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

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CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I set out the results of analysing the data using grounded theory procedure as outlined by Strauss and Corbin. (1990 & 1998) This study set out to investigate relationships between teacher preservice education, NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) policies and teacher practice regarding literacy education in a sample of NSW secondary school English classes. In so doing it developed a grounded theory of conditions which are useful in explaining the phenomenon involved in the apparent profession disempowerment of NSW secondary English teachers in their roles as professional literacy educators. This grounded theory emerged from the methodological procedures described in Chapter 4 and, as such, there is a highly synergistic relationship between the theory and the methods employed in gathering and analysing the data.

The storyline of the theory was explicated by outlining relationships between subcategories and the core category of professional disempowerment using the data collected, supported by archival data. The framework of the grounded theory is used to guide the presentation of this analysis, thereby constructing the story of the grounded theory through the use of the data itself. As outlined in the methodology chapter, the major category of the grounded theory is conceptualised as the phenomenon of ‘professional disempowerment’, while the subcategories are conceptualised as the contributing ‘conditions’.

In keeping with grounded theory procedure those ‘conditions’ (sub-categories) constitute the stages of ‘process’ of the grounded theory and are conceptualised as the ‘phases’ of professional disempowerment. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.152) The phenomena of professional disempowerment is laid out in its phases of process, indicating the contributing conditions which constitute them, in Figure 5.1:
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Institutional Phase
- Political Control
- Professional Powerlessness
- Theory Deficit
- Professional Isolation
- System Overload

Personal Phase
- Survival
- Visibility
- System Subversion
- Alienation

**Professional Disempowerment**

**Figure 5.1**: The conditions of professional disempowerment

While the theory presented above appears linear it was anything but a linear, cause-effect theory. Rather, the conditions of the theory were developed standing in paradigmatic relationship to each other. Each was a construct dependent on the context of, and the relationships between, its components for meaning. Infinite variables, standing in relationship at various levels, determined the overall construction of each condition. It is useful, therefore, to once again consider Strauss and Corbin’s approximation of the paradigm model as presented in Figure 5.2:

**Figure 5.2**: Grounded theory relationship paradigm
(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.99)

Once again, the processes involved should be seen as recursive, rather than linear. By following the organisation of sub-categories under headings of main categories, as
organised around the core category, it was hoped to show how the theory being articulated emerged from, and was grounded in, the data.

In keeping with constructivist views of the constructed nature of knowledge much archival and other related data were used to enhance the analysis. Analysis is, after all, largely interpretation which is guided by local and distant contexts. In particular the professional and institutional phases of disempowerment noted in Figure 5.1 above required examination of literature and archival data in order to examine the broader professional and institutional processes at work in creating informants’ constructed knowledges and realities. This was in keeping with Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory procedure, whereby literature is reviewed in light of the developing grounded theory. Use of such peripheral data allowed the contextualisation of informants’ data into an analysis of the ‘bigger picture’ which, of course, must always be considered as interpretation guided by one’s own subjectivities, meaning different things to both reader and writer.

Early in the study it became obvious that teacher-informants and teacher educators were not so much concerned about the policies of the NSW DET or their theoretical frameworks. Rather, they appeared more concerned with the actions/interactions and consequences which they perceived to flow from the nature of the regulation of the profession in NSW. In short, they seemed more concerned with the nature of the system and the effects that system was having on their professional lives. While concerns of this nature were not new in education, they were crucial in gaining a better understanding of what was at work in the schools and university. They were instrumental in beginning the process of unravelling some of the complex threads that made up the ‘big picture’. The nature of the professional processes involved in NSW high schools provided contextual information which was crucial to understanding the relationships under investigation.

The grounded theory procedures applied in this study produced a set of conceptualisations of these professional processes. (See Figure 5.1 above.) These professional ‘processes’ (henceforth ‘conditions of professional disempowerment’) in turn were organized into three overlapping ‘phases’, each phase determined by the ‘agency’ which was the source of each of the conditions, namely, ‘professional’, ‘institutional’ and ‘personal’. In what follows the conditions of the professional phase are discussed.
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THE PROFESSIONAL PHASE OF DISEMPowerMENT

The conditions of the professional phase of disempowerment are:

- Political control
- Professional powerlessness
- Theory deficit

One of the benefits of the grounded theory procedure used in this study was that it allowed a hierarchy of level of conceptualisations, in relationship to each other, to be determined. (See Figure 5.1 above) The most potent level of influence within the model was that of political control. It is, therefore, fitting to commence the analysis of data with that most influential condition of disempowerment.

POLITICAL CONTROL

Political control seemed to be the most potent force governing issues in literacy education to be identified by the study. Teacher informants were particularly keen to highlight the impact that political control of the bureaucracy of the school system had on their working lives. Indeed, all informants gave bleak impressions of the ability of teachers to participate in the control or regulation of the profession. Such control was seen as coming from outside the profession, chiefly from political and bureaucratic levels. For example, one informant tied educational policies to a three year cycle, coinciding with electoral cycles. (A1) Comments about the political control of education included the following data slices:

they are all politicians now. Once you move out of the Principals role you are on a contract and you sustain that contract by doing what you are asked to do.

Q19. So, this is like, the bureaucracy that controls schools?
A1: The Superintendent. Well, I don’t believe we have had a professional Director General for a long time I think they are political appointments now. They sustain their position by doing what the politicians direct.
I think there is too much control by politicians, I might be naive in suggesting that. That goes right back to I believe Paul Landa, which is a long time ago, it’s not just Metherell or Cavalier, it goes right back where the Minister moved away from being a rubber stamp, which I don’t agree with, either.
(A1:9 – School Principal)
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We are just baby sitters, picking up for the government, the politicians all call the shots

(A4:fnA4:1)

R: What kind of input do you think teachers have into the syllabus?
B1: None, none. Of course not. Who are we? They won't ask us.
R: Who do they ask then?
B1: Well, I think politicians, obviously, the DET. The Draft Writing Brief is out, obviously, but it doesn't have time, how can they use our feedback? They won't. They do what they are told from the top.
R: You mean, the DET?
B1: DET, the government, West, you know, the private schools. I suppose ETA has some input, but they don't get the final say, do they?
That's up to the Minister. Look at the Stage 6 Draft, the blue one, Carr, or the Minister, they just do what they want.
(B1:fn41)

Q: What do you think of the recent push with literacy, where they are making explicit policies saying you've go to
B2: I think it's just more a thing for the government really.
Q: More a political thing?
B2: Yeah.
(B2:25)

... the amount of work we are now expected to do is a bit similar to somebody who was a peasant in the 18th century, who got so tired during the day, from just doing enough work to get food on the table for tomorrow, that you don't think above the basic level of the school. So your thinking doesn't go above the level of your own school. It's probably in ten years you realise that your thoughts, even if you went higher, they just don't go anywhere. Everything just filters down, but very little filters back up. That's what happens.
(A3:19)

Complaints about political interference in schools and universities are not unusual and much has been written about political control over the years. It was, however, significant that participants traced political control to government and to the State Government Minister for Education in particular. Two of the areas informants most commonly nominated as being politically controlled during the study were the areas of syllabus development and compulsory assessment procedures.

Political Control, Policy and Practice

The most influential policy documents in the NSW system affecting teacher practice were the syllabus documents produced by the Board of Studies NSW. This was because the syllabi not only established the curriculum to be taught at all stages of schooling but it also set the assessment procedures, most notably in the uniform matriculation exams of the Higher School Certificate (HSC). As teachers were accountable for adhering to syllabus documents through the HSC exam and quality assurance program of the DET
system it can be argued that syllabus documents, particularly in the senior years, prescribed content and often pedagogical approaches to be followed by teachers. Teacher informants typically expressed concerns about a lack of control over the development of syllabus documents and their accompanying assessment procedures. They tended to identify the three main influences dominating the syllabus development process as:

- government
- universities, particularly the University of Sydney, and
- the private school system.

Some examples of informant comments regarding control of syllabus processes included:

I don’t think there is significant input there, well the only input of significance is when teachers are seconded into syllabus writing ... I think the feedback, or the draft system of coming back into schools is not successful. I am not aware of too many teachers who really analyse a draft and then give some concrete, constructive comment on the draft. Most things in schools is democracy seen to be happening. A draft comes out and teachers don’t respond so they are happy with it ... I think syllabus changes have again, been political. (A1:20)

When you’re at the public school, I mean the Principal of Knox Grammar or somewhere like that will get quoted in the paper. He’ll get a chance to review the HSC, not us. (A2b:6)

Q28. What was their response to the media?[referring to banning of HSC text by BOS]
A2: They [students] just thought it was ridiculous. They really, it taught them a big lesson about how politics gets involved in education, about how columnists like to use any excuse to um, get their target, whether it might be public education, the premier, or it might be the minister for education ... And the kids could see that, see just how woolly the thinking was, for the argument. (Informant A2a:15)

R: What kind of input do you think teachers have into the syllabus?
B1: None, none. Of course not. Who are we? They won’t ask us.
R: Who do they ask then?
B1: Well, I think politicians, obviously, the DET. The Draft Writing Brief is out, obviously, but it doesn’t have time, how can they use our feedback? They won’t. They do what they are told from the top.
R: You mean, the DET?
B1: DET, the government, West, you know, the private schools. I suppose ETA has some input, but they don’t get the final say, do they?
That’s up to the Minister. Look at the Stage 6 Draft, the blue one, Carr, or the minister, they just do what they want. (B1:fn41)

... That I see as a huge problem and I think that is a consequence of being dominated by elite private schools. You know, the syllabus, they’re always talking about what we’re going to expect at the high end, the high achievers and we can’t lower our standards, but what are we doing for the kids who don’t have those language skills, who don’t read, who aren’t interested? (B4:46)
R: Do you feel that as a teacher you get represented in the exam system?
B4: I think it is too dominated by universities and the university people are, in my experience, do not actually know what is going on in schools. Having done this Masters in Education, and being in a school, it’s quite clear that the people at the university do not know what goes on in schools. (B4:47)

A6: I think someone who has actually been teaching who’s been out there in the workforce and hasn’t actually been stuck in academia for long periods of time, has actually been out there teaching in schools. Because I find that the documents that come through from time to time actually seem to be written without the reality, we end up with something you can’t actually do, or teach. I think we should actually have some input and it shouldn’t be someone from a private school, either. It should be someone from Airds, or someone from Hurstville, someone from a high school should be included so it actually encompasses the large scope of ability of the kids now ... we need people who are actually in touch with that. (A6:17)

In addition to syllabus development teachers also indicated that they felt they had little control of compulsory assessment procedures. Most teachers involved in the study nominated assessment as being a major influence in directing their teaching, particularly their literacy practices.

Political Control and Compulsory Assessment
The data showed that political control was exercised in the NSW context through the use of compulsory assessment procedures. These compulsory assessment tasks were revealed to be tied directly to Ministerial control both at the State and Federal level and administered through both the DET and BOS bureaucracies. Compulsory uniform assessment was shown to be used across all the secondary years except for year 9 and as such it had a direct impact on all students within the government school system.

The Early Literacy and Language Assessment Tests
Compulsory testing of public school junior students in years 7 and 8 commenced in 1996, in the form of the Early Literacy and Language Assessment (ELLA) tests. These tests were not compulsory in the private school system. Despite a government ban on the teaching of the terminology of Functional Grammar the ELLA tests conducted during the study were marked using guidelines derived using Functional Grammar, including the generic structures of Text Types. The marking process required
specialised in-servicing of English staff at both schools in Functional Grammar.
(A1:fn1; B:CF1-16)

During 1997 School B appointed a ‘Literacy Team’ of teachers from all KLAs, headed by members of the English Faculty. The team developed a literacy policy explicitly based heavily on the demands of ELLA and which called for the explicit teaching of Text Type structures. The policy focused on performance in the ELLA tests, with students who scored poorly being placed ‘on individual programs specifically designed to address each student’s particular literacy needs’. (B:CF1) These programs were based on more detailed analysis of Text Type Scaffolds, as supplied in Agenda 97 documentation. (B:CF1-30) The school literacy policy released a bulletin calling for all teachers to implement a:

concentration on the grammar and syntax of effective meaning in their texts and making use of the scaffolding models for different types of writing.
(B:CF12)

During 2001 School B allocated students to streamed year 8 classes, based solely on the results of their year 7 ELLA tests some ten months earlier. (B:fn12/12/01)

School A, at the same time and as a direct response to ELLA results, developed a policy whereby all English teachers issued traditional grammar worksheets to students to be completed for homework which were marked during the same period each Friday. Each student in Years 7 & 8 completed the same sheet at the same time and the marks were used in developing students’ rankings in English. This policy continued at least from 1997 to 1999. (A1 fn1; A6:9; A:Archives)

Teachers from both schools linked ELLA to the political nature of the literacy debate. They also connected it to the forced implementation of Text Types and Functional Grammar, through the accountability that standards-referenced assessment demands. It should be noted that teachers were also concerned about their students’ academic welfare, with some stating the ‘did not wish to disadvantage students by not giving them the opportunity to do well. Comments reflecting their concerns about the influence of compulsory assessment included:

A1: I am very concerned about the Dr. Kemp’s [Federal Minister for Education] of the world and the Amanda Vanstones [Federal Minister for Justice] who I think have a privatisation agenda. In fact, I’m not even convinced that Bob Carr [State Premier] and John Aqualina [State Education Minister] don’t have that agenda too, umm, it would be nice not to have to have education in a portfolio [for a minister] but that someone else was looking after it.
I believe that Kemp and Vanstone have beat up the literacy factor.

I don’t believe you can make their comparisons now to several years ago, because I think literacy now is much more significant to everyone, whereas 10 years, 20 years, definitely 30 years ago, for sure, there were so many unskilled jobs, once you left school, all a person may have needed to do was sign their name on their pay cheque or something.

Because they may have just been doing physical work all the time. And now those jobs aren’t there, so now we are finding that the kids who had literacy problems thirty years ago were not really identified, because they just went into work where there were no literacy demands. But now those people, those kids, of similar academic ability of similar circumstance, that are transient, move from school to school, never have a stable education and never really work at their literacy are being identified now. Because when they go for work now, most of them are having some form of literacy test. And people can’t.

B2: I’m always extra thorough when it comes to anything like that [ELLA & School Certificate]. And if anything I will spoon-feed them, I mean it’s not the right thing to do, but to get them through, I’ll do that.

A6: Okay, so the program is here, I’ve got the exercise sheets I do with them, and these two books, [Language texts] Like the sheets aren’t very instructive for what they need, but it’s an assessment task, so I have to give it to them. [referring to weekly grammar sheets used for ELLA preparation in School A]

Q: What do you think of using Text Types?
A3: …It’s mainly because of ELLA, without that we wouldn’t bother.

Q: Do you think it’s [ELLA] having much impact on what teachers are having to do in the classroom?
B2: Well, for Text Types, yeah, because I mean the terminology has all changed again, so you’ve got to say, right this is the narrative text and supposedly they’re supposed to be aware of that in the primary school, anyway. So, they should know that, so when we say, right we’re doing exposition, instead of writing essays or stuff like that, they call it exposition, you know, they should be familiar with those sorts of terms by the time they get to us? They need it for the test.

With ELLA and everything, we had to do something here, so I said to B1 ‘Don’t worry about it, I did it years ago’ [Functional Grammar]. The top classes and the reasonable kids get something out of it, the bottom classes, who are just here because they have to be, it’s too much for them.

Informant perceptions about ELLA driving curriculum have been supported by papers lodged on the website of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), the professional body which represents English teachers at a National level. In its response to the Federal Government’s proposal to establish national year 7 literacy benchmarks the AATE, in claiming that ELLA was a most unsuitable model for benchmarking, stated:
Unfortunately ELLA - a particularly reductionist approach to literacy - seems to be driving the literacy agenda in NSW and driving Year 7 curriculum across faculties in a number of schools. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998, p.15)

It is important to note that the introduction of Functional Grammar and a Genre-based approach to teaching literacy in both sites was closely linked by informants to compulsory ELLA testing. When queried all staff at both sites, except for one participant, informed the researcher that they had only learned about aspects of Functional Grammar because of the ELLA test. Both schools have implemented programs of teaching factual writing based on the demands of the ELLA tests and the use of grammar. (A1:fn1; B: CF1)

The Higher School Certificate and the School Certificate

During observations it was common for teachers and student teachers to stress the importance of the influence of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) and School Certificate (SC) exams on their teaching practices. Not one informant stated that they believed that HSC demands produced the best teaching and learning outcomes for their students.

While some informants pointed out that the demands of the senior exams meant they needed to move too quickly through content, others claimed that particular focuses on texts in the exams meant that too much time needed to be spent on in-depth study on a narrow selection of content. The following reflect the types of comments made by informants:

Q9. When you teach English to a class, what do you think that you are really teaching when you teach English?
A5: ... fundamentally, I'm working toward that HSC, that's my bottom line and that is what I'm going for.
Q10. Do you think that is what is best for the students' learning?
A5: Oh, god no. We just charge ahead. You've got to push ahead, no matter how many are struggling with the content.
(Informant A5:3)

Q29. How do you feel about the HSC content and the way it is structure? Do you feel it is the best use of the time you have with students?
A2: I don't know. I suppose with, from a purely teaching point of view, it would be very nice to have moved on, in fact, and not spent all this time revising what we've been working with for quite some time. That these are intellectually curious and able people, from purely and educational point of view we wouldn't be spending this time rehashing now, you'd be moving on to other things. So, in that respect, it's not dead time from the point of view of the exams obviously, it's very helpful to them.
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From the point of view of education the next three months, or whatever it is that they’re nominally at school is a waste of education time.

Q30. Although, you sound like you enjoy the opportunity to get into it in depth with them.
A2: Yeah, Yeah. Certainly, I enjoy that. But, there are all sorts of things that we haven’t had time to cover, you sort of think, gee these kids would have enjoyed would have loved ... would have loved another Shakespeare, or it would have been really nice to have got into some more poetry with them.

Q31. MM, yeah, I wonder which is better, to be going into it in more depth and more depth, or regurgitating it, as you said, or looking at what the critics say or whether it is better to move on.
A2: ... with good literature, I mean I couldn’t say confidently myself, now what Hamlet is really about. Ask me every six months and I’ve got a different way of approaching it. I think the kids are the same.

Q32. Only an English teacher would be smiling while saying the kids keep changing their understanding of the content.
(A2a:15)

All teachers and student teachers linked the Higher School Certificate (HSC) and School Certificate (SC) syllabuses and exam processes (and results) to accountability as a driving force behind both their teaching practices and the content covered during lessons. For example:

A3: Like them or not bell-curves are a fact of life ... stats are what it’s all about. That’s all they care about.
(A3:fn1)

Q: Oh, yeah. You mentioned the syllabus, so is that one of the main determinants for what you do?
B2: Oh, it has to be, yes. I think accountability these days, particularly with grades and exams and stuff, when you get to year 10 you’ve got to be following the syllabus pretty closely.
Q: What do you mean by the exams and stuff?
B2: Like school certificate and accountability. Particularly now, that they are going to get their marks, as of this year, for the exam.
Q: So, that means accountability for you?
B2: Oh, yeah, particularly with my class. My year 10’s, who are low bottom, they all come up with marks of 20% or something, the parents are all going to be up here, I’m sure. I think that is going to be a problem.
(B2:5)

Q77. So, you think the syllabus is your main guide, for that kind of stuff?
S4a: Oh, yeah. The bible.
Q78. Yeah? Why do you say that?
S4a: It justifies everything you do. Justifies everything.
Q79. And you think that would be your main influence on what you do in the classroom?
S4a: It would be goal. It would be my main influence. What I aim for.
(S4a:18)

A5 thinks grammar is a good tool for learning about the structure of texts for HSC but doesn’t know how to teach it without it being boring and dry. Her perception of it being valuable only extends to HSC kids and only to them doing better in the exams. Once again, content being driven by assessment.
(Refs A5:1)
A particular effect of this appeared to be a shifting focus from themes in literature towards a focus on structure and technical skill, based on the Departmental shift towards a Functional View of Language and the use of Text Types. Both schools implemented programs during the course of the study to meet the demands of the new assessment criteria. (A3:fn1&7; B:cf1-30) Most of these shifts revolved around a perceived need for understandings about structure and grammar in order to meet assessment requirements. For instance B4, literacy coordinator at School B stated:

Q: Why do you have those laminated text type scaffolds in your room?
B4: Oh, that's the new thing. It's in Ella, it's in the School Certificate and the new HSC looks like it will be the same. Everything's on structure, the new focus seems to be, so we've got to focus on it.
I think it's killing the focus we've always tried to have, you know, on ideas. The idea was always the thing, now it's just the structure. You've got to be a good technician now.
Q: So, you've changed the school focus because of the exams?
B4: Well, you've got to, the new syllabus, too. You have too.
(B4:Fn:41)

The HSC also appears to influence the way that teachers approach junior years, in an attempt to give their students experience in the types of work the senior syllabus will demand of them. I saw examples of this repeatedly in classrooms, particularly regarding writing and speaking skills. There appeared little doubt to informants that one of the main purposes of uniform assessment tasks in the lower years was to prepare students for the later years. Comments included:

B3: This is all preparing you for the HSC, this is what you have to do in the HSC. (to year 10 students asking why they have to write essays)
(B3:fn5)

B1: From field notes:
Yr8 debating
Seems like one-off thing for assess & policy requirements
Yr 8 speaking assessment task; 2 periods to prepare
Little assistance given, periods used to do other work; No discussion beforehand; Prescriptive instructions about what to do; No discussion of purpose or audience or how evolved; B1 taking notes into side of lesson planner in margin; Gave no comments on speakers; Not related to any other work; Not related to any further speech experiences; Not related to any themes studying; No modelling or examples; No immersion; 4 students (chairpersons) no debate - left till 'next term'; No discussion at end re: relevance; usefulness or even how kids felt about it all.
Did congratulate students on working well together.

Q: Why did you structure it the way you did?
B1: ... It just gets them used to it. For later. For the senior years, you know, the school certificate and HSC.
(B1:fn31-39)
The use of ‘one-off debates’, where students across four years were given two lessons to prepare their debates as a speaking and listening assessment task, continued at both School A and School B for the duration of the study.

Assessment Used to Drive Teacher Practice

It appeared that teacher informant perceptions about the use of assessment to drive curriculum were well founded. There was strong evidence from DET informants that assessment, in the form of ELLA, was being used to force teachers to use particular approaches to literacy in classes, namely the use of Functional Grammar and Text Types.

Informant L5, a senior academic involved in the writing of both syllabus and other policy documents for the DET, stated that the use of ELLA had been deliberately planned to drive teacher practice in classrooms. This stemmed from DET curriculum experts’ perceptions that teachers, particularly secondary school teachers, would resist implementing Functional Grammar if it was not made accountable through assessment:

R: What I’m finding is that schools ... tell me they introduce their strategies, is they don’t see it as being educational, but as answering ELLA.
L5: That’s recognised by the Department as being a big plus in fact. They said that is the only way you’re going to get any professional development [about Functional Grammar], any awareness of literacy, in schools.
(L5:24)

During a meeting with five of the most senior literacy curriculum officers in the DET system I raised the matter of ELLA directing teacher practice and all agreed that this had been deliberately planned. All, except for the most senior person present (DET1), said that they felt that if the policy docs were making teachers take notice of grammar and spelling then that, in itself, was a ‘good thing’ and that they felt that teachers had not been teaching specifics before the introduction of ELLA. (FN: DET meeting 21/5/99) One of these senior officers stated:

As long as it is a social view of language, language as a socially constructed thing, that’s what we want, nothing else matters, if they take care of that, that’s a major achievement.
(DET5: 21/5/99)
I presented samples of grammar and Text Type work-sheets collected from classrooms to the meeting, seeking their opinions. Another senior officer (DET3) stated that if they knew which school had used the sheets the Principal, or even the District Superintendent would be disciplined. Despite this the same officer then stated:

It’s better than nothing. It’s a start. At least we’ve got them thinking about Text Types. I don’t care if they don’t understand it, as long as they do as they’re told and use it.

(DET 3 : FN; DET Meeting 21/5/99)

At another meeting three different, similarly highly ranked DET officers, gave a similar message, during an address to academic staff at the university. They stated that the perception from ELLA was that Year 7 students across the state were not doing well in literacy and there was a need for more intervention by the DET. One bureaucrat praised ELLA during their address, claiming it:

Tells them [teachers] the kinds of things they need to teach.

(DET6: DET meeting 23/2/99)

Another DET official at the same meeting stated that, if teachers follow the needs of ELLA and adhere to the new policy documents, ‘they are doing fine’. (DET9: DET meeting 23/2/99) All the informants quoted here were involved in either writing or implementing the DET policy documents flowing from the Agenda 97 initiative.

A university lecturer, Informant L6, closely aligned with the Genre School (see Literature Review) and a highly respected researcher in the field of Functional Grammar, made similar comments about the claim that teachers did not understand the theories behind the Agenda 97 literacy policies. Informant L6 stated:

Look, if they follow what the department has sent out in the DSP kits they will get it right. That’s all they need. Joan Rothery’s stuff is all they need. There’s no excuse for not doing it, every school has a professional development kit, that’s all they need. Every teacher should be doing it.

(L6:fn2)

There were high degrees of similarity between the comments of L6 and the DET informants. The comments also aligned closely with assertions by the Genre School. Martin has argued that Systemic linguists should develop theories and approaches, as well as intervene in policy development. (Martin, 1992, p.587; Martin & Rothery, 1993, p.144) Furthermore, Martin claimed that:
Because of their complexity, we can only hint at the kind of work a Functional Grammar does here basing our work on Halliday (1985) and Matthiessen (1990), which are grammars for linguists and their apprentices, not for teachers and their students in schools. [emphasis added]

(Martin & Rothery, 1993, p. 144)

These comments lend weight to other data which suggested that political control was often influenced by the ideological biases of academic ‘camps’ and that varying ideologies impacted at various levels of control within the education system. This issue is explored further later in this chapter.

**Accountability and Compulsory Assessment**

During the course of the study School B experienced pressure from the local DET District Office to lift students’ grades in the HSC. During the study the local District Superintendent contacted School B and required the Principal and Head Teacher English to submit an explanation for students’ poor results in HSC exams. After a number of faxes and submissions to the District Office the new Head Teacher of English, who had been at the school only six months, was informed that, as Head Teacher, they would be held accountable for all results and might be transferred to another school if marks did not improve. (FN:6/7/00)

In early 2001 high ranking DET officials attended a meeting with English staff of School B and presented statistics detailing recent achievements in the HSC exams. (FN: 26/3/01) Teachers were warned that if results did not improve they would be subject to an external review of their teaching practices. They were further warned that such a review could recommend that they be disciplined or transferred. The only criteria used by the District Office to determine the proficiency of the teaching staff were the results of student in ELLA, School Certificate and Higher School Certificate exams. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2001a) It seems, in this case, that literacy assessment procedures and English subject exams - which were controlled at a political level - were combined and were being used to regulate the professional practices of teachers. In mid 2001 the Head Teacher English in School B resigned their position, citing pressures related to the Departmental examination of the compulsory assessment results. (B:fn3/9/01) The Head Teacher said at the time of resignation:
It’s not worth it, the department [DET] just treats me like shit. These results are worthless. I’m supposed to wave a magic wand and fix all the problems. It’s ludicrous, they just crunch numbers and don’t realise we’re dealing with real kids. All they care about is being able to quote the right numbers to the bosses. They didn’t even ask us what we thought, just told us to fix it. I’ve just had enough.

(B:fn3/9/01)

Assessment leads ultimately to accountability and compulsory assessment procedures were perceived as being directed from outside the profession, with ultimate control maintained at political levels. A news system for the HSC was scheduled to begin in late 2001. The NSW government contracted the University of NSW to establish benchmarks from the 2001 HSC exam results. Students failing to meet the minimum benchmark in 2002 will not be issued with a HSC. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c)

Clearly, a new system, whereby students might fail to achieve the certification traditionally expected, had implications for the perceived competence of teachers. This was exacerbated by continuous cries from teaching professional associations that teachers had been alienated from the process of developing the benchmark criteria. (This is explicated in more detail elsewhere in this chapter)

Political Control Of The School System

Although the informant teachers cited syllabus and assessment procedures as being instrumental in guiding their teaching, they also claimed that a lack of participation in developing them resulted in a lack of control of the methods involved in the implementation of either. These perceptions of lack of control are nothing new in education. As a teacher with many years experience in NSW schools, I have heard them voiced throughout my career. I became interested in the ways in which these processes were actually regulated. This interest was subsequently expressed in question form: ‘Why did teachers speak about political control so often?’

As discussed in the ‘Background To Study’, there is a history of ever increasing political control of schools and teacher education in NSW, extending right up to the present day. Much of this literature substantiates teachers’ perceptions about political
control of syllabus and assessment. There were two major regulatory bureaucracies in the NSW education system during the course of the study:

- The Board of Studies NSW (BOS)
- The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET)

Both were large government agencies with separate corporate structures and chains of command. Informant L5 was a senior academic heavily involved in the design of literacy policies for both the BOS and DET. As such L5 had also been heavily involved in professional development of teachers, through government funded programs and with professional associations. L5 claimed that few teachers were aware of the differences between the BOS and the DET, or that it was an issue for them, given that both were controlled by the State Minister. L5 claimed that teachers often perceived universities, DET and BOS bureaucracies as one entity:

L5: In terms of schools and teachers ... most of them don't differentiate between the Department [of Education and Training] and the Board [BOS], they don't seem to be aware where syllabuses and various documents come from.

R: Yeah? You think that most teachers aren't aware?
L5: Oh, I am sure of it. I was at an in-service course on the weekend and this teacher was talking to one of the Departmental representatives saying, “When are YOU going to put out the main syllabus, when are YOU going to, and I looked at this teacher very pleasantly and thought to myself, oh, I have heard that before, they often don't know where the documents come from. And with the barrage of documents and a lot of them look very similar, anyway, in terms of covers and layout, for actual schools and teachers, therefore I don’t think the differences between the Board and the Department are an issue [for most teachers].

(L5:2)

At the time of writing there were important convergences in the hierarchy of the DET and BOS at the political level and it is useful to briefly examine the structure and power of each of these bureaucracies, as documented in official archival data.
Board of Studies NSW

At the time of writing the Board of Studies NSW (BOS) was a powerful statutory body. The following data slice, taken from BOS archives, outlines its responsibilities:

The Board of Studies:

- sets the core curriculum by developing syllabuses for Kindergarten to Year 12 and provides support materials for teachers and parents;
- manages the NSW School Certificate Reference Tests (Year 10) and the Higher School Certificate examinations (Year 12) each year;
- assesses student achievement and awards high quality credentials to meet the needs of the full range of students;
- promotes the provision of quality education by developing, communicating and implementing educational policies and practices;
- provides advice on grading and assessment policy and procedures;
- promotes the provision of quality education through the registration and accreditation of non-government schools, certifying that they may teach students and enter students for the examinations...

(Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001d, p.1)

Political Control of The Board of Studies

During the course of the study membership of BOS was made up of a full-time President and three ex-officio members, with the remaining 19 members appointed directly by the state government’s Minister for Education, as ‘nominees of particular organisations or persons with identified knowledge or expertise’. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001d, p.2) Table 5.1 shows the structure of the BOS:
Table 5.1: Structure of the Board of Studies NSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>No. Reps.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time President nominated by the Minister for Education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ex-officio members: Nominees of Director-General DET</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominee of NSW Vice Chancellors’ Committee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominee of Council of the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominee of Catholic Education Commission of NSW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominee of Association of Independent Schools, the Headmasters’ Conference and the Association of Heads of Independent Girls’ Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher nominated by the Independent Education Union</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent nominated by Catholic Education Commission</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals of govt. schools nominated by NSW Council of Primary School Principals and NSW Council of Secondary School Principals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominees of NSW Teachers’ Federation from primary and secondary schools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with expertise in early childhood education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal person with knowledge and expertise in the education of Aboriginal people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other persons having, in the Minister’s opinion, qualifications or experience that enables them to make a valuable contribution to primary or secondary education in NSW</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001b, p.1-2)

Table 5.1 shows that appointments to the highest levels of the Board were controlled by the Minister for Education and the Director-General of the DET. The DET was also under the direct control of the Minister for Education, so that all the appointments, ultimately were selected directly by the Minister for Education. Given the position that the Director-General was a political appointment it seems highly unlikely that an ex-officio member would be appointed against the Minister’s wishes.

Other nominations were controlled by various unions or interest groups. Regardless of who was appointed, the Board of Studies could only make recommendations to the Minister for Education, (i.e. it had an advisory rather than an executive role) who had absolute power to accept or reject submissions. Given that such submissions were confidential it seems that real power resided with the Minister for Education although, as is discussed later in this chapter, the NSW Premier (head of state government) has intervened in BOS decisions a number of times in recent years. A ban by both the Premier and the Minister on the teaching of Functional Grammar in 1996 serves as an example of the power wielded by the political masters of the NSW system. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997; Editorial, 1997; Ravelli, 1996)

The Minister acknowledged their own influence on BOS decisions when announcing a twelve month delay to the introduction of a new 7-10 English syllabus in
2002. The Minister overtly declared that, despite claims of autonomy, the BOS was bound by the wishes of the Minister. The Minister gave the following undertaking to the NSW Teachers’ Federation Executive:

I have given a commitment to your Executive that I won’t rush the implementation of the syllabus … I believe the new syllabus changes should not be introduced till 2004 and that gives time for a proper introduction and research and materials, and I have given that view to the Board, and the Board will decide … and the Board know who I am.

(Leete, 2002, p.7)

Real power, regardless of representation on the Board, appears to reside at government levels.

Political Control and Professional Regulation

It needs to be emphasised that there were no provisions within the BOS structure for compulsory representation of professional associations. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001b) (This relates to the condition of ‘professional powerlessness’ which is dealt with in Chapter 5.) Traditionally, the only two teacher representatives of the public system on the BOS have been provided as the nominees of the NSW Teachers’ Federation and should be seen as representatives of the union and not of the profession. This is not to say that the Teachers’ Federation representatives did not represent the professional interests of public school teachers. Informants often commented that they saw the union as their main source of professional power. (See page 505.)

NSW Department Of Education And Training

At the time of writing the DET was the government department directly responsible to the NSW Parliament, via the Minister for Education, for the management of more 2,220 public schools in NSW. School Principals were responsible to District Offices, which in turn were responsible to the State Office and the Director General, who in turn was responsible to the Minister for Education, who ultimately was answerable to Cabinet and the NSW State Parliament. There were 456 government secondary schools operating in NSW during 1998, divided into 40 districts. This represented a total of 308,116 secondary students. There were 62 schools in the Wollongong District, 14 of
which were secondary schools. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1999a, 1999c, 2000b)

The DET was also the employer of all public school teachers in NSW. The employer/employee relationship raises the question of professional autonomy. It could be argued that this relationship created a particular ‘bind’. Informants perceived that they had no control over policy or assessment procedures. This certainly appeared to be the case. Not only did the Minister for Education, through delegation to employees, design courses, write syllabuses, mandate assessment tasks, issue policy directives but, as the employer, wielded enormous power over teachers. It can be argued that, in turn, the political party holding power must, therefore, be the most powerful influence in NSW education, answerable only to parliament. This, in essence, means that the political party of the day, through the Minister, controlled:

- the Board of Studies (BOS),
- the Department of Education and Training (DET) and
- teacher employment, which allowed the enforcement of the policies of the above.

**Divisions Between the BOS and DET**

Informants from the DET indicated that there were divisions between the BOS and DET. Each bureaucracy was a separate statutory authority, housed in different places with different hierarchies. DET informants from the Wollongong District Office claimed that there had never been a meeting between local DET and BOS officials, that the two did ‘not get along very well’, but that ‘relations were thawing and they hoped to hold a meeting together soon’. (DET8:FN DET Meeting 23/2/99)

Similarly, informant L5 stated that during their time as an ‘unofficial consultant’ writing policy documents for the DET there had been a great deal of animosity between the BOS and DET, with issues of the control of policy directions, particularly with respect to the writing and implementation of the 1994 *K-6 English Syllabus*. L5 expressed surprise at what they perceived to be ‘improvements’ in recent relationships between the BOS and DET. L5 linked the improvements to a decision by some members of each to ‘subvert’ a ministerial decision to remove Functional Grammar
from all syllabus documents. (L5:4-5) (The issue of subversion of political control is
dealt with later in this chapter, p. 582.)

Political Control Of Policy Development

A clear message emerging from the official public archives (archival data) was that the
Minister for Education could exercise absolute control over the two statuary bodies
which governed education in NSW. Data from informants show that the Minister did, in
fact, exercise such power regularly. In 1996 for example, the Premier of NSW
announced a ban on the use of Functional Grammar in NSW schools. (Board of Studies
New South Wales, 1997; Editorial, 1997; Ravelli, 1996) The ban was interpreted in the
popular press and by some university academics as a blanket ban on the whole system
of Functional Grammar. A report, known as the Eltis Report was commissioned to
investigate complaints from teacher and community groups about the use of Functional
Grammar in the 1994 K-6 English Syllabus and Support Documents. (Board of Studies
New South Wales, 1997) This report included the following in its recommendations:

2.2.1 It is proposed that the revised syllabus and support documents:

• emphasise the use of grammar as a tool
• emphasise the importance of teaching grammar in context
• closely relate grammar to Text Types
• present grammar using clear and concise language
• present grammar using traditional terms at the sentence level and drawing on functional
  concepts for whole texts
• explain the relationship between traditional grammar and the functional approach
• incorporate the grammatical terms and concepts necessary for teachers working with
  students to improve their reading, writing, talking and listening
• include a glossary of the relevant grammar concepts and explain the terms used.
  (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997, p.15-16)

The K-6 English Syllabus (1998) was subsequently re-published retaining a strong
emphasis on the explicit teaching of Functional Grammar and the structure of Text
Types. However, the grammar used had the Functional Grammar terminology removed
and traditional grammatical terminology had been placed over the Functional
Chapter 5: Analysis

definitions. There was no mention of a Systemic Functional View of Language or the theoretical base of the grammar or Genre-based approach to writing, on which the syllabus was based, mentioned anywhere in the document. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1998b)

The Focus on Literacy: Writing (2000) document reinforced the impression that the Minister for Education was not aware that the K-6 English Syllabus included a strong component of Functional Grammar. The document, introduced and endorsed by the NSW Minister for Education, stated:

Our current approach to the teaching of writing has been influenced by all of the above. [approaches to literacy] The benefits of traditional approaches are seen in the current emphasis on knowledge of traditional grammar. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2000a, p.12)

These events seem to suggest that the DET and BOS bureaucracies sometimes undermined the absolute nature of Ministerial control. For example, there appears some confusion as to whether some members of the Board of Studies decided to retain the core theoretical principles of Functional Grammar in the new syllabus despite the explicit wishes of their political masters. It seems that while the BOS went through the motions of changing the terminology of the syllabus so that it was more in keeping with the traditional terminology of prescriptive Latinate grammar, they clearly sought to retain the theoretical principles of Functional Grammar by merely imposing this traditional grammatical terminology over those used in Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. Evidence, examined later in this thesis, suggests that there was a battle between theorists and officials regarding the retention of Functional Grammar in the new syllabus. (This issue is taken up in the section ‘system subversion’ p. 585.) Additionally, it is possible to argue that replacement of rhetorical labels for functions of language with traditional, prescriptive terms risks corrupting the rhetorical nature of Halliday’s Functional Grammar and converting it to a rule-based grammar.

At the very least the incident confirmed that there was virtually no input from professional bodies, especially concerning secondary English teachers, in the consultation and re-drafting process. A check of the report revealed that the Grammar Review Committees of the review consisted almost entirely of DET officials and university academic members of the Genre School of Systemic Functional Linguistics. All the focus questions of the review appeared to centre on establishing ways of
Chapter 5: Analysis

retaining a focus on Functional Grammar and Text Types in the new Syllabus (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997, p.42-3) The intention here is to highlight the power of the Minister for Education and the issue of lack of consultation with professional bodies is dealt with later in this chapter.

University Informant L5, a leading Systemic theorist, heavily involved in writing the original 1994 syllabus and in its subsequent rewriting after the Eltis Report (L5:15 & 38-39), claimed that the divisions about the use of Functional Grammar were, in part, caused by political power plays between the DET and BOS. Among other things L5 claimed that the power to write the *K-6 English Syllabus* had been removed from the DET and given to the BOS in the early 1990s and (according to L5) this caused a ‘split’ between the two and ensured opposition to the new syllabus. However, (L5 claimed) that the makeup of the DET changed before the second syllabus was written and that the new DET officials were supportive of retaining Functional Grammar in the syllabus, despite the wishes of the Minister for Education. L5 made the following statements:

I think there was, I think the initial split between the Board and the Department was first indicated in the syllabus, where the first syllabus that the Board of Studies did, as opposed to the Department, the Department always had strong views, that is where the Department’s nose really got out of joint, when that control was taken away from them. So they were going to oppose the first K-6, no matter what, and it was very umm, overly Functional Grammar and very badly done and I think, in retrospect, shouldn’t have been as full on and explicit as it was.

Um, the next round of English K-6, I think that people in the Department, and I know all of the ones you are talking about, quite well ... Except for ----, that all of the women, that’s typical isn’t it? ---- and there are probably four or five other people there, all the women very strongly, or are, come from a very strong systemic background and I was presenting with one of them on Saturday and she just did a straight Field, tenor, mode analysis for the teachers on a text, using Functional Grammar and was there with the Department’s blessing.

(L5:4-5)

L5 was adamant that in their dealings with the BOS and the DET in the re-writing of the *K-6 English Syllabus* both BOS and DET officials had worked to retain Functional Grammar in the syllabus but that it had to be ‘hidden’ under traditional grammar terminology in order to pass political inspection and the approval of the Minister. L5 worked as a consultant re-writing the syllabus terminology for both the BOS and the DET and reported that the Minister regularly refused to accept policies on the basis that they retained Functional Grammar within them. The following data slice illustrates the extent to which the Minister controlled the structure and content of the syllabus documents:
In fact, the worst ones were the Ministry. So you’d have both the Department and the Board and it was the Ministry that was interfering. Everything, all the documents had to go to the Ministry for approval, and the syllabus was sent back with incredible things like there was mass and count nouns in there, which of course were very traditional terms and it was sent back saying, “Ah, you’re still trying to keep Systemics in there, underhandedly, get rid of these two” you know, just so, controlling and petty.

R: And yet, really, realistically, that was pretty much what was done anyway, it was trying to keep Systemics in there anyway.
L5: Well, yes, which was the brief. The Eltis brief was that it had to be a functional, view, using conventional, not even traditional, conventional terminology.
(L5:14)

Data collected from high ranking DET officers reinforced Informant L5’s perceptions. At a meeting in DET offices six of the highest-ranking literacy and language consultants in the state, who were also involved in writing the new K-6 English Syllabus, stated that Functional Grammar was no longer allowed to be taught in schools. As DET5 put it, the Minister had ensured that:

Functional grammar is dead, it’s dead in the water, it will never come back.
(DET5: DET Meeting 23/5/99)

This was confirmed by Informant DET9, also a senior consultant in the DET, who confirmed that a directive had been issued during 1996, at the instruction of the Premier, banning the use of Functional Grammar in classrooms. DET9 went on to claim that despite this, the directive was being ignored both at State Directorate and District Consultant levels. DET9 claimed that both they and other consultants regularly conducted in-service courses in both primary and secondary schools teaching the principles of Functional Grammar. They also stated that the ELLA test was based on Functional Grammar and that a relatively ‘pure’ form of its theoretical principles was at the core of the framework used to mark it. (DET9: FN14.7.99)

Such claims tend to create confusion, especially when trying to reconstruct the events surrounding the nature of the theory underpinning the mandatory syllabus. Given that such claims were made by one of the state’s highest-ranking policy makers, and were confirmed by a university researcher employed to “re-write” this syllabus, they cannot be dismissed as unimportant or irrelevant. This is especially so when both DET and BOS policy documents relating to literacy and grammar are wholly based on the theoretical principles of Functional Grammar, albeit with traditional terminology superimposed over Functional Grammar frameworks. It becomes even more confusing
when the fact that all key learning area policy documents in the *Teaching Literacy in ...* series, issued under the *Agenda 97 DET literacy initiative*, openly state that:


As discussed in the review of literature a Functional View Of Language is based on the work of Halliday and uses Functional Grammar as the metalanguage for rhetorical analysis of the ways in which language creates meaning. (Collerson, 1997; Derewianka, 1990; Halliday, 1978, 1985a, 1996; Halliday & Hasan, 1976, 1985) It would be difficult to argue that a Functional View of Language could exist without a Functional Grammar being used to inform such a view.

**Ideological Control of Policy**

It was significant this sense of ‘ideological subversion’ at the BOS and DET levels had filtered down to teachers. Some informants commented on the strong influence of ideologies in developing policies aimed at forcing teachers to comply with those ideologies. (A1; A2; A3; B1; B2; B5) Informant B4, a part-time lecturer in English methods at the university as well as literacy coordinator at School B, was particularly disgruntled about the dominance of Systemic Functional Linguistic theory in policy and syllabus documents:

And making English into nothing but linguistics, is part of that devaluing the subject and I think it is part of this anti-intellectual thing, that having ideas is useless, what’s the point of doing that, all I want to do is go out and get a job and be a droid or something. So, there is a real anti-intellectual, spiritual element in kind of this, this culture, here.
(B4:42)

And I think it has to get, see I think the problem is the idea of, it has to get outside this straight jacket of literature as linguistics, as a skill that we just develop language capacity, and I don’t think that’s going to happen, you see, and I think there is a real conflict involved and that is what the editorial in the Herald said yesterday, you see, what the editorial of the Herald is complaining about, is that literature is going to be too simple, like it is going to turn Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, into a cartoon, right? Umm, and I see the point of that, but at the same time the syllabus is being dominated by people who are only looking at it as a language activity, so there is a real conflict within what is going on.
(B4:42)

...the syllabus is being dominated by people who are only looking at it as a language activity, so there is a real conflict within what is going on.
(B4:45)
B4’s suspicion of ideological control of syllabus documents appears congruent with L5’s comments about the same issue. L5, while describing the subversion of the Ministerial directive that Systemic Functional Grammar be banned in schools, commented that:

All the policy people, DET5, DET2 and DET3, they’re all Systemicists who have done their Masters with Jim Martin at Sydney Uni.. Yeah I wonder if they felt like they had to say that to you [that Functional Grammar is ‘dead in the water’].
(L5:33)

L5 went on to describe in extensive detail meetings with the DET personnel after the ban on the use of Systemic Functional Grammar was announced by the Premier. At those meetings L5 assisted both DET and BOS staff to re-write Functional Grammar terminology in all policy and syllabus documents so that no specific reference to the term ‘Functional Grammar’, or any of its cognate terminology, remained. This was a laborious effort and required several re-submissions to the Minister’s office before the re-writing was accepted. L5 reported:

I think that both the Board and the Department recognised what usefulness there was in Functional Grammar, and they both say it would be a travesty to go back to straight traditional grammar, taught the way it used to be taught. Nobody wants that.

So, from my perception, there has been quite an effort, in fact, with both the Board and the Department, to come together on this issue, the K-6 syllabus, then there is a little bit of disjuncture where the Department was trying to put up documents, the literacy strategy ones, and of course, the thing that mattered, the one with the spiral binding ‘Strategies that work in the classroom, Vo.II’, where they needed to use grammatical terms.

And at that point the syllabus hadn’t developed it’s own and they weren’t allowed to use functional terms, so at that point, they developed some of these mongrel terms [Functional Grammar with traditional terms imposed]
(L5:4)

Similarly, informants A1 and A2 indicated a perception of ideological control of school practice through manipulation of policy and assessment. The ideological control they perceived involved both the economic market driven ideology examined by Marginson (1997) and Coles (1998) and the influence of schools of thought from the universities which have representation on the BOS. (Coles, 1998; Marginson, 1997) A1 perceived the Government as representing the dominant international market forces in driving assessment and accountability. Despite seeing some educational merit in the ELLA testing, A1 perceived a far stronger political agenda:

I am very concerned about the Dr. Kemp’s [Federal Minister for Education] of the world and the Amanda Vanstones [Federal Minister] who I think have a privatisation agenda. In fact, I’m not
even convinced that Bob Carr [State Premier] and John Aqualina [State Minister for Education] don’t have that agenda too, umm, it would be nice not to have to have education in a portfolio [for a minister] but that someone else was looking after it. I believe that Kemp and Vanstone have beat up the literacy factor.

I don’t believe you can make their [politicians] comparisons of now to several years ago, because I think literacy now is much more significant to everyone, whereas 10 years, 20 years, definitely 30 years ago, for sure, there were so many unskilled jobs, once you left school, all a person may have needed to do was sign their name on their pay cheque or something.

Because they may have just been doing physical work all the time. And now those jobs aren’t there, so now we are finding that the kids who had literacy problems thirty years ago were not really identified, because they just went into work where there were no literacy demands. But now those people, those kids, of similar academic ability of similar circumstance, that are transient, move from school to school, never have a stable education and never really work at their literacy are being identified now.

(A1:12)

As the Principal for School A Informant A1 had a closer working relationship with the bureaucracy than most classroom teachers. It was significant that he made connections between Federal Ministers and hinted at the economic rationalist ideologies which have driven government education policies, both in Australia and internationally, since the second world war. (Coles, 1998; Marginson, 1997) In similar ways to other western nations Australia has seen a close linking of literacy, assessment and economic growth by governments.

Informant A2 alluded to another level of alleged ideological control of syllabus. Specifically, A2 referred to the banning of two established HSC prescribed texts, without consultation, by the BOS on the grounds that they included indecent language and contained inappropriate issues. The decision to ban the texts, according to A2, had been made by ‘conservative forces’ within the BOS, based on the politics of ideology. (A2a:15) The censorship matter received a great deal of media attention and the texts were eventually restored to the reading list after public campaigns by professional and community interest groups. (For overview of the incident, see English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1997a; English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1997b) Given that the current senior classes had recently studied the texts the issue received a great deal of attention in schools. A2 claimed that even his students considered the matter to be blatantly political control of education:

Q28. What was their response to the media?[referring to banning of HSC text by BOS]
A2: They just thought it was ridiculous. They really, it taught them a big lesson about how politics gets involved in education, about how columnists like to use any excuse to um, get their target, whether it might be public education, the premier, or it might be the minister for education
... And the kids could see that, see just how woolly the thinking was, for the argument.

(A2a:15)
The ban was instigated by the Vice Chancellor of Sydney University, a long serving BOS member, largely on moral grounds, without first reading the texts in question. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1997a, p.3) Informant A2 claimed that their senior students had a clearer understanding of the texts than the BOS representatives:

So, the controversy actually worked for us in that way, because not one of those kids felt the same way as the opponents of the book. And they were all outraged at people making assumptions about it that hadn’t even read it.

And of course any one of those kids could have given a far more sensible response than even Leone Kramer on it because they had, great Professor of literature though she may be, she hadn’t even read it when they originally adopted it, even though they had recommended it. But she didn’t, so she’s read it hurriedly at some point in the controversy, but these kids had spent most of last term of last year studying it and we’d talked about every little tiny point about it. We’d argued it and we’d had book in hand acting it, tried to work out how it would be staged, worked our way through everything. And I would think any one of those kids would have been able to out debate Leone Kramer if it were just on what was in that play, on the issues.

(Informant A2a:13)

It would appear that ideological control of policy and assessment occurs at many levels and that classroom teachers remained reliant on intervention at the political level to protect what they saw as their professional interests, which is a form of ‘professional powerlessness’. (See p. 323)

Political Control And Professional Development

Political control of the DET and BOS also appeared to be impacting on both the quantity and quality of professional development undertaken by NSW secondary English teachers who participated in this study. Within the hierarchy of both schools there was an obvious desire by executive staff to assist teachers to obtain access to professional development. In both schools executive staff attempted to conduct professional development related to the new policies, but reported that such work was a substantial addition to their normal workload. (A2b; A3; B4; B5) More experienced staff expressed concern that the amount of professional development provided by the system has been drastically reduced by political masters in recent years.

Informants from both schools cited DET controlled funding cuts as the crucial factor in curtailing professional development. Funding was determined by policies relating to school size, classification of school etc. Comments about the control of professional development included:
$25 a teacher. That’s training and development allocation now. The total for this school is $1900 dollars. You’re paying 180 dollars a day for casual relief, [temporary replacement staff] so there’s ten days a year, for the whole school.

(A1:25 Principal)

B4: No, I do it. [professional development for school]
But again, there is the problem of resources because some schools have leading teachers and where you have Leading Teachers [senior full-time curriculum support staff] there is a lot more done in the literacy field. [neither School A or School B qualified for a ‘Leading Teacher’.]
R: How do they decide which schools get a leading teacher, do you know?
B4: It’s on numbers.
R: Right, so school B is not big enough to have a leading teacher?
B4: It’s not big enough and it’s not in any disadvantaged schools criteria at all.
R: So, what kind of support have you received, as a literacy coordinator?
B4: Lots of outside, after school, things you can go to.
R: No release time from teaching?
B4: No, none.
R: Not since you started as coordinator?
B4: No, not since there has been an actual literacy coordinator.
R: Wow, nothing from the literacy strategy 97 initiative?
B4: No. There’s no release time, none at all.

(B4:27 Literacy Coordinator)

R: How does the amount of professional development you were getting back then [1970s] compare to today?
B4: There’s literally nothing now. There was much more twenty years ago.

