Political control, subversion and survival: a grounded theory of the disempowerment of a profession

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CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE TO THE STUDY

Human experience and interaction does not exist in a vacuum. As with language, context gives meaning to experience. Contexts are, therefore, of vital importance in researching educational experiences. Richardson points out the dangers of failing to consider context when interpreting educational experiences:

Context is often inadequately established in ethnographic and qualitative studies of teaching and learning. At worst, it can be so poorly accounted for that the micro-level analysis of the particular is made to do what the researcher's ideological frame suggests it ought to do. Quite sophisticated critical discourse analysis of classroom talk can arrive at an explanation of the teacher's role in a particular classroom, which when analysed from within more richly framed social, cultural and historical contexts may have suggested other more credible explanations. As Gilbert (1992) has observed:

'Without an explicit theory of the ways in which the dynamics of historically situated cultural contexts and processes are implicated in the nature and operation of specific events, explanatory references to context will be unsystematic, possibly arbitrary, and inadequately justified. This is a serious flaw, for qualitative researchers have argued that it is the holism and sensitivity to context that sets their approach apart from the selective abstraction of quantitative methods.' (p.39) (Richardson, 1996, p.190)

It has also been widely acknowledged that historical contexts are vital components in attempting to build empirical 'reconstructions' of social phenomena and human experience using interpretivist and constructivist inquiry. (Athanases & Heath, 1995; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Cohen & Manion, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Fosnot, 1996; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1983, 1987, 1989, 1994; Schwandt, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Twomey Fosnot, 1996; von Glasersfeld, 1995) The complexities of the recursive nature of the project added to the imperative to contextualise the study by making explicit the social, political and historical contexts in which it was embedded. In this section the following aspects of the contexts within which the study was conducted are considered:

1. The rapid growth of the NSW high school system
2. Political responses to increased demand
3. The evolution of literacy and learning theories
4. The evolution of NSW literacy education policies
5. Current issues in NSW literacy education
6. The nature of teacher preservice education
By examining these aspects some of the major forces to have shaped the nature of today’s NSW secondary school system are identified and a more complete ‘holism of context’ established, within which the data collected is later interpreted.

THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE NSW HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM

Compulsory uniform secondary education for all children is a relatively recent development in New South Wales. While secondary education was compulsory for all children in NSW, from 1912, full retention to the first year of high school was not achieved until 1955. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.24) Table 2.1 shows figures for retention rates to the first year of high school for the period leading up to full retention:

Table 2.1: Retention rates to the first year of high school prior to 1955.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Barcan, 1988, p.236; New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.24)

The Divided Curriculum

Prior to the introduction of the ‘Wyndham Scheme’1 and the passing of the Education Act, 1961, and its implementation in 1962, few students from state high schools were given the opportunity to matriculate. In his wide-ranging report on secondary education, published in 1957, Wyndham noted that ‘Only 7.5% of a typical secondary school entry matriculate’. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.55)

1 The compulsory uniform comprehensive secondary school system currently employed in NSW has been dubbed the ‘Wyndham Scheme’ after Sir Harold Wyndham, the Director General of Education during the late 1950s, who was responsible for its design and implementation.
An examination of archival data shows that retention rates in private schools during the 1950s were more than double that of the state school system during the late 1950s. The data also suggest that the majority of secondary students underwent craft-oriented, non-academic studies with very few students progressing beyond the third year of high school.2 (Australian Council for Educational Research, 1956; Barcan, 1988, p.236; New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.17, 24 & 32-5) Three major reports of the day found that the decision as to which path a student might be allowed to take was usually determined by the primary school principal, using IQ tests and each student’s personal and academic records from primary school. (Australian Council for Educational Research, 1956; Australian National Co-operating Body for Education, 1951, p.14; New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.35) The evidence suggests that similar systems remained in place throughout Australia until the mid-1960s. (Australian Council for Educational Research, 1956; Australian National Co-operating Body for Education, 1951; New South Wales Department of Education, 1957)

**Post-war Enrolments**

Table 2.2 shows the enrolments in government schools since 1951:

---

2 For figures see section titled ‘Retention Rates’.
Table 2.2 shows that during the forty years to 1957 NSW experienced a ten fold increase in the numbers of students enrolled in the divided curriculum secondary school system. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1957, p.99) Furthermore, it can be seen that since 1951 enrolments in NSW state high schools have more than tripled. Finally, the rapid growth indicated in Table 2.2 strongly supports Barcan’s assertions that the rapid growth in numbers of students and new high schools placed a great deal of strain on the NSW education system as a whole. (Barcan, 1988, p.238 & 344-8) It is, therefore, legitimate to argue that this boom in enrolments had serious implications for teacher supply, teacher education, policy formulation and the allocation of funding for school resources. One of the key ways in which these increases affected the NSW school system was through the impact on retention rates.
Retention Rates

Table 2.3 shows the retention rates for secondary schools between 1948 and 1998:

Table 2.3: Retention rates NSW government schools as (%) of each generation year 7 to year 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr of Entry</th>
<th>Yr7</th>
<th>Yr8</th>
<th>Yr9</th>
<th>Yr10</th>
<th>Yr11</th>
<th>Yr12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>42.9*</td>
<td>13.20</td>
<td>9.2/7.4LC**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>43.40*</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>9.8/8.2LC**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>49.1*</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.7/9.1LC**</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>57.7*</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>70.2*</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97.32</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>63.92</td>
<td>30.81</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98.85</td>
<td>84.19</td>
<td>69.71</td>
<td>31.57</td>
<td>28.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.94</td>
<td>91.24</td>
<td>77.53</td>
<td>36.04</td>
<td>30.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.19</td>
<td>95.30</td>
<td>83.84</td>
<td>34.19</td>
<td>28.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.92</td>
<td>98.04</td>
<td>89.70</td>
<td>48.49</td>
<td>36.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.70</td>
<td>99.14</td>
<td>94.43</td>
<td>67.89</td>
<td>51.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.40</td>
<td>99.53</td>
<td>95.06</td>
<td>74.69</td>
<td>56.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.83</td>
<td>101.01</td>
<td>96.53</td>
<td>79.99</td>
<td>64.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.10</td>
<td>100.39</td>
<td>96.94</td>
<td>81.90</td>
<td>66.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.79</td>
<td>98.90</td>
<td>95.69</td>
<td>79.05</td>
<td>66.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.57</td>
<td>98.57</td>
<td>94.01</td>
<td>75.65</td>
<td>65.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>94.24</td>
<td>74.91</td>
<td>63.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.23</td>
<td>94.62</td>
<td>75.43</td>
<td>62.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.31</td>
<td>94.91</td>
<td>75.51</td>
<td>63.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Prior to the implementation of uniform comprehensive secondary education students were able to sit for the 'Intermediate Certificate' exams in Year 9:
  In 1948 42% of Yr9 sat Intermediate Certificate 38.4% passed
  In 1949 43.4% sat Intermediate Certificate 39.1% passed
  In 1950 46.1% sat Intermediate Certificate 41.0% passed

** Students also undertook final Leaving Certificate exams (LC) in year 11.

Among other things Table 2.3 shows that while each generation has grown in outright numbers they have also remained within the school system far longer. Table 2.3 also reveals that between 1948 -1950:

- The retention rate to year 9 remained below 50% of the cohort.
- Of those managing to remain at school until Year 9, only 42-46.1% actually sat for the intermediate certificate.
- This represents less than one quarter of the cohort for each year.
- Even fewer students actually passed the exam.
In 1962 the ‘Wyndham Scheme’ of uniform, comprehensive secondary education for all students was introduced to NSW schools. An extra senior year (Year 12) was added to the curriculum, the divided craft / academic curriculum was abolished and all students were, for the first time, able to attend uniform comprehensive high schools.

The retention rate to Year 10 jumped from 28.5% of the 1960 cohort to 63.95% in 1965, due largely to the introduction of the School Certificate at the completion of Year 10. The Leaving Certificate was also abolished from the Year 11 program and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) established in the newly installed Year 12 calendar. As can be seen from Table 2.3, there has been a steady but considerable rise in retention to the senior years since the introduction of the HSC. That rise has slowed slightly only in recent years. It is of interest to note that full retention to Year 8 was not achieved until 1977 and full retention to Year 9 not achieved until 1992. This could be interpreted to mean that full retention to Year 10 appears some time off, yet.

The minimum levels of high schooling achieved by the majority of students, since the introduction of the Wyndham Scheme, have increased considerably during the past forty years. In 1950 the majority of students left high school prior to completing their third year of secondary education, but by 1970 nearly 70% of the cohort began Year 10. Retention to Year 12 in 1970 was almost equal to the retention rate to Year 10 for 1960 and retention to Year 12 is currently almost equal to the retention rate to Year 10 in 1970.

