many people because of their experiences over the last fifteen years. This factor helps explain why so many people initially view proposals for change in a highly skeptical light (pp. 251-2).

Given the veracity of these observations, one may conclude the populist curriculum program of Bartlett's Tasmanian Curriculum that followed ELs was probably the only sensible step forward. Certainly, observers may conclude many years will need to pass before a similar attempt at system-wide, integrated, constructivist-inspired curriculum innovation, such as was the case with ELs, can be replicated. Later chapters, however, shall show how teachers have not been too greatly worried by the ELs failure, and continue to work within its philosophy and pedagogy.

The historical theory upon which this thesis is researched and written is principally social conflict theory of historical analysis. Chapter two argued the theory recognizes the central role of

political tensions, self-interest and social conflict in educational change. So, from the perspective of this thesis, any theory of curriculum dissemination should recognize this imperative. Actor-network theory comfortably accommodates this paradigm, and in doing so recognizes the ever-present place of chaos in educational systems. In this respect, actor-network theory is sympathetic to complexity theory of educational management.

The thesis will also include one other lens, closely connected to Actor-network theory, for the purpose of analysis.

Weaver-Hightower's Ecology Metaphor

It becomes very clear any analysis of the ELs curriculum change effort needs to take into account the very complex and highly nuanced nature of the change effort. While eschewing any major drive to engage in policy analysis, and maintaining the essential research methodology of this thesis as being historical analysis, some recent research by Weaver-Hightower (2008) will prove to be beneficial in analysis, particularly because it dovetails so neatly with actor-network theory. Weaver-Hightower has developed an ecological metaphor to analyze policy. The model avoids the straightforward, rational, model policy analysis which entails the stages of problem → research →solution → implementation.

Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecological model recognizes, as indicated above, the complexities in educational policy. Following on from research by Taylor, *et al.,* (1997), he postulates that policies are inherently political. Moreover, in this critical, post-structural view, policies are:

(a) crucial in their physical and graphical form as well as in their textual content;
(b) multi-dimensional, with many stakeholders;
(c) value laden;
(d) intricately tied to other policies and institutions;

> (e) never straightforward in implementation; and
> (f) rife with intended and unintended consequences (Taylor, *et al.*, 1997, cited in Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 153).

For Weaver-Hightower (2008), the ecology metaphor is a call for educational researchers to recognize 'the many interconnections that create, sustain, hold-off, or destroy policy formation and implementation' (p. 153). Moreover, the ecology metaphor,

> helps us to conceptualize policy processes as complex, interdependent and intensely political. It models policy processes on concepts from the natural sciences, bringing new understandings and attention to often overlooked aspects of policy creation and implementation. The metaphor of an ecosystem is more appropriate than one of stages or circuits, because the interactions of environments, groups and events capture better the fluidity of policy processes (p. 154).

Most important for this thesis, the metaphor connects with social conflict paradigm, and, therefore, rests more securely with its research methodology – that of the social conflict paradigm. In the words of Weaver-Hightower (2008): 'it not only allows for but actually incorporates the messy workings of widely varying power relations, along with the forces of history, culture, economics and social change' (p. 154).

As formulated by Weaver-Hightower (2008), this ecology model of policy analysis fits closely with actor-network theory. The metaphor,

> centres on a particular policy or related group of policies, both as texts and as discourses, situated within an environment of their creation and implementation. In other words, a policy ecology consists of the policy itself along with all of the texts, histories people, places, groups, traditions, economic and political conditions, institutions, and relationships that affect it or that it affects. Every contextual factor and person contributing to or influenced by a policy in any capacity, both before

> and after its creation and implementation, is part of a complex ecology (p. 155).

The model takes into account the multi-layers of actors in the total network of activity labeled policy:

> This ecology demands analysis beyond the politicians who construct a policy or the educators who may or may not enact it in classrooms. An ecological analysis looks at media, parent groups, religious groups, printers, travel agents, spouses and all other persons or institutions that allow the process to work, no matter how insignificant their role may appear at first glance. It also necessitates understanding the broader cultures and society in which a policy resides. Limits, of course, are necessary on how deep any analysis can go, but the ecology metaphor's usefulness lies in its ability to extend analysis further (p. 155).

In chapter one readers saw just how complex and messy the ELs curriculum policy was. Following Weaver-Hightower (2008), in later chapters, the thesis shall analyze the essential features of the ELs curriculum in terms of the actors, their relationships, the environments and structures and the processes involved in its development and implementation, and finally, its rejection.

Conclusions

In some respects, it might be argued actor-network theory and diffusion theory have some strong similarities, in that they both are concerned with the adoption of innovations, they both attend to influences impinging on the adoption of an innovation, and both attend to matters of persuasion and subsequent reinforcement of the adoption. Apparent similarities, however, hide profound differences.

Diffusion theory attempts to develop a general model for the adoption of innovations, and is framed in terms of the characteristics of innovations, the adopters and the social system in which the adoption is to be adopted. And at this point this thesis argues the value of the junctions and dysjunctions

paradigm advanced by Harris and Marsh (2005).

Diffusion theory is primarily concerned with the planned and rational model of the management of curriculum innovation. Actor-network theory takes into account the irrational and unplanned attributes of the management of curriculum innovation. It is from this empirical evidence, then, that an understanding of the innovation arises – in particular, researching what factors influence the trajectory of the innovation. Regardless of whether these influences are either social, or technical in nature, they are treated in the same manner.

This thesis should now turn to a survey of the constructivist-based essential learnings curriculum from a national and international perspective in order to gain a wider understanding of what was happening with the ELs curriculum innovation in Tasmania.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS CURRICULA

This chapter will show that at the time of the writing of this thesis, the kind of curriculum that may generally be termed 'essential learnings' was well established in most Australian states and territories. Indeed, it was often referred to as being 'a movement'. This was so, despite a notable community backlash against OBE, with which the curriculum and pedagogy often were associated. Chapter three, however, has noted opposition to OBE was quite a separated issue than any opposition to any essential learnings curriculum.

Essential schools in the United States

There is a network of essential schools in the United States. Its website states this coalition of essential schools bases its pedagogy and curriculum on the following common principles:

> Decades of research and practice reflect the wisdom of thousands of educators successfully engaged in creating personalized, equitable, and academically challenging schools for all young people.
>
> Learning to use one's mind well: The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be 'comprehensive' if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.

> Less is more, depth over coverage: The school's goals should be simple: that each student masters a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by 'subjects' as conventionally defined. The aphorism 'less is more' should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content (CESNationalweb: Common Principles, 2008).

It is then, perhaps, not so surprising most Australian states and territories would, in turn, develop essential learnings curricula. It also is not surprising those states and territories that have developed essential learnings curricula are the same as those the author has shown adopted open-plan education back in the 1970s (Rodwell, 1998). Despite some very slight developments in open-plan education in New South Wales and Western Australia during the 1970s, these states remained detached from these developments, as they have done with developing essential learnings curricula.

Some international attempts at 'essential learnings' and OBE curriculum reform and curriculum control

The fate of curriculum 'reform' in Quebec offered a lesson for the Tasmanian Government on the fate of OBE-inspired and constructivist-inspired curricula. Norman Henchey (1999) described the developments:

> The curriculum reforms in Quebec share the same general orientation as reforms currently taking place in Canada, the United States and other industrialized nations. These include: greater stress on standards, accountability and student success; definition of essential learning expectations (or outcomes, results or benchmarks) to be attained at different levels of

> the system; shift of responsibilities from the bureaucracies of systems and school boards to the individual school; recognition of the importance of the role of the school staff in curriculum development; rethinking of the focus and essential content of various subject areas; emphasis on cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning; integration of information and communication technologies; introduction of new approaches to assessment and reporting; more effective involvement of parents and the community; and closer links among objectives, programs, teaching and assessment (p. 231).

What was the fate of these developments? In a headline of 'Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards', CBC News announced on 1 June 2007:

> After years of complaints from parents and teachers, Quebec has backed away from an unpopular curriculum reform and will reintroduce percentage grades for students starting in September.
>
> Quebec Education Minister Michelle Courchesne officially announced the changes on Thursday, which will include report cards with percentage grades for elementary and high school students and a class average (Quebec restores percentage grades on report cards, 2007)

In order to safeguard traditional school subject disciplines, legislation in some countries supports curriculum authorities in going the way of Quebec in relation to curriculum development. For example, in the United Kingdom the national curriculum enshrines the disciplines (British Council: School Curriculum: K-12 and Primary Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

Essential learnings as a national 'movement'

In 2005, John Graham, research officer with the AEU – Victorian Branch, perhaps with an eye to the public outrage building in Tasmania, wrote to AEU members on the topic of curriculum changes in that state, linking these to national

developments. The AEU saw essential learnings as a,

> 'movement', for that is what it appears to be, has spread around the country over the past few years. Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland have all implemented variations of essential learnings (Graham, 2005).

Graham then did a brief national comparison between the various Australian educational jurisdictions:

> One of the important differences between the various state models centres on the relationship between the essential learnings and the KLAs. In Tasmania and Queensland the essential learnings rather than the KLAs are the 'curriculum organisers'. In South Australia and Northern Territory the essential learnings underpin the KLAs, which remain the curriculum organisers.
>
> Another difference is whether the essential learnings apply to all schools. In Queensland schools opt into the New Basics. There are presently 90 New Basics schools (7%) out of a total of 1300 government schools, and no indication that this will increase in the foreseeable future. In the other states the essential learnings have system-wide application (Graham, 2005).

By 2004, essential learnings increasingly was being taken up by Australian educational authorities.

Victoria

Writing in *The Age*, Melbourne's influential daily newspaper, in August 2004, Alice Russell reported Victorian students would face a new curriculum in 2005 aiming to give them, 'better skills to survive in the real world'. Moreover:

> The first big changes in a decade are on the way for the Victorian school curriculum. From the beginning of next year, there will be a new approach to what students learn, how they are assessed, the standards they must meet and how their progress is reported (Russell, 2004).

Russell assured her Victorian readers traditional subjects such

as maths and English would not disappear from the curriculum, 'nor will they dominate'. No doubt, Russell's reassurance was designed to placate any fears the Victorian public might have had, *vis-à-vis* the loss of traditional subjects from the curriculum. The new framework, known as essential learnings, would group these subjects as core knowledge, and give equal importance to personal and social development and to skills with wide application, such as reasoning and problem solving. So, in Victoria, as in the Northern Territory and South Australia, the KLAs are the curriculm organisers.

Russell explained the move had emerged both as a reaction to the current curriculum and an anticipation of the future. Michael White, the CEO of the old Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, contended the present Victorian curriculum fell short of what is needed:

> The challenge for curriculum in the 21st century is to take young adults and engage them in real-life projects to acquire the skills to deal with an uncertain future... Over the past decade we've been hearing again and again how the world is changing... and our curriculum response is this (Russell, 2004).

Russell explained since 1995, the Curriculum Standards Framework, or CSF, had been the guiding force in Victorian schools. A modified version, the CSFII, was introduced in 2000. It incorporated eight Key Learning Areas, 747 learning outcomes and thousands of learning indicators. This had contributed not just to 'the amount of educational jargon turning up in everyday speech', but, it also contributed to 'the crowded curriculum problems that have generated much teacher complaint'. 'Too much content, too much ticking of boxes and not enough scope to concentrate on complex learning are recurring themes and not just in Victoria' (Russell, 2004).

Russell quoted Bruce Wilson, the Chief Executive Officer of

the CC, who explained there was an international movement to 'uncrowd' the curriculum, and there was a general recognition in many countries that many curricula had been too ambitious in terms of breadth, and not ambitious enough in terms of depth.

From here, she explained:

> What's happening in Victoria is the most recent manifestation of something that's been happening across the country for at least a decade,' explained Peter Ferguson [then] a lecturer in curriculum at the University of Tasmania with experience in the Victorian system. 'What's behind all of it is a refocusing of the core of what's being taught in schools (Russell, 2004).

And that refocusing was mainly concerned with placing a higher emphasis on teaching values. Thus, according to Russell:

> There is a high level of agreement about the general approach needed: that values should become explicit; that education must better equip students for a world of great change, rapid technological development and globalization; that students need to be given more chance to increase the depth of their learning, even if that means reducing the content; that more attention needs to be paid to such things as their individual learning styles and ability to access information; and that the widespread problem of year 9 and 10 'disengagement' needs to be addressed (Russell, 2004).

Russell returned to the authority of Wilson, who contended that of all these factors, the one most frequently mentioned is the need to teach students to deal with a changing world. But, although he agreed it was important, for him, the key to achieving it is focusing on depth of learning. He continued:

> I don't think the notion that the world is changing is a particularly generative concept... What you really want is for every student in our schools to have a deep understanding of some key area of human experience and that will enable them to do whatever they need to do, whether it means coping with

> change or coping with stability or taking responsibility. I think foundational skills of a high order will equip anybody for anything (Russell, 2004).

Under the proposed approach, Victorian students would be assessed in three areas: the supporting 'pillars' of the Essential Learnings framework. Work on these was still proceeding in 2004, with a draft scheduled for publication in November, but the broad outlines had been determined. The Victorian curriculum designers had taken a considerably more cautious approach than did their counterparts in Tasmania, in respect to the inclusion of traditional disciplines. The Victorians had determined:

> Knowledge, the first pillar, include five core disciplines: language, maths, science, humanities and the arts. (These will replace the current eight key learning areas of maths, science, English, languages other than English, health and physical education, technology, the arts and studies of society and environment.)
>
> The second pillar, skills, includes such things as planning, thinking, communicating, ICT... design and technology. It is in this pillar, according to Mr White, that the problems of lack of depth will be solved with the explicit acknowledgement of the importance of generic skills that apply across subject boundaries.
>
> The third pillar is also a move to the explicit inclusion of something many schools already help their students achieve: social and personal development. This includes health and physical development, cultural understanding, awareness of social responsibility and civic obligations and... values.
>
> The three pillars will be given equal weight in determining curriculum, although schools will have more flexibility than at present in implementing it, allowing them to cater for local needs. A new set of performance standards for all three areas, including where possible generic cross-curriculum skills, is being developed, with trial work towards this going

on in more than 30 schools (Russell, 2004).

Then Russell made the observation that 'assessing generic skills and explicitly including values' (although they would not be assessed) in the curriculum suggested a connection between the 'feel-good '70s themes and hard-nosed '90s ones'.

Russell contended Ferguson had argued the Victorian Essential Learnings approach was 'a bit of a reaction against the extremely rationalist outcomes-based education system represented by the national curriculum released in the early '90s, where it was believed that the only things in education that provided form focus are things that are directly assessable' (Russell, 2004). He may have been correct, but the germinal thinking underpinning the Victorian Essential Learnings and similar curricula – constructivist pedagogy – had been around at least as long as Jung, Maslow and Carl Rogers, and, indeed, William James in the 1890s.

Russell showed the new Victorian curriculum would cover prep to year 10, but years 9 and 10 would be getting the largest share of attention because of problems associated with increasing student disengagement in that state:

> One of the things teachers will value out of this is that we're giving significance to years 9 and 10 that we haven't in the past,' says Mr White. 'All teachers know that years 9 and 10 are transitional, all schools know, all parents know – everyone knows. Now we're doing something about it…
>
> My view is that the disengagement we hear about with young people at years 8, 9 and 10 is not about disengagement, it's a desire to engage with the real world. Our task then is to create opportunities for them, within the framework of schooling, to engage with the community, to do real things and to apply the knowledge that they've acquired... to the real world (Russell, 2004).

Addressing the issue of what would be the actual changes in classrooms, Russell looked to Footscray City College principal, Carolyn Woodhouse, who expected the changes to be significant, pushing teachers from a 'sit down in your desk and open your textbook to page 35, and go through the notes' approach, to one where they look at essential material, considered how 'to tackle it with the students, ask why it's relevant to the real world, explain why it's important to learn it and test that the skills used in solving one problem can be applied to others' (Russell, 2004).

Perhaps, again, with an eye on what was becoming a looming problem in Tasmania, Andrew Blair, president of the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, warned against issues with assessment. 'Statewide tests, for example, are not really going to tackle issues of competencies around thinking skills' (Russell, 2004).

Russell contended parents, too, needed to be listened to. According to White, the Victorian Essential Learnings consultation process drew strong messages from parents that they wanted school reports to give clear and simple information, and not only on the personal progression of each student, but also on how they compared with benchmarks and state/national standards, and with other students in the year level (Russell, 2004).

South Australia

In South Australia, Essential Learnings exists in the curriculum alongside the traditional subject areas of arts, design and technology, English, health and physical education, languages, mathematics, science and society and environment. The cover

page of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework website states:

> Essential Learnings form an integral part of children's and students' learning from Birth to Year 12 and beyond. They are resources, which are drawn upon throughout life and enable people to productively engage with changing times as thoughtful, active, responsive and committed local, national and global citizens (SACSA Framework, 2008).

The website further explains:

> Within the SACSA Framework, five Essential Learnings have been identified. They are: Futures, Identity, Interdependence, Thinking and Communication. Specifically these Essential Learnings foster the capabilities to:
>
> - develop the flexibility to respond to change, recognize connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures (Futures)
> - develop a positive sense of self and group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group differences (Identity)
> - work in harmony with others and for common purposes, within and across cultures (Interdependence)
> - be independent and critical thinkers, with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions (Thinking)
> - communicate powerfully (Communication) (SACSA Framework, 2008).

Each Essential Learning was elaborated upon. This description revealed South Australia was not as committed to the maintenance of traditional subjects, as was the case in Victoria.

The ACT

In the Australian Capital Territory, in January 2005, *The Education Act 2004* came into force. The Act requires the Chief Executive of the Department of Education and Training to

decide the curriculum requirements for ACT schools, preschool to year 10. The requirements consist of a curriculum framework, which includes principles on which curriculum is based and states that all government schools are required to develop, maintain and review curriculum in light of these requirements. The ACT Minister for Education established the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce to direct the review of curriculum for ACT government and non-government schools and preschools.

Since 2005, reference groups comprising teachers, academics and other experts, worked with the Curriculum Renewal Taskforce to develop a guiding document for schools: *Every Chance to Learn - Curriculum Framework for ACT Schools, Preschool to Year 10.* The draft document was released in 2006, and since that time, most ACT schools have undertaken a major review of their curriculum organization. An outcome of the review has been the development of Curriculum Organisers, which house each of the Essential Learning Achievements (ELAs).

The ACT Essential Learnings curriculum ensured:

> All students are provided with a core of discipline-based study from the eight key learning areas of arts, English, health and physical education, languages, mathematics, science, the social sciences and technology. It also ensures that learning in the key learning areas is underpinned by, and connected with, the essential interdisciplinary knowledge, understanding and skills required for students to prosper in the 21st century (ACT Government, 2007, p. 13).

Clearly, the ACT Essential Learnings curriculum guarded the value of traditional subject areas.

The Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory, its designers have labelled the essentials curriculum – EsseNTial Learnings. It takes a more radical approach than does Victoria, the ACT and South Australia. It more resembles the ELs curriculum. It developed through many real life and educational contexts, including all Learning Areas. Links between EsseNTial Learnings and the prescribed Learning Areas are identified in the NT Curriculum Framework. Here, it is stated, 'these links are not intended to be prescriptive and schools are encouraged to identify and build on links that support localised learning contexts, needs and educational programs':

> The EsseNTial Learnings are organised into the Inner Learner, Creative Learner, Collaborative Learner and Constructive Learner domains. Each domain has a set of culminating outcomes and developmental indicators to help map a learner's progress through the Key Growth Points and Bands. The domains are each guided by a key question:
>
> - Inner Learner: Who am I and where am I going?
> - Creative Learner: What is possible?
> - Collaborative Learner: How do I connect with and relate to others?
> - Constructive Learner: How can I make a useful difference?
>
> The inter-relationship between the four domains, all of which are integral to the whole learner, is illustrated in the following diagram. Outcomes are often developed in tandem and across domains, contributing to the whole learner (NT Government, 2008).

The NT *Curriculum Framework* identified learning outcomes for all NT students from Transition to year 10. The document continued:

> It provides the major elements of curriculum, around which schools can develop flexible teaching and learning programs that are inclusive of the varied pedagogical approaches of educators assess learner progress report on the outcomes achieved. The framework enables schools and teachers to select content and teaching methods consistent with local

> contexts and priorities to ensure learners achieve agreed outcomes.
>
> The framework consists of the following inter-related structural components:
>
> - EsseNTial Learnings – four domains of Inner Learner, Creative Learner, Collaborative Learner and Constructive Learner each of which has a set of culminating outcomes.
> - Learning Technology – four domains of Problem-Solving and Decision-Making through Research; Communicating through Presentation, Publication or Performance; Operating Computer Components; and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Society.
> - English as a Second Language – includes Early Childhood/Primary and Secondary pathways.
> - Learning Areas – eight nationally agreed Learning Areas of English, Health and Physical Education, Languages, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment, Technology and Design and The Arts.
> - Indigenous Languages and Culture – includes language and culture outcomes for Indigenous Language Maintenance and Language Revitalisation programs (NT Gov., *Curriculum Framework*).

Research at the Northern Territory University by Grenfell (2003) showed that the EsseNTial Learnings is much more overt than many other educational jurisdictions in its constructivist underpinnings.

Queensland

Of all the Australian educational jurisdictions adopting essential learnings, Education Queensland's approach was the most cautious and staked by strategic research. The *New Basics Project* is claimed to be,

> a bold and exciting undertaking by Education Queensland to prepare our students for the future. It deals with new student identities, new economies

> and workplaces, new technologies, diverse communities and complex cultures (Education Queensland, *New Basics Project,* 2008).

The *New Basics Project* commenced in 2003, and was founded on what it claimed was 'rigorous research'. This research embodied 38 schools and a selection of 'like' schools not engaged in the project. From this work:

> In 2007, about 50 schools are enacting Rich Tasks from the original New Basics triad. In addition, numerous schools are developing and enacting (and validating standards in) tasks based on Blueprints. Blueprints are innovative curriculum, assessment and pedagogy frames that aim to maintain the intellectual rigour and real-world connectedness of Rich Tasks while allowing teachers greater flexibility in selecting curriculum content and the medium of assessable products (Education Queensland, *New Basics Project,* 2008).

Further, Education Queensland's *New Basics* website states:

> The New Basics refers to four clusters of practices that are essential for survival in the worlds in which students will live and work.
>
> Each New Basics cluster is designed to help students answer a critical question:
>
> - Who am I and where am I going? Life pathways and social futures
> - How do I make sense of and communicate with the world? Multiliteracies and communications media
> - What are my rights and responsibilities in communities, cultures and economies? Active citizenship
> - How do I describe, analyse and shape the world around me? Environments and technologies (Education Queensland, *New Basics Project,* 2008).

So, with this 'softly-softly' approach, Education Queensland was ensuring the project did not erupt into the same social and political imbroglios, as did its counterpart in Tasmania.

Conclusions

This brief international and national survey shows that by 2006, the year that the ELs curriculum was discontinued in favour of a more conservative approach, essential learnings was far from being regarded as radical. It was, in fact, fast becoming mainstream in Australian schools. This international and national comparative study certainly suggests that when this thesis examines the reasons why ELs was brought to an end, readers should realise the answer may not lie in the nature of the ELs, but rather the management of its implementation, and the political dynamics present in Tasmania at the time. And, as with Queensland, the essential learnings rather than the KLAs were the curriculum organisers with ELs. But, in Queensland, schools were able to choose whether or not they would 'come on board' with essential learnings. In Tasmania that was not possible.

So, it could be argued Tasmania had the most radical approach to essential learnings. Certainly, it was the most radical of the essential learnings curricula put in place by the various Australian state and territory educational authorities. But, no doubt, the absence of choice by Tasmanian schools was a factor leading to the demise of ELs.

To understand a little more of the reasons behind the popular rejection of ELs in Tasmania, counter to what was occurring nationally, this thesis needs to next undertake a brief survey of its history in Tasmania.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

What exactly is meant by the word 'stakeholders'? Harris and Marsh (2005) contend:

> Curriculum reforms can be initiated and championed by various individuals and groups. The fragmentation, reversal and changes in policy and direction can largely be traced to the many groups who can have direct or indirect impacts upon curriculum reform.
>
> ... many potential stakeholders are involved in Australia in developing curriculum policy and practices. Their respective spheres of influence can vary in different contexts and their relative impact also varies over different periods of time (p. 19).

The authors then remind us there are at least twenty-three different groups of stakeholders involved in curriculum policy, ranging from Ministers of Education (state and territory; federal) through to parent groups, employer groups, to various lobby groups.

This and following chapters shall describe and analyse most of these individuals and groups in respect to ELs. But, this chapter is concerned with the political ramifications of how many of these groups, often with historically opposing political views, either individually, or collectively, conducted hostile political campaigns against ELs.

But, first this thesis needs to examine briefly the problematic nature of, and the markedly different political responses to, integrative curricula in the United States.

The problematic nature of integrative curricula

Dowden's (2007) research illustrates the problematic nature and troubled history of integrative curricula, such as ELs, in respect to its political ramifications. Put simply, an integrative curriculum challenges the political and social *status quo*:

> In the USA, the implementation of the integrative and multidisciplinary models has resulted in markedly different political responses (Beane 1997). Implementation of the integrative model has been met by political pressure from several quarters in the USA because it tends to disrupt the transmission of the knowledge and values of the dominant political group – or 'official knowledge' (Apple 1993) – to classrooms. Indeed, in several states in the USA, conservative groups have demanded a particular brand of 'good' schooling that explicitly excludes student-centred approaches (Cuban 2003). Moreover, the American literature of curriculum integration has shown a general bias against the integrated model. In addition, teachers of integrated curricula have been subjected to hostility from teachers with strong subject affiliations, parent groups and other stakeholders in subject-centred curricula such as textbook publishers or conservative church groups (p. 64).

This thesis shall show in the following chapters all of these manifestations of opposition to ELs were apparent in the Tasmanian setting, even down to the pastor from the Legana Church and his wife opposing ELs on the grounds of its offending Christian teaching, which is described in chapter thirteen.

Social control theorist may well agree with Dowden's (2007) explanation regarding resistance to integrative curriculum: it challenges existing power bases:

> While the incidence of hostility and resistance from teacher colleagues may seem surprising, it has a logical explanation. Tyack and Tobin (1994) explained that the aims of student-centred approaches such as the integrative model run counter to the well-entrenched 'grammar of schooling', a bundle of traditional norms stipulating that the school curriculum should consist of differentiated subject areas each consisting of prescribed subject matter drawn from the disciplines. Teachers know the rules attached to the 'grammar of schooling' better than most. In their review of middle schooling, Beane and Brodhagen explained that new teachers of the integrative model are faced with major adjustments, which involve 'complex issues of self-identity, collegial relationships and loyalty' (p. 65).

Of course, just how deeply imbedded the values of the discipline-based curriculum are in Tasmania is problematic, and the possible subject for further research outside of the scope of this thesis. But this was research that could have been easily commissioned by the Department of Education, if it so desired, so it would have been in a position to assess the nature and level of opposition that may have been manifest in respect to its ELs curriculum.

Dowden (2007), moreover, points to Beane's (1997) research that indicates other potential obstacles facing the management of disseminating the ELs curriculum:

> Some teachers have expressed a reluctance to commit to integrative curricula, because they believe it will be 'hard work' compared with other approaches (p. 66).

While readers shall see in chapter eleven Tasmanian teachers were given some incentives to compensate for the extra workloads imposed by ELs, they were still very dissatisfied with the expectations the department was placing upon them with the ELs curriculum.

Tasmania's troubled history of integrative curricula in secondary schools

Chapter three has demonstrated through the old COPE curriculum many Tasmanian primary school teachers were well experienced in teaching within an integrated curriculum framework. But this was not necessarily so with high school teachers, whose loyalties to traditional subjects were much more profound. As Fish (2008), long experienced in matters pertaining to curriculum in Tasmanian secondary schools, observed:

> It was hard enough to get subject teachers in high schools to even talk with teachers from other disciplines about curriculum matters, let alone to do some integrated teaching. What hope did curriculum planners have in getting them to abandon completely their subjects as the ELs people did?

But, as readers shall see in chapter eleven, there were exemplary cases of this.

So what were the chances of ELs succeeding at a secondary level? With his long experience in Tasmanian secondary curriculum, this thesis should draw on Fish's (2008) thoughts regarding this:

> I may be old-fashioned, or naïve, or both, but I could never envisage a curriculum devoid of subjects, particularly at Secondary level. I am well aware of the Bernstein/Hargraves arguments but they have little relevance for the teacher in front of a class. And what was to happen with certification processes at year 10 and above? (Fish, 2008)

Could the department's strategy of the use of lighthouse schools and the cascade model of managing curriculum innovation overcome these old loyalties to discipline-based teaching? Dowden's (2007) research suggests the Tasmanian high schools always were going to pose severe difficulties for the ELs planners:

> The real reasons for trepidation or reluctance are probably embedded in the deep structure of the education system. For most teachers integrative curriculum is a serious challenge that involves a paradigm shift – from a subject-centred perspective to a student-centred perspective – along with substantive changes to their professional identity (Bernstein 1971, Beane 1997, cited in Dowden, 2007, p. 66).