(B4:20)

The only people who have been able to do any professional development on this faculty are the two who are sharing a job and so they’ve taken, gone to a staff development thing on the day when they are not being employed. So it doesn’t cost the Department anything, except the registration fee, which we can barely make the registration fee for a day. It’s unbelievable. I think it works out about $20 a head, that’s all we get for professional development. That’s all we’ve got in the school.

(A2a:3 Head Teacher)

In the past, when there has been some professional development money around, I could get 2 days for five teachers to and we would go to a club and we would work like crazy, have a nice lunch but work like crazy and re-write completely, you’re doing this one, you’re doing this one, now I’m doing the lot myself. I can’t ask him to do it, because he’s got a full load on [indicates A4] He’s teaching more than a full load, full load, full load. The people upstairs too. [indicates all other teacher desks]

So, you know, I’m prepared to do it in a fairly scant way myself, in a bread and butter way, which I think will work.

(A3 in A4:4 Head Teacher)

Teachers in NSW are in a somewhat unique position to many other occupations, in that there are rarely ‘client-free’ days and classes can not be left unattended. As such, teachers are particularly dependent on their employer making funding available for the employment of relief staff. Without this teachers reported that they were generally unable to attend professional development courses out of school and, therefore, were generally limited to in-house programs.
**In-House Professional Development**

During 1997 the DET introduced a new policy of providing professional development for teachers ‘in-house’ and drastically reduced the amount of time and money allocated for the purpose. ‘In-house’ in servicing meant that three ‘student-free’ days were allocated to each school across NSW on the same days. The aim was for school staff to conduct one to two hour sessions of ‘professional development’ on topics set by the central DET bureaucracy. During the course of this study these new ‘in-house’ professional development days took the form of student-free days on the first day of the first three terms each year. (B4:25 & A3b:13)

Each of these days was broken into several sessions, aimed largely at addressing DET policies, such as child protection, handling of hazardous chemicals, sport and administrative duties. (A: Archives; B: Archives) This was a source of irritation for a number of informants. Informant A3 summed up the general feeling:

> Probably the best professional development should happen at school, and I stress should happen, at school but then again head teachers don’t get enough time to work with their staff with professional development anyway. We have a faculty meeting twice or three times a term. And a lot of that is taken up with straight organisational stuff, exams etc. ... we should have someone in, who is good on the internet for instance, just to sit us down and run us through. It doesn’t happen. (A3b:13)

The literacy coordinator at School B stated that the only professional development provided in literacy in recent years was under the banner of *Agenda 97*, the DET literacy initiative which called for all teachers to implement the new, cutting-edge DET version of a Functional View of Language. Informant B4 stated:

> R: So, you had a day with the English staff, didn’t you, as an in-service day?
> B4: Yeah, but that was everybody, that’s a whole school thing. The first day of the first three terms is the staff development day, state-wide.
> R: And there is nothing else, besides that?
> B4: Not in school time, no. Well, again, I tell a lie, when the ELLA tests were given out, we got release time to do things with the ELLA test.
> R: Right, but that wasn’t actually to do with the literacy strategy?
> B4: It is, ELLA is a big part of literacy 97 but it’s all focused on ELLA. (B4:25)

An examination of the only ‘in-house’ professional development day allocated as a session specifically designed to address professional development in literacy during the four years of data collection serves to illustrate the nature of these professional
development days. Two hours of that day were allocated, state-wide, for attention to the new Agenda 97 literacy policies. The rest of the day was devoted to compulsory child protection sessions, one of which included a video to be played in all schools across the state.

The literacy session began with a one hour presentation of the new literacy policies by the school literacy coordinator, Informant B4. This was followed by group sessions where each group read part of the documentation, drew up mind maps of the allocated section and reported on it to other groups. (B:Archivef8) The main focus of these sessions seemed to be the content of DET policy documents. No attention was given to defining or explaining theoretical orientations of the documents. When asked about this B4 stated,

Well, I don’t think that is what this is for, they just need to know what the Department wants. (B4: FN1)

Despite the innovative and complex nature of the Agenda 97 policy documents the data showed no attempts at these sessions to develop English teachers’ understandings of the theoretical frameworks or pedagogies underpinning Agenda 97.

Such control of professional development ‘in-house’ also raises the possible accusation of manipulation of the ideologies of teachers by those in power within the DET. If various levels of political control, as diagrammed in the matrix in Figure 4.16, were influenced and controlled by ideology then the exercise of a control of professional development, in turn, gave those in power some considerable influence over the ideologies of teachers. At the very least, it can be argued, it gave the politically powerful control of much of which aspects of the professional knowledge base teachers were able to access.

_Assessment Oriented Professional Development_

Political control of professional development also seemed to be linked to the political control of policy and assessment. As mentioned, the only other day that staff at School B received professional development during the study, other than the compulsory in-house days, was related to the implementation of ELLA. (B4:25)
During the course of the study School A did not have a resident teacher with a working knowledge of Functional Grammar or a Genre-based approach to writing. The Head Teacher (A2), therefore, organised three school visits from the DET Regional Literacy Consultant for the purpose of instructing School A staff about the requirements of the ELLA tests. One visit involved a full-day intensive course in the marking process for ELLA for three teachers. Staff had to agree to cover classes for each other to attend and only three staff were able to attend each session. The data shows that the courses focused predominantly on aspects of ELLA and the role of Systemic Functional Grammar in the grading of the assessment task. (A:fn15) Teacher informants showed particular interest in meeting the accountability procedures inherent in the assessment tasks. (This notion of ‘accountability’ is examined later under the condition of ‘visibility’.) The only in-service training the English staff received at School A during the study focused on the assessment procedures contained in the ELLA. As some teachers commented when interviewed about the ELLA in-service course:

Well, it’s all pretty useful, because it is how ELLA is marked, so it lets us know what we’ve got to teach.
(A9: FN 2/9/97)

It’s terribly dry, shocking stuff really, but we’ve got to give it to the kids for the test, so we’ve got to know it.
(A5: FN 2/9/97)

Yes, well, it’s different. I mean, I doubt the value of it, but this test is going to take up all our time, it’s really a very big thing. We’ve got to understand this grammar, to teach it. It’s terrible stuff, though.
(A1: FN 2/9/97)

Similarly, the data show that the only professional development course undertaken in School B during recent years was conducted as a one-off short ‘in house’ course lasting at most two hours. The school ‘Literacy Bulletins’ show that the session was related to assessment procedures, predominantly ELLA. (B: CF1-30) The content was designed to meet the policy demands of Agenda 97 and was aimed across all key learning areas. Informant B2 described the general approach:

B2: just one person was a literacy person ... and she sort of gave us an in-service at a faculty meeting. Like, this is report writing, this is how you do it, it doesn’t really relate to science and maths, but you could kind of adapt it, and that’s one of the problems we’ve found with a lot of the material that came through, as well, was subject based, so like, instead of doing like report writing for science or essay writing for science and sort of having all the material there for your thing, it
was spread out. So all the report stuff was on the Coroner, which has nothing to do with English.
Q: And that was driven mainly by the requirements of ELLA?
(B2:10)

The data show that both School A and School B used such an approach. Each called on the District Literacy Consultant to run these sessions, as no staff held expertise in Functional Grammar or the teaching of Text Types. Less than half the English staff of each school were able to attend each short session, due to a lack of financial resources to allow for relief staff. (A:fn1 & B:CF1-30)

The inclusion of grammar in the marking of ELLA was interpreted by both School A and School B as demanding that grammar be re-introduced to the classroom. (This issue is examined in depth later in this chapter) This suggests that the DET’s policy officers (DET2; DET3; DET5; DET6; DET7 & DET8) efforts to use of ELLA tests to coerce the adoption of Functional Grammar and Genre theory were succeeding. It is also important to note here that Consultants within the DET hierarchy were also senior executive staff and employees of District Offices. As such they were representatives of the DET system, working to implement DET policies and were bound by DET regulations. That they delivered professional development programs to schools on behalf of their employer raised questions about the autonomy of such professional development. Indeed, questions arose as to whether such courses constitute genuine professional development at all.

**Ideology, Professional Development And Professional Autonomy**

The data strongly suggest that by controlling funding and directing schools towards in-house professional development the government, via the DET, directly controlled not only the amount of professional development able to be accessed but also the type of course which could be accessed. Enrolment in programs and cost of relief staff inhibited teacher access to weekday professional development programs. This also raised questions about the manipulation of the ideologies of teachers by those in power within the DET.

If various levels of political control, as diagrammed in the matrix in Figure 4.16, were influenced and controlled by ideology, then the exercise of a control of professional development, in turn gave those in power some considerable influence.
over, the ideologies of teachers. At the very least it gave those with political power control of much of which aspects of the professional knowledge base teachers were able to access. The arrow in Figure 4.16 indicates the flow of the influence of ideology downwards, through the various levels of control, towards the classroom. Different ideologies might enter the flow towards the classroom from any of the levels located above the position of teachers.

This, in turn, raised serious questions about the professional autonomy of teacher professional development. If policy and assessment control the actions of teachers, and they in turn were controlled by ideologies, then the obvious question became, ‘how do these influences affect student learning in the classroom?’

Political Control and Federal Government Influence

The Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Youth Affairs tied funding of education to implementation of uniform assessment tasks in schools throughout Australia. (Kemp, 1997a, 1997b) The proposed National Literacy Benchmarks were based heavily on a Functional View of Language and Text Types, in a similar way to ELLA. Both the ETA and AATE have opposed the implementation of the proposed Benchmarks on the grounds that they will force prescriptive teaching and guide curriculum in a similar manner to ELLA. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998) Despite widespread opposition this Minister refused to withdraw the conditions for funding and all states and territories in Australia have signed agreements to implement them. (Kemp, 1997a) NSW was bound by the agreement to implement the benchmarks across a range of years. In this way the Federal Government entered the arena of overtly controlling policy and assessment in NSW schools.

While the influence of the Federal Government has yet to be fully felt, the implementation of National Benchmarks in literacy assessment, recent funding conditions and the influence of federal government bodies such as the Schools Council, the Australian Education Council, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Department of Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) and funding schemes such as the Enrolment Benchmark Assessment (EBA), etc. ensure that the Federal Government’s influence in state education is likely to increase.
Political Control and International Influences

Both Marginson (1997) and Coles (1998) have presented persuasive arguments that political interventions into the control of school education over the past fifty years have resulted largely from international economic forces, generated by the emerging 'global economy'. The global economy, in turn, was driven by the ideologies inherent to economic rationalism. Both authors have argued that the emergence of direct political control of education bureaucracies represented market forces perpetuating social class structures and resisting struggles for equity between those classes. Funding, restructuring and regulation of teachers work, Coles and Marginson have argued, stem from the economic imperatives of the elite and powerful in ensuring that the 'markets in education' continued to serve economic rationalist purposes. (Coles, 1998; Marginson, 1997)

Data collected during member checks supported this positioning of the study within the contexts of international influences. At the staff meeting beginning the new teaching year at School B in February 2001 Informant L2, who was appointed as the new Principal at School B in 2000, addressed staff about DET concerns with the school's performance in the HSC. L2 informed the staff that the DET was using the HSC to judge teacher performance and that student results in the exam were considered the chief indicator of teacher performance and the state of education in the high school. Informant L2 further informed the staff that the DET was 'encouraging competition between schools in the same system' and that School B must now compete for results in the 'market'. (L2: FN 29/1/01) They further stated that the DET had informed them that a new system of accountability, based on HSC results was being implemented and that the HSC was now considered by the DET to be 'the number one priority'. (L2: FN 29/1/01) L2 stated that instructions from the DET linked compulsory assessment to global economics and market forces, claiming:

"Our students will be competing in a world economy and unless we prepare them adequately to compete in the world economy we are not doing our jobs." (L2: FN 29/1/01)

L2 went on to instruct the staff of School B to:

"use the exam results [HSC] to work out if you need to change your teaching strategies." (L2: FN 29/1/01)
The instructions to staff at School B were part of the DET directed professional development days which were compulsory for all NSW teachers on that day. Such data suggests that the influences of globalisation and market force ideologies are exerting direct and explicit influences on the daily work of schools.

**Diagram Of The Levels Of Political Control**

By utilising Strauss and Corbin's (1990) conditional matrix, as outlined in the Methodology Chapter, relationships between levels of control within the NSW school system were stratified. There was also evidence of ideologies at least partly driving these levels, so ideology was placed as an influence pervading all levels, although it should be remembered that different ideologies were probably at work at different levels. Figure 5.3 illustrates the matrix of the hierarchy of layers of political control in NSW developed during this study:

![Diagram of Levels of Political Control](image)

*Figure 5.3: Matrix of levels of political control*
Political Control And Teacher Preservice Education

The data suggested that political control of education, particularly literacy and language education, was also a force in shaping the nature of secondary English teacher preservice education. The very same politically dominated government departments which regulated schools, especially the DET, also appeared to exert a strong influence on the preservice education of teachers. This political control of preservice education was mainly achieved through a regulatory power exerted by DET and supported, at least passively, by the universities.

DET Control Of Entry To The Profession

The only criteria for accreditation as a teacher in NSW during the study was set by the NSW DET, as the biggest (but not only) employer of teachers in NSW. DET documents revealed that prospective secondary English teachers seeking employment with the DET at the time of the study required a degree containing a minimum of two-ninths (2/9) of a degree in English literature and a Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE) containing one ‘methods’ subject in English Methods. To become accredited to teach English as an additional teaching subject an applicant required only one-ninth (1/9) of an English degree and either experience or methods training in another subject. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1995; New South Wales Department of School Education, 1995) This equated to one and a half courses in English literature at university level, or about one-third of a normal year’s study for a major in English literature. Teachers so qualified were offered accreditation to teach secondary school English at both junior and senior high school levels. (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1995, p.4-5) Professional teaching associations seem to have no input to this criteria. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Ramsey, 2000) The data suggest that these criteria were not widely known by teacher informants. (See the section titled ‘Professional Powerlessness’, p. 344)
Political Control and The Nature Of Teacher Education

A search of archival data from all Australian universities revealed that the only method available for gaining entry to secondary English teaching in NSW state schools throughout the 1990s was by way of either a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree, followed by a Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE), or through the Masters of Teaching programs offered in universities throughout Australia. At the time of writing no Australian university offered a four year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) for intending secondary English teachers. That option was generally available only to primary or physical education students. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Ramsey, 2000)

Some universities (eg. The University of Sydney), adopted a five year double degree incorporating the B.Ed with a subject discipline degree during the mid-1990s. However, only a minority of students avail themselves of the full course of study, with those who opt for the shorter program receiving a GDE. (L:Archivef7) The main option for prospective English teachers, apart from the longer Masters in Teaching programs, was to obtain a degree, usually a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), followed by a 1 year Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE). At the time of writing this was the only route to secondary English teaching available at University A. (L:Archive f3) While this university did begin offering the Masters in teaching program in 1996, as of 1999 no student had availed themselves of the option. Asked what happened to the specialised degree in secondary English education the Dean of Education at University A stated:

It's gone, the government axed it.

Q. How? Do they have that power?

Dean: Well, through funding, same thing. It’s not great, is it?
We’d rather have the BEd. It is a much better idea, but the reality is the government doesn’t want it. So we won’t get it. Twelve months in and out is cheaper, so it is here to stay. I don’t think it will change in the foreseeable future. We’re lucky to get them at all, really. It just comes down to money.
(LD: fn1)

This was despite an acknowledgement from within universities that the Graduate Diploma in Education program was inadequate and Bachelor programs were the preferred options for teacher education. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998, ch.7) The use of funding to control the structure
of professional education of teachers also illustrated the influence of political control at the national level.

**Det Control Of Entry To Preservice Education**

The NSW State Government, through the DET employing authority course accreditation system, directly controlled entry to the profession of secondary English teaching in both the public and private sectors. The following is an excerpt from the GDE program handbook from University A:

**Degree Pattern Required for Teaching in New South Wales.**

It is important to note the applicants for the GDE must have completed an undergraduate program which meets the requirements of the NSW Department of School Education for the teaching subjects which the applicant wishes to undertake. These requirements are those of the NSW Department, not of the University, however students will not normally be admitted to the Graduate Diploma unless they satisfy these requirements.

(L:Archivef3, p.5)

The handbook also stated that it was the responsibility of applicants to seek the approval of the DET prior to applying for enrolment:

It is necessary to contact the NSW Department of School Education at the address listed below in order to obtain the approval letter required with each application for the GDE.

(L:Archivef3, p.5)

The handbook also contained a copy of the DET requirements for accreditation to teach. (p.5) An excerpt from DET archival data detailing DET requirements for accreditation to teach secondary English is reproduced in Table 5.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject area</th>
<th>Minimum Requirement for First Teaching Subject</th>
<th>Minimum Requirement for Second Teaching Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>i) 2/9 of a degree in English and</td>
<td>i) 1/9 of a degree in English and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) English method</td>
<td>ii) English method</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(New South Wales Department of School Education, 1995, p.7)

A check of handbooks for all universities in NSW revealed that, at the time of writing, all universities in NSW had adopted the NSW DET minimum employment criteria for
teachers as the minimum standard for entry to their postgraduate initial teacher qualifications. All universities required students to submit their academic transcripts to the DET prior to applying for enrolment in GDE programs. This was confirmed by Informant L1, who stated that the DET had established an office for the purpose of issuing the approvals. (L1:5-9)

All student teacher informants claimed that they had to obtain a letter from the DET, stating that they met DET employment criteria, before their enrolment in the GDE was accepted. This was also confirmed by Informant L1, Director of the GDE program at University A::

Yep. Every student in every subject, whether Australian or overseas has to do that. The Department [DET] requires that people going into teaching must have a teaching qualification, the Dip.Ed. And they must have an appropriate undergraduate degree...

So for the last two or three years we’ve insisted that every student brings a letter from the department that says ‘You will be recognised as a teacher in NSW once you’ve done the Dip Ed and you’ve successfully completed your degree that you are now doing. Or it says ‘You will need another year of English or History or whatever it is before your undergraduate degree will be deemed to be acceptable. And every student must come with that letter for their protection and for ours.

So, that’s the first thing that happens when these applications go in, we whip their transcripts straight off to Blacktown [DET staffing unit] ..., I mean students have to do this. They send their transcripts in and they have to send this letter [they get back] along with their application [to us].

Quite a lot of the applications are saying, ‘I’ve applied for the letter but I haven’t got it yet and I’m sending offers that say ‘we will accept you, provided that your degree is acceptable to the Department of School Education and you have a letter to say so.

(L1:7)

A check of websites and handbooks for all universities in NSW revealed that the NSW DET criteria were applied to all applicants in all universities in NSW at the time of the study. The criteria was even applied to overseas students studying in Australia who intended to return to their country of origin on completion of their courses. (L: Archive F7)

Universities did not examine applicants’ qualifications or suitability to teach a particular subject prior to accepting enrolment in the GDE. DET confirmation of students’ meeting employment criteria was seen as sufficient evidence for entry to courses. There were no professionally determined criteria, only the Department’s employment criteria, as approved by the Minister. In this way the Minister of Education, a state politician, regulated entry to the profession, via federally funded universities.
It is important here to note that not all graduates could be expected to enter into employment with the NSW DET. Private schools and industries other than education were not bound by the NSW DET guidelines for employing graduate teachers. Along with professional associations they also appeared to have no formal input to teacher education accreditation.

All student teacher informants stated that they had obtained such letters prior to being accepted for enrolment in the GDE program. A check with two separate cohorts of GDE students revealed that six students had been accepted for enrolment in subject specialisations in which they held the bare minimum of 1/9 of a degree in English literature. (S1; S2; S4; S5; S7) For example, Informant S2 was accredited to teach, despite having completed only one and a half subjects at university level, a situation that shocked even the informant. (S2:2)

A check with Informant L1 revealed that it was typical for secondary English teachers to hold the minimum qualification in English literature to qualify for access to teaching English as a second subjects. (L1: 8) During the two years in which I lectured in the GDE program it became obvious that this was a common occurrence across all key learning areas of secondary teacher preservice education.

**Teacher Shortages and Standards of Entry**

Evidence emerged during data collection that the lack of professional structures and the control of professional processes by government bureaucracies was affecting the quality of teacher graduates. As previously discussed, all universities in NSW had adopted DET employment guidelines as entry standards into the GDE program and insisted on students obtaining letters of approval from the DET prior to accepting their enrolment. (Archive: L:f7) That meant that students required at most only 2/9 of a degree in English literature to qualify for the entry to the GDE. (See earlier this chapter)

In addition, during data collection a senior lecturer informed a meeting of all lecturers involved in the GDE program that a recent State conference of practicum coordinators from NSW universities had stated that:

their [State conference] concern is just to get teachers, not with the quality of them. [They said that] informal quality control can be had through teacher networks in schools after graduation. (LM: 3)
Program Director of the GDE at University A confirmed that, provided applicants were able to obtain DET approval, the university generally accepted all GDE applicants, regardless of academic qualifications or suitability to teach English. (L1:5-7) Informant L1 stated:

I’ve got nearly 200 applications on my desk, but in the end, we take everybody.  
(L1:6)

Chapter 5: Analysis

The Targeted Graduate System

In addition, practising secondary teachers employed by the faculty as part-time lecturers in subject methods, reported that the NSW Targeted Graduate Scheme also appeared to pay scant regard to professional standards when fast-tracking new graduates into the profession. The scheme was meant to ensure outstanding graduates were identified and placed within the state education system ahead of other applicants.

Informants, fresh from participating in the DET scheme, reported that only four criteria directed the classification of outstanding graduates for employment priority:

- The student’s practicum report - generally written by a DET employed teacher
- Their apparent confidence with classes
- Their global view of school administration and
- That they display a thorough understanding and knowledge of the DET system and policy documents.

Methods Lecturers also reported that situations they considered ‘ludicrous’ were emerging in the targeted graduate system. The following summary highlights the concerns of the group:

- Academic ability is not considered. Interviews are conducted prior to courses being completed, in some cases about half way through the one year course
- Inconsistency between panels - there is no process for feedback
- Panel member receive only 10 minute briefings on the day of the interviews as to the process involved
- In the 12 month period between 1997-1998 300 students from [University A] were reported by interview panels as being suitable for ‘targeting’. This represented 80% of enrolments.
- DET bureaucracy make final decisions about targeting.
- A number of students who are considered very poor students are often targeted, despite poor practicum reports.

(LM: 1-3)
Indeed, at the time of writing staff reported that for the second consecutive year the DET had targeted primary degree students who had either failed their course or were at serious risk of failing. (LM:fn1) At a meeting at University A 23 university staff voted unanimously to approach the DET about the inadequacy of the system for identifying better quality graduates. (LM: 2) There appeared a perception that unless the DET agreed, there was little that could be done about the issue. (LM reflections: 3) It is interesting to note that the methods lecturers, all of whom were school teachers, also asked the faculty to consider releasing students from the limited lecture time available in the GDE program in order to rehearse for interviews with the DET employment panels. (LM: 3)

Informant A1, Principal of School A, was heavily involved in implementing the targeted graduate system, including the interview process. (A1:34) A1 was critical of the system, claiming it consumed a lot of school time but failed to deliver quality graduates:

Q60. How did you find the targeted graduate system?
A1: It was just another time constraint ...
Q61. Do you think it is a good system?
A1: I don’t think so ... I still think we are not getting the quality, the best people.
(A1:35)

During the course of the study a targeted graduate was appointed to School B as a teacher of English. The appointment was made in August, four months prior to the student completing their course. Indeed, the targeted graduate had not completed their practicum or their final GDE exams. The appointment created a great deal of resentment amongst existing English staff. (B:fnArchive F2)

DET Control of Content of Preservice Education

The data also strongly suggest that DET also directly controlled the content of teacher education courses, through accreditation of teacher preservice education programs. Universities in NSW had to be accredited with the DET as a pre-requisite to their graduates being employed in the state school system. To achieve this accreditation universities had to meet DET requirements. (New South Wales Department of
Informant L1, program director for teacher education at University A, reported that the only components of the GDE program which were mandated, by a body other than faculty staff, were those demanded by the DET in return for accreditation. (L1: 7-9 & 20-22) L1 stated that the DET compulsory components of the GDE program during the study were:

- A physical education, health and personal development component
- A seminar in child protection
- A subject dealing in special education
- A minimum of one methods subject per student
- Two minimum level sport coaching certificates.

(L1: 7-9 & 20-22)

A check of the course content in all GDE, or equivalent programs, at universities in NSW revealed that similar content was included in these programs. There appeared to be no formal, detailed literacy and language program offered, other than as incorporated into other subjects. (L: Archive F7) (The matter of the content of English Methods subjects is dealt with in the section titled Theory Deficit later in this chapter.)

While there appeared to be no compulsory language and literacy component in the GDE program, senior lecturers who taught the program reported that the DET did exercise considerable influence over the content of primary teacher preservice education in those areas. One senior lecturer, heavily involved in syllabus development, claimed that accreditation policies had been developed by the DET 'specifically to control' teacher education and that non-compliance with DET requirements carried both 'official and unofficial sanctions'. (L5:41) In responding to questions of DET influence over professional education L5 claimed:

L5: We now teach to the English K-6 Syllabus, whereas before we wouldn't, and _____ would be quite adamant that we shouldn't, but I think that things over the last 5 years have changed, now there is actually content, and a lot of content, that these kids need to know to be teachers, so yes, we introduce them to it here.

So, I think the Department has been very clever in really making everyone dance to its tune. And all sorts of sanctions if you don't.

R: Such as, what do you mean?

L5: Non-recognition, um, very subtle things in fact, we would be, like meetings this morning, this is the new sort of thing. There really is a way of being marginalised by the Department and ____ and ____ know about that, it works in very subtle ways, nothing official, nothing written down, so that if you don't tow the line and do their thing they cut you out.

(L5:42)
Informant L3 indicated that, given the lack of professional control of teacher education, internal faculty politics play a role in course design. When questioned about the lack of language and literacy learning components in the GDE program he explained:

Yes, well, when they merged/split PE and Health into PE/Health they doubled the number of hours in the course. Ludicrous really. We've always known the Dip. Ed. is a terrible course. It's quite political here, really. But they don't graduate with any literacy or language really. (L3: fn1)

L3 claimed that the Dean of the Faculty of Education, being personally aligned with the Physical Education / Personal Development / Health Department of the faculty had favoured that area over others in course structure. (L3: fn1) Other matters relating to control and implementation of teacher education courses is dealt with under the section titled Professional Powerlessness. (p.344)

These data strongly suggest that it would be very difficult for GDE students to gain a working knowledge of the theories underlying policies and syllabuses in English, given that secondary school English policies have been shown to include such a complex blend of conceptualisations of language and literacy learning. It seems valid to assert that the length and all-encompassing nature of GDE programs would make it extremely difficult to engender a comprehensive understanding of all these complex theoretical orientations. As well, because Australian GDE programs have traditionally been run from March to November each calendar year, with holidays totalling 8 weeks during this period, this leaves a total of eight months available for all course work and assessment tasks to be completed. Such a time frame would seem to be inadequate for developing comprehensive understandings of the bodies of knowledge required to ensure professionally empowered teachers.

**Political Control and Educational Research**

The political control of teacher preservice education also had implications for teacher ownership of educational research. The quickest and most prestigious pathway into research in Australia during the study was to enter into a doctoral program at a university after having completed a Bachelor’s degree with Honours First Class
awarded in the fourth year. That pathway was intended to ensure that only students with high achievements in their undergraduate qualifications secured research positions within universities. The prestige attached to such a pathway was reflected in the following excerpt from the guidelines for the Australian Federal Government’s Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) scheme for research scholarships:

4.1.1. Academic requirements
To be eligible for a new APA in 2001, an applicant must meet all of the following requirements:

(a) applicants must have completed at least four years of tertiary education studies at a high level of achievement, for example:
   • a four-year degree (eg. Engineering or Law);
   • a three-year degree and an Honours year;
   • a three-year degree and one year of a higher degree;
   • a three-year degree and one year of a Masters preliminary or other qualifying programme; or
   • a three-year degree and a postgraduate diploma.
Please note: The four-year requirement should be interpreted broadly. For example, a student with a two-year Masters degree, but no Bachelors degree, could be considered with other Masters graduates if the institution regards this as equivalent.

(b) applicants must have obtained First Class Honours or equivalent results.

(APA criteria have, for many years, been regulated by the Australian Federal Government. (Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, Annexure E)
The major components of Honours programs in Australian universities have traditionally been based on research. Strict guidelines determine whether a candidate holds ‘equivalent results’ to First Class Honours and such awards are allowed only under ‘exceptional circumstances’. (Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs, 2001, p.6-7) In practice, according to University A guidelines, only Honours students are usually awarded scholarships:

Competition is strong. Honours 1 or equivalent results are at present essential for receipt of an offer of an APA with Stipend.
(University A Handbook, Archive:Lf3)

The university’s own system for allocating postgraduate scholarships adheres to the same strict criteria, ‘due to the highly competitive nature of the scholarship’.
(University A Handbook, Archive:Lf3)

Given that teachers of secondary English have traditionally completed a three year bachelor’s degree, followed by a Graduate Diploma in Education, the likelihood of teachers fulfilling the necessary requirements to be able to take advantage of the APA
scheme, or to move directly from a four year degree to PhD. studies, would seem remote. An honours pathway for teachers would require a fourth Honours year, followed by a GDE, totalling 5 years study to qualify for the same opportunities available to students from other professions with only 4 years study. In addition to this, any such program would require the Honours year to be carried out in the student’s subject discipline, i.e. Arts English, rather than in the discipline of education. Such a student would then be barred from conducting research in Education and would be restricted to postgraduate study of literature. It would appear that the system has discouraged secondary English teachers from studying education as a discipline and particularly from conducting postgraduate research at the most prestigious levels.

**Professional Powerlessness**

The data show that informants linked the political control of education to a sense of their own lack of professional power. As previously indicated, a number of informants stated that they taught much of their content because it was dictated in official policy. Such comments were often accompanied by claims that they were powerless to change or to influence those policies. The following typify the types of comments made by informants regarding their sense of professional influence:

Q58. As a professional do you think you get much opportunity to put much back into the profession?
A1: No.
(A1:33)

Q5. Have you ever known a teacher to be consulted about teacher education?
A2b: No. I’ve never been consulted in any way.
(A2b:3)

The Department just gets worse, we have virtually no say in anything we do these days, it just gets handed down from on high, the syllabus and everything ... it doesn’t matter if it is not what the kids need, our opinion doesn’t count, we have to do as we are told.
(B3: 54)

A6: ... sometimes I’m not happy in regard to stuff I have to give them because I’ve been told I have to. Like those worksheets. It’s policy. I have to do it.
You know, the hierarchy say give it to them, I’m the shitkicker, so I just give them [students] what I have to and they complain.
(A5:9)

The perceived lack of control over policy processes was often linked by informants to how they felt about their status as professionals. While informants generally stated that
they believed teaching is a profession, they also expressed concern at the lack of status and power they felt they held as professionals. Comments included:

Q: Do you think teaching is a profession?
B2: Oh, yeah, definitely, but I don’t think we get the recognition we deserve. We’re not looked on highly, as teachers ... I get a bit irate and a bit annoyed.
(B2:34)

A3: ... they see that they don’t have the power to do anything about it, therefore, they are not going to push, not going to run up against a brick wall.
(A3:11)

Yes [we are professionals]. I just think we don’t get the chance to be professional. There’s a difference. We want to do our job to the best way we can but we can’t because the powers that be won’t let us.
Q: Who are the powers that be?
B6: Oh, you know. The department, the government, the politicians, the lobby groups, they all get their say before we do.
(B6:3)

We are just baby sitters, picking up for the government ... I don’t look on teaching as a vocation, its more like a trade, just a job, you don’t get treated like a professional and you, I’ve just given up trying to be one ... I don’t see this as a vocation anymore. I just don’t. It’s a job - we aren’t even tradespeople.
(A4:fn1-3)

Well, really, why would you become a teacher? Why? Four years at university and look how we get treated. Other people go to university and get treated like they know what they are doing. Not us.
(B3:fn54)

The perception that they were being prevented from realising desirable levels of professionalism in their work by the education ‘system’ appeared to be a common concern for teacher informants and appeared to cause some considerable frustration to informants. (A2b:2; A3:11-13; A1: 2; A5:15; B3: 54; B1:41: B2: 18&24; B6:fn3)

Even when informants argued amongst themselves about issues of professionalism the key point of disagreement seemed not to be whether they adequately controlled professional issues but whether they held any power at all. The following data slice exemplifies the kinds of debates entered into by informants during data collection:

A3b: Teachers often opt not to be empowered.

Q6: Why do they do that?
A3b: One, being worn down in the classroom. Two, maybe they were wild young radicals at some stage, beating their heads up against a brick wall and found them extremely hard wall to try to get anything through. And 3 you just get so wound up in what you are doing day to day that you haven’t got time to go home and
A4a: Yeh.
... A4a: That's interesting, when you say something like, teachers aren't empowered, because they choose not to be, I find that an outrageous thing to say.
A3b: It's not outrageous. It think it's fairly factual,
A4a: But where is the power that they could empower themselves with?
A3b: Well, that's it, it's the sense of frustration that you've got none to start with.
A4a: Well, if you've got none to start with, you can't be empowered, it's not a matter of choice. You've got none to start with, it's not you. When you say a statement like that, they choose not to be, you imply that it is available.
A3b: No, I'm saying it's not available even and I'm saying that the system's
A4a: Well, they don't choose not to be empowered.
(A3b & A4:3-6)

Senior teacher informants also reported that they were also frustrated by what they perceived to be a lack of respect for their expertise by the education system and that this lack of acknowledgement acted as a hindrance to their contributions to the profession:

A2: It's disgusting that teachers are not considered to be experts on education, yet people in universities are.
...What bothers me a bit, when I think about the things, we've got as good a boss as you can hope to get. A very good deputy, very organised deputy, and I reckon there's hardly a weak link on this staff and there's an awful lot of people here, they're confident, they're good at their job. They are still flexible, they are still learning and they are still prepared to try things. And yet, we still only just get by, really. And it should be better than that. It should be a hell of a lot better than that.
There are still a lot of things that, you think, well god, why can't we do that? We should be able to do just about anything. The amount of experience we've got, and the executive, the people who are head teachers, they are all people who are by and large, prepared to try things, and move in different directions, to try anything, really. And yet, we're not. I suppose there would be no support or we fear there won't, I don't know.
(A2b:6)

Executive staff involved in the project all indicated their frustrations with the failure to utilise their expertise, particularly in the area of policy development:

So your thinking doesn't go above the level of your own school. It's probably in ten years you realise that your thoughts, even if you went higher, they just don't go anywhere. Everything just filters down, but very little filters back up. That's what happens.
(A3: 19 - Head Teacher)

B1: Look, we don't have any say in any of this [syllabus design] they don't even ask us to comment until it's already out. They write it, then ask us to comment. Of course they won't listen to us, they never do. A lot of us will send in submissions, but they will only change what they want to. And they're not even teachers, you have to understand that, they are not even teachers. What would I know? I'm only a Head Teacher.
(B1:41)

And it's [lack of input to policy] kind of this idea that maybe teachers aren't good enough even for university because they're just crafts people, they don't have ideas, they just go through routines ...
(B4:15)
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Teachers Compare Themselves to Others

Informants also stated that they felt that other professions, private schools and universities exerted more influence over education, as a profession, than did state school teachers. For instance, B4 cited some of the common complaints of teachers about lack of status as being related to money, respect and professional autonomy:

I mean, look at doctors or lawyers, they get better money, more respect, better conditions, they are treated as if they know something, like they are educated and know their job. Take the boss here, if he was in business he’d have more staff, a better, bigger budget. It’s ridiculous.
(B4:fn38)

Informant A2b succinctly summarised the concerns of many informants concerning consultation:

A2b: If I was an engineer I would, well, be in a consultancy position or something, contributing to other, more junior staff. If you offered an opinion about your trade, people would respect your opinion. Not in teaching.
When you’re at the public school, I mean the Principal of Knox Grammar [exclusive private school] or somewhere like that will get quoted in the paper. He’ll get a chance to review the HSC, not us.
(A2b:6)

The above comment made reference to the fact that the Principal of an exclusive private school had recently been appointed by the NSW Government to conduct a review of the matriculation exams (HSC). The perception that private schools and universities were better represented in policy consultation processes than state school teachers was common amongst informants. Informant B4 articulated a common concern amongst informants that private school influences on policy development forced teachers to focus on particular types of students in their lessons:

B4: Look, I see another problem in it, too, and that is it seems to me that it [policy] emphasises the high end of ability, rather than the kids who find it difficult. That I see as a huge problem and I think that is a consequence of being dominated by elite private schools. You know, the syllabus, they’re always talking about what we’re going to expect at the high end, the high achievers and we can’t lower our standards, but what are we doing for the kids who don’t have those language skills, who don’t read, who aren’t interested?
(B4:46)

Informant A1, a prominent player in the NSW Principals’ Association, claimed that not only do politically controlled bureaucracies regulate teachers’ professional work, but that there are severe penalties for those who resist such regulation. Informant A1
claimed that critique of the hierarchy’s policies might very well limit a senior teacher’s progression to the levels of bureaucracy which wield power:

The politicians want these changes so they can be seen to be doing something with their three year term. They want people to put things in place, but we come along and say ‘hey, what about this’ or ‘hey, what about that’ ‘How do you do this in the classroom, how will this happen?’ ‘Have you thought about this?’ And then, we are seen to be the blockers, not the people who are there, critically questioning things, but just rocking the boat.

Some people feel if they are seen as blockers, their movement through the system might be halted. What’s happening now is they have created a problem with Districts, where Principals who may have considered as a career move, to become a Superintendent, won’t. I think they are generally the good Principals, the people who will consider a move to those positions are perhaps not going to be the best people for the job. They are more the glory seekers.

Who would want a job with 62 schools as their responsibility? (A1:16)

The implication of informant comments is that teacher knowledge, derived from school experience, was perceived by them as being under-valued within the policy-making system.

Comparison With Other Professions

As mentioned, it was common throughout the study for informants to compare teaching unfavourably with other professions, in terms of power and autonomy. It was, therefore, important to consider the professional structures of teaching in NSW, compared with those of other professions. The results were illuminating and largely supported informants opinions, that teaching lacked the autonomy and power of other professions.

I made inquiries into the professional structures, within NSW, of the following four acknowledged professions:

- Medicine
- Nursing
- Engineering
- Social Work

While several professional bodies existed within each profession it was established that, within each, there existed one acknowledged authority, comprised of member associations, charged with several important functions for each profession. The
organisations representative of the above professions, and their internet addresses, are presented in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Professional structures used for comparison with teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Regulating Organisation</th>
<th>Website*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Australian Medical Council</td>
<td><a href="http://www.amc.org.au">www.amc.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>Australian Nursing Council Incorporated</td>
<td><a href="http://www.anci.org.au">www.anci.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>The Institution of Engineers Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ieaust.org.au">www.ieaust.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aasw.asn.au">www.aasw.asn.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please note that most professional documentation relating to professional accreditation for each profession is available at these websites.

Archival data surveyed from each source revealed a number of points of commonality in the functions of each organisation. Those points were:

- Each was comprised of representatives of affiliated professional bodies. (although some members also held positions in universities, government departments and industry)
- The stated aim of each organisation was to represent the interests of the members of their profession.
- Each organisation worked in consultation with, yet independent of, government and employers.
- Each organisation had sole responsibility for setting guidelines for accreditation of individuals to practice their respective profession within Australia.
- Each published ethics guidelines for conduct within their respective profession.
- Each provided guidelines for the accreditation of practitioners with qualifications from outside Australia.
- Each set guidelines for dealing with complaints against members of their profession.#
- Each set guidelines for the handling of complaints against employers within the profession, with the aim of protecting the interests of both members of the profession and clients.#
- Each set standards and procedures for accreditation of university courses leading to entry to the profession.
- Each conducted ongoing regular revision of university courses and accreditation.
- Guidelines and policies developed by these national bodies were adopted by all their member professional organisations around Australia.

# Both medicine and nursing have separate bodies in each state for these purposes.

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There is high congruence between the responsibilities of each professional organisation outlined above and the principles of the ‘criteria of a profession’ outlined earlier (p. 65), as developed by Darling-Hammond (1995). (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995) Self regulation of accreditation through each body appeared aimed at ensuring that their respective profession remained:

- Client-oriented
- Knowledge based
- Internally accountable

(Darling-Hammond et al., 1995)

Each organisation also stressed the importance of both professional and profession working for what Brock (2000) summarised as the ‘social good’. (See Review of Literature, Chapter 3.)

Lack of Professional Structures in Teaching

As already discussed, in the section dealing with political control, no comparable structures existed for school teachers in NSW during the course of this study. There were no means for professionally accrediting teachers, university courses or setting guidelines for professional practice. The only guidelines which existed in NSW were those established by the employing authority. Roles conducted by governing professional bodies in other professions were assumed, in NSW, by government authorities in NSW, largely by the DET. Ultimate responsibility and control was assumed by the Minister for Education at the state level of government and the Minister for Employment, Education and Training at the Federal level.

The national body for teaching associations in Australia, the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations (AJCPTA), relied on Federal Government funding and held no policies or procedures which exerted control on teacher professional accreditation or standards. During this study the AJCPTA struggled for existence and relied on impetus from individual members of state Joint Councils to maintain it as an organisation. Members of the AJCPTA met infrequently and expressed concerns about its future. (Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations, 1999; Joint Council of NSW Professional Teachers' Associations, 1999)
Professional Powerlessness and Policy Development

Teacher informant perceptions about a lack of influence over policy and syllabus development appeared to be supported by archival data from the English Teachers' Association (NSW) (ETA). The ETA was the only professional association catering to secondary school English teachers in NSW during the study. The ETA had the largest membership of any teacher professional association in NSW, with more than 2000 members and 20 regional branches throughout the state. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998, p.2; English Teachers' Association NSW, 2001, p.1; Gazis, 1996a, p.59)

Despite being the only representative voice for NSW secondary English teachers the ETA remained largely unrepresented, and therefore virtually powerless, in the process of determining syllabus, curriculum or policy content during the course of the study. The long-serving President of the ETA informed me that there was virtually no consultation between policy makers and the profession. (ETA:fn1) An examination of a number of issues of METAphor, the ETA journal, published during the study showed that they carried details of political lobbying by the ETA executive at the Ministerial level, in an attempt to influence policy directions and decisions. The ETA executive regularly reported that the Minister repeatedly failed to either consult with the Association or to follow its advice regarding policy decisions and that policy changes were often only acquiesced to after representations by community lobby groups such as the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations. (English Teachers Association (NSW), 2000; English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998; English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d, 1997b, 1997c, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b; English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996b, 2001) Early in the data-collection process the President of the ETA informed me that:

The Minister didn’t even know there was an ETA until a few months ago. Now we’re going to meet every month or so. It’s a start, but we’ve got a long way to go.
(ETA:fn23/3/96)

The President of the ETA later reported that those meetings failed to eventuate and ETA representation in the development of policy was limited to occasional meetings by ETA Council members with various sub-committee and the HSC Task Force members. The President also reported that professional associations were not informed of BOS or Ministerial decisions until the public release of policies, after the decision-making
process had been completed. (Gazis, 1997a, p.3) The President also claimed that the consultative process gave a false impression of professional consultation, stating:

It is an enigma to the ETA as to how this group [HSC Consultative Committee] has been selected. In fact, we have not been told who the members of this group are ... we will continue to question the Board of studies' syllabus development process since professional teaching associations are locked out of Board decisions.

...Members need to be aware that ETA as well as other professional teachers' associations are not represented at this vital stage of decision making. Our only avenue is via direct representation to the Minister ...

(Gazis, 1996d, p.4)

The ‘Whitewash’ Consultation Process

In 1996 the editor of the ETA journal, mETAPhor, labelled the NSW syllabus drafting mechanism as ‘the whitewash consultation process’. (Simon, 1996, p.6) Examples of what the ETA labelled the ‘whitewash consultation process’ became important data for understanding the political processes controlling teacher professionalism and the powerlessness of teachers to resist such control using conventional professional mechanisms. In 1996 the BOS released, without consultation, a Draft Syllabus for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) courses. The President of the ETA commented at the time:

The media informed me first that the Stage 6 Draft English Syllabus was released on Monday 6th May. Nine days later, ETA was sent one copy of the syllabus minus the survey. Better some than none and better late than never!

(Gazis, 1996c, p.3)

Gazis also claimed that the BOS refused to allow the ETA to have input in the drafting of a new reading list for the new syllabus. (Gazis, 1996c, p.3) The draft syllabus allowed less than three months to consult the profession. (Board of Studies, 1996) The ETA lobbied for more time to be allowed for consultation, a request which was denied by the Minister. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1996a, 1996b, 1996d) In their response to the Minister, the ETA criticized the lack of teacher consultation and time allocated for response in the evaluation process. (English Teachers' Association NSW, 1996b)

The draft syllabus was eventually withdrawn and the McGaw Review established by the NSW Government to review the entire HSC program. The review called for an
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overhaul of the structure and content of the HSC and the drafting of a new HSC English syllabus. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1997c) An examination of ETA documents relating to the review revealed anxiety and frustration amongst ETA membership about the lack of consultation with the profession and the period allocated for submissions to the Minister. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a) The ETA President reported that:

Members at the ETA conference ... made it clear that they were dissatisfied and angry with the McGaw recommendations.
(Gazis, 1997a, p.3)

The President of the ETA claimed that requests to the Minister for a delay in implementation of a new syllabus and for greater consultation with the profession in its design were ignored. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998, 1998a, 1998b; Gazis, 1998, p.3-5) In 1997 a draft writing brief was issued by the BOS as part of the process for developing the new syllabus. The ETA was highly critical of the proposed draft and responded with a lengthy critique of both the document and the drafting process. The ETA response was particularly critical of the lack of consultation prior to the draft being released. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998)

In 1998 the ETA leadership complained that they had frequently been called on to respond to policy drafts without being afforded the time necessary to consult with their members. (Gazis, 1998, p.3 & 5) A check of mETAphor: Journal of the English Teachers' Association (NSW) for the entire period of this study showed that every quarterly issue carried statements by executive members expressing grave concerns about the lack of consultation regarding policies, particularly during the Stage 6 HSC Syllabus and 7-10 English Syllabus drafting processes. The official ETA response to the new HSC syllabus included the following excerpt, detailing members’ concerns about ‘the state of English in NSW high schools’:

3. The state of English in NSW high schools

• need for new English Stage 6 courses recognised
• scaling and the BOS interim solutions, including the new HSC boxed texts for 1999, are creating havoc with the image of subject English
• on and off decisions regarding English (K-12) has had devastating effects on teacher morale, the image of English and training and development
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- insufficient inservice training in subject English
- lack of information and training to high school English teachers about K-6 English
- confusion between the nature of English(es) and the nature of Literacy
- general teacher dissatisfaction with the White Paper's English course structures, particularly devastating is the inability of the state government to recognise that students with learning difficulties have special needs and they do complete Year 12

(English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998, p.2)

ETA submissions regarding low-ability courses, the nature of literacy and literature studies and a need for greater consultation, including with students, went largely unheeded and in 1999 the BOS released a new draft *Stage 6 English Syllabus Package* for the HSC. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999d) The package contained the draft syllabus and allowed six weeks for responses to be lodged. The report on the consultation was released within three weeks of the deadline for submissions. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999a)

The President of the ETA reported that ETA control of the syllabus at the BOS level consisted of one member of the ETA sitting on the BOS English 7-12 Syllabus Advisory Committee. (Gazis, 1998, p.4) A check of BOS archival data showed that the Advisory Committee had no decision-making powers and was limited to making recommendations to the full BOS Committee. The BOS Committee, in turn, submitted recommendations to the Minister, who retained ultimate control over policy decisions. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001b)

Data also showed that bureaucrats within the BOS appeared to exert greater influence on syllabus development than either the ETA representative or the full Board of Studies Curriculum Committee (BCC). The two NSW Teachers Federation [teacher’s union] representatives on the full BOS Committee reported in 1999 that ‘significant changes’ had been made to the draft syllabus, including the addition of new ‘topics’, by bureaucrats within the BOS structure after the consultation period had concluded. In the following excerpt one of the representatives claimed that the lack of consultation was linked to ‘political expediency’ and a need to issue the new syllabus quickly:

there have [been] significant changes from the draft syllabus to the final syllabus documents with new topics being devised. There is no proposal to send these documents out for further consultation despite the fact much of the content has not been seen by teachers. They are destined for the Minister’s Office and then into schools.

...Our Maths, Science and English representatives have all expressed concerns over the level of difficulty of the two unit courses in their subjects. They estimate significant numbers of students will fail these subjects because there is not a simpler course available for them to succeed
in ... These ‘imperfect’ documents are now coming to the Board for endorsement often with a statement from the BCC outlining concerns about the document before us. It seems the quality of the syllabuses is being sacrificed for political expediency. (Fogarty & Deacon, 1999)

Archival data from the BOS indicated that the syllabus development process, in each stage of consultation, was controlled by the syllabus ‘project team’ within the BOS bureaucracy and that the ‘project team’ was under no obligation to implement the recommendations of the BCC or other responses to consultation. The process allowed for the ‘project team’ to write syllabus changes into draft syllabuses, without further consultation, prior to forwarding them to the full BOS Committee ‘for endorsement’ and forwarding to the Minister for ‘approval’. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001a)

The data also indicated that in 1999 the Minister intervened and enacted amendments to the new HSC syllabus without reference back to the BCC, whose members subsequently protested to the Minister, to no avail. (Leete, 1999) The new HSC syllabus was implemented in 1999 and examined for the first time in 2001. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c) In addition, the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching (MACQT) reported that they had had no feedback on whether or not their recommendations of the past three years had been acted on, or even whether the various organisations implicated had been notified by the Minister of those recommendations. (Scanlon, 1998, p.2)

The BOS also released the English 7-10 Draft Writing Brief in 2001. The same time limits applied to the Writing Brief as did to the Stage 6 English Syllabus drafting process. The ETA claimed that:

The short consultation period caused anger and frustration amongst ETA members both in the metropolitan [sic] and in regional NSW. (English Teachers' Association NSW, 2001, p.1)

The ETA criticized the BOS as having:

limited the number of teachers who would have otherwise engaged with the consultation process’. (English Teachers' Association NSW, 2001, p.1)
The response document contained five pages of concerns expressed by teacher members of the ETA about the new syllabus document. Two of the ‘major concerns’ of the ETA were:

- Inconsistencies of intent, phrasing and scope both within sections of the draft and across sections of the draft
- Lack of inclusivity for learners

(English Teachers’ Association NSW, 2001, p.1)

The ETA President reported that the system of consultation during the development of the 2002 draft 7-10 English syllabus remained one of ETA members submitting a response to the BOS bureaucracy and that the BOS and Ministry retained control in either accepting or rejecting such responses. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2002; Gazis, 2001, p.3)

Despite repeated representations by the ETA the Minister refused to delay implementation of the new syllabus until intervention by the NSW Teachers’ Federation (NSWTF) in April, 2002. After refusing the requests of the ETA the Minister acquiesced to NSWTF demands and delayed the implementation of the new syllabus until 2004. (Leete, 2002, p.7) The industrial union clearly held more sway with Minister than professional teaching bodies.

**Token Representation on the Board of Studies**

In 1998 the Minister For Education appointed a representative of the Joint Council of Professional Associations of NSW to one of the Ministerial appointment positions on the Board of Studies. The appointment was made in acknowledgement of a particular individual’s contribution to education in NSW and not as an ongoing right of the Joint Council. (Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations, 1999) The Minister retained the power to fill the position in the future, with their own choice of appointee. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001d)

In addition, the one position allocated to the Joint Council by the Minister was meant to represent all 43 teacher professional associations, from across all key learning areas, affiliated with the Joint Council in NSW. (Joint Council of NSW Professional Teachers' Associations, 1999)
The data suggested that teacher concerns about lack of representation in, or control over, the syllabus development process appeared to be well-founded. Although the new consultation process allowed a brief period of consultation to occur, the BOS bureaucracy and the Minister retained full control of the final writing of syllabus documents. Further data, indicating the teaching professions’ powerlessness regarding policies emerged from two ‘cameos’ of political control of policies which occurred during data collection.

Cameos of Powerlessness in Action

Cameo 1

During 1997, while I was collecting data at School A, the Minister exercised their authority and excluded the texts *Top Girls* and *Fineflour* from the Prescribed HSC Text. The data showed that the Minister acted on the advice of a panel of review, chaired by Dame Leone Kramer, member of the full BOS Committee and Chancellor of the University of Sydney. The review panel consisted of academics and community group members but did not seek the input of any teacher professional organisation or the advice of any practising school teacher. (Gazis, 1997a, p.4)

A full Council meeting of the English Teachers’ Association (ETA) passed the following motion condemning not only the censorship but the lack of professional consultation:

> The English Teachers’ Association of NSW has no confidence in the ability of the Minister and his review group, chaired by Dame Leonie Kramer, to make valid and informed judgements which are representative of the wider community regarding HSC English text lists. Further, we abhor the ad hoc nature of such a ‘committee’ ... which NSW English teachers find demeaning. (Gazis, 1997b, p.3-4)

The Minister reversed the decision only after prolonged lobbying and political pressure by community groups revealed that Dame Leone Kramer had not read the book prior to its exclusion. (Gazis, 1997a, p.3) Teacher informants at School A all indicated that they were unhappy about the censorship. A3 stated that they were ‘appalled’ by the incident, while A5 stated that it was ‘typical political interference’ in school policies. A1 and A2
also stated that they were unhappy about the situation and that they considered it ‘an example of how [teachers] get treated by the system, so unprofessional’. (A1&A2:fn14)

Students at the school had just completed studying one of the texts and the exclusion became a focus of discussion in senior classes. It is interesting to note that the staff at the school linked the ban to a perceived traditional control of HSC policies and the BOS by academic staff of the University of Sydney, in keeping with the views expressed by Brock (1989). (A2b: fn2; A1:12; A5:fn:2) The Head Teacher English (A2) summarised the general perceptions of informant teachers about the incident in the following:

Well, it’s just another example of Leonie Kramer and Sydney Uni telling us what to do. Sheer political interference, with no input from us.
(A2b: fnA2b)

Informant A2 said of the students’ perceptions:

A2: Well, unbelievable ... because not one of those kids felt the same way as the opponents of the book. And they were all outraged at people making assumptions about it that hadn’t even read it.