The figures in Table 2.3 show that retention rates in all years of secondary education have climbed steadily since 1950, reaching a high in 1993 and only declining slightly since then. Today more than double the percentage of students entering high school complete year 9 (the third year of high school) than did in 1950. In addition, more than three times the percentage of the cohort completes the final year of secondary schooling than in 1950, despite the fact that this represents an additional year of school.

Today the retention rate to the fifth year of high school is seven (7) times higher than in 1950; three (3) times greater than in 1960 and more than twice the retention rates to year 11 in either 1970 or 1980. The average student completes six years of secondary schooling, more than double the number of years spent at high school by the average student in 1950. These figures strongly suggest that many of today’s more senior teachers have experienced great change in student populations and curriculum during their professional lives.
POLITICAL RESPONSES TO INCREASED DEMAND

Given the rapid increase in the demands made on the system one would expect an increase in resourcing. The official archives suggest strongly that the opposite happened. It seems that teachers have consistently been called on to deliver a higher quality of education with fewer resources.

There is also evidence of an increase in the political control of education. The new demands on government funding led to the emergence of a stricter, more overt political control of school education and the profession of teaching. There is evidence that this, in turn, led to political and ideological battles for control of curriculum, policy and professionalism to be explored in a later section.

Funding for Secondary Education

With the increase in enrolments came greater public expense. State Government expenditure on education rose from 11.9% of total State expenditure in 1949 to 19.2% in 1959. (Barcan, 1988, p.239) Table 2.4 shows a comparison, Australia wide, of the adjustments in education funding, made by state governments, to accommodate the rise of the new secondary enrolments:

Table 2.4: Net current expenditure on education by state governments in Australia 1958 to 1967 as a percentage of all expenditure on education

(Fitzgerald, 1970, p.31)
These figures reveal that between 1958-1968 much of the state funding allocated for new secondary school enrolments was, in fact, taken from the allocation for primary schools. Fitzgerald has argued that despite inflation and rapid expansion in primary school numbers funds were diverted from primary funding and directed towards the expansion of the secondary school system. (Fitzgerald, 1970) Budgets were balanced by cuts from within.

Table 2.4 also shows that between 1958 and 1968, a period which saw a threefold increase in secondary enrolments, the percentage of State government education funding allocated to primary schools dropped 11% but the allocation to high schools rose by only 8.3%. The percentage allocated to teacher training, then a state responsibility, rose by only 1%, despite dramatic shortfalls in teacher supply caused by the opening of new schools. These figures show that the rapid boom in secondary education experienced with the introduction of comprehensive secondary education was achieved with a reduction, in real terms, of funding.

**Federal Intervention in Funding**

Under the Australian constitution the funding of education is the responsibility of individual state governments, however the Federal Government has assumed a role in providing funding for education. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997, p.240; Barcan, 1988; McKinnon, 1991) The 1950s were considered to be ‘boom years’ of economic development in Australian. During this period the Federal Government began to fund large educational grants to the States. This was originally aimed at supporting new Catholic schools, thereby saving government expenditure on capital works. There can be little doubt that it also served to gain catholic votes for the governments of the day. (Barcan, 1988, p.242; Burke & Spaull, 2001; McKinnon, 1991, p.28-9) Today the Federal Government accounts for about 12% of funding for state government schools across Australia and about 65% of funding for private schools. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1997, p.240) It is not unreasonable to argue that this new involvement in funding of state education has led to more complex political interventions in teacher education, policy decisions and teacher practice. This point is expanded on in various later sections of this thesis.
Standards of Funding

Australia has adopted criteria set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the standard for calculating expenditure on education for international comparison as a percentage of GDP. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p.305) Table 2.5 shows the history of government funding for education in Australia since 1950, expressed as a percentage of GDP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1991-2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-60</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1992-3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1993-4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1994-5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1995-6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1996-7</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1997-8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>1998-9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.5 suggests that government funding for education in Australia has traditionally been low. In 1951 a government inquiry found:

For the money expended Australia has had very good value. ... There seems little doubt, however, that the expenditure on public education has been well below that of other English-speaking countries. (Australian National Co-operating Body for Education, 1951, p.111)

The same can be said of government funding since that time. Table 2.2 shows that between 1958 and 1968 the retention rate of the Year 10 cohort alone jumped from 14.8% to 63%. Table 2.5 shows that expenditure on all education, Australia-wide, rose by only 1.3% of GDP during the same period.

The figures presented show that expenditure on all forms of education increased by only 2% of GDP between 1950 and 1966, the years of most rapid growth. This figure
also takes into account the amount directed towards several new universities and colleges which opened around the country throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

It needs to be kept in mind that the curriculum also expanded to accommodate the additional year of the HSC during the early 1960s. These were the boom years of Australian immigration and it is obvious that teachers were also required to cope with large increases in the numbers of children from non-English speaking backgrounds. (Barcan, 1988) While Table 2.5 shows an increase in the percentage of GDP directed to education during the 1970s, Marginson has argued that this rise merely served to bring Australia into the range of spending common in other OECD countries. (Marginson, 1993)

Finally, Table 2.5 shows that expenditure on education, as a percentage of GDP, has declined every year since 1975. Retention to year 10 during the same period jumped from 77.53% of the cohort to 94.24%; retention to year 11 from 36.04% to 75.65% and Year 12 from 30.59% to 65.21%.

School Specific Expenditure

The Australian Senate recently compared studies on school-specific expenditure and concluded that funding decreased from 3.6% of GDP in 1972-73 to 2.8% of GDP in 1993-4 and 2.7% of GDP in 1995-6. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, Ch.5, p. 2-3) Table 2.6 details the Committees figures on the decline of school-specific expenditure as a percentage of GDP since 1972:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-4</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-6</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please see print copy for images
Recent Funding

Table 2.7 details government expenditure on schools, expressed as a percentage of GDP, for the period 1990-96:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.7: Total government funding for schools as a percentage of GDP 1990-1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please see print copy for images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.7 shows that current expenditure on schools has declined since 1990, despite rises in retention rates. The 1998 Senate Committee noted that, despite total expenditure rising during the period 1988-1996 the increase was:

barely sufficient to keep pace with the recurrent costs of schooling, which have been rising faster than prices within the general economy, in line with the increased demands placed upon schools. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 5, p. 1)

The Committee also noted that recent changes to the funding arrangements for private schools, controlled by the Federal Government threaten to exacerbate the funding shortfall:

During the ... period (1988-89 to 1995-1996) both Commonwealth and State funding to private schools increased significantly. Commonwealth funding increased by 21.3% over the nine year period (compared with an increase of 1% to government schools) while total State government funding increased by 23.3%.

The increase in funding to private schools exceeded their increase in enrolments (which rose from 27.3% in 1988 to 29% in 1995). [3] This divergence is likely to be exacerbated by recent Federal Government changes such as the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment and the abolition of the New Schools Policy. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 5, p. 2)
International Comparisons

In 1996 the American Federation of Teachers analysed OECD figures in order to compare international expenditure on school education for 1995. Table 2.8 compares funding for school education, as a percentage of GDP, for OECD nations:

Table 2.8: Comparison of OECD countries expenditure on primary and secondary education in 1995 including all public expenditures but (a) excluding capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD Country</th>
<th>% of GDP</th>
<th>$ Per Student</th>
<th>Per Capita GDP Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Finland</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sweden</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5,336</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Norway</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5,262</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Canada</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4,935</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Denmark</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4,475</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 United Kingdom</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3,365</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 United States</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4,935</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 United States(b)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4,470</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Switzerland</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4,838</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 France</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3,630</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Austria</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4,107</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Italy</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4,036</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Belgium</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3,438</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Netherlands</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3,192</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Germany</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3,616</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Australia</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2,532</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Japan</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2,707</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD (1995) except (a) NCES (1996), and (b) NCES (1995)
Note: Currencies converted to U.S. dollars using purchasing power parities.
(Nelson, 1996, p.9)

The American report ranks Australia at 16th place out of 17 OECD nations listed. Only Japan spends less than Australia on school education, both as a percentage of GDP and per capita. Japan is, however, currently spending large amounts on capital works. (Nelson, 1996, p.9) The report is supported by a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics report which sought to compare Australian expenditure on school education with other OECD countries. The report placed Australia 9th out of 11 OECD nations compared and concluded that Australian government spending on school education, as a percentage of GDP, was below the OECD average, only marginally ahead of Mexico. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002, p.306)

Marginson claims that Australian government spending has not only failed to keep pace with growth in enrolments, but that Australia has once again fallen behind
other OECD countries in the funding of education, at both school and tertiary level. (Marginson, 1993, p.61-63) Marginson cites another study, which supports Australia's low ranking on the world scale of education funding:

Maglen et al. (1994, p. 10-11) find that in 1990-91 Australia's expenditure on education, 5.5% of GDP, was tenth out of twelve OECD countries for which data were available. The mean was 6.1%. (Cited in Marginson, 1997, p.285)

Given the above figures on retention rates, funding and re-distribution of funding it seems that teachers in state schools have faced a prolonged period of rapid change in the sheer size of the system within which they work, the types of curriculum they have been expected to implement and the social make-up of the student body with which they work. These increased demands on teachers' professional expertise have been met with reduced funding by successive governments - simply put, teachers have been asked to do more with less.