This, however, is not to suggest the Tasmanian secondary school teachers led the revolt against ELs. Apart from individual teachers who opposed ELs for a variety of reasons, from the self-proclaimed ethical resister, such as Piercy (2008) – who will appear in the following chapter – to the downright laggards, there existed a loose and informal alliance amongst a variety of groups in Tasmanian society with self-interests opposed to ELs. This manifested itself in some strange and unusual bedfellows – political symbiosis, indeed. This was an example of a political act that Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 156) places considerable importance, *vis-à-vis* his ecology metaphor.

The political symbiosis of some stakeholders

'Symbiosis' is defined as 'the habitual living together of organisms of different species'. The term is usually restricted to 'a dependent relationship that is beneficial to both participants' (*Columbia Encyclopaedia*, 2004). Similarly, political symbiosis occurs when people of dissimilar political persuasions come together for their own particular purpose.

Tasmanian political history is rife with a vast array of most fascinating examples of political symbiosis. For example, as Tasmanian award-winning author, Richard Flanagan (2007) explained in a lengthy article in the London *Daily Telegraph* about 'the madness of old-growth logging, the rape of Tasmania' and the insidious symbiosis that [allegedly] exists

between the Tasmanian Labor Government and 'rogue corporation', Gunns Ltd.

No less, intriguing were the various layers of political symbiosis that existed during the ELs year of 2000-06. One such unlikely alliance was that of *The Mercury*, which spoke for conservative Tasmanians, and who combined with the AEU – Tasmanian Branch, a traditionally Labor Party supporting organization. There is no doubting the teacher union garnered as much support for its anti-ELs cause from *The Mercury* as it possibly could. And, no doubt, in its dual drive to sell newspapers and to keep the government accountable, *The Mercury* was happy to oblige. Indeed, possibly the same could have been said about the other major Tasmanian newspapers – Launceston's *The Examiner,* and *The Advocate* from the North-West Coast. Additionally, there were the television and radio stations, of which this thesis tends to use the ABC's *Stateline* program as a source. Obviously, they all had their own agendas and political motivations, to which they are entitled.

But what of the AEU, a traditional Labor-supporting organization, coming out against the Tasmanian Labor Government? Certainly, the AEU took its time in publicly criticising the ELs rollout. Witness a 3 July 2006 *Mercury* article by Duncan that this thesis cites in chapter twelve, which suggests the Liberal Opposition almost had to coax the AEU into publicly criticising the rollout.

The private schools

Then there were the other players – the influential private schools – The Hutchins School, Launceston Church Grammar, Fahan School, St Michael's Collegiate School, Scotch Oakburn College, The Friends School and the smaller Christian schools. Chapter nine shall reveal examples of these schools, with one

eye to their clientele, and of course, another eye to what they considered favourable pedagogy for their students, these schools and colleges, either adopted, partially adopted, or looked over the ELs curriculum. Chapter nine also shall explain how Tasmania's second largest school network – the CEO, which controls all of the Catholic primary schools and the larger Catholic colleges, such as St Patrick's College in Launceston – opted to embrace the ELs curriculum. For these schools to 'come on board' with ELs, no doubt, was a political act, because in doing so they were taking sides in what was looming as a 'red hot' political activity in Tasmanian social terms; but it was an act of cooperation. Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 156) considers cooperation in respect to relationships in his ecological metaphor. These schools had there own political motivation for either supporting, or avoiding, ELs.

Employer bodies and the politics of representing parent organizations

Tasmanian media outlets traditionally have been politically close to the TCCI, because of the value placed on the members' advertising dollars from the chamber. But, of course, the chamber's principal apprehension was in terms of its members' concern about understanding the language of the ELs school reports. In chapter thirteen, readers shall encounter the views held by the TCCI concerning ELs and its motivation underpinning these views, principally the way in which the Department of Education would have its schools report on exiting year 10 students' achievements to prospective employers through its report cards.

One could be excused for thinking, ostensibly, the least politically aligned group of ELs stakeholders was the TASSP&F. But this may not be so. Many aspiring politicians have used this, or similar organizations in other states and

territories, as a springboard for higher political ambitions. For example, one-time Victorian premier, Joan Kirner, began her political career in school mothers' clubs, and at one time in the 1970s had been for five years as President of the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs (Australian Workers; Heritage Centre). Jenny Branch, President of TASSP&F, announced at a conference at the University of Tasmania on 4 June 2008 she was a candidate in a local government election later in 2008. She was also chair of the national organization of parents' associations and, consequently, was on many federal government committees. Her projected career in Tasmanian local government is significant. In Tasmania, most local government members are not aligned with any political party, but many use the position in order to advance to other political careers in other areas.

It appears, however, that Branch's organization is not held in a high regard by some Tasmanian state schools. The Kersey group of principals (2008) was quick to inform the author of this thesis that some Tasmanian government schools prefer not to be affiliated with the TASSP&F. Consequently, when Branch was claiming to represent parents of Tasmanian state school children, this statement needed considerable qualification.

In addition to concerns about understanding exactly what was being taught in the Tasmanian schools, the concern of TASSP&F about ELs was similar to that of the TCCI – understanding the ELs language in the school reports. But, readers know most parents vote, and also many are small business people and members of the TCCI; readers shall learn in chapter thirteen the Liberal opposition had picked up the concerns many parents shared with the TCCI about the ELs report cards. Of course, this was not simply a concern about the report cards from exiting year 10 students, but the report cards

that every Tasmanian pupil from a government and CEO school was bringing home. Again, the concern was about the language used in these reports; as chapter thirteen shall reveal, at Question Time in Parliament, Government politicians could be made appear very foolish, indeed, if they could not give an explanation of the language being used in these report cards.

Conclusions

Given Dowden's (2007) research on the fate of integrative curricula in the United States, one must ask if the ELs curriculum designers and planners knew in advance of its problematic nature and troubled history. With this existing research it must have been very easy for the ELs people to have predicted where some, or, indeed, most, of their opposition would have come from. Surely, to be forewarned was to be forearmed? Why was not there any research commissioned by the government in order to assess what, for many, must have been patently obvious? This situational analysis was never undertaken in Tasmania.

The ELs planners must have known more was needed than simply engaging in consultation with the various interested parties. And readers must ask: how good was the consultation process? Were the planners simply returning to Head Office at Hobart's Bathurst Street – the ELs 'bunker' – after having consulted with the various stakeholders, with a message they wanted to hear. With the very best of intentions, in the absence of any independent and substantial research, the messages received in the consultation could easily be distorted in the perception of all parties concerned in the process.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This chapter is concerned with mapping and analysing the *modus operandi* of the management of the Department of Education in its development and implementation of the ELs curriculum. *Inter alia*, this chapter also attempts to assess the view the ELs planners held in regard to what exactly was the most desirable knowledge for Tasmanian students.

The special role of *The Mercury* in the history of ELs, and an analysis of the impact of the media on educational policy

In the early paragraphs of the introduction to this thesis, readers learnt of the anonymous correspondence from a high-level ELs bureaucrat of the sense of betrayal by the press in bringing down ELs. When one reads this chapter and those that follow, one could not but be impressed, or concerned, with the blatant role the press played in the demise of ELs.

This thesis has earlier demonstrated in respect to the case of Neale's curriculum in Tasmania the powerful influence of the press, particularly *The Mercury*, had on educational policy in Tasmania. So, *The Mercury*, *vis-à-vis*, the waging of campaigns against state educational policy, has a history going back at least one hundred years. But the influence of the press – particularly *The Mercury* – on ELs was vitriolic and often disheartening for

the ELs planners; as readers shall see in later chapters, it also was devastating for the ELs supporters in schools.

Indeed, during 2005-06 there were 78 lead stories on ELs in *The Mercury*. Seldom in the history of Australian education has there been such a concerted media campaign against a curriculum, and seldom has such a campaign been so successfully managed as that by *The Mercury* against ELs.

Journalism and the media and have become an emerging focal point for educational researchers (Blackmore & Thomson, 2004; Gewirtz, Dickson & Power, 2004; Lingard & Rawolle, 2004; Rawolle, 2008). Underlying this research focus, is a belief that the practices of journalists and the media impact on the lives of students, parents, teachers, administrators, researchers and policy makers. Some researchers have argued that there is a growing influence of the media on politics, resulting in deliberate strategising of politicians in framing (Altheide, 1997) and spinning the media (Fairclough, 2000; Gewirtz, Dickson & Power 2004). Through this media-politics link, the media has been represented as increasingly shaping the educational field. One way to understand the changing influence that the media holds on education is through 'mediatization'.

'Mediatization' is a term that has been developed through communication studies, or media studies. It is a term used to describe a process in which modernity is shaped (Krotz, 2008). It is a process beginning with a change in communication media, and proceeding to the subordination of the power of prevailing influential institutions (Hjarvard, 2008). As a consequence of this process, institutions and whole societies are shaped by, and are dependent on, mass media (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999).

Mediatization, thus seems to suggest some form of symbiotic relationship between the media and public institutions, such as the Tasmanian Department of Education, and in the shaping of its policies, policies such as ELs. But there is certainly difficulty in finding any sustained way in which ELs benefited from media attention, especially that of *The Mercury*. Although, of course, we have seen how the ELs policy makers made use of media outlets, such as the ABC *Stateline* program to furnish their message to the Tasmanian community. There were few examples of proactive use of the media by the Government, such as when Wriedt attacked the perceived political bias in Donnelly's *Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula* (2005), and defended the integrity of ELs (Low Choy, 2005g, 30 Sept.). There is, however, no question that the media played a large role in shaping the fortunes of ELs.

Certainly, campaigns by the press against ELs were not a phenomenon peculiar to Tasmanian education policy. Indeed, Haas (2007) shows how,

> there is ample evidence that news media influence public perceptions. Media research provides evidence that news pieces influence which people and issues the public thinks about, as well as how they perceive them (p. 63).

Addressing the issue of 'the politics of educational change' and the media Taylor, *et al.* (1997) stress 'progressive change is always precarious because of the presence of oppositional discourses'. The authors proceed to state:

> These discourses are linked to local traditions of reform, which may be reinforced or challenged by the media – with implications for progressive change. There are regular media-generated calls, for example, for 'back to the basics' in education policy in the UK and the US, as well as in Australia. Though on occasions, of course, the media do play a more sympathetic role in their presentation of educational policy issues (p. 167).

Stanley Cohen's (2002) benchmark study of mods and rockers in the 1960s, wherein he coined the term 'moral panic', was one of the early studies of the role of the media in generating moral panic. Although, the media's assault on ELs never reached the point of a moral panic, there is ample evidence it reached the proportions of public outrage. However, nearly forty years have passed since Cohen's study was originally published. Since then, a variety of researchers from a variety of disciplines have used Cohen's paradigm to investigate, among other things, the role of pressure groups on public policy. During recent decades, Cohen's paradigm has undergone considerable modification and updating.

The highly effective media manipulation by pressure groups was one factor prompting McRobbie and Thornton (1995) to argue that the moral panic model as presented by Cohen needs updating. These pressure groups provide a constant stream of information and sound-bites, and are always ready to wheel out experts to enter into television and radio discussions. McRobbie and Thornton (1995) notes ' "moral panic" is now a term regularly used by journalists to describe a process which politicians, commercial promoters and media habitually attempt to incite' (p. 559). The authors go on to contend that 'moral panics seem to guarantee the kind of emotional involvement that keeps up the interest of, not just tabloid, but [also] broadsheet newspapers' (p. 559).

More recently, Sarah Cassidy (2008), education correspondent with *The Independent*, reporting on the latest reports of the Cambridge University-led Primary Review, describes how 'moral panic' is shaping educational policy. The review – the biggest review of primary education in 40 years – has concluded, 'primary school education has been damaged by ...

mixture of "moral panic", "policy hysteria" and "fad theory" has had a devastating effect on primary schools in England'. Clearly, there are close parallels here with ELs.

Since the 1990s educational researchers have looked at the influence of the media on the development of educational policy. Wallace's (1995) study of the contribution of the mass media to the education policy process highlights the significance of the mass media as an integral element of educational policy making. Anderson (2007, p. 103) argues 'to understand the role of the media in schooling and school reform, it is necessary to examine how the media collude in the construction of the political spectacle'. He goes on to show the media uses spectacle to generate points of view, perceptions, anxieties, aspirations, and strategies to strengthen, or undermine, support for specific educational policies, practices, and ideologies. He illustrates the role of the media on school reform policies and practices, showing the implications here for power, and how this operates in the context of the media spectacle. Especially, he highlights the implications here for school practitioners and school reform. He shows that educational policy makers must be aware of the influence of the media on what they are attempting to achieve, and be proactive in offsetting this influence. This and the following chapters will show the ELs planners always seemed to be 'on the back foot', taking a reactive stance, as the media waged campaigns against what they were attempting to achieve.

Within the Australian context, Thomas' (2006) study provides a detailed account of the relation between media representations of education policy, and the process through which policy is developed. Her study is chiefly concerned with the assessment of a major review of the Queensland school curriculum, known as the Wiltshire review. *Inter alia*, the study provides an analysis of the mass mediated context in which it took place,

and, therefore, the issues and public pressures with which it was required to deal. She well illustrates the links between public perception and policy formation, and insists, as does Anderson (2007), educationists should better understand, and perhaps, directly intervene in the media representation of education issues and policy. While, in hindsight, it is a truism now to argue the ELs planners should have been more proactive in dealing with the press, especially *The Mercury*, this underscores the point often made in this thesis that the ELs planners invariably showed their naïvety in what was the Department of Education's first attempt at system-wide curriculum change in decades.

The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) confirms the distraction the media, particularly *The Mercury,* had on the ELs team. Individual members of the team continually were having to brief the Minister for Education on issues, many of which were unfounded and unsubstantiated. For example, there was the issue of the jargon buster, which this thesis shall refer to later in this chapter. She goes on to state the government was not nearly rigorous enough in counteracting the attacks from the media, particularly *The Mercury*. Much of this adverse media comment came when there were changes in personnel at the secretariat level in the department, and was, therefore, at an unfortunate time.

Views on the Tasmanian Department of Education's preparedness for system-wide curriculum change, and the department's internal politics of curriculum change

But was the Department of Education ready for such a system-wide curriculum change effort? From a perspective of ten years retirement, Fish (2008) summarises the position of the department as it set off on a journey of system-wide curriculum development and implementation:

> While [the] Curriculum [section of the department] suffered extensively as a result of Cresap, the ELS initiative seemed to have a different genesis. It is my understanding that the major players were located in the Planning Branch under the management of David Hanlon, and had no curriculum experience or expertise.

This was a point strongly denied by the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008), but because of the imperatives of balance in this thesis, a point, nevertheless, that needed to be included. Moreover, it may well have been these professionals' expertise lay in curriculum development, as opposed to the management of curriculum dissemination – two distinctly different professional activities.

Fish (2008) went on to state:

> The Director of Curriculum, Larry Scott, and the Principal Curriculum Officers (including those with National experience – Howard Reeves (Maths), Frank Bansel (the Arts), John Annells, (general) and Brian Webberley (Technology) were all sidelined. The task of the PCOs [principal curriculum officers] was limited to maintenance of existing programs. It is interesting to note that the ELs team was located at Head Office, while the 'real' Curriculum team or what was left of it remained 'isolated' at Mt Nelson. I believe that there was considerable antipathy between the groups. It was not only the smaller numbers of people with expertise in curriculum dissemination expertise [that was a concern for an outside observer] but also the 'removal' of most of those with expertise from the 'action'.

Scott's (2008) observations supports Fish's (2008) views on the lack or administrative preparedness in the department for major system-wide curriculum change:

> My first appointment to Head Office was as Senior Superintendent (Middle Schooling) in Planning Branch. This branch had responsibility for policy implementation, planning and associated research activities. During this time, much effort was devoted to an analysis of teaching and learning practices and the possibility of developing better models of curriculum delivery. There was always some tension

> between our branch and the Curriculum Services Branch regarding role and purpose.
>
> The role conflict was one of stakeholder inclusion – should subject PEOs [principal education officer] be involved in the deliberations, and if so; at what level, and at what stage? The Director of Planning always insisted the development was simply to promote discussion and debate about what schools should be offering. There was never any intention at this stage to undergo intensive curriculum reform, and certainly the term ELs had not been coined (Scott, 2008).

Scott (2008) maintains 'the non-involvement of PEOs was a poor implementation model':

> Regardless of outcome, or motive, key stakeholders such as the PEOs of traditional subject areas felt isolated from the process and devalued as legitimate contributors to any reform initiative.

Moreover, Scott (2008) commented on the continual bureaucratic restructuring within the department – always an index to poor forward planning:

> Not long afterwards – in the first of a number of restructures that dominated this part of my career – I moved from Planning Branch to Director of Curriculum Services. I must say that this move was greeted with some cynicism by the members of this branch, many of whom suspected that I was there to push Planning Branch curriculum deliberations. This was not the case, and we enjoyed a year of cooperative working, delivering and upgrading curricula and teacher professional development activities. ELs had not yet arrived on the scene.

But Scott (2008) argued how the restructuring malaise in the department continued as the department geared up for the development of ELs:

> Around this time the Director Planning was promoted to Deputy Secretary. The appointment of her successor heralded another restructure. Planning Branch was given authority for curriculum design and development, and my branch was re-badged as the Tasmanian Educational Leaders Institute (TELI).

> TELI was to be responsible for professional development and leadership training only.
>
> The restructure did not involve a transfer of senior curriculum officers (subject PEOs) from my branch to Planning. Rather, a change of their role was decreed. No longer were they to have carriage of design and development and associated advice. Instead, they were to restrict their role to teacher professional development only.
>
> It was around this time Minister Wriedt announced Tasmania was to embark on major curriculum reform – ELs.
>
> The group to manage this process was to be housed under the Planning Branch umbrella, and no subject PEOs were to be appointed to the group. Instead, a whole new cohort of personnel was appointed. Over the next year little formal intercourse was conducted between PEOs and the newly appointed ELs team.

Views on ELs and assessment

But for Scott (2008) the substantial problems facing ELs came with assessment:

> As materials and policy gradually began to emerge, it became obvious that the ELs – rightly in my opinion – required a new assessment model. Consternation regarding the new assessment model was emerging. For instance,
>
> - there was a growing concern within the assessment and certification authority (TASSAB) as to how the ELs would replace or assimilate basic subject assessments.
> - the TCCI expressed concern as to how employers would make judgements about a student's ability in key areas such as Maths and English if a new assessment model based on the ELs was the only piece of certification an exiting student carried with them
> - the University of Tasmania expressed concern that the traditional tertiary entrance score (TES) model would no longer be viable, and some new measure would be needed. In the extreme, the new model was touted as the university conducting its own entrance examinations in Basic Subjects.

However, the problems associated with assessment and certification at the secondary level of ELs continued. Scott (2008) describes these:

> There was increasing tension emerging around the resolution of assessment of the ELs and provision of information regarding a student's ability in key subjects such as Maths, English, Science, etc.
>
> Although it was not my responsibility, I convened a meeting between the ELs team and PEOs to discuss this basic issue: that is, what is to be the relationship between the ELs and a final assessment/certification package that gives students and prospective employers some idea of achievement in traditional subject areas? It was not a fruitful meeting.

So, the malaise remained. Scott (2008) continues his assessment of this period of the development of ELs:

> Shortly after, 'the powers that be' found a solution – another restructure! This time my branch was to be subsumed within the branch responsible for the ELs. In a way it made good sense, ensuring more open participation by key stakeholders, but, also, it was too little, too late – the issues of assessment and ELs relationship to the basics was becoming too complex. The bureaucrats were so myopic in their vision they were like rabbits in a spotlight.

The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) partly concurs, and states it was a mistake to disband the independent Tasmanian Assessment Board (TASAB) when the department did, and have the authority for assessment, particularly the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE), based within the ELs component of the department. By maintaining the board, it would have prevented many of the problems that occurred with assessment at the secondary level.

The 'what' and 'why' for the curriculum change, but almost nothing on the 'how'

When an outside observer studies the professionals at work on the ELs project in the department during the years 2000-06, one

is struck with the fact there was an enormous amount of effort going into the 'what' and 'why' for the curriculum change, but almost nothing on the 'how'. Arguably, unlike the management of the large, system-wide developments of the 1970s and 1980s in Tasmania, during the ELs years, there were few professional involved in the project, such as Hughes, Campbell, Brewer or Fish, if any, with an understanding of the complexities of the management of system-wide curriculum implementation. Indeed, it may be argued ELs was sadly in need of professionals with this level of understanding of the management of system-wide curriculum development and dissemination, who had commanded such respect amongst Tasmanian teachers, and who had so successfully managed curriculum change during the 1970s and 1980s.

The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) certainly counters this argument, and contends there were many people in the system who were 'very well informed' on curriculum implementation, and the evidence for this is the vast numbers of teachers and other professionals who visited Tasmania to study and observe the implementation process. She adds that 'the feedback on our professional development programs was of the very highest order'.

This may well be so, but this point does not address the problem of the rollout becoming 'rushed towards the end', an issue she, herself, brought to the author's attention, and which was stated by other people and groups, for example the Kersey (2008) group of principals.

Moreover, in regard to the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) point about the quality of the professional development work in the ELs rollout, she does not address the issue that is raised in this thesis concerning the actual management of the rollout, and its

lack of a research base. It is one thing to have high quality professional development in a curriculum rollout, but all of that can be wasted if other issues that schools have in the forefront of their concerns are constantly negating them.

But certainly, both Brewer (2008) and Fish (2008) contend that with the many perceived unresolved issues facing teachers, coupled with the paucity of professional talent in the department for the management of the dissemination of curriculum, the timing was wrong for such a system-wide attempt at curriculum renewal. While there may have been people within the department who could clearly articulate *why* Tasmanians needed a new curriculum, and *what* it should comprise, there were few who could articulate the *how* of a large-scale and long-term management strategy for its implementation. If there were such people in the department, certainly, they did not produce any documentation that would contradict this assertion.

An ELs architect writes on Tasmanian curriculum change and ELs

Interestingly, writing for *Curriculum Perspectives* in 2004, Hanlon began an article by quoting from Hargreaves, *et al.*, (2002). Hanlon had been invited to consider 'the apparent conflict between the ideas of cultural transmission, on the one hand, and higher-order generic skills on the other'. He conceived of this conflict as being one of 'curriculum wars' and one that 'echoes curriculum conflict of the past' and recalls Bernstein's (1971) argument that reconceptualizing subject-based and subject-segregated knowledge threatens the fundamental structures of power and control in society. Hanlon (2004) went on to announce:

> In Tasmania we are engaged in system-wide transformation in the good company of colleague schools from the Catholic and independent sectors. As we work together to provide the education our

> learners need at the start of the 21st century we eschew curriculum wars, oppositional stances and either/or approaches. From a long base of values and purposes determined through broad community consultation we are focusing on higher-order thinking and understanding and building a conceptual framework for curriculum that respects and encompasses discipline/subject knowledge and the forms of inquiry at the heart of disciplines (p. 56).

Indeed, Hanlon's statement was similar to many others that appeared in Tasmania during the period of the ELs curriculum, from 2000-06, in that he had much to say about why Tasmanian's needed the curriculum, and what it should look like. Much of these other articles were authoritative sources (for example, Hughes, 2002; Skilbeck, 2005, cited in Ashman & Lê, 2006). But, despite Hanlon's recognition of the threats that could come to such a curriculum, the Tasmanian Government appeared to do little to offset these threats by removing the many obstacles that lay in its way. But, that is not to say there were not people within the department who understood the problems being faced by ELs in the management of its implementation.

The arrival of SARIS

A Department of Education website posted in 2002 announced the SARIS Project aimed to provide an IT system that would assist teachers and school leaders by:

> - supporting teaching, learning and assessment practice through the recording of student achievements;
> - providing professional learning for teachers to effectively and efficiently use ICT in the assessment recording component of the teaching and learning cycle;
> - enabling the efficient recording of assessment and/or comments, to be used for reporting;

- providing a framework for the implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework 2;
- providing a continuous student assessment record; and
- meeting 'Learning Together' and 'Tasmania Together' goals (SARIS website, 2002).

The aim was to have SARIS in place in time to support teachers in assessing and reporting against the outcomes and standards of the ELs Framework in 2005. It was the declared intent of the department that SARIS would 'be the required tool for all schools and colleges for the recording of assessments and will support reporting to parents/carers' (SARIS website).

Moreover, the department announced:

> To date, over 20 schools and colleges have been closely involved in the writing of functional specifications for SARIS and another 80 have provided significant input about the needs of schools and colleges in the recording of assessment information. A similar consultation will take place in early 2003 to enable reporting functionality requirements to be identified. Schools and colleges will be given an opportunity to express interest in being involved in this process (SARIS website).

Many observers may contend that the SARIS rollout was a political act, but still most of the ELs planners would argue it was a necessary one. Clearly, there needed to be some centralised and statewide system of assessing students' progress. For the general public and the various employer groups who would be reading these reports, given the nature of a constructivist curriculum, they were massively overlaid with OBE jargon. No matter what teachers' educational views may have been about the ELs curriculum, some teachers reported that the sheer amount of work involved in the SARIS reporting was off-putting. For example, one, now-retired North-West Coast teacher, remembered them as being 'the bane of his last few

years in the teaching service and the constant heated topic of staffroom discussion'. He knew of no teacher in his old school who was supportive of the computerized system of assessment. In fact, 'it all was a lot of work, simply to advance the careers of some ambitious bureaucrats, and some bloody ambitious politicians' (Ingham, 2008). Of course, such remarks need to be seen in contrast with those put forward in chapter eleven by the Kersey (2008) group of principals.

Yet, readers are reminded of Edwards' (2005) research cited in chapter four on teachers' responses to curriculum innovation in the Victorian Department of Education. Here, on the Tasmanian North-West Coast, there are echoes of:

> 'I regard the DoE as my adversary, because I believe they have two main aims for me: i) get rid of me or ii) get me to do a lot more work. A new government seems obliged to change things but because it's new. So I'm pretty cynical about it' (p. 74).

By 2005, clearly, severe problems were emerging in the management of the ELs rollout.

Attempts at a quantum shift in the role of the school principal

From his written work it is evident Carey McIver, Director, School Leadership Development, during most of the ELs years, appears to have had a thoughtful understanding of the problems associated with managing the ELs change effort from the point of view of schools. While not addressing key theoretical issues associated with the management of curriculum innovation that have been addressed in chapter five, his discussion paper on the role of the school principal in the change effort reflects considerable professional and academic insight. The paper is addressed to these people and their special role in the change effort. His paper had been 'collaboratively constructed with

principals and other educators across the state' (McIver, 2006, p. 1). In collaboration with others, McIver (2006) arrived at five touchstones characterizing schools in the twenty-first century:

1. Value-based, purpose-driven
2. Having Collective Responsibility for All
3. Personalising Learning
4. Being Centres of Innovation
5. Being Centres for Building Communities (p. 3).

From here, McIver (2006) contended:

> A transforming school demands a change in the earlier principal paradigm. If we are to be in a world-class education system, it is essential that we identify and support the leadership and management necessary to ensure high and improving outcomes for all leaders.
>
> These new times demand a quantum shift in the leadership necessary to design schools for the twenty-first century... the era of self-directing, autonomous schools is evolving into new times where schools work closely and collaboratively to meet the educational needs of the cluster they serve. As a result, the expectations of our principals are also being transformed (p. 4).

McIver (2006) asked for a quantum shift in the role of the school principal, from that of 'a lonely, isolated individual focussed on their school and in competition with their peers' to a collaborative leader, working with networks beyond the school. School principals for the twenty-first century need to be,

> people who understand themselves sufficiently to make right judgements. As the lead learner, the principal is a nurturer of leadership in others. This new form of leadership does not depend on past paradigms which embody a hero or traditional leader. Leadership in the future will not be provided by individuals, but by groups and networks active in their communities (p. 4).

As if appealing to principals to unload any cynicism they might have about self-seekers and careerist in the overall ELs

endeavour, McIver (2006) asked the school principals for a new relationship with the department:

> It is not helpful to perceive the school as being separate or weakly connected to the Department of Education. The notion of 'them or us' is abandoned for 'us' as connected, responsible and unified leaders around the goals of our Department... Policy initiatives reflect changed community expectations and inter-agency cooperation which challenge the school leadership and management perspective of 'my school' and principal behaviours of 'doing it my way' for the benefit of 'my school' (p. 5).