And of course any one of those kids could have given a far more sensible response than even Leone Kramer on it because they had, great Professor of literature though she may be, she hadn’t even read it ... but these kids had spent most of last term of last year studying it and we’d talked about every little tiny point about it. We’d argued it and we’d had book in hand acting it, tried to work out how it would be staged, worked our way through everything. And I would think any one of those kids would have been able to out debate Leone Kramer if it were just on what was in that play, on the issues.

Q28. What was their response to the media?
A2: They just thought it was ridiculous. They really, it taught them a big lesson about how politics gets involved in education ... and the kids could see that, see just how woolly the thinking was, for the argument. They did feel very defensive of it.
(A2a:15)

Cameo 2

As discussed earlier, during the course of the study the NSW Government banned the teaching of Functional Grammar in schools and called for the K-6 English Syllabus to be rewritten using conventional grammatical terminology. (This matter is dealt with at some length later in this chapter.)

Despite claims in the Eltis Report (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1997) that there was wide consultation regarding the new syllabus, Informant L5 offered evidence of a somewhat different process in the writing of the syllabus documents. The
Eltis brief was to re-write the syllabus document using conventional grammatical terminology and L5 claimed to have participated in the rewriting with the goal of retaining Functional Grammar in the syllabus. The processes and motivation involved are dealt with in the sections detailing the ‘personal phase of disempowerment’ (p. 491). It is, however, important to note here that Informant L5 claimed to have single-handedly written the grammar adopted in the 1998 K-6 English Syllabus. The grammar was Hallidayan Functional Grammar with traditional grammatical terminology imposed over the definitions and explanations. (L5:29-30) Informant L5’s claims were substantiated by the fact that they later published the grammar under the auspices of the Primary English Teachers’ Association (PETA). The grammar is unlike any other I was able to locate and NSW appears to be the only education system in the world using the hybrid grammar.10 In addition, Informant L5 claimed to have also single-handedly defined a Functional View of Language for the syllabus and DET policy documents:

L5: Well, yes, which was the brief. The Eltis brief was that it had to be a functional, view, using conventional, not even traditional, conventional terminology.
R: Was there an idea given of what functional is?
L5: I had to define it. I had to define for the K-6 English Syllabus what a functional approach meant.
(L5:15)

Informant L5’s claim was supported by the fact that the definition used in all NSW literacy and syllabus documents used almost the exact wording L5 had used in their original text dealing with the subject. (Citation withheld for reasons of confidentiality.) It was not intended to be critical of the work of M.A.K. Halliday or a Functional View of Language here. A Functional View of Language and the associated approaches to literacy learning have contributed much to literacy and language education. However, the fact that one person, an academic from one university, was able to define the compulsory approach to literacy and language education for all students and teachers in NSW was a powerful demonstration of just how little influence teachers exerted on policy making processes. That the same person was able to write a grammar for the sole purpose of inclusion in the syllabus underpinning literacy education throughout the entire NSW education system demonstrates the extent to which ideological and political influences, rather than professional organisations, were able to control policies and

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10 In order to protect the confidentiality of Informant L5 no citation is attached to this reference, however, a copy of the published text has been retained and stored with other data at the University of Wollongong. Any person wishing to verify the existence of the document should contact the author through the Graduate School of Education, University of Wollongong.
teacher practice in the period during the study. Furthermore, it illustrated the lack of power teachers were able to exert on the directions and content of policies released by educational bureaucracies during the study.

The ad-hoc nature of the policy development process was demonstrated by the way in which L5 became involved in writing K-6 English Syllabus. According to L5 the bureaucrats who had control of the writing of the K-6 Syllabus were determined to base it on Functional Grammar and to include as much grammar in the document as possible, despite not having the knowledge base required for the process. The first draft was released for comment but no other documentation had been prepared. (L5:38)

According to L5 the bureaucrats who wrote the first draft had not consulted widely and had little idea of how the new syllabus might be implemented. The following data slice from an interview with Informant L5 illustrates just how narrow the consultation process appears to have been:

L5: Ohh, I was involved in the first English K-6 as, that was more interesting, a very unofficial consultant, where,
R: An unofficial consultant?
L5: Well, there was some very gung-ho people who did that first K-6 who had got very excited about Functional Grammar and it had to all be in there, and they didn’t quite know it well enough, they didn’t know how to apply it and all that sort of thing. So they’d written the first draft, it was out in schools and they didn’t have anything else, they had to have all the inservicing materials, they didn’t have a clue.

So, at that point, anyone who knew anything about Functional Grammar was just pulled in, you know, kind of just read this draft, or you know, give us feedback or develop in-service modules or whatever. And so, I ended up being brought in on that basis.
(L5:38)

Informant L5 was quite candid in stating that most of the decisions in the policies had been taken by a small group of bureaucrats who were ideologically aligned with the Genre School and were all supporters of retaining a focus on Functional Grammar in the syllabus documents. (L5:32)

The lack of input by the profession was further illustrated by the way in which the support documents for the new 1998 K-6 English Syllabus were written. L5 claimed that the support documents were written by a small group of bureaucrats and academics over one weekend the week they were released:

I don’t know if I ever told you the story of how, at one point, just before the modules had to be inserviced, they [DET] were just about to have this great big inservicing day, with about 80 consultants in this great big hotels in the city, with about 3 days of inservicing on the new syllabus and here are your inservicing modules and this is what you are going to take out into schools and a week beforehand they hadn’t even written them yet.
And I was dragged in by ____, with whom I had a very odd relationship, I mean she was very active against Functional Grammar and here she was with a Functional Grammar syllabus which she had endorse.

And I sitting in my office and I got this phone call saying, "Could you please", from ____, "Could you please come to Sydney and give us a hand with this tonight?"

And I stayed in the hotel room up there for three days, I just got pulled out of my office up to there, and we worked with ____, ____ and another 2 or 3 other people from the Department.

They just hired this apartment for 3 or 4 days and we just worked solidly for these modules. And then they were virtually still hot off the presses at the time we took them to go and in-service all the consultants.

So, nobody trialled them or anything.

(L5:38-39)

The insights provided by L5 supported data from teacher informants and archival data suggesting that teachers lacked professional power in the development of policies. The data suggested that the adoption of a Functional View of Language as DET and BOS policy was engineered and manipulated by a small number of bureaucrats and academics with vested ideological interests, rather than through professional regulation. Indeed, there appeared to be some question as to whether they did so at odds with the wishes of their own political masters.

**Ideology and the Imposition of DET Policies**

Archival data also suggested that the other government bureaucracy involved in education in NSW, the DET, also implemented massive change without consultation during the same period. A proliferation of policy documents, across all KLAs, were released by the DET, under the *Agenda 97* literacy initiatives. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1997a) A particularly influential policy document was *Teaching Literacy in English*, which stipulated that:

> In the NSW Department of Education and Training, all literacy activities are based on a Functional View of Language...
> (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.14)

This document openly stipulated a single approach to the teaching of literacy in NSW schools and that all teachers employed by the DET were expected to use a Functional View of Language, based on the explicit teaching of generic Text Type Scaffolds, regardless of professional orientations, assessment of student needs or the existence of various learning contexts. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training,

Such approaches appeared to be imposed on teachers in NSW without consultation, despite the fact that Systemic Functional Linguistics and Genre-based approaches to texts were relatively new, extremely complex and controversial conceptualisations of literacy and language learning. During the course of this study the Australian Association for the Teaching of English claimed that the new policy documents were out of step with the profession. The association described the NSW approach as:

that unfortunate NSW phenomenon in which 'literacy', at least as far as writing is concerned, is defined in extremely narrow terms as conformity to a text-type - the phenomenon being at its most obvious in ELLA. NSW still awaits the research that supports conformity to text-type as forming any coherent view of language and literacy development. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998, p.15)

The Association went on to claim that NSW policies represented subversive attempts by Systemic theorists to enforce their ideological and theoretical frameworks on teachers in NSW. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998, p.15)

During the course of the study I interviewed 4 of the authors of the DET Literacy in ... Series documents, who informed me that there had been no consultation process with the profession and that only two of the authors had experience in teaching in high schools. (DET1; DET2; DET5; DET10) The DET informants also confirmed that the key authors of the policies were consultants who had completed Masters degrees involving research in Systemic theory at Sydney University, as members of the ‘Genre School’. (See the Review of Literature) At a meeting with the DET informants I mentioned my own perceptions about a lack of consultation and the possibility that teachers might not have access to the theories underpinning the documents. The high ranking DET officials replied:

I don’t care if they don’t understand it, as long as they do as they’re told and use it. (DET3)

As long as it is a social view of language, language as a socially constructed thing, that’s what we want, nothing else matters. (DET5)
The data reinforced comments made by teacher educator informants already examined in the section dealing with political control. Policies appeared to have been written, without professional consultation, and used to direct the work of teachers for both political and ideological ends. Professional input to policy development appeared to have been denied to the profession. Teachers appeared not to be viewed by senior bureaucrats as professionals but as workers who must follow directions regarding language and literacy instruction.

**Professional Powerlessness and Teacher Preservice Education**

As already described in the section dealing with the condition of political control, university informants stated they were concerned to meet compulsory DET and BOS requirements in designing Secondary English teacher preservice education courses. (L1: 8-9 &21; L5:43-5; L4: 4&fn1; L3: fn1) The data also suggested that, in the absence of professional regulation, universities appeared to use policies as both professional guidelines and as a professional knowledge base for teacher preservice education programs.

**Use of Policies as Professional Guidelines**

In the absence of any accreditation process by a professional governing body L5 explained that the accepted practice within University A was to seek the guidance of the employing DET authority for course content in teacher preservice education programs. Informant L5 stated:

the Dip. Ed. is, it's the same as our certificate in TESOL, we would be absolutely stupid if we just went off and did our own thing, without saying to the employers, what is it that you require your teachers to have, to be employed in your institution?
So, we modelled our certificate around the employers requirements.
(L5:43)

Q: If that is the only way to be trained as a secondary English teacher, then is it right that the Dip. Ed. doesn't have any literacy component, or that the only people who determine what goes into it, what is compulsory, is the employer group?
L5: Yes, now I see where you are coming from. Yeah. Yes, in that sense, there is no equivalent of that in education. Like, lawyers to become lawyers they have their requirements.
(L5:44)
Archival data showed that the largest component of Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE) type programs in every university in NSW during the course of the study was individual subject area ‘Methods’ subjects. (L:Archive F7) Those Methods (English Methods in the case of secondary English teachers.) subjects were largely intended to provide students with specialised theoretical and pedagogical frameworks for their chosen subject areas. The majority of students chose two Methods subjects to be studied over the course of the one year GDE course. (L:Archive F7)

Informant LI, GDE program coordinator at University A, stated that in the absence of professional guidelines individual lecturers contracted by the university were responsible for designing and implementing methods subjects. Such design and implementation appeared to be almost entirely left to the discretion of individual Methods lecturers. University Informant LI explained it thus:

R: The methods subjects, what role do they normally fill in the Dip. Ed?
LI: It’s up to individual methods courses. But the methods people meet together, amongst themselves and meet together with us to thrash out, broadly, what the methods should be about in relation to the rest of the program. So the methods people are aware, broadly, what’s in the rest of the program, what’s done internally, what’s done in prac. because they are involved in that very closely. And they take that into account, as they design their program. And what we’ve done is, we’ve set out in these meetings broadly what sort of things the methods programs are expected to cover.

But it is up to each individual methods lecturer to decide how they are going to do that. We try to treat them, I’ve got to be careful not to sound patronising, we try to treat them exactly the same as any other lecturer in the program. They are hired, recruited, hired and paid by the university as part time university staff. Now I think, technically, my name actually goes to the university as Coordinator, as the person who is ultimately responsible for the methods programs, but in practice it’s up to each of these people to determine what is in the specific methods course. (LI:10)

This was in keeping with my own experience as a contracted lecturer with the university. I was contracted to design and implement a subject designed to address literacy and language learning pedagogy for all GDE students, both for primary schools and high schools. I was given total freedom of content and method of delivery. Further, despite making extensive inquiries I was unable to locate any professional guidelines for such teacher preservice education programs.

Methods lecturers also indicated that there were few professional controls exerted over the selection of Methods lecturers. They reported that they had not had to re-apply for their positions for at least eight years. The two most recently appointed methods lecturers reported that they had never been through an application process at all but had been appointed by other methods lecturers. (LM:4)
Policies as an English Methods Knowledge Base

Despite apparent freedom in the design of methods courses Informant B4, a part-time lecturer in secondary school English Methods, stated that there was an expectation to deal mainly with the policies of the BOS and DET in educating prospective teachers:

I mean, I'm only doing what has already been set out. And it is all to do with, what are the mandatory policies, what does the syllabus say about this, what's the junior syllabus say, what are kids doing for 2 unit related, 2 unit general, how do you teach an essay, the role of essay writing, um and it's just a kind of survey course, rather than a practical course, and I think there needs to be more opportunity for practical things.

... That's exactly why, when people come out to teach they say, what's the point in doing a dip. ed., it's totally useless, and everything I've learned, I've learned in the school ... you don't get time to do anything in depth.

R: And you also need to cover the syllabus and policy?
B4: Yep. See, I think it is a bit of a joke to call it methods because what I expected, was I expected more practical, work and experimentation in how to do things and most of it is just what you do, not how you do it.
(B4:58)

Rather than the content of teacher education being regulated by the profession, driven by the needs of clients and based on the knowledge base of the profession it appeared to be largely based on the policy documents of the largest employer group in the State.

Informant B4 claimed that there was a link between the focus on employer's policies and a poor perception of teacher education and even with poor teaching practice after graduation:

It makes me understand why people say, my dip. ed. was a waste of time, but what it also does is it then makes them learn to do what they have to do to survive in a classroom, so teaching becomes a coping venture, rather than a mastery thing, because they don't have the mastery they need to take up full time teaching when they get here, they certainly haven't had enough opportunity in their prac. The prac's just a taste. And then they go out and get a job full time, forget it.
(B4:59)

Other issues surrounding the content of the methods course and the perception of the GDE program are pursued in the other sections of this chapter.
THEORY DEFICIT

The condition of Theory Deficit was difficult to label. The danger with the term is that it might infer blame or judgement of informants. It has not been designed to do so, but is intended to conceptualise a condition which was largely beyond the control of informants. The following extract from my reflective journal illustrates my early thoughts on this point:

Refs Method [GDE course content]

It is not the answers so much, as what the answers can tell me about the big picture, when pieced together with all the other info, to reveal relationships.

e.g. What specific students think of their Dip Ed is not as important as what it says about where they feel they belong, about their assumptions about knowledge, about their perceptions of what education is. Of what literacy is.

Am not out to 'prove' that the lecturers are bad, but to see what the picture in my snapshot shows.

Shows that students have poor perception of literacy needs of students, lack of articulate theories.

Blame system. Are not empowered individuals.
(Refs: cf methods)

I began the study with the belief that education is a complex and multi-faceted discipline. I, therefore, began with the premise that, in order to engage with the knowledge-base of the profession, teachers needed to be articulate, informed, critical thinkers. An important part of critical thought is the resistant reading of situations and contexts, the ability to understand and challenge social and professional constructs.

In order to be professional, resistant and critical practitioners teachers need to be well informed about the complex theories and pedagogies which inform policies. They also need to be equipped with alternative knowledge, if only for the purpose of developing alternative possibilities to policies and teacher practice.

It became obvious during the conduct of the study that there were gaps in the knowledge bases of both teacher and student-teacher informants regarding language and literacy learning theories and policies. For example, attempting to define key terms like literacy, language or even English proved extremely problematic for informants and they often appeared to lack a professionally informed language with which to speak about language and learning. The following are early excerpts from my reflective journal:

Quite staggering how experienced teachers have so much trouble talking about literacy, literature. Obvious they have quite a poor understanding of literacy and how it develops or its role in learning or cognition. They struggle with it, their experience almost directing them to the current understandings, but their knowledge is generally blurred and vague.
They don’t seem to be able to articulate their theories of learning or their theories of literacy and literature in English. Not even their concept of English.  
(Reflections A5:31)

Conceptualisation of literacy in English is a highly complex professional body of knowledge. If teachers don’t have access to that, and a way to talk about it, it effectively deprives them of their professionalism.  
(Reflections: A61)

The conditions of political control and professional powerlessness appeared to be closely related to what the data revealed as gaps in informant knowledge about conceptualisations of literacy and language learning. That knowledge gap, conceptualised as ‘theory deficit’ emerged during data analysis as the third condition in the professional phase of the disempowerment cycle.

**Literacy as the Special Role of the English Teacher**

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.

(New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.5)

The data revealed that informants in both schools saw the teaching of literacy as a special responsibility of the English staff and that considered it the role of English staff to provide leadership for whole school literacy development. For example, the Principal of School A (A1) stated:

Well, I still think [English] has a strong literacy factor, even though I strongly support the notion that literacy is the responsibility of the whole school, but the English language, literacy and literature is the role of the English faculty, obviously.  
I think they have a strong role to play in making kids interested and to enjoy both writing and reading and going as far as they can in the various ah, realms of literature from the easier to the more difficult.  
Speaking, I think getting kids to speak, English is not the only subject that can do this, by any means but I think they might be the prime trainers, if you know what I mean. They are the leaders.  
Q16. So, you look to the English staff for leadership in those areas?  
A1: Yes, leadership in those areas. They are the experts in literacy and literature. And also for working with kids on expression problems, whether they be oral or they be in writing.  
(A1:9)
Informant B4, an English teacher and literacy coordinator in School B, claimed that, while literacy was seen as a whole-school responsibility, other staff at the school generally felt that it remained largely the responsibility of the English staff:

> They think, ‘well, this isn’t my job, it’s the English Department’s job and I expect the English Department to go around helping to teach these kinds of things.’
> (B4:42)

B5 reported that, due to holding a Masters Honours degree in Systemic Functional Linguistics and Genre-based approaches to essay writing they had been pressured to train other departments in both School B and one other high school. They also claimed that such work was prompted by the introduction of ELLA. (B5:1-3) In addition, five out of eight members of the ‘Literacy Team’ at School B during the course of the research project were members of the English staff. (B:cf1-9)

**Teacher Problems Articulating Personal Theories**

As discussed in the later section titled ‘Alienation’, most informants held educational theories in low regard. Besides not valuing educational theories, most informants seemed to lack a language for articulating their ideas, particularly using the jargon of educational theories. For instance B1, a Head Teacher of English, was observed instructing a year 8 class in the writing of short stories. After the class they were unable to put a name to the type of responses that they wanted students to produce:

> Q: What do you call this kind of response?
> B1: I don’t know ...
> Q: Seems to me this is similar to what is meant by Critical Literacy - understanding why and how the author is positioning the reader.
> B1: I don’t know about Critical Literacy, Glenn, it’s just what we’ve always done.
> (B1:fn16-18)

Informant B2 claimed that educational theories were only of value in university study and generally had little influence on the work of teachers. B2 stated that their own teachers were probably the greatest influence on their current teaching. Comments included:

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11 The term ‘jargon’ is used here in its strictest sense, to describe ‘the language particular to a trade or profession’. (Macquarie Dictionary, p.953)
Q: So, is there any particular theoretical orientation that you think has influenced the way you teach? Is there anything you can think of that has a particular impact on you?

B2: No. No. I don’t think so, I think I sort of model myself on some of the better teachers I had when I was at school. Who were sort of that laid back type disposition. I mean, Glasser’s model and all that sort of stuff, I never think of that sort of stuff anymore, even though we did all that in Uni. So, any of that stuff from Uni, no I never give it a second thought. And, actually, I don’t think you, as a person, it didn’t prepare you for stuff, in the actual classroom and stuff, anyway, any of that stuff. You need to be there, you know, sort of experiencing it for yourself and try and work it out. Work out your own kind of method that suits you and try to stick to that. Yeah. (B2:15)

Informant B4, who was the literacy coordinator for School B, aligned themself with literary approaches to teaching but was unable to identify which theories:

R: Sounds like you’ve got a literary base, mainly in your ideas of what English is all about?
B4: Yeah. Definitely.
R: But um, in your actual day to day teaching, what theory bases do you think influence you the most?
B4: Well, what theory bases are there? I don’t know what you mean.
R: Well, I was wondering if you subscribe to any particular school of thought about teaching, about education or learning?
B4: Does any thing leap out?
B4: I can’t say that there’s any thing with a name on it. (B4:6)

When asked to explain how they thought children best learn, informants’ answers were generalised and quite vague. For instance:

Q: How do you think kids learn best?
B2: Umm, well I think they learn best in a friendly atmosphere, I think that’s important, instead of having a stand-offish teacher standing there, saying get down and do your work. I think if you have a good relationship with your students they tend to do well...
Q: What about in English? What kind of things do you think work with kids in English?
B2: Hmm, yeah, I guess a variety of stuff, I suppose. You know, they like variety.
Q: Have you got a focus that you use, that you think is particularly successful?
B2: No. Just general teaching. Whatever books are interesting. And try and do that.
Q: So, if you’ve got a novel you think the kids will like, in year 8 or year 9.
B2: Well, I always like doing newspapers, front page newspapers and I will try to use computers, if I can get in. To type up some of their stuff. (B2:16-17)

Naturally, the inability to readily articulate personal theories of learning did not mean that informants did not have theories, merely that they lacked the language with which to describe them. When probed during interviews most informants divulged their theories about learning in English. For instance Informant B4 revealed a literary,
English as cultural studies approach, towards their teaching but still experienced difficulty, even frustration, in articulating those theoretical orientations:

So, I think. Why is language education important for kids? Because I think it’s part of the fundamental part of being a human being, that you use language, so you should have an aptitude in language which includes understanding possibilities of language, so there is that critical element of it. I think the critical elements are very important. Apart from that, I must say there is also that kind of religious background, too, where, how we learn about how we structure our world, and how we value our world. You know, to open people up to different ideas. In our world, what makes them accessible to different ideas and experiences and I think it’s mainly the most um, readily available thing is language. You know, so you read what people write and language has been kind of part of our culture to record how people think, how people behave.

I don’t know. [Annoyed.] (B4:9)

Most teachers turned to policy documents for guidance on matters of teaching and learning, rather than to professional knowledge bases. Syllabus and policy documents seemed to offer security for some teachers. For instance:

Q26. What is English all about?
A3: That’s a hard one, because of the syllabus, the [English 7-10] syllabus is a lot less prescriptive. It’s unreal, and I find that particularly hard, because I suppose I like prescription. It’s easy teaching English in 11 and 12 because you’ve got that prescription there, you’ve got your language component, you’ve got your novels, poetry, drama, that’s good, but with the junior school you’ve got to have a good head teacher with a program that comes off the non-prescriptive nature of the syllabus, says you should be doing this here, and doing these skills here, this here, all the way through. (A3:12)

A5 struggled to define what they thought English was all about but concluded that the senior school exams were really the underlying influence on their teaching strategies:

fundamentally, I’m working toward that HSC, that’s my bottom line and that is what I’m going for.

In the junior school, once again ... I’d be looking at something similar, I’d be trying to prepare them ... It doesn’t make sense, what I’m trying to say ... It’s just such a broad question, for me to answer, I suppose. What is English? (A5:3-4)

B2 and B4 also connected English with the HSC but also with preparation for employment:

Well, English is about, ha, hopefully giving students skills that they can use in the workforce or onto uni, so obviously skill ... So, the basic skills. Enjoyment, reading for enjoyment, hopefully. (B2:4)
Teacher Preference for English as Literature

In probing teacher informant’s views on theory it became apparent that most considered literary approaches to English as their preferred methodology. For example:

Q9: ... what do you think that you are really teaching when you teach English?
A5: That, I guess that question depends on what classes I’ve got. So, if I’m asked a question like that with Years 11 & 12, I’d have to say in Year 11 I’m sort of trying to give them an overall view, I mean I would try to do Chaucer and I would try to give them a greater perspective of literature.
(A5:3)

A5 stated that her approaches with junior classes were different but remained based on literary theory and were aimed at preparing students for the literary demands of the HSC. (A5:4) Informants A2, A3 and A7 also stated their preference for focusing on literary studies, rather than literacy, in the classroom. This was also reflected in lessons observed, where classwork largely centred on the study of ‘experts’ interpretations of literature. (A2:fn1; A3:fn3; A7:fn1) For example, A2’s stated concern with HSC classes was that they learn to ‘regurgitate set interpretations’ and that could only learn this by having it ‘hammered into them’. (A2:fn4)

Literacy and literary approaches to teaching English appeared to be two quite separate entities for most informants. For example, Informant A3 made the following comment:

Q: A lot of people here seem to focus mainly on literary approaches to teaching English?
A: Well, that’s what English is, isn’t it? What else is it? Oh, I suppose literacy, but that’s really just a new thing.
(A3:fn3)

Like most informants, A3 appeared to have disdain for teaching what they considered to be language-based approaches to English. The division between literature and language is illustrated in the following comment by A3:

in the senior school umm, the teaching of English I find very rewarding, because I love Shakespeare and I like poetry and I like drama, I can deal with that. The language section I find hard because I’ve never enjoyed language that much.
(A3:12)

Informant B4 was openly disdainful of the new focus on language and literacy in DET policy documents, stating:
but what I don’t like is the move of looking at literature as purely a language activity, like you get out of the ESL and linguistics departments. Because what that does is negates the idea that human beings lives are about meaning and people who are not about making meaning out of their life are not living, from my point of view, even if they think they are. And I think that is a problem (B4:13)

Despite earlier confusion about which theories informed their teaching B4 was emphatic that a literature-based approach was preferable, equating literacy with grammar. B4’s attitude was common among teacher informants and is illustrated in the following exchange:

R: What do you think is a better tool to that, do you think that a Functional View of Language, as in the new policies is better or would you prefer a literary approach?
B4: Oh definitely a literary approach, it works with kids, if they like a book they will think about it, but you try to get them to think in terms of grammar it just won’t work.
(B4:36)

Informant B2 claimed that if children haven’t developed literacy skills prior to arrival at high school it is too late to for English teachers to help them. (B2:7) According to B2 English teachers are not capable of teaching literacy skills properly. B2 remained adamant throughout the study that such skills were the domains of specialist teachers and parents. The following data slices illustrate B2’s position:

Q: What do you think the main needs of kids are in literacy learning?
B2: Hmm.
Q: What kind of things do you think they need to be given by the teacher to be able to develop their literacy skills?
B2: I mean, they need to be able to read, I mean if they can’t read, that’s hopeless, that’s half your problem, I think.
Q: Well, how do we teach kids how to read?
B2: Well, they have to be taught by their parents, don’t they? We can’t do it...
(B2:28)

Q: As teachers, how do we help kids learn to read and write?
B2: ... referring them onto people like ..., if they’re struggling, sort of getting parental, I usually have a standard letter ... I’ll see the learning difficulties teacher first, if she says, yeah, I’m doing this with this child, or I’m doing this, and I’ll say, look, I think they need help still, if she says she’s finished with them, I’ll send a letter home and say, look your child is struggling, can you help at home, by doing some reading with them or actually reading the novel to the kids, I tell them, yeah get your parents to read the novel to you, that’s still sort of watching and learning and following on.
Q: Is it possible in schools to really take into account what kids need?
B2: Well, no, not if you’ve got a class of thirty, it’s very difficult.
(B2:30)
The data also indicated that a number of informants considered that the new focus on literacy in policy documents was in direct competition with the study of literature in classrooms.

**Perception of Literature as Higher Order Education**

A common theme running through informants’ opinions about English was that English itself is a separate entity to literacy and language. This was sometimes represented as a vague separation, such as the exchange below, where A6 alludes to English as ‘giving confidence’ to engage in literacy skills:

A6: English, well I think English is about communicating and the ability to communicate. It’s also, it gives students confidence in regard to being able to express there own ideas in the written form.

(Informant A6:5)

Probing revealed that, without exception, teacher informants perceived literacy and language based approaches to teaching English as being secondary in importance to literary approaches. For example:

Q: Umm, what about literature, how important do you think literature is in English?
B2: Well, I mean it’s the whole basis of English, really, and you work the other stuff [literacy and language] around it.

(B2:27)

Integral to this conflict was informants’ opinions that literary approaches to teaching offered more insights into global issues of life and human experience than did literacy. For example:

R: Sounds like you’ve got a literary base, mainly in your ideas of what English is all about?
B4: Yeah. Definitely ... Yeah, English is kind of the classics, for what the classics tell you about the world.

(B4:6)

Teacher informants appeared to separate the study of literature from literacy development, despite often having similar views about what each offers students in English. The study of literature seemed to be held in higher esteem by informants. For example:
Q43. This comes down to what English teaching is about, again, is there a difference between literacy and literature?
A5: Yes!!!! [Laughter]
A5: With literacy I suppose I’ve got to look at literature through trying to develop the skills of literacy in my kids but appreciating somebody else’s literature is a different ball game to literacy, as far as I am concerned. Obviously, working part and parcel, I guess literacy is, I guess communication, in all its forms, to me. Um, and it’s certainly not just English based but the whole spectrum and uh, written communication and

Q44. When you are working with the kids and you are focusing on their literacy skills, what kind of things are you doing?
A5: I’d be doing things like, their comprehension, their reading skills, their evaluation stuff, of literature, I’d have to place in there as well, with their literacy. Um, but their study of literature, I don’t see it in the same basket, I don’t see it as the same thing.

Q45. So what are you trying to do with kids when they are reading literature?
A5: When we are looking at literature, I am looking at literature, we are looking at, it seems to me like a higher level, I suppose that I’m getting them to evaluate it, to be critical of it, to appreciate it from their heart. I suppose.
It’s not just a skill. I guess that’s what I am trying to get out of them, it’s a love I suppose, a real heart thing, rather than a literacy skill and with literacy I guess I see that as a skill. Lots of skills, whereas literature is more of a love or deeper to me.

Q46. Do you think it’s more important?

[ Silence]

Q47. It seems like you do.
A5: Everybody’s got to be literate and everybody has to have literacy skills, can I get everybody to get a deep appreciation and a love of what I love or what others may see important, I can’t. So, yes, I want to elevate kids. To that level.
(A5:16)

The data indicated that most informants appeared to agree with A5 and linked the study of literature with higher order thinking processes, while literacy was relegated to basic skills. Literacy appeared to be restricted to reading and writing, while the study of literature was seen as requiring reflection and personal development. For example:

Q: Literature and literacy, do you think they are two different things?
A3: Yes, I think they are. Literature, what we read in the way in particular, what the 3 key elements of literature, novels, drama, poetry.
Literacy is the skill you have to be able to analyse and write yourself.
Q: Okay, so how would you define the literacy you are concerned with in the classroom?
A3: The ability to be able to write a decent sentence, the ability to express yourself, using a good range of words. The ability to read and understand what is given to a class.
(A3:16)

Informant A6 offered another example of the separating of literacy from higher order thinking and learning in the following excerpt:
Chapter 5: Analysis

R: Is there a difference between teaching literature and teaching literacy?

A6: Yeah, there is, because I think that you know, literature will actually go through, literature is more interpretation of someone's writing and there is more interpreting and trying to understand what that person says.

Literacy is the ability to read and the ability to write and the ability to speak properly. So yes, they are, even though they all come under the one banner of English, they are separate things as such. They are.

(A6:10)

Literacy as skills, while an outdated conceptualisation in professional education circles seemed to be the prevalent conceptualisation amongst teacher informants. As illustrated by the data slices presented here, most informants seemed to separate critical reading from literacy, perceiving it as the domain of the study of literature. Indeed, most informants indicated a limited view of the nature of literacy. The following excerpt illustrates the point:

Q: Okay, well, what do you think you are trying to achieve with kids with literacy theory?
B2: Well, you know, just helping them with their reading and writing, not reading as such, but helping them to construct sentences, and things, so they can write things.

But with your literary theory, though, you are looking beyond the novel, this is what the meaning is, but the true meaning, I'd say with poetry as well, so it's not looking at things on the surface, actually looking a bit deeper.

Q: And literacy is more what?
B2: Literacy is more the surface, it's more just the writing. I mean the theory for literacy as being able to explain a novel or anything like that, I mean sure, you might say, here's a simile or something like that, but you don't go into great depth with that sort of stuff.

(B2:28)

It is important to note that all teacher informants stressed the importance of literary approaches above literacy and language pedagogies, despite the emphasis on a Functional View of Language, Critical Literacy and grammatical knowledge in NSW policies.

As indicated in some of the data presented above, a number of teacher informants appeared to perceive a threat from the recent focus on literacy in policies to the traditional focus of high school English on the study of literature. Some teacher informants were openly critical of the focus on language and literacy in policies. For example, Informant B4 stated:

B4: I like the idea that everyone is a teacher of literacy. I don't like the idea that English is nothing but literacy, instead of literature as well, but in a way, if everybody could accept that literacy is everything, they have to say well, what else is English?
... in terms of teaching English as a subject, if English is nothing but literacy, then why have it, if everyone is a teacher of literacy?

See, and I think English can be more than it has historically been, something as well as literacy.
(B4:30)

It is significant that B4 was both coordinator of literacy at School B and Lecturer in English Methods at university level. They epitomised the views commonly held by informants regarding the separation of higher order language skills and literacy. There was a common perception amongst English teacher informants that a focus on literacy threatened literary traditions in subject English. Informant B4 explained it as follows:

B4: Yes. I see, well, why tell stories? Why have conversations? Why should people talk?
... spelling, reading, writing, fill in your dole form, right, well, I think people who are in those areas are limited, they are lacking in imagination, they are lacking in understanding of, ... they are lacking in imagination, they are lacking in an appreciation of the varieties and richness of potential human experience, they disregard the fact that people can live in many different ways and do live in many different ways in time and place.
And, you know, we have literature because we learn what peoples stories are.
... People have been sitting around telling stories longer than they have been scientists and mathematicians, right, telling stories is a fundamental human function. It is communication, even if it is not speech. You know, music and literature, to me art, art is all about how you define, what does it mean? What do things mean?
You might as well be a robot otherwise.
... That’s a culturally, Australian working class attitude, because in the US and Europe, people don’t question as much the value of literature, and I think that has more to do, in a sense, with the sense of having more confidence in their own culture because they, literature provides a sense of who you are. So what does it mean to be French? You read French literature. What does it mean to be American? You read American literature. Australians don’t do this.

... And making English into nothing but linguistics, is part of that devaluing the subject and I think it is part of this anti-intellectual thing, that having ideas is useless, what’s the point of doing that, all I want to do is go out and get a job and be a droid or something. So, there is a real anti-intellectual, spiritual element in kind of this, this culture, here.
(B4:37&42)

...get outside this straight jacket of literature as linguistics, as a skill that we just develop language capacity ... that is what the editorial in the Herald said yesterday ... that literature is going to be too simple, like it is going to turn Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, into a cartoon, right? Umm, and I see the point of that, but at the same time the syllabus is being dominated by people who are only looking at it as a language activity.
(B4:45)

Informant B1 also expressed the opinion that a focus on literary approaches offers moral guidance for students. In defending their use of such an approach to literature, based on the work of Leavis, B1 stated:

Well, I think Leavis was about using literature to find some morality, about representing some hope. Using literature to examine life. I don’t think there is anything wrong with that.
(B1:fn27)
Teacher Perceptions of New Theories

Intertwined with the conceptualisation of English as literature informants appeared to adopt a stance apparently aimed at defending their past work. Data suggested that such a defensive stance appeared to have been motivated by a perception that the Agenda 97 literacy policies inferred that English teachers had not properly addressed literacy learning in the past. Informants often expressed exasperation about new policies, claiming that they had always achieved what the new policies were aimed at. Informant B2 voiced the views of most informants when they claimed that the only effect of the new literacy policies and strategies was to take choice away from teachers. (B2:26) The following data slice highlights the points raised by B2:

Q: Do you think this explicit policy shift towards literacy activities, do you think that is justified?
B2: No, because I think we were just doing it all along, anyhow, and now you’ve got to make sure you are doing it, whereas before I would say, well okay we won’t do report writing ... but now there is more a push to do it as we’re told ...
(B2:26)

The impression that new policies, or even new theories, were merely old approaches with new names appeared common amongst informants. Teachers often used old frameworks to attempt to make sense of new approaches, in which they had received little or no professional development. In the exchanges above and below B2 was claiming that a Genre-based approach to understanding texts was merely the same as old approaches. This view of a Functional View of Language, and Functional Grammar in particular, was especially common amongst informants. The following exchange with Informant A3 illustrates the point:

Q: What do you think of using Text Types?
A: It’s just a new name for an old thing. I mean, isn’t it always? What’s the old saying, there’s nothing new under the stars? It’s mainly because of ELLA, without that we wouldn’t bother.
(A3:fn2)

Informant B1, the Head Teacher of English at School B, concurred in the following data slice:

B1: ... I don’t think they [Text Types] are that different ... maybe more skills based.
Q: Is it any different to what you used to do?
B1: No!! Nothing changes, isn’t that the way with these things?
(B1:fn1)
Informant B2 claimed the changes were the result of political interference in policy decisions:

Q: What would an English teacher have called it before, if you were already doing it?
B2: Well, I suppose just like essay writing, um, report writing, that's still called that, instead of narrative it was story writing or creative writing, so I mean, we've always done it, anyway, they've just changed the terms on us all of a sudden, just to confuse us.
(B2:26)

Informant B5 also perceived the new terminology as being inflicted on teachers by new policies, specifically the syllabus, rather than as emerging from new theories of language and learning. When asked if teachers had always incorporated a Functional View Of Language and Genre theory into their teaching of literature B5 replied:

I would say, looking at the syllabus and looking at what we are doing, there is that, you know, people have been doing it different ways. It's just that now they want to change it and use this terminology.
(B5:9)

Informant A1, Principal of School A, claimed that a Genre-based approach to literacy had been discontinued by the DET and a ‘Text Type’ approach adopted, although they stated that the name alone had been changed. (A1:21) None of the teacher informants involved in the study were aware that Text Types were a variation of a Genre-based approach to teaching writing. (Bws: fn9 & A: fn14) A1 claimed that such changes were a hindrance to effective teaching, claiming the changed terminology was ‘putting teachers off’ implementing the new literacy policies. (A1:21)

**Language as Grammar and Scaffolds**

As mentioned, informant teachers often referred to the terms ‘English’ and ‘language’ as separate entities. It became apparent that the term English generally referred to the study of literature, while the term language was widely used to refer to specific literacy and language work, particularly the teaching of grammar and the structure of Text Types. The following example illustrates the typical usage of the terminology in School A:
Q27. What do you mean by language?
A3: Oh, you know ... where they’ve got to comment on the purpose of the text, they’ve got to
comment on the relationship between what the person’s trying to get across and perhaps some
meaning that is underneath the passage. Umm, I’ve always found that pretty solid going. But for
the junior school stuff, I’ve had one period this year of English 8.4 and I agreed with the other
teacher that I would just do some language stuff, doing word skills, basically doing vocabulary,
that’s one period a fortnight, it’s really just filling in.

Q29. Does that include grammar?
A3: Yeah grammar, too. In terms of, we’d have this on a particular day, I find though in the
high school, you’ve got to do blocks, an novel, a play, a language unit.
(A3:12)

The word ‘unit’ meant that language was studied as a separate ‘block’ of work, separate
from work with literature. The terms carried similar meanings in School B, as illustrated
by the following data slice:

B2: He [B4] did some Text Types stuff with them because he’s got them one period a cycle so
he does all the language and I do all the novel based work, drama, that kind of stuff, the main core.
(B2:9)

Both sample schools separated the teaching of knowledge about language, both at the
text and sentence levels, from the teaching of English through literature. Common
practices at both sites was for separate units of work to be developed focused solely on
‘language work’, usually based on grammar or for classes to attend special classes once
per teaching cycle for special instruction in ‘language work’. (A:Archives fl0 &
B:Archives fl1)

For example, A3 stated that, although they preferred to focus on grammar for one
day each timetable cycle with each class, School A had recently developed a strategy of
allocating ‘language’ worksheets based on exercises in traditional grammar to each year
group for homework. (A:fn3; A3:14) An examination of two years worth of these sheets
showed that they were all simple grammar, spelling and punctuation exercises, of the
type commonly used in a Skills-based Approach to the teaching of literacy. (A:fn4) The
worksheets were followed up twice each year by 6 lesson units of work which focused
on grammar. Those units and homework sheets were programmed to be separate from
‘normal’ English studies, which A3 called ‘their real work’. (A3:14) Samples of the
homework sheets used by School A are reproduced below in Figure 5.4:
Figure 5.4: Sample of grammar worksheets used by School A
(Archive A:f1)
Informant A3, a Head Teacher, informed me that the sheets were used to meet the requirements of the DET *Agenda '97* literacy policies, which called for teachers to implement a Functional View of Language. That the above grammar sheets, used in isolation from meaningful language use, were incompatible with a Functional View of Language appeared to be lost on staff at School A. Staff appeared not only to lack understanding of the theories which underpinned the documents, but also seemed more concerned with appearing to meet the policies than to actually use the methods in their teaching. The following extract of a conversation with Informant A3 highlights the lack of understanding of the new policies within the school:

Q: Why do you use the grammar sheets?
A3: Just for policy, really, to satisfy the ELLA requirements.
Q: Isn’t ELLA based on Functional Grammar?
A3: Yes, but who knows anything about that? This is the only way we can do it. At least we can work with these. We’ve got to cover our arse somehow.

Despite the fact that teachers were aware they were not using the grammar on which the policies were based they appeared to believe that the teaching of traditional grammar in isolation met the requirement to implement a Functional View of Language. This example also helps to illustrate the extent to which literacy and language were interpreted by teacher informants as being dominated by grammar.

An examination of school policies from School B showed that staff there also interpreted the new policies in a similar way. Language work became a type of code for teaching grammar and structure. Whole units of work based on grammar and Text Type scaffolds were implemented in all classes within school B as a direct result of the *Agenda '97* policies. (B2:22 & B:cf1-18) Informant B4, as literacy coordinator at School B, confirmed that the use of grammar sheets and Text Type scaffolds were aimed at covering ‘language work’ and meeting the demands of the new *Agenda '97* literacy policies. (B4:54) The Head Teacher English, Informant B1, stated that the use of grammar sheets was particularly aimed at teaching ‘basic skills’ in literacy, claiming that such skills were best learned through rote learning of prescriptive rules:

I think they [grammar exercise sheets] are the best way, if you’re dealing with basic skills. Yes, they are good for that. I mean that’s the way they learn these things, you hammer them in one at a time until they remember them.

The idea was to do one sheet at a time, in class each week. That’s a good way to do these, they learn, what the rules are on one side and fill in the answers on the other.
Some of these kids in Year 11, you know, can’t use well, like a simple thing, like an apostrophe. They don’t know it. You’ve just got to keep hammering the rules in. They deal with basic skills.
(B1:fn25)

Samples of the grammar sheets used by School B are reproduced below in Figure 5.5:

![Please see print copy for images](image)

**Figure 5.5:** Sample of grammar worksheets used at School B
(Archive: B:fl12)

Both schools also introduced the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds during the course of this study. (See Review of Literature) The Scaffolds were supplied by the DET and were introduced as a direct result of the *Agenda ’97* literacy policies.
(Archives A:f1 & B: cf:1-18) A sample of the Scaffolds used in both School A and School B are reproduced in the Review of Literature, Figure 3.24.

During observations in both schools the Text Type Scaffolds were handed out to students during ‘language classes’. Students drafted their pieces of writing into the Scaffolds, conforming to the sequences and details outlined by the Scaffold outlines. Teacher informants appeared to interpret the use of Text Type Scaffolds as requiring a prescriptive and conformist approach to the teaching of writing. (A2:fn8; A3:fn3; B1:fn10; B5:fn3; B2:7&9)
Informant B1, the Head Teacher of English at School B, nominated Informant B3 as an ideal example of how staff at School B were implementing the use of Text Type Scaffolds. Regarding Text Type Scaffolds B3 stated:

B3: Oh, they’re good. I think they’re good. In the past it hasn’t been clear. Text types are really prescriptive. It’s good to have something prescriptive, it lets the kids know where they are going and what they have to do.

(B3:2)

According to Informant B3 staff at School B used the Scaffolds to direct both the content and sequencing of student’s drafts and published pieces of writing:

R: Do you get kids to organise their writing beforehand or use an approach for drafting?
B3: Well, like I said, the scaffold, write your notes into it and then write it out polished. The scaffold helps them put it in the right sequence.

(B3:fn45)

The data also showed that Informant B1, the Head Teacher English, used the sequences of the Scaffolds as the only marking criteria when marking ‘procedure’ texts with a year 8 class. (B1:fn10)

Data collected during the demonstration lessons conducted by Informant B3 showed that they used the Scaffolds as a strict pro forma to guide the content and sequencing of students’ writing. B3 also recited the topic sentences to be used in each paragraph to the students in the class. (B3:fn3-35) Work samples collected after the tasks were completed revealed that all the students’ pieces were extremely similar. During observations students were warned that they would lose marks if they did not use the topic sentences exactly as dictated by Informant B3. (B3:fn3-5 & Archive B:f1) The data revealed that each time Informant B3 used Text Type Scaffolds during observed lessons they recited topic sentences and other components of texts to the class, instructing students to copy the teacher’s words verbatim. (B3:fn35; fn20-30)

Informant B1 also supplied what they considered to be ‘exemplary’ work samples from the school, based on the same approach to using Text Type Scaffolds. (B1:fn39) A sample of the work samples are reproduced in Figure 5.6:
Figure 5.6: Samples of writing using text type scaffolds
(Archive: Bf1)
Informants stated that they considered the above work samples to offer proof that the use of Text Type Scaffolds was successful in enhancing students' literacy skills. Informants B1; B2; B3; B4 and B5 stated they did not see any problems with the fact that all the students' writing in the above samples are all very similar. The following data slices illustrate their responses to my questions regarding the uniformity of the work samples:

B3: It shows they're doing what they're supposed to do. That's what they [DET] want.
B4: It's a start, then they can transfer it over later, themselves.
B5: Well, they learn how to do it properly, that's what it's all about these days.
(B: fn10)

The data indicated that teacher informants perceived conformity to the rules of grammar and structure, as outlined in Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds, as a highly desired goal in literacy education.

Teacher Knowledge about Conceptualisations of Literacy and Language Learning

It appeared that a number of the teacher informants' views of language and literacy were informed more by their interpretations of DET policies than by established theories of language and literacy education. It, therefore, became necessary to investigate teacher informant knowledge of the major conceptualisations of literacy and language learning to have informed NSW policies in recent years. As discussed in the review of literature, the major conceptualisations of literacy and language learning to have informed education in NSW in recent decades were:

• Language as Process
• Whole Language
• A Functional View of Language

It is now intended to explore teacher informants understandings of these three key conceptualisations of literacy and language education. In so doing, it is not intended to make definitive statements regarding teacher expertise or knowledge bases, but to
provide a brief glimpse into the knowledge bases that informed teacher perceptions and practices in the school sites. This section also serves to examine teacher access to, and understandings of, the knowledge base which might inform the profession of literacy education and the theory bases which underpin past and present literacy education policies. While many of the informants might have used the various pedagogies developed under each conceptualisation it became necessary to explore participants abilities to engage in discussions using articulate, coherent language based on major educational theories. Such abilities hold obvious implications for the professional lives of informants.

**Teacher Knowledge About Process Writing**

Process writing has formed an intricate part of literacy policies in NSW since the late 1960s. (See Review of Literature) The stages of the writing process, as represented by Walshe’s model of writing as process, have been enormously influential both in policy development and with teachers in NSW. (Turbill, 1983; Turbill & Butler, 1994; Walshe, 1981a, 1981b, 1998) Indeed, much of the Writing K-12 document and the curriculum cycle model of recent policy documents were influenced by the Process Writing model, particularly the pre-writing and drafting stages. (New South Wales Department of Education, 1979, 1987; New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e)

None of the teacher informants appeared to have a working knowledge of process pedagogies. Informants generally confused Process Writing with Whole Language and the primary school. For example:

Q: Do you know what Process Writing is, _____?
A4: It’s used in primary school’s isn’t it? Should I? I mean it’s holistic, doesn’t it mean you’re not supposed to teach grammar, that kids just pick it up? I’m not sure, isn’t it outdated now?

While no teacher informants knew what Process Writing is they did use some of the strategies inherent to the pedagogy. The strategies, however, were given only cursory treatment. For example, the drafting process was used to some degree by some teachers:
R: Are you familiar with Process Writing?
A6: umm, well, what is it?
R: A model for the drafting process.
A6: Well, I get kids to draft.
R: Do you conference them?
A6: Well, I talk to them sometimes about their writing. What do you mean?
R: Do you hold writing conferences with them? Where they read each others work or you read it, give feedback, change stuff etc.
A6: Um, not as such but sometimes I help kids. You can’t get around to all of them.
(A6:19)

Drafting, for most informants, seemed to mean merely correcting spelling and punctuation, to a notion of ‘correct’ usage. Informant A3 illustrates this point in the following data slice:

A3: Well, I’m probably very old fashioned when it comes to writing things like letters and stories and things like that, I like to write a rough copy, to submit it, what I used to do, was even in their rough copy, if there were three mistakes I’d hand it straight back and say “I’m not marking it”. They’d have to go and do it again, until they got it to the stage where there were only three errors in it, then I’d accept it. And that, was very rough on the kids. At ____ High School, some of the kids in the top year 9 and 10 class, boys, all boys school, in tears because they said it was too hard, they couldn’t do it. After a while they got to expect the standard was there, so they checked it amongst themselves, so I expect kids to get it right. ... Drafting process is basically first in, if there are like 10 mistakes, I give it back and they wind it back down to 3 and it comes in as close as it’s going to be, with only 3 errors, then I’ll mark it.
(A3:14)

No teacher informants could nominate prewriting strategies they used with students and in the time I spent observing various writing lessons I never saw any prewriting or drafting strategies used by teacher informants. Indeed, my notes often mentioned the lack of such strategies. (A2fn2-8; A4:fn:6; A9:fn1; B1:19; B2:fn1; B3:fn41-48; B4:fn27; B5:fn1-33) Informant B5 had 8 posters on the wall of their room, displaying steps to follow in the ‘writing Process’. (B5:fn1) The steps were based on the model of writing as Process developed by Walshe. (Walshe, 1994)

Despite having the posters in their room, observations of B5’s lessons showed that they did not appear to value students using the processes in their writing but preferred that they completed one draft, attended to spelling and punctuation and published their work. Their was no encouragement during observations of writing lessons for students to edit or revise their writing. Text Type Scaffolds were also used to prescribe set structures and sequencing of student texts. (B5:fn3-34) When asked about where the ideas for the posters came from B5 stated that she thought they were based on ‘process I guess and Genre theory, probably a mixture’. (B5:fn4)
During observations and interviews no informants placed emphasis on conferencing, rewriting with changes to language structure or to responding or evaluation - all key components of Process Writing and central to DET writing policies. The following data slices were typical of data collected during observations of writing classes:

Yr11 B1

Class writing an essay, but no 'process'. No draft process discussed or set out. No peer conferencing going on around class. Kids really focused when B1 helping them. Asked [B1], definitely just 'one shot' writing. Seems to be how B1 always has class writing. (B1:fn19)

Watched A4's class today. Writing task, year 10. No drafting or planning what they were writing. Asked him about it. Does not know what Process Writing is. Stated drafting process getting kids to write it out properly, without mistakes. Said sometimes he gets them to re-write, if it is too messy. (Reflections: A4) (see A4:fn6-7)

Informant B3 claimed to have begun to use Process type strategies with their classes recently but claimed they were part of the new approaches based on Text Types:

R: Did you use brainstorming, mind maps or re-drafting before? [before Text Types]
B3: No. Never. I don't think anybody did. The only reason we do now is because B5 is qualified in Text Types, she shows us how to do them. We're lucky that way, I don't think other staffrooms, you know, other schools can do it.
R: You never had the kids brainstorm ideas and write to points before, then re-organise them into a piece of writing?
B3: No. You wouldn't know to, how would you? There haven't been any courses or anything in how to use Text Types. It's only through B5 that we do it.
R: What guided the way you taught writing before?
B3: Well, you gave them a piece of writing, tried to stimulate their imagination and hope they could write something out. It was pretty hit and miss, you know, like they could think about books they've written and stuff but it's hard to find something that all the kids like. Now you just tell them how to write it, how to lay it out and how it's put together. (B3:3)

Although B3 claimed to use Process oriented strategies, observation of numerous writing lessons conducted by B3 failed to show any use of them. Fieldnotes made during lessons included:

B3's classes:

no brainstorming
no organisation of ideas
no modelling
no concept mapping
drafting process 'just correct mistakes and put in capitals and full stops'.
All this despite her insistence that she does all these things (see B3:3) (Ref:B3:fn2)
Further probing revealed that B3 believed they completed Process-oriented strategies by having students draft their work onto Text Type Scaffolds prior to correcting mistakes. The following data slice illustrates B3's strategies:

R: Do you get kids to organise their writing beforehand or use an approach for drafting?
B3: Well, like I said, the scaffold, write your notes into it and then write it out polished. The scaffold helps them put it in the right sequence.
(B3:fn45)

As a teacher of high school English it has often surprised me how my new classes claimed not to have engaged in drafting processes since primary school. It is an area that I have worked on with students at a number of schools. During the time I taught in both School A and School B, during participant observation periods, it became apparent that many students in the senior years had few procedures (or processes) that they could follow to enhance their writing, especially pre-writing and drafting processes. For example, a Year 10 class I taught at School A complained bitterly when I asked them to plan and draft their work prior to publishing a creative writing assessment task. The following exemplifies the kinds of responses I often received from students when I attempted to teach them strategies for improving their writing using prewriting and drafting strategies:

Year 10
10/6/97
We did that back in primary school, it's for little kids.
Are we gumbies, why do this?
We're not stupid, we can just write it out once.
(AFA-10)

After observing Year 11 final exams at School B I spoke to both students and staff at School B about Year 11 students apparent lack of prewriting strategies in English exams. The arguments from students were similar to those expressed above, most students believed such activities were for use by primary students. (Refs: 16/9/98) Responses from staff indicated they believed such strategies were the domain of primary school teachers. Informant responses also indicated a poor understanding of Process Writing and the value of prewriting activities. The following data slice was typical of the responses I received:
Chapter 5: Analysis

Q: Does anyone actually teach them about prewriting activities or how to use process strategies for improving their writing before they start writing in the exam?