Political Intervention in Policy

Traditionally the NSW education system had been guided by key professionals within the DET, most significantly the Director-General of Education, as shown by the influence of Director-General Wyndham in the design and implementation of a comprehensive education system in 1962. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1957) As the size and expense of the secondary system grew the NSW state government began removing responsibility for policy decisions from the Director-General and placing them with the state Minister for Education. (Barcan, 1988, p.239; McKinnon, 1991, p.28-30) Marginson, in a major survey of political reform of education in Australia summarised the major changes during this period as including:

1) 'Ministerialisation', whereby reforming Ministers seized control by dismantling or restructuring the programme departments responsible for education (Lindgard et al. 1995)

2) The appointment of generic managers with no history in education, drawn from elsewhere in the public or private sectors and thus potential instruments of radical reform. By 1992 not a single education department was headed by an educator who had come up through the system.

3) Fiscal restraint, or cuts in real terms, modifying the capacity of schools to resist restructuring, and more readily persuaded them to raise private funds.

4) The reorganisation of the schools and school systems themselves. (Marginson, 1997, p.192)
Although curriculum and other policies have technically remained state concerns, the allocation of funding and the establishment of organisations such as the Schools Council, the Australian Education Council and the Department of Employment, Education and Training, has also precipitated a shift in the balance of power in the policy making process favouring the Federal Government. (Barcan, 1988; McKinnon, 1991; Schools Council, 1990a) In 1990 the Australian Schools Council noted this trend towards greater political control of education policy, stating:

Assumptions governing teaching have become less straightforward and more tied to political concerns than previously.
(Schools Council, 1990a, p.12)

Likewise, in 1991 McKinnon, in a major report, made the observation that most modern changes in education policy in NSW had become:

consequences of the ebb and flow of political accommodation rather than purely educational concerns.
(McKinnon, 1991, p.30)

The process of political control has recently become more overt. In 1997 the Federal Government demanded that all States and Territories sign agreements to join the National Literacy Plan as a pre-condition to receiving Federal Funding for education for the next three years.(Kemp, 1997a) This represented the first time that the Federal Government had linked literacy policy directly with education funding to the States. (Kemp, 1996, 1997b)

It seems that the ‘ebb and flow of political accommodation’ has become a rather complicated affair. Teachers professional lives appear to have changed dramatically in recent years. They are now regulated by a mix of political influences at both Federal and State level, often masked by indirect influences of funding or policy decisions on various levels.³ It now serves to briefly examine the effects these so-called ‘boom years’ have had on the area of professional knowledge. For, surely it is the evolution of professional knowledge in literacy education which represents the possibilities of classroom practice over the period in discussion.

³ This point is elaborated on later in Chapters 2 & 5.
The demands being made on literacy and on its teaching are considerably greater than they once were. The increasing pressures placed upon teachers to know and do more have been dramatic in recent years. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.iii)

While the secondary education system was expanding so, too, were the bodies of knowledge from which teachers were expected to draw. Advances in literacy education have often represented extreme paradigm shifts in professional knowledge, challenging long-held views of literacy, language and learning.

It is appropriate now to outline the various approaches to literacy learning that have evolved since the 1950s. Some of the issues raised here are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3.

A Continuum of Shifting Paradigms

The evolution and union of literacy and learning theories can be, broadly speaking, divided into distinct, major conceptualisations of literacy education. Policy documents of the major government education bureaucracies, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Board of Studies NSW (BOS), have usually reflected the evolutionary development of these conceptualisations of literacy. Table 2.9 summarises these conceptualisations of literacy learning approaches and their related policy documents:

DET is the NSW government department responsible for the administration of all state government schools and colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). BOS is the NSW government bureaucracy responsible for development and administration of syllabus documents and the running of the Higher School Certificate system in years 11 and 12. It is responsible for syllabus documents for both state and private schools (See Chapter 5)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Approach</th>
<th>Teaching Style</th>
<th>Language Theories Informing</th>
<th>NSW Policies Influenced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as subject</td>
<td>Teacher centred, One correct form, Focus on product</td>
<td>Traditional grammar</td>
<td>(NSW Department of Education, 1961)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills-based</td>
<td>Teacher centred, Focus on fragments of product in attempt to piece together whole product</td>
<td>Structural grammar</td>
<td>(NSW Department of Education, 1967)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process-based</td>
<td>Student centred, Freedom of form, Focus on processes leading to product</td>
<td>Transformational grammar / Chomskian focus on meaning</td>
<td>(NSW Dept. Education, 1979 &amp; 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole language</td>
<td>Student centred, Focus on conditions to foster processes and mastery. Teacher as facilitator of learning</td>
<td>Post-modernist approach Foucault, Goodman, Cambourne. Opposed to skills-based approaches</td>
<td>(Board of Studies NSW, 1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text types</td>
<td>Focus on generic structure of texts and use of scaffolding Based on premise that basic structure must be learned before blending can occur.</td>
<td>Functional view of language / genre theory after Martin and Rothery Variation on genre theory / distinctions blurred for many teachers Text types commonly used in schools to refer to genres</td>
<td>(Board of Studies NSW, 1994, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; NSW DET, 1997, 1998, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social view of language</td>
<td>Attempt to master individual skills leading to social empowerment and thereby social change</td>
<td>Continuing evolution of systemic functional linguistics, functional view of language, genre theory and critical social theory. Currently experiencing a degree of acceptance of the tenets of process and whole language. (Kamler, 1997; Lee, 1997)</td>
<td>(Board of Studies NSW, 1999a; NSW DET, 1999, 2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.9 also shows the related teaching styles and the linguistic theories which have underpinned each theoretical framework. These conceptualisations reflect major shifts in thinking about the nature of language, learners and learning. Such paradigm shifts have often competed (and continue to compete) with one another for ideological dominance of schools and teachers.

**The Evolution of Literacy Education Policies**

NSW literacy education policies have often mirrored the conceptualisations of literacy presented in Table 2.9. These conceptualisations of literacy call for detailed knowledge of the theoretical frameworks which underpin them. It is now intended to briefly examine the additional demands these policies represent on teachers professional abilities.

**The Special Place of Secondary School English**

Despite much rhetoric during recent years, about the importance of the role of all subject teachers in literacy education, teachers of English retain the primary role in literacy education in high schools. The recently issued *Teaching Literacy in English in Year 7* policy document adopts the *National Statement*’s position regarding the ‘special role’ of secondary English:

> At the secondary level, reading and writing of the specialised language and texts in each area of learning must be taught by the subject teacher. Teachers of English, however, have a special role since they focus on knowledge about language and how it works. They teach students to use, think about and analyse language and to develop strategies for composing, comprehending and responding to texts. (English for Australian Schools, 1994, cited in New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.5)

The rationale and aims of the *NSW 7-10 English Syllabus* also place responsibility for the development of secondary students’ language skills predominantly with English staff. (p.5 & 11) The 7-10 syllabus also openly links English, language and literacy to broader educational concerns, such as personal growth and the development of critical thought, emotions and values. The Rationale for the Syllabus concludes with the following comment:
While students do learn in other ways, learning for the most part occurs as students use language, as they talk, listen, read, write, observe and reflect upon the processes of their own learning. Hence, English is central to the achievement of the aims of the total curriculum. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1987, p.5)

The special place of English is also acknowledged in policy documents at the senior secondary level:

The importance of English in the curriculum is a recognition of its role as the national language and increasingly as the language of international communication. Proficiency in English enables students to take their place as confident, articulate communicators, critical and imaginative thinkers and active participants in society. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c, p.6)

In practical terms, it seems that teachers of English are often the only teachers available in the high school who might be expected to hold specific professional knowledge of literacy and language issues. English remains the only compulsory subject in every year of schooling and is the centre point of the ‘K-12 learning continuum’. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c, p.9-10)

**Relationships Between Theory and Policy**

NSW literacy education policies have generally closely followed developments in so-called ‘cutting-edge’ theories. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.15-16) As Table 8 shows there have been a series of theoretical orientations underpinning different policy documents, ranging from ‘Skills-based’ approaches of the 1950s to the ‘Genre-based’ approaches of the current time.