Thus, McIver (2006) went on to argue school principals were the key actors in the curriculum innovation. He appealed to their professionalism and vision. But was his message heard? According to Green (pseudonym) (2008), a senior principal, it was 'discussed at some meetings and generally bagged'. Coming on top of the SARIS issue and the changes brought about by the Atelier report on inclusionist policy, there was simply too much here for schools to take on board. The McIver (2006) paper really showed 'how out of touch some bureaucrats in the department really are' (Green, 2008).

Why was this the case? Anecdotal evidence from school principals suggests the real weakness in McIver's (2006) document was his appeal to rally 'around the goals of our department'. Many school principals perceived a political reality of many of the department's goals. For some principals, ELs was about politician's career interests, a point that we shall see in later chapters repeated by *The Mercury*. Many believed much of this massive, time-consuming change effort was motivated by personal career ambition by some planners, and the drive for political power by some politicians. Moreover, school principals understood the cynicism amongst many of their teachers, confronted as they were with the unresolved difficulties which were referred to in earlier chapters.

Moreover, petty professional jealousies, personal ambitions and the general 'bad press' ELs was generating about the Tasmanian schools and community-at-large was enough to render what was a sound and progressive message being provided by McIver (2006), into something that was almost ineffective. Clearly, what was needed was a management strategy for the curriculum innovation that took all of this into account, and one based on sound theory of management of educational innovations. The Tasmanian educational system was in dire need of a theorist of the management of educational innovation.

The cascade model of curriculum dissemination

Despite the fact that within the department nothing was written on the possible models of the management of curriculum implementation dealing with ELs, Williamson (2008) recalls discussions with departmental planners who spoke of ELs being rolled out according a cascade model of curriculum innovation. Yet, when the author spoke anecdotally with an ELs planner in July 2008, involved in the very highest levels of decision-making with the curriculum, she attests that she had never heard of the term (Ex-ELs Planning Officer, 2008). And certainly, there is no written evidence of the cascade model of curriculum dissemination being used. Yet, there is clear evidence – for example, from the central role of lighthouse schools – that the innovation was being managed according to cascade theory. And, given that this was so, how effective is the cascade model in practical use?

Hayes (2000) shows the problematic nature of the cascade model:

> In their common concern with 'improved' curricula and 'more effective' teaching-learning methods, education ministries often use the 'cascade' model to attempt to effect large-scale change at the classroom

> level. Experience of cascades in in-service development has tended to show, however, that the cascade is more often reduced to a trickle by the time it reaches the classroom teacher, on whom the success of curriculum change depends (p. 135).

There are, however, ample examples of the cascade model of curriculum dissemination working very well. For example, Morrison, Gott and Ashman (1989) show how the model was very effective in the management of a system-wide secondary science curriculum in the United Kingdom. *Inter alia*, they show that 'the critical elements of the success of the innovation appeared to be':

- the leader of the innovation had status and legitimacy in the [school] department;
- the leadership style was appropriate for each stage of the development;
- the content, form and organisation of the innovation was accepted by participants as desirable responses to felt need and external pressure;
- the innovation was comprehensible and clearly defined, with its relationship to existing practices clearly drawn;
- the rate, scale and complexity of the innovation were articulated...
- the resistance, concerns and staff-related factors which facilitated change were clearly identified at each stage of the development of the innovation...
- the climate and managerial structure in [school] department were appropriate – both in meeting day-to-day running of the [school] department and in generating openness to change;
- the innovation could be trialled and controlled (eg its timing, size and impact on the staff);
- the support structures and resource support for the innovation was appropriate and adequate (pp. 163-164).

In chapter four it was shown the Cresap Report left the department with few personnel who had the talent and experience to conduct such research. Certainly, while many of these people may have retired before the advent of ELs, their

equivalent experience and expertise was sadly lacking from the department. Clearly, there had been a drastic gap in curriculum development and dissemination in the department, following the Cresap cuts. Moreover, each one of the points highlighted above by Morrison, Gott and Ashman (1989) may well have been researched in a very profitable manner, utilising all kinds of methodologies. Why, then, were not researchers from the University of Tasmania, some other Australian university, or organizations such as the Atelier group, commissioned to research the weak points of the ELs dissemination process, and possible 'difficult spots' in the Tasmanian education system?

The cascade method of curriculum dissemination works on the principle that a small team of trainers will train a larger group, who will, in turn, pass on their knowledge and skills to a further group. In theory, there is no limit to the number of links in the chain, before the final target population is reached; in practice, however, the number of intermediary stages is usually limited to three or four (Kam Foong, 2003, pp. 1-2).

Although being the most commonly used model of curriculum dissemination, it soon becomes very clear that, internationally, the cascade model has many shortcomings. Witness, for example, an English language project in Malaysia. The story of the failings of the model is graphically told using the metaphor of sandcastles and a rising tide. It is,

> a story of the sea and of beautiful sandcastles on the shore...
>
> The persistent use of the cascade system of implementation ensured that teachers remained the disciples of received wisdom. The consequence is a gap between philosophy and action, because the people who matter most in the implementation process, the teachers, have been left on the periphery of the change process. The teachers are told that they are agents of change and are empowered to use their

> professional knowledge and expertise to direct change, but in practice, they have to adhere to implicit and explicit norms and support bureaucratically imposed conditions.
>
> Every innovation brings along specific behaviour change requirements. Teachers and trainers claim to 'fall in' and administrators are quite happy to hear that they are doing so. But in reality, are they just building sandcastle while the tide is out? (Kam Foong, 2003, pp. 1-2)

The case of an alleged dysfunctional ELs change agent

The Kersey group of principals (2008) spoke in high praise of the work of ELs planners such as Andersen and Hanlon, and the relationship, which they nurtured with schools in the overall change effort. However, the group brought the author's attention to the case of the ELs bureaucrat, a person that ostensibly must be thought of as having some power in the ELs change effort. The Kersey group of principals (2008) described her as an ELs bureaucrat who spoke to teachers and principals threateningly, while 'waving her finger at her audience'.

Surely, this is dysfunctional power, power that is counter-productive. The Kersey group of principals (2008) were all committed to ELs. But, they pointed out sometimes they had to undertake much 'fence mending' with the respective staffs, following meetings with this particular ELs change agent.

The Kersey group of principals pointed out there were too many Tasmanian teachers passionately committed to ELs and its accompanying constructivist pedagogy for them to have second thoughts about the inherent value of its pedagogy when faced with what may have been an isolated case of a dysfunctional ELs change agent.

Dealing with an ethical resister

There was a looming late majority, the middle-of-the-road teachers, like the vast majority of swinging voters, who were hesitating and waiting to gauge the real merits of ELs and its accompanying constructivist pedagogy for their students, and probably how much extra work that it would mean for them. Then, there were the self-declared ethical resisters, such as Garry Piercy, who had forty years' experience under his belt. Piercy had quipped 'there was more rubbish and claptrap in ELs than at the Ulverstone tip'. Describing the ELs planners as 'educational hooligans' and 'curriculum vandals', he steadfastly refused to accommodate the ELs pedagogy in his teaching, because he believed it had a detrimental affect on children's education (Piercy, 2008). How did the parents of Sprent Primary School children and the department handle Piercy's intractable attitude?

Piercy's exiting grade 6 students, with their undoubted traditional academic achievements in what is commonly called the basics, or the three Rs, were highly regarded at Ulverstone High School (Snare, 2008). In the ELs rollout, teachers, such as Piercy, were contra-opinion leaders, with high legitimacy and authority in the community in a pedagogy that was in sharp opposition to that contained in ELs. Indeed, Piercy was the subject of a forced transfer out of Sprent Primary School to Devonport Primary school at the end of term 1, 2008. And such was the regard in which he was held in the broader Ulverstone community, the North-West Coast daily newspaper, *The Advocate*, ran a full front-page story and a double-page story on pages 4-5 on the ensuing raucous that reverberated across the North-West Coast on the last day of term 1, 2008 (*The Advocate*, 2008, 31, May).

On the front page and in the two-page spread in *The Advocate* devoted entirely to the controversy, Piercy's high regard in the

Sprent-Ulverstone community was highlighted in graphic terms. At 'an emotion-charged' gathering at Sprent Primary School on the last day of term 1, 2008, it was reported:

> You mention the name Garry Piercy at the Ulverstone High School and they will say "we know which ones are his students". They are the ones who are leaps and bounds ahead of other kids (Tapp, 2008a).

An Ulverstone High School teacher endorsed this point of view, adding that all of the Ulverstone High School grade 7 teachers 'scrambled after the kids that Piercy had had the year before' (Snare, 2008). On 30 May 2008, at the Sprent Primary School, an assembly of some one hundred or more angry parents of Piercy's students, and his ex-students, shouted their support for him, and claimed the department should be transferring the principal, and not Piercy, because it was the latter who had maintained educational standards in the school over a period spanning many years. Moreover, parents claimed 'the school was "advantaged and blessed" to have a teacher of Mr Piercy's calibre' (Tapp, 2008a).

The public outrage caused by Piercy's attempted forced transfer swept through the North-West Coast like a summer firestorm. The furore reverberated through the media; the TASSP&F sought 'an immediate review of school teacher transfers'. Further, 'Premier and Education Minister, David Bartlett... promised to monitor talks next week between his department and Sprent Primary School parents over the forced transfer' (Pippos, 2008).

Premier Bartlett, had not been in his new role for a full week, when he was faced with this heated imbroglio and intensifying public indignation. As the new Premier – who had maintained his Education portfolio – in his first day of office, Bartlett had

promised a 'clever and kind' future for Tasmania (ABC *Lateline*, 2008). But only days later, addressing the Piercy affair, *The Advocate's* (2008, 31 May) front-page story read: 'What's smart about this Minister?' With the recent sacking of Steve Kons, a Braddon (North-West Coast) MHA Labor was 'on the nose' in Braddon; Tasmanians waited for the political fallout on the 'Piercy affair'.[4] Although the following week was the first week of the June school holidays, the Sprent Primary School parents vowed they were not going back down from what they regarded as shoddy treatment by the Department of Education.

Within days, the Tasmanian Liberal Opposition had joined in the public debate. Its website read: 'The State Opposition has expressed concern over reports today that popular Sprent Primary teacher, Garry Piercy, is being unnecessarily transferred to another school midyear against the wishes of students, school parents and Mr Piercy' (Tasmanian Liberals, 2008). The government responded quickly. On 4 June, *The Advocate's* headlines read: 'Mr Piercy staying put'.

Vexed issues of categories of adopters and timing

Chapter five showed diffusion theory employs a number of 'categories' for individuals – a classification that readers have seen in chapter five as being politically loaded. One such group is that of opinion leaders. These individuals influence adopters of innovations, either positively or negatively. In Piercy's case, because of his demonstrated enormous status in the community, what he said to parents, and, of course, what he said to like-minded teachers about education, generally, and ELs in particular, was listened to. His was a negative influence, and one that should have been countered in some way by the ELs

[4] In the same issue as the Piercy story, *The Advocate* carried a double-page story on the 'Kons Affair'. Only weeks before, Steve Kons, Deputy Premier and a member for Braddon, was sacked from Cabinet for misleading Parliament.

planners on the North-West Coast if ELs was to flourish at Ulverstone High School and its feeder primary schools. After all, it was not as if Piercy was opposed to curriculum innovation, *per se*, because the author recalls in the 1970s Brewer had used videotapes of Piercy's classroom extensively as examples of exemplary teaching practice in the social sciences change effort.

Chapter five showed the timing of any curriculum innovation is vital for its success. The attempted dissemination of the ELs curriculum came at a most unfortunate and problematic time for any attempted curriculum change in the Tasmania education system. There is no evidence of any situational analysis being done, but had there been one done, surely there would have been many signs for the managers of the change effort to proceed with caution. The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) concurs that this aspect of the ELs rollout was not managed well, and more could have been done to ascertain the possible difficulties the ELs planners might have encountered in the secondary schools. But she recalls ELs consultants during the middle stages of the rollout raising issues of difficulties surrounding such aspects as assessment in secondary schools with senior planners, but these concerns were never adequately dealt with. She also insists that Professor Phillip Hughes, the external evaluator of ELs, also raised issues concerning secondary schools; but, again, she recalls they were not adequately addressed.

Analysis

Using the diffusion theory paradigm – the first prong of their proposed paradigm for analysing curriculum tensions – Harris and Marsh (2005) write:

> Of interest to innovation diffusion researchers are the particular characteristics of an innovation, the characteristics of the range of adopters (innovators; early adopters; early majority; late majority; laggards and ethical resisters), the type of decision

> making about the innovation (optional, collective or authority-based), the stages an innovation passes through (knowledge; persuasion; decision; communication; action), the type of communication channels (mass media, interpersonal), the roles of particular individuals in the adoption process (opinion leaders, change agents, change aides, change resisters) and the degree of fit between individuals in the social system (p. 19).

During the years 2000-04 Wriedt and her ELs planners must surely have been well satisfied with the way in which the curriculum was being rolled out in Tasmanian schools. In analysing the curriculum tensions in the ELs rollout, using junctions and dysjunctions paradigm postulated by Harris and Marsh, in respect to diffusion theory, everything seemed to be going as planned. According to Wriedt's and Hanlon's account given to Watt, and the list of ELs achievements listed in Appendix One, the years 2000-04 had been marked by strong consultation with all stakeholders, including parents groups, employer groups, the University of Tasmania, principals, teachers and school communities. Surely, ostensibly, this was consensus at its best.

Moreover, there were ample professionals, such as Andersen within the department who certainly had a solid understanding of constructivist pedagogy underpinning ELs. People such as Andersen certainly rendered sterling service in the development of pedagogical aspects of ELs, and from evidence advanced by the Kersey (2008) group of principals, they were very well received in schools.

In the schools, particularly in the primary schools, there appeared to be teachers aplenty who put up their arm and readily admit to being an early adopter, or early majority enthusiast, to the ELs pedagogy. Even the high schools that were coming on board – for example, Cosgrove and Clarence high schools –

must have been reassuring for Wriedt and her senior planners. In the private school sector, the CEO schools and colleges, such as St Patrick's College in Launceston, were beginning to show their enthusiasm for the curriculum innovation.

This leads to an actor-network analysis, the other leg of the Harris and Marsh (2005) paradigm of junctions and dysjunctions of examining curriculum tensions. Chapter five illustrated actor-networks are potentially precarious, in that relations need to be repeatedly 'performed' or the network will dissolve. This point stresses the need for an innovation continually and progressively to grow and develop. Problems need to be quickly addresses and seen to be remedied. Moreover, the theory also assumes networks of relations are not intrinsically coherent and may, indeed, contain conflicts. Here, an argument will be advanced that a major, and apparently festering problem with the ELs innovation, was the factor of assessment and report writing. At the heart of this growing imbroglio in Tasmanian education, was the issue of the SARIS rollout.

In actor-network terms, this chapter has demonstrated that SARIS and the Atelier report were perceived by some Tasmanian teachers and principals to be very much political instruments. These developments marked a breaking down of the, hitherto, smooth rollout of ELs. From 2004 on, the actors in the ELs network increasingly were in disharmony. Moreover, hovering above these destabilising influences was a government, for all apparent purposes, that was having difficulties of its own.

Of course, actor-network theory states the participants – human and non-human – are all actors in the intensely charged and intensely nuanced process known as the ELs curriculum. From the Commonwealth Government, through to the Tasmanian Minister for Education, through to the developers and managers

of the innovation, through to their computer programs, to the change agents, then the principals and teachers in the schools are all actors in this network called ELs. This chapter was concerned with the Commonwealth Government, the Tasmanian Minister for Education and those professionals outside of the schools, who have been loosely labelled the ELs planners. Non-human actors, principally, the texts, were used to develop and convey messages to the schools and society-at-large, and the computer software.

Many school principals and teachers consider 2004 was the year things started to go wrong for ELs. Chapter five explained how actor-network theory searches for individual motivation. The theory presupposes the actors involved in the negotiation of an innovation are motivated by a variety of factors, ranging from self-interest, to a sense of professional fulfillment, to a genuine desire for social justice. But sometime during 2004, Tasmania's socio-political climate changed, a process more describable than definable. But, nevertheless, readers have seen that many senior school administrators considered that the immense goodwill associated with ELs in schools began drastically to fall off towards the end of 2004. And the evidence is that SARIS, and the Atelier changes to inclusionist policy, had contributed much to the changing climate for educational change.

In chapter five it was shown actor-network theory posits the view that judgments about what a particular actor can, or cannot, do comes from the process of tracing their engagement in the negotiations of the network, not from any *a priori* judgment that they are good at, or predisposed to do something. And the theory sees any innovation as fundamentally contingent, as idiosyncratic, as something that could have been otherwise, had the individuals and their individual motivation been different. This presupposes the actors in the network are committed to,

and motivated towards, the innovation and uphold its worth, above possible alternatives. But, for Tasmanian teachers and parents, there were alternatives to ELs, and this came in the form of dedicated teachers, committed to past practices and pedagogies, as readers have seen in the passion surrounding the attempted forced removal of Piercy from Sprent Primary School.

Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor assists in the analysis for this chapter. Linked closely to actor-network theory, the ecology metaphor makes much of actors in the ecosystem. Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 156) insists 'some actors are more powerful than others within a system, and determining who these powerful actors are, is a core task in a policy ecology analysis'. But, of course, readers will recognize that 'powerful' is a problematic and relative term. Ms X may be perceived to be powerful by one individual, but for another, she may simply be perceived as being a nuisance and an unnecessary interruption in the day-to-day work in a classroom. Committed teachers, such as Piercy, was held in enormously esteem amongst parents in the Sprent-Ulverstone district, but Piercy considered the ELs change agents as nothing more than 'damned nuisances' (Piercy, 2008).

To interpret this in the light of the ecology metaphor, *vis-à-vis* the actors in the ecological-cum-educational system, it can be observed simply that the perceived influence of the actors in the minds of the individual members of their audiences – the people in the schools – was extremely relative to one's level of commitment to ELs.

This thesis will now examine the way in which ELs was rolled out and received in Tasmania's non-government schools.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PRIVATE EDUCATION SECTOR

If non-government schools chose to participate in the ELs curriculum framework, they had much more at stake than did their government counterparts. When the new Minister for Education abandoned ELs, following the disastrous 2006 (ELs election), a principal of a government school needed simply to inform the parents of the children at their school the Department of Education had instructed them to change their curriculum. However, this privilege did not exist with a principal of a CEO, or independent, school. They would have much more explaining to do to their clientele, if they were to choose to abandon the ELs curriculum. Here, usually, there was a process of negotiation between the school and its parent group before the school made a curriculum change.

The Independent Schools' Association approves of ELs

Certainly, in 2004, at least, the Independent Schools' Association approved of the ELs initiative. For example, in the ABC *Stateline* program broadcast in early 2004, Ward announced:

> The Independent Schools Association says the underlying principles are sound and that a number of their members have chosen to implement some of the ELs. Some schools have already taken to the new system, others will next year report on the ELs for the first time (Ward, 2004).

This association embraced all non-CEO and non-government schools – The Hutchins School in Hobart and The Launceston Church Grammar School, for example.

The CEO and St Patrick's College

The ELs initiative occurred in Tasmania during a time of sustained growth in enrolments in CEO schools that commenced at the beginning of 2003 and continued into 2005. In 2005, the CEO reported:

> Total enrolments in 2005 approached the peak levels last achieved in the early 1990s. The Prep to 12 enrolments totaled 13,304 students with a further 899 students enrolled in Kindergarten classes. Overall, an additional 262 children were enrolled in Catholic schools across Tasmania in 2005. Growth in the primary sector increased by 3.71%, while secondary enrolments were stable. The rate of growth in a number of Catholic schools now means that the system has reached enrolment capacity in a number of areas across the state (CEO, Annual Report, 2005, p. 4).

While enjoying such growth – annually, the equivalent of a medium-sized school – and given the unfavourable publicity for ELs, the CEO was at pains not to offend any of their clientele by being uncritically supportive of ELs.

Consequently, it was guarded in its approach to ELs, particularly in respect to reporting to parents. In 2005, the CEO reported:

> The Catholic education system across Tasmania has continued to implement the Tasmanian ELs Curriculum Framework. In 2005 there was considerable media scrutiny surrounding the implementation of ELs in Tasmanian schools. In particular, there was debate regarding the reporting of the ELs to parents. In this regard, Catholic schools in Tasmania have adopted a balanced approach to their reporting of Essential Learning outcomes. Most schools have modified their reporting systems to continue providing parents with a range of information regarding traditional subject areas, as well as details on achievement standards

> with respect to the ELs. Overall, Tasmanian Catholic schools, supported by the CEO, are committed to the implementation of the ELs curriculum (CEO, Annual Report, 2005, p. 4).

The CEO went on to claim:

> Research indicates that the emphasis on developing thinking skills in the context of integrated, relevant fields of inquiry is enhancing student performance across a range of key learning areas (CEO, Annual Report, 2005, p. 4).

The organization did not cite any evidence for its statement in regard to the research referred to.

St Patrick's College, Launceston is one of the largest schools in the CEO system. Penny Ludicke (2005) reported in the college newsletter in May 2005 the college first introduced aspects of the ELs in the year 7 curriculum in 2003, when the interdisciplinary subject, Humanities, was created from English and SOSE. Humanities retained the core disciplines' focus on language, literacy, history and environment, but added underlying conceptual links and an inquiry focus.

Ludicke (2005) stressed how ELs at St Patrick's had not abandoned traditional subject disciplines:

> The objectives of Essentials Learnings in Tasmania are simple. While in many schools (and this includes St Patrick's College) subjects or disciplines are not dispensed with, interdisciplinary links are increased so that students can make connections in their learning. Tasks, units and learning sequences are enriched to enhance their connections to the real world and how subjects or learning areas are taught becomes important as what is being taught (pedagogy). Connectedness, community, values and depth of understanding all assume a major focus in an Essentials-based curriculum.

According to Ludicke (2005), since 2003, at St Patrick's the ELs team had included teachers from humanities, science, art and

health and physical education, mainly working in the year 7 curriculum area. Ludicke (2008) reported the college began to adopt ELs in a very purposeful, yet conservative, manner. The bulk of the support came from the lower-secondary, humanities teachers. While the senior-secondary mathematics/science teachers were, generally, those who held most reservations about its introduction in the college. But during the following two years, given the restraints imposed by the nature of the existing school buildings and timetabling, the support for ELs grew at the college. Ludicke (2008) referred to the rollout of ELs at the college as being conservative, but yet, challenging, for many teachers.

She stressed very strongly the collegiality of the decision making in the St Patrick's ELs initiative:

> While not every teacher in these disciplines, or subjects, is working with Essentials or could be considered to be on the team, there is a central core or cluster of teachers who work together passionately and productively to implement key elements of the Essentials. The flexibility of the team structure gives teachers the opportunity to contribute in different ways and to participate within the team at varying levels of intensity depending on their available time and expertise (Ludicke, 2005).

Like any sound curriculum rollout, St Patrick's ELs initiative had forward planning stretching over several years:

> Our focus in 2005 is to continue to strengthen the Year 7 team and interdisciplinary teaching, while retaining core discipline and subject areas. In Year 8 we aim to begin interdisciplinary planning between three subject areas. By the end of 2005 the team will have a map in place of several learning areas across Year 7 and Year 8 in order to facilitate productive team projects and planning in 2006 (Ludicke, 2005).

Ludicke (2005) explained to the St Patrick's College parents 'Essentials' was underpinned by 'a wealth of theory'; for this reason the college 'has made the practical application of

Essentials a priority' (Ludicke, 2005). This means,

> flexibility in how we implement ELs; how we establish our teams; working in partnership with key learning areas; and finally, clear communication with parents are of prime importance to us (Ludicke, 2005).

She asked the St Patrick's parents during the forthcoming school year to 'look out for our participation, promotion or partnership in several projects that support or link up with the Essentials philosophy' Ludicke (2005). This would include,

> a whole school activities day for Year 7 and the development of one in Year 8 for 2006, the recent Year 7 Information night, a Year 7 Exhibition, the Year and Transition Booklet, participation in the Boys' Lighthouse Project and our display in the Years 8, 9 and 10 Student Information Night later in the year (Ludicke, 2005).

How did all of this finish after ELs was 'ditched' by the government? Ludicke (2008) reported although the term, 'Essentials' continued into 2006-07, much of the pedagogy has remained in the college under a curriculum area called, trans-disciplinary humanities. She affirmed there is still strong support for an integrated curriculum and an underpinning constructivist pedagogy at St Patrick's College, especially amongst the lower secondary teachers. Indeed, this area of the college's curriculum is planned to develop further in 2009-10 into year 9.

A non-CEO private school

But, with the public concern building with ELs, beginning about 2004, not all Tasmanian non-government, non-CEO private schools took the necessarily complicated steps of negotiating with their parent body in order to adopt the ELs curriculum. 'It was simply not worth the effort', one principal of such a school confided. He said that, after much deliberation with his school council and staff, the school chose, instead, another integrated curriculum – this one from the United States – that delivered

much the same objectives and involved much the same pedagogy 'I, personally, would have preferred ELs, but with the negative publicity that it was receiving, it was going to be far too difficult a choice' (Yong, 2008).

Analysis

Chapter five showed that Rogers (1995), writing on diffusion theory, that the social system into which an innovation is being implemented is termed a 'bounded' community. According to this analysis, the social system is made up of 'units'; in this study, one unit being the non-government schools. But there is a blurred boundary separating the non-government schools from the government schools. While they share many characteristics, they have different histories, cultures, clientele and community expectations. Consequently, implementing ELs into a school in the non-government sector required different management strategies than did those in a government school. Particularly, these decisions needed to be based on different values. But parents, teachers and students from both sectors read, listened to, or viewed the same media. They were subject to the same negative news on ELs. In short, educational managers in the private sector had a choice about implementing ELs, while those in the government sector had no choice.

On the one hand, while the actors in the non-government schools had greater choice in their adoption, or non-adoption, of ELs in their schools, on the other hand, the key administrators in these schools had to exercise much greater discretion in their decisions about curriculum matters. Chapter five showed at a base level, an actor-network theory approach to the study of an innovation involves 'following the actors', human and non-human, and tracing the moves, counter-moves and compromises that go to make up the negotiation of any innovation. This chapter showed that the actors in non-government schools

needed to exercise much greater discretion in the choice of adopting ELs. One school did not adopt ELs, simply because of the negative publicity it was receiving; while another school adopted it with considered caution. The actors played out roles according to different scripts, much of which was determined by the expectations of the clientele, which were largely determined by their different histories and cultures.

Weaver-Hightower's (2008, pp. 155-156) ecological model recognizes the complexities in educational policy. Chapter five showed the various attributes of policy, all of which have special poignancy and resonance for policy makers in non-government schools: policy can be multi-dimensional, with many stakeholders; value laden; intricately tied to other policies and institutions; never straightforward in implementation; and rife with intended and unintended consequences. So, the policy makers in non-government schools had considerable independence from government decisions regarding ELs. Certainly, they were key stakeholders in the development of ELs, and they were provided with an opportunity to express an opinion about ELs during the formative years of its development, non-government schools needed to exercise a greater regard for other elements in the ecology than did their government counterparts. Because of the nature of their relationship with their clientele, they needed to be much more responsive to the negative news being produced by the Tasmanian media about ELs, at the risk of their schools suffering in their delicate position in the ecology.

In an apparently much more comfortable position in the ecology were the academics and researchers. Now this thesis should turn to their role in the development and rollout of ELs.

CHAPTER TEN

ACADEMICS AND RESEARCHERS

When one researches the ELs change effort from the perspective of academics and researchers, one is struck with the fact that most of the commentators were content to endorse the innovation from the standpoints of what it was and what it sought to achieve, but few academics were prepared to comment critically on what was quickly becoming very clear concerning the lack of sound management of its implementation. The reason behind this may possibly be traced back to the origins of the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania noted in the introduction to this thesis, in that the faculty had much closer links with the Department of Education, and did not want to offend its partner in the Tasmanian education system.

Research in the Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania

The clear exceptions were Professor John Williamson, Dr Marion Myhill and Dr Christine Gardner from the faculty. The AEU-commissioned research by Gardner and Williamson (2004) that will be cited in more detail in chapter twelve was the single most powerfully informed research that challenged the strategies being employed in the ELs rollout, informing Tasmanians that teachers were not happy with the timing of the change effort.

Williamson, however, recalls offering informal advice to Hanlon regarding the strategies the department was employing in its implementation policy for ELs. Specifically, Williamson had urged Hanlon not to attempt too much at one time in implementation, especially in respect to having all of the state's high schools implement ELs according to a single timetable (Williamson, 2008). This view is similar to that expressed by Scott (2008). However, during the first four years of ELs, the government could only have been pleased with the manner in which its rollout was proceeding.

Nationally prominent academics

Australian and overseas academics had observed the ELs initiative and congratulated the curriculum designers on their erudition and perspicacity. For example, one internationally prominent academic observed ELs as being,

> an attempt to aim for the very highest standards of performance in learning while ensuring the needs of every student are met in a fair and inclusive way. It provides the foundations for a broad, inclusive education from birth to 16 (Skilbeck, 2004, cited in Ashman & Lê, 2006).