B1: What do you mean? Drafting, they learn that in primary school. They can’t use any of that in exams, anyway, it’s one off writing.
B3: We don’t have time for that. It’s baby stuff, there’s no time.
B7: They can do it in their head if they want, they don’t need to learn it. It just wastes time.
B4: Well, what can we do? It’s too late now, if they won’t do it now, it’s too late.
B7: Yeah, you’d think they would have learned that in primary school, wouldn’t you?

Q: But don’t you think prewriting activities would help them to organise their ideas prior to writing their answers?
B1: Oh, of course it would, but how can you make them do it?

Q: Do you do it with them in class?
B1: But it’s primary stuff, this is the problem, the primary schools don’t do their jobs, why should we have to do stuff like that, these kids are senior classes, they should be able to do it themselves.

(B:fn11 and Refs:16/9/98)

The data suggested that few informant teachers understood or used Process Writing with their classes.

Teacher Knowledge about Whole Language

Some teacher informants stated they had no idea what Whole Language approaches to literacy education were. (A3:fn3; A6:18; A7:fn3; A8:fn3; B7:fn3; B3:43; B2:fn11)

Informants commonly thought it meant a holistic approach to teaching, for example:

R: Do you know what Whole Language is?
A6: No. Is it holistic?
R: Kind of, it is a theoretical orientation that a lot of teachers use for teaching English. It’s had quite an influence on policies in the Department.
A6: Well, no, I don’t.

(A6:18)

Some informants had a vague idea of some of the conflict surrounding the Whole Language versus phonics debate, linking it to learning language through usage, but stated that they thought it meant they should not use direct instruction with students. (A5; A4; B4; B1) For example, Informant A4 stated:

holistic, doesn’t it mean you’re not supposed to teach grammar, that kids just pick it up? I’m not sure, I think it’s outdated now.

(A4:fn7)
Informant A5 expressed anger about the introduction of Whole Language, despite having little knowledge of the theories underpinning the approach:

And that is why I get so frustrated with primary teachers, because when the whole word approach came in, out went phonetics. And out went, you know, any form of [instruction]

Q56. You mean Whole Language?
A5: Well, they were dealing with basic words, let’s not sound it out. Let’s just learn whole words and forget sounding out words and that sort of thing. So out went phonetics [sic], in came the whole, the whole word.

Q57. Was that something with your own kids?
A5: That’s, um let me think how long ago that was, I remember, I’ve got sister in laws who are all primary school teachers. Um, so that would have been early eighties and they were just finishing college and were very strong on it. But let’s not mix anything, let’s just keep to one thing, and I find that really hard, because I see kids learning in different ways and I see some kids needing that and maybe good phonetic [sic] approaches and some kids may learn through grammar.

(A5:20)

The perception that Whole Language approaches mean that teachers should not give direct instruction has been prevalent for some time and has been one of the main arguments levelled against Whole Language by adherents of phonics and Genre-based approaches. Some informants expressed similar beliefs, although they usually indicated that they had little knowledge about the theoretical basis of Whole Language. For example, one day I asked Informant A9 for some chalk to use with a class and they replied:

I never use chalk, I wouldn’t know where to look for it. I haven’t written on the board for years.

Q: What did you mean?
A9: It’s old fashioned isn’t it? You know, holistic approaches and everything. I let the kids do their own writing. They control everything, I don’t tell them what to do, they figure it out for themselves.

Q: Do you think that is what is called a Whole Language approach?
A9: Yes, that’s right, it’s more holistic.

Q: Do you ever write stuff with the kids?
A9: No, I get them to make their own up. I go around and look at their work and help.

Q: Do you teach grammar?
A9: No, you’re not supposed to these days. That all went out years ago.

Q: Do you know anything about Brian Cambourne’s model?
A9: No.

Q: The conditions of learning, immersion, demonstration, approximation, etc.
A9: No. What’s that? Is that this new stuff?

(A9:FA12 & fn8)

Informant B4, literacy coordinator at School B, claimed that the implementation of Whole Language in schools during the 1980s, through policy documents, was misinterpreted by high school teachers. B4 claimed:
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B4: Well, I think there were a lot of assumptions made about people’s understanding [about Whole Language] and the people that participated in that, you know, the people that are now in their early fifties, mostly, like, my friend, ____. They could see that it was absolutely empty and meaningless to know that day by day you were going to teach spelling, you were going to take apart sentences to learn the names of the parts of the sentences, you were going to read this book, so you could talk, but really the vacuum there was, it was like mowing the lawn, it was just do it to do it.

The people lost sight of what you might call the getting of ideas, you know what is the purpose of this? So all that stuff was thrown out because it seemed purposeless and what was brought in was things like Whole Language, okay?

But again, people got involved in the activities of Whole Language but they lost sense, it seems to me of the purpose and understanding of it. And this is one of the reasons Whole Language went down the plug hole. Because you got a new generation of people coming through who didn’t experience the previous prescriptive ways of teaching, they went to teachers colleges, they learned all the busy work, they get involved in doing the busy work for the busy works sake, but I’m not sure that there is any real sense of what the purpose of this was. Just, you know, the idea of okay, we’re going to practice language, we’re going to practice reading, writing, listening, speaking and our language abilities will get better. Well, that’s not good enough is it? It’s too, um, it was umm

R: The Whole Language approach?
B4: Yeah, it was the Whole Language approach, but without this sense of what is the philosophy behind it, so that you always keep in mind what you are trying to do. You have to know why you are doing what you are doing. And I think people weren’t taught to know what the purpose of this was. They were just taught the techniques but not the purpose. (B4:14-15)

Informant B4 appeared to have a reasonable understanding of Whole Language and its place in the evolution of conceptualisations of literacy and language learning. B4 linked the misinterpretation of Whole Language on a lack of knowledge about the theories underpinning the approach and to political control of professional development. (B4:17-20) B4 claimed:

B4: Well, the Whole Language was to make everything relevant. You know, rather than taking out teaching grammar, spelling as separate from a context. It was to try to make the language meaningful, so that everything you taught had to be taught within a context of meaning.

But, what people started doing was saying okay, well we’re going to have a unit on food, so you know, because everyone is interested in food. So, we’ll find poems on food, we’ll find, we’ll write stories about food, we’ll do recipes on food, we’ll look at the different kinds of writing or Genres or whatever you want to call it, but it’s all going to do with this theme of food. Okay. But it takes a lot of preparation to do that well. And it’s very easy just to make it busy work, rather than making it meaningful and I think part of the problem there is, that if they really wanted that to work and this is where teachers were supposed to be given the opportunity to develop their own lessons, and stuff, but the structure of the workplace didn’t change so that they had the time and the energy to do that.

R: In what ways?
B4: Well, you know, so it goes from a thing where you are told week by week what to teach, to suddenly okay you can now make up all your own units. But teaching Whole Language effectively takes a lot of thought and a lot of development and you cannot be teaching the same number of classes with the same number of periods per week year after year and have that time to develop those things unless you are doing it all at home in your own time.

R: What happened to grammar, spelling and punctuation amongst all that?
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B4: Oh, well see that is what got neglected, because the idea was that people just pick it up. Now, here again, I think that that’s part of the swinging pendulum, because there is an assumption made, hang on I’ve got to go back and think about this. It’s a reaction to things, you know, so much spelling and grammar had been so boring and deadly, so the pendulum swung away from it but then people stopped teaching the spelling and grammar in a consistent or conscientious manner, because it was just an irritation or something and so then, it was just neglected because it’s harder to put that into a unit and have continuity from year to year to year.

R: It seems a lot of people just think Whole Language means you don’t have to teach grammar or spelling?
B4: Yep. That’s right.

R: Do you think that is a correct interpretation of Whole Language?
B4: No. The thing is, here again, it’s a time and resources management thing. Right? Because what you do, when you see a need then you teach it, well if you’ve got five classes of thirty kids each, you’ve got a hundred and fifty needs at different times. So, it doesn’t work to have individual programming for everybody. So, you think well, it just gets left in the too hard basket.

R: Is that your experience? That a lot of teachers did leave it in the too hard basket, because of those system constraints?
B4: Yeah, I mean I think so, I mean, this is another thing, too you see, we used to sit around in the staff rooms in the late 70s and early 80s and actually talk more about things I think. We had more time, somehow. Whereas, now I couldn’t tell you what other people do in their classrooms, the only things I know what other people do are what we do as common tasks. I have no idea what other teachers do in their classrooms.

R: How does the amount of professional development you were getting back then compare to today?
B4: There’s nothing now. There was much twenty years ago. (B4:17-20)

R: How do you feel about some of the changes that teaching English has undergone?

B4: Well, I like the idea that people are having to think about what they are teaching and maybe having more of a sense of continuity, because I think in the past, particularly in the seventies, there was the idea that we had to throw out everything, that it was too prescriptive, but it created a vacuum. And I think a lot of the vacuum was because there was assumptions made about the understandings English teachers have. And I don’t think a lot of them, I think, from what I’ve seen a lot of English teachers just got the idea that you do language activities, that’s enough (B4:12)
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Teacher Knowledge about Immersion and Demonstration

One of the strongest indicators that teacher informants did not consciously attempt to implement Whole Language approaches in their daily teaching was revealed by the state of their classroom walls and the seating arrangements for their students. Two of the key conditions of learning inherent to Whole Language approaches are the conditions of immersion and demonstration. (Cambourne, 1988) The conditions featured heavily in the Writing K-12 document, Reading K-12, the 2001 Draft Writing K-12 document and were an integral component of the curriculum cycle and the Genre-based approach to teaching literacy and language skills. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1987; Derewianka, 1990, 1996; New South Wales Department of Education, 1979, 1987; New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1999b)

During data collection I regularly took photographs of all English classrooms and staffrooms in both schools as a part of my observation records. Samples of the photographs are reproduced in Figure 5.7:
Figure 5.7: Sample photographs of teacher informant classrooms Schools A and B (Archive:Af2 and Archive: Bf13)
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Teacher informants at both schools were the sole users of their rooms and each room was the ‘home’ room for both teacher informant and their students. The walls of each classroom were brick and all had windows aligned along at least one wall. Each also had a blackboard or whiteboard at one end of the classroom and some had overhead projector screens mounted next to the boards.

Examination of the photos revealed that the classroom walls remained bare of student work or sample texts for the entire duration of data collection. In the case of School B that represented some four years. No informant in either of the two schools displayed any model texts or student work on the walls of their classrooms during the course of the study. Some teacher informants placed a few photographs taken from old calendars on the walls of their rooms, as inspiration for creative writing exercises. A few others had small posters they had received through DET programs displayed. In the case of School B some classrooms displayed, in one neat row, the laminated Text Type Scaffolds which had been issued by the school.

Informants B3 and B4 had their students’ desks faced away from the blackboards in their room, so that students’ backs were turned to the blackboard and the overhead projector screens which were mounted next to them. The data indicated that the classrooms at both schools showed little physical sign of the implementation of Whole Language pedagogies. This analysis was in keeping with the data collected from teacher informants as presented earlier.

The data revealed that programs in School A showed that there was no programming for wide reading or personal borrowing from the library during the entire course of the study. A check with teacher informants confirmed that none programmed for classes to borrow their own books from the library or to read during class time, apart from set texts during English classes. (Archive:Afl)

Additionally, Informant B6 (the teacher-librarian at School B) stated that repeated attempts at School B to initiate a wide reading program for junior students had failed. B6 further claimed that no English staff took classes to the library to borrow books of their own choosing on a regular basis. A check of booking records maintained in the library confirmed that no English staff had booked the reading area for at least one year and that no classes had been booked in for the purpose of borrowing reading material. All bookings by English staff related to research activities or the use of computers or videos. (B6: fn4-5) A check with all informants at School B also confirmed B6’s claims. Informants stated that they felt such reading programs were of little value and
that students would not read any books borrowed. (B:fn16) Informants B4 and B5 stated
that they never took classes to the library to borrow novels or other fiction books.
(B6:5) Reading programs in School B appeared to be restricted to the class sets of
literary texts which students studied in English classes. An examination of the year
programs in School B showed that 3 novels and one play were set for study by each
year group per year. (Archive: Bfl2)

Such approaches to reading supported data indicating that teachers held little
knowledge about Whole Language approaches. The methods used by teachers in
structuring student reading sessions appeared to be in particular opposition to
Cambourne’s ‘conditions of learning’ in Figure 5.8:

Please see print copy for images

**Figure 5.8:** Cambourne’s conditions of literacy learning

*Teacher Knowledge of a Functional View of Language*

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)

Given the implementation of a Functional View of Language as DET policy with the
*Agenda ‘97* literacy initiative it possible to argue that the knowledge-bases teacher
informants required access to most were the theories underpinning a Functional View of
Language. It is also possible to argue that, as a Functional View of Language has built
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on the work of Process and Whole Language approaches (Derewianka, 1990, p.14), teachers also require knowledge about Whole Language approaches if they are to implement a Functional View of Language.

Most informants stated that they did not know what a Functional View of Language was. (A3:fn3; A6:20; A7:fn3; A8:fn3; A9:fn8; B7:3) Invariably, those informants who did claim to know something about a Functional View of Language connected it with the teaching of Text Types Scaffolds or grammar. In the following data slice Informant A3 stated that staff at School A had very little understanding of the theoretical frameworks which underpinned the latest policy documents:

Q14. How much do your staff know about Systemic Functional Linguistics or Genre-based approaches to teaching literacy?
A3b: Nothing, or next to nothing because we haven’t had any professional development on it. (A3b:10)

Of the staff at School B, only informant B5 had any expertise in the use of Functional Grammar or a Genre-based approaches to literacy, having completed their Master’s degree in Education in an area related to Systemic Functional Linguistics. (B5:3) B5’s knowledge of Systemic theory appeared to be limited to a rudimentary knowledge of Functional Grammar. During interviews Informant B5 stated they were not aware of the approaches developed by the Genre School for the teaching of writing, as adopted in DET and BOS policy documents. (B5:3-20)

The data showed that some informants confused a Functional View of Language with the notion of ‘functional literacy’, of being able to complete basic literacy tasks for daily functioning. For example:

Yes, you know, doing the basics, reading signs and stuff, basic writing skills. (A2:fn4)

you mean like for job applications and stuff? (A6:20)

Isn’t it using practical things, like filling in forms etc? (A7:fn3)

Yes, it’s how you do stuff like job applications and forms, fill in forms, that type of thing. (B2:fn11)

The way in which context contributes to meaning is a central component of a Functional View Of Language and an important tenet of Functional approaches is the examination
of language usage in real contexts and for real purposes. There appeared to be confusion among informants about the nature of context and its role in a Functional View of Language.

For example, both schools maintained the practice of sending classes to a set ‘language’ teacher once per cycle. It was the role of the ‘language teacher’ to provide instruction on language structures, using Text Type Scaffolds, and grammar, using grammar sheets. (A2b; A3fn8; B4:2; B2:9) B2 and B4 claimed that they did not teach Text Types ‘in isolation’ yet maintained the practice of sending their classes to another teacher for ‘Text Type lessons’ once per fortnight for more than three years. (B2:8) The following response, given by B2 in relation to teaching language skills ‘in context’ in their own classes highlighted some of the misconceptions about context common amongst informants:

Q: You said before, you always try to teach that kind of stuff [Text Types] in context, do you find that difficult, with the new approach?
B2: No. No, no. I find it’s fine, because you, I usually set an extension task at the end, anyway, at the end of the unit, with novels ... extension tasks, which would cover all those sorts of things, like report writing, you know, newspapers, like I had dictionary work and that sort of thing, as well. Yeah.
Q: Just as a tack-on activity at the end?
B2: Yeah.
(B2:23)

Work samples provided by Informant B2 indicated that such activities generally comprised of traditional grammar worksheets or comprehension activities, which did not appear to directly relate to the work covered in each unit of work. (Archives B:f12) Informant B5 also stated they preferred the notion of addressing language skills as a separate entity to mainstream English studies:

Generally, I mean my method of teaching is I mean, I want them to have a section, just on text-types [and grammar], like they bought these books, which are all great, you know,
(B5:5)

The books to which B5 referred was the Text Types in English series. (Anderson & Anderson, 1997a, 1997b, 1998) All the informants at both School A and School B reported that they used the texts on a regular basis. Informant A3 stated that staff at School A preferred to teach such language skills separate from literature content. (A3:14) An examination of the booking records at School B showed that the texts were also used daily by different English staff at the school and that all staff had used the
texts at least once per fortnight during 1998. (Archive: B:fl) The activities in the texts were not related to any of the work being studied in class at the time and were completed separate from normal classwork.

The Head Teachers of English at both schools stated that the use of the texts and specialised ‘language lessons’ were adopted as a means of implementing the new DET literacy policies. Informant B4, literacy coordinator at School B explained:

R: How have you been implementing a functional approach to language?
B4: Well, this is what we are waiting to do, so far it has been a thing, where people have been told about the Text Types, um, they have been told that is not all there is to teaching literacy, um, they have been told at in-services but we don’t have any structure that checks to see if they’re [Text Types] being taught or how they’re being taught, or when to teach them.

And I think that is what we are going to do next. So, we’re going to do Text Types, because for a couple of reasons, number one, it’s something to do. That’s expected. (B4:51)

The data showed that both schools chief tool in attempting to implement a Functional View of Language was the introduction of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. (See the review of literature.) The approach used at both schools was based on a program developed by another school in their District, which had been adopted by a number of high schools throughout the region. (A2b&fn; B11&fn; B:cf) The plan was based on the explicit teaching of each Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold to students. Students were expected to memorise the components and reproduce the structures identically in their writing. The grading system adopted allocated points for each component of the Scaffolds which was sequenced in the ‘correct’ position by the student in their own writing. (B:cf2) Both schools began their approach to a Functional View of Language by laminating the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and placing them on the walls in all English classrooms. (Archives A:fl & B:fl)

Informant DET 9, the District Literacy Consultant, reported that the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds was common in schools throughout the Region and that they presented some concern for officials:

DET9 stated that there was growing concern among Consultants that schools were focusing on the scaffolds. DET9 also claimed that it had become common practice at a
number of local high schools to spend one period per week as a ‘literacy lesson’ across the school, whereby every student completed a writing exercise with the same scaffold across all faculties. DET 9 reported that this was cause for great concern, as it was contrary to the philosophy of a Functional View of Language. (DET9:la) At a meeting with senior DET officials Informant DET1 claimed that they had attempted to prevent the Scaffolds from being distributed to schools but that a prolonged ideological dispute amongst DET officials prevented withdrawal of the Scaffolds and they were issued to every school in NSW. (DET1:Refs)

Teacher Knowledge About Functional Grammar

A Functional View of Language is based on the use of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, utilising Functional Grammar as a metalanguage and rhetorical tool for analysing the social and cultural functions of language. (Derewianka, 1990; Halliday, 1985a) The data revealed that, apart from Informant B5, no teacher informant had a working knowledge of Functional Grammar. (A1:2; A2b; A3:15; A5:4; A7:fn3; A8:fn3; B1:fn1-5; B2:11; B3fn; B4: B6: fn3; B7:fn3)

As already indicated, most informants believed that Functional Grammar was merely traditional grammar with Functional terminology imposed over it. In the case of the new K-6 English Syllabus, the exact opposite was true. The Functional Grammar had been re-written imposing traditional terminology on the Functional definitions. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1998b; Derewianka, 1998)

Informant A3 explained the use of traditional grammar, rather than the Functional Grammar outlined in policy documents, in School A in the following data slice:

Q: Why do you use the grammar sheets?
A3: Just for policy really, to satisfy the ELLA requirements.
Q: Isn’t ELLA based on Functional Grammar?
A3: Yes, but who knows anything about that? This is the only way we can do it. At least we can work with those. We’ve got to cover our arse somehow.
(A3:fn4)

The ELLA tests were marked using answer sheets and strict guidelines issued by the DET for the purpose. The guidelines used Functional Grammar terminology to outline the grading options, not traditional grammar. (Archive B:f13)
School B drew on the expertise of Informant B5 to introduce some of the concepts from Functional Grammar, as illustrated in some of the teaching practices of B1; B5 and B3. Terms such as ‘topic sentence’ and ‘nominalisation’ were commonly used by those teachers when discussing Functional Grammar. (B1:fn; B3:fn; B5:4) Both B1 and B3 claimed their knowledge of Functional Grammar was limited to what they had taught themselves or had been shown by B5. However, B1 did claim that they did not find the terminology to be a problem. Four other informants present at the time dissented:

B2: I don’t think you need to be a postgraduate to understand these new theories. You can pick it up by reading a bit. You don’t have to be trained.

[others in staff room argued that Functional Grammar is too complicated to learn yourself]

I don’t agree. We have those books, Text Types in English, that’s all you need to do it. (B1:fn3)

Informant B1 did, however, claim that students found the language of Functional Grammar ‘terribly boring’. (B:fn1) Similarly, Informant A5 stated they had tried to learn about Functional Grammar but claimed to have found the experience ‘frustrating’ due to the nature of the terminology. A5 also claimed that the lack of knowledge about Functional Grammar was disadvantaging senior students. The following data slice illustrates A5’s concerns:

Q28. Oh, Functional Grammar? What did you think of it?
A5: I found it really frustrating. Because, just to remember the terminology frustrated me to start with. Um, and to swap over, but I didn’t get into it in any great depth, I just thought I needed to know some of this terminology to be able to help the kids and apply it, so I wasn’t being completely confusing.

Q29. So what did you do, get a book on it or something?
A5: I actually started out using my daughter’s texts, and then I got some other ones ... I was mainly worried about the kids, if they come into my class and they are talking on different terms and what I maybe, when it comes up, I thought, it’s going to confuse them.

Q31. Do you think that it would make much difference, if you were able to use Functional Grammar, to complete analysis of texts?
A5: Well, I don’t think I am doing that too often, except I really find it necessary for Year 11, because when they are looking at language in Year 11 you need those terminologies to be able to writing about it. And they can’t, because we don’t do enough of it, or we don’t really go into it like we should in the junior school, for them to be able to pick it up in Year 11. So, it’s a real um, dilemma for me in Year 11, to articulate it, but I want them to have that written knowledge of their text.
(A5:10-11)

A5 also claimed that students had trouble coping with the terminology of a Functional View of Language, particularly the grammar. A5 also claimed that it did not help students’ writing abilities:
they found it terribly dry and

Q23. You are smiling.
A5: Terribly dry. [laughter]
A5: And they were pleased to get off it. But some of them quite liked the structure of it. Some of them quite liked the way that you sort of work through it and it did make sense. Like maths. Particularly those kids that were heavily into maths, it seemed to fall into place.

Q24. Do you think it helped their writing?
A5: No! I don’t think it helped their writing at all ... 

Q25. What about the kids that liked it, did you see any signs that they used it, to any great advantage?
A5: I didn’t see any great advantage in it ... if you are asking me did I see any great advantage in their writing after it, I didn’t.

(A5:8-9)

Informant B2 also claimed that the terminology of a Functional View Of Language was presenting problems in the classroom. B2 claimed the focus added to the burden of workload, stating:

You know, I really think it is more important in the primary school level, when they are younger, to instil it in then, rather than in high school, I’d much rather concentrate on the other things.

(B2:22)

Well, for me I find it more of a chore, because I, the kids find it damned boring and I do, myself as well, so I’m not into it probably as much as I should be, but yeah, I think it’s more important at a primary school level and I think we should be just left alone to, you know, we’ve got so much other stuff to worry about, like you know, the School Certificate, then the you’ve got your HSC, it takes up time they could have spent in primary school doing.

(B2:23)

Informant had been involved in assisting colleagues to understand the new DET literacy policies and made the observation that teachers were finding the language of a Functional View of Language more difficult than were students. The following data slice indicates B5’s views:

R: How do you find that the kids are coping, or even the teachers you’ve worked with, how do they cope with the language?
B5: Ah, they [teachers] get, oohh, you know, ‘this is terrible’. Year 10, when I told them about nominalisations they just took it in their stride, you know. I mean, we talked about it, I showed them some examples, discussed a few, got them to give a few examples and given an essay, “okay, now find the nominalisations” and they went through and they took it in their stride.

The teachers find it harder to understand than the kids ...

Because they haven’t really had the opportunity to learn that, or through that. I mean it is a frightening concept.

See, when I did my studies, when I did that research, it took me a hell of a long time to really come to grips with all of these ideas. You know, when you are throwing grammatical metaphor at people, hell, you know what is that? Generic structure, I mean, it is a bit frightening.

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People get so used to doing things their way, I think that it's just human nature to resist change because you feel threatened by it. And it's a whole lot of re-learning process.

I mean, it's basically the same thing that you are doing but with this Functional Grammar, with this new literacy thing and all of that, basically what we are doing is we are giving things we did before new terminology and we are also trying to kind of make more explicit to students what we should be doing in order to improve. And you know, we haven't been used to doing that in the past.

(B5:5-6)

B5 also claimed that the DET consultants who had visited the school to assist staff were of little assistance and that the difficulties of coping with the new policies had led to teachers failing to implement the theories into their teaching practice. Informant B5 explained it thus:

I think it is just a process that you feel threatened, you're not used to it. It's not that they don't want to do it. They want to do it. And so, second thing, stemming from that, is there's no time. All these demands placed upon us, all these changes brought about. You are just supposed to do it in this, suddenly a consultant will come and talk about grammatical metaphor and nominalisation, Functional Grammar, one hour and they expect the teachers to know. And all they do is confuse people.

That consultant has spent time, has had a lot of time to learn all these concepts, right and then they come. In fact, a lot of consultants don't know enough about it themselves. They flounder around in it themselves, which makes it more difficult to convince your audience.

R: What's been your experience, you've obviously seen that going on in schools?
B5: Yeah, people just shake their heads and go. Some of them will go and have a one-off lesson in class, using what you have given them. And then they forget about it, because you feel frightened. If you don't know, if you don't know, if you don't understand, how can you teach it?

(B5:7)

Teacher Knowledge About Text Types and Genre

As previously discussed, most informants perceived a need to implement the use of Functional Grammar and Text Types to meet the demands of the Agenda '97 DET literacy policies. Both schools implemented policies of identifying specific Text Types for each faculty to focus on in their teaching. The perception appeared to be that Text Types were peculiar to particular subject areas and each faculty needed to identify one to focus on. (A1:9; B:cf1-30) Staff at School A had only just introduced the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds when I began observations at the school and few teachers had begun to use them in class. At staff meetings all teacher informants at School A stated that they did not understand Genre theory or how the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds were meant to be used. Several staff members stated that they thought a Genre-based approach to writing was related to literaryGenres and a literature-based approach to
English. All the informants from School A went on to state that they did not know anything about the theories behind the use of Text Type Scaffolds. (A:fn14)

The English Faculty at School B sought to force the ‘fit’ of each Text Type into their literature based lessons, in an attempt to deal with all the Pro-forma Text Types in a short period of time. The Head Teacher English explained it thus:

> When we do a unit I say, Right, we’ll focus on this text type and we can work through them, one after the other. (B1:fn1)

The approach of creating artificial purposes for Text Types in order to prescriptively fit the Text Type to the situation was illustrated during lessons I observed at School B. Informant B1 set students the task of writing a procedural text, a set of instructions showing someone how to rescue the dwarves in the novel, *The Hobbit*. (B1:fn10) Informant B3 also set report Text Types to be written on themes of novels. The Text Types were imposed on the units and the structure of the scaffolds strictly adhered to. (B:ArchiveF1)

Data collected at School B revealed that each year group was expected to cover all the generic Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds during two week periods programmed into each term. (Archive: Bf12) One example I observed was the use of the recount scaffold as an introductory assessment task for new Year 7 students. Every student was set the task of writing their autobiography using a recount Scaffold as the guiding framework. Each class spent the whole ten week term producing their work. The Scaffolds were used as the basis of marking criteria for the assignments, with grades allocated only for the following criteria:

- Presentation
- Text Structure
- Sentence Structure
- Punctuation
- Spelling

(B: ArchiveF1)

Work was drafted on the recount Scaffold and the structures of the Scaffold strictly adhered to during marking. A copy of the Scaffold is reproduced in Figure 5.9:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Scaffold for RECOUNT</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORIENTATION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give background information who what when where</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EVENTS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events arranged in chronological order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal comments are often added as each event unfolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific or individual nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text in past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking words to do with time eg then next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averbial phrases eg He stood over there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>RE-ORIENTATION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End with a personal comment or interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.9:** Recount Scaffold used for autobiography in School B

Some informants indicated that they felt the use of Text Types was not a desirable method of teaching writing to their students, generally because they thought the method too prescriptive or too boring for students. However, all such informants stated that they felt compelled by policies to use the Pro-forma Scaffolds, regardless of their impressions. (A2:fn1; A3:fn2; A5:23; A9:fn9) Informant B4, as the coordinator responsible for implementing Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds in School B, expressed concern about the value of the Scaffolds in the following data slice:

B4: I'm not sure. I'm not sure, I know what Text Types are, I know what the purpose is, um, and but I, the way it is presented in what's given out to schools, um, it's like, oh, I don't know, it's like a set of plans for a carpenter to build a chair and table, you know, but um, it seems kind of superficial, you know, one dimensional, so I'm not sure what the theory is and I'm not sure it's that important anyway.

R: Can you elaborate on that a bit?
B4: Well, because, I don't know, I just haven't seen a lot of explanation of what, what I've seen is only a functional thing, right. It's only like how do we learn to read, so you look at the kind of sounds that are made reading, you know. But how you learn to read isn't what reading is all about.
Just little kids, you know, when they first learn how to make meaning out of symbols, kind of thing. But that is just, like, it's like learning how to drive, right, you learn how to drive you know how to navigate a car around, but that doesn't mean you understand the difference between driving some really nice Alpha or Italian race car and just hooning around in a junkie old Holden, there's a completely different thing involved in that experience of driving those two vehicles.

So, the Text Types, to me seems to be a very functional thing, but um, I don't know if there is anything beyond it in the theory. (B4:51)

It is significant that Informant B4 interpreted the use of Text Types as being based on functional literacy and displayed a poor understanding of a Functional View of Language. Informant B4 also felt that the introduction of Text Types achieved a secondary function, beyond helping students' literacy skills:

Ah, I think there are other things that will be achieved by doing Text Types, and that is to make people more aware that they are responsible for teaching literacy and language skills in their subject. (B4:51)

Other informants stated they thought that the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds was prescriptive but stated that they perceived prescription as a positive thing. For example:

Oh, they're good. I think they're good. In the past it hasn't been clear. Text types are really prescriptive. It's good to have something prescriptive, it lets the kids know where they are going and what they have to do. (B3:2)

B4 claimed that teaching Text Types as a formula was not a problem but was part of the process of forcing a focus on literacy. Informant B4 did not appear to fully understand just how prescription might help, but stated they were aware that Pro-forma Text Types were leading to prescriptive approaches being used to teach writing:

R: Do you think people here are turning it [Text Types] into a formula?
B4: Oh, yeah, they are turning it into a formula, but that's the first step. I don't see a problem with that. In a way, as long as some people see that it is not a formula, and I think that is, oh, I don't know.

R: One of the fears that the linguists who designed a Genre approach, Kress, Halliday, and others, had of the Martin/Rothery model, which is the one the Department is using, is that they fear it could become prescriptive, like the old traditional grammar approach.
B4: Yep. That's right, absolutely, that's the problem, I'm interested that those people have said that, that is a problem.

R: Do you think that is a valid fear?
B4: Oh, definitely. You bet, because it is happening at ___.

R: What do you mean? What is happening there?
B4: Well, that it's becoming prescriptive, and everything you write has to fit a text type, you know, and if you learn the Text Types, then that is all you need to know. Well, that is my impression, anyway.

Learn the Text Types, it's like for every problem A there is an answer B, you know, there is not B1, B2, B3, B4, you know, to nth degree, it's like, here's the simple question, here is the simple answer, always ... no, it is definitely being used as something prescriptive.

Informant B4 also stated that although they supported the notion of Text Types, as a means of forcing a focus on literacy, they preferred to rely on literary approaches in teaching language skills. In the following excerpt B2 claimed that working with grammar did not work with students:

R: What do you think is a better tool to that, do you think that a Functional View of Language, as in the new policies is better or would you prefer a literary approach?

B4: Oh, definitely a literary approach, it works with kids, if they like a book they will think about it, but you try to get them to think in terms of grammar it just won't work.

It is interesting to note that Informants A5, B5 and B4, the only teachers with any understanding of a Functional View of Language, pointed out that the approach gave them a language with which to speak about language claiming that they had lacked a metalanguage in the past. (A5:9; B5:6; B4:52) This reinforced the perception that teacher informants often lacked the means with which to discuss their understandings of literacy and language learning.

In order to give me a better idea of how Text Types were being implemented the Head Teacher of School B, Informant B1, arranged for me to attend some of their lessons, as well as some conducted by Informant B3. These two teachers were chosen because they were considered by the rest of the staff at School B to have the most expertise in the area of using Text Types in English. The data collected proved to be quite illuminating.

B1 selected a top student to illustrate the worth of Pro-forma Text Types for helping students produce well crafted writing. The only criteria used for judging the student's work was adherence to the Scaffold. The student received high marks for what appeared to be a poorly crafted piece. I made the following observations of the students' work:
Examples of scaffolds in use.

Year 8 student, top of class ****
Using 'Description Response' scaffold to write a response to The Hobbit.
No paragraphs in student’s writing.
No comments from teacher
Lengthy sentences, very large blocks
Written in point form to scaffold
Not much flow stilted
Layout: 
  5 points
  Conclusion
Given 18/20 for ‘good use of your text type’
(B1:fn10)

During lessons it became obvious that B1 considered the structures of the Pro-Forma Text Type Scaffolds to be a worthwhile entity in themselves. Students were regularly asked to parse texts and identify components using the accompanying Pro-Forma Text Type Scaffolds as a template. It became obvious that the structure of the Pro-Forma Text Type Scaffold was the objective, rather than the independent creation of texts for specific purposes. (B1:fn1-10; B1:refs)

The data collected from classes showed that both Informant B1 and B3 followed a procedure whereby they had students write one draft into the scaffolds, correct spelling and punctuation and publish the piece. Both teachers photocopied text book examples of Text Types and distributed them to students, calling the process ‘modelling’. B3 would often recite sentences to classes, instructing them to put the sentence in particular paragraphs. If the sentence was missing when marked students lost grades. (B3:fn30-45)

For example, the following data slice exemplified B3’s attitude towards the use of topic sentences:

[Year 10 English essay writing lesson]
B3: ****, just get the topic sentences for the four paragraphs from someone else.
(B3:fn5)

The notion of correct sequencing of structure was an overriding concern in students’ writing for Informant B3, as illustrated in the following data slice:

I like the scaffolds, they let us know how to structure things. They let the kids get the structure right ... the scaffold, write your notes into it and then write it out polished. The scaffold helps them put it in the right sequence.
(B3:fn44)
... you just tell them how to write it, how to lay it out and how it’s put together.
(B3:3)
The data indicated that teacher informants had a poor understanding of a Genre-based approach to writing or about the use of scaffolding using Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. The stages of the curriculum cycle were given only fleeting reference as 'modelling', which was interpreted as merely showing students a completed version of the Text Type. Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds were adopted in both schools as representing the only 'correct' form for each Genre and students who broke or blended the generic structures of Scaffolds were penalised. The data showed that Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and Genre-based approaches to writing were interpreted by informants, in the absence of detailed knowledge of the theories, as requiring prescriptive practices in the teaching of writing, both by teachers and students.

Summary

The data suggested that teacher informants had little knowledge of the major conceptualisations of literacy and language education to have influenced NSW policies in the past forty years. At best the data showed that some informants had a limited knowledge of some of the theories which underpin the major conceptualisations examined. Informants rarely made connections between theories and policies or between the elements common among the different conceptualisations. The data further suggested that, where teachers did hold understandings or opinions about the major conceptualisations of literacy and language learning they generally lacked a jargon, or professional language, with which to discuss their ideas. Such problems of knowledge, or theory deficit, led to situations where teacher informants implemented new policies in ways which were obviously not in keeping with the theories that informed them.

The concern for structure and form appeared to be the driving force behind most tasks aimed at literacy education. The use of grammar in isolated, fragmented tasks was popular, as was prescriptive, narrowly defined implementation of Text Type Scaffolds. It became increasingly obvious that such classroom strategies were not in keeping with the theoretical frameworks which informed both the pedagogies and the policy documents which called for their use.

It became apparent that teacher informants held poor understandings about the theories which underpinned both policies and practice. It, therefore, became imperative that I examined student teachers' understandings of conceptualisations of literacy and
language learning in order to better understand the role of theories and professional knowledge at the beginning of the ‘continuum’ of professional development.

**Theory Deficit and Teacher Preservice Education**

In keeping with the findings of major studies in recent years, notably *A Class Act* and *Quality Matters* (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Ramsey, 2000), most teacher informants were critical of the state of teacher preservice education, including their own. The data suggested that teachers had issues with the quality, length, content and relevance of teacher preservice education courses, particularly GDE programs. The evidence also indicated that experiences with, and perceptions of GDE programs, were major factors in alienating teachers from educational theories, research and universities. These alienations played a major role in alienating teachers from their own profession at both ends of the continuum of professional development.

**Teacher Perceptions of the GDE**

Without exception teacher informants were critical of the quality of the Graduate Diploma in Education (GDE), or what informants typically called the ‘dip. ed.’ (Diploma in Education) The data suggested that GDE programs may well have been the original source of informants’ disillusionment with educational theories. (See later section titled Teacher Perceptions of Educational Theories, p.600)

The general perception among teacher informants appeared to be that the GDE was inconsistent and failed to relate theories to the realities of schools. A particular concern appeared to be the perceived inadequacy of the GDE to prepare teachers for the initial years of teaching. The following data slices represented the various views taken by informants:

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12 There have been various forms of teacher preservice education courses available to teachers of English over the years. Most have consisted of one year postgraduate programs following attainment of Bachelor degrees in English Arts. In recent years variations, with options of one extra year of study leading to a Masters or double degree options have emerged. The most common course of entry to the profession during the study remained a single year of postgraduate study in education. All such programs were, for ease of reading, referred to as ‘GDE’ programs within this section of the thesis.
Q3. What do you think about the dip.ed?
A2b: Well, everyone knows, it's pretty ad-hoc, isn't it? I don't think many teachers have many doubts about that. It's a bit embarrassing really.

(A2b:2)

It [Dip.Ed.] was pretty woeful, it doesn't really prepare you to teach, not at all.

(B1:fn41)

In regards to methodology, based on similar stuff that, I think, classroom practices it was, and that was just totally irrelevant to teaching ... That was one subject, it went for six weeks or something. So, there was never any talk or mention of practical stuff.

(A6:3)

Oh, it [Dip. Ed.] was not very good, quite bad in fact. [pause] Terrible. My Masters was great but my Dip. Ed. was hopeless ... it just didn't make any sense, it was too brief, you just skimmed everything on the surface. It made you very sceptical about what they were saying. It wasn't until I went into depth in my Masters that I learnt much.

(B5:34)

with my Dip. Ed. course, I found a lot of my educational theory was useless on me. Because I didn't want that, I was very concerned with discipline, and controlling classes and would I be able to get through to the kids, and what I was going to be like as a teacher that a lot of that would be useless to me.

...And I didn't needed gifted and talented and I didn't need a great deal of theory or Piaget or Freud, which is what I did at college. I just didn't need that bit.

(A5:20 & 26)

Look my teacher education was useless. I mean, I had a good time, a great time, but I never learned how to teach.

I don't think you learn in college or Uni. I don't think I learned to teach for 8 years, yeah, 8 years of teaching, then you feel competent

(A4:fn5)

That's exactly why, when people come out to teach they say, what's the point in doing a dip. ed., it's totally useless, and everything I've learned, I've learned in the school.

(B4:59)

Informant A4 claimed that the perception of the GDE as 'worthless' was a major factor in the low status of teaching as a profession, especially when compared to other professions. (A4a:8) A4 made the following comments about the nature of professionalism and the quality of the GDE:

Well, the old classification was that it had to do with the training, the level of training that you had and if you went to university you learnt a volume of stuff, then you were in a profession, doctors, lawyers, dentists, all those professions. Teaching is a bit strange because people often, not always, come from a liberal arts education and then they do a diploma and anyone will tell you that diploma is worthless.

(A4a:8)

Informant B2 was the only teacher informant who had completed a four year degree specialising in Education. B2 commented that they felt, while there were irrelevant components to their Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (English/History), it seemed to
prepare student teachers more adequately than did GDE programs. B2 believed the main reason for this was that the four year degree contained practicums each year, giving students more time in schools. (B2:12) Most other informants also indicated that they thought the keys to improving teacher education lay in the provision of more practicum time in schools, supervised by teachers. For example:

Blocks okay, but you'd think they'd learn a hell of a lot more here than they're learning at university because they learn to survive in front of the class. It's a very hard thing to do if you are not aware of what is going to happen to you ...

Q18. So, you seem to think that initial training, the Dip. Ed., isn't as important as practice.
A3: Well, it should be, it should be a very important aspect, but it probably comes back to ... the best learning is in front of the class, because you often come out of a class and think to yourself, 'I'll never do that again'. Now that is the best lesson, because it happens to be practical. You could be told that 10 times by a lecturer, who you admire a lot, and it mightn't sink in. But if it happens to you, and you feel belittled by it, or you feel knocked over because you haven't prepared a lesson well enough and you finish it 10 minutes early and you've got a riot on your hands, well then you don't let that happen again.
As far as educational theory, teaching learning theory, it's good, but it has limited relevance to the real world of 8.4 period 5 Friday. Where the basic rule, there, is crowd control first, teaching second. It's crowd control at the start of the year, then you can teach, right through the year. If you don't do that, you won't teach.
What I am saying is probably far too basic for you. But it's what I believe in.
(A3: 9)

Teacher Perceptions of Lecturers

Lack of teacher involvement in teacher preservice education emerged as a major concern for most informants. Teachers were critical of the lecturers they had at university, particularly of the fact that few of them were practising teachers and could not relate theory to the classroom. Comments included:

The English methods lecturers I had, I'm sure they had never been in schools. Apart from a private school education themselves, I doubt if they had ever taught as far as I could see. They just seemed to be off the planet.
(A5:26)

Those lecturers, they hadn't been near a classroom in years, if ever, and we knew it, too. Everyone says the same thing.
(B1:fn41)

I don't think the people teaching teachers know how to teach. God, when was the last time they were in a classroom? My [teacher education] had nothing to do with discipline or kids that can't read or anything like that.
(A4:fn5)
the university people are, in my experience, do not actually know what is going on in schools. Having done this Masters in Education, and being in a school, it's quite clear that the people at the university do not know what goes on in schools.  
(B4:47)

Informant B4 seemed concerned that negative experiences with educational theories during GDE programs alienated teachers from ‘the ideas behind what they do’. (B4:12)
The following data slice illustrated this point:

you talk to a lot of people and they say, ‘Why do we do a Dip. Ed? It’s useless’. You know, a Dip. Ed.’s useless, it’s a waste of time, you don’t learn anything about teaching. And I always find it very difficult because what it demonstrates to me is that those people don’t have any appreciation of the ideas behind what they are doing.  
(B4:12)

Informant B4 stated that they had been disappointed by their involvement with the GDE as a part-time English Methods lecturer. B4 felt that to call the subject ‘English Methods’ was, itself, a ‘joke’, claiming the experience had helped them to understand why people were so dismissive of teacher qualifications. They also claimed that the inadequacies ensured that student teachers would be overloaded upon entering the system and would need to develop survival strategies merely to cope. The following data slice illustrates B4’s perceptions:

B4:  Well, you only get time to do a survey, an overview, you don’t get time to do anything in depth. [in the GDE]  
R:  And you also need to cover the syllabus and policy?  
B4:  Yep. See, I think it is a bit of a joke to call it methods because what I expected, was I expected more practical, work and experimentation in how to do things and most of it is just what you do, not how you do it.  
R:  How does that make you feel, as a professional, that that’s what people entering your profession  
B4:  Well, it makes me understand why people say, my dip. ed. was a waste of time, but what it also does is it then makes them learn to do what they have to do to survive in a classroom, so teaching becomes a coping venture, rather than a mastery thing, because they don’t have the mastery they need to take up full time teaching when they get here, they certainly haven’t had enough opportunity in their prac. The prac just a taste. And then they go out and get a job full time, forget it.  
(B4:59)

The data indicated that most informants believed that teacher education was beyond the control of the profession and that the situation impacted negatively on the quality of teacher preparation. There were also serious concerns amongst teachers regarding the quality of current teacher education programs.
Perceptions of Standards Within GDE Programs

Informant A1, Principal of School A, also had experience lecturing in Methods subjects in the GDE program at University A. A1 felt that a lack of quality control in the GDE resulted in poor teachers making it into the classroom and that this was detrimental for both the profession and for school students. According to A1 it was far easier to discourage a student at the entry level to the profession than later in their career:

A1: See, I don’t think we bite the bullet enough at the Dip. Ed. level. I not pleasantly, reluctantly, failed someone which meant they failed their dip. ed. when I was a lecturer. There was pressure put on me by that person to rethink his final mark, which I was instructed by the university to do. But then someone else said, no don’t do it, the , so I stuck with it. That went on for 6 or 7 months, challenges and appeals and all that, that person, I would think they would be better not teaching, from a schools sake and I think it would be better for them [but the student passed].
...

Informant A3, a Head Teacher, also had experience with the removal of an incompetent teacher from the school system. (In a different school to which A1 referred.) Informant A3 claimed that teachers were ill-equipped judge students on practicum, as is widely practised in GDE programs, or to act to remove those unsuitable for entry to teaching. (This may have been a moot point, given the evidence about actual standards within the GDE program.) A3 claimed that this meant that incompetent students entered the school system, merely to cause problems at a later point in their careers. The following is an excerpt from an interview with A3:

A3: ... I’ll start with the people because teaching is a real personality thing. We get some real good goers here, who are obviously going to be excellent teachers and they show that, because they’re keen to work hard, keen to prepare and they’re keen to the right thing in terms of going one step further than perhaps we do now, because we’ve been in the job so long. It’s nice to see the fresher views and their enthusiasm and encourage them.

The problem we have with young people coming through here, or even mature age people coming through here, who are at least at this stage of their lives, not suited to teaching. Our problem is telling them that we think they are not suited to teaching. Probably because of our humanitarian natures, it’s hard for us to tell people we think they aren’t suited to be a teacher.

I don’t believe in that, um, I have been involved in the how would I say it, the removal, the sacking of a teacher, after one year because he was just incompetent. And that was a really savage year in my life, having to continually support my views to the Principal [not A1] I was working with, that this bloke was incompetent. It was just terrible.

So that person should have been kicked out when he was doing his dip. ed. and told that he was unsatisfactory then, rather than getting him into a school with a full time teaching job and
having to go through a process over one year cause you can’t just sack people, of being declared unsatisfactory. Teachers with 20 or 30 years of experience, who I have worked with, one of whom is currently umm, being given the flick after I don’t know how many years, and just should never have been given a job.

(A3:4)

A3 pointed out that they thought the majority of GDE students were quite good, but that the ‘ten percent’ who weren’t and were allowed into the system presented a burden to the profession. Some of A3’s comments are contained in the following data slice:

Those students who want to be teachers and are in it for the right reasons, that are in it for the right reasons, are good teachers.

... Most of the students that I’ve come across, mature age and young ones, 90% are good, will make good teachers. Some of them, as in any field, I think are chosen unwisely. Because they’re not interested. They don’t want to do the work, they want to sit around, they want to make cups of coffee, and it’s not a sit around drink cups of coffee job, is it? Or if you have a cup of coffee, if you are into sitting down and relaxing, it just doesn’t happen. You do it on the go.

(A3:4-5)

Informant B6 was blunt about their perceptions of GDE students to have completed their practicums at School B. B6 was critical not just of student knowledge of education and teaching but of their organisation skills and their attitudes towards their practicums. Comments included:

The dip. ed. students they send us are just hopeless. I’d love to get in there to teach a course on learning styles and show them how to teach. It’s amazing just how badly prepared these kids are. They come here and don’t know how to organise themselves, we had one this time, he hit a student. Luckily it was my son, but he shouldn’t have hit him at all ... they should do more on how to organise classes and prepare themselves.

(B6:fn1)

While Informant B4 pointed out some GDE students were very competent, they also saw problems with the attitudes and work ethic of others. The following data slice illustrates B4’s concerns:

B4: Naive, I find they are incredibly naive. The older ones are better, it’s interesting to see how basically idealistic and smug they were before they did their major prac. and how many of them were not as cheery and smiley after they did their major prac. Although, I must say some were better, some were better and they are probably the ones who will be good teachers, because they really like kids. I think too many of them are doing it because they see it as an easy option. I think, I don’t know. I can see that what will happen, well, it’s a mix, like any other time, I don’t know what else to say.

R: What do you think of the course?
B4: I don’t know enough about the course.

R: Well, what do you think about what you did with them?
B4: I think you're expected to do too much in too little time. I think it should be double, like there are other courses you have to do a double method, I think you should do a double method for English. I don't think there is nearly enough time. Because I don't see where they get to learn enough about classroom teaching strategies. What they learn is what they, they learn about the syllabuses, they learn about general things, I think they need a whole course in teaching strategies.

R: What do you mean by teaching strategies?

B4: Well, like, um, like, oh, let me think, okay, senior literature, let's forget about whether literature is important or not. Let's talk about junior literature and senior literature, you know, how much time do they get to learn about what you do in the classroom with text, how you do it, the strategies you can do it with. They are going to learn all this on the job. Discipline. Classroom management strategies, you could do a whole year on classroom management strategies. You only get to talk about the idea of it, you don't get time to practice things, to work on things.

A3 found it difficult to articulate what qualities and knowledge they thought a good graduate should have but claimed that it would be obvious to a teacher who saw them in a school. Once again, the links between practice and theory were blurred for a teacher informant who failed to see that theoretical frameworks might assist in developing and articulating just what was meant by good practice. Some of Informant A3's comments included:

A3: Love of kids. Love of seeing other people learn. Keenness to do a little bit more than just prepare a basic lesson, lateral thinking, ability to work hard and the desire to be a teacher, plus that natural ability to get on with kids and be able to teach, pretty hard to put your finger on it, I think. But usually within, it's like standing at the door of the first class of any year, you can usually pick who the trouble makers are going to be, just when they first come to your lesson. I think it's fairly much an innate sort of thing, when you walk past someone's class you know whether the noise is productive or non-work. So I suppose, I find it very hard to pick, well, they're preparing, their follow up is excellent, the kids respect them, they're doing the right thing.

I showed work samples to a group of informants at School B and asked them what they thought of the fact that students apparently could not fail the GDE course. All informants stated dismay that such work was accepted and that students could not fail based on the quality of their work. Comments included:

B5: That's disgusting, see they think teachers don't need to know anything.

B3: No wonder we cop so much flak from other jobs.

B1: The they let them out on us and we have to cope with them.

B4: Look, this is why I don't want to have anything to do with them. They're just undermining the profession. How are we supposed to be professional if they're letting students like that in?

B1: Well, the dip. ed. isn't worth anything, is it?

(B:fn2)
Informants expressed concern that any low standards in the GDE inevitably must translate into low standards within schools. (B:fn2)

Theory Deficit and the GDE Program

A check of all subject outlines for the GDE program revealed that no subject addressed the conceptualisations of language and literacy as outlined in the Review of Literature. Given that this had far ranging implications for the implementation of both policy and practice it was decided to briefly investigate student teacher knowledge bases. The inquiries made were not intended to test student teachers, but to gain insights into the nature of their teacher preservice education regarding language and literacy in the teaching of English.

Policies as Theories

Informant L1, Director of the GDE at University A, stated that any language and literacy content relevant to the teaching of English was meant to be covered in the subject known as English Methods. (L1:12) However, as discussed earlier Methods Lecturers reported that they were expected to focus on the policies of the DET in course content.