The 1961 *Spelling and Handwriting Syllabus*, for instance, emphasised correct form, linking correct usage to rote learning and memorisation of skills. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1961, p.5) The rules of grammar featured heavily in NSW syllabus documents with the 1967 primary curriculum, introduced to coincide with the implementation of uniform secondary education, claiming that knowledge of the rules of grammar enables [students] to understand the information conveyed by a sentence ... (New South Wales Department of Education, 1967, p.35)
Parsing sentences into smaller units, using the rules of traditional grammar, was considered the key to understanding all language. The sentence remained the focal unit of teaching literacy, with the use of grammar seen as the key tool of the professional educator. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1967, p.35)

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2.9, Skills-based Approaches remained at the fore of NSW policy documents until the publication of Reading K-12, which broke new ground by adopting new Process-based approaches to the teaching of literacy. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1979) This document represented radical departure from fragmented Skills-based Approaches. NSW teachers embraced the policy with fervour and the early 1980s saw a widespread movement, in NSW primary schools at least, towards Process and Whole Language-based approaches.

The Writing K-12 document of 1987 also adopted many of the principles of the recently developed Process Writing and Whole Language approaches. The document’s Statement of Principles included the following points,

- The elements of language are interdependent. Fundamental to an understanding of writing is the recognition of its relationship to talking, listening and reading.
- Students develop most effectively as writers when they learn to write in an active and positive learning environment.
- Language has a cultural context.
- Writing is both a process and a product.
- The structure and nature (register) of a piece of writing are shaped by the writer’s purpose and the intended readership.
- Assessment and evaluation procedures should take account of all aspects of the writing process.

(New South Wales Department of Education, 1987, p. 3)

Writing K-12 also contained detailed analysis and advice for implementation of a modified version of Cambourne’s ‘conditions of learning’ in the classroom. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1987) Much of the documents theoretical underpinning was drawn from philosophies developed from Whole Language theory.

The Writing K-12 document was, however, short-lived and seemed to fall victim to what might be called ‘an ideological battle’ for the control of literacy education. There is evidence which suggests that some Systemic linguists moved to undermine the implementation of Writing K-12, which some Systemists viewed as empowering their ‘progressivist’, process-oriented, rivals within the education system. Cope, one of the
key Systemic players involved in the political battle for the removal of 'progressivist' policies during the 1980s, has described the political manoeuvring of policies as the 'antithesis of liberal education practice' but claimed that the ends justified the means. (Cope, Kalantzis, Kress et al., 1993, p.239)

It also seems that good theory and good policy have become victims of the struggle for ideological control of literacy education. A recent study, which involved some of the very Systemic linguistics involved in the removal of the Writing K-12 document, declared that Writing K-12:

set international benchmarks in establishing a coherent set of principles for writing, a primary school syllabus for writing, writing in the secondary school and-perhaps above all - clear strategic and practical curriculum frameworks for writing across all the subject areas of that time.

...Writing K-12 was produced after an exhaustive process of consultations, workshops and conferences involving classroom teachers and curriculum specialists from throughout NSW over several years. It was not implemented beyond 1988. But it remains a splendid prototype or exemplar of teaching literacy in writing within and across all subject areas throughout the K-12 school curriculum.
(Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.11)

The period since 1988 has been distinguished in NSW literacy education by the continuing Process/Whole Language vs. Systemics/Genre/Text Type debate, although there are recent signs of changes in the thinking of some in the Systemic camp. (Kamler, 1997; Kress, 1993a; Lee, 1997)

The 1987 English 7-10 Syllabus, which remains in effect today, reflects the shifts achieved during the 1970s and 1980s, towards student-centred, experiential learning through real, meaningful language experiences. The NSW English 7-10 Syllabus is currently being reviewed and has been the subject of much debate, conflict and lobbying between interest groups, predominantly against the inclusion of an exclusively 'Functional View of Language', rather than a range of eclectic approaches.5

Functional Grammar, Genre and Policy

In 1994 the NSW Board of Studies introduced the new English K-6 Syllabus and Support Document. The inclusion in the syllabus documents of Functional Grammar, Critical Literacy and Genre-based approaches represented a major shift in policy

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5 These concerns are dealt with in the section titled Current Concerns in Literacy Education and in Chapter 7.
towards the implementation of Systemic Functional approaches to the teaching of literacy. While it may well be true that many teachers were using Functional Grammar, prior to the new syllabus being issued, the official adoption of the new theories, as policy, has led a number of researchers to enter into sometimes heated debate about the suitability of Systemic approaches for school education. (Anstey & Bull, 1996; Christie & Martin, 1997; Coles, 1998; Collerson, 1988; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993b; Editorial, 1997; Green, 1996; Green & Beavis, 1996; Green, Hodgens & Luke, 1997; Grover, 1995; Hammond, 1990; Hasan, 1995; Jones, 1996; Kamler, 1995, 1997; Kress, 1993c; Martin & Rothery, 1993; Ravelli, 1996; Reid, 1987; Richardson, 1994a, 1998; Sawyer, 1993, 1995; Vella, 1996; Watson & Sawyer, 1998)

Political Intervention in Policy

In September, 1995, as teachers were in the process of implementing the new syllabus, the State Premier announced a ban on the teaching of the terms of Functional Grammar in NSW schools. This announcement was received by the popular press and some theorists as a return to traditional grammar. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997; Editorial, 1997; Kamler, 1995; Ravelli, 1996) So extreme had been reaction to the complexities of Functional Grammar that one Sydney newspaper editor was moved to comment:

No more modifiers, classifiers, determiners, modal adjuncts, dictagloss, numeratives, themes, describers, relational processes and generalised participants for NSW primary school students. That is the welcome outcome of the revised K-6 English syllabus that has been approved by the NSW Board of Studies to be introduced into NSW schools next year. The Premier's determination to put an end to the nonsense of inflicting 'functional grammar' on young children which was the key factor in encouraging the board to produce a user-friendly and effective English syllabus for primary school students, has been justified. Students will now be saved the pain of trying to understand the inexplicable. Teachers, too, will be spared the impossible task of trying to teach the inexplicable.

(Editorial, 1997, p. 16)

While this ban was presented in the popular press as a blanket ban on Functional Grammar, along with the reintroduction of traditional grammar, there is evidence to suggest that the reality was far more complex.
Subversion of Professional Processes

In 1997 the English K-6 Review Committee, established partially in response to the 1995 ban on Functional Grammar, reported:

that teachers have adopted a range of practices with respect to the teaching of grammar, including in some cases its omission.

Relatively few teachers are able to explain the role of grammar, either traditional or functional, as a tool for learning about language and as a resource for making meaning. Many teachers find the terminology dealing with grammar in the syllabus new and difficult to work with.

Teachers are also asking for a clear explanation of the relationship between traditional and functional grammars. As a result, there is currently an array of grammars and associated terminology being used in schools in NSW.

(Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997, p.14)

As discussed in chapter 5, there is evidence of some anomalies in the review process. It seems that many of the academics and consultants appointed to the Review Committee were, in fact, the very people responsible for the introduction of the Functional Approach in the original syllabus, most being members of the group known as the ‘Genre School’.

In what appears to a bid to prevent Functional Grammar being banned altogether the BOS committee re-wrote much of the Functional grammatical terminology used in the syllabus and replaced it with terms from traditional grammar. A new syllabus was released using Halliday’s Functional Grammar, but with traditional grammatical terminology imposed over the Systemic framework. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1998b) In this way ‘special’ grammatical terms, designed solely for NSW schools, were created and introduced to professional practice through official policy.

The potential for ambiguity should be obvious, especially given the Committee’s earlier statement claiming that most teachers are unable to understand current, or even past, theories of language or grammar.

For example, despite the obvious need for a theoretical orientation and framework for such important, detailed professional guidelines the following terms do not appear anywhere in the new syllabus documents:

- Functional Grammar
- Systemic Functional Linguistics
- Genre
This seems a remarkable, almost paradoxical, situation given that the approach to language education throughout the documents relies heavily on the Systemic Functional Linguistic tradition. The documents cover some 800 pages of detailed policy and curriculum material aimed at teachers, principals and parents in relation to classroom practice regarding literacy education.