Earlier, Hughes (2002) had stated:

> The search for a less crowded curriculum should make us look more critically at what we include: information, concepts, understandings, skills, values. We do not want a content-dominated curriculum. We cannot afford a content-free curriculum... Modern theories of learning don't eliminate or even reduce the importance of knowledge, but instead emphasize the way we use knowledge (p. 45).

While recognising the contentious debates surrounding ELs, Ashman and Lê from the Faculty of Education at University of Tasmania maintain:

> The Essential Learnings have provided the Tasmanian State School system, as well as the Catholic and Independent Schools, with a blueprint

> for the future of education within the state. The blueprint will provide learners with the capacity to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to participate in a world that is changing and evolving. It provided educators with a greater capacity to focus on what is important, relevant and central to curriculum as well as highlighting what is required when formulating teaching and learning sequences that will offer maximum learning opportunities. It provides a vehicle through which interactions can occur and for curriculum to be devised (n.d.).

'The state's top education academic' attempts a media 'circuit breaker'

Generally, academics from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania took a similar point of view and attitude towards ELs. During a period of increased public concern about ELs, Professor Roslyn Arnold, Dean of the Faculty of Education, in a *Mercury* article came out strongly in support of ELs, by issuing what may be termed motherhood statements concerning its pedagogical merits and what she believed would be its contribution to the state's economic and cultural development. Her claim came only days after some 50 of the state's brightest students were reported to have given ELs the thumbs down. Delegates at the Youth Parliament voted almost unanimously to remove ELs and bring back the old curriculum (Low Choy, 2005h, 10 Sep.).

Portrayed by *The Mercury* as 'the state's top education academic', Arnold claimed:

> Parents should not lose faith in the new Essential Learnings curriculum…
>
> in a few years, Tasmania will be renowned for its education system.
>
> And the controversial new curriculum will make it worth relocating to Tasmania for its public education system, she said (Low Choy, 2005h, 10 Sep.).

In the same *Mercury* article, Low Choy reminded Tasmanians:

> Language experts blasted the Education Department this week for using convoluted jargon to explain Essential Learnings to parents.
>
> Parents branded the language used on Education Department information sheets as 'confusing'', 'ridiculous' and 'just crazy' (Low Choy, 2005h, 10 Sep.).

But Arnold urged parents not to lose faith in the new curriculum:

> 'I think it's very clear the Education Department recognises it has some work to do and I would agree with that,' she said.
>
> 'It would be a great shame if people were to lose confidence in the new curriculum because of the language.
>
> 'Essential Learnings is based on the best theories of learning and thinking development available. Its foundations are very sound' (Low Choy, 2005h, 10 Sep.).

Arnold concluded by stating students who found the new curriculum objectionable would come to enjoy Essential Learnings (Low Choy, 2005h, 10 Sep.).

In a biting editorial, *The Mercury* responded to Arnold's 'over-the-top' predictions on the value of ELs by declaring:

> Let's hope the Education Department seizes on the words of the University of Tasmania's Dean of Education... as it goes about doing a better job of informing the Tasmanian community.
>
> No, we are not talking about her defence of Essential Learnings and a very stout one it was. No, it's her lucid, uncomplicated explanation, in a single sentence, of what Essential Learnings is about [engagement with students] (*Mercury*, 2005, 12 Sep.).

In a sarcastic vein, *The Mercury* contended 'the same could be said for the challenge facing the department – it needs to engage with the community and develop an understanding'. Moreover:

> The core of the jargon problem has been that the department has been talking to itself rather than engaging the community.
>
> The exposure... of the disease that is jargon in education was long overdue. And the Government's mea culpa and the promise to do something about it – and quick – is the only possible response (*Mercury*, 2005, 12 Sep.).

The Mercury, however, went on to argue 'ridding education of diseased English – and the nonsense that teachers need their own professional language when there is a perfectly good one everyone else uses – [was] just part of the problem'. The real and substantial problem was that ELs was driving from schools such wonderfully simple words, such as success and achievement' (*Mercury*, 2005, 12 Sep.). The Hobart daily continued:

> It seems that we don't want to measure success, we want to measure things like key element outcomes. Students have outcomes, not success or failure. And the outcome, for students and parents, is bewilderment. Just where are they in the scheme of things, they must ask, as subject marks and scoresheets become rubrics.
>
> Competition in the classroom is a healthy thing and so is measuring it – if we have the teachers with the skills to do so.
>
> Cloaking the realities of the classroom – As, Bs, Cs, Ds and failures – in fuzzy language does no one any good. Except, of course, those teachers who fear to be measured by the performance of their students (*Mercury*, 2005, 12 Sep.).

So, *The Mercury* continued in its drive to link the ELs reporting with some kind of conspiracy to mask children's poor achievement. *The Mercury* concluded by declaring Arnold had

every right to argue Tasmanians had a 'world-beater in Essential Learnings', but unless the state's teachers were 'given the skills to drive it and the community has faith in it, its key element outcomes will look pretty sick' (*Mercury*, 2005, 12 Sep.).

This was a convincing line of argument, which had manifold resonance throughout Tasmania, and one that had been used against Neale's curriculum back in 1909 (Rodwell, 1992, pp. 122-3). Yet, it was one that was soon to prove to be correct. What Tasmanians needed from the University of Tasmania, and particularly from its Faculty of Education, was some strong advice to the government on the need for focused research, before there was any more of the ELs rollout in schools. Clearly, there was something very wrong in the way in which it was being managed. Yet, despite the furore in the Tasmanian education system and society, its implementation was inevitable; and as far as the Faculty of Education was concerned, it was simply a matter of accommodating the curriculum into their own discipline and research interests of its academics.

The Mercury keeps the Government on the 'back foot' in the growing ELs imbroglio

Chiefly through the reporting by *The Mercury*, the government appeared to be continually on the 'back foot' as far as the public perception of ELs was concerned. As any sports person knows, once on the 'back foot' in any particular contest, it is difficult to reverse the momentum. What is usually required is an exemplary 'match-winning' piece of play from an individual in the team. Taylor, *et al.* (1997) draw the reader's attention to the need for 'political will and leadership' in respect to reversing attacks by the press on particular educational policy:

> A good example of this point is the leadership which was provided by the Keating Labour [sic] government regarding the Reconciliation process with Aboriginal people. The celebrated Redfern

> speech, addressed as much to the wider white community as to Aboriginal people present at the time, was an attempt to take the lead in changing wider community attitudes (p. 167).

In respect to attempting to defuse negative press comment regarding ELs, the closest parallel that occurred in Tasmania to Keating's landmark speech, perhaps, was Arnold's September 2005 media release supporting ELs. This was a message *The Mercury* had little difficulty in lampooning, and turning back in favour of the negative message the newspaper had been waging for many months. Indeed, in the hurly-burly world of system-wide curriculum innovation, it seems a poor message is much worse than no message at all. Arnold simply gave *The Mercury* a 'sitting target' at which to shoot.

Analysis

Sarason (1971) has shown educational change inevitably alters, or threatens to alter, existing power relationships, especially if that process implies, as it almost always does, a reallocation of resources, be it technological, financial, or human. Of course, there may have been academics in the Faculty of Education who believed offering advice to the Department of Education on its management of the implementation of ELs would be seen as an unnecessary challenge to the rollout, coming at a time of such public outrage.

There was, however, more than simply power at stake here. There was also a political dynamic. It may be argued that it may have been perceived to be poor politics for academics in the faculty to challenge the way in which the implementation of the ELs curriculum was being managed. This was particularly so, because so many academics supported its pedagogy.

The observations here about the passive manner in which the

Tasmanian academics simply 'linked arms' with the ELs planners, simply networking with them in support of ELs, leads to actor-network theory. Chapter five illustrated how, at a base level, an actor-network theory approach to the study of an innovation involves 'following the actors', human and non-human (Latour, 1996, p. 112), tracing the moves, counter-moves and compromises that go to make up the negotiation of any innovation. Consequently, according to actor-network theory, network building, or making alliances, involves a mutual negotiation of roles for actors, which, typically, is seen in terms of recruitment, negotiation of roles, policing of roles; then, once the alliance is firm, being able to speak on behalf of an alliance and represent the alliance in a space and a time removed from the actors. This was the role of many of the Tasmanian academics from the Faculty of Education, *vis-à-vis* ELs, as they perceived it.

Moreover, chapter five revealed how an actor-network framing of this innovation draws attention to the processes by which the Department of Education assembled, and then attempted to stabilize a network in order to deliver its educational goals for all of its students. While being, seemingly, a part of a democratic process marked by consultation and negotiation, teachers, through their pre-service education, were pressured heavily to adopt ELs and be successful ELs teachers. This was the special role allocated to the academics from the Faculty of Education. This was their job, their *raison d'etre,* the role for which they were being paid.

However, it must be said one cannot stand in judgment on the academics for this passive support for ELs. But, from whence was the pro-active, critical professional commentary to come? Somebody from the faculty needed to tell his, or her, colleagues in the Department of Education that some thorough research was

needed in the management of the ELs rollout. In other words, silent compliancy may have assisted in the breakdown of the system: the actor-network system that was ELs was slowly breaking down through the lack of honest, critical and professional internal criticism. Perhaps, compliancy did more to destroy ELs than strong and constructive criticism. This was certainly a point made by Scott (2008) in chapter one concerning the compliancy by Department of Education personnel.

As for Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor, academics in the Faculty of Education are actors in the ecosystem, working in close cooperation with the ELs planners, particularly in the implementation of the curriculum. Indeed, while ever the rollout was proceeding well, using the ecology metaphor, the academic actors nourished and supported the curriculum rollout. Indeed, the academics may have been seen as the fertilizer in the ecosystem. They performed a vital task in inducting neophytes into the ELs pedagogy. And this certainly would have been the case during the early years of 2000-04 when ELs was receiving much favorable support and commentary from the Tasmanian media.

But as readers have seen in chapter one, things started drastically to go wrong with the ELs rollout sometime in late 2004. Of course, this meant that now the neophyte teachers in their pre-service education were getting mixed messages about ELs. The university academics were telling them it was the way of the future, and they would all be working within the ELs framework in Tasmanian schools when they graduated as qualified teachers. However, the messages these neophytes were receiving from the media and the public-at-large were informing them there were real problems with the curriculum. The smooth functioning of the Tasmanian education system was breaking

down. Now, far from being the fertilizer in the ecosystem, nourishing and supporting the growth of ELs, there was a possibility that neophytes, some professionals in schools and members of the community-at-large, were now perceiving these academics as facilitating a break-down in the ecological balance of the system.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

From a wide selection of *ad hoc* and anecdotal discussions with school principals and teachers throughout Tasmania, it is apparent that the widespread and vocal opposition to ELs was a part of a more extended patchwork of discontent by school principals and classroom teachers, *vis-à-vis* government policy.

It is not within the aims of this thesis to analyse inclusionist policy, but simply to show how concerns by some school principals and classroom teachers for these matters spilled over into opposition to the ELs curriculum. In short, many Tasmanian teachers and principals felt their legitimate concerns of an ever-increasing numbers of children with special needs being placed in classrooms, without adequate provisions and support, were not being met. Many people in schools believed an uncaring Department of Education was thrusting new and demanding tasks on them, as it was doing with ELs.

Certainly, there was a marked difference in the public discourse in the media, especially *The Mercury*, and the high level of support for ELs by the rank-and-file of professionals in schools. But, one suspects sooner or later, if the Government continued pushing ahead with the ELs rollout during 2005 and 2006, eventually the negative discourse would take its toll on the curriculum change effort.

Teachers' response to mandated change: the issue of choice

Schools choosing to 'come on board' with ELs by 2005 were only faced with a choice of *when*, and not *if*: all Tasmanian state schools were required to implement the curriculum. Thus, all state-school teachers were confronted with the inevitability of change. The issue of teachers' adaptation to mandated change has long received international attention by researchers.

Evans (1996) (citing Bolman & Deal 1991/1995) discusses the impact of change, particularly on teachers. With a direct relevance for many teachers who railed against ELs, (as described by Gardner & Williamson, 2004), he states that change challenges competence and confronts teachers to be effective and valuable. Thus, change can discredit teachers' previous experiences and professional skills, challenge their purposes and identities and devaluing their perceived professional competence. Change also creates confusion and unpredictability. A set of roles, rules and policies help teachers to make meaning from the structure of an organization – change leads to the alteration of some of these and consequent confusion and disillusion for those involved. Change also causes conflict as individuals and groups seek to make sense of the change and their place in the organization as people jockey for new roles and power bases. Often the change is perceived as being introduced by administrators; the staff who have to implement the change may not have been consulted.

Bailey (2000) also discusses the impact of mandated change on teachers. She comments that mandated change 'directs teachers, rather than engages them' (p. 113). Bailey (2000) (citing Fullan 1991) comments that a top-down process of mandating change discourages teachers' abilities to set goals, develop skills, respond to feedback, and become engaged in improving their

practice; instead, it encourages teachers to become dependent on the latest innovation, driving them further from a sense of their own expertise and professionalism. With an obvious lesson for the ELs planners, she states that the failure to deal with the concerns of marginalised teachers is a key cause of failed educational change, both because of teachers' demoralisation and because there are serious practical implications to ignoring what teachers know about bringing about real and sustained change.

Readers will be reminded of Piercy, the self-declared ethical resister described below in this chapter, when Fried (1995) agrees with Bailey, and goes on to state that if teachers do not feel that a new strategy or approach can be put to practical use, they will not bring it into their classrooms. Fried (1995) argues that any worthwhile school change must be owned by teachers, working together, or they will be unlikely to last. Any innovation or change that teachers do not care for can be undermined, or simply ignored; eventually, it will go away, as was the case with ELs. What is surprising is that there is no evidence that the ELs planners recognised this research, and to built it into their implementation strategy.

Fullan (1991) points out that change is an intensely personal experience and that each teacher needs to work through their experiences of change in their own manner and own time. He points out that those who 'advocate change and develop changes get more rewards than costs, and those who are expected to implement the changes experience more costs than rewards' (p. 127). He also makes the point that one of the great mistakes of recent years is the belief that having a committee made up of teachers making decisions about change does not equate with involving all teachers in the decision-making. For those teachers not involved in the decision-making process, it is still an

imposed change based on a decision made by others, and they will need time to work through the accommodation of change into their professional practice. Here, we are reminded of the Kersey group of principals (2008) and the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008), cited below in this chapter, who contended that the ELs rollout needed to be extended for at least a year in order for teachers 'to take on board' the changes. Fullan provides strategies for teachers to use when considering change proposals, and provides guidelines and suggestions for implementing change in schools. He bases his arguments on the fact that change must happen if educational authorities are to provide students with the educational opportunities they deserve in a rapidly changing society.

The Kersey group of principals speak out in support of ELs

The Kersey group of principals (2008) was passionate about the pedagogical worth of ELs. They maintain that from the years 2000 through to 2004, people in Tasmanian state schools were embracing progressive education, as perhaps, never before. As far as they were concerned, the teaching service was fully supportive of Wriedt and her senior planners. For the Kersey group, Wriedt was doing a wonderful job in her portfolio. Certainly, for them, there were no 'wrinkles' in the way in which ELs was being rolled out. The group was unanimous in insisting the watershed in its history came in the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, when the ELs rollout was pushed ahead too quickly. This was a period that exposed severe problems in administration. The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) concurs with this point. She maintains the whole rollout became 'too rushed' towards the end.

Teachers under attack from alleged falling literacy and numeracy standards

Added to these woes and pressures on schools, a *Mercury* article revealed 'new figures released last week showed Tasmania had fallen further behind the rest of the country in most measures of literacy and numeracy' (Stedman & Drill, 2008). On the back of such media reports, many principals and teachers believed they were being 'hammered' by the media. This came on top of their other concerns in schools: namely, inclusionist policy. As readers shall see below in this chapter detailing the Warburton articles in *The Mercury*, concerns about literacy and numeracy standards had been around for years. But, for the Kersey group of principals (2008), this was a problem that schools, within the limits of their resources, were working very hard to address, and the 'rubbish in the press' was simply a distraction for them and their teachers. For this group of principals, the Atelier (2004) report caused 'real headaches'.

In June 2006, popular Tasmania's ABC *Nights* compare and contributor to the *Sunday Tasmanian*, Annie Warburton, devoted a weekly article to the perceived detrimental results of outcome-based education and its associated ELs curriculum on children's standards of literacy attainment. Alleged falling literacy standards, and the manner in which the schools were failing Tasmanian children and parents were a common theme in Warburton's contribution to the *Sunday Tasmanian* (see, for example, Warburton, 2005, *Sunday Tasmanian,* 10 April).

Thomas (2005, p. 31) draws our attention to how the media, particularly the print media through its news columns, orchestrates a 'campaign to create a crisis of confidence' in the State system of education. Warburton's message included the following carefully crafted sentences in satirical prose, and

certainly added to 'the crisis of confidence' in Tasmanian literacy standards:

> And now darkness descended on the land and the newspapers and the books and the magazines were full of poor spelling and bad grammar and incomprehensible jargon, yea, even unto the electronic media and online and a voice cried out in the wilderness: who will deliver us from this plague? But the teachers heeded it not, for in truth they had forgotten how to spell, nor could they punctuate or parse, nor could they make a verb agree with its subject, nor indeed could they tell a pronoun from an adjective... And the politicians, who had been taught by the teachers and knew no better, came to them in unholy alliance and together they begat the doctrine that all children were equal at everything and none should ever be allowed to experience 'failure'; this became known as 'Outcomes-Based Education'.
>
> Here endeth the lesson (Warburton, 2006, *Sunday Tasmanian,* 10 June; also see AART *Newsletter,* 2006, No 3).

Anderson (2007) draws our attention to the work done by Edelman (1977; 1988) in analysing the impact of the media on policy formation and 'creating the political spectacle'. Edelman (1988) focused on the relationship between language and politics and what he called the 'linguistic structuring of social problems' (p. 26, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 108). Of central importance for Edelman is 'how the problem is named involves alternative scenarios, each with its own facts, value judgements, and emotions' (p. 29, cited in Anderson, p. 108). Of course, this is exactly what Warburton is doing in this article with her astute use of satirical prose. She very effectively structures the problem of falling literacy standards, and the affect this has on society-at-large.

As Edelman (1988, p. 31, cited in Anderson, 2007, p. 108) shows 'a crisis, like all news developments, is a creation of the language used to depict it; the appearance of the crisis is a

political act, not a recognition or rare situation'. If not actually creating the crisis concerned with falling literacy standards in Tasmania, Warburton is certainly fuelling the crisis with her *Sunday Tasmanian* article. Tasmania's alleged falling literacy standards, occurred amidst the social outrage associated with OBE. The next step was to link this supposed malaise with ELs.

Endorsing Edeleman's (1988) research in the use of the media to trump up a literary and numeracy crisis, is research by Peter McInerney (2008), who draws on research by Comber, Green, Lingard and Luke (1998) to show how, in September 1997, the federal Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Dr David Kemp, chose to release the results of a National English Literacy Survey in the *Weekend Australian* (1997, 20-21 Sep.). Conducted by the ACER, the survey claimed that 27 per cent of year 3 and 29 per cent of year 5 students did not meet the national standard of reading. Describing the results as a national disgrace, Kemp then appeared on the current affairs program, *60 Minutes,* and publicly berated teaching standards and methods in Australian schools.

McInerney (2008) contends:

> Although the findings of the survey did not go unchallenged, they did trigger a round of media beat-ups about a literacy crisis that has continued almost unabated through the ministries of Kemp, Nelson and Bishop. In what could well be described as a politics of derision, senior government figures, including the Prime Minister John Howard, have consistently used the mainstream media to attack public schools for their lack of attention to values education, poor academic standards – especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy, failure to maintain proper discipline and with the promotion of a left-wing agenda. A good deal of the federal government's criticism has been voiced through Kevin Donnelly (p. 86).

In her second article in the *Sunday Tasmanian* Warburton claimed, in referring to her previous article, 'I've had a greater response to my last column than to anything else I've ever produced, for radio or print, locally or nationally' In this article she linked falling literacy standards with ELs (Annie Warburton, 2006, *Sunday Tasmanian,* 24 June). So, in the popular Tasmanian mind, ELs was a major driver in the decline of literacy standards.

During July 2006, the influential Australian Association of Reading Teachers (AART) rejoiced at the handing of the Education portfolio over to Bartlett, who had 'announced that the outcomes-based and jargon-filled Essential Learnings framework will disappear from Tasmanian schools next year.' To celebrate the demise of ELs the association had printed in its July 2006 Newsletter the entire text of both of the abovementioned Warburton *Sunday Tasmanian* articles (AART *Newsletter,* 2006, No 3).

Warburton had not researched her topic as well as she might have; and shame on the AART for not footnoting its own possible role in the decline in literacy standards in Tasmanian and Australian schools. Practising teachers back in the late 1970s could have reminded the AART and Warburton that a cause of the loss of literacy standards, indeed, may be traced at least back to the late 1970s, when the whole-of-word approach to literacy teaching began to appear in Tasmanian schools. The AART pushed for this approach as much as did any other professional group, challenging the teaching of spelling and the phonic method of teaching of reading. The malaise had truly existed long before OBE. Indeed, the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) makes the point that the fall-off in Tasmanian literacy and numeracy can be traced back at least to the decade of the

1990s following the Cresap cuts, when so little was done in Tasmanian curriculum development.

If Warburton had talked with Tasmanian teachers who had taught in COPE-inspired classrooms back in the 1980s, or had the opportunity of 'time travel' back into those classrooms, then she would have seen the same 'whole of word' method for the teaching reading as Tasmanians such as the Hobart optometrist and literacy standards advocate, Byron Harrison, had been campaigning against (Jones, 1995). It has been demonstrated earlier in this thesis that ELs was simply positioned on a pedagogical continuum extending at least back to COPE. Children in many of these classrooms were not taught English grammar, spelling, or reading through phonics; many of these children, of course, are now teachers in Tasmanian schools. It is simply drawing a long bow to place the blame entirely with ELs. Although, of course, there were some Tasmanian teachers who argued the ELs curriculum was doing little to remedy the fault.

But, attesting to the apparent fact the whole literacy and numeracy 'bashing' was occurring in the media during the ELs years was constructed by the media, is evident in that since the demise of ELs in 2006, while appearing occasionally in the media, the issue by mid-2008 was virtually 'dead in the water'. The media and the general public had virtually lost interest in it. Certainly, it is no longer a 'red hot' political issue it was during the latter ELs years.

***The Mercury* portrays dissenting teachers as freedom fighters pitched against an authoritarian bureaucracy; the Department of Education responds**

But there was no doubting many teachers were strongly opposed to ELs, whatever their motivation. In an article headed, 'ELs rubbish, say teachers: Students now learning less' Low Choy

from *The Mercury,* in September 2005, wrote 'teachers say Tasmanian students are learning less under the Education Department's controversial new Essential Learnings curriculum'. *The Mercury*, however, was able to invent some new media strategies in its continuing revelations concerning ELs. During 2005 and early 2006 *The Mercury* seemed intent on uncovering teacher discontent with ELs. But the Department of Education had in place a ban on its teachers speaking to the media. First, *The Mercury* could argue this alleged authoritarian policy was detrimental to informed debate:

> The Education Department should allow teachers to publicly air their views on the Essential Learnings curriculum, say the State Liberals.
>
> Education spokesman Peter Gutwein said the Education Department's gag on teachers was stopping informed public debate about... ELs.
>
> 'In order to allow informed community debate on concerns surrounding ELs, teachers should be allowed to speak their mind on the curriculum and particularly the reporting process to parents,' Mr Gutwein said.
>
> 'It has become patently obvious during the recent debate over the ridiculous and confusing ELs jargon that teachers are not able to speak freely on this critical issue' (Low Choy, 2005d).

But, Low Choy (2005i) found two state school teachers who had defied Education Department gag rules to speak out about ELs and, of course, they had a ready audience in Low Choy (2005d). One was from a primary school and the other from a secondary school. The secondary teacher claimed:

> Most teachers would like to see ELs abolished.
>
> 'When the Education Department's enforcers are around, we toe the party line, but in the staffroom we're saying what rubbish ELs is...'
>
> 'We're hoping it collapses before it does too much damage.

> 'At one high school's Christmas party last year, the teachers sang The First Noel but changed the lyrics to "No ELs, No ELs".'

Low Choy (2005d) made a special point of portraying the male teacher, 'with almost 30 years' experience', as bravely speaking out against fears of 'losing his job' He asked that 'his name not be published' because, 'public service rules prevent teachers talking to the media'. He continued:

> 'It's like Chairman Mao's cultural revolution. You can't have a dissenting view,' the teacher said.
>
> He said ELs could produce a generation without solid knowledge of basic disciplines such as maths, science and English.
>
> 'The Education Department is making schools abandon words like maths, science and English. They're alleging learning of these continue but there is less real knowledge being passed on. Standards have fallen,' he said.
>
> 'The intelligent kids, particularly, are absolutely livid about ELs. They say it's wishy washy. They want real subjects. They want real knowledge' (Low Choy, 2005d).

Indeed, this was exactly the experience of Alex Dale (2008) a year 12 student from Devonport's Don College. She claimed that as a student at Reece High school, she had a class teacher who took the majority of her subjects in a primary-school-type base classroom. During the ELs years, she had only two science lessons. Indeed, for Alex, the discipline of science was almost a mystery, until moved to Don College in year 11 in 2007. Alex said she hated the ELs curriculum, and as far as she knew, all of her fellow students felt the same way about it. At Reece High School she had felt like a 'guinea pig'.

In a like fashion to Piercy's concerns, whom readers encountered in chapter eight, the female primary school teacher,

who spoke to Low Choy for the 12 September 2005 *Mercury* article had almost 30 years' experience and claimed 'more students would slip through the cracks under the new system'. Perhaps, like Piercy, she was an ethical/pedagogical resister. Without citing any evidence, she went on to state:

> 'I don't think the kids are learning nearly as much as they did before ELs came in...'
>
> With ELs allowing for very little individual work, teachers found it difficult to identify which students were falling behind, she said.
>
> 'Because kids are working co-operatively almost all of the time, you don't know which kids know things and who's not keeping up,' she said.
>
> And ELs did not allow her to teach to the best of her abilities (Low Choy, 2005d).

Both teachers took issue with the Department of Education's use of jargon in ELs document. And Low Choy (2005d) reminded readers the department had come under fire only the previous week for using convoluted jargon to explain ELs. She claimed the department had admitted 'it could do better, but said jargon was professional language'. The two teachers being interviewed by her strongly disagreed:

> 'Let me assure you it is not the professional language of teachers,' the high school teacher said.
>
> 'It is unintelligible. I have several [university] degrees and I don't understand what they're talking about.'
>
> The primary teacher said she could not understand the jargon.
>
> 'We don't want it. Who's it for? To keep someone in a job somewhere, no doubt,' she said (Low Choy, 2005d).

Alison Jacob, countered these claims, and contended:

> 'It is not surprising there would be a variety of views or that teachers would need some time to adjust.

> 'The department understands there are some concerns about how changes have been communicated. We welcome further input with teachers who have expressed some concern in *The Mercury*, either individually, through principals or their branch directors' (Low Choy, 2005d).

This was a brave call by Jacob, and hers was the usual departmental response – simply, promise to invite more consultation. Indeed, many teachers would need time to adjust to ELs and everything that went with it. But, time was not something the department had. Within twelve months, of this article appearing in *The Mercury*, there would be a state election and the Hobart daily would constantly remind Tasmanian voters of the essential failings of the ELs curriculum. The department seemed to have no plan in place to counter this aggressive message coming from *The Mercury*.

Exposé journalism and teachers' views on the distracting influence of the press

Indeed, the disaffected teachers had found a firm ally in *The Mercury*, which had little time for what Jacob was attempting to explain. In the above-quoted article, the discourse from the paper had taken a subtle, but effective turn. It was now portraying the disaffected teachers as embattled 'freedom fighters' against a repressive Department of Education. Increasingly fueling the public outrage concerning ELs, these professionals were now being portrayed as guardians of Tasmanian educational standards under attack by the reckless government and its ELs curriculum. So, with even greater appeal to the popular psyche, in an almost undercover-type of operation, *The Mercury*, gathered in stories concerning teacher discontent with ELs. There are echoes here of that wonderful, and at time devious, exposé journalism of a hundred years earlier – the American muckrakers (Rounds, 2002).

Of course, the teachers interviewed by *The Mercury* did not cite any evidence, nor did *The Mercury*, but by 2005 public discourse in Tasmania was loaded with anti-ELs stories linking the curriculum to Wriedt's political ambitions and Labor mismanagement, and supposed reductions in literacy and numeracy standards. Readers of *The Mercury* would be constantly reminded ELs was 'Education Minister, Paula Wriedt's "baby" ' (see, for example, Low Choy, 2005b).