Student informants supported the perceptions of Methods Lecturers and reported that English Methods consisted mainly of an examination of BOS syllabus and DET policy documents, including the content stipulated by the DET for accrediting teacher education courses. Informants’ responses included the following:

Q87. Have you looked at defining, or trying to understand what literacy is?
S2: No. What we did in English method was just cover the syllabus and just the aims and objectives, the policies.
(S2:20)

It’s so disorganised. We did so much crap. P.E. & Health, bullying, curriculum, I mean it’s useful somewhere but pisses me off to spend so much time on it and not do the stuff we need.
(S4b:1)
Informants indicated that the focus on policies and syllabus surprised them, especially once they had experienced the demands of classroom teaching on their practicum. S1 claimed:

Q23. By policies you mean the syllabus.
S1: Yeah, syllabus and she [Methods Lecturer] goes over the syllabus and all this sort of stuff. I really like her, but in terms of the every day, maybe she can’t prepare us for it, maybe we have to work it out ourselves, as we go along. But in terms of the everyday stuff, about how to cope with designing, because I found on prac. I had in a lettergram I had about 4 different levels I had to pitch it at for 4 or more different reading levels. Do you know what I mean? And you don’t get, they don’t go over the stuff like that, how do you adapt it, how do you do this?
(S1:7)

Observation of Methods classes and a check of the GDE English Methods course booklet revealed that the course did, in fact, focus on DET policies and BOS syllabus requirements. (L: Archive f3) The booklet had been used for successive GDE programs over a period of eight years, from 1991 to 1999 and contained material for lectures and tutorials in the English Methods course over the duration of the GDE.

It contained a rationale, outcomes and an outline of the course over the first 5 pages. The 118 pages which followed were comprised entirely of copies of DET policy and BOS syllabus documents to be used for each session of the program. The copies tallied with each topic listed in the course program. The course appeared to be based entirely on the policies of the DET and BOS. (L: Archive f3)

Checks with course outlines and websites for other universities showed that English methods subjects in other universities were also predominantly focused on DET and BOS policies and syllabus documents. (L: Archive F7) One example was the University of Sydney, the oldest and largest university in Australia. The entire duration of the Methods subject was programmed to study sections of one text book and various junior school syllabus and policy documents during each week of the course. An extract from the subject outline of the English Methods program for session one is reproduced in Table 5.4:
Table 5.4: Readings for methods program at Sydney University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Focus</th>
<th>Readings (Re-Viewing English) &amp; Syllabus Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction Ch.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>History of English in Australia</td>
<td>Ch. 2&amp;3 Syllabus Rationale, Aims, Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Ch 17, 18, 19, 20 Writing Section of Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Ch 11, 12, 13, 14 Reading Section of Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Reading 发音与听力, Speaking and</td>
<td>Ch 15, 16, 21, 25 Applications Talking and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Listening Section of Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yr 2 input</td>
<td>Ch 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Ch 14, 23, 24 Media Section of Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Ch 15, 16 Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literature section of syllabus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Taken from course outline L:ArchiveF7)

Table 5.4 presents only the program for Semester 1. Semester 2 was similar, but based on the HSC syllabus. (L: Archives F7) Further archival data suggested that the English Methods program at the University of Sydney revolved around DET and BOS policies, rather than a professional knowledge base, as illustrated by the following extract from the Masters of Teaching program:

*Weekly Session Information English Curriculum Methodology.*

*This schedule is a guide to the focus of each session.*

* Through knowledge of the syllabus documents (7-10 and 11-12) is a central goal of the entire course ... (L: Archives F7)

This sample is not presented in order to be critical of the work of the University of Sydney, rather to highlight the difficulties placed on teacher education by time factors and accreditation constraints. Data showed that valuable time was spent in very limited teacher education programs learning the policies of the major, but not only, employer. The bind, of course, was that if universities did not address the demands of the DET criteria, their graduates would not be able to seek employment in government schools.
It is possible to argue that graduates must understand syllabus documents in order to teach effectively. The approaches adopted by the GDE programs, however, appeared to centre on the policies themselves, rather than on the theories which underpinned the policies. Even if students gained an understanding of aspects of the theory base of the policy documents, which is highly unlikely given the time frame for study, their understandings would be from the viewpoint of the policy documents themselves, rather than being informed by a professional knowledge-base.

If teachers are to meet the criteria of a profession they needed access to the complex knowledge bases which underpin policies. Policies vary from school to school, from district to district and from state to state. GDE programs in NSW appeared to be preparing teachers who would only be familiar with the policies of that state at a particular point in time. Given the frequency of policy change in NSW in recent years it would be highly unlikely that any such preparation could empower professionals for a 'lifelong continuum of learning'. (Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995)

There is also a point to be made that, as the employer, it would appear to be the responsibility of the DET to train its own employees in policy matters after they are appointed. As discussed in the previous sections, political control of DET, BOS and universities means that in the final analysis, government controls both teacher educators and the employing body. The control of education, in the simplest of terms, was a closed shop. Such an analysis, of course, was somewhat simplistic. There were bound to be other forces at work in the control of education, however, it appeared that teachers did not control the knowledge base or the regulation of their own profession. If so, then it would be difficult to argue that they were client-oriented, given the degree to which policies appeared to influence teachers' daily work. If teachers, and even new teacher graduates, did not understand the theories behind policies it would be difficult to argue that they could make decisions in the classroom most beneficial to their students.

Despite criticism of the amount of policy studied in the course, students also appeared to value knowledge of the syllabus. Students, understandably, perceived such knowledge as an aid to their first years of teaching. In a similar manner to teacher informants a number of students indicated that the syllabus was the main influence on their classroom teaching. Examples of responses included:

Q77. So, you think the syllabus is your main guide, for that kind of stuff?
S4a: Oh, yeah. The bible.
Q78. Yeah? Why do you say that?
Chapter 5: Analysis

S4a: It justifies everything you do. Justifies everything.
Q79. And you think that would be your main influence on what you do in the classroom?
S4a: It would be goal. It would be my main influence. What I aim for.
(S4a:18)

Q: What influences your teaching most?
S10: The syllabus I guess.
S11: Yeah, mainly the HSC.
Q: Why is that?
S10: Well, it has to, you've got to do it in schools, that's what counts.
S11: Yeah, on prac you forget about lectures and stuff. Straight into the syllabus. It rules.
(S10:fn1)

Student Perceptions Of The GDE

Student teachers also appeared to hold the GDE in low regard. Most expressed disappointment with course content, claiming they felt it was not related to classroom teaching. In a similar manner to teacher informants they failed to see many connections between educational theories studied and classroom practice. Comments included:

I just don’t feel like I’ve learned anything. I don’t know what I am supposed to come away with.
(S2:10)

Look, if you had to do the dip. ed. you’d be angry, too...
(S6:4)

Q.18: What are the strengths of the Dip. Ed. for English teachers?
Umm, none?
(S8:fn5)

S3: My idealism needed to be moulded a little more. My weakness is that I find it hard to create a presence. The Dip Ed didn't do that. I just felt thrown in ... If at uni. they had given me some decent procedures ...
...I didn't get the good practical advice I needed to cope in the classroom.

Q: What kind of theory base have you gained from the Dip Ed?
S3: There is a gap, an ocean, between what's being taught and what's going on in classrooms" (S3:1)

Student informant S4 claimed that the focus on DET policies detracted from the GDE program, making the following comment in conclusion:

If someone came to me and asked if I would recommend the Dip Ed, I couldn’t do it. The lecturers, they claim they have high standards, but it didn’t, it wasn’t what they said.
(S4b:1)

Most informants claimed that the short nature and high workload of the GDE prevented them from engaging with the course content to their satisfaction. Indeed, it was obvious
that most of the GDE students felt pressured and stressed by the busy nature of their course. Students repeatedly stated that, although they believed the work in the GDE was not of a demanding nature, the amount of work placed a great deal of pressure on them. Comments included:

"The workload in the dip ed also stops you from getting into the theory. Enormous workload, practically 20 hours a day"
(S3:2)

"I felt the Dip. Ed. didn’t mean a lot of learning. Absolutely. Umm, I feel dealing with the stressfulness of what we were going through, I mean I wasn’t prepared for that. Dealing with stress is what counts. [in the GDE] You know and I would love to have been taught in the Dip. Ed. You know, drawing on a blackboard, writing on a blackboard, just those little things.
(S4a:21)

Some students reported that they valued the efforts of the Methods lecturers above other subjects. For example:

"The methods have been good, I’ve enjoyed the methods assignments, where your forced to design things, how you would teach the kids"
(S5:19)

Some dissented and, while appearing reluctant to criticise the practising teachers who worked as Methods Lecturers, were critical of the subject. The following data slice illustrates the point:

S1: Dip. Ed? Arrggh. Okay, I’ll be honest, I think ** is a lovely woman, I really like **, I think ** does a lot of work for us and is really good, and I think she goes over a lot of stuff, but in terms of the practical stuff, I didn’t get much from her English methods ... Maybe that is just a different style but there are many people who have said that. I don’t know if you have got any feedback from that, but, she is very airy-fairy. She’s very sort of up in the air and she just goes over all the policies ...

Q23. By policies you mean the syllabus.
S1: Yeah, syllabus and she goes over the syllabus and all this sort of stuff. I really like her, but in terms of the every day, maybe she can’t prepare us for it, maybe we have to work it out ourselves, as we go along. But in terms of the everyday stuff, about how to cope with designing, because I found on prac. I had in a lettergram I had about 4 different levels I had to pitch it at for 4 or more different reading levels. Do you know what I mean? And you don’t get, they don’t go over the stuff like that, how do you adapt it, how do you do this?
(S1:7)

Students reported that they felt they had not received a sufficient grounding education based subject, such as psychology or theories of learning. Some blamed this on lecturers’ teaching abilities, while others felt the GDE was an impossible task, given the time constraints. For example:
Q30. So, have you got a grounding in things like, schema theory, or cognition?
S1: I haven’t got a fair grounding, at all, it’s just the basics, it’s just sketched in a bit. I mean, how can you get I mean I think, I don’t know, my theory about the dip. ed. is that it’s a good starting point, it gives you the basics, it sketches in a lot of theories for you. It provides, the most valuable thing is the prac. I’m sure people have said this... I don’t think that a dip. ed. will ever give you as much as people hope. I don’t know, I mean what can you do in a year?
(S1:10)

Informant S5 pointed out that, while they had been looking forward to studying education, they were ‘disappointed’ by how shallow the course had been. S5 stated:

S5: Um. I’ve been a bit disappointed in the Dip. Ed. because how children learn is something that has always interested me, I think I started reading books on how children learn when I first fell pregnant. And have read a lot of philosophy of education and how children do learn over the years and when I came here I found a lot of the times that we were meant to be able to discuss theories on how children learn and how to create educational environments perhaps the classes were too big, I don’t really know the reason but, the discussions were very shallow in the curriculum classes, particularly, where we were meant to have the opportunity to discuss those things. And there was perhaps so much to discuss and there are so many different interest groups that it is, perhaps difficult to discuss principles.
(S5:8)

Informant S5 claimed that the size of the cohort may have thwarted discussion on the implications of educational theories:

the level of discussion of theory and the implications of theory and things that people were just talking about, um are not discussed, so that again I think it’s the size ...
(S5:19)

Most students indicated that their practicum was the most valuable component of the GDE. For example:

Umm, I feel that I my methods will be useful but it wasn’t until I did my prac. that I realised what English was
(S4a:8)

The prac, the prac was the best part. You learned more in a week on prac than in the whole dip. ed.
(S1:fn2)

My prac. was tough but it forced you to learn. We should have spent more time in schools. The rest was just a waste.
(S9: fn1)

The GDE Program Director confirmed that GDE students were often critical of the theory components of the GDE but valued Methods and the practicum as being more based in the ‘real world of schools’. (L1:11) Informant L1 stated:
what students believe is most important is what [Methods] does with them, what they do in
schools. They don’t think what we [university lecturers] do is terribly important. We try to
convince them that these sort of things are important to career development and professional
development. And sometimes you hear people say, ‘Yeah, we recognise your point’, sometimes
you hear people say, ‘Well, I didn’t agree at the time, but now that I’ve been out in schools for a
few years I realise that I think about these things and they are important’.
(L1:11)

Informant L1 claimed that the low regard for educational theories prevalent in the GDE
was also widespread in schools, as illustrated in the following exchange:

R: As I’ve been interviewing teachers, I’ve been interested by something. I’ve certainly picked
up a certain thread running through the profession towards educational theory. Have you picked up
on anything?
L1: Sure, yeah. It’s universal. They think it’s worthless.
(L1:12)

Students did not seem to make conscious connections between the educational theory
studied in their GDE and their experiences in the classroom whilst on practicum. The
following data slice was typical of informant views:

Q31. Do you think your dip. ed. has given you a good base to go out and teach?
S2: No. Not at all. I feel that anything I have learnt has been on prac. Curriculum, I did that for
a whole year, I still don’t know what that is about. I think it was just politicised. Just getting on the
political bandwagon. Anything that I learnt in the dip. ed. or thought that I learnt, when I got into
the classroom it was different. Totally different.
Q32. What kind of things?
S2: Actually, classroom management is something that sticks out for me. Especially at the
beginning, it was like, don’t go near the kids, stand out the front, assert yourself, that’s where you
stand, in front of the classroom, all the time, don’t go near the kids, it was like, don’t race around,
you’re the teacher, you’re the student, keep it that way. I was really shocked.

When I got into the classroom I had to walk around the classroom to keep them on task. I
don’t think you can keep students on task by standing in front of the room and just yelling at them.
Q33. Nobody explained that to you in the Dip. Ed?
S2: That’s what was promoted at the beginning. It was a shocker.
Q34. That you stand in front of the class?
S2: Yes.
Q35. Really.
S2: Yes. Absolutely.
(S2:9)

Informant S9 articulated views prevalent amongst GDE students when they claimed that
they would have preferred more practical help with classroom teaching in their course.
S9’s claim that the GDE was ‘too theoretical’ was indicative of the way few student
informants were able to make connections between educational theories and practice.

The following data slice illustrated those points:

The problem with the Dip. Ed. is that it is too theoretical. The Dip. Ed. should be more practical. We need to spend more time in schools teaching English. I learnt more in one day while on prac. than I have at uni. where I have now spent 9 months doing the Dip. Ed. The structure of the dip. ed. is bad.

Also, the lecturers don’t know what is going on in the classroom. They’re behind the times and don’t know what they are talking about, which is really frustrating. Teachers, I believe should run the Dip. Ed. Also, the lecturers tell us not to overload our students with assessment, however, they don’t practise what they preach. They have over assessed us purely for the sake of assessment. As a result, I feel really burnt out.

(S9:7)

The that the Dip. Ed. at [University A] is seen as the best in NSW really astonishes me. My experience of this course is that I find it highly unorganised, lecturers don’t communicate with one another about assessment dates, subject matter is boring and dry. Lecturers don’t inject enthusiasm into the lectures, no conclusions are drawn. (we just go around in circles all the time, particularly in curriculum) The Dip. Ed. is geared towards Primary Methods students, which I’m sick and tired of.

...Emphasis should be placed on more prac. teaching and not talking about theories and airy fairy stuff that doesn’t help anyone.

I certainly wouldn’t recommend the Dip. Ed. to anyone until the course has been restructured. The Dip. Ed. has been a waste of time. I have learnt many things while on prac. and I have learned nothing at uni.

(S9:9)

Informants S1, S2, S4, S9, S10 and S11 all made assertions that they felt the course content of the GDE favoured primary teaching programs at the expense of secondary teacher programs. (S1:5; S2:11; S4a:8&29; S9:fn4)

Student Problems Articulating Theories

I interviewed a number of GDE students during the final week of their GDE program. Despite having completed a postgraduate qualification in Education, students generally found it difficult to speak about their favoured approaches to teaching. They often seemed confused and had difficulty engaging in the jargon of teaching. In the following data slice Informant S4 linked such problems to lack of experience and the need to conform to the GDE program:

Q93. Is there any theoretical orientation that you think guides your teaching? [pause]
Any underlying philosophy, that you think relates to any educational theories you’ve learned?
S4a: What, do you mean?
Q94. Say, is there a model of how kids learn that you think has helped you understand how to teach more effectively?
S4a: Umm, yeah, I think something from psychology, that was very useful. And also ... (voice trails off)

Q95. And you think they have influenced your personal philosophy?
S4a: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Q96. Can you identify any?
S4a: What do you mean?

Q97. Well, like, some teachers feel that Process Writing or Whole Language or Systemics might be their favoured approach.
S4a: I can't really answer that, I don't know what those things are, but maybe they do, I can't say.

Q98. So, you haven't ever sat there, in lectures or tutes, and gone, that's it, that really is important. That's what I need to do or know?
S4a: I haven't been out there long enough to make decisions about that kind of stuff.

Q99. Just from your own understanding of it.
S4a: The problem is, from my prac, from my own personal experience, I felt obliged to follow my supervising teacher's model, which I didn't necessarily agree with. Unfortunately I was going through my prac as a student, you know, they mark us on it, therefore I've got to do everything my supervisor says, even if I don't want to do it.

Q100. So, you didn't feel you could form your own theories or practices?
S4a: No. It's something I found really frustrating about it.

While Informant S9 was critical of the GDE program, they also felt that they lacked sufficient experience to comment on the 'relevance of educational theories in the teaching of English'. (S9:3) The short length of the GDE program also appeared to be a concern for a number of informants. The data suggested that such concerns may have been well founded. During an interview Informant S1 stated:

Q29. I'm trying to paint a mental picture. Have you dealt with cognition?
S1: We have, in Psychology, with _____, that was yesterday.
(S1:9)

Upon checking the course outline I discovered that the GDE had, in fact, been given a one hour lecture on cognition the day before. Due to the length of the course students received just a one hour lecture on cognition before moving onto the next topic in their psychology subject. In contrast, students undertaking degrees in education at the same university must complete a minimum of two entire subjects dealing with aspects of cognition. (L:Archivef3 Course Outlines) While this was not surprising, given the short duration of the GDE, it illustrated the brevity with which GDE programs, or their
equivalents, treated the theory bases essential to developing informed educational practice.

**Student Perceptions of English as Literature**

Like most of the teacher informants, the data indicated a preference amongst student informants for a literary approach to teaching English, rather than one based on literacy and language learning theories. (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11:

*Methodsfns:2-5*) Comments recorded at a meeting of informants included the following data slice:

Q: What do you think is your main focus in teaching English?
S9: Literature, has to be.
S7: HSC, yeah, but I guess that’s literature, too.
S5: Yes, of course.
S3: Yeah, you learn everything else through it.

Q: What about language and literacy skills?
[students quite angry]
S10: Everything’s literacy now, it’s so political.
S3: What a load of crap. If you take care of reading everything else comes together.
S5: Yeah, as long as the kids read good books they learn literacy anyway.

Q: It sounds like you don’t like the new focus on language and literacy?
S9: We want to be English teachers, not ESL [English as a Second Language] teachers.
(S:fnal-2)

Students appeared to link literacy with political control of policies and perceived the new policies as threatening the traditional role of the English teacher. As with teacher informants, the data showed that student teacher informants generally equated literature with deeper understandings, while literacy was viewed as being skills based. Literacy appeared, in the minds of informants to centre around mastery of skills and conventions alone. The following excerpts exemplify such views:

S3: My philosophy about English is in literature, making bridges for kids from one point to another level, another concept. Literature at different levels is what I want, not just literacy skills.
(S3:2-3)

Q93. Do you think your aims in literacy are different to your aims with literature?
S2: Um. Okay. If I was teaching a book, I’d want them to be able to read the book competently, to be able to understand what is going on, not just what’s happened in the event, but what is behind the scene, what is behind the metaphors, I want them, its just like eating an apple, you’ve
got the skin, but you want to find out what's underneath. And that is how I teach literature, what is the underlying meaning and why is the author trying to do it in the way he is?

Q94. Great, and what are your aims with literacy?
S2: Going by what's going on, it's to read and write and that is it.

Q95. Do you think there is more to it than that?
S2: My aims, of course, would look at reading and writing of course, but developing those skills, developing speaking skills, listening skills, incorporating them into the classroom and I think I use those four language skills constantly in the classroom. So there is not just one focus on one skill.

Q96. So, literacy is about the skills and literature is about understanding the broader issues?
S2: Yes. Definitely.
(S2:21)

Informant S3 was adamant that a focus on literacy ruined the enjoyment of literature:

Q. How do you feel literacy and literature compare?
S3: There is a sameness about them. Literature also has enjoyment, literacy doesn't.
(S3:3)

The perception that literacy and language theory was 'gobblygook' and 'airy fairy' seemed to be widespread in the GDE program. (S7:2; S8:2) Students were vocal in their dislike for four lectures given as a trial for introducing a component of language theory to the GDE. (See the section dealing with student knowledge of a Functional View of Language.) Informant L2, an English Methods lecturer, stated during a discussion session with students that:

Literacy and literature are completely different things.
(L2:fn7)

I pointed out that I thought literacy and the study of literature were about the same kinds of things, such as: reflection; issues; deeper thought, critical analysis, meaning and that neither was just about 'reading and writing'. On considering my position L2 agreed but stated:

but for most purposes, literacy was interpreted in the dip. ed. course as being able to read and write, using grammar and linguistic analysis.
(L2:fn7)

This assertion was surprising, given that the GDE program contained no focus on specialised knowledge of the teaching of 'reading, writing, using grammar [or] linguistic analysis'. It appeared from the evidence that informants considered the
teaching of language and literacy as a second priority and separate entity to the teaching of English as literature.

*Lecturers Perceptions of the GDE*

The data showed that Lecturers also generally perceived the GDE program to be inadequate to the task of educating teachers. Informant L4, a lecturer with a particular interest in the Whole Language / phonics debate, claimed that, as theories evolved in the 1970s and 1980s, teacher education failed to keep pace. L4 claimed the new theories were taught to GDE students, in an attempt to keep pace with evolving theories, but the background contexts, the theories which came before, were ignored. According to L4 this led to a situation where students thought the teaching of ‘specifics’ was no longer important. The following is a segment from an interview with L4:

L4: I think in the 70s and 80s when all of the, trying to get decent books into schools came into focus and using a more literature based program, came into being, teachers like ___ , who had actually done their teacher training before that, brought all that with them, they brought all their stuff.

Obviously you had to do word analysis, word families and groupings, and looking at actual words, you do all that as well, but that wasn’t the focus, so some of the teachers like ___ , brought all that with them, but it was never emphasised enough when they were teaching new teachers how to teach, so there’s this whole generation, and ___ admits now, it was not emphasised enough. People assumed, oh, yes you do all that stuff as well, but that didn’t happen.

(L4:2)

L4 claimed that the GDE was particularly poor in the area of language and literacy development. L4 claimed that GDE students in their subject rarely included any specific strategies to assist students learn to read in their lesson plans. L4 offered the following example:

When I was marking the Dip. Ed. and the undergraduates assignments, they have to do a series of literacy based lessons, they have to plan them and show how they would include strategies for kids with severe literacy problems.

So many of them did silly things, like a shared booklet, so you have your big book and you go through it. Now the number of times that I saw, as the only strategy, you look at the cover, you look at the picture. And you predict from the picture what the story will be about. And then you turn over and they all look at the picture. What do you think in going to happen next, what’s happening in the picture?

Now it seems to me really strange that no-one ever says, “And then we look at the words” You read the words, you’re meant to be reading the words, but the focus is always on the picture, the picture, the picture. Predicting, predicting.

(L4:5)
Lecturer informant L3 stated that it was widely accepted amongst the language staff in the Faculty that the GDE was inadequate at meeting the needs of students regarding language and literacy learning theories. (L3:fn1) L3 claimed that the design of the GDE program was controlled by politics and factions within the Faculty of Education lecturing staff. According to L3:

Yes, well, when they merged/split PE and Health into PE/Health they doubled the number of hours in the course. Ludicrous really.

... We've always known the Dip. Ed. is a terrible course. It's quite political here, really. But they don't graduate with any literacy or language really.

(L3:fn1)

L3’s account of the doubling of PE/Health hours in the GDE may have explained why the number of hours engaged in PE/Health studies outweighed all subjects other than English Methods. (L1:21)

Informant L5, the Language Coordinator for the Faculty of Education stated that there was no content about any of the major conceptualisations of language or literacy learning theories included in GDE course content. L5 had a low opinion generally of GDE students and was critical of their teaching abilities regarding literacy. Informant L5 described attempts to introduce a small amount of language theory content in 1997 as a ‘disaster’. (L5:fn1) The following data slice illustrated L5’s perceptions:

The Dip. Eds. are difficult to teach anything. They come from the B.A. and think they know it all and you've got to try to teach them baby stuff. They just want to get into classrooms but don't know anything [about teaching] but they think they do.

Q: Do they learn about Whole Language, or process or even SFL in their teacher education?
L5: No, how can they? They come from the B.A. in literature, it's just literature, how can they know any of it? They have no approaches to use and it shows in the classroom.

Q: You think most graduate without learning any literacy or language development theory?
A: Yes. Exactly. The majority don't know any of the theory. We need to look at changing the Dip. Ed.

The Dip. Ed. is a big problem, it always has been. Very inadequate, leaves a lot to be desired. This year was a disaster [introducing literacy content] They only got [4] hours and it was a real disaster.

(L5:fn1)

Teacher informant B4, a part-time lecturer in the GDE, also had a poor impression of GDE students, claiming that too many of the students appeared to be undertaking the course because they saw it as an ‘easy option’. (B4:58) B4’s comments included the following:
Naive, I find they are incredibly naive. The older ones are better, it’s interesting to see how basically idealistic and smug they were before they did their major prac. and how many of them were not as cheery and smiley after they did their major prac. Although, I must say some were better, some were better and they are probably the ones who will be good teachers, because they really like kids. I think too many of them are doing it because they see it as an easy option. (B4:58)

Informant L7, a senior teacher and Methods Lecturer, acknowledged that GDE students often appeared to have a low opinion of educational theories and particularly of language theories. L7 thought that the light treatment of theories caused by the nature of the GDE program contributed to students’ animosity towards educational theories. Informant L7 claimed:

The theory the dip. eders. do seems to be so little, they just glance over various theories very lightly, so really what it does, perhaps, frustrates them, that there is this body of knowledge that they are not given access to, it is only paid lip service, so therefore they seem to think it must be bullshit. (L7:fn1)

Informant B4 also claimed that the nature of the GDE program, particularly regarding literacy and language education, caused disillusionment amongst both students and teachers. B4 stated that they considered it ‘a joke’ to call the subject they lectured ‘English Methods’. B4 made the following comments in response to a question regarding the content of the GDE English Methods subject:

B4: That’s exactly why, when people come out to teach they say, what’s the point in doing a dip. ed., it’s totally useless, and everything I’ve learned, I’ve learned in the school.

Q: The attitude of the university was that if they needed specialist literacy and language theory, they would get it in the methods course,

B4: Well, you only get time to do a survey, an overview, you don’t get time to do anything in depth.

Q: And you also need to cover the syllabus and policy?

B4: Yep. See, I think it is a bit of a joke to call it methods because what I expected, was I expected more practical, work and experimentation in how to do things and most of it is just what you do, not how you do it.

Q: How does that make you feel, as a professional, that that’s what people entering your profession

B4: Well, it makes me understand why people say, my dip. ed. was a waste of time, but what it also does is it then makes them learn to do what they have to do to survive in a classroom, so teaching becomes a coping venture, rather than a mastery thing, because they don’t have the mastery they need to take up full time teaching when they get here, they certainly haven’t had enough opportunity in their prac. The pracs just a taste. And then they go out and get a job full time, forget it. (B4:59)
Informant L5 claimed that lecturing staff have traditionally been reluctant to become involved in the GDE program at University A and that it had been perceived as a ‘problem’ for some years. (L5:27) L5 also stated:

But, this is the problem, that nobody has a commitment to the Dip. Ed. as such, we’re all teaching in other programs, every so often we are dragged reluctantly into doing something in the dip ed. (L5:27)

L5 claimed that workload, time constraints and lack of resources prevented language staff from taking a more active role in the GDE program. It is notable that L5 considered it ‘horrendous’ that GDE students were graduating without adequate grounding in language and literacy learning theories. Some of L5 comments are included in the following data slice:

L5: Well, I guess until the last couple of years or so, we just thought that it was such a monolith we couldn’t break into it anyhow, to force it in, obviously you can’t fit it in one year, it’s too hard in one year, you know, they do all these other things, and if we jump up and down about it, then we have to do something about it. Not only in terms of, I mean we never articulated it, but I’m sure what we had in the back of our minds was first of all we would have had to do all of the lobbying, develop the program and subjects and then teach it. And nobody has the time to do that, mentally you have to put down the shutters at some point. And if you’re involved in the graduate program and the undergraduate program, to take on another program, I couldn’t do it. So, whenever the issue of the Dip. Ed. comes up, I say right, we’ll do what we can but we just can’t fit anything on.

I don’t know if that’s how other people feel, but to me it’s just that, if you could feel that there was really something that you could do, then you might, but it’s just grafted on like it has been for the last couple of years ...

R: Does it make sense to you, that if people are graduating without the basis in theories that drive policies, that that would lead to all kinds of problems.
L5: I think it’s horrendous. Yes. Yes.
(L5:28-9)

During the course of the research project the Faculty introduced a trial giving four hours of lectures on language theory in the GDE program. L5 described the introduction as a ‘disaster’. (L5:fn1) Informant L5 claimed that they did not ‘want to know about’ the GDE program and passed it onto a junior academic. L5 stated:

L5: Well, L6 came in and I just handed it to her. I mean, I was the senior academic, I guess, but I just said, here’s your avocation, I don’t want to know about it, quite frankly and then ____ sort of took over last year.
(L5:27)

Informant L6 was the lecturer for the trial content and described the course thus:
I only did some intro stuff. Some ‘what is language’. Really basic. They don’t know what
language is. English teachers don’t know anything about language.
(L6:3)

L6 also had a low opinion about the GDE program, claiming that the resourcing of the
course was inadequate, stating:

I’ve never thought the Dip. Ed. was adequate. It’s a woeful way to prepare teachers. It’s a resource
thing. The uni doesn’t get the resources to do it properly.
(L6:3)

Most notably L6 felt that the GDE did not compare favourably to other postgraduate
programs they had lectured in and was critical of the standard of the course and
students’ work. The following data slices illustrate some of the points made by L6:

It was not a pleasant experience.
I only found out halfway through it that it was a new course.
... They had no idea. I expected them to be at a level you expect postgrads to be at. That
was my mistake, I treated them as post-grads. They couldn’t cope. The work was too much for
them. I was amazed at what they didn’t know.
... These were postgrads, I expected a higher standard.
I only gave them observation tasks, I don’t even know if they did it.
... Half of them were hardly ever there. I don’t know who was who, I don’t know who the
English students were.
... I don’t know if I want to get into this with you. It wasn’t great. It depends on what you
want to know. They didn’t do much.

Q: Are you doing it next year?
A: I hope not, it’s dreadful. I don’t know.
(L6:2-3)

Informant B4 claimed that the English Methods component was also inadequate, not
only in regards to literacy and language but also in relation to the study of English
literature and the use of educational strategies in the classroom. B4’s comments
included:

R: Well, what do you think about what you did with them?
B4: I think you’re expected to do too much in too little time. I think it should be double, like
there are other courses you have to do a double method, I think you should do a double method for
English, I don’t think there is nearly enough time. Because I don’t see where they get to learn
enough about classroom teaching strategies. What they learn is what they, they learn about the
syllabuses, they learn about general things, I think they need a whole course in teaching strategies.

R: What do you mean by teaching strategies?
B4: Well, like, um, like, oh, let me think, okay, senior literature, let’s forget about whether
literature is important or not. Let’s talk about junior literature and senior literature, you know, how
much time do they get to learn about what you do in the classroom with text, how you do it, the
strategies you can do it with. They are going to learn all this on the job. Discipline. Classroom
management strategies, you could do a whole year on classroom management strategies. You only get to talk about the idea of it, you don’t get time to practice things, to work on things, (B4:58)

Student Teacher Knowledge about Conceptualisations of Literacy Learning

Student Knowledge About Process Writing

The data showed that no student teacher informant had detailed knowledge of Process-based approaches to literacy education. (S:fn3-7) The following data slice was typical of student responses to questions regarding Process Writing:

Q: Have you been taught about Process Writing?
S4a: What do you mean?

Q: Well, in your courses, have you learned anything about an approach to writing, it’s called Process Writing? You might know it as drafting, conferencing, publishing, etc.
S4a: Well, I know to draft, but not in our course, no.

Q: Do you know how to conference with kids?
S4a: Well, like if you talk to them about what they are doing?

Q: So, you don’t remember any models about how to guide kids through a drafting process?
S4a: God, I sound bad, no ...
(S4a:26-8)

Student responses indicated that they had no readily articulated ideas about how language functions in literacy processes. They lacked strategies for improving students’ writing, other than a focus on structure, punctuation, spelling and grammar. The following data slice illustrates the point:

Q. Do you know what Process Writing is?
S3: No. We didn't do it in the course, what is it?
Q. An approach to writing, using the drafting process to help organise, draft, revise and publish kids work.
S3: No.
Q. Did you cover anything on the drafting process?
S3: No. Not in the dip. Ed.
Q. What about conventions, like grammar, punctuation etc.
S3: No.
Q. How about spelling strategies, helping kids learn how to spell?
S3: No.
(S3:3)
It was also apparent that the drafting process was not linked by informants to the creative process. For example:

Q56. Okay, how about Process Writing? Do you know anything about Process Writing?
S2: Is that like creative writing? No. No ...

Q58. Do you use a drafting process with kids, if they are writing something?
S2: It depends. On what the task is. I'd like them to draft it themselves, before I go drafting it myself, for them.

Q59. Yeah, that's what I mean, them drafting their writing.
S2: No. Not really, I mean of course their capitals, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing. I'd probably look more at the structure than anything else.

Q60. So drafting, you don't use that as part of the creativity process?
S2: No. No. Maybe it should be part of the creative process, I don't know.
(S2:13)

Student informant responses indicated that they had never heard of the concept of writing or reading as a Process. Probing also revealed that no informants could articulate particular theories or strategies they felt were important to assist in organising students' writing Processes.

**Student Knowledge about Whole Language**

The data also showed that no student informants were familiar with Whole Language approaches to language and literacy education. (S: final-7) Informant S1 appeared familiar with the term and was aware of the phonics / Whole Language debate in primary schools but was unaware of the theories or strategies on which Whole Language was based. (S1:17-19) At one meeting with student informants I asked the whole group if they were familiar with Whole Language, Genre Theory or Text Types. Student informant responses bordered on the hostile. For example:

That's educational theory bullshit, we just want to teach.
(S7:4)

I don't want anything to do with that.
(S8:4)

It's all crap, what about literature.
(S10:4)

[Educational] Theory doesn't teach you how to teach.
(S11:4)
What about good books and plays, that's how you learn English, not through some airy fairy theory (S6:fn4)

The fact that the various conceptualisations of language and literacy learning were compatible with many of their own interests in teaching, such as a focus on 'good books' and critical reading, appeared to be lost to the informants.

Animosity towards literacy appeared to prevent student informants from seeing the value of language and literacy theories to the teaching and the extent to which students lacked strategies for dealing with literacy and language development was surprising. For example:

Q52. How about Whole Language? Did you ever study Whole Language approaches?
S2: No.

Q53. Do you know what Whole Language is?
S2: No.

Q54. Have you ever heard of it before?
S2: No ... god, I don't know any of this.

Q55. It's a model of language and literacy learning.
S2: See, maybe that's what they should have taught us in the dip. ed. (S2:13)

Q121. Okay, what about Whole Language, have you learned about that?
S4a: Whole language? No, maybe, can you explain it, what do you mean?

Q122. It's a model of literacy and language learning which gives conditions to create in a classroom to foster literacy development. You don't remember any conditions of learning?
S4a: No. Well, I've never heard of it.

Q123. Sorry if this feels like badgering you. What about spelling strategies?
S4a: What do you mean?

Q124. Do you know any strategies to teach kids how to spell?
S4a: Well, with a word processor or a dictionary, or sound it out.

Q125. Did you learn that in your course?
S4a: No. That's the problem, you know, you speak to people and they expect you to do that, like maybe if the course was more practical, you know the little things.

... No, there was never any emphasis on that. It really makes me sound bad, but I did go to lectures.

... When I was on prac I was talking to my teacher, she said not to be concerned with spelling. Not to worry about it. And I was reflecting on it later, after that conversation and I just thought, it wasn't really covered in the course, like it wasn't really covered, I haven't really dealt with that issue. (S4a:28)
Some students thought they had heard about Whole Language, however, probing revealed very limited or incorrect understandings. For example:

Q. Have you heard of Whole Language?
S3: Yes. Or I think, is that where they consider the whole text of a book in interpreting it?
Q. It is an approach to literacy learning.
S3: No. Although I might have heard of the term.
(S3:2-3)

S5: Yes, my children were pretty well brought up on Whole Language, so I am a little familiar with it. I can't bring to mind what it is.
Q47. But, you didn't cover it in your dip. ed.?
S5: No. No.
(S5:12)

The evidence indicated that few student English teacher informants held any detailed knowledge about the conceptualisation of literacy and language education as Whole Language. Such a finding was not surprising, given the nature of a typical GDE program. The data suggested that informants simply had not had access to the theory bases which had been so pivotal in shaping current theories and policies relating to the teaching of English.

**Student Knowledge About A Functional View of Language**

Since 1997 all NSW DET policies have stipulated that all literacy activities in NSW DET secondary schools be based on a Functional View of Language. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1997a) As discussed earlier in the review of literature, all NSW literacy policies since that time have incorporated not only a Functional View of Language but also a number of associated approaches, such as Critical Literacy, Systemic Functional Grammar, Genre Theory and the use of Text Types. Given that the GDE program appeared to focus largely on the policies of the NSW DET and BOS it seemed prudent to investigate whether the GDE was giving student informants access to the complex theories which drive those approaches. It was surprising to discover how little teacher informants knew about the theoretical frameworks which underpinned the very syllabus and policy documents they were currently studying.
Chapter 5: Analysis

The data showed that at the completion of their GDE program no student teacher informant, apart from S5, had any understandings about the theoretical underpinnings of a Functional View of Language, Functional Grammar or a Genre-based approach to writing. Informant S5 was an English as a Second Language (ESL) student, who had undertaken English Methods as a second teaching area. S5 had studied some Systemic Functional Linguistics in their Arts degree. (S5:fn1) Informant S5, while appearing to hold some understanding of a Functional View of Language and Genre theory, stated they had not received sufficient instruction about how to implement the methodologies in the classroom. (S5:11) Their lack of grounding in the approaches led Informant S5 to attempt to teach five different Text Types, using Pro-forma Scaffolds, in an isolated and formulaic way to a low-ability English as a Second Language (ESL) class over a five week period during practicum. In the following data slice S5 claimed that, while the focus on structure could be useful with ESL students, it proved counterproductive with mainstream English students:

S5: Yeah, and again, I did have to do that to be able to teach ESL so it was from my undergraduate degree as well. But there was a big push about understanding how language functions and then you’re half way there. And with ESL that’s very true, because the kids are needing the rules to understand and they’re highly motivated. But the literacy and the contemporary kids [low ability], that’s not what it’s all about, as far as I can see, that it was more about being able to make them excited about their writing, being able to express themselves in some way that is meaningful to them and they were not in any way interested to know that in certain subjects a certain sort of language was appropriate and um, so that was a big struggle ... I just went into it the wrong way. Particularly with a little group at Figtree I had, they were withdrawn from the class and they were a literacy group, um, and we did start to teach, want them to be able to come away in five weeks knowing five Genres, and components. Umm, And, it was a huge ask, it didn’t happen. (S5:11)

Informant S1 claimed that the student teachers seeking ESL qualifications received a better education in teaching ‘the basics’ of literacy. Informant S1’s comments in the following data slice illustrate the way in which teacher informants often separated ‘basic skills’, literacy and the teaching of English:

S1: They [ESL students} get a better grounding in the basics.

Q9. What do you call the basics though?
S1: Umm, basics, basics, as in this sort of stuff, like Text Types, what do you call it, Genres and the language component, and how to teach and all this sort of stuff. (S1:3)
Most student informants had heard of approaches associated with a Functional View of Language briefly in their studies but stated they did not know very much about them. Example responses included:

Q53. So, you haven’t covered any of a Functional View of Language in your dip. ed.?
S1: No. Not that sort of stuff, it’s been touched on, but if you didn’t know what it meant, then it just went over your head.
(S1:16)

Q: The latest theoretical orientation which is having an impact on policy is Systemic Functional Linguistics, through Genre, Text Types, based on linguistic theories developed broadly by Halliday et al. Are you aware of those theories?
S4a: Umm. No. I mean I’ve heard of them, through ___ but I don’t know what they really mean
(S4a:12)

Q48. Do you know much about [a Functional View of Language]?
S2: No.
Q49. Does it interest you much?
S2: No. Not at all.
(S2:12)

Student informants stated that a Functional View OF Language was mentioned briefly during lectures for one subject but all informants stated that the language of Systemics and the complexities of the approaches were too difficult to understand in such a short period. Responses included:

And the stuff [L6] was delivering, most people had no background in it, so they had no idea what she was talking about ... but if you didn’t know what it meant, then it would have just gone over your head.
(S1:16)

Q39. In pedagogy you had a stint of language and literacy theory. Can you remember that?
S2: With __ I didn’t know what she was talking about
... and it just went over my head, I just didn’t know what she was talking about.
Q41. That’s a shame. Did you feel the content was very relevant?
S2: No. No. I think it was more tertiary level, actually.
Q42. Did you think it was interesting for you, as a teacher, to inform you?
S2: No, I don’t think I learned anything.
Q43. From what I gather it was based on Systemic Functional Linguistics is that right?
S2: Yes.
(S2:10)

S4a: I think [L6], actually, ___ gave a lot of theory, a ridiculous amount of theory, so much so, in fact, that every one dropped out. And it was a shame, because what she was saying was good stuff but there was just too much to take in. She only had a limited time to give it and she had a lot to give, she had a lot to offer, um, but because of that she was aiming too high and a lot of it just went over our heads. It got to a stage where no one turned up to lectures. I was there, because I felt an obligation to be there, but I can see how someone in maths, would find it, you know, difficult.
(S4a:12)
I was so disappointed. It was hopeless, no body turned up for it. It was a tragedy. It made language unbearable, really turned everybody off.
(S4b:fn1)

It was gobblygook, airy fairy.
(S6:fn2)

Informant S1 displayed interest in the literacy debate which raged in the NSW media during the course of the study, about the teaching of ‘the basics’. (S1:14) While confusing many of the theories on which the debates centred, Informant S1 was aware of the existence of Genre and Functional Grammar and the debate between the use of Functional or traditional grammar. S1 gave credit for their knowledge to their mother, who was a ‘literacy teacher’. (S1:15) S1 claimed that they had been surprised to find that the GDE did not address such issues and that the other students appeared unaware about the issues involved in the debates over literacy pedagogies. Informant S1 stated:

S1: Umm, see that’s the other thing that scares me, I think I know nothing, but then I look at other people. [in the GDE]

Q50. Where did you pick that up from?
S1: Reading. I read a lot. I sort of, mum gives me a bit. Then you get your functionalists and then you get grammar, decoders.

Q51. Do you think the other Dip. Ed. students are as up on this?
S1: No. Not being arrogant, but no.

Q52. That’s the impression I get.
S1: They have no idea. That scares me. I think, I just go, excuse me, you didn’t know that? Not being, to me that is something that you should know and a basic thing. You should have an idea of what has been going on and they have no idea of what has been going on in their profession.
(S1:15)

there are significant problems and as for all that language stuff, I picked it up because I read a lot, I you know, all this Kemp business going on, I was so surprised that people who were actually in English were actually going “huh? wha?” They had no idea, they had no idea about basic skills, ELLA.
(S1:18)

Student informants often appeared confused and ill-informed about theories of learning. While they appeared to have picked up some terminology it was rarely accompanied by detailed understandings. An example was illustrated by Informant S1, who was considered a high quality graduate by lecturers within the GDE program, having consistently obtained High Distinctions in all subjects. The following data slice illustrates how informants often displayed incomplete understandings of educational theories, a trait which appeared to cause them frustration and disillusionment with education as a discipline:
Chapter 5: Analysis

Q65. What about theories of learning? I'm interested to know whether or not you feel you have a theory of learning when you have finished the dip. ed.? Do you think you know how kids learn language in English. Do you think you go out there and you have a fair idea of how these kids are going to learn?
S1: In terms of reading or in terms of what?

Q66. The whole thing, English, literacy, what you are expected to do, what are your perceptions?
S1: I know, we've done things in Reading like top down, bottom up what's the other one, stages theory and the other one, that ____ likes, what's that other kind, not Halliday, some other guy, oh, you have to have explicit teaching, you get that, but that is only if you do the reading thing. In terms of, I mean they do a lot on the old VAK, you know, VAK, Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic, which to a certain extent is great. They still have the, which annoys me, I don't think, there has been research done it, that shows that it's not as credible, but the old left brain right brain stuff. I don't know, I've read stuff on that that says that is oversimplifying it. There are a lot of lecturers here who still do that. You know, left brain, right brain, you are either one or the other. I mean I suppose I get cross with that, because I was the sort of kid who was naturally good at English and history but loved science, loved French, loved maths, painful kid, wanted to do everything and when I went to Uni and did Chemistry as well as English and history, so I think this is rubbish. And you get writers like Aldous Huxley, who is right into science, you can't separate disciplines, they like to go on about that.

There's really not that much that I can recall, which is probably really bad, because we probably have done some, but they're the bits that have stuck.

(S1:19)

While some informants were familiar with some of the terms associated with a Functional View OF Language they clearly did not understand the complexities of the approaches. It was particularly obvious from the data that students experienced difficulties understanding relationships amongst context of situation, context of culture and social purpose, as articulated in Systemic models. The following exchange with Informant S2 illustrated the point:

Q97. Do you know what Text Types are?
S2: Sort of.

Q98. Some Systemicists believe that a text-type approach to teaching English is the most appropriate, what do you think?

S2: I disagree with that, totally. I disagree with that. No, no, no. That's just saying, read this, that's all you need to know. They're just concentrating on what the function of language is. There is more to English than just what it's function is.

Q99. What else is there?
S2: Purpose. There is a difference between function and purpose. It's the aim of language. It's not necessarily a good thing that somebody writes a good piece of writing to a set format, but that they are able to manipulate that to their own purpose, not to suit the purpose that has been stipulated. I think students have to be able to experiment and see what happens, I mean just to teach students to a particular Genre, I mean, no. uh, uh.

(S2:22)
It was not surprising that students often appeared confused about the nature of language in English, given that there appeared to be no focus on language and literacy learning theories in the GDE program and, without wishing to denigrate student informants, the flaw in the above example is obvious. Function, within a Functional View of Language, parallels social purpose. Also, the purpose of a Genre-based approach to writing is to build mastery in blending Genres for specific social purposes, not to always conform to one type. (Halliday, 1985a; Kress, 1993a)

The important point here is that the data showed that student teacher informant understandings of teaching approaches was hampered by their lack of theoretical knowledge. Not only was their knowledge of the professional knowledge-base poor but those shortcomings in their knowledge-bases indicated that they also had poor understandings of the policies they were meant to implement in classrooms.

As a Functional View of Language relies on Functional Grammar to provide the metalanguage for analysing and discussing language it was also important to examine student teacher knowledge about Systemic Functional Grammar.

**Student Knowledge About Grammar**

Of the entire English Methods cohort, only Informant S5 claimed any knowledge of Systemic Functional Grammar. Informant S3 stated they had studied 'some' Functional Grammar as part of a literature subject in their Bachelor of Arts degree but that they had 'lost' it since. S5 stated:

Functional grammar lapses if you're not up on it all the time.  
The biggest problem is the clinical terminology, it has superfluous seriousness. [It] scares people off.  
(S3:3)

A check with all other student teacher informants established that had no working knowledge of Functional Grammar or its role in policies or literacy pedagogy. (L2:fn7; S6:fn2) The following data slice, from an interview with Informant S4 was typical student teacher responses regarding Functional Grammar :

Q112. So, getting to Systemics, do you think that seems to offer you much as a teacher?  
S4a: MM. [shakes head]
Q113. Well, when you speak about grammar, do you mean traditional grammar or Functional Grammar?
S4a: Huh?

Q114. Are you aware of the differences?
S4a: No, I'm a bit embarrassed. All I know is that there is a debate [about] what should be taught. You know, and it's pretty confusing. I was walking home from the methods lecture, where you mentioned Functional Grammar, remember at ____, with ____... she said, "____, what the hell is Functional Grammar" and "What the hell is traditional grammar?"

So, in the lesson, she gave an answer, but, you know, it's not been part of our education, at all.

Q115. So, you don't understand much about the use of grammar, either functional or traditional?
S4a: No, I don't think any of us do. Maybe some of the older, you know the mature ones.
(S4a:26)

Despite admitting to limited knowledge about literacy and language development theories, or to knowledge about grammar, most informants claimed that knowledge about grammar was not central to good literacy development, citing their own experiences as evidence. For example:

I wasn't taught grammar when I went to school and I am very literate, otherwise I would have made it through uni.
(S9:6)

Q51. Do you think grammar is important?
S2: Well, I went through school without learning any grammar, for me it is not important
(S2:13)

Q109. Do you think not having knowledge about grammar hindered your own development as a writer?
S4a: Well, I haven't been criticised too much on that, so I can't be too bad.
(S4a:23-4)

Despite such a perception, most student informants indicated that, if required, they would teach grammar as a separate skill in their classes. (S1:20; S2:13; S4a:24; S6:fn6a; S8fn:2 & S9:6) If new graduates are unfamiliar with conceptualisations of literacy and language education and are unfamiliar with Functional Grammar but are prepared to teach traditional grammar if required the obvious risk is that they would be in danger of using traditional, prescriptive approaches. Without the benefits of modern theories, the focus on rules would necessarily lead to skills based teaching, based on rules of usage. As such it would represent a retrograde step of some fifty years for the teaching of literacy.

Despite progressive and complex policies being implemented over recent decades, the evidence suggested that teachers and graduates were often limited to fragmented,
outdated prescriptive methodologies based on their limited professional knowledge bases.

**Summary of the Impacts Of The Professional Phase**

Analysis of the data indicated that the following areas in the NSW secondary school system were directly controlled at the political (government) level:

- BOS syllabus development
- DET policy development
- Compulsory assessment procedures
- Professional development
- Entry to teacher education programs
- Content of teacher education programs
- Entry to the profession
- Control and design of educational research

Professional associations, representing teachers and teacher educators, appeared powerless to challenge such political control. This powerlessness appeared more evident when teaching was compared to other professions and their infrastructures. The lack of professional power led to a situation where teachers had little input to policy development and were able to challenge decisions only indirectly (generally through public protest) after their political masters had imposed them.

Teacher educators appeared to respond to the power vacuum within the profession by adopting employer guidelines in lieu of professional guidelines and accreditation schemes. Employer policies became guidelines for entry to the profession and for teacher preservice education. As a result a double-bind appeared to have developed, whereby teacher preservice education courses did not appear to contain the theory content needed to understand the very policies on which teacher education programs were based. Student teachers, therefore, appeared to have little understanding of current policies or the theories which underpinned them.
Beginning and experienced teachers alike appeared to experience difficulties in articulating their personal theories of learning. Those personal theories appeared not to be informed by formal education in the widely accepted conceptualisations of literacy and language pedagogies. Neither teachers nor student teachers appeared to understand the theories behind the policies they were meant to implement in their classrooms. Both groups appeared to attempt to develop their personal theories based solely on their own experiences, rather than on a mix of personal experience and educational research.

As a result of limited understandings of conceptualisations of literacy education teachers and student teachers appeared to hold narrowly defined views of literacy and language education, often separating it from their subject content and fragmenting it into something similar to a Skills-based Approach to teaching literacy. Both student teachers and teachers preferred the teaching of literature to literacy and perceived a division between the two. Literacy became a subject to be taught separate from English studies, generally as a fill-in activity based on traditional grammar or the notion of correct form and sequence, at the levels of both the sentence and the text.