The grammar described in these documents is strongly Hallidayan in theoretical essence. The theoretical approach to text is also strongly and overtly a Genre-based approach, drawing heavily on the use of Text Types, after Martin, Rothery, Derewianka, Knapp, Callaghan and others of the ‘Genre school’. (Callaghan, Knapp & Noble, 1993; Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Christie, 1990b; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993a, 1993b; Derewianka, 1990, 1996, 1998; Martin, 1992, 1993; Martin & Rothery, 1993)

It can be argued that this gives rise to a paradoxical situation which is capable of hindering the professionalism of practicing teachers. Given the Committee’s comments on lack of teacher-knowledge of language theory and both types of grammar, it is highly unlikely that this ‘reworking’ of a complex, sophisticated grammar; into a more complex form, could do anything but further hinder teachers already struggling to cope with new approaches to literacy. It would appear that no study has been completed to determine whether the ‘new’ grammar has added to the confusion or what impact it has had on practice generally. However, if theoretical frameworks underpinning policy remain vague, or indeed hidden, then the possibilities for informed professional choices by practitioners must surely be unnecessarily restricted.

This single example gives cause for some concern. It could be argued that the grammatical terms appear to have been removed in an apparent attempt to make the syllabus appear as though it is based on traditional grammar rather than Functional Grammar. There is no record or evidence of any discussion in professional circles about the suitability, or indeed the theoretical appropriateness, of the new terminology.

Much of the work of re-writing the terminology was carried out by Derewianka, who was employed as a consultant by the BOS. Derewianka is a well-known, highly regarded expert in Hallidayan theory and was also involved in the writing of the original English K-6 Syllabus.

Derewianka eventually published the ‘new’ Functional Grammar, utilising traditional terms, as an independent text. (Derewianka, 1998) Once again, this book does not make explicit the fact that the grammar described therein is a version of...
Halliday’s Functional Grammar, with traditional grammatical terms imposed over Halliday’s framework. This issue is dealt with at greater length in Chapter 5.

**Teacher Concerns About Current Policies**

The 1996 Draft Stage 6 Syllabus called on teachers to develop their students’ understanding of linguistic features, as well as a deep knowledge of grammar and grammatical analysis. The theoretical framework for this knowledge was intended to be Halliday’s Functional Grammar, combined with a Genre-based approach to text. (Board of Studies, 1996, p.7, 22-8, 38, 39-41) The draft syllabus was eventually abandoned, largely due to concerns by secondary teachers about its emphasis on linguistic structure. (English Teachers’ Association NSW, 1996a, 1996b)

In responding to the Draft Stage 6 Syllabus the E.T.A. membership expressed concern about the statement that one should focus on the ‘study of the language system itself’. (Board of Studies, 1996, p.6; English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996a, p.6) Besides questioning the validity of focusing on a ‘language system’ in the teaching of literacy, the Association also called on the BOS:

> to state explicitly to which language system this refers: traditional grammar, a functional view of language or an amalgam of the two.
> (English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996a, p.6)

The E.T.A.’s membership also called for clarification of terms such as: ‘context’; ‘cultural context’ and ‘linguistic study’ and expressed concerns over distinctions between ‘linguistic study’ and ‘cultural study’. (English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996a, p.12-6) To date no clear explanation has been issued. This lack of explicit description of the preferred grammatical and linguistic theories can be considered an example of what McKinnon referred to as policy decisions based on ‘political expediency’, rather than on educational outcomes. (McKinnon, 1991)

The ETA has also expressed concerns about the impact of the implementation of pedagogies based on Systemic theory. The Association has claimed that teachers are not equipped to implement current policies and would require massive retraining and inservicing by experts in the field before attempting to implement the policies. The ETA remains particularly concerned about areas involving close textual and contextual
studies, Critical Literacy and linguistic studies, including the study of grammar. (English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996a, p.17) The ETA regularly voices concerns, through its journal, about the rate and directions of change in NSW literacy education policy.

While a new English syllabus for years 7-10 remains in the drafting stage it is safe to assume that the secondary school syllabus will utilise the same theoretical frameworks employed in the primary syllabus and current DET policy documents governing the teaching of literacy. The ETA has reported to its members, after considering all options currently under consideration for a new *English 7-10 Syllabus*, that adoption of any of the current proposals will result in great upheaval for all teachers of English and that few teachers will be adequately trained or resourced to adopt the new policies. Simply put, few teachers are in a position to fully understand the theories or pedagogies underpinning the new policy documents. The ETA has begun negotiations with the Minister for Education for a voice in the drafting of the new 7-10 syllabus. (Gazis, 1996b)

It is important to note that the DET has, for the first time in the history of NSW education, issued a statement declaring that it supports only one conceptualisation of literacy for the teaching of English in NSW schools.

> In the NSW Department of Education and Training, *all* literacy activities are based on a functional view of language, which emphasises the way language is used to make meaning. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.14)

It is reasonable to assert that this conceptualisation of literacy education relies heavily on explicit knowledge of structure and form, based almost entirely on Halliday’s Functional Grammar. While the new policy document acknowledges the role of English as cultural artefact it clearly places the language system as the key to literacy learning, claiming that it is the special place of the English teacher to address this specific, explicit knowledge about the language system. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.6)

The policy document also includes, in its view of a ‘Functional View of Language’, a strong commitment to the teaching of a Genre-based approach to text. Similar documents have been released covering all Key Learning Areas (KLAs). (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e) As such, the policy documents clearly states that only pedagogies utilising a Genre-based approach to text...
and Functional grammatical frameworks are officially condoned in NSW schools. One possible outcome of these policy processes is the [unintentional?] denial of English teachers’ right to eclectic practice, based on professional judgement drawn from a wide base of professional knowledge.

**THE NATURE OF TEACHER PRESERVICE EDUCATION**

Just as booming enrolments saw increased Federal intervention in school education through funding and policy decisions so, too, did increases in demand for tertiary education herald federal intervention at the tertiary level. This federal intervention helped shape both primary and secondary teacher preservice education. It also ensured that regulation of teaching qualifications remained in the hands of the employer groups and not the profession.

Prior to the second world war most teachers in Australia were trained in dedicated teachers' colleges, which were funded by state governments. The Federal Government began to supply extra funding for teachers' colleges in the post-war years and by 1962 six teachers' colleges were operating in NSW under the control of the NSW state Department of Education (DET). (Barcan, 1988, p.258) As already discussed, not only did funding for schools fail to keep pace with the boom in enrolments but spending on teacher education during the 1960s period rose by only 1% of net state expenditure on education. (Table 3) A drastic shortage of qualified teachers forced a rethink of teacher preservice education.

In 1969 the Federal Government agreed to fund teacher education in multi-purpose Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs). By 1974 all state-run teachers’ colleges, except Wollongong Teachers’ College, had become CAEs and the Federal Government had assumed complete funding of all state-run CAEs and Universities. (Barcan, 1988, p.276-7) In 1988 the federal White Paper on Tertiary Education was released and all institutions with enrolments over 2,000 received full federal funding and all CAEs began to merge with Universities. (Traill, 1992) Today all teacher preservice education is conducted by federally funded universities.

It is important to note that until 1970 the majority of primary teachers had completed courses of either three months, one year or two years duration. Secondary teachers generally completed a three year specialist degree with the add on one year
Chapter 2: Background & Rationale

Graduate Diploma in Education as their teaching qualification, although there were exceptions. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998)

**Teacher Shortages and Teacher Qualifications**

The 'boom years' of school enrolments during the 1950s and 1960s began a teacher shortage that was to last into the 1980s. As the demand for secondary teachers increased it appears that the quantity of teacher preservice education failed to keep pace with the changing demands of the system.

In 1952, despite the fact that 25% of all matriculating students entered into teacher education, the secondary teacher shortage led to the introduction of a two year 'junior secondary only' qualification. Archival data suggest that the 'junior' secondary teachers were called on to teach at all levels, despite not possessing the requisite qualifications. (Barcan, 1988, p.239) In addition, many lesser trained primary teachers entered the secondary system, particularly as teachers of subject English, with little or no re-training. (Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Barcan, 1988, p.29) By 1970 31.4% of all secondary teachers were only two year trained. (Barcan, 1988, p.266) During the 60s a shortage of teachers in both the secondary and primary system developed, prompting the Government of the day to import teachers from overseas. (Barcan, 1988, p.249)

Another by-product of the shortage in supply of teachers was the acceptance into schools of teaching staff with no formal qualifications. Table 2.10 shows the percentage of teachers in NSW with tertiary qualifications during the so-called 'boom' years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% graduates with tertiary qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Barcan, 1988, p.249)
As Table 2.10 shows, by 1966 the percentage of secondary teachers with tertiary qualifications had dropped to 42% of all practicing high school teachers. Of the 42% of teachers with tertiary qualifications, it is likely that many held qualifications in particular disciplines, but not in education. To this day private schools in NSW are not bound by DET requirements for teachers to hold qualifications in education in order to teach in school. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Australian Teaching Council, 1996; Barcan, 1988, p.258; Ramsey, 2000)

When considered with the figures already discussed showing the decline in spending on all education, as a percentage of GDP, the above figures indicate that government funding and planning for teacher education failed to meet the need of the new school system. The supply of properly trained and qualified secondary teachers was not able to keep pace with demand and schools were forced to accept more teachers who had less preservice education than their predecessors. This meant that, as the new conceptualisations of literacy were emerging in theory and policy, fewer teachers were being trained in the theories of the day prior to entering a classroom for the first time. Indeed, fewer teachers than ever were receiving any formalised tertiary training. (Barcan, 1988, p.255-7)

**Current Issues in Teacher Preservice Education**

A study by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the Australian Government has indicated that the level of specialised preservice education amongst secondary teachers remains quite low. Table 2.11 gives percentages of the sample surveyed according to years of training:
Recent studies have called for a minimum of 4 years, and preferably 5 years, training for all teachers. (Australian College of Education, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001c; Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Christie, 1991; New South Wales Department of Education, 1980; Ramsey, 2000; Schools Council, 1990a) At the time of writing only Queensland had implemented compulsory five year teacher preservice education programs in universities. (Carr, 1996) The figures in Table 2.11 indicate that more than 50% of secondary teachers in New South Wales have received below what might be considered an acceptable length of preservice education. It should be remembered that these figures include teachers employed within private secondary schools and that the number of teachers with lesser qualifications is likely to be declining as older generations retire.