The Kersey group of principals (2008) confirmed the distracting influence of the press on what they were trying to achieve in their schools with ELs. But they insisted this was much worse in the south than in the north of the state, where *The Mercury* did not have the same level of readership.

Analysis

Chapter five showed diffusion theory employs a number of categories for individuals. One such group is that of opinion leaders. These individuals, such as the two teachers that were encountered in this chapter who had been interviewed by Low Choy (2005d) for her *Mercury* article, and Piercy, who were encountered in chapter eight, influence adopters of innovations, either positively, or negatively. Moreover, their influence varies in accordance with their level of technical competence, social accessibility, level of conformity to social norms and their degree of support for the innovation. Naturally, when the rollout of the innovation was experiencing severe difficulties, as was the case with ELs in the years 2005-06, and the media was running hotly against it, these individuals – the ethical/pedagogical resisters – are listened to more intently by parents, community members and colleagues.

Chapter five of this thesis also revealed how, in researching the

characteristics of adopters, Huberman and Miles (1984, p. 43) wrote 'educational innovations are not introduced into a vacuum'. Indeed, every school has its own unique web of political entanglement, with multi-faceted histories and personal motivations. And when an educational innovation is rolled out into the school, new demands and pressures embrace this web of political opportunism. In most Tasmanian schools, ELs did just that. Maybe, cynicism amongst teachers was heightened with the ELs planners and the politicians who were 'pulling the levers' of educational change. Now, the Department of Education was politicized, and a vote for ELs by a teacher was seen as being a vote for Wriedt and Labor. This point was made clearly by the secondary school teacher encountered in this chapter who was interviewed by Low Choy (2005d) for *The Mercury*.

Chapter five showed how, writing in respect to actor-network theory, Callon (1986b, p. 224) stated that some negotiations with actors in the educational setting are easily achieved, while others may require much persuasion, or even coercion, within the process of negotiating roles. Indeed, while reflecting on the role of ethical resisters in ELs – Piercy in chapter eight, and the teachers that Low Choy (2005d) interviewed for her *Mercury* article cited in this chapter – network building is a problematic task in curriculum development and implementation. Certainly, ensuring actors remain faithful to their role, is a story of the relations of power.

Clearly, the stability of networks is never assured. Outside socio-political changes can bring havoc on a curriculum innovation. In this thesis it has been hypothesized that events such as the tragic death of a charismatic premier – that of Bacon in early 2004 – brought unforeseen influences on the ELs rollout. Further, chapter five revealed how the network builders

– the ELs planners – must continually ensure the actors remain true to their negotiated roles. Constant airing of widespread dissatisfaction by many teachers in the media fueled much of the public outrage concerning ELs. This outrage generated by a hostile press, concerning the perceived ELs jargon and falling literacy and numeracy standards were simply a symptom of a much broader problem – poor management of the ELs curriculum rollout.

How does the Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor interpret these events from the standpoint of principals and teachers? He has written:

> Ecologies have *niches and roles* some of them well defined, that actors must fill. Politicians and the bureaucracy, for example, often have roles structured by constitutions or traditions of government, although these roles may be loose in numerous ways. Other niches and roles exist outside the state's anticipatory abilities, such as the roles of oppositional groups that foment change [emphasis in original] (p. 156).

Of course, this chapter has shown the Tasmanian Liberal Opposition increasingly came on 'the front foot', became proactive, during the period 2004-06. It was as if they had a renewed sense of confidence following Bacon's untimely death. Now, they were able to use the latent teacher dissatisfaction over issues such as inclusionist policy as a springboard for political action, along with the growing public outrage this thesis has alluded to in ELs, which was being constantly generated by the press, particularly *The Mercury*. Admittedly, some Tasmanians may have argued there may have been some foundation for this outrage.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

The AEU – Tasmanian Branch had an ambivalent attitude to ELs. Traditionally, with close links with the Labor Party, and usually with a settled relationship with the Department of Education, at least four years passed before it began to respond to concerns being expressed by its members about ELs.

'More hands-on political interference in schools than ever before'

In December 2007, the outgoing Tasmanian AEU president, Walker, used the occasion of the election of the new AEU president to assess her four years in the position. She nominated the controversy surrounding the former ELs curriculum, as one of the most difficult periods of her time in office. Of course, other than the ELs imbroglio, her presidency was marked by a state election and the demise of Wriedt as Minister for Education. Walker declared:

> The Essential Learnings phase, presided over by Ms Wriedt, was very taxing. It was quite a long lead-up to realising people were unhappy with the amount of work involved in the assessment and reporting part of it that was quite unwieldy... And then we did the largest survey I think the union has ever done to assess members opinions and then to sort of put the pressure on to get the whole thing really scaled down and changed, it really was quite a long and difficult and challenging process (*Mercury*, 2007. 6 Dec.).

Concluding her interview with *The Mercury*, Walker criticised what she said was 'more hands-on political interference in schools than ever before, with minister's decisions sometimes more about their own career paths than what is best for schools' (*Mercury*, 2007, 6 Dec.). Her comment that there was 'a long lead-up' prior to uncovering the full measure of teacher discontent with SARIS is significant. SARIS was an integral component of ELs. As the previous chapter has shown, the Kersey group of principals (2008) insisted, generally, teachers gave SARIS a fair go, but on top of the difficulties that have already noted that existed in Tasmanian state school classrooms, eventually, many teachers went to their union for support. Certainly, the Kersey group of principals (2008) state that in their schools they placed a huge amount of resources at SARIS in an attempt to solve the problems teachers were having with the computerized reporting system.

Interviewed by Raelene Morey from *The Examine*r on the last day in her office, Walker again spoke out against Wriedt and the ELs program. In an article that was almost entirely devoted to her criticism of Bartlett and the initiatives he was taking to replace senior secondary colleges and TAFE Tasmania with polytechnics, academies and training schools, Walker declared Bartlett was lacking in wisdom and experience and accepting far too much advice from his many advisors. 'And I think that was Paula's [Wriedt's] problem as well' (Morey, 2008).

However, to be fair to Bartlett, either from sharp political acumen, or from a genuine concern for their workloads, from the early days of his taking the Education portfolio, he expressed sympathy for teachers in Tasmanian state schools. Writing in the *Sunday Tasmanian*, soon after the ELs election, Meryl Naidoo reported:

> New Education Minister David Bartlett acknowledged changes were placing a burden on teachers and said he had some sympathy for them…
>
> 'There has been enormous stress and pressure on teachers in the past couple of years and they are drained, she said.
>
> Mr Bartlett said he was aware of the union's concerns and would be talking to teachers as a priority during the next three months (Naidoo, 2006).

Moreover, the Naidoo report in *The Examiner* confirmed what this chapter will reveal below how Gardner and Williamson (2004) had uncovered regarding teachers' concerns and the fact they felt they were being 'bombarded' with change:

> The Teachers Union has warned its members are exhausted because of the constant changes to the system.
>
> The union's Tasmanian president, Jean Walker, said teachers should refuse to take on any further initiatives until the problems are solved (Naidoo, 2006).

The AEU, of course, is itself a political body, comprised of people with personal and political ambitions, and differing educational ideologies. Some were more kindly disposed to ELs than were others. And, of course, many of those advisors Walker was referring to are the same political apparatchiks Crawford was referring to in chapter four in the 2005 *Stateline* interview.

The AEU: 'I'm afraid I think ours is a bit jargonistic'

At the beginning, the AEU was only lukewarm in its support for ELs. For example, in the ABC *Stateline* program broadcast in December 2004, that was cited in chapter one, Walker claimed:

> I've just recently read the Tomlinson Report on secondary education in the UK and also the new report on secondary education in Scotland, and I do have to say that they seem to have managed to express very similar concepts in a rather more simple language and

> I'm afraid I think ours is a bit jargonistic. I think that's a pity (Ward, 2004).

In the same *Stateline* program, however, Leppard, who readers encountered in chapter one, represented the Department of Education, who dismissed these concerns as being merely pseudo concerns. He claimed:

> Any new system has with it some new language, and I think it would be unreasonable and unfair of people to expect that they should have instant recognition of anything that's new. They don't expect that of anything else in their life. If I talk to you about SMS text messaging, if we'd had that conversation five years ago, no-one would have known what we were talking about. So there is some new language to describe, some new concepts (Ward, 2004).

While Leppard may have been correct about the changing nature of language, he was grossly understating the public concerns about ELs. It was not something as simple as SMS text messaging. Granted, ELs did have its own language, but it was also completely revolutionizing the Tasmanian school curriculum, and the way in which schools were interfacing with the community, parents and employers. Moreover, by 2004, opposition to the innovation was growing amongst the rank-and-file of teachers.

Walker advanced the age-old argument put up by most educational innovations of 'not throwing out the baby with the bathwater'. She claimed 'if learning grammar, or learning particular rules, or listening to a lecture is the best way to go about learning, then that's what we do... many teachers are concerned about the reporting process, and that content may be sacrificed' (Ward, 2004).

Ward responded by contending: 'The school curriculum hasn't changed much for almost half a century and the Education

Union says teachers recognize it's time for an overhaul' (Ward, 2004).

For Walker, change was inevitable, but for her in the change effort there needed to be a balance between the new and the old. She saw much of the enquiry-based ELs curriculum as being skills-based, and the content, or knowledge, experienced teachers had taught for years was being sacrificed to a new curriculum they rightly saw was encountering increasing opposition from parents and employer groups. For her,

> If you've taught for quite a while where content has been important and now you have to come to terms with the fact that it is maybe less important than the skills that are being taught. But I think it's finding a balance between the core subjects and skills and flexible abilities we want them to have in the future (Ward, 2004).

A significant challenge facing the ELs designers and advocates was to find a balance that would satisfy teachers, parents and employers. But such was the growing furor and level of discontent amongst Tasmanian teachers, by the end of 2004 the AEU needed hard evidence on teacher workloads.

The AEU and concerns about teacher workloads and inclusionist policy on special needs children

In a revealing Tasmanian ABC *Stateline* broadcast in November 2006, it was contended:

> Two weeks ago the union [AEU] lodged a 45-page claim detailing demands for a new workplace agreement for public school teachers. It calls for the government to reduce class sizes and teacher workloads. The union also wants more resources provided to help teachers deal with special needs students (Tasmanian ABC *Stateline* Transcript, 2006).

Indeed, the AEU had long fought for smaller class sizes. In October 2006, it announced in its newsletter (2006) it had

recommended the capping of kindergarten and prep classes at 20 children and years 1 and 2 classes at 25 children. Certainly, Green (2008) confirmed at the time of the writing of this thesis, these targets had not been achieved in the state schools of which he had a close association.

No less problematic for Tasmanian teachers, was the question of including special needs children in normal classrooms. Walker revealed just before her retirement as state president of the AEU the union had long opposed the government's inclusionist policy, without adequate support in terms of reduced class sizes and additional teacher's aide time. She said she was sick and tired of teachers being made feel guilty if they did not fall in line with government inclusionist policy (Killick, 2007).

The Gardner and Williamson Report

In the 'context of increasing concern about workloads of education workers,' in mid-2003, the Tasmanian Branch of the AEU commissioned Williamson from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania to undertake a survey of government school teachers and allied educators in Tasmania (Gardner & Williamson, 2004). With Dr Christine Gardner as the principal researcher, the completed report was handed to the AEU in August 2004. The survey had three main purposes:

> First, to identify and describe the factors that determine the workloads of principals, teachers and other education workers; second, to critically examine these data and to suggest how current workloads may be more manageable, while maintaining desired outcomes; and finally, to suggest ways of ensuring the most effective use of all resources, including, where appropriate, more innovative ways of distribution so as to promote student learning (p. 1).

With discontent about ELs so widespread in Tasmanian schools, some principals and teachers may have exaggerated

their workloads. However, Gardner and Williamson (2004) reported:

> Respondents reported a range of intensifications. It was not uncommon for teachers and principal respondents to report working some days bordering on 11, 12 or more hours with minimal break times. A half-hour uninterrupted break was unusual. Such a working routine often was augmented by several hours at the weekend...
>
> Respondents typically viewed change negatively; although the intentions underpinning changes were, at times, acknowledged as worthwhile improvements and developments to learning and teaching. The number of changes at any one time and the resultant layers of change, however, were problematic for a variety of reasons explained by respondents. One teacher commented upon the need for time to incorporate change into professional practice before being confronted by more change...
>
> Respondents expressed a range of concerns, including: how to find more time; the incoherence of change; attempts to implement new changes, while dealing with the exigencies of day-to-day work in schools; the infrequency of being able to take reasonable break times; having to discuss essential working matters 'on the run'; having to 'juggle' too many demands and expectations and being close to losing control of the juggling act; the increasing demands on time of non-teaching duties; the requirements to teach more curriculum, or a broader curriculum, in less time; rising case loads and a corresponding fall in staff numbers; having to perform more responsibilities, sometimes tasks that conflicted; being unable to sleep at night; working in a context in which more people are becoming more demanding; and the lack of attractiveness of teaching as a profession...
>
> One teacher's report was characterized by: first, her expression of her sense of being under attack; second, her perception of an apparent absence of support; third, her perception that her many years of teaching practice were an inadequate foundation on which to base future pedagogical decisions; and finally, her recurring experience of short-lived change (p. 55).

Gardner reported in an interview later not all teachers were negatively inclined towards ELs. In some schools, particularly primary schools, teachers spoke out strongly in support of the curriculum change effort. The strongest opposition to the change effort came in secondary schools, where, she suspected, loyalties to subject areas were strongest (Gardner, 2008).

The political consequences of the report were swift and sustained. For example, on 19 October 2004 in the Legislative Council, Tony Fletcher, MLC for Murchison, basing his argument on the Gardner and Williamson Report, spoke out in the Legislative Council on:

> The intensification of the work at the school level on how more work was being expected over a greater number of hours and that, indeed, was impacting upon the wellbeing of the educators and other allied staff of the education system and unless remedial action was taken to address this matter, it would have negative impacts upon the education outcomes that were being achieved (Hansard: Legislative Council, 2004, 19 Oct., Part 2, p. 26).

Fletcher went on to argue the sheer pace of change demanded from schools by the Department of Education was having a detrimental effect on school communities and teachers (Hansard: Legislative Council, 2004, 19 Oct., Part 2, p. 26).

The Atelier changes

Indeed, increasingly during late 2004 and 2005, Wriedt and her ELs planners were under attack from many sections of Tasmanian society. At the height of the statewide outcry against ELs during 2005, the AEU's Deputy President, North, Peter Kearney (2005), spoke out against his members' workloads, particularly those being imposed by ARF:

> You might be a little concerned at the workload implications of ARF, especially in the second year and onwards and pleased to know that the AEU has well-researched information on workloads and a

> legally binding Award to support you in managing your workload…
>
> The last 18 months have seen unprecedented levels of change and increased demands on teachers and teacher workloads. Our Union has been co-operative with the ELs and with the Atelier changes. Maybe we should not have been, as the DofE has simply taken our co-operation for granted and given no ground in return. That is why it is time for action (p. 1).

The Atelier changes that Kearney (2005) criticized are those that briefly have been discussed in chapter one. Here, the angst that the report prompted amongst Tasmanian principals, teachers and school communities has briefly been discussed. This point helps to explain the venom in Kearney's message:

> Action to say enough is enough. Action to say that it is not ready to go forward. Action to say I am not ready. Action to say I do not believe that the workload issue have been dealt with – even action to say that in my school there are colleague teachers who are not coping with the changes, even though I feel ready (p. 2).

'The AEU had been "all but mute" '

The Department of Education did not respond to these demands for what was argued was a more equitable workload. But, there is good evidence the AEU did not rush headlong into its opposition to ELs. The Liberal Opposition, claimed the union was sitting 'in the middle of the road' on the issue:

> Opposition education spokesman Peter Gutwein said the AEU had been 'all but mute' on problems with ELs.
>
> 'Its actions, or lack of them, were in the interests of the Labor Party, not teachers, and did students a disservice,' Mr Gutwein said.
>
> He said if the Opposition had not been a 'lone' critic of ELs, reform would have begun long ago and not in the middle of the school year.

> Ms Walker said former education minister Paula Wriedt and her bureaucrats had ignored AEU pleas for change.
>
> 'They just pushed on with it,' she said. 'We were ignored.
>
> 'She was not willing to listen' (Duncan, 2006a, 3 July).

In respect to the accusation that Wriedt and the ELs planners 'just pushed on with it' this point conforms with what this thesis has noted in chapter one in regard to what Williamson had observed about the curriculum rollout.

Analysis

For the disaffected teachers there was always the ballot box, which was looming ever closer as the year 2006 approached. If the Minister and her department did not listen to these concerns, there would be that inevitable day of reckoning when Tasmanians went to the polls, in March 2006. The results of the Tasmanian 2006 election and its aftermath are now a part of Tasmanian history.

In chapter five, Harris and Marsh (2005) drew attention to the importance of the context of educational change. These researchers considered the role diffusion theory places on the context of an educational innovation. They show many diffusion theorists have argued curriculum initiatives are in fact 'diffused' or 'mediated' through various contexts. These various and interrelated contexts are imbued with different meanings by teachers working within them, and are dependent on a variety of values (Harris & Marsh, 2005, p. 18). The authors then draw attention to the research done by Dinan-Thompson, who states curriculum change 'is a process not an event' (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 1995; Sarason, 1990, cited in Dinan-Thompson, 2005, p. 149). Moreover, Dinan-Thompson (2005, p. 149)

insists curriculum change 'is open to trial, error and challenge'.

It has been argued the problems associated with the context of educational change are very closely related to that of the timing of educational change. By early 2005, the challenges to the ELs rollout were coming 'quick and fast', and, perhaps, an election was going to be the only way these matters would be settled. That is not to say that for many pro-ELs principals, teachers and parents the 2006 election result meant the end of ELs. It was, as Dinan-Thompson (2005, p. 149) had stated: 'trial, error and challenge', indeed! Many of the pro-ELs people in the schools reckoned they had salvaged the best of ELs, post-2006. For them, curriculum change, simply, 'is a process not an event'.

Chapter five illustrated how an actor-network analysis attempts to trace the Department of Education moves in attempting to assemble a large network of actors to support the development of ELs and its rollout into schools. Specifically, in actor network terms, readers have seen in this chapter the department negotiated roles with various texts, advisory personnel and the Tasmanian Branch of the AEU. Via these actors, the department attempted to negotiate certain roles with teachers, roles that supported the adoption of ELs in a school, and the acceptance of it by the school and its community. But, inclusionist policy and SARIS are themselves actors in the network, which were essentially out of step with those human actors. Tasmanian citizens, however, ultimately had the opportunity to vote on the issue.

SARIS had a critical role in the innovation, and the AEU strongly opposed the computerized assessment being pushed on its members within a tight timeframe. The union asked for a breathing space for its members. In chapter five it was shown Earl and LeMahieu (2000, p. 150) had written 'around the

world, assessment is becoming an extremely "high stakes" activity for students, teachers and schools.' Indeed, the success of the entire ELs rollout hinged on teachers and schools adopting this particular computerized reporting. In actor-network terms, this particular actor in the network was not recruited into the network on mutually agreeable terms. In chapter five it was shown actor-network theory is particularly interested in how actors are recruited; what negotiations take place to arrive at roles that are mutually agreed; then what mechanisms are put in place to police the various heterogeneous actors as they perform their delegated roles. With SARIS, the stakes were high, and if the department would not listen to the grievances of those involved, the disaffected principals, teachers and parents always knew ultimately they had the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction at the ballot box sometime in 2006; in this sense, they knew full well they held the upper hand in any negotiations. This leads to the Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor.

This chapter began by reminding readers of the sheer complexity of the relationships between the political elite in Tasmania – the governing Labor party – and the AEU and the many political apparatchiks amongst the ELs planners and political advisers. Further, Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 156) state 'individuals fill many roles simultaneously':

> Politicians are often also parents, and both are also voters. In this and other ways, then, ecologies are not reducible to their component parts (Laura & Cotton, 1999, cited in Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 156); rather they must be viewed as whole functioning systems (Weaver-Hightower, 2008, p. 156).

This phenomenon simply adds to the complexity in attempting a cause-effect analysis of the breakdown in the management of the ELs implementation. It can only be concluded that by 2004 it

was a network, or an ecology, out of kilter. This thesis shall now turn to other important actors in the network – parents and the employers of school leavers.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PARENTS AND EMPLOYERS

The Tasmanian election was due in March 2006; an embattled Liberal Opposition saw in the ELs imbroglio the opportunity to win over many disaffected voters. Wriedt's seat in Franklin was particularly vulnerable. The Liberal challenger, Vanessa Goodwin, was a candidate with a real chance of being elected. For parents and employers, the central concern was with the ELs reports. Indeed, this was a highly contentious aspect of the ELs rollout for the government.

The vexed question of report cards

Readers have already encountered the issues surrounding the leverage by the Commonwealth in regard to the 'plain English' report cards, and the disorderly manner in which the Tasmanian Government responded in having teachers complete two report cards for each of the students – an ELs report card and a 'plain English' report card. In late-2005 and early-2006, the TASSP&F surveyed 1200 of its members on the ELs report cards. In April 2006, only months before the demise of the curriculum, Philippa Duncan in *The Mercury* announced:

> Parents will push for changes to the controversial new Essential Learnings report cards.
>
> Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends helped lobby the State Government to slow down the transition to the new report cards.

> Parent and Friends president Jenny Branch said new Education Minister David Bartlett would now be urged to alter the ELs reports.
>
> She said a survey of 1200 parents – due out next week – had revealed three to four problems with the reports.
>
> Ms Branch said a common complaint had been the report's confusing language.
>
> 'We need to get this right,' she said. 'Parents need to know if their children are learning, or not' (Duncan, 2006d, 27 April).

Gutwein contended the suggestions the Tasmanian TASSP&F had made for improving the reports should render them easier to understand. But the Liberals still held some major concerns about the reports. Certainly, they sensed there was much more political mileage to be gained from the issue:

> It is clear that, judging by the results of the latest survey of teachers on ELs school reports, as well as general public comment from parents, employers and teachers, there are problems with ELs and its reporting framework,' Mr Gutwein said. 'Apart from the lack of clearly defined standards on school reports, the Education Minister needs to act to address the problems of poor implementation of the new curriculum (Low Choy, 2006).

'Ploughing ahead' with a 'high-stakes' activity

Poor implementation, indeed! Despite the continued warnings, the Department of Education during early 2006 'ploughed ahead' with the implementation. But now this thesis should re-focus attention to the still-vexed problem of the report cards.

It is interesting that when this thesis comes to analyse the management of the development and implementation of ELs from the point of view of parents, the nature of report cards are firmly in focus. Chapters five and twelve have recorded the statement by Earl and LeMahieu (2000, p. 150) showing the

'high stakes' nature of students' reports. There was much potential political capital to be made out of any mismanagement of the ELs rollout in this regard.

Branch's political ambitions have been described in chapter seven. She played a key role in representing parents in the makeup of ELs during its design stages; later she represented their concerns about the management of the ELs implementation. And chapter seven has noted the Kersey group of principals (2008) show Branch did not represent all Tasmanian state school parents.

The ELs jargon buster: controversy about a 'dud decoder of courses jargon'

Of course, the uproar in parliament and in the media concerning the ELs jargon buster, taken by itself, was a trivial, if not a humorous, incident in the sad history of the ELs rollout. But it really was the tip of the iceberg. The real substance of the imbroglio existed far below the surface of this minor issue. There were ample examples of large educational systems and institutions designing jargon busters to decode the language employed in their system or institution. The Victorian Department of Education employed this online tool for their clientele (Vic. Dept of Ed. And Early Childhood Development: Acronyms and Jargon, 2008).

During mid-2005 the Tasmanian Department of Education published a jargon buster. Writing in *The Mercury* in September 2005, Low Choy headed her article 'Dud decoder of courses jargon'.

> The Education Department has published a 'Jargon Buster' to demystify the raft of bureaucratic buzz words it is using to explain its new Essential Learnings curriculum to parents.

> But confused parents say consulting the Jargon Buster only leaves them more bamboozled. A leading language expert says he is not surprised (Low Choy, 2005b).

That expert was Professor Roly Sussex, from the University of Queensland's School of Applied Language and Comparative Culture Studies. He also was a regular guest in a popular ABC Radio talkback program on the use and misuse of language. Sussex said most parents would find the jargon buster unintelligible:

> 'There needs to be a jargon buster to explain what's in the Jargon Buster,' Prof Sussex said yesterday.
>
> 'I respect what they're trying to do but I'm afraid what they've come up with is a bit difficult.
>
> 'I think it was the famed physicist Lord Kelvin who said: "If you have a good idea and you can't explain it in words a milkmaid can understand then there's something wrong with the idea" ' (Low Choy, 2005b).

But, Low Choy reminded Tasmanians ELs was 'Education Minister, Paula Wriedt's "baby" '. Further, she argued Wriedt had 'long been talking it up as a change for the better', and earlier in 2005, Wriedt has stated her department had spent a lot of time trying to make the ELs 'reports user friendly' (Low Choy, 2005b).

Low Choy, no doubt, knew she was 'on a winner' when she brought noted author, Dr Don Watson, one-time Labor Party adviser, to the argument. *The Mercury's* opponents could hardly accuse it of using Liberal Party supporters to attack ELs. Her report continued:

> 'It's a language not unlike Stalinist language,' Mr Watson said.
>
> He said not being able to understand it was a sign the reader was still in possession of their linguistic

faculties (Low Choy, 2005b).

According to Low Choy, the jargon buster, published on the department's website, offered 'convoluted explanations for terms including "on balance judgment", "culminating performance" and "rubric" ':

> Parents need to be able to understand the terms in order to make sense of their children's new-look Essential Learnings school report cards (Low Choy, 2005b).

Sussex contended if the department was trying to convey a policy to people who are consuming it, then 'they've got a little bit more work to do':

> 'A report card is meant to transmit to parents a clear professional evaluation of what their kids have been doing and how well' (Low Choy, 2005b).

Sussex made the commonsense observation 'report cards needed to be in terms that parents would understand easily'.

Low Choy then went on to argue the jargon buster touted the terms it defines as 'being in frequent use when teachers and students talk and write about monitoring, assessing and reporting of learning progress'. She then added:

> With both primary and high schools adopting the ELs curriculum, children as young as five may have to grapple with the department lingo...
>
> Opposition education spokesman Peter Gutwein said the Essential Learnings Jargon Buster sheet seemed just as confusing as the jargon it was attempting to explain.
>
> 'The language used in the Jargon Buster is the same corporate, bureaucratic language used in most of the other Essential Learnings reporting system,' Mr Gutwein said.
>
> 'The explanation of terms such as "rubric", "formative assessment" and "on balance judgment" are filled with language that drones on, and no

> parent could expect to gain a significantly clearer understanding of these terms after reading the Jargon Buster' (Low Choy, 2005b).

For Gutwein, Wriedt was fostering a language within her department that 'is simply not how people normally communicate' (Low Choy, 2005b).

Defending the jargon buster

Certainly, the language usage here is a little strained. But as the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) shows the point about which Gutwein should have reminded *The Mercury* readers was the jargon buster was written to be read by Tasmanian teachers, not the general public. It was on the web as an aid for teachers in order they might avoid using unintelligible jargon with parents. It was modeled on the New South Wales Department of Education jargon buster on its website, where it went without any media comment. And as ex-the ELs Planning Officer (2008) states:

> Once the issue grew legs, it was difficult to stop. While we developed other measures in late 2005-early-2006 – an assessment document – Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting in Tasmania: K-10 (n.d.) – to counteract this misinformation that was coming from the press, perhaps we [the ELs development team] were not rigorous enough in ensuring that the message reached the general public.

And as the Kersey group of principals (2008) insist, teachers had a professional responsibility to be 'up to speed' with language being employed in their curriculum. They were being paid to do so. One would expect most teachers to understand the language contained in the passage.

Sussex suggested the department hand its literature over to a professional editor for a rewrite. This was a suggestion that carried loaded inferences in respect to the department's ability to

write plain English. Of course, this was an ultimate insult for a government department concerned with public education!

Jacob was invited to comment on the topic. She used the well-worn argument about the process of consultation in which the ELs planners were engaged. She assured the Tasmanian public there 'was broad consultation through focus groups around the state to canvas parent opinion on the best way to report about the progress of their children' (Low Choy, 2005b). Clearly, by now, the ELs planners should have realized there were other strategies required in the management of ELs rollout, other than consultation!

But, obviously, the jargon buster was causing more problems than it was solving. Perhaps, as an index to the frustration and outrage in Tasmanian society, this apparently miniscule issue was adopting goliath-like proportions. So, a few weeks later it was withdrawn from the department's website. This move provoked yet another article in *The Mercury* from Low Choy (2005e).