The lack of knowledge about the theory bases informing policies limited informant abilities to challenge the approaches outlined in policies. This combined with the lack of professional structures in NSW education and teacher education to limit the ability of teachers to challenge the political control of education and enact changes to the professional power base or to address issues of theory deficit in new graduates or established teachers. Such a situation led to the professional phase of professional disempowerment presenting as a cyclic phase. The professional phase of disempowerment was diagrammed during analysis in the cycle outlined in Figure 5.10:
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The Professional Phase and the Criteria for a Profession

The evidence suggested that political control, professional powerlessness and theory deficit contributed to undermine the criteria for a profession established by Darling-Hammond. Table 5.5 shows the action/interaction of the three conditions of disempowerment presented as the professional phase of disempowerment and the corresponding criteria the evidence suggested they undermined:

Table 5.5: Comparison of the professional phase of disempowerment with the criteria for a profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria of an Empowered Profession*</th>
<th>Criteria of a Disempowered Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client-oriented</td>
<td>Political Control (Employer policy oriented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Accountability</td>
<td>Professional Powerlessness (Accountable to employer &amp; political masters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge based</td>
<td>Theory Deficit (Employer policy based)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Adapted from Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.16-17)

While it was useful to lay the conditions out in this table it should be remembered that each condition had complex relationships with others, through what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as ‘paradigmatic relationships’. It was, therefore, perhaps more accurate
to compare the conditions of disempowerment and criteria for a profession as set out in Table 5.6:

**Table 5.6:** Criteria of a disempowered profession and the conditions which contribute to it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria of an Empowered Profession*</th>
<th>Criteria of a Disempowered Profession (and the conditions which contribute to it)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client-oriented</td>
<td>Employer policy oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Accountability</td>
<td>Accountable to Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge based</td>
<td>Employer policy based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Political control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional Powerlessness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Theory Deficit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Political Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Professional powerlessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theory deficit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Adapted from Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p.16-17)

The professional phase of disempowerment also contributed to the contexts within which the ‘institutional processes’ of NSW secondary English existed during the study. It is, therefore, fitting to now examine the data relating to the ‘institutional phase’ of professional disempowerment.
THE INSTITUTIONAL PHASE OF DISEMPowerMENT

The use of the ‘axial coding paradigm’ recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990) established the major actions/interactions of this ‘phase’, or part-process, as laying within the formal institutions of the NSW education system. The component conditions of the institutional phase of disempowerment were conceptualised as follows:

- Political control
- Professional Powerlessness
- Theory Deficit
- Professional isolation and
- System overload

Given the discussion of the examination of the ‘professional phase’ of disempowerment earlier, the following conditions are dealt with in this section:

- Professional isolation
- System overload

PROFESSIONAL ISOLATION

I drew the term ‘isolation’ from data which showed that teacher informants often felt a sense of loneliness in their classrooms and that they rarely managed to visit other teachers in their working environment. I also soon came to understand that teacher informant complaints about a lack of professional development were also about their sense of professional isolation and a lack of a feeling of collegiality with other teachers. Not only had teachers become isolated from policy development procedures, as already examined, but they were isolated from colleagues and other professionals, on whom they had long relied for assistance in coping with the demands of the system. The data indicated that, as the system grew during the 1960s and 1970s, so too did teacher informants’ perceptions of their own isolation within the burgeoning NSW system. Comments regarding professional development also led to scrutiny of professional
associations and resourcing relating to new policies. Teacher isolation was shown to be physical, collegial and professional.

**Isolation and Teacher Practice**

Messages from teacher informants indicated that they felt a sense of both physical and professional isolation. Workloads, new policies, the new demands of teaching, timetables, finances and a lack of professional development opportunities were all viewed by teacher informants as contributing to the condition categorised here as professional isolation. The demands of the system were viewed by most informants as exacerbating the physical isolation of the classroom.

Informants often spoke about the lack of opportunity just to sit and talk to colleagues, with most blaming increased workloads and the changing nature of teaching. Most informants felt that isolation affected their teaching and their sense of job satisfaction. Some responses included:

> you see, we used to sit around in the staff rooms in the late 70s and early 80s and actually talk more about things I think. We had more time, somehow. Whereas, now I couldn’t tell you what other people do in their classrooms, the only things I know what other people do are what we do as common tasks. I have no idea what other teachers do in their classrooms.
> (B4:20)

> We just don’t get any time now to get together. I mean really [get together] as a faculty to share and support each other.
> (A2:fn3)

> teachers work in the world of 600 kids, 50 staff members, but its a very isolated workplace, they shut the classroom door and if they don’t ask the kids what they thought of that lesson ... Unless the kids are jumping out the window ... Right, they can continue operating that way forever. ... We’d all like to be doing these good things all the time but other things come along and take their place. But I think teachers are too closeted.
> (A1:25)

Given teacher concerns about isolation it was fitting to briefly examine the nature of their physical workplace. Teacher informants worked under conditions typical in NSW high schools. Each informant (apart from Head Teachers) worked an average of four one hour periods per day with one student free period on average per day for preparation and other duties. Student free periods were dependent on timetabling and my experience as a participant observer and data collector showed that it was rare for all English staff to meet together at one time, even at staff meetings. (A:fn1 & B:BO1)
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Long term observations also indicated that playground supervision, meetings, student demands and other school duties meant it was also unusual for all English staff to have an entire lunch break together.

In addition, English staff at both schools were accommodated in split staffrooms. This has been the case at every school at which I have worked during my eleven years as a teacher in NSW schools. During the study English was the only compulsory subject for every year of secondary schooling. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c) As such, English Departments in high schools were the largest faculties with the most staff to house.

English staff at School A shared two staffrooms on different floors of the same building and School B shared three staffrooms in two separate buildings at opposite ends of the school. Such arrangements made it difficult for all the English staff at either school to get together in the same place at the same time. In an attempt to remedy this both schools reported that they attempted to hold whole faculty staff meetings two to three times a term, with varying degrees of success. Additionally each school held whole school staff meetings after school hours about once every two weeks, as per DET requirements, although both schools reported that it was rare for all staff to be able to attend meetings. (A3:23 & B1:43)

Isolation and School Management

A sense of isolation appeared at each level throughout both schools. For example, the Principal at School A reported that the high turnover of District Superintendents meant that they rarely developed a working relationship with their immediate supervisors or peers. A1 reported that Regional Principals’ Conferences were no longer held and that Principals rarely met with their peers, other than through infrequent Principals’ Association meetings. (A1:24) Additionally, political restructuring of the school system, according to Informant A1, had led to a situation where the District Superintendent for both School A and School B was responsible for 62 schools and that they rarely contacted schools unless there was a major problem which demanded their attention. (A1:13-14) Informant A1 claimed that because of their isolation and despite being a top level manager, they felt alienated from the DET bureaucracy. The following data slice illustrated A1’s position:
What’s happened in my six years for example, I’m on my sixth immediate superior, right? I came here, it was ___, he was replaced by ___, then ____ for a bit, and ____ and umm, _____ and there’s someone else there, I’ve forgotten, so six in six years.

Q25: How does that impact on your sense of professionalism?
A1: It doesn’t. I just do what I have to do with them. And they’re pleasant people. You know, I’ve got no problems with them. What’s happened though, is they don’t care about me as long as there is no fires in this school, whereas I think under the sixteen school cluster, they had time to be proactive. And now, definitely, the Superintendent, with 62 schools, is I believe, totally reactive and there is nothing happening. If there are no problems in this school, I think he still cares, but I’ll say he won’t have anything to do with the school. He can’t, if you’ve got 62 schools, there’s going to be at least ten will have a significant problem you have to deal with.

(A1:14)

Similarly, Informant A2 reported that they felt particularly isolated as a Head Teacher. A2 reported that they had only recently been able to visit another school for the first time solely to discuss executive matters with another head teacher. The two visits, the first in 7 years as Head Teacher, were under a special ‘one-off’ funding arrangement to assist with school administration. The second visit in the arrangements was dependent on the Principal of School A being able to allocate funds for relief staff from the school’s general budget. (A2a:1) Informant A2 claimed that, given the lack of resources, they felt burdened by their responsibility to assist their staff with professional development and hoped that the visits might offer ideas they could implement in School A. They also hoped that such visits might provide reassurance on a personal level that the approaches they had adopted in relation to new policies and theories were in keeping with what was occurring in other schools. Informant A2 claimed such reassurance was a rarity within the DET system. (A2a:2) The following data slice illustrates A2’s position:

We only met last week for the first time, but that was part of the appeal of it. Yes, here’s someone else, someone from outside, and maybe you can sit down and talk to them about those things, see how they are going. Might well be productive, at least with the feeling of how you are going compared to them.

... things to do with school tone and culture and things like that, once you are inside it you can’t see it anymore. You notice it for a few weeks when you are first in the job, but thereafter you’ve got to have someone else to say ‘Gee, I really like the way you did that, or there is a cold feel about your staff room.’

Q: Do you get much feedback from outside?
A2: No. Not at all. It’s very rare.

(A2a:2)

Informant A3, a teacher of English as well as Head Teacher of History at School A, claimed that the sheer volume of work expected of teachers combined with a lack of
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professional development funding to isolate head teachers. Informant A3 stated that, in an attempt to ease the burden on junior staff, they had personally shouldered responsibilities that had traditionally been done by all staff members. According to Informant A3 this meant that not only did A3’s workload increase but that the school implemented new policies in a ‘fairly scant way, in a bread and butter way’. (A3b:4)

In a similar manner, Informant B4 stated that, as literacy coordinator, they had taken on the burden of the implementation of the Agenda 97 literacy strategy in School B. B4 stated that there had been no funding for professional development in the new policies in School B and that they had attempted to develop strategies for whole school implementation on their own, with minimal input from other staff. Informant B4 stated that they considered the task ‘demoralising’, claiming that ‘the burden of all this ultimately falls on my shoulders’. (B4:fn37a) The following data slice illustrated B4’s position:

R: So, what kind of support have you received, as a literacy coordinator?
B4: Lots of outside, after school, things you can go to.

R: No release time from teaching?
B4: No, none.

R: Not since you started as coordinator?
B4: No, not since there has been an actual literacy coordinator.

R: Wow, nothing from the literacy strategy 97 initiative?
B4: No. There’s no release time, none at all.

R: So, you are doing it all on top of your normal work load?
B4: Whatever you do, you decide to do on top of your normal load.
(B4:22)

Teacher informants claimed that while workloads had increased they had to use time they had once used building professional relationships to meet the increased workload. For example, Informant A3, while valuing the role of student welfare in their work, claimed that it was an area that added to their workload. They also claimed that socialising within the profession had decreased as the work burdens increased, further isolating teachers from each other. Attempts at both schools to create opportunities for meeting and discussion amongst staff proved difficult, given timetabling and extraneous duties, as illustrated in the following comments by Informant A3:

The nature of teaching has changed now, in that you get very little time to do what we are doing now, sitting here talking, then again the nature of what I am doing has changed, from being a
teacher to trying to run a department. But still, the main reason I’m here is teaching itself, and it’s just the pace, right, it’s more intense. You spend more time in caring for the kids where before, it was a job where you went in, taught and came out, did preparation and marking and that was the job, but now you spend a lot more time in welfare and this school is a reasonably good welfare school. The people at the top care and that flows down and there are caring teachers as well. So you spend a lot more time on welfare.

A lot of the fun has gone out of teaching ... I’m trying to bring these two departments together, whereas before we always used to go off on a Friday afternoon for a drink together, that’s all gone. When I first started teaching you went for a beer, if you didn’t go there was something wrong with you. But now, everyone goes home to their families, so that’s changed, too. But you can get over that with gruel [lunch] days and stuff, you still have a bit of fun, a bit of relaxation. If there is food, people will sit and talk, and that’s the aim of our Friday meals.

Informant B4 supported the views of A3 but also claimed that isolation from colleagues combined with work overload to create a situation in the 1980s whereby, as new literacy policies were issued, teachers merely placed them in the ‘too hard basket’ and avoided dealing with them. (B4:20)

Informant A2 claimed that, while most staff at School A shared resources and were supportive of each other, they rarely got to work together or actually watch other teachers in the classroom:

I think in a school like this, and you’ve worked here too, it’s clear that people are very nice to each other on staff and if you came into the staffroom and said, ‘I’ve got nothing on Keats’ 2 or 3 people would jump up and say, here, I’ve got some stuff, there. I’ll bring it in tomorrow or something, so there’s that kind of sharing. But the opportunity to actually work together and watch somebody work with kids no, and its a shame.

Informant A2 claimed that most of their staff would welcome the opportunity to work with others and share ideas. They made the point that sharing professional responsibilities with other teachers could reduce stress levels and improve the quality of a teachers’ work but that such a ‘luxury’ was out of the reach of most teachers. The following data slice illustrates A2’s perspective:

How much do you actually help your staff, with staff development or work together on things. And the answer is not very much because there isn’t the time. It’s not the will I think there’s, it’s very nice to be working with someone else on a project, it sort of shares the responsibility, lowers the stress levels, shares the workload, the output is maybe more than double for having worked on a project together.

Q6. Does that happen very often, as a head teacher?
A2: It doesn’t, no. The sharing you mean?
... So there really is it’s a very difficult thing, sure you share ideas in the staff room or in a staff meeting, programs on peoples desks, but as far as sitting together, watching someone else, working with someone on a class, it can’t be done. It is frustrating, because its, as you say, sitting there watching is such a new role for a teacher, isn’t it. It’s [the researcher’s role as observer] a luxury really, isn’t it?

(A2a:7)
Isolation and Professional Development

Every teacher informant cited a lack of professional development as a major concern to them. Each appeared to place a high value on professional development and claimed opportunities for professional development had evaporated in recent years. The lack of professional development was inevitably linked to a sense of isolation both from other professionals and the knowledge base of the profession. The following response from Informant A5 illustrates the connections made by respondents:

Q63. Do you have any views on those changes that are brought about by these theories?
A5: Just off the top of my head, my only view is that it generally that it all happens too fast, and you're given no support and you're given no time and you're given no time really, nothing to really modify it. I guess I find that really frustrating, and that's the way the Department works, and has worked ever since I've been here, since 1980, so um, I find that really frustrating.

Do I get upset about different policies, I can generally see most often validity in what they are trying to do, and that sometimes is widening for me, too. I sometimes get locked in to what I am doing or to what's easy or so I like to have that thrust upon me, to broaden me a little bit, with the work I'm doing with my kids.

But I do get frustrated that nobody wants to give me time to do it or nobody wants to help me do it, that there are no real consultants, as far as I am concerned, anymore, there are consultants but they are locked away in their little sheds and they get to go to all the in-services but the rest of us don't get to go anymore. That sort of thing I find very frustrating.

... When I first came out there were a lot and there were also some wonderful people who were going around schools all the time ... and it helped me tremendously to do it. But that has just gotten weaker and weaker, every year as far as I am concerned. So that support doesn't seem to be there anymore. To help.

(A5:22-24)

Invariably the perceived decline in professional development was linked to a decline in government funding and the move towards in-house professional development.

(Discussed in the section titled political control) The move by the DET towards in-house professional development meant that most teacher informants turned to outside sources, which also brought concerns over costs. Informants generally felt that if the DET and BOS wanted them to implement new policies and syllabus documents that professional development and support should have been provided at the employer's expense. Informant B5 echoed the concerns of other informants in the following data slice:

I mean if they want us to go and teach it, they want us to go and do all these courses and learn about it. They are put on the weekends, they are put on the holidays, and money is not available. Like there is something happening run by the ETA very soon I think, and that is $90 or whatever it is, it's on a Saturday, and I was prepared to go on a Saturday, but the school doesn't have the money to pay for it. I've got a family, my daughter is at uni. and my other daughter is at school.

(A5:22-24)
Informant B2 also pointed out that the need to attend professional development in the employer’s policies raised industrial issues and placed a burden on their family life. The point was significant, given the ratio of women employed as teachers of English. Informant B2 also pointed out that the lack of professional development also meant that they were dependent on colleagues for development in new policies and strategies. (B2:32-34) The following data slice illustrates the points raised by informant B2:

Q: The changes in policies have come about quite quickly in the past 20-30 years, how do you feel about that, do you have any views on it?  
B2: Well, what in particular?  

Q: Do you have any impressions about the changes?  
B2: Well, once again, I think it has to do with public pressure and the government has to feel as if they are doing something when maybe they are not, but I think the main problem is the lack of professional development to go with all this.  

Q: And that creates a problem for you, as a teacher?  
B2: Oh, yeah, definitely. Because I mean, unless someone goes to a course, and even then, you know, when do you actually have the time to sit together, except for out of school time, and people aren’t doing that as much anymore, because that’s not part of our conditions, sort of thing, with Federation, sort of thing.  

Q: How do you feel about that, as a professional teacher?  
B2: Well, I’m annoyed that there is no professional development during the day, because the family, like the _____ thing, I would have liked to go to that, but 3.30pm -6.30pm, for me with three kids, that’s hopeless, I mean, unless you’ve got someone at home or a mother or someone who lives nearby, there’s no way I’m going to attend that, so I’ve got to rely on feedback from others. (B2:33)

Evidence in both schools showed that teachers often relied on information from colleagues regarding new syllabus content and policy matters. During data collection both schools developed a strategy whereby one teacher from the English faculty attended professional development courses relating to new HSC courses on weekends and reported back to other staff with whatever resources were available. This occurred three times during 1997 at School A, three times during 1998 and four times during 1999 at School B. (A2:fn5 & B4:fn44) School B also formalised that process by incorporating reports from the teacher concerned at staff meetings. (B4:fn44)

As shown, the responses from informants indicated that they were unhappy about the arrangements regarding the imposition of new policies and syllabus courses without
adequate professional development. Perhaps Informant B2 summarised the concerns most succinctly in the following data slice:

Q: So, just quickly, what do you perceive as some of the biggest problems facing English teachers?
B2: Well, lack of professional development is one of the main things, and as I said, with all these policies coming through, unless you are getting the professional development to go with it, you’re relying on second-hand sources all the time and other people to try to do the work for you and it’s just never the same as actually getting it yourself, first-hand anyway.

Q: Do you feel like you understand the policies?
B2: Not all the time, no. No. (B2:36)

Isolation and School Funding

A check with school administrators supported informant perceptions about the scarcity of professional development. Despite an inundation of new policies and syllabus documents across all key learning areas during the study, including new HSC courses in all areas, there was no increase in funding for professional development of classroom teachers. Informant A1, Principal of School A, reported that School A received only $25 per teacher, per year for professional development. As A1 pointed out, teachers could not be released from class unless a relief teacher was employed at a cost of $180 minimum per day, leaving only 10 days per year for a staff of eighty teachers in School A. Informant A1 reported that, by the time course costs were taken from the fund only about two teachers per year were able to attend any professional development courses at school expense or during school time. (A1:25)

The Head Teacher of English in School A reported that the situation had dire consequences for both the professional knowledge and moral of the English staff in School A. In the following data slice Informant A2 explains that the lack of funding meant that during the study only part-time staff were able to attend professional development programs:

And as we all get older and we all get further and further away from our training, and the staff development funds have been cut back to such an abysmal level that no one can do anything now. The only people who have been able to do any professional development on this faculty are the two who are sharing a job and so they’ve taken, gone to a staff development thing on the day when they are not being employed. So it doesn’t cost the Department anything, except the registration fee, which we can barely make the registration fee for a day. It’s unbelievable. I think it works out about $20 a head, that’s all we get for professional development. That’s all we’ve got in the school. (A2a:2)
As already discussed, informants at School B stated they received no professional development funding from the DET during the course of the study. A check with the Head Teacher of English at School B confirmed that School B also received only $25 per teacher, per year, for the allocation of professional development but that none had been allocated to the English Department. (Bl:44)

As discussed earlier, Informant L5 was heavily involved in the writing of DET and BOS English and Literacy policy documents, having defined a Functional View of Language for both. L5 stated that they were aware that it was highly unlikely that teachers could implement the multitude of policy documents issued during Agenda '97 as there had been insufficient professional development in the approaches stipulated in the new policies. According to L5 the lack of professional development ensured that prescriptive teaching practices regarding Text Types and grammar were inevitable.

Comments included the following data slice:

R: So, you are not surprised that people with that kind of background, that they are going to have problems implementing these approaches and interpreting (indicating Genre model)

L5: No. What happened, in terms of K-6, that left itself wide open to this interpretation, because you’ve got that “scope and sequence” of grammar, sitting there, all on two pages, with no support.

If I hadn’t put out the PETA book there would be absolutely nothing to advertise exactly how to implement this. It’s bound to lead to people taking them and teaching them one by one, without decent support material ... And no professional development, of course they’re going to do all the wrong things with it.

R: Has there been anywhere for you to voice your concerns about that?
L5: Oh, nooo, because the Department says it has no money for professional development, people were already in-serviced in K-6, they don’t need it anymore. No, it really does astound me that they think that, just by putting out that scope and sequence, that that’s settled the issue of grammar.
(L5:31)

Isolation and New Policies.

The sense of isolation in the face of a flood of new policies appeared to be heightened by the fact that no units of work were supplied by the DET or BOS to assist in the implementation of the new literacy strategies. Despite that fact that policies were the exclusive domain of the employer, virtually no resources, apart from the policies themselves, were provided by the employer to assist with their implementation in schools.
Both schools confirmed that teachers were expected to write their own programs incorporating the approaches demanded of the new policies. No time allowances or funding was made available to assist with that process and no professional development was provided in the theories which underpinned the new policies. (A2b:2 & B4:18) A3, A5, A2, A1, B1, B2, B3 and B4 all claimed that the situation had changed dramatically since the 1970s and 1980s, when teachers worked together to compile units of work and shared them with colleagues across the region. The following exchange with B4 highlights the point:

R: Hmm. The Department doesn’t provide you with anything like units of work, or anything?
B4: No. No. So, it’s purely an efficiency drive now ... There was a lot more work done in the mid seventies and even the late seventies and early eighties. There were a lot more in-services, there were big in-service programs then. And also, teachers were younger. So I still have booklets in there with peoples names on them from when they were in their mid-twenties, right? And we’d get these groups that’d get together and actually I think a lot of it was federal funded, now to think of it. You’d have groups of eager young English teachers who go out and they would develop units and they would be printed up for the region. And then, the kinds of things that are in the ETA bulletin.

R: Does that happen any more?
B4: No. You look around you will find, I’ve got a few I could show you. HSC texts and they have how you approach HSC texts, groups of peoples names who contributed. Not any more. (B4:18)

In addition B4 reported that they had sole responsibility for the implementation of the Agenda ‘97 literacy strategy in School B but had not received any specific training or support to assist in the task. B4 stated they were expected to educate themselves in the new strategies and policies in addition to their normal workload. (B4:25)

The two schools were quite different regarding the sharing of resources. While staff at School A shared teaching resources, as indicated above by A2, it became obvious there was some animosity amongst staff at School B towards sharing teaching resources with colleagues. Where School A shared units of work and stored them in cabinets in the staffroom, School B’s cabinet was virtually empty. Staff at School B stated that they did not share resources very much and all refused to lodge their units of work in the staff room for others to access. Each teacher was expected to compile their own units, with little input from other staff.

Informants B2, B4, B5 & B7 claimed the situation appeared to have stemmed from incidents involving staff claiming credit for the work of others. (B:fn9a) Staff at School B appeared to be burdened even further by the condition of isolation than the
staff at School A because of these concerns over the ownership of resources. This suggested that the condition of isolation was made somewhat worse by these circumstances. Teachers appeared to work in a far more isolated work space in School B than in School A, although isolation was clearly an issue of some importance for teachers at both schools.

Both informant A4 and Informant B4 claimed that they felt that they were stagnating because of the DET transfer system. Each had been at their respective schools for in excess of twenty years. Both stated that they felt they were isolated from what was going on in other schools but were unable to transfer to another school within the District due to DET central control of the state-wide system. The informants stated that they were keen to transfer but that the system did not allow it. According to the informants any request for transfer would have resulted in their being transferred to another district where teaching positions were difficult to fill. Neither wished to sell their homes or to travel long distances to work and so opted to remain where they were. (A4a:10&B4refs) The transfer system within the DET was regulated at the political level, with the DET bureaucracy and the Minister having final say over transfers, in a similar manner to the way in which new appointments to schools were made.

Isolation and Professional Associations

As revealed by the earlier examination of the structures of other professions, professional associations generally provide networks and means of communication among professionals through journals, conferences and other professional structures. Data indicated that a high percentage of NSW teachers did not enjoy the support that such professional structures offer. Data collected from the Staffing Unit of the DET showed that there were a minimum of 2,383 teachers employed with Secondary English as their first competency in NSW in 2001. (DET:29/11/01) The English Teachers' association (NSW) (ETA) reported during the study that it had almost 2,000 members. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998) The actual number of teachers who teach English and are not members of the ETA was likely to be far higher than the above figures indicated. The figures provided did not include casual teachers or take into account the fact that many casual teachers are teachers of English and are members of the ETA. Indeed, given that many beginning teachers would be in need of teaching
resources, it was highly likely that a high percentage of the memberships of the ETA would have been casual teachers and not permanent staff.

Also, it was common in schools for teachers of subjects other than English to be given English classes to fulfil their teaching load. For example, at School A there were two teachers from other subject areas teaching subject English, while at School B there were also two teachers from other subjects carrying English periods in their load.

In addition, membership of the ETA is open to teachers from non-government schools. While the ETA was unable to give a breakdown of its membership a check of the executive for 2001 showed that 25% of Councillors were teachers from non-government schools and 10% were university-based academics. Whilst not predictive of the membership of the entire ETA membership the data suggested that it was likely that a significant proportion of the 2,000 members of the ETA were from outside the NSW state school system. It is therefore, reasonable to argue that a relatively low percentage of NSW state school English teachers were able to take advantage of the benefits of membership of the only professional association for secondary English teachers in NSW.

**SYSTEM OVERLOAD**

Teacher informants repeatedly indicated that they felt overloaded by the demands of the education system within which they worked. Most perceived a lack of time, resources and support as major concerns and that those conditions had worsened in recent years.

Such claims drove the examination of related literature, as discussed in earlier sections of the thesis. The evidence within the literature suggested that the demands made of the secondary education system and of teachers had increased dramatically over the decades preceding the study. It is argued earlier in this thesis that the following influences added greatly to the complexities and demands placed on teachers of secondary English since the 1950s:

- higher enrolments
- climbing retention rates
- failure of government spending to keep pace with growth
- the evolving conceptualisations of literacy and language education
- the evolution of policies to reflect those changes
Chapter 5: Analysis

Overload and Teacher Practice

All informants indicated that the demands of the system, combined with a perceived lack of support, negatively impacted on the quality of their teaching and on their enjoyment of it. One of the major impacts appeared to be the sheer volume of teaching and administrative work expected of teachers in a typical working week. Class sizes, lack of time, changing student populations, a proliferation of policies intended for implementation in the classroom and a lack of resources all featured in informants responses regarding their sense of system overload. The following data slices illustrate informants perceptions:

Problem is the kids have changed ... we’ve got so many students we never used to get, it’s much harder.
(A2:fn3)

The nature of teaching has changed now, in that you get very little time to do what we are doing now, sitting here talking ... the main reason I’m here is teaching itself, and it’s just the pace, right, it’s more intense. You spend more time in caring for the kids.
(A3b:25)

It’s just such a hard job. We just have to work so hard.
(A4:fn4)

A3b: One, being worn down in the classroom. Two, maybe they were wild young radicals at some stage, beating their heads up against a brick wall and found them extremely hard walls to try to get anything through. And three you just get so wound up in what you are doing day to day that you haven’t got time to go home and [do anymore]
A4a: Yeh.
Q7. What causes that?
A3b: What causes it? Increased workload, the amount of work that you’re expected to do.
Q8. And what causes that?
A3b: The amount of teaching that you’re expected to do on your own bat, because you are not getting the professional development.
A4a: Or [teaching] programmes
(A3b & A4:3-4)

Q: Is it at all possible in schools to really take into account what kids need?
B2: Well, no, no, not if you’ve got a class of thirty, it’s very difficult.
(B2:30)

It’s ludicrous really, when you think about it. Really crazy. Well, you know, we are expected to do everything, teach, welfare, raise money, you know, fund raising, computers, sport, child protection, personal development, everything. And teach, how can you do it all?
... we have to do it all, now, but they don’t want to give us time to do it ... time, money resources, but time is the big one. We just have too many classes to teach.
(B5:fn37-38)

There are so many things about teaching where you feel that you haven’t got a complete handle on everything. You’ve got all the trial HSC stuff out of the way but you think, Oh, my god, I haven’t done anything about some other area. But there is not time to do that, unless you are going to be coming in on the weekend and not many people are going to be doing that. It’s finding time, there is no time built into the school situation.
(A2:6)
A number of informants indicated that they felt that a major contributor to their sense of overload was the fact that the DET and BOS bureaucracies did not distribute units of work or other teaching resources to teachers. (A3:3; A4:4; A5:13-7; A6:fn1; A7:fn2; B2:22; B4:17-18; B5:6-10) A number of informants stated that they believed the amount of support from the DET had declined in recent years. For example, Informant B4 stated that the situation had changed considerably since the 1970s and that, in contrast to earlier years, the bureaucracies provided no units of work all in recent years, including under the recent literacy initiatives. (B4:17-18) B4’s comments included:

Q: Hmm. The Department doesn’t provide you with anything like units of work, or anything?
B4: No. No. So, it’s purely an efficiency drive now.
... There was a lot more work done in the mid seventies and even the late seventies and early eighties. There were a lot more in-services, there were big in-service programs then. And also, teachers were younger. So I still have booklets in there with peoples names on them from when they were in their mid-twenties, right? And we’d get these groups that’d get together and actually I think a lot of it was federal funded, now to think of it. You’d have groups of eager young English teachers who go out and they would develop units and they would be printed up for the region. And then, the kinds of things that are in the ETA bulletin.

Q: Does that happen any more?
B4: No. You look around you will find, I’ve got a few I could show you. HSC texts and they have how you approach HSC texts, groups of peoples names who contributed. Not any more. (B4:18)

My own experience and inquiries made during the study revealed that the DET and BOS bureaucracies had no program or procedures to facilitate the exchange of ideas or sharing of teaching resources between English staff in schools. Each school was responsible for designing and implementing individual programs and procuring their own teaching resources. The problems associated with this overload appeared to be exacerbated by the condition of ‘isolation’, as discussed in the previous section.

Overload and Retention Rates

As discussed earlier, Informant A3 cited welfare as a particularly demanding area of policy to have impacted on teacher workload in recent years. (A3b:25) Informant A3 also claimed that changing retention rates had impacted on schools throughout the District. According to A3 policies and syllabus material failed to meet the needs of the students less likely to go onto further study. The example A3 cited was that the local steelworks were once the major employer in the District, with students leaving school in
year 10 to take up apprenticeships and other industrial work. A3 claimed that the steelworks was no longer a major employer of ex-students and that retention rates had steadily climbed to the point where many lesser motivated students remained at school to the final senior years while being forced to study the same content as students aiming for university entry. The following data slice illustrates A3’s perspective:

A3:  Well, when I first started at ____ High School, all boys school, at the end of year 10 if there were a hundred kids in a form, 70 would go straight to the steelworks. Automatic. Hardly without applying, they’d just go. It was just off, you’ll get a job at the steelworks, ‘ah yeah, don’t push me sir, it’s all over’.

And then that changed and we had a big emphasis on trans-ed classes, another scheme that followed, you know, get your bottom year 9 and 10 kids involved in programs that had work experience involved all year sequentially all year, so that they might be able to pull an apprenticeship or get some sort of work, get them away from traditional teaching, which they find totally irrelevant ...

Q48. What about the senior years? Are years 11 and 12 different now?
A3: Yes, they became different because a lot of kids were asked to come back and their parents put a lot of pressure on them to come back and they walk through the door on day 1 Year 11, ‘I don’t want to be here’. So, if you have the bottom Year 11 class, and it must be like this in a lot of schools out there, in Campbelltown, from friends who teach out there, its just a battle all year, because they just don’t want to be there. No dole, parents are pushing them, they don’t want to be there, teachers pushing them. They’ve got four things operating on their lives there, besides the normal things, all the things that happen to you when you’re a teenager. And it’s just too much.
(A3b:25)

Informant A3 also claimed that the makeup of Year 11 and 12 students had changed as a direct result of the DET policies on selective high schooling. A3 claimed that School A had lost the most academically able students to the local government selective high school. A3’s comments included:

after half the population of the school left, the cream go to selective or private schools, the cut-off for the selective school was IQ of 112, so we got everything under that. So we rarely see any top class kids, which is inconsistent with everyday life, which is a system we’re still operating under. So, the kids we have in probably 3 or 4 English and history classes, above Year 11, 11 and 12, are fairly run of the mill kids. There aren’t many high flyers at all, compared to the overall numbers. I’ve only struck high flyers in the school I was at before this. There are usually a couple of good kids here, who stay on.
(A3b: 25)

Informant A3’s impressions of the effects of better students being attracted away from comprehensive high schools to specialist schools were supported by data collected at School B. In response to declining enrolments and in an attempt to attract more academically inclined students School B introduced a selective class to each Year 7 intake. The class was known in School B as the ‘pilot class’. Examination of school prospectus for the period of the study showed that students were initially assessed by
feeder primary school Principals as to suitability for ‘targeting’ for consideration for the pilot class. In 2001 the system was formalised through the use of special entry exams for two ‘gifted and talented’ classes aimed at attracting top students away from selective and private schools. The pilot classes were taught a separate curriculum during the course of this study and were housed full-time in the only computer laboratory in the school available for general use. (B:Archivef9) During observations at the school I witnessed a number of heated debates amongst the teaching staff about the ethical implications of such policies in comprehensive high schools. Informant teachers all expressed concerns about matters of equity and workloads over the preferential treatment given to the pilot classes. All teacher informants at School B stated that they felt it was unfair that they were expected to meet a higher criteria of accountability to parents of the ‘pilot classes’, as well as to the school bureaucracy over ‘pilot class’ results. (B:BO1)

**Overload and School Management**

System overload appeared to penetrate each layer of the school system to which I was privy during the research process. Informant A1, Principal at School A, stated that their immediate supervisor, the District Superintendent, was responsible for 62 high schools within the District area. A1 stated that the situation meant that they rarely had any contact with their supervisor, a situation they found made the responsibility of their job much more stressful and difficult. (A1:15) A1 claimed that not only did the situation affect them, but their superiors as well. A1 indicated that, as a result of political control of contract structures, they had served under six District Superintendents during their time as Principal at School A. A1 claimed that the system placed stress on both Superintendents and Principals. The following extract illustrates A1’s points:

Who would want a job with 62 schools as their responsibility?
The other side of the coin is who would want a job where, I’ve had six immediate supervisors in six years. What tenure will you have in that position? And if your under 50 or just over 50 and still looking at 7 or 8 years to go, well, the writing on the wall is that these people have not been given a fair go.

(A1:16)

Informant A2, the Head Teacher of English at School A claimed that Head Teachers were so overwhelmed by their workload that they rarely got time to implement new
policies or develop new material with staff. Informant A2 pointed out that there were no ‘pro-rata’ timetable arrangements for Head Teachers. Head Teachers throughout NSW were expected to teach the same class load, regardless of the size of the faculty or school they were expected to administer. A2 was adamant that it was impossible for faculties to implement new policies unless their workload was reduced. The following data slice includes some of the key points raised by A2:

A2: Well, I think certainly less face to face [teaching]. Or for head teachers, probably for other teachers as well, would be the ideal thing. It’s just too big a job to do really well. You have your good patches, but you have lots of bad ones, too, because you’ve got too much on your plate, it’s too hard to do well. It’s too big a job. We don’t even have a pro-rata understanding in this game.

Now this is not a very big school, I’m still in some ways enjoying the fact that I have escaped from big Campbelltown high schools and yet I’m getting paid the same, yet I’ve got 580 kids here to deal with. The job is that much smaller, so I can actually see the edges of the job, whereas at Campbelltown, I had the same number of teaching periods and 1300 kids and a greater proportion of kids from impoverished backgrounds, poorer kids, disadvantaged backgrounds, who needed a lot more time and yet, no one had said, ‘Look, if you are going to be a head teacher in a school this size, then you may teach one less class, so you’ve got a bit more time to do all the administrative, discipline stuff.

The welfare stuff and so on. It seems too hard a task and nobody has tried to approach that. Money is not the answer, because that could cause such a division between teachers. That no one wants to propose that you should be paid more according to the size of your job. But time seems to me, I know that means money for the Department, they take your class away from you, someone else is going to have to teach it. They’re going to have to find the staff elsewhere, but it’s the only way to make a big difference to what we do.

There comes a point at which you just have to accept the situation you are in anyway, I can’t change that, I can’t find more time here. But I might be able to find a couple of interesting ideas which I might be able to implement, then again I might come back with a whole folder of stuff which is yet another folder full of stuff on my desk, which should be done. [but is not]

Informant A2 had considerable experience as a playwright, screenwriter and actor but stated that, due to work overload it was almost impossible to share their expertise with junior staff:

Q14. Do you get a chance to share that expertise with other, more junior, teachers?
A2: Again, it’s all, well, when would I do it? I can’t take them out of class, without having some relief there. I can’t pay anyone to relieve them, so the only way I can do it is by sending their classes to the quadrangle and that’s not acceptable to the school community, either.

So there really is, it’s a very difficult thing, sure you share ideas in the staff room or in a staff meeting, programmes on peoples’ desks, but as far as sitting together, watching someone else, working with someone on a class, it can’t be done. It is frustrating, because it’s, as you say, sitting there watching is such a new role for a teacher, isn’t it. It’s a luxury really, isn’t it.

Informant A3 supported the view that there was insufficient time in a teacher’s day to allow them to complete their job adequately. They also linked overload to insufficient
resourcing, claiming that lack of release time for colleagues added to their own isolation and work overload as a Head Teacher. The following data slice illustrates A3’s position:

A3b: In the past, when there has been some professional development money around, I could get two days for five teachers to and we would go to a club and we would work like crazy, have a nice lunch but work like crazy and re-write completely, you’re doing this one, you’re doing this one, now I’m doing the lot myself.
I can’t ask him to do it, because he’s got a full load on [indicates A4a] He’s teaching more than a full load, full load, full load. The people upstairs too. [indicates all other teacher desks]
So, you know, I’m prepared to do it in a fairly scant way myself, in a bread and butter way. (A3b & A4:3-4)

The perceived lack of professional development and its impact on system overload is explored further later in this section of the chapter.

**Overload and Policies**

A key contributor to system overload appeared to be the plethora of new policies and syllabus documents issued by the DET and BOS bureaucracies in recent years. Most informants indicated that they felt too many policies had been issued with too little support to assist their implementation. The Principal of School A claimed that a proliferation of policies relating to social education was of particular concern to staff at School A, which had a significant enrolment of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. (A1:20) Informant A1 linked political control of policies to the sense of system overload being experienced by teachers. For example, Informant A1 stated:

> I think syllabus changes have again, been political, not the content but the fact that the changes have occurred. Ahhh, there’s a drug problem, let’s include drug ed. here, and homophobia’s a problem, we must teach about homophobia. Those types of things have put teachers off. The attitude that there is a problem in society, schools will fix it by teaching the kids. (A1:20)

Informant A1 claimed that teachers were simply asked to do too many things and that the diversity of policies ensured that teachers were unable to do any ‘well’. According to A1 staff have been unable to focus on areas of need due to workload demands. A1 cited the ELLA test as an example, claiming that the results were not adequately followed up because of the diversity of policies teachers have been expected to address in the classroom. In the following data slice A1 illustrates their point by citing some of the policies teachers were expected to address in recent years:
Now that’s the concern, the information we have had back from the ELLA test I think have been extremely beneficial, the only problem is I don’t think we are having the time to draw upon them as much as we would like to because of things like, sexual assault, drug education, right all the other things. My problem is, at the moment Glenn, is that I say to people in influential positions, ‘What do you want us to do well?’ Because we are not going to do any of these well. Give us one, two or three things and we will do them well, give us 10 to 15 things to address and we will just nibble at the surface.

Q18. What kind of response to that are you getting from above?
A1: They, I think, the educational side of their conscience says ‘yes’ but they are all politicians now. Once you move out of the Principals role you are on a contract and you sustain that contract by doing what you are asked to do.
(A1:10)

Informant B4 confirmed that they had experienced similar problems with implementing new policies in their role as literacy coordinator at School B. B4 claimed that policies had often competed with each other for a ‘minimal amount of time’ and that staff often back lashed against the perceived overloading, refusing to participate in school programs aimed at implementing policies involving literacy and welfare. (B4:27) B4 particularly singled out the Agenda ‘97 literacy initiative as having been implemented without adequate resourcing. They also linked the policies to ideological control and accountability through literacy assessment. (B4:30-49) Comments included the following data slices:

what I don’t like about it [literacy strategy 97] is the part that you are not given the resources to follow everything up.

You get all these books and all this information and all these tests but if you are a leading teacher, you’ve got time to deal with it, if you are not a leading teacher, then you don’t deal with it, unless you want to work all the time.

... And it is also made more difficult by the squeezing of funds, the user pays principles, you know, the idea that everybody has to account for themselves. It’s this whole kind of looking over your shoulder mentality all the time.

(B4:30&49)

Informant A3 compared teachers’ workloads to a ‘peasant in the 18th century’ and claimed that the overloaded work burden prevented teachers from contributing to policy consultation processes. The following is a data slice from an interview with Informant A3:

A3: It’s probably a treadmill, the amount of work we are now expected to do is a bit similar to somebody who was a peasant in the 18th century, who got so tired during the day, from just doing enough work to get food on the table for tomorrow, that you don’t think above the basic level of the school. So your thinking doesn’t go above the level of your own school. It’s probably in ten years you realise that your thoughts, even if you went higher, they just don’t go anywhere. Everything just filters down, but very little filters back up. That’s what happens.

(A3: 19)
As already discussed, most teachers indicated that the demands of assessment policies such as the year 10 School Certificate (SC) and year 12 Higher School Certificate (HSC) exerted great influence on their teaching. In a similar way most also indicated that compulsory assessment added a great deal to the stress of their teaching loads. Informant B2 described the demands of assessment in the following data slice:

B2: I guess the changes with the curriculum, the HSC and School Certificate again, with lack of support to go with that. Time the time factor is always a problem, there seems to be far more administrative things that you have to do these days than what we did previously.

And I think stress, I think stress is a lot more, as well and I think that goes back to accountability as well, I mean at ___, the old Principal, he’s not there now, but if a student didn’t do well at any assessment task or did really poorly in the HSC, they were pulled over the coals, so they were sort of intimidated that they could never fail a student in an assessment task or they were accountable. Well, it must be you, you’re the one not teaching them properly, how could this student fail?

So there was a huge problem, there ...
(B2:36)

B5 stated they believed new language and literacy policies were implemented with an unrealistic lack of concern for teacher workloads. According to B5 teachers who did not understand new policies or who were overworked were highly unlikely to attempt to implement the policies in their classrooms. Informant B5 displayed their disdain for the policy process in NSW schools in the following data slice:

basically we have new policies, someone is sitting on his arse there, just doing nothing, just thinking how can we change this and all of that, looks good on paper for him. So, they change things and, given school and all, how many times are you going to implement that? And um, you know, it’s kind of scary. It’s scary for us, to have all of these. You need a transition time, to learn, you are comfortable with it, and then you teach it.
(B5:8)

A5 claimed that new policies were often impossible to implement and had been written by people who were out of touch with modern classrooms. For example:

I think someone who has actually been teaching who’s been out there in the workforce and hasn’t actually been stuck in academia for long periods of time, has actually been out there teaching in schools.

Because I find that the documents that come through from time to time actually seem to be written without the reality, we end up with something you can’t actually do, or teach. I think we should actually have some input and it shouldn’t be someone from a private school, either. It should be someone from Airds, or someone from Hurstville, someone from a high school should be included so it actually encompasses the large scope of ability of the kids now ... we need people who are actually in touch with that.
(A5:17)
Informant B5 held some knowledge of Functional Grammar and attempted to informally assist other staff members at School B in their own time. B5 claimed that the ad-hoc and arbitrary nature of in-house professional development regarding the latest policies confused teachers and added to their sense of overload. According to B5 the implementation of policies contributed to overload, which in turn contributed to survival strategies and a sense of alienation from the theories behind the policies. Informant B5 also linked theory deficit, lack of teacher knowledge of theory bases underpinning policies, as a bar to the effective implementation of new policies. An example of Informant B5’s views is contained in the following data slice:

I think it is just a process that you feel threatened, you’re not used to it. It’s not that they don’t want to do it. They want to do it. And so, second thing, stemming from that, is there’s no time. All these demands placed upon us, all these changes brought about. You are just supposed to do it in this, suddenly a consultant will come and talk about grammatical metaphor and nominalisation, Functional Grammar, one hour and they expect the teachers to know. And all they do is confuse people.

That consultant has spent time, has had a lot of time to learn all these concepts, right and then they come. In fact, a lot of consultants don’t know enough about it themselves. They flounder around in it themselves, which makes it more difficult to convince your audience.

Q: What’s been your experience, you’ve obviously seen that going on in schools?
B5: Yeah, people just shake their heads and go. Some of them will go and have a one-off lesson in class, using what you have given them. And then they forget about it, because you feel frightened. If you don’t know, if you don’t know, if you don’t understand, how can you teach it? (B5:6-7)

Informants B2 and A5 supported the views of informant B5 regarding the difficulties in teaching policies they did not understand but specifically linked the problem to the ways in which new policies generally inferred that old approaches were to be disbanded. (A5:20 & B2:22) The view that new policies were dismissive of older approaches was common amongst informants and was supported by the review of literature presented earlier in the thesis. Comments included the following data slices:

I think it’s probably gone a bit overboard now. ... Like, you know, the whole emphasis on grammar, which you know, gets rid of all the content you were doing before. So, it takes up a lot more time, where before you’d just do it with your work, anyway, basically, not whole units of stuff on it. (B2:22)

My dilemma is when the baby gets thrown out with the bath water, to use the old cliché, is when one theory comes in and lets chuck all the rest. And the same goes with grammar, to a certain extent, I find that hard. (A5:20)
In addition to normal assessment procedures Informant A6 indicated that the demands of the new literacy policies had forced them to teach in ways that were counterproductive for students. A6 cited School A’s response to the state-wide *Agenda '97 Literacy Strategy* as an example in the following data slice:

A6: Sometimes I know I am doing the right thing in regards to, that I’m doing the right thing in regards to my own ideas, regarding literacy, but in regard to, sometimes I’m not happy in regard to stuff I have to give them because I’ve been told I have to. Like those worksheets. It’s policy. I have to do it.

You know, the hierarchy say give it to them, I’m the shitkicker, so I just give them what I have to and they complain. (A6:9)

Informant A6 was alluding to accountability in the above data slice. As discussed earlier, executive staff at School A had implemented a school policy of issuing grammar sheets to students for homework each week as a response to the demands of ELLA and *Agenda 97* literacy initiative. Teachers were required to issue and mark the grammar worksheets during class time and compile class results to be forwarded to the Head Teacher each term. (Archive: Afl)

Similarly, as discussed earlier, School B adopted the use of grammar and Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold sheets in class. (Archive: Bfl2) Informant B2 also claimed that accountability for HSC policies had greatly increased stress levels at their previous school. According to B2 the Principal at their old school had held teachers accountable for any poor student results and that the situation had contributed a great deal to the stress levels among staff. The following data slice illustrates the point:

B2: I guess the changes with the curriculum, the HSC and School Certificate again, with lack of support to go with that. Time the time factor is always a problem, there seems to be far more administrative things that you have to do these days than what we did previously.

And I think stress, I think stress is a lot more, as well and I think that goes back to accountability as well, I mean at Kirrawee, the old principal, he’s not there now, but if a student didn’t do well at any assessment task or did really poorly in the HSC, they were pulled over the coals, so they were sort of intimidated that they could never fail a student in an assessment task or they were accountable. Well, it must be you, you’re the one not teaching them properly, how could this student fail? So there was a huge problem, there. (B2:36)

The notion that compulsory assessment added greatly to teacher perceptions of overloading was demonstrated at School B towards the end of this study. As discussed earlier, English staff were held accountable by the District Superintendent for poor student achievement, as revealed by ELLA, School Certificate and Higher School
Certificate exam results. Teachers were directed to attend a meeting out of class time in order to be addressed by the Superintendent about the need for them to improve the results or face a disciplinary revue by the DET. The incident caused a great deal of anxiety amongst all staff at School B and in August, 2001 led to the resignation of the Head Teacher of English. The revue continued at the time of writing and was clearly adding a great deal to the workload of teaching staff, who were expected to re-write all programs and courses in their own time. (B: English Revue Papers f10)

Informant B4 claimed that teachers simply did not have the resources to implement new policies. B4 cited the failure of high schools to implement the *Writing K-12* (1987) document as an example and stated:

>The thing is, here again, it’s a time and resources management thing. Right? Because what you do, when you see a need then you teach it, well if you’ve got five classes of thirty kids each, you’ve got a hundred and fifty needs at different times. So, it doesn’t work to have individual programming for everybody. So, you think well, it just gets left in the too hard basket. (B4:20)

**Overload and Policy Releases**


A new HSC syllabus was also implemented in 2000 for examination in 2001. A search of BOS electronic archives revealed syllabus documentation for the two senior years of English schooling alone totalled 34 documents and equalled thousands of pages of guidelines for implementation of the new policies. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2001c) Those figures did not take into account policies relating to other areas which teachers of English might be expected to incorporate into their teaching, such as: child protection, talented and gifted learners, learners with special needs, boys
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education, the middle years etc. The total number of policy documents related to language and literacy education issued to NSW secondary English teachers during the course of the study represented an extremely large body of professional knowledge and placed obvious demands on teacher practice in the classroom. It was highly doubtful whether it was possible for any teacher to effectively understand, much less implement, such a vast array of educational policies and theories as appeared to be expected by the DET and BOS bureaucracies.

Overload, Policies and Professional Development

Teacher informants often connected the perceived overloading of policies with a lack of professional development to assist in understanding and implementing the new policies. All teachers reported that they were rarely professionally developed in implementing new policies or syllabus documents. Simply put, they were often expected to implement approaches they did not understand and were given no additional resources to assist their implementation. The lack of professional development was related by informants directly to cuts in funding in recent years. The following data slices illustrate informants’ perceptions of the lack of professional development and its contribution to a sense of system overload:

And as we all get older and we all get further and further away from our training, and the staff development funds have been cut back to such an abysmal level that no one can do anything now. The only people who have been able to do any professional development on this faculty are the two who are sharing a job and so they’ve taken, gone to a staff development thing on the day when they are not being employed. So it doesn’t cost the Department anything, except the registration fee, which we can barely make the registration fee for a day. It’s unbelievable. I think it works out about $20 a head, that’s all we get for professional development. That’s all we’ve got in the school.
(A2a:3)

Well, I think the main problem is we don’t have professional development anymore, very little of it, it’s very hard. Unless you’ve got someone, a head teacher, who’s saying, right, let’s do this and we’ll do all this together at the same time. It’s virtually left up to your own, you either do it on your own or you don’t. There’s no accountability with it.
(B2:10)

my only view is that it generally that it all happens too fast, and you’re given no support and you’re given no time and you’re given no time really, nothing to really modify it. I guess I find that really frustrating, and that’s the way the Department works, and has worked ever since I’ve been here, since 1980, so um, I find that really frustrating.

Do I get upset about different policies, I can generally see most often validity in what they are trying to do, and that sometimes is widening for me, too ... But I do get frustrated that nobody wants to give me time to do it or nobody wants to help me do it, that there are no real consultants,
as far as I am concerned, anymore, there are consultants but they are locked away in their little sheds and they get to go to all the in-services but the rest of us don’t get to go anymore. That sort of thing I find very frustrating.

(A5:24)

Informants reported attempting to fill the void caused by the lack of opportunities for professional development but claimed that they were forced to do so in their own time and in addition to their normal duties. According to informants the situation ensured that the professional development was addressed in only a superficial way and added to their workload. Comments included:

A3b: In the past, when there has been some professional development money around, I could get 2 days for five teachers to and we would go to a club and we would work like crazy, have a nice lunch but work like crazy and re-write completely, you’re doing this one, you’re doing this one, now I’m doing the lot myself. I can’t ask him to do it, because he’s got a full load on [indicates A4] He’s teaching more than a full load, full load, full load. The people upstairs too. [indicates all other teacher desks]

So, you know, I’m prepared to do it in a fairly scant way myself, in a bread and butter way, which I think will work.

(A3b & A4:4)

Q: So, just quickly, what do you perceive as some of the biggest problems facing English teachers?
B2: Well, lack of professional development is one of the main things, and as I said, with all these policies coming through, unless you are getting the professional development to go with it, you’re relying on second-hand sources all the time and other people to try to do the work for you and it’s just never the same as actually getting it yourself, first-hand anyway.

Q: Do you feel like you understand the policies?
B2: Not all the time, no. No.

(B2:23)

Informant B5, who held some knowledge of a Functional View of Language, also reported that they had assisted another school in an informal in-service situation but was unable to do very much to assist colleagues in School B. The school could not afford to pay for replacement staff and B5 stated their workload did not permit any time to help with staff development. (B5:3)

B4 reported that, despite being responsible for implementing the new literacy policies across all key learning areas in School B, they received no professional development in the policies and no support or resources for implementing the policies. Neither were they allocated any time off face-to-face teaching to assist with implementing strategies or assisting other staff. The following data slice illustrates B4’s position:
Q: So, having spoken about spelling and grammar. You are the literacy consultant here at the school, aren’t you?
B4: Coordinator. Supposedly.

Q: Does that mean you do it or someone else does it?
B4: No, I do it. But again, there is the problem of resources because some schools have leading teachers and where you have leading teachers, there is a lot more done in the literacy field. Right, like ___ had a leading teacher. ____, they have fantastic literacy programs.

Q: How do they decide which schools get a leading teacher, do you know?
B4: It’s on numbers.

Q: Right, so [School B] is not big enough to have a leading teacher?
B4: It’s not big enough and it’s not in any disadvantaged schools criteria at all.

Q: So, what kind of support have you received, as a literacy coordinator?
B4: Lots of outside, after school, things you can go to.

Q: No release time from teaching?
B4: No, none.

Q: Not since you started as coordinator?
B4: No, not since there has been an actual literacy coordinator.

Q: Wow, nothing from the literacy strategy 97 initiative?
B4: No. There’s no release time, none at all.

Q: So, you are doing it all on top of your normal work load?
(B4:22)

As discussed earlier, Informant L5 was instrumental in developing DET and BOS policies governing language and literacy education. It was significant that, as a leader in the field of a Functional View of Language and Genre Theory, L5 was highly critical of the sheer volume of policy documents released in NSW in recent years. L5 matter-of-factly stated that teachers would obviously have been overloaded by the burdens of the policies and that the overloading must lead to ad-hoc interpretations and implementation of the policies in the classroom. L5 blamed lack of funding and inadequate resourcing for poor implementation of the policies. The following excerpt illustrates L5’s position:

L5: I mean, if you think of what they [Dept.] have given them in the last few years, and even more so primary teachers, do they think it is going to be possible to implement all those documents?