The NSW Department of Education and Training currently has strict entry criteria for employment in all State schools which do not apply to private schools. These criteria include a minimum of three years tertiary education for junior high school and four years for senior high school subjects. Generally speaking only one year of the four in the average secondary school teacher’s preservice education is usually oriented towards education as a discipline. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1995; New South Wales Department of School Education, 1995)

### Concerns About the Quality of Student Teachers

As universities began to take a greater role in the education of teachers many university staff opposed the inclusion of practical teacher training at their institutions. For some commentators teacher education continues to represent a perceived erosion of standards. It is claimed that the inclusion of specialised teacher preservice education in universities

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**Table 2.11:** Survey of secondary teachers’ preservice education expressed as number of years trained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Years Trained</th>
<th>% Total Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Two Years</td>
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<td>Three Years</td>
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<td>Four Years</td>
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<td>Five Years</td>
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(Batten, Griffin & Ainley, 1991, p.5)
has adversely affected the quality of not only teacher training but the university system overall. (Barcan, 1988, p.244; Hyams, 1979, p.140; Kramer, 1990, p.223-5)

There has also been considerable concern of late about the entry requirements to teacher training courses. The Australian Schools Council concluded in 1989 that since the 1970s the entry requirements for teacher training courses has been well below those of other courses. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.16-17; National Board of Employment Education and Training, 1989) The 1990 Australian Education Council inquiry into teacher education cited a perceived decline in the standard of teacher education candidates as:

probably the most serious problem [in teacher education] encountered during the working party’s enquiries.
(Australian Education Council, 1990, p.15)

The 1998 Australian Senate report into the status of teachers, A Class Act, found that there was:

disturbing evidence of a general (but not universal) decline in the academic quality of young people attracted into the teaching profession, as measured by a lowering of the TER scores (Tertiary Entry Rankings) of teacher education applicants.
(Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch.7, p.1)

In its submission to the Committee the Australian Council of Deans illustrated their concerns with the following point:

In 1989, more than half the commencing students in the Education field of study were concentrated in the lowest quartile of tertiary entrance scores of all school leaver commencing students.
(Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch.7, p.1)

Evidence from the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and the NSW Department of Education and Training supported assertions that a majority of student teachers were selected from the lowest achievers entering the university system. Other evidence to the Committee, from teachers and teacher organisations, showed that this situation is perceived as a detrimental ‘dumbing down’ of the profession.
(Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, Ch. 7) The Committee recommended that TER levels for entry to teacher preservice
courses be raised significantly in order to ‘attract more high achieving students into the profession’. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7, p. 6)

**Summary**

The demands on secondary English teachers since the second world war appear to have increased considerably in both volume and complexity. The introduction of compulsory, uniform secondary education occurred to a backdrop of a shortage of teachers and resources. In addition to a burgeoning education system, teachers have been faced with rapidly evolving conceptualisations of literacy and language learning. These changes have often been reflected in ‘cutting edge’ policy documents, which teachers are expected to implement in classrooms.

The developments in theory, and in turn policy, have called on teachers to challenge their traditional beliefs about language, literacy and learning. It can be argued that the theories teachers are meant to use to guide their practice have been distorted in the new policy documents and, in some cases, the theories have actually been hidden from view. The issues raised by the English Teachers' Association in recent years reflect professional concerns about attempts to keep pace with, and implement, these rapidly evolving theories and policies.

At the same time that these challenges were being presented to teachers, it would also appear that the system of higher education in Australia was also struggling to cope with the demands for teacher education. Certainly, it would appear that many teachers currently working within the system have received only minimal preservice education in literacy and language learning theories. It is, therefore, justifiable to ask what affects these development have had in classrooms.
Rationale for the Study

Why is such a study important? This study can be justified primarily on four grounds:

- Personal and professional motivation
- Benefits for the profession
- Timeliness of the study
- A need to address the paucity of research in the field

Personal and Professional Motivation

This study grew out of my own experiences as a teacher of secondary school subject English. Since completing a four year Bachelor of Education (Secondary) English/History degree (B.Ed.) in 1991 I have worked in a number of high schools, particularly in the area of literacy education. During my time in schools I have come to realise that not all teachers share my enthusiasm for educational theories or, indeed, for a focus on literacy in secondary English.

Research I conducted with Aboriginal communities and high schools during an Honours year of study in 1991 indicated that many secondary English teachers operate with little knowledge of language or literacy learning theories. This finding was supported by other research, which suggested that many teacher preservice education courses provide inadequate grounding for teachers in literacy education. (Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Batten et al., 1991; Cambourne, 1988; Cambourne & Turbill, 1990; Grant, 1994; Murray, 1988; Short, 1991; Tolley, 1989) The more I taught, the more I became convinced that good theory can inform good practice. I also became more aware of many of my colleagues resistance to educational theory or of their lack of knowledge about literacy and language theories.

Perhaps the most stark example of this was the insistence by a number of my workmates that Whole Language approaches state that no spelling, grammar, or rules of convention should be taught to children in school. This seemed to be a recurring theme in English staff rooms. The words of a colleague from the first page of field notes taken during this project illustrate the point:
Why are you teaching that stuff [grammar] in your lessons? That went out years ago, you’re not supposed to do that anymore.
...it’s pointless they just pick it up by doing other stuff, you don’t need to do it, worrying about spelling and grammar, are old hat, why do it? If they don’t pick it up there’s nothing you can do. (RPfn:1)

Another common example of confusion with theories has been the response to the introduction of Functional Grammar. I have often found it difficult to convince colleagues that Functional Grammar is not merely traditional grammar with a ‘new name’.

The fact that I was often at odds with colleagues in their interpretation of DET or BOS policies (a situation exacerbated by the 1999 Stage 6 Syllabus) led me to want to investigate the relationships between theory, policy and practice. I was also inspired to investigate the complaints of a number of older colleagues that ‘teaching is not like it used to be’ and that keeping pace with change has become more difficult. It was this complaint which originally led to my early investigations into the socio / political / historical contexts of the secondary education system.

My own curiosity about my newly acquired profession became the key motivation driving the project. This focus was somewhat vague at the beginning of the research project, as it appeared uncharted territory, but the focus was soon sharpened by peer briefings, readings of related literature and issues raised early in the research process.

Implications for the Profession

The Value of a Professional Theory Base

A teacher who does not understand the ways in which different children learn differently, who does not have a sense of the scaffolding of a field of knowledge or how to evaluate students’ prior knowledge, and who does not have a wide repertoire of alternative representations, explanations, and modes of teaching is not going to be equipped to help all children learn.

... An unprepared teacher is likely to teach in the way he or she was taught. When a powerful teacher education process does not intervene, new knowledge does not have an opportunity to transform teaching across generations. Yet prospective teachers cannot profit from these insights if they have no opportunity to encounter them.  
(Darling-Hammond, Wise & Klein, 1995, p.21)

The proposed study has significant implications for the profession. Teacher education has been said to be a:
career-long continuum of professional development ... the principle of learning how to learn.


Any such 'continuum' requires a solid foundation of preservice education on which to build. An extensive survey of literature on the topic concluded that:

the weight of research over the past twenty years indicates that- even given the wide range of quality in schools of education - teachers who have completed a full preparation program for licensure are in fact more highly rated and successful with students than are teachers without full preparation. (Evertson, Hawley, and Zlotnik, 1985; Ashton and Crocker, 1986, 1987; Greenberg, 1983; Haberman, 1984; Olsen, 1985).

(Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.19)

Education-specific coursework, particularly related to education and pedagogy appears to be far more valuable to teachers than subject-content related courses. (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.24)

**The Value of Education-Specific Theory to Teachers**

While many Australian teachers appear critical of their teacher preservice education courses it would appear that many also value education-specific content. Research has indicated that 80.4% of beginning teachers rated education method training of 'medium/high value'. (Batten et al., 1991, p.10) American research confirmed the finding:

Two recent studies of mid career and other non traditional recruits to teaching found that their strongest recommendation was for a heavier dose of subject-specific teaching methods, including pedagogical guidance combined with more information about child and adolescent motivation, development, and cognition (Darling-Hammond, Hudson and Kirby, 1989; Coley and thorpe, 1985) These findings are not surprising in light of recent researcher suggesting the importance of subject-specific pedagogy to teacher effectiveness, particularly as it intersects with knowledge about students (Shulman, 1986; Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987; see also Kennedy, 1990) (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.24)

Research ties classroom success to not only the nature of preservice education, but the length of the program experienced by prospective teachers:

Studies of teachers admitted through quick entry alternate routes have frequently noted that the candidates have difficulty with curriculum development, pedagogical content knowledge, attending to students' differing learning styles and levels, classroom management, and student motivation (Lenk, 1989; Feiman-Nemser and Parker, 1990; Grossman, 1989, 1990; Mitchell,
...Novice teachers without full training show more ignorance about student needs and differences and about the basics of teaching than do trained beginners (Rottenberg and Berliner, 1990) (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.20-21)

It would also appear that both the quality and quantity of teacher preservice education are key issues which concern the profession.

**Concerns About Teacher Education Programs**

In 1989 the Schools Council stressed the importance of the relationships between theory and practice in both the classroom and in teacher preservice education:

If teacher quality is to be maintained and indeed improved then the Council believes it is essential that:

- the type, content and length of teacher training courses be such as to ensure the best available preparation for teaching as a career;
- there be an appropriate mix of theory and practice and that
- relevant links between the two be established in preservice training.

(National Board of Employment Education and Training, 1989, p.14)

The adequacy of the one year Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE) postgraduate program by which most secondary teachers are trained has long been a concern in Australian education and in 1990 the Australian Education Council (AEC) linked those concerns with shifts in retention rates, school system structures and the shifting political control of schools. The AEC stated its 1990 inquiry into teacher education was driven primarily by:

- the apparent inadequacy of the practical preparation, induction and continuing education of teachers and
- the widespread changes in the structure, curriculum and governance of schools in Australia.

(Australian Education Council, 1990, p. i)

After widespread consultation the Council concluded:

the end-on Graduate Diploma of Education is widely acknowledged as a limited and therefore inadequate preparation for teachers and ... [AEC] recommends that it be redesigned. ... a diploma award is no longer an appropriate award for any beginning professional entering upon autonomous practice.

(Australian Education Council, 1990, p.iii)
Despite efforts to implement two year post-graduate programs throughout Australia, few universities have been able to establish substantial enrolments in such courses. Many of the students enrolled in the new-style programs have been reported to be primary school candidates. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7, p. 8)

Teachers appear to concur with concerns about the GDE program. Research has indicated that around 70% of all secondary teachers believe they are inadequately prepared for their subjects. (Batten et al., 1991, p.9; Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991c, p.10) A recent survey of both secondary and primary teachers in NSW reported that only 38% of respondents believed that their preservice education adequately prepared them for teaching. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7 p. 8) Added to this 75% of all teachers believe that their preservice education needed to be ‘more closely linked to classroom experience’. (Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991c, p.11) Fullan (1991), after conducting a wide-ranging study across Canada, found that 90% of surveyed student-teachers and lecturers wanted courses which could ‘prepare teachers who can integrate theory and practice’ but that only 30% felt that their ‘institution actually attached a strong emphasis to this goal’. (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p.293)

Of even more concern, 42% of Australian secondary teachers reported that they have received no training, whatsoever, in one or more of the subjects they teach. Added to this, 32% of the same sample reported ‘inadequate preparation’ in other subjects. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.11&20; Batten et al., 1991, p.8; Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991c,p.1&20)

The concerns outlined above led the NSW Minister for Education, on 28 June, 1999 to announce ‘a wide ranging review of teacher education’. The final report, after considering evidence presented to it and information from 20 earlier studies, found:

The evidence indicates that failure, including at a national level, either to establish standards of professional teaching practice or to embed them deeply into the profession is now impacting in a negative way on the direction and quality of initial and continuing teacher education, and hence teaching.
(Ramsey, 2000, p.31)
**Concerns over a Decline in Professional Development**

Concerns about shortfalls of preservice education appear to be exacerbated by the fact that most teachers do not have adequate access to in-service professional development in order to update their knowledge. A study of the 1987-88 year showed that only 35% of classroom teachers attended in-service courses in any field during school time in 1987-88. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.42) NSW principals reported that during the 1990s funding levels for professional development fell to about 10% of previous levels. They also claimed that the trend towards ‘in-house’ professional development during school time undermined the effectiveness of such training. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7B)

The 1998 Senate Committee was highly critical of the lack of provision of professional development for teachers generally:

> Unfortunately in-service education divisions are disappearing from education departments, and with them many long term, coherent, structured programs for professional development. With each school increasingly responsible for its own professional development the trend to piecemeal, ad hoc approaches - which teachers have identified as the greatest weakness of existing provision - is intensified. Competition between schools has also undermined collaborative approaches to professional development between staff at neighbouring schools. Where principals and staff place a high priority on teachers’ professional development, other programs must be cut to fund them. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7B, p.6)

Traditionally postgraduate study has taken up much of the shortfall in the availability of teacher professional development. In 1995 the Australian Language and Literacy Council noted that in 1987-8 one in four teachers were upgrading academic qualifications, with over 85% completing courses in their own time. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p. 42) The 1998 Senate Committee made the observation that:

> Teachers have one of the highest rates of participation in courses to upgrade their qualifications, despite the fact that such qualifications are rarely recognised in teacher promotion procedures, attract no additional salary and are often undertaken without any employer support. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7B, p.8)

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the high rate of postgraduate study amongst teachers has contributed strongly to the successes of the overburdened NSW secondary
system. With this in mind, the Australian Council of Deans [of Education Faculties] has raised concerns about the possible effects of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) on teacher effectiveness. The Council claims that, given the dependence of the teaching profession on postgraduate courses as a means of professional development, the potential for decline in enrolments has serious implications for future teacher practice:

In 1996 there were ... about 20,000 teachers involved in graduate coursework programs around Australia in an industry that provides no incentive in terms of salaries for people pursuing higher qualifications. These same people now are going to have to pay the equivalent of $10,000 a year to pursue a full-time ... graduate coursework program. They will simply not do it. And yet, that is the very platform of continuing professional development that is fundamental to a rigorous professional development context for Australia's teachers. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7B, p. 8)

These fears were confirmed by the recent Ramsey Report, which found a marked drop in the enrolment of teachers in postgraduate programs during the 1990s. The report laid a large proportion of blame on the introduction of HECS and the increased financial costs this has led to in seeking higher education in Australia. (Ramsey, 2000, p.25)

**The Need for Literacy Theory in Teacher Education**

There have been widespread calls for all teacher education programs to include a substantial core content of literacy and language theory. (Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998; Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Christie, 1991; Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991a, 1991c; English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996a, 1996b; National Board of Employment Education and Training, 1989) There appears to be widespread support, across disciplines and theoretical orientations for the inclusion of comprehensive literacy theory in teacher education:

All major works reviewed by the Council in preparing this Advice were unanimous in their emphasis upon the need for all teachers, as teachers of English literacy, to understand the processes involved in the acquisition and enhancement of literacy competence, commencing with an understanding of the early stages of emergent literacy within early childhood and the development of literacy within and across all ages and stages of the school learning contexts. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.91)
The ‘end-on Graduate Diploma’ (GDE) system has led to a situation whereby high school teachers generally only receive a very small amount of education about language and literacy during their GDE year, if they receive any at all. Secondary English teachers also appear to be worse off in this regard than their primary school colleagues:

Most primary teacher training preservice courses have at least three English language and literacy subjects. But... some secondary Diploma in Education programs have none at all.
(Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.91)

A check of websites for various Australian Universities confirmed this finding. (See chapter 5) Submissions, by NSW school principals, to the 1998 Senate Committee highlighted concerns about a lack of knowledge about literacy issues among newly graduated teachers:

the area of literacy, as we have said, is one in particular that we are very concerned about. Generally, from wherever they come, teachers are ill prepared in that area.
(Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch. 7, p.11)

Despite regular calls for a stronger focus on literacy education the preservice education of secondary English teachers remains focused solidly on the study of literature. Currently the vast majority of candidates for secondary English teaching complete a three year Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, followed by a one year Graduate Diploma in Education. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991c, p.10) Teacher preservice education in the area of language and literacy appears to have changed little over the past few decades, despite regular calls for reform.