There had been turmoil in State Parliament as the Opposition probed the Government for weaknesses on the ELs curriculum, causing some embarrassing moments and some headaches for Government members during Question Time. Under close media scrutiny, here, Wriedt admitted her department's jargon buster was 'completely unhelpful' for parents (Low Choy, 2005e). As the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) states, had Wriedt been firmly in control of the issue, she would have pointed out to the Opposition the intended audience for the jargon buster.

However, Wriedt went on to confirm, on her instructions the jargon buster had been removed from her department's website, admitting:

> There is no doubt that documents for parents which use complex language are of little use and as a result the jargon buster has been removed from the department's website.
>
> The manner in which it was written was completely unhelpful in demystifying any of the terms (Low Choy, 2005e).

According to (Low Choy, 2005e), 'parents, teachers, students, language experts and the business community', were 'all bamboozled by the jargon buster.' These groups demanded a 'please explain'. Again, Wriedt had Jacob come forward to defend the department in the face of a confident Opposition and a feisty Tasmanian media contingent:

> But Ms Jacob refused to define any of the jargon in more simple terms, offering a complex explanation as to why it was not possible for her to define 'concept map' (Low Choy, 2005e).

Clearly, the 'sloppy' management of the ELs rollout, especially with the language being used to communicate with parents, was causing the vastly outnumbered Liberal Opposition to brim-full with confidence, as they eyed the forthcoming lection. And, now Premier Lennon was 'feeling the pinch'. According, to Low Choy:

> Ms Wriedt said she acknowledged the Education Department's communications with parents could have been 'a whole lot clearer'.
>
> 'The language used in Education Department communications with parents does need improvement and I will ensure that improvements are made,' she said.
>
> 'There will be a more concerted effort to use clearer language in all documents used to communicate with school communities' (Low Choy, 2005e).

Many school principals and teachers had been reporting growing disquiet amongst parents about the ELs initiative during 2005; 2006, clearly, was destined to be a testing year for the change effort. There had been much publicity concerning the ELs report cards being used for the first time at the end of term 1, 2006. These new report cards did not use the terms maths, science and English. Instead, students were assessed on outcomes based on their 'being numerate', 'acting democratically', 'thinking reflectively' and 'being arts literate' and so on.

The ELs report cards survived the 'ELs election' during the months that followed when ELs was 'dead in the water', but still officially the curriculum in use. Low Choy, in *The Mercury* reported on 10 October 2006 Tasmanian parents would have a chance to 'vote' on the ELs report card at the end of term 1, 2007. Branch, was responding to the deeply felt concerns and disquiet emanating from the various parents and friends associations around the state. She contended her organization would strongly back the view held by the majority of parents. As soon as parents had an opportunity to examine the new report card, they would be given the opportunity to respond to a survey seeking their opinions of the new report card:

> If there's overall a strong view held by the majority of parents, [then] we will be backing them. We are committed to listening to parents and will take their concerns to the Education Minister's department (Low Choy, 2006).

During the week prior to the posting of Low Choy's article on *The Mercury's* website, Low Choy reported 'Wriedt had accepted a number of changes to ELs reports proposed by the TASSP&F during the previous week. 'Almost all of the parents' suggestions for improving the format have now been taken up,' she reported Wriedt as saying. 'The biggest shame in all this is parents haven't seen what they're going to get and once they do

that should allay a lot of their fears,' Wriedt concluded (Low Choy, 2005a).

Branch from the TASSP&F 'was happy to see the last of ELs'

Following the 'ELs election', Duncan reported in *The Mercury* in April 2006 Branch was happy to see the last of ELs. Duncan claimed 'The major concerns with parents have been around the use of language in the report to parents'. In the article headed, 'Parents will push for changes to the controversial new Essential Learnings report cards', Duncan revealed just the full extent of the influence of Tasmanian parents on the ELs rollout:

> Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends helped lobby the State Government to slow down the transition to the new report cards.
>
> ... Jenny Branch said new Education Minister David Bartlett would now be urged to alter the ELs reports (Duncan, 2006a).

Branch had organised a survey of 1200 parents, which had revealed 'three to four problems with the reports'. A common complaint had been the report's 'confusing' language. She went on to state something should have been patently obvious to the ELs planners: 'We need to get this right,' she said. 'Parents need to know if their children are learning, or not' (Duncan, 2006a).

In her *Mercury* article, Duncan (2006a) revealed the Government had agreed to requests from the AEU and the TASSP&F to postpone the next stage of the ELs reports. Now, Walker linked arms with Gutwein in calling for changes to the new reports. One suspects in post-ELs Tasmania, with a new Minister for Education, Gutwein knew he could be seen to be putting an end to what he argued was a sad saga in Tasmanian public education. While ever the public perceived that elements of ELs remained in their schools, there would be continued

public outrage. And, of course, children's report cards are the public face of schools. The Liberal Opposition and *The Mercury* waited for when Tasmanian students took home their first ELs report cards. One would imagine the Liberal Opposition rejoiced at this move.

Duncan reported in *The Mercury*:

> The new-look reports did not use traditional terms such as maths and English.
>
> Instead, students were marked against three ELs assessment areas, or 'elements': being literate, being numerate and maintaining well-being
>
> Teachers were to have assessed students against an additional three elements this year: acting democratically, enquiry and being information literate (Duncan, 2006a).

On taking up his new portfolio of Education, Bartlett was under public pressure, and, surely, pressure from within his own ranks, to do something about the ELs-inspired report cards. His department had now agreed to delay this next step until late in 2006. Duncan reported it was a victory for a confident Opposition:

> Mr Gutwein said parents needed clear, subject-based reports and urged Mr Bartlett to further review the ELs reports.
>
> 'Parents want to know how their child is performing in areas such as mathematics, science and English,' he said.
>
> 'They should not have to attempt to interpret fuzzy language' (Duncan, 2006a).

Before the 'ELs election' and Wriedt's demise as Minister for Education, ELs and the new report system was drawing 'heavy fire' from the Opposition and various quarters of Tasmanian society, with criticism from parents, teachers, students, language experts, education experts and the business community, during

the dark pre-election months. But, still, during these pre-election months, Wriedt stood firm with her ELs team, and according to Low Choy, she continued to be 'excited about the ELs' (Low Choy, 2006). And well she may have been. As an ex-Clarence High School student, no doubt, Wriedt kept in touch with what was happening at her old school.

Not all parents were opposed to ELs: 'these children have got to come up with ideas'

Only two years earlier, ELs was receiving considerable praise from parents at this school. For example, Roseanne Partridge, the 2004 President of Parents and Friends at Clarence High, was an ELs enthusiastic, as was Leppard, the school principal. Significantly, Clarence High School services the Bellerive-Howrah upper-middle class area, a factor, which suggests ELs may have been more positively received in upper-middle class districts. However, only further research outside of the scope of this thesis would shed more light on this subject. Partridge's son, who was about to finish grade 10, had gone through that school's transition, and she enthused to ABC Tasmanian *Stateline* viewers:

> Yes, it's bought him more out of himself with this new system. It's not something that they're going to be given a sheet that's been photocopied. This is something these children have got to come up with ideas, they've got to find the information, they've got to get off their bottoms and do it. They've got to work hard at it and they've got to look for all this information and they've got to go out and do interviews, things like that. (Ward, 2004)

Brownlow (2008), an upper-middle class professional parent of an intellectually gifted child, who was head prefect at a Tasmanian high school in 2008, was less enthusiastic about ELs. Certainly, Brownlow (2008) was not hostile towards Clarence High School as such, because the benefits her daughter had gained from attending the school far outweighed any concern

she might have held about ELs. Her concerns centred on the much-reduced choice of subject ELs had effected for students at that school. The school is a high-level academic school, where a large proportion of its student body proceeded on to senior college and tertiary education. Brownlow, herself a teacher with thirty years' experience, contended no matter how much a parent might agree with the constructivist pedagogy contained in ELs, 'the reality was that kids going on to university will need an education based on academic disciplines'.

If there were difficulties in the early implementation stage at Clarence High School, for Leppard, these had to do with the ELs language:

> We made some mistakes with that. We didn't explain clearly enough what you call 'the jargon' about reporting and we've learnt that lesson very well now. And we ask people much more often whether this makes sense or whether it doesn't (Ward, 2004).

Indeed, Leppard and his ELs enthusiasts at the school may have been consulting with their clientele and appeasing parents' deeply held fears, but there were many Tasmanian schools where this did not happen. And there was a state election looming ever closer.

Clearly, the poor management of the ELs rollout could be contrasted with the enormous budget underpinning the initiative itself. After the ditching of the program, the Tasmanian taxpayers learnt ELs 'came at a cost of more than $12-million and was backed up by a $200,000 advertising campaign.' And Wriedt, the former Minister for Education, claimed 'it's a necessary part of providing parents information in a clear way' (Ward, 2007).

'Essential Learnings debate turns spiritual'

Lugg (2000) has shown how educational policy makers in the US have long sought to portray through the media how their policies concur with Christian ethics. Not surprisingly, any media reports that showed how existing educational policy offended Christian ethics would place that policy in a severely negative light for many in countries such as the US and Australia.

Indeed, certain parents from Tasmanian Christian groups did find exception with ELs, although these concerns often were clearly underpinned by political motive. For example, in a *Mercury* article headed 'Essential Learnings debate turns spiritual', written by Paine in 2005, a Tasmanian relief (casual) teacher criticised ELs 'for requiring her to assess a child's spirituality'. The teacher said she had had several concerns about the ELs curriculum since her first involvement five years previously. She said she 'also worried that children would believe 'nothing was right or wrong' under the new inquiry-based system that encouraged children to think for themselves'. She questioned what 'ethical behaviour' actually was, claiming 'people have different views of what's ethical'. When she had asked about teaching and assessing values, she claimed she could not get a 'good' answer. The woman claimed 'knowledge and skills should come before inquiry-based thinking' (Paine, 2005).

The Mercury revealed the woman's husband was an ethics lecturer and a pastor at a Legana church, and he, too was concerned about ELs. He claimed many children coming through ELs would have a 'don't tell me what to do' attitude (Paine, 2005). But in the same article Wriedt showed the woman was a candidate for West Tamar council and a card-carrying member of the Liberal Party, who had had her campaign

literature endorsed by the then Liberal MHR, Michael Ferguson (Paine, 2005).

In the same *Mercury* article, Wriedt went on to argue the criticism that the basics were 'neglected was ridiculous'. 'To suggest we would put a curriculum in place that would not teach the basics, the reading, writing and maths, is laughable.' Wriedt reminded *The Mercury* readers that she, herself, was 'a parent and my son is getting some of those basics in kindergarten, taught in a context that children can understand' (Paine, 2005).

Wriedt also slammed the criticism about spirituality:

> 'Of course, spirituality means different things to different people,' she said.
>
> 'Of course it's possible for a teacher to know if a child has an understanding of morality.'
>
> She said good teachers already did much of what was encouraged in ELs (Paine, 2005).

Gutwein responded by claiming, 'Wriedt needed to ensure educators understood the new curriculum' (Paine, 2005). Most importantly, she needed to ensure parents were confident their children were receiving a quality education (Paine, 2005). Indeed, the process of schools reporting to parents had reached hitherto unrealised political dimensions in Tasmania.

'Business hits ELs reports: makes no sense, say employers'

Whereas, many Tasmanian parents objected to the report cards, because of the perceived unintelligible language, employer groups objected to them for failing to show clearly and precisely what the school leaver had achieved at school. During 2005, the attack by *The Mercury* on ELs was relentless. Low Choy (2005f) headlined an article in that newspaper, representing

employer dissatisfaction with ELs with, 'Business hits ELs reports: makes no sense, say employers'. According to her:

> Tasmania's business community says it does not understand the Education Department's new Essential Learnings report cards.
>
> The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and two of the state's top human resource firms say the reports do not make sense to employers...
>
> 'We need to spare a thought for Tasmanian businesses as they make decisions to employ and train people.
>
> 'A framework that does not indicate whether a potential employee can read, write and add up is of little benefit to their daily business operations' (Low Choy, 2005f).

Low Choy (2005f) reported Thomas was particularly critical of the ELs report cards, because they did not use the terms maths, science and English. Instead, exiting year 10 students, and indeed, all students, were being assessed on such things as 'being numerate', 'acting democratically', 'thinking reflectively' and 'being arts literate'. Many in the community could only agree with Thomas. A plumber, for example, wanting to hire an apprentice, would want to have some idea of the potential apprentice's comparative ability in maths, science and English. For many of Thomas' members, worse still under ELs, students would no longer be assigned A, B, C and D grades, nor would they be failed. For many employers, choosing the potentially best young employee seemed an almost impossible task.

During 2005, in her relentless attack on ELs, Low Choy (2005f) turned to the TESA Group managing director, Craig Ransley for more comment on the ELs report cards. According to *The Mercury* report, Ransley's Hobart-based recruitment firm, which specialises in blue-collar jobs, turns over more than $100

million a year. Ransley claimed the ELs report cards 'made no sense whatsoever':

> 'I think they're designed to remove accountability from the Education Department and the department needs to be accountable to employers and to parents' (Low Choy, 2005f).

Ransley's views in the Low Choy (2005f) article held particular political venom, and one that was sure to stimulate more political comment. Accusing the Department of Education of designing the report cards in order to mask accountability issues in respect of low scores in literacy and numeracy was a grave charge, and one fervently denied by people such as the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008), to the point that this was 'almost a laughable accusation'.

But of course, with Ransley stating what he did about a government cover-up, and Low Choy's including it in her article, they were performing a sophisticated political act. As Anderson (2007, p. 108) shows, Edelman (1977) had demonstrated in his work with language, the media and politics, that 'the linguistic evocation of enemies and the displacement of targets' – in this case the ELs report cards and falling literacy and numeracy standards – is a subtle, but yet powerful, political act. As Anderson (2007, pp. 108-109) puts it:

> Those with the power to manage can cast... progressive teaching methods... and so forth as the villains in educational reform. All displaced attention from other possible actors and events. Limiting the demand for accountability to schools displaces other targets that escape attention.

Thus, Ransley's comments ensured attention by the Tasmanian voting public on falling literacy and numeracy standards were not focused on, for example, any Howard Government policy, such as its 'lean and mean' education funding for Australia's government schools.

Defending ELs from attacks by employers

In Low Choy's (2005f) *Mercury* article, Hanlon, hit back at the accusations. He declared the TCCI had been involved in the development of ELs. Moreover, 'they continue to be consulted on curriculum changes, particularly assessment and reporting (Low Choy, 2005f). He added there had been a positive response from employers on matters relating to ELs, with 'recently 30 employers and employer groups [giving] overwhelming positive feedback about reporting' (Low Choy, 2005f).

Still, for Wriedt and her planners, the issue of school reports was a serious one, and had to be dealt with. The recently cited *Mercury* report referred to 'a reporting system that requires a jargon buster'. And the department, indeed, had provided a jargon buster, but one that was meant to be used by teachers in order to ensure their reports were jargon free. Low Choy (2005e) was simply distorting the truth to assert the jargon buster was posted on the department's website in order to assist parents and employers understand the ELs language. But, as it turned out, this move gave the ELs detractors – the politically motivated, the laggards, recalcitrants, ethical resisters, the malcontents in the education system, and the genuine ideological resisters – more ammunition to fire off at ELs.

Analysis

In chapter five it was shown Rogers wrote as far back as 1962 the rate at which an innovation is taken up by a group of potential adopters – in this case the parents and potential employers of Tasmanian state school children – is influenced, first by characteristics of the innovation itself. The obvious first criterion for this adoption is the innovation must have some relative advantage – it must in some way appear to be superior

to the existing product or practice. Here, readers are reminded of Piercy who they encountered in chapter eight, and who poured scorn on ELs, and had received massive support from parents. For these parents, at least, there was no obvious advantage for them in their aspirations of their child[ren]'s education in what the ELs report cards, or, indeed, the curriculum itself over that preceding it.

Then, according to Rogers (1962), there is the issue of compatibility – the degree to which the innovation matches the values and experiences of individuals in the community. The evidence that this thesis has been able to unearth for this chapter, strongly suggest the point at which most parents and potential employers encountered ELs was the annual report cards. Here, there was an issue of complexity: the language contained in the report cards was simply too difficult to understand, or use. For many parents and employers, it was simply meaningless.

The ELs report cards were the public face of the innovation. And Rogers (1962) shows observability – the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others – is a vital component for its success. The ELs report cards were a volatile political entity, due to the apparent poor choice of language contained in them.

Chapter five also shows an actor-network theory framing draws attention to the non-human elements in the Department of Education network. For instance, along with SARIS, were the report cards; these had a critical role in the rollout of the innovation. Indeed, the success of the entire innovation hinged on the public acceptance of the report cards. Simply ensuring teachers adopted the ELs pedagogy was a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the network to be stabilized, as the

department so desired. The department believed it had consulted with parents and employer groups on the ELs pedagogy. But by 2005, it was becoming patently obvious many parents and employers opposed the report cards. And, of course, the report cards, in actor-network terms, were key actors in the network, and were extremely politically volatile. It has been demonstrated that actor-network theory is particularly interested in how actors are recruited; what negotiations take place to arrive at roles that are mutually agreed; then, what mechanisms are put in place to police the various heterogeneous actors as they perform their delegated roles. Assisted by zealous reporting in *The Mercury*, the political nature of the ELs report cards ensured that they were, indeed, a problematic actor in the network. What light does Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor throw on the problem?

Weaver-Hightower's (2008, p. 156) stresses the importance of relationships between the actors in a network. The actors are 'more than space sharers'. They exist in complex relationships of four basic types: competition, cooperation, predation and symbiosis. The most appealing aspect about the actor-network theory and the ecology metaphor is that the ELs report cards and texts such as the failed jargon buster are seen as being actors in the network. These textual players, albeit, are not passive actors. They are proactive, and possess a political life of their own. It is unlikely the ELs planners who designed them had any idea of the political proportions they would assume.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VERSUS THE TASMANIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This thesis has shown the extent of Commonwealth leverage over the states and territories in some curriculum matters, *vis-à-vis* accommodating history and the plain English report cards: 'parents are sick of left wing ideology' (Cassidy, 2006). During the whole of the ELs years of 2000-06, the only conservative government in power at a state, territory and national level was the Howard Coalition Government in Canberra. It was continually 'on the front foot' in its campaigns against the states and territories in influencing education policy through its program of tied grants. Of course, this was a campaign as much about the maintenance of political power, as being about educational policy.

The Tasmanian federal seats of Bass and Braddon, rightly, were deemed to be marginal. Prior to the 2004 federal election, Labor held all of the five Tasmanian federal seats: Bass (2.1%), Braddon (6.0%), Franklin (8.0%), Lyons (8.2%), Denison (14.3%) (ABC *News Online*: Australia Votes, 2004). However, in 2004, Braddon and Bass fell to the conservatives. Thus, for the forthcoming federal election, set for sometime in late-2007, these two seats were vital for both Labor and Liberals.

'Hogging and Coagulating the Australian Education Agenda'

Knight, Lingard, Bartlett and Porter (1995) researched the increasing control by the Commonwealth over the states and territories in respect to education policy. The issue was becoming apparent in the late 1980s. For example, an ARC-funded study of the AEC, 1987-94, in a paper, entitled Hogging and Coagulating the Australian Education Agenda, delivered at the 1995 Annual Conference of AARE held in Hobart, the authors began their paper by stating:

> Central to our discussion are the shifts in power and control associated with the increasing ministerialisation of policy and the more recent shift to direction from Premiers and Premiers Departments and the Council of Australian Governments (Knight, *et al.*, p. 1).

The paper concluded by stating:

> The older tensions between central bureaucracies and peripheral professionals have been compounded with the increasing politicisation of education and training, and the growing hegemony of ministers, HOGs and COAG (Knight, *et al.*, p. 12).

During the years since the research was undertaken, the process of federal control over education has intensified. But this chapter is as much about political point scoring, as it is about Commonwealth influence over education.

Set in the midst of the public outrage surrounding ELs, state education policy was going to possibly spill over into federal politics. This chapter shall paint a brief outline of some key events in this educational battleground to illustrate the high political stakes that ELs was becoming, particularly during the period 2004-06 – the lead-up to the 2007 federal election.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Plan

Flowing from the *Adelaide Declaration,* previously referred to in chapter one, was the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. A part of that plan was the Australian Government's 2005 Plain English Report Card. The Australian Government's Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks website states:

> Under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, all States and Territories have agreed to report student achievement data against the benchmarks to the Australian community through the MCEETYA [Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs] annual National Report on Schooling in Australia.
>
> Reporting is in terms of achievement or non-achievement of the benchmark standards...
>
> The reporting of national benchmark data for each State and Territory acknowledges differences between States and Territories, including differences in the average amount of schooling completed by students and in their ages at the time of testing (*National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks*).

The Age fell in line with Minister Nelson, the architect of the scheme. In an article headed 'Reports Still Failing Parents', the newspaper declared:

> From next year under the new Commonwealth funding regime, schools will be required to issue reports in plain language, with student achievement graded from A to E and ranked at least according to what quarter of the class they fall into in a particular subject.
>
> Some education specialists have raised doubts about the usefulness of ranking students against their classmates because it doesn't reveal what students need to do to improve their learning.
>
> But federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson sees the reforms as a necessary response to the strong desire from parents for reports to contain information that compares a child's performance to others in their class (*Age*, 2005, 21 March).

Peter Cuttance and Shirley Stokes from The University of Sydney, in their research paper, titled, Reporting on Student and School Achievement, prepared for DETYA, in January 2000, showed parents most wanted the following in children's school reports:

- More frequent reporting, especially when student is having problems.
- To be told about strategies that can be used at home and will be used at school to address student needs that have been identified.
- Written reports to identify standards that a child's progress is measured against.
- Information in reports to be cumulative, so that child's progress can be charted.
- Discussion at parent-teacher meetings to be based on examples of student work (Cuttance & Stokes, 2000).

Clearly, what Nelson was advocating, supported by *The Age* and endorsed by influential academics, *vis-à-vis* reporting to parents, was diametrically opposed to what the ELs curriculum was insisting on.

Reaching agreement on the Australian Government's Plain English Report Card

But, in order to meet federal funding criteria, during 2005, the Lennon Government had reached agreement with the Australian Government on the Plain English Report Card for its schools. Under the Australian Government's *School Assistance Act and Regulations*, there was a set of conditions that Tasmania had to meet in order to receive the funding. Finally, in October 2005, Nelson advised the ELs report card met with the requirements in relation to reporting to parents. The report card had been confirmed as providing an accurate and objective assessment of a child's progress in plain language. The report now included

reporting against achievement bands A-E (*payday News* 2005, 53, Oct.).

Establish *Benchmarking* as an independent referee and authority

During the ELs years, however, the federal-state bickering never ceased. According to *The Mercury*, Tasmania's controversial ELs curriculum remained the worst primary school curriculum in Australia, according to a 2005 national report. The report, *Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula* (2005), blasted aspects of ELs as being 'vague and lacking academic rigor'. So wrote Low Chow (2005a) in *The Mercury*:

> ELs was rated bottom of the class in all three subject areas the Federal Government report assessed.
>
> Education Minister Paula Wriedt accused federal Education Minister Brendan Nelson of employing a friend to write the report.
>
> Dr Nelson has been critical of ELs, demanding that Tasmania's Education Department prepare 'plain English' report cards for students in addition to ELs-based report cards.
>
> 'This can hardly be claimed to be independent advice,' Ms Wriedt claimed
>
> 'Dr Nelson set up a mate to write the report that he wanted – and guess what? He got it!' (Low Chow, 2005a).

Indeed, Wriedt knew exactly who the report's author was. But, in the same article, the report's author, Donnelly, retaliated to such claims by declaring four highly respected and qualified academics contributed to the report. 'They include the eminently respected former head of the Mathematics Association of Australia and an acknowledged primary school science expert who has been awarded international travel for her work,' Donnelly said. 'Education is too important for our young people to play politics with' (*Age*, 2005, 21 March).

But, as the ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) explains, the authors of *Benchmarking* never spoke with members of the ELs team in Hobart, and consequently much of the information that was used on which to base an assessment came from outdated information simply trawled from the web. This was particularly the case with mathematics. The ex-ELs Planning Officer (2008) contends the Tasmanian mathematics detail in *Benchmarking* came from something that was outdated and had been developed by a particular school cluster for local use.

Reminding Tasmanian voters of the public outrage of ELs imbroglio and Wriedt's attachment to it, Low Choy (2005c) wrote the ELs curriculum had been under fire for the past month, 'drawing heavy criticism from parents, teachers, students, language experts and the business community'. Despite this criticism, 'Ms Wriedt has continued to champion ELs, implemented in all state schools this year' (Low Chow, 2005c).

Low Choy (2005c) attempted to establish *Benchmarking* as an independent referee and authority on Australian curricula. The report rated ELs curricula for mathematics, science and English as the worst in Australia. She claimed:

> ELs falls well short of education standards both interstate and overseas, the report shows.
>
> It finds Tasmania's primary school mathematics curriculum shows limited evidence of having academic content or of being detailed, unambiguous or measurable (2005b).

The ELs science and English curricula also received a damning review from Dr Donnelly (Low Chow, 2005c).

> 'It could be reasonably anticipated that only the experienced teacher would be able to make the connections between the classroom activities and the

> science idea that was meant to be investigated, explored and understood,' he writes.
>
> The ELs English curriculum fares no better, with Dr Donnelly branding it 'generic'.
>
> 'Standards like "understands how to construct and deconstruct art works designed with particular intentions" are so generalized and vague that teachers would find it difficult to interpret,' he writes.
>
> 'Statements like "understands how to comprehend and create meaningful spoken, written and visual texts using appropriate symbolic, cultural, syntactic and semantic understandings" fail to detail what such understandings refer to or to give teachers explicit guidance on how such understandings might be implemented in the classroom' (Low Chow, 2005c).

Donnelly drew comparisons between the 'all-out approach' to ELs in Tasmania and the more conservative approach to essential learnings that, as chapter six revealed, for example, was employed in the Victorian curriculum. 'But unlike... Tasmania there is a greater recognition of the importance of the academic disciplines,' he argued (Low Chow, 2005c).

No doubt mindful of the forthcoming 2007 Federal election and the marginal Tasmanian seats, and an even more imminent state election, Nelson, used the occasion of the release of *Benchmarking* to wage yet another assault on the Tasmanian Government and its ELs program. In the Low Choy (2005c) *Mercury* article, Nelson stated he had found curricula in countries like England, Singapore and Japan were outstripping Australia's performance in primary schools, particularly in mathematics and science. He declared:

> 'The report recommends that Australia's education system, which has been infected by what's known as the outcomes-based model, needs to return to a much more concise, prescriptive syllabus which teachers [in a way that] parents can understand and

> assess the progress of children on a year-to-year basis,' Dr Nelson said (Low Chow, 2005c).

The Mercury gave Wriedt the right of reply, and she countered by showing Donnelly was 'an educational conservative who had authored other attacks on education'. She contended a recent Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development report had backed Tasmania's ELs curriculum (Low Chow, 2005c). But, Wriedt was once again on 'the back foot', having to defend her ELs rollout.

The Mercury then gave Gutwein a voice on the topic. He declared 'the report confirmed comments made by teachers about ELs' (Low Chow, 2005c).

Certainly, Low Choy gave no space in her article to Donnelly's career in supporting and shaping conservative education policy. Indeed, since the election of the Howard Government back in 1996, Donnelly had been kept busy in his research and writing for such groups as the Menzies Institute – the Melbourne-based conservative think-tank. He also is a regular correspondent with *The Australian,* a stablemate of *The Mercury* in the Murdoch media group. (ketupa.net media profiles Murdoch & news). He also is director of Melbourne-based Education Strategies, his own consultancy base.

The politics of think-tank research

The manner in which *The Mercury* and *The Australian* used think-tank research to cover political interest with a discourse of supposed rational policy analysis is precisely the subject of research by Haas (2007). He shows the media often creates a crisis as a political act through an appeal to scientific rational, and neutral discourse.

The Mercury and *The Australian* attempted to gain political advantage through an appeal to the findings of a supposedly politically agnostic Howard Government report. Of course, *Benchmarking* is no more politically neutral than is *The Mercury,* or *The Australian.*

In a surprise move, Low Choy (2005g) in *The Mercury* allowed Wriedt the opportunity to take the initiative in a lengthy response to *Benchmarking*:

> Wriedt yesterday launched a spirited defence of Tasmania's controversial new Essential Learnings curriculum and blasted critics who suggested it was not teaching the basics.
>
> In a wide-ranging interview with *The Mercury*, she says she does not accept the state's bottom-of-the-class ranking by a Federal Government education report released on Wednesday.
>
> The report rated the Essential Learnings (ELs) curriculum the worst primary school education system in Australia.
>
> *Benchmarking*... blasted aspects of ELs as being 'vague and lacking academic rigour'.
>
> ELs received the lowest ranking in all three subject areas the report assessed.
>
> But Ms Wriedt says the report was based only on opinion.
>
> 'We are not at the bottom of the pile. We are highly competitive with other states. It's not all going wrong down here,' she said (Low Choy, 2005g, 30 Sept.).