Q: So, you are not surprised that people with that kind of background, that they are going to have problems implementing these approaches and interpreting (indicating Genre model)
L5: No. What happened, in terms of K-6, that left itself wide open to this interpretation, because you’ve got that ‘scope and sequence’ of grammar, sitting there, all on two pages, with no support.

If I hadn’t put out the PETA book there would be absolutely nothing to advertise exactly how to implement this. It’s bound to lead to people taking them and teaching them one by one,
with decent support material, although the modules, I think, should give them a good model. And no professional development, of course they're going to do all the wrong things with it.

Q: Has there been anywhere for you to voice your concerns about that?
L5: Oh, nooo, because the Department says it has no money for professional development, people were already in-serviced in K-6, they don’t need it anymore.

No, it really does astound me that they think that, just by putting out that scope and sequence [K-6 support document], that that’s settled the issue of grammar.

(L5:30)

The term professional development appeared to encompassed employer support in understanding policies and employer resourcing to meet policies, rather than development in theoretical frameworks valued by the profession. For example, teachers often referred to the provision of time off classes for preparation of new units of work for lessons as ‘professional development’. Similarly, teacher informants also considered training in employer policies and preferred practices to be ‘professional development’.

(A6:fn1-2; B4:18-25; B2:10; A5:24; B5:7; A3b & A4:4; B5:3; A7:fn1) There seemed to be little distinction between professional development in matters of profession-based theoretical knowledge, as opposed to matters of employer policies and responsibilities.

Some teachers indicated they were prepared to pay for their own education, however, most claimed that relief from classroom teaching, in order to attend courses, was almost impossible to obtain. (A2; A5; A4; B4; B1; B3) This created resentment towards the idea of both having to pay for the course and to take it on a non-school day. Informant B5 illustrated the general feeling amongst staff about paying for courses privately and attending programs on weekends:

I mean if they want us to go and teach it, they want us to go and do all these courses and learn about it. They are put on the weekends, they are put on the holidays, and money is not available. Like there is something happening run by the ETA very soon I think, and that is $90 or whatever it is, it’s on a Saturday, and I was prepared to go on a Saturday, but the school doesn’t have the money to pay for it. I’ve got a family ... and I can’t afford $90 just for a course for work.

(B5:7)

B4 claimed that the lack of professional development support meant that teachers were rarely able to plan and implement new approaches appropriately. B4 included the recent implementation of a Functional View of Language and Text Types in their observations but singled out the implementation of Whole Language approaches to illustrate their point. According to B4 a lack of support led teachers to implement Whole Language approaches in misinformed ways, particularly the teaching of specifics of language use in context. B4 claimed that teachers simply did not have the time or resources to
implement new policies in appropriate ways. The following data slice indicates B4’s perspective:

Well, the Whole Language was to make everything relevant. You know, rather than taking out teaching grammar, spelling as separate from a context. It was to try to make the language meaningful, so that everything you taught had to be taught within a context of meaning.

But, what people started doing was saying okay, well we’re going to have a unit on food, so you know, because everyone is interested in food. So, we’ll find poems on food, we’ll find, we’ll write stories about food, we’ll do recipes on food, we’ll look at the different kinds of writing or Genres or whatever you want to call it, but it’s all going to do with the theme of food. Okay. But it takes a lot of preparation to do that well. And it’s very easy just to make it busy work, rather than making it meaningful and I think part of the problem there is, that if they really wanted that to work and this is where teachers were supposed to be given the opportunity to develop their own lessons, and stuff, but the structure of the workplace didn’t change so that they had the time and the energy to do that.

Q: In what ways?
B4: Well, you know, so it goes from a thing where you are told week by week what to teach, to suddenly okay you can now make up all your own units. But teaching Whole Language effectively takes a lot of thought and a lot of development and you cannot be teaching the same number of classes with the same number of periods per week year after year and have that time to develop those things unless you are doing it all at home in your own time.

(B4:17)

It was significant that B4, while showing some knowledge of the nature of Whole Language approaches, indicated that the wider view was that Whole Language excluded the teaching of grammar. B4 attributed that misunderstanding to the lack of resources, rather than to any inadequacy in Whole Language pedagogy. B4 stated:

Q: What happened to grammar, spelling and punctuation amongst all that?
B4: Oh, well see that is what got neglected, because the idea was that people just pick it up. Now, here again, I think that that’s part of the swinging pendulum, because there is an assumption made, hang on I’ve got to go back and think about this.

It’s a reaction to things, you know, so much spelling and grammar had been so boring and deadly, so the pendulum swung away from it but then people stopped teaching the spelling and grammar in a consistent or conscientious manner, because it was just an irritation or something and so then, it was just neglected because it’s harder to put that into a unit and have continuity from year to year to year.

Q: It seems a lot of people just think Whole Language means you don’t have to teach grammar or spelling?
B4: Yep. That’s right.

Q: Do you think that is a correct interpretation of Whole Language?
B4: No. The thing is, here again, it’s a time and resources management thing. Right? Because what you do, when you see a need then you teach it, well if you’ve got five classes of thirty kids each, you’ve got a hundred and fifty needs at different times. So, it doesn’t work to have individual programming for everybody. So, you think well, it just gets left in the too hard basket.

Q: Is that your experience? That a lot of teachers did leave it in the too hard basket, because of those system constraints?
B4: Yeah, I mean I think so, I mean, this is another thing, too you see, we used to sit around in the staff rooms in the late 70s and early 80s and actually talk more about things I think. We had
more time, somehow. Whereas, now I couldn’t tell you what other people do in their classrooms, the only things I know what other people do are what we do as common tasks. I have no idea what other teachers do in their classrooms.

Q: How does the amount of professional development you were getting back then compare to today?
B4: There’s nothing now. There was much more twenty years ago. (B4:20)

Overload and Teacher Preservice Education

Student teacher informants also complained of system overload during their GDE course. A major cause of concern for informants appeared to be the volume of work and assessment tasks expected to be covered during the course. A number of informants indicated that they did not feel the level of work was a problem, but rather the amount needed to be completed in a short period of time. Almost all informants considered the one year GDE program inadequate to the task. Comments included:

I don’t think that a dip ed. will ever give you as much as people hope. I don’t know, I mean what can you do in a year?
...I don’t think it’s hard, there’s just a lot of it ... the dip ed. here, isn’t that, in terms of academic, I mean I did chemistry in my undergrad degree, hey my chemistry stuff, as well as English / history, my chemistry stuff was actually harder than what we are doing here. It’s just there’s a lot of it. And there is a lot of stuff and a lot of research involved in it.
... It’s time consuming, there is a lot of research, there’s a lot of thinking, but I don’t think it’s academically demanding. I don’t know, maybe that’s being a bit arrogant, but I don’t think it’s, compared to my last three years, I’ve done an enormous amount of work, but um, in terms of yeah, I don’t know. (S1:10-11)

S3: There is a gap, an ocean, between what’s being taught and what’s going on in classrooms ... The workload in the dip ed also stops you from getting into the theory. Enormous workload, practically 20 hours a day ... Too broad, the theory, yet I enjoyed learning it. I had more time, I did it over 2 years. I had it over the other kids. They just didn’t have time to get out the 10 books or whatever for an assignment. (S3:1)

Q12. Just looking at your handouts. I understand that your prac. was early in the year, is that right?
S4a: We had two pracs. We had a two week prac early in first session.
Q13. Two weeks?
S4a: Two weeks. There were a lot of complaints about that, actually, we thought it was too early. We were only here for a couple of weeks and all of a sudden we were on prac. And even the history lecturer said that that was just far too early.
... I felt the Dip. Ed. didn’t mean a lot of learning. Absolutely. Umm, I feel dealing with the stressfulness of what we were going through, I mean I wasn’t prepared for that. Dealing with stress is what counts. (S4a:4&21)
the lecturers tell us not to overload our students with assessment, however, they don’t practice what they preach. They have over assessed us purely for the sake of assessment. As a result, I feel really burnt out.
(S9:7)

A number of students claimed that they found their teaching practicum in schools to be difficult, which added to their feelings of overload. (S1:6; S3:2; S4a:12; S8:2; S9:1&6-8) Student behaviour appeared to be a major concern on practicum, along with a lack of support regarding teaching material and resources. Most informants also indicated they felt inadequately prepared to take full advantage of their practicum as a learning experience. The following data slices represent some of the opinions of informants:

S1: I don’t feel like I’m equipped to teach ... And, yeah, I, you try your best. On prac. I mean I had a pretty horrific prac in many ways ... But I mean I had kids, you know, it was just tough, because they were not um, not a high level of academic, like they don’t have, they have mainly in Year 11 and 12 its almost all contemporary English. They have one, general English class. There is just no drive, they don’t have all the supported background, so a lot of them don’t have the basic English skills that you would expect. I had kids in senior classes that could not write a sentence. That was sort of a bit of a shock. You know, a catholic girls school background, you don’t expect it.
... though even you know there are people in the world who don’t have these skills but until you are faced with it, you sort of, I had kids in year 7, had awful trouble writing sentences. You really have to go back to the basics and I don’t think an arts degree prepares us for that very well at all.
(S1:6)

S2: It’s not that I didn’t find my prac out at rewarding, I did, but it was totally different. I think maybe when I first went into my Dip. Ed. and out on prac. I assumed a lot of things and now I’ve learnt not to assume. I just couldn’t believe how a lot of students have problems, not just like education, but at home.
I found ___ High great, I hated my year 8. I just dreaded going to teach them. The whole time, it was like, put your rulers down, stop having pen fights, stop stealing liquid paper, get out. And every day it a detention and I just thought it was terrible. I was always having to raise my voice to the same people, all the time ... I used to always come out of that class really worked up. I always looked forward to teaching years 9 and 11 and I found the good students really suffered in year 8.
(S2:5)

S3: My idealism needed to be moulded a little more. My weakness is that I find it hard to create a presence. The Dip Ed didn’t do that. I just felt thrown in ... If at uni. they had given me some decent procedures. I’m used to that in nursing, if something goes wrong, you follow a procedure ... I didn’t get the good practical advice I needed to cope in the classroom ... The teachers just said, 'You’re from the uni you should know everything’.

Like, my first week I programmed in to give year nine drama for two periods on Friday afternoon. Nobody said anything, the teachers just sat back and let me go ahead. Then the head teacher just came down and said, ‘I thought you’d fall apart with that’. Why didn’t he tell me before it happened?
... I felt there is an ageist thing there, people think you’re crazy to want to be a teacher. They don’t like your enthusiasm.
(S3:1)

It appeared that student teacher informants’ sense of overload extended to their experiences with language and literacy theories during the GDE. During an observation
session with the entire English Methods cohort every student in the cohort complained
about the attempt by the Education Faculty to introduce a four hour language and
literacy component to the GDE program during 1997. The entire cohort complained that
the content was too difficult to access in such a short period and that they had attended
only two of the four lectures in protest. (L2:fn3) Subsequent interviews with Lecturer
Informants L1, L2, L3 and L6 confirmed that the experiment was cancelled due to
objections by the students. According to L1 and L6 students complained that they had
been unable to understand the content of the lectures and did not have enough time to in
the course to solve the problem. (L1:17-18; L2:fn3; L6:2) Informant L6 stated that
student assignment tasks were cancelled and those handed in were not marked. (L6:fn3)

Another example of the crowded curriculum of the GDE program was given
during an interview with student teacher Informant S1. In an attempt to gain an insight
into the type of content the students dealt with in the GDE I listed a number of
educational topics, asking S1 whether they had studied them. All received negative
replies until I asked about cognition, to which S1 replied, ‘We have, in Psychology,
with _____, that was yesterday’. (S1:9) It was surprising to learn that the course had,
in fact, received its one and only hour lecture on cognition the day before. A check
of the psychology course outline revealed that each major topic received one lecture per
item for the duration of the semester. For example, students were expected to cover
behaviourism one week and cognition the next, before moving onto the nature of
intelligence the next. Within 8 one hour lectures the program sought to cover an
extremely broad range of theories of psychological development. (Archives:Lf3)

There was also evidence that overloading of lecturer informants was also
contributing to the nature of the GDE program. As discussed earlier, a number of
lecturer informants were quite candid about their perceptions of the state of the GDE
program. For example, Informant L1 stated that they felt the program was too crowded
and that it should be a minimum of three to four years to be effective. (L1:15) Informant
L3 also claimed that the GDE program did not have time or sufficient resources to
address literacy and language learning theories adequately and that GDE students rarely
showed much understanding of language or literacy learning in their teaching strategies.
(L3:2-4)

During an interview with L5, a senior academic involved in the Education Faculty
at the university stated that work overload and the difficulties inherent to addressing the
obvious problems in the GDE meant that few academics were prepared to tackle the problem. L5’s comments included the following excerpts:

Well, I guess until the last couple of years or so, we just thought that it was such a monolith we couldn’t break into it anyhow, to force it in, obviously you can’t fit it in one year, it’s too hard in one year, you know, they do all these other things, and if we jump up and down about it, then we have to do something about it. Not only in terms of, I mean we never articulated it, but I’m sure what we had in the back of our minds was first of all we would have had to do all of the lobbying, develop the program and subjects and then teach it. And nobody has the time to do that, mentally you have to put down the shutters at some point. And if you’re involved in the graduate program and the undergraduate program, to take on another program, I couldn’t do it. So, when ever the issue of the Dip. Ed. comes up, I say right, we’ll do what we can but we just can’t fit anything on. (L5:29)

Summary of the Institutional Phase of Disempowerment

Professional isolation and system overload appeared to be intertwined with the professional possess of the professional phase. The contexts created by the conditions of political control, professional powerlessness and theory deficit ensured that teachers remained isolated not only physically but professionally. Teacher informants claimed that professional development resources, which had once been plentiful, had been denied them by their political masters. This was despite an enormous growth in new theories and policies over the same period.

The overload in both school populations and policies placed huge demands on both teachers and teacher educators. Those systemic demands appeared not to have been sufficiently resourced or addressed by political masters. Once again, given a lack of professional structures, teachers were unable to actively intervene in the conditions presented here in an organised manner. The institutional phase of disempowerment, therefore, appeared to be cyclic in nature. The cycle of the institutional phase of disempowerment is presented below in figure 5.11:
The combined, recursive conditions of the institutional phase created the context within which the personal processes of professional disempowerment thrived.

**THE PERSONAL PHASE OF DISEMPOWERMENT**

The third and final phase of process in the grounded theory was conceptualised as the 'personal phase of disempowerment'. The personal phase was so named because the use of the grounded theory paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) showed that the data suggested that the actions/interactions conceptualised within the conditions of the phase were mostly those of individuals or small groups rather than of political bodies or institutions, as was the case in the first two phases. The personal phase was, of course, contextualised within the larger cycle of disempowerment and stood in close, dependent relationships to the other two phases. While the personal phase was set within the context of the combined political and institutional phases it was comprised specifically of the following four conditions:

- Survival
- Visibility
- System Subversion
- Alienation
Chapter 5: Analysis

Survival

Teacher informants indicated that they had several strategies in place to assist them to cope with the demands of what they perceived to be an overloaded education system. Such strategies appeared to be used as a defence mechanism to protect both informants and school students from what were perceived to be detrimental aspects of the public education system in NSW. I originally conceptualised this phenomenon as 'resistance' but the use of the grounded theory paradigm revealed that resistance was merely a 'strategy' involved in a process of coping with a number of factors. Resistance, therefore, became a sub-category and the use of such strategies was re-conceptualised as the condition of 'survival'. The term was derived from data where informants detailed their reactions to what they perceived as the overloaded nature of the education system.

Survival and Teacher Practice

Survival as a concept appeared at all layers of the two schools examined. The Principal of School A, Informant A1, claimed that the move to three year contracts for all positions above Principal in NSW had led to a position where senior educational bureaucrats were not prepared to speak out to protect the interests of students. (A1:9-11)

Informant A1 claimed that, given that there were no professional bodies with the power to regulate teacher interests, senior educators could only ensure their own professional survival by compromising their educational ideals and acquiescing to the demands of their political masters. According to A1:

They, I think, the educational side of their conscience says “yes” but they are all politicians now. Once you move out of the Principals role you are on a contract and you sustain that contract by doing what you are asked to do.
(A1:10)

At the school level A1 claimed the excessive demands placed on schools by policies meant they were only able to address policies in a superficial manner. A1 stated:

My problem is, at the moment Glenn, is that I say to people in influential positions, What do you want us to do well? Because we are not going to do any of these well. Give us one, two or three things and we will do them well, give us 10 to 15 things to address and we will just nibble at the surface.
(A1:10)
As discussed earlier, A1 linked the overloading of the school system to the three year political election cycle. (A1:11) A1 stated quite openly that concerns about attempting to meet all the demands of policies within the overloaded school system led them to selectively choose which parts of those policies to adopt or ignore. According to A1 they ‘prioritised’ which new policies to implement based on their professional opinion as to the benefit of the policies to their clients, the students in the school. (A1:10-11) It is important to note that I did not perceive such survival strategies as a negative attitude by teachers. The attempts by A1 (and other informants) to reduce impacts on students appeared to be an attempt to maintain the criteria of a profession, as discussed earlier, whereby a professional remains above all, client-oriented. The following data slice illustrates A1’s position:

we are working on now, three year cycles [reference to government election cycle]

Q20. Do you think that affects what you do?
A1: It makes me focus on what is important and what this school will do, as opposed to having to do things that the Department expects to do. Things that, perhaps if I put on the back-burner, would eventually fade away, quality assurance has come and gone, performance management contracts have come and gone, profiles didn’t even come, yet we talked about it for a long time. You could go on with a number of things. And that’s just in the last four years.

Q21. So, how do you cope with that?
A1: You’ve just got to prioritise what is important, on kids in the school and anything that comes in, you’ve got to work positively with it. That’s why I speak positively of ELLA, that has been a plus but the political push, I suppose, behind the child sexual assault issue, I’m not denying that that is an issue that had to be addressed, but it’s been done on overkill I think, to the point where many teachers feel insulted by the time that they have had to put into courses, etc. and the message for 99% of that is pretty simple, I don’t know if you are going to change the 1% they are talking about, I don’t know if it is one percent.

So I think you’ve got to work out what you are doing at the school, I think you’ve got to meet the kids needs. I have a simple philosophy. As a teacher I felt, would I, be my question to myself was would I be happy if my children were in my class, not that I would want them there, right. Would I be happy if my kid had to be in my class with what I was teaching. Now my question to myself is ‘Would I be happy if my kid was attending this school?’

Again, I would say, not that I would want them there, but if this were a one school town, would I be happy if my kids were here? I would say yes.

(A1:11)

Informant A1 linked their selective implementation as a management style to the general success of the school within the public school sector, claiming:

No school is perfect, this is not a perfect school. I think we are moving forward, not backwards. and forward movement is not smooth. I feel we are moving forward and there is community feedback and numbers. The actual school enrolment is increasing and many, some of them are teachers’ kids. Not from this school, but from the area, so that is an indication.

(A1:11)
Informant A3 concurred with Al’s views on selective implementation as a survival strategy for ensuring better outcomes within the school. A3 claimed that the strategy of selective subversion of policies by Al was a key component to the professional survival of staff overall. A3’s comments included:

A3b: He [Al] does a lot of deflection of stuff that comes from the top. He, you can see him saying ‘this is important, this isn’t’ ... [Al], he’s switched on. He takes a lot of pressure off. A lot of stuff comes to him and he reads it pretty thoroughly, and he says no, well, this is important, we’ll do it. And when he says that, you think oh well, we’d better do it because you respect the fact that he has done a lot of culling, taken a fair bit of pressure off.

Informant A2, the Head Teacher English, also had a high regard for the ways in which Informant A1 deflected some policy demands. (A2b:4-5) However, A2 was concerned that senior staff within the school appeared to be only just surviving the system, rather than thriving within it. Informant A2 stated that they believed the school was not moving forward, despite the experience and enthusiasm of the staff. The following excerpt illustrates A2’s concerns:

A2b: What bothers me a bit, when I think about the things, we’ve got as good a boss as you can hope to get. A very good deputy, very organised deputy, and I reckon there’s hardly a weak link on this staff and there’s an awful lot of people here, they’re confident, they’re good at their job. They are still flexible, they are still learning and they are still prepared to try things. And yet, we still only just get by, really. And it should be better than that. It should be a hell of a lot better than that. There are still a lot of things that, you think, well god, why can’t we do that? We should be able to do just about anything. The amount of experience we’ve got, and the executive, the people who are head teachers, they are all people who are by and large, prepared to try things, and move in different directions, to try anything, really. And yet, we’re not.

Informant A2 claimed that they felt that they just could not change anything else within the system or find any more time and that they just had to accept it and survive within the system. (A2a:6) Informant A3 drew an analogy between peasants of the 18th century and teachers’ workloads to point out that they believed teachers merely survived on a day to day basis. (A3:19) A3 connected that survival to the isolation of teachers from the processes which govern their working lives, as illustrated by the following data slice:

It’s probably a treadmill, the amount of work we are now expected to do is a bit similar to somebody who was a peasant in the 18th century, who got so tired during the day, from just doing enough work to get food on the table for tomorrow, that you don’t think above the basic level of
A3 went on to connect the condition of survival to political control, professional powerlessness and system overload. According to A3 as teachers gained more experience within the system, they became more aware of the difficulties with attempting to resist political control of their working lives and instead turned to survival strategies to minimise the negative impacts on their daily lives. The following data slice illustrates A3’s perspective:

A3: But there is another thing involved in it. I don’t think many teachers, a lot of teachers, particularly in this area, and here’s a real generalisation, want to have the power to determine policy. Because they are happy with their day to day lives of 9 to 3, perhaps some who do very little preparation at night and I think a lot of people, especially when they get to 40 - 45 are happy to run down to their 55th birthday and take their long service leave and retire with a minimum of fuss.

Q42. What do you think has caused that?
A3: Probably two things have caused that. One, they are happy doing that, that’s just the nature of the beast.

Two, they see that they don’t have the power to do anything about it, therefore, they are not going to push, not going to run up against a brick wall, they never have.

Informant A2 concurred, claiming that the conditions contributing towards the condition of survival also often impacted negatively on teacher originality and creativity and led to ‘opportunity wasted’. (A2b:6) A2 stated:

It seems like opportunity wasted in a way, because often as a teacher you find yourself thinking, gee if you only had your own school, or if you could only pick your own teachers or whatever, what couldn’t you do.

But we’re left with the bits. We make this work okay, it works quite well compared to some places. But it’s not fantastic, it’s not original and creative.

According to Informant B4 survival strategies served to disempower teachers further from professional processes. Informant B4, while reflecting on their experience as literacy coordinator, claimed that ‘wave after wave’ of new policies, created by people perceived to be from outside the school system, had led teachers to become ‘cynical and jaded’. According to B4 the overloaded school system meant that most English teachers at School B had retreated to their classrooms and were ignoring and losing interest in
systemic processes. (B4:49-50) The following extract highlights the points raised by B4:

Well, most teachers just say, oh well, I mean, my age at least, they just say, okay, well, we’re going to be here when all these people [who write policies] are gone and we just let things roll on, you know, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next. So, unless you’re ambitious, or um, young, or you are a certain kind of personality I suppose, um, people that have been in it for a long time and are just looking towards the end and don’t see any real opportunity for them, then they become cynical and jaded, they just have an attitude, well, I’m just going to do what I’m going to do in my classroom, and who cares about anything else?

(B4:50)

The data supported B4’s perceptions about teachers adopting similar survival strategies to school managers. Informant A6 indicated that they were driven predominantly by their perception of students’ needs when considering which policies to implement. Accountability was a key factor for A6, who stated that they implemented components of the school’s literacy policy which were connected to assessment but ignored others. For example, A6 attempted to implement the school spelling policy, but when students complained and problems arose, they abandoned the spelling policy, in a strategy they labelled ‘survival of the fittest’. A6 stated:

It’s survival of the fittest.

So, therefore, any language you do with them, you’re turning them off. So I started off with doing stuff like, this is the thing that has been sitting on my shelf since [A2] gave it to me, I went out and photocopied it all and the kids resented it so much that it was, spelling words, and if you have a look at them, they’re pretty crappy. And like, a lot more listening than actually doing. So, by the end of it I threw it in and I refused to give it to them because, sure they were getting little bits of practice, but it was just ridiculous. It wasn’t effective.

So, the only way, I called it survival of the fittest, you had to do what you could [for the students]. So, they’ve done autobiography, they haven’t done their word processing, they’ve done a novel, um, polished writing.

(A6:10)

A6 stated that they adopted strategies of making it appear that they were meeting policy demands even if they were not. The major strategy adopted by A6 was to teach the components of the program which were assessable and to ignore those that were not and were causing problems for them in the classroom. (A6:11) A6 claimed:

This is the easiest way to do everything I have to do.

(A6:11)
Accountability was also a major influence on Informant B2, who claimed that they had experienced pressure from Principals to give students better marks in HSC assessment tasks, regardless of the quality of their work. B2 claimed the issue ensured that they devoted most of their time to tasks which were accountable, rather than those which were not. (B2:36) Informant B5 also claimed that they insulated themself from what they perceived to be the overloaded demands of policies and the bureaucracy:

B5: It’s ludicrous really, when you think about it. Really crazy. Well, you know, we are expected to do everything, teach, welfare, raise money, you know, fund raising, computers, sport, child protection, personal development, everything. And teach, how can you do it all? ... we have to do it all, now, but they don’t want to give us time to do it ... time, money resources, but time is the big one. We just have too many classes to teach.

Q: So, how do you cope?
B5: We just survive, do what you can. Get by, try and insulate yourself a bit so you don’t burn out.

Q: Do you ever burn out?
A: Not me, no, not yet, but some people here have. They do ...
(B5:fn37-38)

Informant B5 claimed that their strategy for survival was mainly to use their own daughters as a yardstick by which to judge the worth of policies and systemic demands. B5 stated they abandoned any they felt they would not be happy to be used with their own daughters if they were in their classes. B5 also linked the development of their survival strategies to the isolation of the classroom and the inability to develop shared strategies with other professionals. The following extract illustrates B5’s views:

Almost ten years, but you know, some people have been here a lot longer. And I don’t know what other people do with their classes. You know and I mean, I have to find my own way of coping and surviving. And being able to make a contribution to my teaching. Most of the things I bring to school I think of my own daughters, what they got out of it. Paying back of that. So I try to put my best in.
(B5:8)

In keeping with the views of Al (A1:11) B4 claimed that survival strategies were often based on the idea that policies change so quickly that some teachers believe they will change again soon and, so, can be easily ignored. B4 described it thus:

Which is part of the history of department of education in this state, and which is why teachers say, right, this is the latest thing, it will blow over, the next group will come in and have their ideas, so I’ll just ignore the lot of them.
(B4:56)
B4 claimed that one strategy, particularly for older teachers, was to merely withdraw into the isolation of their classrooms:

Well, most teachers just say, oh well, I mean, my age at least, they just say, okay, well, we’re going to be here when all these people are gone and we just let things roll on, you know, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next.

So, unless you’re ambitious, or um, young, or you are a certain kind of personality I suppose, um, people that have been in it for a long time and are just looking towards the end and don’t see any real opportunity for them, then they become cynical and jaded, they just have an attitude, well, I’m just going to do what I’m going to do in my classroom, and who cares about anything else?

(B4:50)

Survival and Prescriptive Teaching

The data indicated that some teachers were returning to a reliance on prescriptive teaching approaches as a survival strategy. Favour for prescriptive practices appeared to be based more on a perceived need to survive the demands of an overloaded system than on theoretical orientations and a need for ‘explicit strategies’ for language and literacy teaching. Simply put, some informants found it eased their workload if they reverted to prescriptive teaching methods. For example, Informant B3 explained that most teachers preferred prescriptive programs as they offered more direction and removed the onus for program development from teachers, considerably reducing their workload. B3 claimed that prescriptive policies could serve as checklists for content to be covered with classes. (B3:3)

The Head Teacher of English at School A stated they did not favour prescriptive approaches to teaching but indicated that accountability pressures in the HSC led them to implement prescriptive methods with senior classes. For example, A2 stated that one class was having problems with exam style questions dealing with the poetry of John Donne and they had responded by providing rote responses for memorisation:

so I’m concerned about them being prepared by having in their minds, what are the chief characteristics of this poetry, because any kind of question is probably going to come down to them having to regurgitate stuff along those lines. It was the one question on their trial paper that wasn’t handled very well by them. So I keep trying to get back to that, more or less memorise these half dozen key things about metaphysical poetry Donne in particular that you can regurgitate, at will, if necessary.

(A2a:10)
During observation of A2’s classes students were expected to memorise critics’ interpretations of Donne’s poetry rather than develop their own interpretative skills. Critic’s interpretations were expected to be adopted as ‘correct’ and the terminology expected to be reproduced in assessment tasks. When asked about this A2 stated they felt that, given the lack of time available, the method was the best way to produce good exam results in the HSC. (A2:fn1-3)

Informant A3 stated they preferred to teach HSC courses because of the prescriptive nature of the syllabus and that they perceived it as the responsibility of the Head Teacher to program prescriptively for the junior years. A3 stated:

That’s a hard one, [junior English] because of the syllabus, the syllabus is lot less prescriptive. It’s unreal, and I find that particularly hard, because I suppose I like prescription. It’s easy teaching English in 11 and 12 because you’ve got that prescription there, you’ve got your language component, you’ve got your novels, poetry, drama, that’s good, but with the junior school you’ve got to have a good head teacher with a program that comes off the non-prescriptive nature of the syllabus, says you should be doing this here, and doing these skills here, this here, all the way through. (A3:12)

A number of teacher informants regularly stated that they perceived it as the responsibility of the Head Teacher to program for their junior classes and that they preferred prescribed content for junior classes. (Archive A:fl & B:fl1) Indeed, the issue caused a dispute at School B between 1998 and 2001. The District Superintendent and Principal eventually intervened and directed staff that it was the responsibility of individual teachers to write programs. The important point here was that teachers preferred prescribed content and programming as it lightened their workload. (Archive:Bf11)

Informant A5 claimed that although they preferred to be have flexibility to address student needs they also needed prescription to lighten their own workload. A5 acknowledged that prescriptive approaches were detrimental to student learning but stated they often preferred prescription for the sake of their ‘own sanity’. (A5:5) A5 stated:

So, for my own sanity, however, I would love something very prescriptive, that I could just work through. That would be structured, that would be very sane. (A5:6)

Informant B2 stated they preferred the prescribed curriculum at their previous school to the teacher controlled curriculum at School B. The preference appeared to be based on
the easing of their workload, rather than any pedagogical benefits. An excerpt of an interview with B2 included the following data slice:

Well, what we actually had at the _____ was the actual syllabus and cut out as our program for the year and you’d have to actually tick what you had done. That was easy.
I found that easy, because then you just had to write in what four novels, because it suggests you only do four novels a year and then you’ve got comprehension, creative writing, drama, speaking, all that sort of stuff. So I found that quite easy.
(B2:33)

Informant B4 reported that staff at School B were waiting for a new English 7-10 syllabus to be released before writing programs, as they hope that they new syllabus would be more prescriptive than the current one and would make the task of programming easier. (B4:44) B4 also reported that the system of using Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds adopted by School B was based on one developed by another local high school and had been adopted to save time dealing with the new policies and theories.(B4:52-54) Informant B4 claimed that the use of the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds as a prescriptive teaching method was deliberate. Informant B4 stated:

Oh, yeah, they are turning it into a formula, but that’s the first step. I don’t see a problem with that. In a way, as long as some people see that it is not a formula, and I think that is, oh, I don’t know. .. Well, that it’s becoming prescriptive, and everything you write has to fit a text type, you know, and if you learn the text types, then that is all you need to know. Well, that is my impression, anyway. Learn the text types, it’s like for every problem A there is an answer B, you know, there is not B1, B2, B3, B4, you know, to nth degree, it’s like, here’s the simple question, here is the simple answer, always.
... it is definitely being used as something prescriptive.
(B4:54)

Despite their belief that the prescriptive methods adopted were not the best methods for teaching mastery of writing blended Text Types B4 stated they had used the prescriptive approach as a survival strategy. According to B4 the lack of resources and professional development with the new policies meant that they were forced to take whatever they could find, to ease the burden of implementing the new policies. B4 explained their use of the prescriptive style of teaching Text Types as a survival strategy in the following data slice:

Because it’s already there, we don’t get time to do our own, so it’s like finding units of work for the HSC, we looked around and found another one, which they probably got from somewhere else and we changed it to suit what we wanted to do here. Just take what we think are the best bits.
(B:fn42)
Informant L5, a leading Genre theorist, was critical of the focus on Text Types and the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds but suggested that the Scaffolds had been designed by the DET as a survival strategy. (L5:6) According to L5 the prescriptive ness of the scaffolds were designed to appeal to teachers struggling with overload and were meant to ensure that the desired focus on structure was implemented in some form in classrooms. (L5:14-16) Informant L5 stated:

"Where, as I’m sure from the Department’s view, I’m sure these have been provided as, I guess shortcuts for people who really haven’t got the time or the interest to get involved in literacy, that’s not their bag. There can be something simple like that they might easily implement, they will, but you would hope they would then take it that step further, that they would not rest easy, there’s flexibility there."

(L5:15)

**Survival and Professional Development**

There was evidence that some informants were abandoning professional development as a survival strategy. As discussed in the section dealing with system overload, some teacher informants expressed resentment about having to pay for professional development in DET and BOS policies out of their own savings and having to attend courses on their days off work. (A2:3; B2:10; A5:24; A3b&A4:4; B2:22; B5:3; B4:17) Attendance at external professional development courses aimed at improving teacher knowledge of DET and BOS policies were perceived as adding to teacher workloads and, as such, refusal to attend them was viewed as a survival strategy in itself. As previously discussed, the strategy also appeared to be driven by resentment towards the DET and BOS for failing to provide adequate support in work time.

Informants A3, B2, B3 and B5 stated that they sometimes shared professional development resources with colleagues but indicated that they were only prepared to address such matters in what they considered superficial ways, given the need to reduce their workloads. All indicated that they were not prepared to increase their workloads by seeking out professional development in DET and BOS policies. (A3b:12; B2:36; B3:3; B5:7)

There was evidence that staff sometimes assisted each other in matters of professional development but that they restricted such assistance to a minimum and aimed it squarely at assessment and accountability. Informant B5 assisted other staff in the implementation of Text Type Scaffolds in School B. (B3:5) B5’s assistance was...
limited to meeting the demands of the HSC course and was not intended to assist in the junior school. (B5:3) Informant B2 also stated that they had been briefly ‘in-serviced’ by another staff member regarding Text Types at their previous school and that such assistance was aimed solely at assisting the school’s ELLA results. (B2:10)

In addition to the refusal to attend professional development courses outside work hours some informants also stated they refused to participate in professional development during work hours, in order to avoid increasing their workload. For example, Informant B4 stated that they received no time off class or extra support for assuming the role of literacy coordinator at School B. One responsibility of their role was the professional development of all teachers at School B in the new literacy policies under Agenda ‘97. The only courses available to assist them in the role were conducted after school or on weekends and required payment for attendance. As a result Informant B4 stated that they were not going to attend such courses and that they intended resigning the post of literacy coordinator. Informant B4 did resign and at the time of writing School B had been without a Literacy Coordinator for two years. Comments by B4 included the following data slice:

There has been a move towards, well, we’re not going to pay for relief, anything you want to do, you’ve got to pay for.

And also, the District used to run, in school time, courses, but then somewhere down the line, with global budgeting they said, the school has to pay, anyone who comes to that course has to pay to go to the course, as well as pay the relief. So, now they are always held after school or on the weekend.

R: Which is a problem?
B4: Well, I’m just not going to do it anymore. Why bother? What’s the point?
(B4:26)

Teacher informants also indicated that, in order to survive what they perceived to be the overloaded education system, they preferred professional development which provided teaching resources rather than theoretical knowledge. (A3:fn1; A6:A3fn1; B2:13; A7:fn1; A8:fn1; B2:13; B3:5; B7:fn4) Comments included the following data slices:

Q: Are you in the English Teachers’ Association?
B7: Listen mate, what’s the point if they don’t give me a unit of work I can use? Why should I pay the money?
Q: What do you mean?
B7: Well, some of it is okay, the units of work, you know, HSC stuff, but the rest is crap. Who cares about some obscure research at a uni or a private school? I need stuff to help me here, in the classroom.
Q: What do you think of research?
B7: Well, it’s got very little to do with what we do here, doesn’t it? How is it going to help me survive? Not one bit. It might be okay if you’re at a uni but what’s it got to do with teaching?
(B7:fn4-5)
Most teachers don’t want theory [from professional associations], you want something you can teach. (A7:fn1)

I couldn’t care less about educational theory. [from professional associations] I want something to help me teach. (A8:fn1)

I don’t want theoretical articles because I can’t use them teaching, units of work are good. (A5:fn1)

Perhaps Informant A3 best illustrated the general feelings of informants in the following data slice:

As far as educational theory, teaching learning theory, it’s good, but it has limited relevance to the real world of 8.4 period 5 Friday. Where the basic rule, there, is crowd control first, teaching second. It’s crowd control at the start of the year, then you can teach, right through the year. If you don’t do that, you won’t teach.

What I am saying is probably far too basic for you. But it’s what I believe in. (A3:8-9)

Informant DET9 was District Literacy Consultant for both schools and was responsible for providing specialist assistance to them regarding literacy policies. DET9 stated that when they visited schools the staff generally did not want theory and were mainly interested in any teaching resources DET9 may have been able to offer. (DET9:1) There was also evidence that some primary teachers were turning to professional associations for teaching resources as a survival strategy and that, as a result, professional associations were turning more to producing teaching resources than traditional professional development material.

Informant L5 indicated that the Primary English Teachers’ Association (PETA) was increasingly assuming the role of providing support material and teaching resources designed to meet the demands of the new literacy policies. L5 had a great deal of experience conducting professional development programs for primary teachers for PETA and had published three text books aimed at assisting teachers of all levels implement the new literacy policies, particularly a Functional View of Language. According to L5 PETA performed professional development roles in an attempt to assist teachers by filling the void left by the lack of DET and BOS support. The following data slice illustrates L5’s position:

No. What happened, in terms of K-6, that left itself wide open to this interpretation, because you’ve got that ‘scope and sequence’ of grammar, sitting there, all on two pages, with no support. If I hadn’t put out the PETA book there would be absolutely nothing to advertise exactly how to implement this. It’s bound to lead to people taking them and teaching them one by one.
without decent support material... And no professional development, of course they're going to do all the wrong things with it.

R: Has there been anywhere for you to voice your concerns about that?
L5: Oh, nooo, because the Department says it has no money for professional development, people were already in-serviced in K-6, they don't need it anymore. No, it really does astound me that they think that, just by putting out that scope and sequence, that that's settled the issue of grammar...

R: Is there any regulatory body or association that represents teachers over this?
L5: Well, PETA is the only one, and they are doing something.

R: PETA seem the most successful of associations for teachers, how do you see their role in trying to regulate teaching?
L5: Oh, I don't really see them in that light, I don't think they respond, they don't see themselves as filling that role.

R: They see themselves there to do what?
L5: Primarily for publishing support documents, increasingly providing professional development, this in-service course I ran on the weekend, we have been running for 3 years around the state, on grammar.

[DET2] ... was the Departmental person on the weekend and all the teachers were saying, this is an issue in schools, people haven't got a clue about grammar, they don't know about grammar as such, they don't know what to do with their classes. What is the Department doing? And [DET2]'s answer was, it is primarily the District's responsibility, it rests on the literacy consultant's shoulders. The Department, itself, really has little responsibility, they only get involved when it is convenient for them.

(L5:31)

Informant L5 also linked the need for survival in an overloaded school system to the proliferation of simplified, prescriptive texts using Text Type Scaffolds as 'quick fix' lessons to teach writing. L5 claimed that such texts were emerging in response to 'fairly ill-informed consultants in Districts and to commercial publishers' who were responding to a need in school for simple documents to 'make life easier' for teachers who did not understand the approaches in the policies. (L5:12)

Survival and Filling Professional Voids

As discussed in the section dealing with professional powerlessness, teacher informants indicated that they perceived their trade union, the NSW Teachers' Federation, as representing their interests and taking the place traditionally filled by professional associations. This was particularly so in the areas of syllabus and policy development and professional representation. As such, the tendency to rely on the Federation for professional issues was viewed as a survival strategy by teachers. Informants clearly believed that the Teachers' Federation had more influence in representing their professional interests than professional associations, who they perceived as merely
being able to provide units of work and teaching resources. The issues surrounding the power of professional associations has been dealt with in the section of this chapter dealing with the professional phase of disempowerment. Informant comments included the following:

the Teachers Federation should set up a research, curriculum “Big E” education section, which is kind of separated, really, from industrial issues. And that it builds some sort of real credibility, by the quality of it’s publications and research.  
(Informant A2b:2)

Q: Are you in any professional associations?  
B3: Yes, just Federation. They are the only ones who will do anything for you.  
(B3fn:54)

B6: For my teaching, the Federation, obviously. There’s no-one else who will go to bat for you.  
(B6fn:4)

B7: Federation, I mean why would you join the others? What are they going to do for me? At least Federation stands up for us.  
(B7fn: 3)

Q51. Which bodies do you see as representing the profession?  
A3: The Federation. Has to be. If I get into strife, I expect to have barristers etc. provided by the union, provided that I thought that I had a fair case.  
(A3:25)

Q: Are you in any professional associations?  
A9: No. Just Federation ... why would I waste money on the others? What do they do for me? At least Federation speaks up about syllabuses and stuff like that.  
(A9fn:7)

In a similar way, it was shown in the section dealing with professional powerlessness that universities, in the absence of official professional guidelines, appeared to have adopted DET and BOS guidelines and policies as criteria for structuring their teacher education courses and the subjects within the various GDE programs. The adoption of DET guidelines and the focus on BOS syllabus documents was shown to fill two purposes:

- It allowed graduates to seek employment with the DET system and thus made the qualifications more attractive to potential students
- It ensured good relations with the DET and BOS bureaucracies and avoided what L5 described as ‘marginalisation’ by education officials. (L5:42)

As such, the practice of adopting DET and BOS guidelines without consultation with the profession was analysed as a survival strategy by the universities of NSW. Those
issues are covered more fully in the sections of the chapter titled, ‘Political Control’ and ‘Professional Powerlessness’.

Survival and Policy Development

There was evidence that policy makers had also adopted survival strategies to overcome the demands of the NSW education system. As discussed earlier, the introduction of Functional Grammar to NSW was surrounded by controversy, resulting in political intervention to ban Functional Grammar from schools and a direction to remove Functional Grammar from the *K-6 English Syllabus* (1998). Informant L5 was instrumental in the rewriting of the *K-6 English Syllabus* with traditional grammatical terminology imposed over the Functional Grammar definitions on which it was based. According to L5 the re-terming of Functional Grammar, and the subsequent teacher resource text book they published on it, was a direct response to the political intervention and a strategy aimed at the survival of Functional Grammar in NSW schools. According to L5 the attempt to ensure the survival of Functional Grammar began at the level directly below the political layer of control of the DET and BOS bureaucracies. L5 stated:

I think at a certain level and ____ is involved, they are being very careful and um, that is the same with the Board of Studies, it’s almost as if they are in this pivotal position where they have to act for the people above them, who haven’t got a clue about grammar or literacy or anything.

R: This is the Board of Studies people?
L5: Board of Studies and the Department. [DET]
(L5:6)

L5 claimed that the political control of the syllabus development had been inspired by public misunderstandings about Functional Grammar and a public campaign to have the grammar banned. The movement to ban Functional Grammar, according to L5, was assisted by a prominent Sydney talkback radio commentator and a group of conservatives who were concerned with accuracy in language use rather than meaning. (L5:6-7&20) Informant L5 claimed that, despite the absence of any clear indication of the theoretical origins of the grammar in policies, the survival of Functional Grammar ensured that a balance was struck between accuracy and meaning in the policy documents. L5 claimed:
Mind you, in English K-6, one of the reasons we went for the model that we did is that it allows teachers to address issues both of meaning and accuracy. So, it can deal with structural issues, it attacks all that sort of stuff that we need to look at if we are worried about accuracy and obviously, I think effective language use was the catch cry.

Now, if Alan Jones, etc. had had their way, it would have been just that. [accuracy] So, by developing a model that allowed you to also talk about meaning, then we were able to have that balance, so I can understand that some people would be using traditional type grammar to address issues about accuracy and I think there is a place for that.

(L5:20)

L5 also claimed that they had widespread support from within the profession to ensure the survival of Functional Grammar:

but to the teachers, who and I think there is still a groundswell of support for functional grammar and at the workshop on Saturday, people, the first thing that started it off was, what do you see as the main issues? And a lot of them said, "Look, we were just getting into functional grammar, just coming to grips, just coming to appreciate what you can do with it, and it was cut off at the knees".

Now these weren't dyed in the wool Systemicists, by any means, these were just regular classroom teachers. Nobody would say, 'Oh, that terrible functional grammar, you know, thank goodness it's gone.'

So, with the teachers, I think that both the Board and the Department recognise what usefulness there was in functional grammar, and they both say it would be a travesty to go back to straight traditional grammar, taught the way it used to be taught. Nobody wants that.

(L5:6-7)

When I challenged the theoretical soundness of using prescriptive grammatical terminology imposed over a rhetorical, Functional Grammar L5 responded that there were some weaknesses but that the ‘compromise’ was worth it, to ensure the survival of Functional Grammar in policies. Informant L5 stated:

L5: Hmm, and with younger kids I think words like verb and noun are more abstract than they need to be I think it’s much more commonsense to be talking about participants and processes and those sorts of things. So, yeah, but I think we’ve got to commit to the teachers first, the teachers are the ones that are comfortable with verbs and nouns and the kids, and then extend them from there and say, well alright we’ll look at different types of verbs. There are only two or three places where it doesn’t really work and it was worth that kind of compromise, to keep it in the system.

R: To keep it in the system?
L5: Yes.
(L5:9)

The development of the BOS grammar is dealt with in the sections titled ‘Visibility’ and ‘System subversion’.

The data suggested that even high-level policy makers saw a need to initiate survival strategies regarding the development of new policies, in the face of political intervention and professional powerlessness. Individuals adopted responsible for the
survival of new theoretical frameworks in policies with a minimum of professional consultation. This issue is pursued in the following sections of this chapter.

**Survival and Teacher Preservice Education**

Lecturer informant L5 indicated that lecturers adopted survival strategies when considering the structure of the GDE, particularly the lack of language and literacy content. According to L5, teacher educators had to ‘put the shutters down’ regarding the GDE, as addressing the problems inherent to the course were too daunting, given current workloads. Comments by L5 included the following data slice:

> But, this is the problem, that nobody has a commitment to the Dip. Ed. as such, we’re all teaching in other programs, every so often we are dragged reluctantly into doing something in the dip ed. (L5:27)

> Well, I guess until the last couple of years or so, we just thought that it was such a monolith we couldn’t break into it anyhow, to force it in, obviously you can’t fit it in one year, it’s too hard in one year, you know, they do all these other things, and if we jump up and down about it, then we have to do something about it. Not only in terms of, I mean we never articulated it, but I’m sure what we had in the back of our minds was first of all we would have had to do all of the lobbying, develop the program and subjects and then teach it. And nobody has the time to do that, mentally you have to put down the shutters at some point. And if you’re involved in the graduate program and the undergraduate program, to take on another program, I couldn’t do it. So, when ever the issue of the Dip. Ed. comes up, I say right, we’ll do what we can but we just can’t fit anything on. ... if you could feel that there was really something that you could do, then you might, but it’s just grafted on like it has been for the last couple of years, then ...

> ... I think it’s horrendous. Yes. Yes. (L5:29)

Informant L6 tied the state of the GDE to the political control of university funding, claiming that the structure of the course was all that could be managed under the circumstances. (L6:2-3) The following data slice illustrated L6’s views:

> I’ve never thought the Dip. Ed. was adequate. It’s a woeful way to prepare teachers. It’s a resource thing. The uni doesn’t get the resources to do it properly. (L6:3)

The structure of the GDE appeared to be the result of a survival strategy on the part of the staff of University A. As discussed earlier, the only compulsory content of teacher education courses in NSW universities was stipulated by the employing DET bureaucracy and not any organisation representative of the profession. Data collected from informants and archives showed that universities throughout NSW required
postgraduate students to meet DET criteria and obtain a letter of approval for their undergraduate degrees from the DET prior to enrolment in GDE or similar programs. Universities appeared to use the accreditation criteria set by the DET as a survival mechanism to ensure their courses remained attractive to students. L5 made the following comment regarding the need to meet DET requirements:

The Dip. Ed. is, it’s the same as our certificate in TESOL, we would be absolutely stupid if we just went off and did our own thing, without saying to the employers, what is it that you require your teachers to have, to be employed in your institution? So, we modelled our certificate around the employers requirements. (L5:43)

Informant L5 also indicated that the focus on syllabus and other policy documents within teacher education courses generally was the result of a survival mechanism by academics. According to L5 the political control of the education system ensured that academics faced increasing pressure to meet the demands of the DET and BOS policies in courses, rather than allowing professional concerns and processes to determine course content.

We now teach to the English K-6 Syllabus, whereas before we wouldn’t, and ___ would be quite adamant that we shouldn’t, but I think that things over the last 5 years have changed, now there is actually content, and a lot of content, that these kids need to know to be teachers, so yes, we introduce them to it here.

So, I think the Department has been very clever in really making everyone dance to its tune. And all sorts of sanctions if you don’t.

R: Such as, what do you mean?
L5: Non-recognition, um, very subtle things in fact, we would be, like meetings this morning, this is the new sort of thing. There really is a way of being marginalised by the Department and ___ and ___ know about that, it works in very subtle ways, nothing official, nothing written down, so that if you don’t tow the line and do their thing they cut you out.

(L5:42)

Informant L5 also claimed that the educational backgrounds of secondary English teachers, through the GDE program, did not give them access to the theories which underpinned new policies about language and literacy learning and led to their withdrawal and survival strategies. L5 concluded her remarks with the following comment:

Yes. I mean I’ve got a secondary background, I was a secondary teacher, and of course, because of that I know what secondary teachers are like and they are least amenable to working with and, you know, effecting change and I think primary teachers are much more open to that sort of thing. ... My impression of secondary teachers is that most of them, and I’m cautious about generalisations, but most of them quite smug in what they think is, you know, their subject area,
the academic content. They are quite complacent about what they do, no-one can teach them anything. I’m thinking mainly about English teachers, secondary English.

... I think it is because they train in their degree, in a totally unrelated area to what they are working in, and I think that makes it very difficult for them to understand what is going on around them

(L5:29)

According to L6 the academic background of the students in the GDE meant that they were not adequately prepared to cope with the theoretical content of language and literacy learning theories in such a short allocation of course time. Comments by L6 included:

It was not a pleasant experience ...
They had no idea. I expected them to be at a level you expect postgrads to be at. That was my mistake, I treated them as post-grads. They couldn’t cope. The work was too much for them. I was amazed at what they didn’t know.
These were postgrads, I expected a higher standard.
... I don’t know if I want to get into this with you. It wasn’t great. It depends on what you want to know. They didn’t do much.

Q: Are you doing it next year?
A: I hope not, it’s dreadful. I don’t know.

(L6:2-3)

If GDE students were unable to cope with complex language and literacy learning theories in the time allocated at university, then what of their ability to survive in the hectic day to day rush of overloaded classrooms? Informant B4, a practising teacher and university lecturer, connected the nature of the GDE to student future classroom practice. B4 stated that the GDE program was overcrowded and focused too much on policies and generalities, rather than on theories and pedagogies specific to the teaching of English. In the following data slice B4 offers their opinion about the shortcomings of the GDE program:

I think you’re expected to do too much in too little time. I think it should be double, like there are other courses you have to do a double method, I think you should do a double method for English, I don’t think there is nearly enough time. Because I don’t see where they [GDE students] get to learn enough about classroom teaching strategies. What they learn is what they, they learn about the syllabuses, they learn about general things, I think they need a whole course in teaching strategies.

R: What do you mean by teaching strategies?
B4: Well, like, um, like, oh, let me think, okay, senior literature, let’s forget about whether literature is important or not. Let’s talk about junior literature and senior literature, you know, how much time do they get to learn about what you do in the classroom with text, how you do it, the strategies you can do it with. They are going to learn all this on the job. Discipline. Classroom management strategies, you could do a whole year on classroom management strategies. You only get to talk about the idea of it, you don’t get time to practice things, to work on things.

(B4:58)
Informant B4 claimed that their experience lecturing English Methods in the GDE program helped them to understand why teachers devalued their teacher preservice education. B4 claimed that the nature of the GDE actually indoctrinated beginning teachers into the condition of survival. Rather than offering empowered professionalism, B4 claimed that the GDE helped turn teaching into ‘a coping venture, rather than equip students to approach teaching as ‘a mastery thing’. (B4:59) The following data slice illustrates B4’s point:

you only get time to do a survey, an overview, you don’t get time to do anything in depth.