Summary

There would, therefore, appear to be serious doubts as to the suitability of past and current English teacher preservice education courses to equip teachers to lead informed, empowered professional lives. Teachers do not have ready access to in-service training but, more importantly, even new graduates do not appear to have been formally educated in the basics of current literacy learning and language theories. Policies governing the teaching of secondary English have steadily developed a more complex focus on language and literacy development, yet teacher preservice education remains solidly grounded in the study of literature. Without a base knowledge of
literacy and language development theory, it is highly questionable whether many secondary English teachers are equipped to keep pace with current developments in practice, theory or policy. This situation, alone, has serious implications for learners and teachers.

A Paucity of Previous Research

Theory and policy shifts remain an inevitable fact of life for New South Wales teachers of English. While many reports and studies have reported on the status of teacher preservice education courses, few have examined the impact of current course content on classroom practice. Little has been done to examine the way in which all these policy and theory shifts have impacted on teachers and learners in the engine room of the system - the classroom. After considering the various changes in training, theory and policy facing classroom teachers, the Australian Schools Council found:

There has been relatively little effort to undertake research to determine the effects that these dramatic changes in policy, curriculum, assessment, funding and other practices have had upon teachers and the quality of English literacy ... that they are now delivering. There is no shortage of anecdotal evidence, but too little research.

(Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.93)

An extensive search of the literature available has verified this claim. While there is a wealth of material dealing with theory, policy and teacher training there appears to be a paucity of information about how the various changes in literacy theory, training and literacy policy have impacted on the classroom practices of secondary English teachers and learners.

Timeliness of the Study

There has been a great deal of concern in recent years about general declines in the quantity of educational research conducted in Australian schools. (Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991b) The 1998 Senate Report was highly critical of cuts in funding education research and urged the Federal Government to
develop strategies to encourage research in school education. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, p.3)

In 1995 an inquiry by the Australian Language and Literacy Council, assisted by the Higher Education Council and the Schools Council, called for the urgent establishment of research aimed at:

- Monitoring the impact upon both teachers and students in the English literacy, English and English as a Second Language fields of the recent changes in policy, curriculum, assessment, funding arrangements, and other relevant developments;
- developing models of preservice and professional development that address the issues raised in the advice and
- dissemination exemplars of good practice, which should be available in both printed and electronic data base formulations...

(Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995, p.93)

Ramsey’s (2000) wide-ranging review of teacher education, concurred with earlier reports condemning the state of teacher education and called for radical reform of teacher education and practice systems. The Ramsey Report highlighted the importance of ongoing research and of developing new approaches to old problems:

Unless new approaches are developed in a number of important areas, my belief is that like the twenty previous reviews of teacher education of national significance over the same number of years, little will happen ... and good ideas will languish.
(Ramsey, 2000, p.3)

Our knowledge of theory and policy and the nature of teacher education appears to be reasonable. Our knowledge of how these elements interact in the classroom is, to say the least, limited. The study presented herein is timely and aims at continuing recent works, examining their implications in the realm of the everyday professional lives of teachers.

Given the radical changes that developments in theory, teacher education and Department of School Education policies have brought about, the effect at the last link in the chain - the classroom - has vital implications for theorists, learners, teachers and particularly for teacher-educators. If we are to achieve ‘an appropriate mix’ of theory and practice and devise teacher education courses adequate to meeting the demands of the learners of the future then we need to better understand just what is occurring in classrooms today.
PRESUPPOSITIONS GUIDING THE PROJECT

In any inquiry it is important to reveal any presuppositions that the researcher holds in relation to the areas under investigation. The following are some presuppositions held by the researcher which helped direct the design of the research project:

- That within Australian culture education is seen as a basic right of all children, to better allow them to control their own lives and strive towards realising their potential.
- Skills in literacy are essential for access to power in today's world.
- Language and learning are closely related.
- In a literate society literacy is an essential part of the connections between language and cognition, that is: 'engagement' in literacy is a vital component in facilitating thinking, learning and personal development.
- That there is no one 'correct' form of English, rather, some forms are more appropriate to given circumstances than others.
- That 'learning to read, write, spell, punctuate etc., (ie., learning to become literate) ought to be as uncomplicated and barrier-free as possible' and 'once learned, the skills and knowledge that make literacy possible ought to endure beyond the four walls of the classroom; that they should be durable'. (Cambourne, 1988, p.4)
- That effective teachers of English incorporate an eclectic mix of approaches in creating 'holistic' classrooms - including Whole Language and Systemic Functional Linguistic based approaches to language.
- That teachers require an understanding of the cultural and social contexts that children bring to the learning environment.
- That teachers of English need an understanding of how language functions in order to assist their students appropriately.
- That teacher preservice education should enable teachers of secondary English to 'learn how to learn'. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995) That is, it should supply a base knowledge of language and literacy education theory, to guide and support their developing beliefs and attitudes in their teaching of English.
- That what teachers bring to their classrooms, in the way of preservice education and the policy requirements of their employer, contributes to shaping and directing their practice in secondary English classes.

Questions that Contributed to the Initial Design of the Study

The design of the study was guided, in its earliest phases, by the following questions. Naturally, other questions emerged during the process of the study and the focus of the project changed as the data were analysed. Many of the questions which guided the study were fleeting thoughts, some were directed by participants, others appeared to be major issues demanding attention. It is not possible to list all the questions, or the multitude of answers, raised by this project. In keeping with the qualitative
methodologies employed the study did not seek to provide strict answers to these questions, but rather sought to use them to assist in the construction of conceptualisations of relationships existent between the areas under investigation. The following list is supplied merely as an illustrative guide to the types of questions which directed the early days of the project design and collection of data. The questions are organised into the three main areas under investigation.

**Theories and Policies Impacting on English**

- What is literacy in English, from the perspective of policy makers within the Department of School Education, primarily concerned with in secondary schools?
- What is literacy in English, from the perspective of teacher educators in teacher preservice courses, primarily concerned with in secondary schools?
- What is literacy in English, from the perspective of teachers of secondary English, primarily concerned with in secondary schools?
- What are the differences between a literature-based approach and a literacy approach?
- How aware are teachers of the theoretical currents which have contributed to Department of School Education curriculum in recent years?
- How aware are teachers of the theories which have contributed to policy decisions affecting literacy in English classes?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the various approaches to the teaching of literacy in English which have evolved during the history of English teaching in New South Wales?

**Teacher Preservice Education**

- How has the history of teacher preservice education shaped the practices of teachers of literacy in English?
- What is the nature of the differences in how teachers are trained between various institutions?
- How are trainee teachers selected?
- What is the nature of preservice education in literacy given to student English teachers?
- What theoretical frameworks for understanding literacy and language learning are given to student teachers during their preservice education?
- What types of theoretical frameworks are provided to student teachers to assist with their continuing professional development in the area of literacy education?
- What theoretical frameworks do student English teachers hold about the teaching of literacy in English?
Chapter 2: Background & Rationale

- Which areas of literacy and language theory are currently favoured by teacher educators for inclusion in preservice courses?
- How effective are teacher education courses in Universities in equipping prospective teachers of English in High Schools to "learn how to learn" about literacy in English teaching? (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995)
- What are teachers views of their preservice education?
- How relevant is teacher preservice education to teacher practice?
- How does teacher preservice education impact on teacher practice in secondary English classes?

Teacher Practice

- What kind of knowledge base about literacy does teacher practice in secondary English classrooms reflect?
- What are secondary English teachers' theory bases in relation to the needs of learners in their classes?
- How relevant do some teachers of English in New South Wales high schools perceive current issues in literacy and language learning theory to be to their everyday teaching?
- How effectively does the knowledge base of some teachers of English in New South Wales high schools equip them to understand current issues in literacy and language learning theory?
- To what extent do some teachers of secondary English classes put literacy learning theories into practice in their classes?
- To what extent do some teachers of secondary English classes put Department of School Education policy into practice in their classes?
- What kinds of teaching methods do teachers of secondary English employ in their classes?
- How suitably educated are some teachers of secondary English to fulfil the requirements of Department of School Education literacy education policy?
- How suitably educated are some teachers of secondary English to teach literacy in English in today's classrooms, given current theoretical frameworks?
- What do some teachers perceive as the major needs of literacy learners in high school English classes?
- What kind of literacy curriculum do some teachers believe would best suit the needs of learners?
- What kind of literacy curriculum do some teachers want for learners?
- What kind of literacy in English do teachers value and prefer for their students?