After allowing Gutwein a lengthy reply, significantly, *The Mercury* invited readers to text their responses: Parents and students: Tell us what you think of Essential Learnings. Does it work for you? *And if not, why*? (Low Choy, 2005g, 30 Sept.). Of course, *The Mercury* showed its real bias by not inviting readers to respond to: Does it work for you? *And if so, why*?

Stuart Macintyre's criticism of Donnelly's extreme views

The Australian (2007) however, was a little more evenhanded in its dealings with Donnelly's polemics than was *The Mercury*. *The Australian* (2007) gave ample space to Stuart Macintyre's criticism of Donnelly's extreme views. Macintyre had long voiced his opposition to the educational policies of the Howard Government. A prolific author of Australian Studies and Australian history, since 1990, he had been Ernest Scott Professor of History at the University of Melbourne; in 2002, he was made a Laureate Professor of the University of Melbourne. Certainly, as far as quality internationally acclaimed research was concerned, he was 'head-and-shoulders' above Donnelly.

In March 2007 in *The Australian*, Macintyre ran a broadside on Donnelly and his shameless partisan journalism. He was reviewing Donnelly's book, *Dumbing Down: Outcome-based and Politically Correct – The Impact of the Culture Wars on Our Schools*. He revealed Donnelly – nicknamed Rasputin – as a shameless political opportunist, who had been an educational advisor to Don Hayward, Education Minister in Jeff Kennett's Victorian Coalition Government, and had worked with a series of state and federal Coalition ministers. But according to Macintyre, Donnelly did not set the same educational standards for himself that he expected from state education systems. Macintyre accused Donnelly of sloppy spelling, syntax and sentence structure in his book (Macintyre, 2007).

Certainly, many Tasmanians interested in the education debate surrounding ELs would have appreciated *The Mercury* following the same even-handed lead shown by *The Australian* in this case. Macintyre accused Donnelly of being 'obsessive and partisan' in his journalism; maybe, the same could have been leveled at *The Mercury* during the ELs years.

Analysis

Ostensibly, in diffusion theory terms, the Tasmanian educational system, in which ELs was being diffused was a clearly defined entity. It comprised the state of Tasmania. In chapter five it was shown Rogers (1995) had written about the 'bounded' community in which the innovation diffuses. But, increasingly during the eleven and a half years of the Howard Government, this was a boundary under intense political challenge, through educational policies and the political ambitions of an outside government, with control over vast and much-needed resources by the Tasmanian Government.

The Howard Government had made severe inroads into state educational policy. The influential actors in the whole schema were increasingly to be found in Canberra. Thus, actor-network theory better explains what was occurring during these years.

Chapter five described how, at a base level, an actor-network theory approaches the study of an innovation by 'following the actors', human and non-human. For example, (Latour, 1996, p. 112) shows how the theory traces the moves, counter-moves and compromises that go to make up the negotiation of any innovation. With the political thrusts and counter-thrusts occurring between the Howard Coalition Government and the Tasmanian Labor Government, network building, or making alliances, became very fluid, complex, and at times vitriolic.

The actors in the ELs network were continually coming under attack from outside of the state, and having to justify what they were doing to maintain the much-needed federal funding. This required much defensive action by the ELs planners. The

negotiation and stabilization of roles for the actors in the network was becoming increasingly challenging for Wriedt and her ELs planners. This underpins the assertion by the actor-network theorists that the stability of networks is never assured. Certainly, the boundaries are seldom stable.

Weaver-Hightower's (2008) ecology metaphor underscores this point:

> *Boundaries* are an important facet of the environment and structure of an ecology. Policies, most obviously, have jurisdictional boundaries, from local ordinance to international law. Not all boundaries are clear-cut, however. It is difficult to conclude that one actor has no part or feels no impact, and it is difficult to conclude that one phenomenon... has no impact. Boundaries exist, but they can be difficult to discern with accuracy [emphasis in original] (p. 156).

In this chapter it was shown that certainly during the ELs years the boundary that was the Tasmanian education system – the target of the ELs rollout – was blurred with the Howard Government's challenges with federal intervention.

However, Weaver-Hightower (2008) goes on to argue:

> Within the boundaries, actors face the ecology's *extant conditions* that – because ecologies are constantly changing – proceed the moment of analysis. Extant conditions in human social ecologies may include the economy, social change, poverty, crime, infrastructure, foreign relations, and cultures in general. History and tradition, not to mention existing dynamics involving race, class, gender, and religion, are also influential. To varying degrees, these conditions and dynamics structure future possibilities and define the lines along which competition, cooperation, and predation occur [emphasis in original] (p. 156).

The exact level of damage that Howard's government did to ELs is not known. But, certainly it was not about promoting

the curriculum in any positive manner. The thesis shall now turn to an analysis of the educational and political aftermath of the 'ELs election' of March 2006.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL AFTERMATH

While ELs existed in schools for several months following the March 2006 'ELs election', astute observers were confident that following the voting public's pronouncement on its worth, through Wriedt's much-reduced poll in the seat of Franklin, that the curriculum had a limited future. The Government simply had to get it off the front pages of the newspapers. Its eventual demise had come at great cost. According to Duncan in *The Mercury*, 'the State Government has spent more than $20 million implementing, developing, and advertising ELs, laptops for teachers and ELs-linked cash bonuses for principals' (Duncan, 2006b, 30 June).

The Mercury announces the end of ELs; 'the jargon-filled ELs would disappear'

Much the history of ELs was played out in the media, particularly *The Mercury*. And this was the case with the public announcement of its demise. On 30 June 2006, Duncan reported in the Hobart daily:

> The Essential Learnings framework will be dumped less than two years after it was introduced to all schools.

> Education Minister David Bartlett yesterday revealed the jargon-filled ELs would disappear from Tasmanian schools next year.
>
> And his deputy secretary David Hanlon did not rule out a return to the traditional subjects of maths and english [sic].
>
> Mr Bartlett said his department head John Smyth and some principals had begun work on 'Tasmania's Curriculum' to replace ELs.
>
> He promised the result would 'radically simplify the language and the framework' but was reluctant to concede ELs had been scrapped.
>
> He preferred to call the massive overhaul 'an ongoing refinement and improvement process'.
>
> It has earned criticism from every quarter – teachers, parents, students, the Australian Education Union, education experts and the business sector.
>
> Opposition education spokesman Peter Gutwein said the widely criticised framework had 'died a death by a thousand cuts' (Duncan, 2006b, 30 June).

The phrase, 'a death by a thousand cuts', holds particular poignancy for this thesis, as it is placed in the title of the thesis. The Phrase Finder states that it describes:

> a slow death by the torture of many small wounds, none lethal in itself, but fatal in their cumulative effect. This torture was a form of execution in ancient China, reserved for the most heinous crime. The more literal translation from the Chinese is 'one thousand knives and ten thousand pieces', the scariest possible description, designed to deter criminals (Phrase Finder).

One wonders whether or not Gutwein really understood the significance of his use of the phrase.

But despite this unfortunate use of language, the demise of ELs should be positioned in the broad, national landscape of political and educational events, which occurred at about that time.

The changing political landscape of Australian curricula

Between March 2006 and November 2007 the whole Australian educational landscape was shaken by three major quakes. First, there was the near-defeat of Wriedt in the seat of Franklin at the Tasmanian state elections, and the consequent dumping of ELs. Then, there was the about-face in Western Australia with the government's OBE-based curriculum. To top off all of this, there was the landslide win by Labor in the November 2007 federal election.

First, this thesis should observe what happened in Western Australia. Readers should remember that, as chapter six has shown, Western Australia never developed an essential learnings framework. OBE, however was applied to traditional subjects in all government schools for grades K-10. The significance of this event for this thesis lies in the way in which the Commonwealth Government brought pressure on the Western Australian Government in regard to its curriculum. Following the removal of the Minister for Education, Ljiljanna Ravlich, in December 2006, in a similar fashion that had occurred with Wriedt earlier that year, much the future of OBE in Western Australia was bleak. Then came the removal of the Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Western Australia's Curriculum Council, and the ultimate reversal of policy, such that OBE was largely abandoned. Western Australia, however, also came under pressure from the Commonwealth Coalition Government.

Federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, launched a series of stinging attacks on Western Australia's public education system and the influence that it was coming under in terms of OBE. One such media report showed that Nelson claimed OBE was the result of a 'crippling ideology of playing politics'. He

went on to deride the fact that the 3Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic had become 'republic, reconciliation and refugees' (*Australian*, 2005, 24 Sep.). There is little doubt that in Western Australia, the Commonwealth was a very significant player, using financial policy levers as it also was doing in Tasmania.

In Western Australia, Donnelly, also played a hand. On an anti-OBE website (http://www.outcomeseducation.com/articles.htm), he is reported as attacking Western Australia's OBE, reminding Western Australians what Nelson had said about it when Nelson was in Western Australia during 2005. According to Donnelly, Nelson was correct. The outcomeseducation.com website advertised that the Western Australian Institute of Public Affairs had organised for Donnelly to be in Perth in June 2006 to give a public talk on OBE (http://www.outcomeseducation.com/articles.htm).

In January 2007, Tony Barrass reported in *The Australian*:

> Following continued criticism of Western Australia's Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum, the Western Australian Government has announced that the OBE will be significantly altered. Under the changes announced, student assessment will revert to traditional grades and percentages, rather than using levels and bands. In addition, Year 12 exams would be re-introduced, Australian history would become compulsory for all students taking modern history courses and a new curriculum will be written for all year levels. The Western Australian Minister for Education claimed that the changes were the result of community expectations, as people 'equated higher standards of education with more traditional course content and rigorous teaching' (Barrass, 2007, 23 Jan.).

OBE was 'on the nose' with large sections of the Australian voting public, and what had happened in Western Australia in respect to the Commonwealth bringing pressure on its curriculum had also occurred in Tasmania nine months earlier.

Wriedt suffers a large decline in her primary vote

In the March 2006 state election, Wriedt suffered a large decline in her primary vote, very nearly losing her seat to Liberal challenger, Vanessa Goodwin, in what was popularly touted as a backlash over the ELs curriculum. Duncan from *The Mercury* summed up the situation:

> Paula Wriedt has attributed her poor show at the state election to the jargon-rich Essential Learnings curriculum.
>
> 'The language should have been clearer," she said yesterday.
>
> 'Obviously there has been some controversy around the ELs, particularly with issues like language and reporting.
>
> 'Teachers had a challenging year last year.'
>
> Ms Wriedt's personal vote dropped more than 3000 to 5089 at the poll.
>
> For the past '10 long days' she has been battling Liberal newcomer Vanessa Goodwin for the Franklin seat she has held since 1996.
>
> The cut-up of preferences secured the nation's longest-serving education minister's future yesterday at noon.
>
> Ms Wriedt expressed relief and excitement at the result, but admitted the looming prospect of loss had hurt.
>
> 'Any drop in your vote is always a blow to your confidence,' she said. 'It can make you question yourself' (Duncan, 2006c, 30 March).

Only Ross Butler's strong vote – subsequently elected in Franklin as Labor MHA, following the retirement of Lennon in June 2008 – stood between Wriedt and Goodwin (Duncan, 2006c, 30 March).

In an ABC *Stateline* program in 2007, Ward asked Wriedt: 'What became clear at last year's state election, was that Essential Learnings was 'on the nose' and Wriedt nearly lost her seat.' Wriedt responded by declaring: 'I don't blame the Essential Learnings for the result, but clearly there's a message there about, you know, listening to people' (Ward, 2007b). Indeed, this thesis can but concur with Wriedt, if she meant in that statement that there was nothing wrong with ELs, *per se*, but, rather, in the management of its rollout.

'There is no fishbowl in Australian politics as small as the Tasmanian one'

There is no doubting the ELs imbroglio took a massive toll on Wriedt's personal and political life. Certainly, her fortunes took 'a nose dive' following the 'ELs election'. During early August 2008, Wriedt had stood down from her portfolio of Economic Development and Tourism with a personal crisis. It was reported in *The Mercury* her 'political future is in doubt' (Stedman, 2008a).

Of particular relevance to this thesis, in regard to pressures on ministers in the Tasmanian Parliament, reduced as a result of *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas).* Herr had continually warned Tasmanians of these pressures and the resulting dependence by ministers on paid advisors and poltically sympathetic public servants. Stedman (2008b) in *The Mercury* later reported on Herr's assessement of a possible cause of Wriedt's condition:

> The unfortunate events highlighted the immense pressure ministers were under – especially since the numbers in State Parliament were cut from 54 to 40.
>
> It is very hard to live in a fishbowl and there is no fishbowl in Australian politics as small as the Tasmanian one…

> You have seven ministers effectively trying to do the work of twice that number in South Australia but the pressures are largely the same (Stedman, 2008b).

'The Catholic education sector supports the proposed review of the Essential Learnings framework'

Educationally and politically, there was much uncertainty following the 'ELs election'. Tasmanian parents, teachers and employers waited anxiously from the time of the March 2006 state election for Bartlett, to announce his new educational agenda. When Bartlett announced the end of ELs, Dr Dan White, Director of the CEO, supported the move. He declared:

> The Catholic education sector supports the proposed review of the Essential Learnings framework being undertaken by Education Minister David Bartlett...
>
> 'Whilst Catholic schools have been very supportive of the educational philosophy underpinning the Essential Learnings framework, the terminology used in the curriculum has caused confusion within the school community,' Dr White said...
>
> He said the assessment and reporting dimensions of ELs needed to be overhauled.
>
> While the ELs literacy and numeracy standards provided a useful framework, Catholic primary school teachers believe they need detailed guidance in determining curriculum outcomes, particularly in mathematics and English (*Mercury*, 2006, 4 July).

Now, it's *The Student at the Centre*

Soon after White's reported statement, in July, came the policy document entitled *The Student at the Centre* that has been discussed in chapter one. In his Foreword to the document, Bartlett, wrote of,

> an 18-month plan to better link the full expertise and resources of the Department of Education with our schools and students. By doing this, we can better support Tasmanian public schools and colleges to further improve both the educational experience and the results of students.

Indeed, one of Bartlett's first actions against ELs had been much earlier, when he had acted on a popular sore point with ELs – reporting to parents in a language that all parents could understand.

On his own website, in an announcement entitled, 'Taskforce To Strengthen Reporting To Parents', Bartlett stated he intended to 'make Essential Learnings reports easier to understand' (Tas. Gov. Media Releases: David Bartlett, 2006).

Bartlett had assured voting Tasmanians he had included all of the principal parties in his process of policy development. He also asked Branch, to play a key role as a member of the taskforce. Moreover, the language of the reports had to be clear and acceptable to the average Tasmanian. Therefore, he had invited the 'respected and prominent author, Don Watson', to be a consultant to the Taskforce. He said the taskforce would have 'access to expert resources' and would 'include teachers direct from the classroom to determine a way forward that will meet parent and learner needs as well as being educationally robust' (Tas. Gov. Media Releases: David Bartlett, 2006).

'Returning to familiar terms, such as maths and English': 'we're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater'

Several months after the election, Ward interviewed Bartlett on the ABC *Stateline* program. She began the program by declaring:

> Controversy around the new Essential Learnings curriculum almost cost the previous Education Minister, Paula Wriedt, her seat. Yesterday Mr Bartlett admitted the Government had failed to sell its merits. Now he wants an overhaul, including ditching the terminology Essential Learnings in favour of Tasmania's Curriculum, but the key concepts will remain (*Stateline* Tas. 2006 b).

When Ward asked what was really going to change with the Tasmanian Curriculum, and whether it was correct, as Wriedt had just recently stated, it was simply a name change, Bartlett responded by stating:

> It's not ditching Essential Learnings. What it is, is building on a very good base, we're ensuring that we're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater, that we are going to look at issues, learn from mistakes, but consolidate the very great gains that Essential Learnings has provided in many Tasmanian schools (Ward, 2006).

Bartlett then assured Tasmanians that parents and children would be returning to familiar terms, such as maths and English. But, his reference to the management of the implementation and its complexity, along with some unfortunate language usage in the curriculum is significant. Interestingly, he did not place any blame on external forces, such as a hostile Commonwealth government, or belligerent Tasmanian and mainland press, or entrenched resisters within the Tasmanian education system, or hostile interest groups in Tasmania, such as the AEU.

During Question Time in Parliament, Bartlett outlined his ideas, *vis-à-vis* the fate of ELs and the possible shape of his Tasmanian Curriculum, and in doing so he began to provide details on the new Tasmanian Curriculum:

> The new Tasmanian curriculum framework takes the best of the Essential Learnings, the values and purposes, the explicit teaching of thinking, the use of ICT throughout all learning and it makes clear the continuing importance of the subjects including maths, English, science and of course history to our children's learning. The new framework greatly reduces the assessment and reporting workload of teachers and this alone overcomes major concerns. The refined framework will permit reporting to parents and a well understood clear language using State standards (Bartlett, 2006).

For Bartlett, the way forward proposed improvement in three ways:

> First, making the curriculum less complex and using language that is more explicit, more teacher, parent and student friendly; secondly, supporting this with syllabus statements that provide guidance for teachers on the content of their teaching; and, thirdly, having a less complex approach to assessment (Bartlett, 2006).

Indeed, this rather brief and cursory survey of key people in the Tasmanian education system on the ELs question, as previous chapters have revealed, would suggest Bartlett had considerable support for his statement, particularly in regard to the new Tasmanian Curriculum retaining the best from ELs, and distinctly moving forward. In the chart below, readers shall see what was retained from ELs for the new Tasmanian Curriculum.

Bartlett announced to the House of Assembly he had sent to all Department of Education staff a paper outlining the proposed way forward. He wanted to ensure that every teacher in this state had the opportunity to respond to the proposal and shape it, so that this curriculum is the best it could be. He also wanted to ensure 'the excellent work that teachers and many others had done in moving education forward over the last number of years would not be lost'. He proposed to trial the framework with 'randomly selected focus groups of teachers and focus groups of principals'. He also proposed to provide 'students, teachers, support staff, professional staff and parents in the wider community with an online feedback process that everybody can participate in' (Bartlett, 2006).

The Government's new scheme for polytechnics, academies and training schools: lessons not learnt for the management of implementation of educational policy?

As chapter twelve has revealed at the end of Walker's term as president of the AEU – Tasmanian Branch, she was reported in December 2007 and again in February 2008 as speaking out on perceived problem associated with the establishment of polytechnics, academies and training schools in the state. This also was the subject for an ABC *Stateline* program on 3 October 2008. In this program, hosted by Ward, Simon Cullen, an ABC *Stateline* reporter, suggested that the Government's new arrangements for the polytechnics, academies and training schools in the state,

> prompted some comparisons with the failed implementation of the Essential Learnings framework two years ago. Parents are concerned it's the same children being used as the guinea pigs for these changes (Ward, 2008).

On the same program, Jane Kovaks, a parent of a year 10 student due to enrol in post-secondary education in 2009, complained that now it was the same students who were suffering from the Government's proposed scheme for secondary colleges: 'it's all changing again. It's the same group. It's the same year of children' (Ward, 2008).

Cullen then contended that, despite the growing opposition to the scheme, the Government was pushing ahead with it:

> When David Bartlett took over the education portfolio from Paula Wriedt, he said he had learned the lessons of the past. He conceded problems with putting in place the Essential Learnings curriculum led to public opposition to the changes. Now there is a similar feeling towards these reforms. At the very at least there's a push to delay the implementation (Ward, 2008).

Despite this alleged opposition to the new arrangements with post-secondary education, the ABC *Stateline* program revealed that the Government would continue pushing with the program, while consulting with various stakeholders. Mike Brakey, Principal of Hellyer College, explained on the same *Stateline* program:

> All we can do is keep working our way through those issues with the union and, you know, to and fro with it every week (Ward, 2008).

The Tasmanian Curriculum and ELs

During early 2008, a number of important notices began to appear on the Department of Education website concerning the Tasmanian Curriculum. One such notice was entitled 'The Tasmanian Curriculum 2008 and the Essential Learnings: Overview of Changes'. It comprised a chart that outlined the main changes from the Essential Learnings Framework to the Tasmanian Curriculum. For further details, viewers were invited to access the relevant syllabus and support materials section of the department's website. Appendix Two of this thesis provides a chart outlining the differences between ELs and the Tasmanian Curriculum. The chart has been retrieved from the department's website.

The word 'History' was now associated with the word 'Society'. An emphasis was placed on the use of historical evidence and suggested content was strongly linked to social issues, and there was a strong emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and perspectives.

Outcomes had been dispensed with. The old social outrage with alleged nonsensical language had been dealt with, thus eliminating the cause of much public concern, particularly those associated with reporting to parents in a jargon infected language.

Some views from the AEU – Tasmanian Branch, Tasmanian teachers and principals on the significant gains from the ELs years

Some teachers were jubilant. Walker claimed: 'We certainly welcome some revision, some reviewing, some simplification and cutting back on workload for teachers' (Ward, 2007). Green (2008) certainly agrees that Tasmanian Curriculum was a step forward from ELs. However, the Kersey group of principals (2008) insist that had the ELs rollout been stalled for twelve months at the end of 2005, and schools given more time to ensure that SARIS was being smoothly implemented, they would much prefer the ELs curriculum.

Had Bartlett learnt from the fundamental mistakes of the ELs program? Not so, according to Walker on the occasion of her last day in office. It has already been noted what she had to say about Wriedt's lacking in wisdom and maturity and her mistakes of paying too much uncritical attention to her advisors. According to her, Bartlett continued to make the same mistakes. (*Examiner*, 2008, 9 Feb.).

While there may be some, or even much, truth in what Walker has argued, it was advanced from the teachers' point of view, a point of view certainly not endorsed by any of Bartlett's advisory team.

The pressures on Tasmania's state school curriculum were greatly lessened with the Coalition's loss at the federal level in November 2007. Eleven years of federal-state bickering had finally come to an end. Now, all state and territory governments were of the same political persuasion as the federal government – that is, the Labor Party.

But, what of the Tasmanian teachers, their schools and their parents? Were there any positives to come out of the ELs years? The Kersey group of principals (2008) insist that one significant gain of the ELs years was the collaboratively moderated assessment methods in which primary teachers now engage. They also point to the high-level of professional discourse in schools and school communities that came with ELs. For them, highlights of this included Andy Hargreave's visit to Launceston during 2004, and the 'amazing commitment to progressive pedagogy' that flowed from that visit. Then, there was the vastly superior and powerful pedagogy that was contained in ELs that vastly benefited Tasmanian children and elevated the community of learning in a school.

Despite their win at the 2006 election, and still embroiled in a controversy surrounding the establishment of the Gunns pulp mill, however, the Lennon Government was not travelling well. So in late January, he 'pulled on' a Cabinet reshuffle. Consequently, *The Mercury's* headline ran: 'Wriedt wins in Cabinet reshuffle' (*Mercury*, 2008, 29, Jan.). But the interest of this thesis is centred on the responses to the blog that *The Mercury* opened as a result of the article, and the sustained political nuances that it provokes eighteen months after Wriedt left the Education portfolio. This blog is included as Appendix Three, because it serves as an index to the level of popularity of Wriedt and her ELs curriculum more than eighteen months after her dismissal as Minister for Education and the apparent demise of ELs. Of course, how much these comments on *The Mercury's* website are representative of opinions of ELs over eighteen months, in schools, or in Tasmanian society-at-large, following its apparent demise as the Tasmanian government curriculum is a matter for further rigorous research.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In 2000, when the youthful and ambitious politician, Paula Wriedt, in her capacity as the Tasmanian Minister for Education, gave instructions for her department to begin the development of the ELs curriculum, the act heralded a series of events that nearly brought her political career to an end. ELs was an ambitious program of curriculum development and implementation. Of course, as previous chapters have revealed – particularly chapter four – curriculum development and implementation is an intensely political act, and one that is liable to bring about all sorts of unforseen, political, social and cultural conflict in its wake.

No doubt, *The Mercury* was well aware of what it could achieve by continually reminding Tasmanians ELs was a political creation and something Wriedt was using to advance her own political career. It did this by reporting statements such as:

- 'Ms Wriedt has continued to champion ELs' (Low Chow, 2005c);
- 'Education Minister, Paula Wriedt's "baby" ' (Low Choy, 2005b);
- [Wriedt] continued to be 'excited about the ELs' (Low Choy, 2006);
- 'more hands-on political interference in schools than ever before, with minister's decisions sometimes more about their own career paths than what is best for schools' (*Mercury*, 2007, 6 Dec.).

These are just some of the reported statements that could have left Tasmanians with no doubt that ELs was as much about

Wriedt's political ambitions, as it was about providing a quality integrated curriculum underpinned by a constructivist pedagogy for Tasmanian children.

This thesis opened by citing a statement made by Tasmania's new Minister for Education, David Bartlett, in a 2006 ABC *Stateline* program with Ward, where he summarized the essential failings of the system-wide curriculum. For Bartlett, the failure of ELs was due to problems with:

- poor management of implementation
- language
- reporting (SARIS)

What were the reasons for this? The findings of the thesis can be summarized as:

- the lack of a situational analysis for the change effort: that is, the poor timing of the ELs change effort, in that it came on top of unresolved issues for teachers – namely class sizes and inclusionist policy; and ELs came at a time when teachers felt that they were being bombarded with policy change from the department.

- shortcomings with the management of the rollout in respect to the 2005 event of new schools 'coming on board' with ELs and concurrently having to adopt SARIS. Related to this point were the shortcomings with ICT skills by many teachers.

- making ELs compulsory for schools: not providing individual schools and their communities with a choice of opting in or out of the curriculum.

- the lack of scrutiny of government policy, as a result of the politicisation of the upper bureaucracy of the Department of Education and the reduction in size of the Tasmanian Parliament.

- the role of the media, in particular, that of *The Mercury*.

- the lack of constructive critical and supportive research by other elements of the education system.

- the on-going 'battle' between the Commonwealth and the Tasmanian Government.

- the untimely death of Jim Bacon. His successor, Paul Lennon, did not connect with the Tasmanian public in the same way.

- poor leadership at the highest levels of the Tasmanian Department of Education.

Using the social conflict theory of historical analysis as a methodology, and using a thematic approach, this thesis set out to unravel the multiple nuances of this select history of ELs. In accordance with social conflict historical analysis, readers have seen that concepts, such as progress and advancement, are problematic terms. Thus, if there were any perceived educational advancement in Tasmania during the ELs years, this was entirely a relativistic notion, and depended entirely on one's point of view. This thesis, however, has not concerned greatly with the relative pedagogical value of ELs, rather with its role as a political being, and, principally, with describing and analysing the essential failings of the ELs curriculum, especially in the management of its implementation. In this process, it sadly

failed to win sufficient political ground for it to be accepted by voting Tasmanians.

Social conflict theory explains much about the supposed 'progress' of educational history and curriculum development in Tasmania. The written document guiding school learning, commonly called the curriculum, is, and always has been, essentially a political statement. That was the case when directors and directors general controlled the bureaucracy responsible for state schooling in the state. The political nature of the curriculum has increased vastly since the advent of ministers of education 'pushing the buttons and pulling the levers' on schooling in the state. A particular strength of the social conflict theory lies in its search for motives in curriculum change.

A remarkable aspect of the ELs imbroglio was the fact that essential learnings curricula, by 2006, had been internationally and nationally commonplace. But readers have seen how other Australian states and territories that developed and implemented essential learnings curricula, for example, Queensland, did so with a great deal of caution, and based the management of these aspects of the curriculum on well-founded research. Knowing full well the political ramifications of reporting to parents, in most Australian educational jurisdictions, chapter six revealed there was an effort made by policy makers to reduce the political fallout from the curriculum change effort. Yet, in Tasmania, educational policy makers simply appealed to a process of consultation with the various stakeholders and interest groups. This thesis has argued that in the first place research was needed to avoid the political 'black holes' that the curriculum change inevitably would bring about in the state.

This research has shown there were remarkable similarities between the political rejection of Neale's 'reforms' of 1905-09 and McCoy's populist developments of 1909-19, when compared with Wriedt's ELs of 2000-06, and Bartlett's populist Tasmanian Curriculum of 2006. In the cases of both Neale and Wriedt, an epoch of intense progressivism was accompanied by concentrated socio-political debate and upheaval. When Neale and Wriedt became political casualties, there followed a period of populist-inspired 'normality'. The one great difference between the Neale-McCoy era and the Wriedt-Bartlett era, of course, was that Neale and McCoy were professional educators and Wriedt and Bartlett were professional politicians. In respect to the respective political casualties, one was a professional bureaucrat – Neale. And one was a politician – Wriedt.

The passing of the *Parliamentary Reform Act 1998 (Tas),* which reduced the Assembly from 35 to 25 members, and thus vastly increasing ministers' workloads, resulted in an increase in the number of 'minders' and politically sympathetic planners in the department. This also coincided with the reduced scrutiny of legislation in the Parliamentary Labor Party.

A reading of this thesis illustrates the central role the press played in bringing down ELs. Indeed, it was a potent force. It would be serendipitous to assert that rising influence of the media in influencing government educational policy coincided with the politicisation of decision-making in educational curricula policy, blatantly expressed with the minister in control of curriculum change. However, this was not the case. It has been demonstrated that *The Mercury*, almost a hundred years earlier, in particular, played a prominent role in forcing the sacking of Neale as the Director of Education. For all apparent purposes, the media was the principal dynamic in pushing ELs to the forefront of public scrutiny and to the point of public

outrage. Certainly, it always seemed to have the Department of Education on the 'back foot', particularly from 2004 until the 'ELs election' of 2006.

The Mercury probed Wriedt on the alleged faulty development and implementation of ELs in a variety of ways. *Inter alia*, through some brilliant satirical journalism by Warburton, it created discourse of public outrage and spectacle, particularly concerning alleged falling literacy standards. ELs was portrayed as the creation of the 'looney left' shamelessly and carelessly destroying literacy standards in the state. ELs was constantly linked with waffly language and offending jargon. Having created the discourse, *The Mercury* controlled the 'match plan' until the very end of ELs.

While certainly the ELs report cards were a problem with employers, this was an issue *The Mercury* constantly kept in front of the public in the months leading up to the 2006 state election. And readers may ask why did Wriedt and the ELs planners allow this canker to fester? The answer must lie in the fact that the kind of reports that were acceptable to employers, and those that were determined by the very nature of the constructivist, integrated pedagogy of ELs were always going to be incompatible with what many parents and employers expected and understood. This always was going to be a major stumbling block for Wriedt and her top planners, but surely by 2005 this issue should have been solved, and thus, deny *The Mercury* and any other hostile media the opportunity of putting it in front of the public at election time.

The manner in which *The Mercury* was so effectively able to keep the issue of the jargon buster alive and in front of the public gaze during the lead-up to the state election was as much a story about the Government's incompetence as it was about

some of uncanny skill of some of *The Mercury's* journalists. The whole saga simply made the Government, and Wriedt in particular, appear foolish and amateurish for the voting public. One would suspect this could have been quickly and decisively dealt with, particularly when the jargon buster on the Department of Education website was there for the use of teachers, and not the general public.

When *The Mercury* used the *Benchmarking* issue to create a crisis as a political act through an appeal to scientific rational, and neutral discourse, it again came out as a decisive winner. While some better informed of the Tasmanian voting public may have seen through the ploy being advanced by *The Mercury*, generally, because the Hobart daily had so effectively assisted in constructing and then controlling the nature of the public discourse concerning alleged falling educational standards in the state, and linking this with ELs, it was always going to effectively use this as an issue for the forthcoming elections.

In the Tasmanian government, or in the education system, there was simply nobody capable of making a public statement of the kind Keating had used in his famous Redfern speech that could be used effectively as a circuit breaker in the whole ELs imbroglio. Arnold's attempt at a circuit breaker was so tragic it simply provided *The Mercury* through its editorial to satirize the points she had made, in the manner Warburton had made so effectively in the *Sunday Tasmanian.*

Of course, with the absence of any specific research on the topic, people may never know the actual impact that any articles from *The Mercury* that argued that ELs offended Christian values had on voting intentions of Tasmanians. But readers may be sure these articles had some bearing on voting intentions. *The*

Mercury articles that were cited in this respect illustrates the breadth of *The Mercury's* onslaught on ELs.

By far the most brilliant journalism employed by *The Mercury* in its campaign against ELs was that which portrayed a select group of embattled teachers as freedom fighters poised against an authoritarian government bureaucracy. This was brilliant exposé journalism in the tradition of the great American muckraker journalists. No matter how much readers may disagree with their motives, one can only admire the perspicacity of *The Mercury* journalists.

But, to revisit the cricket metaphor, as far as the department was concerned, it was a team without a researched and tested match plan. While blame cannot be laid for the failure of the ELs rollout at the feet of the government's media people for not 'taking the game up to the opposition', this is to cover up what was the real problem with the government's effort at system-wide curriculum change. Either through inexperience, or lack of concentration, they simply 'dropped too many catches', made too many mistakes in their execution. In other words, through poor execution, they invited the media to have 'a field day' on their own mismanagement.

Fully cognizant of the political nature of the development and rollout of ELs, this thesis made considerable use of a particular analytical tool to assist understanding. The paradigm of junctions and dysjunctions proposed by Harris and Marsh (2005) has proven a highly effective means of examining curriculum tensions. To this end, following Harris and Marsh (2005), this thesis has utilised the lens of diffusion theory, and juxtapose this with the lens of actor-network theory. With the former inclined more towards a cause-effect and linear epistemology, and the latter more inclined towards chaos theory,

this thesis has been able to unravel some of the multiple political acts, intended, or unintended, with the various machinations of the stakeholders in the management of the development and implementation of ELs. Especially, this research has been able to shed some light on the motivation, power shifts and compromises associated with the various actors, both human and non-human, as the curriculum innovation was developed and rolled out. Closely associated with this actor-network theory, is the ecology metaphor that assists further in analysis, because it ascribes to the chaotic and highly politicized nature of curriculum development and implementation.

In the full meaning of the word, 'the curriculum' is a potent political document, or in actor-network terms, an actor in its own right, with its own political agenda. This study has highlighted the problematic nature of the term 'curriculum reform'. Some of the multi-layers of political intrigue have been unearthed in this thesis, illustrating the vast and vested interests involved in ELs. Most unlikely alliances were formed to bring some control over the nature of the creature that was being created, by an army of vested interests and stakeholders. There were no 'rights' and 'wrongs'; simply, there were only intensity of vested interests. During the ELs years of 2000-06 in Tasmanian there was an unabated imbroglio and public outrage concerning the ELs curriculum. Tasmanians stood in a great variety of positions, in either support of, or in opposition to, ELs. Most Tasmanians had an opinion about the curriculum. From pupils, to teachers, to parents, to employers, to politicians, to educational bureaucrats, people either supported it, or, opposed it, hated it, or, were passionate about it, all for a vast variety of reasons.

Weaver-Hightower (2008, p. 156) refers to this apparently loose cooperation where actors work together, perhaps, very

informally, towards a common goal. By 2006, the key stakeholders in the political framework and underlying political dynamics of ELs had a keen eye on the Tasmanian state elections that year, as the only possible way to break the circuit of the ELs imbroglio. Certainly, the political stakes for a successful ELs rollout were high.

Through chapters seven to fourteen this thesis has shown repeatedly the development and rollout of ELs was essentially a political act. Many observers may argue that ELs was born through the quest for the maintenance of political power, and its eventual demise was through the democratically expressed will of the people. In various ways *The Mercury* would remind Tasmanians this was the reality with ELs. Consequently, ELs was perceived as being a fair target in the Tasmanian political thrust and parry, often orchestrated by *The Mercury*.

ELs grew from the Bacon Government-inspired *Tasmania Together* venture, arguably, one of the most significant exercises in community consultation hitherto undertaken in Tasmania. Perhaps, the nature of its parentage too greatly influenced the *modus operandi* of the management of the design and implementation of the curriculum. There appears, to have been an almost naïve belief in the strength of the process of consultation through the history of the management and implementation of ELs. It was as if the process of consultation, in itself, would carry the day in the development and rollout of ELs. While there is some evidence the ELs development and rollout was based on the cascade theory, there was no widespread debate, research, or, even understanding, of this management theory for curriculum dissemination.

The Cresap 'reforms' had 'killed off' the culture of curriculum development and implementation during the early 1990s. And

ten years later, there was a definite paucity of experienced people in the management of curriculum design and development within the Tasmanian Department of Education. And for those with any system-wide curriculum experience, they were marginalised, in favour of a select group located closer to the Secretary's office. Certainly, there was no serious attempt to develop a culture of critical research in the department during the ELs years.

With the exception of the research done by Gardner and Williamson (2004) for the AEU, and the later synthesis done by Williamson and Myhill (2008), there was a definite lacking of leadership from the University of Tasmania in respect to research on ELs and its impact on teachers and schools. In the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania, as in the Department of Education, academics and researchers were happy to voice their opinions on why Tasmanian schools needed the constructivist-inspired ELs curriculum, and what it should look like. But, there was no informed opinion on how this development and implementation should be managed. Except for isolated instances, in the Tasmanian education system there is evidence of a non-critical, compliant relationship between the principal actors in the network.

Readers will recall in chapter three, research by Pusey (1976) into the administration of the Tasmanian Department of Education that showed a propensity for the bureaucracy towards authoritarianism. Under pressure from the media, the union and various groups with a vested interest in ELs, from 2004 onwards, despite the humanistic and intended liberating influence of the curriculum that the ELs planners were attempting to roll out, sections of the bureaucracy once again 'reverted to type' in its authoritarianism.

The very nature of the way in which a decision was made to bring ELs to an end was in itself authoritarian. Of course, here reference is made to the manner in which the decision was made to end the curriculum, and revert to a more discipline-based curriculum.

If ELs established the public acceptance of the right in Tasmania of a minister to develop and implement a curriculum that primarily sought the hegemony of a particular political party, or the advancement of a particular minister, then is it likely Tasmanian parents and children can expect a new curriculum whenever there is a change of government. The possibility of this occurring has serious consequences for the role of state-provided education in a society and culture. And if this is so, what will be the consequences for the other components – for example, faculties of education and private schools – in the state's education system? In the future, will these institutions simply fall in line with the political ambitions of a particular minister of education? Certainly, the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania, with some noted exceptions, seems to happily comply with whatever the Minister for Education prescribed.

That, of course, does not suggest that when Minister Bartlett gave instructions to his planners to develop and implement his Tasmanian Curriculum, it was based on the principle of *tabula rasa*. It did not completely start anew. In this thesis it has been demonstrated that, while there were essential failings in the ELs curriculum, much of its essential components – its constructivist pedagogy – remained to be utilised in his Tasmanian Curriculum. And, as has already been stated in the abstract to this thesis, some might argue the essential components that remained were the essential values of ELs, in the first place.

Perhaps, after all, the baby was never thrown out with the bathwater.

APPENDICES

Appendix One

Department of Education, Annual Report, 2004-05, Learning Together

http://www.education.tas.gov.au/annualreport/04-05/appendices/learningtogether (retrieved 13/03/08).

Learning Together

By 30 June 2005 the majority of initiatives identified in *Learning Together* had been achieved.

Goal 1

Responsive and continually improving services

We have:

- Established the *Learning Together* Council
- Appointed a senior educator to take responsibility for the initial implementation stages of *Learning Together*
- Established web technology to enable interaction between the Minister for Education and the community
- Provided a minimum of two hours per week release time for all first year teachers to undertake planning
- Produced a district information and induction pack for beginning teachers
- Provided financial support for pre-service teachers for practice teaching in rural/isolated areas

- Provided professional learning opportunities for relief teachers and teachers who have been out of the workforce for extended periods
- Worked with the University of Tasmania to ensure pre-service training includes study and experience in behaviour management, inclusive practice and mentoring by experienced teachers
- Provided professional development and a career framework for non-teaching staff to develop skills and career opportunities
- Improved processes for promotion for teachers
- Established a formal mentor program in every district to encourage women to apply for promotion
- Supported schools to provide innovative service to the community through shared resources and responsibilities
- Supported schools to broker the co-location of services from government and enterprises
- Sponsored and evaluated projects to identify best practice in school/community partnerships
- Documented and promoted innovative school/community ventures
- Sponsored pilot schools that redesign their organisation and management incorporating the community
- Developed a partnership charter that provides the framework for schools to establish partnerships
- Developed models and processes for flexibility in deployment and use of school resources
- Entered into arrangements to benchmark our organisational performance
- Provided quality management including a review and accountability framework
- Established benchmarks and targets across the Department of Education, including e-solutions
- Published Department of Education strategies on the web

- Developed a process to provide regular feedback to staff and identify ongoing professional development
- Began TAFE / VET in Schools staff retraining program with industry experience
- Piloted a school project linking all classes to a secure internet webpage
- Established the Tasmanian Educational Leaders Institute (TELI)
- Established the TELI Advisory Council
- Established formal mentor programs for targeted groups

Goal 2

Provide enriching and fulfilling learning opportunities

We have:

- Published a clear statement of the values base and the purposes of education
- Published a description of what is considered to be essential learning
- Provided support for teachers in their curriculum planning and teaching
- Published a statement of what we want students to achieve
- Published an assessment guide for teachers to use
- Ensured that parents receive regular feedback on their child's achievement
- Developed a learning guide for the early years through the curriculum consultation
- Established and facilitated cluster partnerships between early childhood educators and child care professionals
- Provided professional development for cluster coordinators and mentors to early childhood educators and child care professionals

- Established action research projects to determine best practice in facilitating links between child care and early childhood education
- Brought together the planning, funding and regulatory functions of government bodies in post-compulsory education and training
- Established a Tasmanian Qualifications Authority integrating TASSAB, Universities Registration Council and TAReC
- Networked regional school, college and TAFE Tasmania counsellors and industry bodies
- Monitored both learner and industry needs to ensure timely services are provided
- Established post-compulsory participation benchmarks for young people in Tasmania with targets to be achieved by education providers
- Tracked 2001 Year 10 students for three years and provided information and advice about learning options
- Provided an e-learn voucher to post-school Tasmanians who had not had basic IT training
- Extended TAFE Tasmania's access program to a general education program
- Established a study preparation program for adults wishing to prepare for tertiary study
- Implemented general education in TAFE for people entering training after breaks or for those lacking confidence
- Conducted an annual exhibition of Adult Education learner achievements to showcase the diversity of Adult Education opportunities
- Provided online re-entry programs with support from Online Access Centres
- Provided all Tasmanians with the opportunity to gain a recognized IT qualification

- Provided fee-based training in the use of library and information services
- Provided a 50% fee exemption for TAFE courses identified for growth and development
- Created a single state-wide TAFE institute - the Institute of TAFE Tasmania - from 2001
- Ensured that schools report on student achievement at the various levels of schooling
- Implemented state-wide reporting of student achievement in the *Annual School Report*
- Provided strategic direction on the purposes and goals of post-compulsory education
- Developed and facilitated learning pathways required by learners from post-compulsory education and training providers
- Built links between schools, VET providers and the University to provide transparent recognition of VET
- Established a 'VET account' of TAFE training hours for schools and colleges with TAFE Tasmania
- Facilitated partnerships between schools, colleges and TAFE to maximise the use of resources/infrastructure
- Enhanced the role of the Office of Youth Affairs in developing individual strategies for young people who have left the education and training system after Year 10, helping them renew their participation
- Provided accurate and timely labour market information to career counsellors
- Ensured students have access to career planning tools and up-to-date labour market advice via the internet
- Established Community Learning Advancement Networks (CLANS), to ensure that local delivery of training is consistent with regional development and needs

- Encouraged the involvement in education and training of employers who can extend the range of work placements
- Established a lifelong learning call centre
- Published *Tasmanian Learning Opportunities* guide with information about post-compulsory learning opportunities

The following initiatives from Goal 2 were underway:

- Implementing longitudinal collection of student achievement so that progress over time can be tracked
- Surveying employers every three years to assess job readiness of their recent new employees
- Developing a format for presenting the variety of qualifications an individual may gain through lifelong learning, in a manner that meets the needs of individuals, employers and learning institutions

Goal 3

Safe and inclusive learning environments

We have:

- Established a Behaviour Support team, with one person in each District and a team leader
- Established projects in each District to trial approaches to behaviour and support
- Provided incentives for schools to improve attendance rates
- Provided all schools with efficient electronic processes for recording and monitoring attendance
- Implemented an intensive literacy intervention program in the early years

- Established a program to have a trained *Reading Recovery* teacher in all primary schools
- Enhanced *Flying Start* to ensure maximum effectiveness and flexibility
- Promoted early literacy development of pre-school children through community education and libraries
- Provided training in teaching basic literacy skills for secondary teachers
- Established online literacy support and information services for all teachers
- Ensured regular community consultations and formed special education reference committees
- Extended district high school options through VET in Schools programs such as school-based apprenticeships
- Implemented strategies from Partners in a Learning Culture for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people
- Implemented strategies from Building Bridges for people with disabilities involved in training
- Provided professional development for teachers, teacher aides and principals in inclusive practice
- Implemented a program for gifted students, linking students to mentors, including adults
- Provided online forums and learning materials designed to extend gifted students
- Provided websites, support, advice and specialist equipment to increase access to information services for specific groups
- Provided early entry processes for students who meet guidelines and ensure the opportunity for acceleration
- Conducted public education programs on the importance of attendance
- Developed flexible learning alternatives to attract transition students from Year 10 to Years 11 and 12

- Developed a range of teaching and support materials and implemented mentoring support to equip teachers to more easily meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Published descriptions of special education funding models and moderation processes
- Investigated truancy-free zones
- The following initiatives from Goal 3 were underway:
- Reporting publicly on the progress of students with disabilities in the school system

Goal 4

An information-rich community with access to global and local resources

We have:

- Established a Centre of Excellence in online learning
- Established partnerships with local IT firms and the University
- Created opportunities for Tasmanian firms to develop online educational content for Tasmanian, national and global markets
- Established web-based sister school relationships for every school and college with schools from our major international trading partners
- Electronically linked Tasmanian community organisations with like organisations, nationally and internationally
- Made significant heritage and archival material available in digital format
- Ensured preservation of documents and long-term electronic access to them
- Assisted individuals and organisations to publish local history and community information

- Worked with community organisations to assist them keep records in easily accessible forms
- Published online heritage resources and developed resources to help interpret heritage/archival material
- Shared conservation facilities of Tasmania's libraries and museums
- Provided electronic access to archival resources and information about the state's archives
- Developed strategies for the library network to become a key centre for learning communities and individuals
- Facilitated access to government information at federal, state and local levels
- Collaborated on the initial development of a specific community education strategy focusing on community health issues
- Developed the policy framework *Informing Tasmanians* and put in place strategies to address duplications/deficiencies

Goal 5

A valued and supported workforce

We have:

- Hosted an international conference in 2002
- Conducted an *Education Week*
- Conducted functions to enable the Minister for Education to recognize outstanding teachers and innovative practice
- Provided teacher relief for teachers to undertake short term release to share expertise and work on department initiatives
- Ensured that all school and college teachers have at least minimum-level professional qualifications

- Prevented people who are 'not of good character' being employed in schools
- Strengthened the scholarship program for teachers in areas where it is difficult to recruit
- Developed a strategy that allows more graduate teachers to be recruited to permanent jobs
- Conducted a change management program that highlights consultation processes appropriate at all levels of the department
- Increased District Superintendent involvement; recognising their importance as educational leaders and change enablers
- Ensured all department staff have access to email
- Established and automatically updated a department-wide organisational directory, available online
- Used the web to strengthen a service culture
- Ensured information provided is current and accurate
- Provided 'user friendly' processes for forums on key issues
- Distributed information electronically, targeted to the interests and needs of the audience
- Performed electronically many processes that were previously paper-based, such as recreational leave
- Established a register where teachers can express interest in particular projects
- The following initiatives from Goal 5 were underway:
- Ensuring all school and college teachers have the competency necessary to teach. (http://www.education.tas.gov.au/annualreport/04-05/appendices/learning together) (retrieved 13/02/08)

Appendix Two

Differences Between ELs and the Tasmanian Curriculum

The Essential Learnings Framework	The Tasmanian Curriculum	Comment
Five Essential Learnings and 18 key elements	7 curriculum areas	Feedback suggested a focus on more familiar curriculum areas
Values, Purposes and Goals	Refined through consultation	The values, purposes and goals continue to guide the curriculum
Learning, teaching and assessment principles	Refined through consultation	The learning, teaching and assessment principles continue to guide the curriculum
Thinking at the centre of the curriculum – separate key elements for Reflective Thinking and Inquiry	Thinking at the centre of the curriculum; thinking skills developed in all curriculum areas	Feedback suggested retaining a focus on thinking but developing thinking skills in all areas not separately
Focus on ICTs and a specific key element (Being Information Literate)	Focus on ICTs; ICT skills developed in all curriculum areas	Feedback suggested an ICTs skills checklist, supported by other resources

Outcomes, Standards and progressions for 18 key elements, from pre-Standard 1 to 5	Standards and Stages in all curriculum areas, from standards 1 to 5 incorporating stages 1-15	The reporting to parents task force recommended clarity, consistency and more progression points in reporting in all areas
Teaching for understanding	Focus on understanding in all curriculum areas	Feedback suggested that the focus on understanding should be retained in all curriculum areas
Online support through The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Guide (LTAG)	Online support through the Tasmanian Curriculum Library	Resources to support the refined curriculum are being progressively added and updated in response to school need
(New area for 2008)	Vocational and Applied Learning	Enables students and apply their curriculum learning and establish personal pathways for education, life and work

Dept of Education, *The Tasmanian Curriculum 2008 and the Essential Learnings Overview of Changes* http://www.education.tas.gov.au/curriculum/features (retrieved 12.08/08).

Appendix Three

Readers' Comments

Wriedt wins in reshuffle

Article from: MERCURY January 29, 2008 03:30pm
http://www.news.com.au/mercury/story/0,22884,23127006-3462,00.html (retrieved 23/04/08).

PAULA Wriedt has emerged as the big winner in a Cabinet reshuffle announced by Premier Paul Lennon this afternoon.

Ms Wriedt has gained the Economic Development portfolio, formerly run by the Premier and retains responsibility for tourism, which will be housed within the Department of Economic Development.

jean of tas Comment #8. Paula is a very astute politician, an incredibly intelligent lady. I happen to know that Paula would never officiate at any official function without she was well researched and versed on the event. It is also a well known fact that she just happens to be an excellent public speaker. She is an excellent role model for all females, regardless of what side of the fence you sit on. With any task you take on the old saying rings true, ¿you can not please everyone¿. If we look realistically at Paula's career she must have pleased a few people in her time, else she would not be where she is today. Jean of Tas, for one so knowledgeable of women in politics, I would love to see your CV.
Posted by: Shirley of Brighton 10:07pm January 30, 2008

Comment 26 of 26

Only some one who is not a teacher or who has not been involved in the education department would think Ms Wriedt was any good at her job truth is she was the second worst education minister this state has ever known.

Posted by: les of hobart of haobart 8:26pm January 30, 2008

Comment 25 of 26

'where's your document analysis'I have had to use that document more times than you would know and it would take pages to back up the argument that a soley progressive education system does not work.No one could provide a satisfactory method of assessment and people still had to rely on formal standardised assesments, even Paula realised that. As to accountability, the system is riddled with clip board carriers jumping from position to position, literacy advisor one year then inquiry advisor the next leaving chaos behind.

Posted by: Michael Lynch of Seven Mile Beach 3:26pm January 30, 2008

Comment 24 of 26

hmm paula minister for photo oportunities about the only portfolio she can successfully handle

Posted by: ivan of hobart 1:42pm January 30, 2008

Comment 23 of 26

anne . comment 14 .. You are the one that is poorly informed ... but then again you probably haven't been to a function when Paula was Minister for Education and her speech was NOTHING to do with what the function was about. Yes, she was a great source of amusement then as she is now.

Posted by: jean of tas 1:04pm January 30, 2008

Comment 22 of 26

Michael statements like yours amuse me greatly. You latch onto catch phrases with little or no quality follow up. If you had read the document you would know. The problem with Essential Learnings is it required effort to implement and people bothering to look at the document itself rather than read false allegations. The major problem it did highlight is that we have an aging and jaded population of teachers. If the present education minister was as smart as Paula he may have looked at re introducing the bonding system of old. If you had bothered to really know what it was about you would have found the whole education system was a LOT more accountable. Sad we lost it. Paula did more for public education in the State than anyone in recent years. BUT it was people chose to read the publicity than spend time with the documentation itself. I think after that it would have been a bad consequence public life if we lost such a far sighted politician.
Posted by: wheres your document analysis 11:58am January 30, 2008

Comment 21 of 26
Essential Learnings was vacuous waffle; wondering and thinking with little being actually learnt. It was all a bit Star Trek."A five year mission to boldly go where no man has gone before." Some of it was fine but to make it the basis for an education system was doomed from the start.
Posted by: Michael Lynch of Seven Mile Beach 11:28am January 30, 2008

Comment 20 of 26
why bother of Launceston .If ignorant people like you had bothered to find out what those two little words meant for our children instead of pulling it down after 5 years we would have an education system that would be world class. The two words

we have now should be DARK AGES. Good on ya Paula you were a great education minister.
Posted by: |obviously YOU didn't why bother 11:15am January 30, 2008

Comment 19 of 26
Still waiting for the worldclass education system you promised us Paula but then accountability in this state is non existent.
Posted by: Michael Lynch of Seven Mile Beach 10:21am January 30, 2008

Comment 18 of 26
I actually like Paula. She is a constant source of ongoing amusement.
Posted by: Need a laugh 8:37am January 30, 2008

Comment 17 of 26
Piper - I think you'll find that Forestry lives under the banner of Resources, and has done for some time...
Posted by: wen 8:09am January 30, 2008

Comment 16 of 26
And what then Rod C are you suggesting voting in the Liberals? you must be practicing your stand up routine!
Posted by: Bob of HObart 7:30am January 30, 2008

Comment 15 of 26
Jean with women like you women don't have to be concerned with male chauvanists. It is sad that poorly informed people make comments in these forums. Paula Wreidt was a VERY good Education Minister who actualy valued public education. Those that pushed her out of that portfolio had a very narrow knowledge of what kids will need for their future and a narrow

vision for Tasmania. I congratulate her on having her hard work pay off.
Posted by: anne 12:43am January 30, 2008

Comment 14 of 26
Here we go back into the dark ages economic development i don't think so
Posted by: les of Hobart of hoabrt 12:07am January 30, 2008
Comment 13 of 26
Two words, essential learnings.
Posted by: why bother of Launceston 10:30pm January 29, 2008

Comment 12 of 26
I checked my calender and it isn't the 1st of April, so this must be a serious announcement. At least we can now promote the Pulp Mill as a tourist attraction.
Posted by: R U Serious of The Twilight Zone 9:56pm January 29, 2008

Comment 11 of 26
I fill sorry for Tasmania in the next election will get rid of big red clan... to be replaced by the have no idea clan.. when will tasmania get a real goverment. and thanks for my land tax bill too gone up from $180.00 to $620.00 in three years
Posted by: peter brown of rose bay 9:50pm January 29, 2008

Comment 10 of 26
Well done Paula, the only person I know to be promoted for non achievement. Bring on the next election, so we can get rid of this bunch of incompetent arrogant puppets of Big Red.
Posted by: Rod C of Hobart 7:51pm January 29, 2008

Comment 9 of 26

Paula has another portfolio? Suppose she has to get one right sooner or later - someone give her a makeover before she enters back out into the public domain.
Posted by: jean of tas 7:45pm January 29, 2008

Comment 8 of 26
So forestry has disappeared into thin air. How convenient Mr Lennon
Posted by: The Piper of Gunns River 7:35pm January 29, 2008

Comment 7 of 26
Perhaps in the next election we can elect competent individuals who can actually perform the tasks they take on. But, foolish me, I must be dreaming.
Posted by: Always Hopeful 7:23pm January 29, 2008

Comment 6 of 26
For some reason you omitted to publish my initial comment espousing the virtues of Paula Wriedt - our only politician who makes the Premier look good by comparison
Posted by: What a joke 6:34pm January 29, 2008

Comment 5 of 26
I fail to see the logic in removing Tourism Tasmania from where it was and placing it within the Department of Economic Development. Tourism Tas has just been through a huge (and expensive) restructure and is a key partner of heritage, arts and parks within Tasmania. To move this agency does not make sense.
Posted by: Errol Little of Port Arthur 5:42pm January 29, 2008

Comment 4 of 26
I seem to recall some years ago the Mercury printed a report from State Emergency which identified that the Hobart Hospital

was in an flash zone from Self's Point did have a major accident. The proposed relocation is even worse from emergency services view??
Posted by: Concerned 5:35pm January 29, 2008

Comment 3 of 26
of course it makes sense to have a non lawyer as the "top" lawyer in tassie - bring back steve!
Posted by: are you kidding of hobart 5:23pm January 29, 2008

Comment 2 of 26
And Steve Kons loses the position of Attorney General for dobbing in the Premier's ex-deputy over the TCC scandal
Posted by: What a joke 3:50pm January 29, 2008.

Appendix Four

Interview Questions

What was the extent of your involvement in the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Framework?

In your opinion, what were the strengths of the curriculum?

In your opinion, what were the weaknesses of the curriculum?

In your opinion, was the adverse negative publicity of the curriculum deserved?

In your opinion, what were the strengths of the curriculum's implementation process?

In your opinion, what were the weaknesses of the curriculum's implementation process?

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