R: And you also need to cover the syllabus and policy?
B4: Yep. See, I think it is a bit of a joke to call it methods because what I expected, was I expected more practical, work and experimentation in how to do things and most of it is just what you do, not how you do it.
... it makes me understand why people say, my dip. ed. was a waste of time, but what it also does is it then makes them learn to do what they have to do to survive in a classroom, so teaching becomes a coping venture, rather than a mastery thing, because they don’t have the mastery they need to take up full time teaching when they get here, they certainly haven’t had enough opportunity in their prac. The prac just a taste. And then they go out and get a job full time, forget it.
(B4:59)

Perceptions about the inadequate nature of the GDE program were reinforced by teacher informants’ own experiences. Teacher informants indicated that they felt the nature of GDE programs was inadequate to the task of preparing teachers. Inherent to responses was the view that teachers had to learn how to manage classrooms and learners after they commenced teaching. Comments by teacher informants regarding their teacher preservice education included the following comments:

Well, everyone knows, it’s [GDE] pretty ad-hoc, isn’t it? I don’t think many teachers have many doubts about that. It’s a bit embarrassing really.
(A2b:2)

It [Dip.Ed.] was pretty woeful, it doesn’t really prepare you to teach, not at all.
(B1:fn41)

In regards to methodology, based on similar stuff that, I think, classroom practices it was, and that was just totally irrelevant to teaching ... That was one subject, it went for six weeks or something. So, there was never any talk or mention of practical stuff.
(A6:3)

Oh, it [Dip. Ed.] was not very good, quite bad in fact. [pause] Terrible. My Masters was great but my Dip. Ed. was hopeless ... it just didn’t make any sense, it was too brief, you just skimmed everything on the surface. It made you very sceptical about what they were saying. It wasn’t until I went into depth in my Masters that I learnt much.
(B5:34)
with my Dip. Ed. course, I found a lot of my educational theory was useless on me. Because I didn’t want that, I was very concerned with discipline, and controlling classes and would I be able to get through to the kids, and what I was going to be like as a teacher that a lot of that would be useless to me.

..And I didn’t need gifted and talented and I didn’t need a great deal of theory or Piaget or Freud, which is what I did at college. I just didn’t need that bit.

(A5:20 & 26)

Look my teacher education was useless. I mean, I had a good time, a great time, but I never learned how to teach.

I don’t think you learn in college or Uni. I don’t think I learned to teach for 8 years, yeah, 8 years of teaching, then you feel competent

(A4:fn5)

That’s exactly why, when people come out to teach they say, what’s the point in doing a dip. ed., it’s totally useless, and everything I’ve learned, I’ve learned in the school.

(B4:59)

Teaching is a bit strange because people often, not always, come from a liberal arts education and then they do a diploma and anyone will tell you that diploma is worthless.

(A4a:8)

Given teacher comments about survival and data proffered about the GDE it seemed reasonable to connect the nature of the GDE to the development of the condition of survival. It is fitting to now examine some of the other strategies and interactions the data indicated had been developed in connection with the personal phase of disempowerment.

**VISIBILITY**

Given the politically controlled, professionally disempowered, theory deficient, isolated, overloaded and survival oriented nature of the school system the data suggested that informants developed action/interaction strategies to enable them to at least appear to be meeting the demands of policies. In short, informants appeared to ‘be seen’ to be meeting the demands of policies more than was actually the case. That process was conceptualised as the condition of ‘visibility’. The condition of visibility is closely related to the condition of ‘system subversion’, which is examined in the following section of this chapter. Many of the sub-categories of each condition overlapped and it was sometimes difficult to decide the condition which best conceptualised the phenomenon represented in particular data slices. The use of the grounded theory paradigm, however, indicated that the condition of system subversion
was largely a strategy developed at least partially in response to the condition of visibility.

Visibility and Teacher Practice

The term ‘visibility’ was derived from insights provided by Informant A1, the Principal of School A. Informant A1 claimed that the frequent shifts in DET policies were tied to ‘political cycles’ and that it was part of A1’s duty to shelter teachers and students from the negative impacts of frequent policy changes. A1 stated that they did so by prioritising which policies to implement and to what extent to implement them. According to A1, going with the flow of the system allowed them to place some policies ‘on the back burner’ until political change brought new focuses to replace the old. (A1:11) Informant A1 summed up the approach as:

Most things in schools is democracy seen to be happening.
(A1:20)

Informant B4 claimed that the decline in funding for schools had led to a greater sense of accountability within the education system.

And it is also made more difficult by the squeezing of funds, the user pays principles, you know, the idea that everybody has to account for themselves. It’s this whole kind of looking over your shoulder mentality all the time.
(B4:49)

According to B4 many teachers responded to increased accountability only on the surface and had withdrawn to the isolation and autonomy of their classrooms as a survival mechanism. The following data slice illustrated B4’s perspective:

Well, most teachers just say, oh well, I mean, my age at least, they just say, okay, well, we’re going to be here when all these people are gone and we just let things roll on, you know, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave, what’s the next wave.

So, unless you’re ambitious, or um, young, or you are a certain kind of personality I suppose, um, people that have been in it for a long time and are just looking towards the end and don’t see any real opportunity for them, then they become cynical and jaded, they just have an attitude, ‘well, I’m just going to do what I’m going to do in my classroom, and who cares about anything else?’
(B4:49)
Informant B2 claimed that they felt pressure, through accountability, to pass all students in assessment tasks, relating the following story from their previous school:

And I think stress, I think stress is a lot more, as well and I think that goes back to accountability as well, I mean at [school], the old principal ... if a student didn’t do well at any assessment task or did really poorly in the HSC, they [teachers] were pulled over the coals, so they were sort of intimidated that they could never fail a student in an assessment task or they were accountable. Well, it must be you, you’re the one not teaching them properly, how could this student fail? So there was a huge problem, there.

(B2:36)

Informant B2 claimed that experiences with being held accountable for student results had led them to mark assessment tasks easier and to help students more than they were supposed to with assessment tasks, to ensure higher grades. (B2:13) B2 also stated that they assisted students with assessment tasks, even if they had been instructed not to senior staff:

You know, here we were, thinking, oh, you know, we’re getting all these really good marks, so I’m always extra thorough when it comes to anything like that. And if anything I will spoon-feed them, I mean it’s not the right thing to do, but to get them through, I’ll do that and if I think they’re not coping properly I’ll give them stuff and like that.

(B2:13)

During observations I noted that B1, B2, B3, B5 and B4 broke assessment guidelines during HSC courses and allowed students to work on assessment tasks in class time, in an apparent bid to increase student marks. When asked, all informants stated they were not supposed to allow it but that it ensured better results. (B:fnl12)

As discussed earlier in the chapter, there appeared to be a general feeling amongst staff at School B of resentment towards the new literacy policies which was based on a perception that the policies inferred teachers had neglected literacy in the past. Informant B2 linked that resentment to visibility. According to B2 teachers at School B had failed to implement the new literacy strategies, despite a literacy policy and action plan being developed. (B:cf1-18) Regarding the implementation of the new school literacy policy B2 stated:

No, because I think we were just doing it all along, anyhow, and now you’ve got to make sure you are doing it, whereas before I, well okay we won’t do report writing, because it doesn’t really work, go to our subject, but now there is more a push to do it overall, but I really think a lot of other faculties don’t embrace it, anyway. And I know at [school], we said, oh yeah, literacy it’s literacy, okay, but nothing was ever done about it.

(B2:26)
One of the key reasons teachers did not implement the new literacy policies fully, according to B2, was because such activities were perceived as taking time from addressing the demands of the year 12 HSC exams. According to B2 achievement in literacy activities was considered separate to achievement in subject English and was seen predominantly as the domain of the primary school. The following data slice illustrates B2’s position:

Well, for me I find it more of a chore, because I, the kids find it damned boring and I do, myself as well, so I’m not into it probably as much as I should be, but yeah, I think it’s more important at a primary school level and I think we should be just left alone to, you know, we’ve got so much other stuff to worry about, like you know, the School Certificate, then the you’ve got your HSC, it takes up time they could have spent in primary school doing.
(B2:23)

Informant B5 supported the perception that some teachers were appearing to implement the new policies but had, in fact, abandoned them. B5 blamed a lack of professional development and a poor knowledge-base for teachers’ reluctance to address the new literacy policies. The following excerpt illustrates B5’s views:

Yeah, people just shake their heads and go. Some of them will go and have a one-off lesson in class, using what you have given them. And then they forget about it, because you feel frightened. If you don’t know, if you don’t know, if you don’t understand, how can you teach it?
(B5:7)

There was also compelling evidence that teacher informants at School A were concerned more with assessment procedures being seen to be done than with the integrity or accuracy of the procedures. As a means of establishing the role of participant observer in School A I spent three months as a classroom teacher with the English Faculty, teaching a full load. On my first day of duty Informant A2 told me I would have to grade and write the half yearly assessment reports for classes in years 7, 8, 10 and 11.

When I raised the point, at a lunchtime staff meeting, that I had no experience with the classes or results on which to base the grading or comments, informants were adamant that the lack of previous marks or contact was irrelevant. All staff stated that they felt I should do the reports and that the accuracy of the reporting was of no consequence. (A:fn12-14) I eventually did the reports under protest, manufacturing grades as best I could based on what I could glean from students’ workbooks. I have witnessed similar dealings with assessment and reporting in at least three other schools.
in which I have worked as a teacher. Clearly, the need to appear to be assessing regularly outweighed the need for accuracy or integrity in the reports. The issue of the reports is dealt with more fully in the section of this chapter titled ‘system subversion’.

The important point intended in disclosing the above was not to be critical of teacher informants but to show that there were systemic imperatives which meant that it was more important to them to be seen to be reporting regularly than to maintain the integrity of the assessment procedures. The obvious consequence of not getting reports out on time was that parents and bureaucrats would bring pressure to bear on teachers who already considered themselves to be overloaded and under strain.

Data collected from School B indicated that visibility was also a concern for teachers where the ELLA test was concerned. The ELLA test was conducted in year 7 and again with the same cohort in year 8 at School B during the study, with results presented to parents in the form of profiles. During an interview Informant B2 stated that they were not surprised that the year 8 test had revealed only one student in their class with a lower level of achievement between years 7 and 8. According to B2 teachers generally marked the year 7 tests harder than they did the year 8 tests, so as to allow for improvements in the results in year 8. The aim was to make it appear that student literacy levels were improving between years 7 and 8. (B2:6-7)

During ELLA tests for year 7 at School B I witnessed the teacher in charge of the tests inform teachers not to assist students at all during the test and to ‘give them the wrong answers so their marks stay down’. (B:fn13) The teacher also ended the ELLA test 30 minutes prior to the time allowed for it. When asked about it they stated, ‘It keeps the marks down so they can improve next year’. (B:fn13) Matters surrounding the ELLA tests are dealt with more fully in the section titled system subversion.

The data suggested that School B also used literacy testing to appear to meet DET requirements for evaluating new students each year. School B had a policy of testing the entire cohort of each new year 7 class each year as a means of establishing the reading age of each student. A sample page of the test used given to each year 7 cohort during the course of this study, and still in use at the time of writing, is reproduced in Figure 5.12:
Figure 5.12: Test used to establish students’ reading ages. School B

Chapter 5: Analysis

I spend this anniversary and festival from my country, far from my family, yet I cannot truthfully say that I feel far from home. Whether be the ties of blood on my mother's side, or the friendships I have developed many years of active life, the commanding sentiment of comradeship in the common cause of great peoples who speak the same language, who kneel at the same altar and, to a large extent, pursue the same ideals, I cannot feel myself a stranger in the centre and at the summit of the United States. I feel a sense of unity and a fraternal association which, added to kindness of your welcome, convinces me that I have a right to sit at your fireside and share your Christmas joys.

In the seventeenth century people began to make comparisons of living things with the machines that then being perfected. The French philosopher Descartes called the body with a clock. In a clock one describes each part as having a function in the working the whole. This led Descartes to say that was quite novel at the time, namely that one could proceed to find how all the parts of the machine, investigating it as if it were a machine. Comparison of living machines may seem at first to be crude, even a rather childish procedure, it certainly has limitations, but has proved to be extraordinarily useful. Machines are the models of our brains and hands. We therefore understand thoroughly and can speak conveniently about other things by comparing them with machines.

Mars is the only planet whose solid surface can be studied; and it tempts to consider the possibility of in more detail. Its smaller size leads to considerably conditions; but the two essentials, air and water, are both present, though scanty. Martian atmosphere is thinner than our own, it is perhaps adequate. It has been proved to contain oxygen. There is no ocean; the surface markings represent, not seas and shores, but red desert and dark ground is perhaps moist and A conspicuous feature is the white cap covering the pole, which clearly a deposit of snow. must be quite shallow since it must be quite shallow since it is 

away completely in the summer. Photographs from time to time indelible clouds which blot our temporarily large view of surface details; clear weather, is more usual.
The ‘reading age’ test used by School B was comprised of three pages similar to the one presented above in Figure 5.12. Students were given forty minutes to complete the test, without any assistance or direction from teachers. Instructions given were to ‘write in the missing words’. (B:fn9c) The test appeared to be little more than a cloze exercise comprised of segments of decontextualised texts. The Learning Difficulties Support (LDS) teacher at School B stated that they graded the test by allocating different points for each ‘correct’ word. They stated that ‘correct’ meant that ‘it had to make sense’.

(B:fn9d) When I asked about the test the LDS teacher stated:

It [the test] doesn’t mean anything.

Q: Why do you use it?
A: Well, because we have to show that we are assessing where they are at. I use it sometimes to identify kids who need help and I bring them in for some one on one … Just use it as a rough guide it doesn’t really mean anything. It’s mainly for the Department and he [the Principal] tells the parents we do it. It’s more for them, I suppose.

Q: What does it tell you about their reading?
A: Nothing, really. I just grade them and keep it on the record to show we did it. Sometimes you pick the really bad kids from it. It’s really just for the record.

Informants Bl, B3, B4 and B5 all stated that they received a copy of the test results for their year 7 classes each year but that they ignored them, claiming they were ‘useless, we don’t take any notice of them’. (B1:fn9c) The literacy tests seemed to be used purely to appear to meet a need to be seen to be evaluating new students’ literacy skills, supposedly as a means of informing teacher practice in their new school. The data suggested that the test served little, if any, other purpose.

**Visibility and Literacy as Grammar**

The data suggested that the use of grammar exercise sheets and Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds in both schools were strategies devised for visibility in relation to the new *Agenda ‘97* literacy policies. Teacher informants indicated that they did not believe the methods were educationally sound but that they were being used because they were the easiest way to implement the new policies.

As discussed in the section of this chapter dealing with theory deficit, School A responded to the *Agenda ‘97* policies and the implementation of the ELLA tests by
introducing the use of traditional grammar exercise sheets for homework with each junior class. (Archive:Afl) The sheets were given to year 7, 8 and 9 students to take home and complete in their own time. Teachers were instructed not to allow class time for working on them and no lessons were programmed for instruction on their content. The sheets were marked each Friday during class and the marks for the exercise were used to provide 60% of the total annual assessment marks for years 7 and 9. (A2:fn15 & A3:13) The system was in place for the two years during which I conducted observations at School A and I was told by Informant A2 that they were in use for at least two years after that. (A2:fn16)

The use of the grammar sheets revealed a mixture of influences involved in the need for visibility. Informants did not understand the theoretical frameworks behind the new policies, particularly a Functional View of Language and the stated need for explicit strategies in teaching literacy. The policies, as already discussed, were largely interpreted in both schools to call for the explicit teaching of grammar and structure of textual features. This appeared to reinforce informants views that a focus on literacy in English equated with a focus on 'language skills’, which equated to a focus on the rules of grammar outside the context of everyday usage. The focus adopted by both schools, it is argued, was closer to older, prescriptive approaches to the teaching of the rules of grammar, rather than a Functional View of Language.

Informant A3 linked the use of grammar sheets to a theory deficit amongst staff in the theories involved in the new policies and the need for visibility as a survival strategy. A3, a member of the executive staff in School A, stated that, although staff did not understand the theories underpinning the new policies they needed to be seen to doing something and the use of the grammar sheets was the easiest option. A3 stated:

Q: Why do you use the grammar sheets?
A3: Just for policy, really, to satisfy the ELLA requirements.
Q: Isn’t ELLA based on functional grammar?
A3: Yes, but who knows anything about that? This is the only way we can do it. At least we can work with these. We’ve got to cover our arse somehow.
(A3:fn3)

The Head Teacher English, Informant A2, also confirmed that the sheets were used primarily to meet a perceived need under the new literacy policies while allowing for a shortfall in teacher knowledge about the new approaches. The following excerpt illustrates Informant A2’s view:
Chapter 5: Analysis

A2: We had to do something and the sheets seemed the easiest way without impacting too much on our teaching.
Q: Why traditional grammar?
A2: We've only done a little bit of work with [DET9] on functional grammar for marking ELLA. Not enough to teach it, I don't know that we would anyway.

Most, I guess all of us, wouldn't teach it if we had a choice, it's of very limited value, a very retrograde step, really. I guess this is a way of minimizing the damage, or the impact anyway, if you, on classes.
(A2:fn6)

Other informants at School A also indicated that they would not have taught grammar in such a manner they were if it had not been forced on them by recent policy changes. All stated that they used the grammar sheets because they believed they were linked to the new literacy policies and the accountability of the ELLA tests. (A1:fn1; A4:fnA3; A6:7; A5:9-11; A7:fnA3; A8:fnA3; A9:fn1) The following data slices were typical of informant comments:

It satisfies 3 things at once, really. We have some structured homework for their parents to see, they do some of the kinds of things that we seem to have stopped doing a few, a fair while back. Like spelling, grammar, grammar in particular. And we get marks on the books, which is what it's all about isn't it?
(A4:fnA3)

Oh, they're great. [grammar sheets] It takes half a period to give them out, one period to mark them and correct mistakes, so it really helps. One less thing to prepare.
(A8:fnA3)

Saves having to do that sort of stuff, that kind of teaching in class.
(A7:fnA3)

Yeah, what a noun, what a verb is, what a sentence, now we're actually doing sentences, because the sheets that ___ gives them ... I've got it here, I've been given an outline, what they're supposed to do, that's the program. That's what I've been given. Full stop. I'm expected to stick to it ... Like the sheets aren't very instructive for what they need.
... I go by the book, I give the sheets out, I mark them. I just don't get that one on one time with the kids, there are 28 in the class, so I can't. This is the easiest way to do everything I have to do.
(A6:7-10)

Staff also indicated that they perceived the new focus on literacy to be driven by the new policies and that they preferred a focus on the study of literature to a study on literacy as they perceived it. (A3:16; A5:16; A6: 7-10; A7:fn4; A8:fn4)
Chapter 5: Analysis

Visibility and Text Types

During data collection at School A the DET issued Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds to all high schools in NSW, as a part of the Agenda '97 literacy initiative. (Archive:Af2) School A implemented the use the sheets in special ‘language units’, whereby students in years 7 and 9 would spend two weeks studying grammar and textual structure in isolation from other units of work. The aim was to work their way through the full set of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds, one after the other. (A3:13-14) Informant A3, who was assisting in the implementation of the scaffolds, claimed that they did not think the Scaffolds were worthwhile but that the school was compelled to implement them under the new policies:

Q: What do you think of using text types?
A3: It’s just a new name for an old thing, I mean, isn’t it always?
What’s the old saying, there’s nothing new under the sun.
It’s mainly because of ELLA, without that we wouldn’t bother.
(A3:fn7)

School B responded to the Agenda 97 literacy initiative in a similar way. A ‘literacy team’ of 10 staff, 5 of whom were English teachers, was formed and a whole school policy was written by the team. (B:cf1) Informant B4 was appointed literacy coordinator of the team and resources were sought from other schools regarding the teaching of Text Types. B4 stated that the use of Text Types in the school policy was a direct response to the new policies emerging from Agenda 97. Comments included the following data slice:

Oh, that’s [text types] the new thing. It’s in Ella, it’s in the School Certificate and the new HSC looks like it will be the same. Everything’s on structure, the new focus seems to be, so we’ve got to focus on it.
I think it’s killing the focus we’ve always tried to have, you know, on ideas. The idea was always the thing, now it’s just the structure. You’ve got to be a good technician now.
Q: So, you’ve changed the school focus because of the exams?
B4: Well, you’ve got to, the new syllabus, too. You have too.
(B4: Fn:41)

B4’s perceptions about the need to implement Text Type Scaffolds because of policy demands, rather than for educational reasons were supported by other informants. B1:1&26; B2:8-11; B3:fn2-3; B5:4) The School B literacy policy misleadingly stated that staff had received professional development on the use of Text Types and the strategies inherent to Agenda ‘97. The following is an extract from the policy:

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There have been whole school activities conducted on staff development days for the past two years which have trained teaching staff in literacy concepts such as text types and teaching strategies appropriate to respective KLAs.

I attended both of the ‘whole school activities’. Each consisted of a one hour session of reading segments of the Agenda ‘97 literacy policies and mind mapping what teachers thought they meant. The sessions were compulsory components of state-wide DET student-free professional training days involving teachers from all subjects and were conducted by B4. There was no specific explanation of a Functional View of Language or the pedagogies involved in a Genre-based approach to the teaching of writing, or of the uses of Text Type Scaffolds. (B4:fn41) The school literacy policy also stated that:

Students who are identified as having literacy difficulties are placed on individual programs specifically designed to address each student’s particular literacy needs. Programs are monitored throughout the year and close contact with parents and class teachers is kept regarding the progress of these children. (B:cf:1)

I know from my own teaching experience at the school that no follow-up of students identified as having problems with literacy by the ELLA tests occurred. During early 2000 and 2001 a total of five of my students were identified as having severe problems with literacy. The learning difficulties teacher at the school began assisting their reading but each year the program was discontinued within 2 months and no progress reports or re-testing occurred.

The school literacy policy also nominated one Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold for each faculty to be ‘teach explicitly and systematically’ for the whole of the first half of the year 2000. (B:cf8) The faculties and their nominated Text Types are reproduced in Table 5.7:
DET issued Text type scaffolds were enlarged into posters, laminated and placed in all rooms of the school. Photocopies of the scaffolds were also supplied to teachers for use with students. The methodology was intended to be one where teachers handed out the scaffolds and had students complete their writing within the structural headings of the scaffolds. (B:cf12) The literacy policy stated that each cohort would progress through the Text Types as they moved from year 7 through successive years. (B:cf11) The plan was clearly aligned with the Teaching Literacy In Year 7 ... series issued by the DET under the Agenda 97 literacy initiatives, indeed the DET books were issued to faculties with the scaffolds. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1997a) The planned school-wide focus on the stipulated Text Types failed to eventuate, although the policy remained in place until the end of 2001 and beyond. A check with the literacy coordinator at School B revealed that the proposed program was never started. (B4:fn44) The school literacy plan also identified school focuses in literacy in the following areas:

- Text Types
- Faculty Planning
- Remedial Strategies
- Middle Schooling and Literacy
- Boys Literacy
  (B:cf15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Assigned Text Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PdHPE</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Recount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Science</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Recount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Recount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arts</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to note that B6, the faculty librarian and an English teacher, regularly complained to me during the observation period that there was no reading program within the school and that the only focus of the new literacy policy had been on Text Type Scaffolds. (B6:refs4) A report was eventually submitted to the DET outlining the school’s actions under *Agenda 97* guidelines. (B:cf1-16)

It is important to note that Informant B2, during the course of the development of the school literacy policy pointed out that there was no accountability built into the policy and teachers were free to either implement it or not. In this way the policy was a strategy for visibility but not for accountability. The following data slice illustrated B2’s point:

> Unless you’ve got someone, a head teacher, who’s saying, right, let’s do this and we’ll do all this together at the same time. It’s virtually left up to your own, you either do it on your own or you don’t. There’s no accountability with it.

(B2:6)

Informant B4 had also indicated earlier that the policy was not being followed up and that teachers would be left to their own devices as to whether they were taught at all. The following data slice illustrates the lack of practical assistance in the implementation of the policies and hints that Text Types were implemented to meet the need for visibility under the *Agenda ‘97* policies:

> R: How have you been implementing a functional approach to language?

B4: Well, this is what we are waiting to do, so far it has been a thing, where people have been told about the text types, um, they have been told that is not all there is to teaching literacy, um, they have been told at in-services but we don’t have any structure that checks to see if they’re being taught or how they’re being taught, or when to teach them.

And I think that is what we are going to do next. So, we’re going to do text types, because for a couple of reasons, number one, it’s something to do. That’s expected.

(B4:51)

The proposed action was, in fact, never taken and the school literacy plan was not implemented with any other year 7 cohort. School B appeared to be addressing visibility with the literacy team and the school literacy policy. The literacy team disbanded shortly after the scaffolds were distributed and B4 resigned as literacy coordinator. As of late 2001 the literacy team had not reformed and no further initiatives had taken place. The school literacy policy appeared to exist merely to give the impression that the school was implementing policies that it had addressed only in very superficial ways.
The teaching of Text Type structures was not, however, abandoned. An examination of English Faculty teaching programs for years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 revealed that a major component of assessment in each year was based on the successful compliance with the structure of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and the ability to conform to the rules of traditional grammar. Each assessment task dictated a set Text Type and particular conventions of grammar students were expected to conform to. The focus on structure was the only criteria used for assessing each piece of writing.

One example was the Year 11 program. During the first two weeks of each year the new year 11 cohort were all expected to study and produce an example of ‘all the Text Types’ over eight one hour lessons. The program nominated eight Text Types for study. Where Text Types were called for in programs they were accompanied by Scaffolds which were expected to be used as the exemplars of textual structure for student achievement and assessment.

Visibility And Policy Development

The data suggested that policy makers also developed strategies of visibility as a means of ensuring political survival of favoured policies within the education system. As discussed previously, in 1996 the NSW Government gave instructions for the removal of Functional Grammar terminology from the primary school English syllabus. Under the Agenda ’97 initiative the primary syllabus underpinned ‘reading, writing, talking and listening in all key learning areas’, including secondary school English. (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a, p.12) As such, the framework informing the K-6 English Syllabus (1998) was also meant to inform the policies affecting subject English.

The DET and BOS, independent of each other, both attempted to develop grammars which would pass inspection at the political level but abandoned the projects and assigned the task to Informant L5, as a consultant academic. (L5:6-8) Informant L5 was personally responsible for writing the hybrid grammar used in the 1998 K-6 English Syllabus, which underpinned all literacy policy documents issued by the DET and BOS during the study. The grammar was an amalgam of Functional Grammar and traditional grammars. (L5:8) According to L5 the development of the hybrid grammar was driven...
by a need to retain a Functional View of Language but not be seen to be using Functional Grammar as the metalanguage. L5 stated:

So, from my perception, there has been quite an effort, in fact, with both the Board and the Department, to come together on this issue, the K-6 syllabus, then there is a little bit of disjuncture where the Department was trying to put up documents, the literacy strategy ones, and of course, the thing that mattered, the one with the spiral binding ‘Strategies that work in the classroom, Vo.II’, where they needed to use grammatical terms. And at that point the syllabus hadn’t developed it’s own and they weren’t allowed to use functional terms, so at that point, I developed some of these mongrel terms, which are fine. (L5:7)

Informant L5 directly connected their development of the hybrid grammar with the survival of Functional Grammar in NSW policies, claiming that:

There are only two or three places where it doesn’t really work and it was worth that kind of compromise, to keep it in the system.

R: To keep it in the system?
L5: Yes.
(L5:9)

R: I actually interviewed some people about the reasons for changing it and adopting the terms that they did and a lot of it was aimed at getting it through at a political level.
L5: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. But it wasn’t a disaster, having to do that, I think in retrospect it’s [the grammar] probably got more acceptable [because of the forced changes].
(L5:10)

L5 linked the development of the hybrid grammar to a need for it to appear that Functional Grammar had been dropped from the syllabus when, in fact, it had not. In the following data slices L5 made it clear that one of the aims of the rewriting of the syllabus was to make it appear to public commentators and political masters that the new syllabus did not contain Functional Grammar:

L5: Yep. I don’t think they are intentionally subverting, but I think at a certain level and ____ is involved, they are being very careful and um, that is the same with the Board of Studies, it’s almost as if they are in this pivotal position where they have to act for the people above them, who haven’t got a clue about grammar or literacy or anything.

R: This is the Board of Studies people?
L5: Board of Studies and the Department. And out there they have got the community, and people like Alan Jones [talkback radio commentator] who, again, have very different opinions about these things, so they have to answer to them in very simplistic terms and try to make it look black and white, ‘no, we are not doing functional grammar, etc etc’, but to the teachers, who and I think there is still a groundswell of support for functional grammar.
(L5:6-7)

... In fact, the worst ones were the Ministry. So you’d have both the Department and the Board and it was the Ministry that was interfering. Everything, all the documents had to go to the Ministry for approval, and the syllabus was sent back with incredible things like there was mass and count nouns in there, which of course were very traditional terms and it was sent back saying, ‘Ah,
you’re still trying to keep Systemics in there, underhandedly, get rid of these two’ you know, just so, controlling and petty.
(L5:14)

A number of media articles and professional journals at the time of the new syllabus openly claimed that Functional Grammar had been banned altogether from the syllabus. (Editorial, 1997; Grover, 1995; Kamler, 1995; Ravelli, 1996; Threadgold, 1995) That view was supported by DET policy documents, which disingenuously stated that current policies were based on traditional grammar. For example, the Focus on Literacy: Writing (2000) document stated:

The benefits of traditional approaches are seen in the current emphasis [in policies] on knowledge of traditional grammar.
(New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2000a, p.12)

The syllabus was, in fact, based almost entirely on the Systemic Functional framework and contained a section dealing with Functional Grammar which had the Systemic terminology removed and traditional terminology imposed over it. (a section written by Informant L5) (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1998b)

(In)Visibility and Functional Grammar

It appeared that policy makers went to considerable lengths to achieve visibility regarding compliance with political directives. A search of the hundreds of pages which made up the K-6 English Syllabus (1998) and support documents revealed that, despite being based almost entirely on the Systemic Functional framework, there was no trace of the following terms anywhere in any of the documents:

- Functional Approach
- Functional Grammar
- Systemic
- linguistic

This was remarkable in that the K-6 English Syllabus was underpinned by and contained a detailed section of Functional Grammar as the metalanguage of choice. It is obvious on reading the NSW documents that they are based on Systemic linguistic theories and teachers would require knowledge of Functional Grammar in order to be
able to implement the policies. It would be difficult, however, for any teacher not familiar with Systemic theories to even discern which theories the policies are based upon. The only text detailing the hybrid grammar and theoretical framework which underpinned the new syllabus documents was published by the Primary English Teachers’ Association (PETA). The author, Informant L5, stated that they had originally written the book to be published by the BOS for use with the new syllabus but that political intervention had prevented its publication with the syllabus documents. (L5:30)

The subversion of policies at the primary level appeared to also have directly impacted at the secondary level. A new HSC Stage 6 Syllabus was implemented in 1999. The Chief Education Officer English released a curriculum support bulletin in 1999 which stated:

Probably for the first time in Australia, developments in senior English have been influenced by K-6 English rather than the other way around. Teaching language, literacy and communication is now based on a social view of language, which simply recognises that the main purposes of language are social. Language is a resource for making meaning in all sorts of different social and situational contexts. (Hardage, 1999, p.1)

The above pronouncement that ‘teaching language, literacy and communication is now based on a Social View of Language’ not only indicated a connection between the two syllabuses but also flagged a change in the DET bureaucracies use of a Functional View of Language as official policy. The term ‘Social View Of Language’ was also used in the Focus on Literacy: Writing document, although there appeared to be little difference between the definitions of a Functional View and a Social View, apart from the labels. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2000a) At the time of writing the Agenda ‘97 policies remained in force and a Functional View of Language was DET policy, albeit minus the use of the terminology of Functional Grammar. The shift in terminology to a ‘Social View of Language’ appeared to be related to the falling from grace of the use of Functional Grammar and the need for it to appear that the approach had been removed from policies altogether when, in fact, it had not. This perception was reinforced by the fact that, as examined in the review of literature, most proponents of a ‘Social View of Language’ have sought to retain the use of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar as the metalanguage of choice for use in pedagogies adopting a Social View of Language.
The new HSC syllabus also incorporated a number of the tenets of a Systemic Functional View of Language and drew heavily from the framework provided by Functional Grammar. Once again, however, the terms associated with Functional Systemic Linguistics did not appear anywhere in the syllabus documents or support documents. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c) The DET guidelines on the theory bases of the new syllabus stated that it was based on a Social View of Language but failed to mention that those theories were informed by analysis using Functional Grammar. (Hardage, 1999) That hundreds of pages of educational policy documents, including documents meant to inform teacher knowledge, failed to detail or name in any way the theoretical framework on which they were based demonstrated the lengths policy makers were prepared to go to achieve visibility before their political masters.

There were also theoretical issues raised by the re-writing of the grammar in the syllabus. Hallidayan Functional Grammar is a widely respected theoretical framework based on rhetorical descriptions of the functions of language in creating meaning, whereas traditional grammars are prescriptive and rule-based in nature. By imposing traditional grammatical terminology over a Functional Grammar it could well be argued that there is a danger of the rhetorical grammar becoming prescriptive and rule-governed, thereby corrupting the very nature of the theoretical framework. The subversion of policies and theories is dealt with later in the section titled ‘System Subversion’.

Visibility and Teacher Preservice Education

The data suggested that visibility also occurred within teacher preservice education. Teachers in Australia have long complained that they perceive their teacher preservice education to be inadequate to the task of teacher preparation and sub-standard in quality when compared to other tertiary qualifications. That teachers hold those perceptions was reinforced by two major studies which were conducted during the course of this study. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Ramsey, 2000)

Complaints by informants regarding their teacher preservice education led to inquiries which revealed that conditions of visibility were integrally linked with aspects of teacher preservice education. Teacher perceptions of the value of teacher education
also appeared to be congruent with student perceptions of the GDE program. In addition, student teacher complaints about quality and standards within the GDE also appeared congruent with actual results recorded in two cohorts.

Informant perceptions were supported by supplementary data in which it appeared that the GDE program was seen to be more rigorous than was actually the case. In particular, the lack of professional structures and an overloaded tertiary education system appeared to contribute to a system which placed the need for visibility before professional internal-accountability.

**Perception of Standards Within the GDE**

A number of student teacher informants reported that they felt the GDE was of a low academic standard. Similar to teacher informants, student teachers often compared the GDE to their discipline degree. For example:

Well, the dip. ed. here, isn’t that, in terms of academic, I mean I did Chemistry in my undergrad degree, hey my Chemistry stuff, as well as English History, my chemistry stuff was actually harder than what we are doing here. It’s just there’s a lot of it. And there is a lot of stuff and a lot of research involved in it. Do you know what I mean?

... It’s time consuming, there is a lot of research, there’s a lot of thinking, but I don’t think it’s academically demanding. I don’t know, maybe that’s being a bit arrogant, but I don’t think it’s, compared to my last three years ...
(S1:13)

Most students reported that they felt that the grading of assessment tasks in the GDE was overly ‘soft’. (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S10; S11) Such perceptions appeared to pervade all 4 cohorts of the GDE I was associated with during the study. Most students were unhappy at the situation. For example, Informant S5 claimed that, regardless of the amount of work put into an assessment task, they were always awarded high marks. In the following excerpt A5 claims to have been appalled by such practices:

I’ve had other stuff, I handed in and thought I would not pass and handed in and got a distinction. Just done really bad work in the last half hour and chucked it in. Oh, the standard here is just abysmal.
(S5:19)

Informant S4 stated they liked the lack of focus on performance and claimed that in one subject mere attendance at tutorials was all that was required to achieve a high grade.
at the end, um if we end up if we go to all the rehearsals and the um, we turn up at the performance, we get a HD [high distinction].

Which is good, one because the incentive is not to get a grade, it is to actually go through the process of doing drama without having that extra pressure of being graded.

Likewise with the other one, basically she doesn’t care about the grading ...

Q2. So if you all turn up you all get a HD [High Distinction]?

S4a: Well, a Distinction, but it doesn’t really matter, but the emphasis is not on the grade. And for me that is, well it’s ideal for me, because I’m there for the learning experience, not to be graded.

(S4a:3)

Regardless of how they felt about the grading, most student informants stated that it did not appear to be possible to fail the GDE course. This was a perception I also encountered repeatedly during my time working as a lecturer at University A.

Lecturer informants complained that students within the GDE program often expected to receive high grades. Informants L1, L3, L4 and B4 claimed that reasons for the expectations about high grades stemmed from competition for ‘targeted graduate’ status with the DET employment system and students’ experience with receiving high grades in university subjects throughout the GDE program. (B4:fn38-40; L3:fn1-3; L4:5; L5:fn1)

**Actual Standards Within the GDE**

In response to comments by student and lecturer informants during the first year or so of data collection, and partially in response to my own experiences, I investigated informant perceptions of unusually high grades being awarded in the GDE program. (L1; L5; B4; Refs) Table 5.8 details the grades awarded for the years 1998 and 1999 in the four compulsory subjects which comprised the core educational pedagogy component of the GDE program:
Table 5.8: Grades awarded in education subjects at University A 1998 - 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject A</th>
<th></th>
<th>Subject B</th>
<th></th>
<th>Subject C</th>
<th></th>
<th>Subject D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Distinction (85-100%)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction (75-84%)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit (65-74%)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass (50-64%)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass Conceded (45-50%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail (45-0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8**</td>
<td>2**</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cohort:</strong></td>
<td>133</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average grade for each subject:</strong></td>
<td>78% Dist</td>
<td>73% Credit</td>
<td>76% Dist</td>
<td>83% Credit</td>
<td>68% Credit</td>
<td>65% Dist</td>
<td>82% Dist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No. of Students with Distinction or better:</strong></td>
<td>86/133</td>
<td>70/148</td>
<td>123/133</td>
<td>91/148</td>
<td>49/133</td>
<td>40/148</td>
<td>101/133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** These numbers reflect students failed by lecturer. The students were not failed but were given passes by the faculty executive. See text for details.

(Figures compiled from Lecturing staff records L: Archive F5 & cf:educ)

Table 5.8 shows that, in keeping with informant perceptions, the data showed that the majority of GDE students received Distinction, or better, passes for all subjects except subject C during 1998 and 1999. Subject C was the inaugural subject trialling language and literacy theory introduced in 1998. Subject outlines revealed that the subject continued into 2001, however, the hours were reduced to four one hour lectures and the content reduced to focus on early language acquisition and the primary years.

(L:Archive F3)

Due to one of the English Methods lecturers leaving the university in 1998 I was unable to obtain English Methods results for that year. I was, however, able to obtain English Methods results for 1999 and 2000 from Informant B4, who was a Methods lecturer at the university from 1997 to 2001. (B4:fn37-40) The results for the subject English Methods in the GDE program at University A are presented in Table 5.9:
Table 5.9: Student results for English methods subject GDE program 1999 - 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>No. students awarded each grade per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Distinction (85-100%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction (75-84%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit (65-74%)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass (50-64%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail (0-49%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. students in cohort:</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Grade Awarded each year:</td>
<td>80% (Distinction)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from Lecturer records L: ArchiveF5 & cf educate)

When asked about why the average marks were so high Informant B4 claimed that they were under pressure from the university hierarchy to pass all students, regardless of ability. B4 said:

Well, this is the thing, see. I received so much flak about marks and everything in that course. They all expect HDs when, quite frankly, they don’t deserve them. But that’s what they’re used to ... everyone else gives them HDs and Ds, [at the university] and [the coordinator of Methods subjects’] attitude was, if they kept coming they all got Ds. The grades don’t mean a thing, it doesn’t matter what they do, they get good grades.

Q: How long do you think this has been going on?
B4: Oh, long before I started, it seems like it’s the attitude at he the uni. Everyone passes. You can’t fail anyone. If you fail anyone it’s as if you have something wrong with yourself. [Informant L1] just wanted everyone to pass. [They] kept saying to me to just get everyone through.

(B4: fn38-40)

Informant L4 also asserted that they had experienced pressure from the university hierarchy to pass all GDE students, particularly foreign full fee paying students. L4 claimed that they had attempted to fail students in the past and that senior Faculty members had changed the grades to passes after they had been submitted by L4.

(L4: fn1-4) Informant L4 stated that a senior faculty member had told them a number of times:

It’s up to us to graduate them, let the schools sort them out when they get out.

(L4: fn1)
Chapter 5: Analysis

Informant L4 was adamant that direct pressure was exerted on lecturers not to fail students. According to L4 students expected high grades and university executives expected all students to pass the GDE program. L4 also claimed that they had experience of senior faculty members changing grades to ensure that students passed. (L4:fn2-3) The following data slice illustrates L4’s views:

You just don’t fail people in the Dip. Ed. Especially if they are full fee paying. [country] don’t ever fail a [foreign student].

Q: Why not?
Because they’ll just pass them anyway, just changes their marks.

Q: What, even if you fail them?
Yes. [They’re] not the only one. The expectation from the top is to pass them. Don’t fail any. Actually the don’t just want passes, they want good passes, Distinctions seem to be the lowest they want. It’s a farce. It’s such a terrible course. And you’re going to teach in it? Good luck, that’s all I can say, is good luck. (L4:fn3)

The data also indicated that strategies were adopted by individuals within teacher preservice education to meet a perceived need for visibility within the GDE program. The evidence suggested that grades were allocated in a manner to make it appear that student standards were higher than might reasonably be expected for such a large cohort. Examples of just how such visibility was sometimes achieved are examined in the following section dealing with system subversion.

The data also suggested that the system of appeals within the university made it very difficult for lecturers to fail students. Both Informant L4 and Informant A1 reported that they had been involved in time consuming and lengthy appeals processes instigated by students when fail marks were awarded. (L5:1-15 and A1:36) Informant A1, Principal of School A, had experience lecturing in Methods subjects in the GDE program at the university. Informant A1 claimed that the standards within the system of teacher preservice education meant that teachers not suited to teaching ended up in schools. A1 claimed that pressure came from both the university executive and the appeals process, although in one instance the Dean of the Education Faculty had supported A1’s position. A1 stated:

See, I don’t think we bite the bullet enough at the Dip. Ed. level. I not pleasantly, reluctantly, failed someone which meant they failed their dip. ed. when I was a lecturer. There was pressure put on me by that person to rethink his final mark, which I was instructed by the university to do. But then someone else said, no don’t do it, the Dean, so I stuck with it. That went on for 6 or 7
months, challenges and appeals and all that, that person, I would think they would be better not teaching, from a school's sake and I think it would be better for them but they got through. (A1:36)

The issue of entry standards into the profession had implications for professionalism in schools. Those implications also emerged in the data as concerns amongst teacher informants and are dealt with in the section dealing with system subversion and teacher preservice education.

Summary

The efforts by School B to implement a whole school policy based on the use of Text Type Scaffolds and traditional grammar can be viewed as a visibility strategy. The need to be seen to be implementing policies appeared to become more important than actually implementing what teachers thought were the most effective and professional methods of teaching literacy. Indeed, it appeared highly likely that the need for visibility within the system impacted on teachers’ perceptions of literacy and contributed towards their negative feelings about literacy when compared to the study of literature, as discussed in the section dealing with theory deficit.

The extent to which the two schools catered to a notion of visibility rather than to true accountability was exemplified by the focus of their efforts in the wake of the Agenda 97 literacy initiative. Both schools spent considerable effort within what they considered to be an overloaded system to be seen to be implementing the new policies. Meetings were held, materials were developed and distributed and lesson time allocated for addressing the new strategies involving Text Types and explicit teaching of structure, despite teacher informants stating that they did not value the new approaches.

No resources were expended at either school to address the fact that all teacher informants stated that they either did not understand or had a limited understanding of the theories involved in the new policies. Indeed, given the age of the informants it would have been almost impossible for them to have been fully conversant with the strategies which emerged during the 1990s without extensive professional development or recent postgraduate tertiary qualifications. Informants indicated, as discussed earlier, that such professional development had not been available for some years. Efforts were
exerted in implementing strategies they did not understand, in the absence of professional development sufficient to bring their professional knowledge up to date. Clearly, policies issued by both the DET and BOS were meant for implementation and informant teachers were placed in a situation where they had little option but to do their best and to meet the demands of visibility, even with policies they did not understand well enough to implement in the manner intended. The problems encountered by teacher informants in attempting to meet the demands of the system appeared to be exacerbated by the use of visibility strategies by policy developers. The need for visibility in policy development indicated just how little ownership of the policies and theories of language and literacy teachers held.

In an attempt to retain policies which reflected current educational thought policy makers actually melded theoretical frameworks together in an attempt to disguise their preferred model. Theories and policies became muddied and the theoretical orientations of syllabus documents became difficult to determine through reading them. For policy makers, as for a number of teacher informants, the ends appeared to justify the means.

Teacher educators also appeared to buckle under a perceived need for high achievement within the GDE program. The extraordinary situation whereby the majority of students received grades at the highest levels indicated that the awarding of high grades had become a survival strategy within the university site.

That many informants sought ways to ensure visibility in compliance with policy and systemic demands seems clear. It now remains to examine how such visibility was achieved and how such strategies affected teacher practice.

**System Subversion**

Perhaps the most pragmatic of the conditions conceptualised was that of ‘system subversion’. Influenced by the various factors which contributed to all of the conditions exposed, the condition of system subversion provides a snapshot of how educators responded to the other conditions in their daily practice. System subversion may be considered the action/interaction strategies phase of the holistic theory, however, it should be remembered that all of the conditions stood in paradigmatic relationship to each other. If system subversion were to alter then it is most probable that other conditions within the grounded theory would also change. Much of the data here draws
from and adds to data presented in other sections. Each condition was both a cause and an effect standing in direct relationship to each of the others.

I was somewhat perplexed by my initial perceptions of strategies later conceptualised as system subversion. A number of theorists in recent years have been critical of NSW high school English teacher practices regarding the teaching of literacy. (Bernstein, 1990, 1996; Callaghan et al., 1993; Carr, 1996; Cazden, 1988; Chipman, 1989; Christie, 1991, 1997, 1990b; Cope, 1988; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993b, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 1990; Fries & Gregory, 1995; Gilbert, 1994; Hammond, 1990; Kamler, 1995; Kamler et al., 1997; Kress, 1985; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993b; Luke, 1988; Macken & Rothery, 1991a; Martin et al., 1987a; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rothery, 1980, 1981, 1993; Ravelli, 1996; Rothery, 1989, 1996; Street, 1995; Threadgold, 1995; Wignell, 1988; Wright et al., 1992) It also became obvious to me that teachers were not implementing current literacy theories or pedagogies in their lessons, nor did it seem that they were taking much notice of the requirements of current policies. I often wrote in my reflective journal that teachers appeared to treat policies as theory. Indeed, it often seemed that teachers had very little understanding of the theories which informed policies. It is important to note that I often gained access to strategies used in schools through my trusted position as a participant observer and practicing teacher. Had I been an ‘outsider’ I am sure many of the subversions I witnessed would have been hidden from the data collection process. This fact added greatly to the sense of responsibility I feel for the impressions I create about my informants.

To merely state that teachers were not using particular theories or policies in their teaching approaches seemed to offer little to understanding the relationships being explored. I did not wish to merely be critical of my informants without attempting to understand the relationships within the system which contributed to the contexts within which I perceived that they were practicing their profession. I spent a lot of soul-searching time questioning my own critique of informants’ lessons and other data, concerned that to join other critics in focusing only on what was missing from lessons was, in fact, missing the bigger picture.

My concerns were addressed somewhat by the use of the grounded theory process, which contextualised aspects of teacher practice within the system of school policies, teacher education and the school system itself. By using the grounded theory paradigm phenomena which others have often conceptualised as shortcomings in teacher practice were able to be conceptualised as only one condition standing in
paradigmatic relationship to others within the construct of the grounded theory presented in this thesis.

**Subversion and Teacher Practice**

Some informants were quite open that one of the keys to a personal sense of professionalism in teaching practice was through selective implementation of policies and theories. In the personal phase of disempowerment revealed by the grounded theory procedure individuals appeared to consider that one of main ways in which they could exercise a sense of professionalism was in the selective implementation and subversion of aspects of the school system. The major motivation for such selectivity appeared, overwhelmingly, to be a concern for students. I was constantly amazed, throughout the study, by the caring nature of teachers towards their students. Whether in the classroom or staffroom, informants showed the utmost concern for the educational welfare of their charges.

Subversion appeared at the highest levels of the system. The level of senior policy makers is dealt with later in this section. At the school level Informant A1 was extremely candid as to how they considered subversion of policies as an important part of their duties as Principal of School A. A1 openly stated that they decided which policies to implement and which to 'put on the back-burner', depending on the perceived benefits to students. (A1:12) Like many other informants, there appeared to be a cost / benefit equation on which Informant A1 depended in making such decisions. A1 made the following comments regarding the effects of the overloaded education system and the influx of new policies in recent years:

Q20. Do you think that [the demands of the system] affects what you do?
A1: It makes me focus on what is important and what this school will do, as opposed to having to do things that the Department expects to do. Things that, perhaps if I put on the back-burner, would eventually fade away, quality assurance has come and gone, performance management contracts have come and gone, profiles didn’t even come, yet we talked about it for a long time. You could go on with a number of things. And that’s just in the last four years.

Q21. So, how do you cope with that?
A1: You’ve just got to prioritise what is important, on kids in the school and anything that comes in, you’ve got to work positively with it...
So I think you’ve got to work out what you are doing at the school, I think you’ve got to meet the kids needs. I have a simple philosophy. As a teacher I felt, would I be my question to myself was would I be happy if my children were in my class, not that I would want them there, right. Would I
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be happy if my kid had to be in my class with what I was teaching. Now my question to myself is
‘Would I be happy if my kid was attending this school?’

Again, I would say, not that I would want them there, but if this were a one school town,
would I be happy if my kids were here? I would say yes.

No school is perfect, this is not a perfect school. I think we are moving forward, not
backwards. and forward movement is not smooth. I feel we are moving forward and there is
community feedback and numbers. The actual school enrolment is increasing and many, some of
them are teachers’ kids. Not from this school, but from the area, so.

(A1:12)

It was interesting that Informant A1 expressed some support for the ELLA tests. Further
questioning later revealed that they valued feedback for student learning and, despite
dismissing the accuracy of ELLA scoring, felt that teachers could use it differently
within the school for their own information about student needs. (A1:9,11 &12) This, in
itself, appeared to be a type of subversion of the ELLA process.

Informant A1 appeared to be held in generally high regard by the teachers at
School A. Informants A3 and A4 all cited, without prompting, the ability to subvert
some of the demands of the system as a valued quality in their Principal. Comments
included:

A3b: He does a lot of deflection of stuff that comes from the top. He, you can see him saying
‘this is important’, this isn’t.
A4a: Who?
A3b: [A1], he’s switched on. He takes a lot of pressure off. A lot of stuff comes to him and he
reads it pretty thoroughly, and he says no, well, this is important, we’ll do it. And when he says
that, you think oh well, we’d better do it because you respect the fact that he has done a lot of
culling, taken a fair bit of pressure off.
A4a: Oh, yeah, definitely. He’s a great boss, very strong, he cuts out a lot of the crap.
(A3b:1)

Informant A2 also indicated that they valued the way in which A1 selectively
implemented new policies within the school, claiming that A1 was ‘as good a boss as
you could ever get’ in that he ‘protects the staff a lot from the rubbish from the
Department’. (A2b:5)

Subversion and Assessment

As discussed earlier, one of the key ways in which political control was exerted on
schools was through compulsory assessment tasks. Compulsory assessment, such as the
Early Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) tests, the School Certificate (SC) and
the Higher School Certificate (HSC) directly controlled and influenced the choices
informants made about literacy and language education practices. Informants also appeared to subvert those assessment procedures as a result of the influence of the conditions conceptualised by the grounded theory process.

Informants appeared to subvert assessment procedures both as a strategy for survival and for the purpose of meeting the demands of visibility. One of the most obvious incidents of subversion occurred in the very first week of data collection at School A. At the beginning of data collection I commenced a three month period of casual relief teaching in English as part of the process of establishing myself as a participant observer within the school. During the first week I was informed by Informant A2 that I was required to provide grades and comments of student performance on the half-yearly reports for my new classes. The teacher I was replacing had not left marks for the classes and I was expected to give my new students grades based on my one week of experience in the school. The reports were due the week after I commenced working in the school. When I explained to the staff that I felt I should not be writing reports for students I had only just met all the informants at School A disagreed and stated they believed I should write the reports, including allocating grades to each student. Comments included:

I think you could assess them as well as I could. I don’t see what the problem is.  
(A9)

Their answer is their answer, no matter who marks it. Well, yes I see your point but it doesn’t really matter as long as they get a mark.  
(A2)

Just make up a mark, have a look in their books. As long as you think it is fair.  
(A3)

Look, it’s probably not the best way to do it, but just make it up. It doesn’t matter. Someone’s got to do it. It’s your class.  
(A5)

Yeah, I had to, too. Don’t worry about it, just do it.  
(A6)

I don’t see that it matters, who else will do it, you’re doing the block.  
(A7)

I don’t care who does it, just so long as I don’t have to.  
(A8)

(A:fn12)

Despite my objections I was instructed to write the reports by the Head Teacher English, Informant A2. The reason given was that both the DET and parents expected
the reports to be issued on time and the need to meet that expectation was more important than the accuracy of the reports. (A:fn12)

The above experience was not unusual in my casual relief teaching experience. In fact, I had been asked to do similar things in schools beforehand and have done so since the experience in School A. The key point here is not to use the incident to criticize the teachers involved but to illustrate the powerlessness that they obviously felt within the school system. It was more important to maintain the visibility of meeting the demands of the system, in order to survive in their positions, than to maintain the integrity of the assessment procedures used within the school.

School A also used the marks collected from the homework grammar sheets sampled in Figure 5.13 to allocate end of year grades for year 7, 8 and 9. No other marks were used to allocate grades. (A:fn4) The method of allocation of grades obviously subverted the principles of assessment contained in BOS syllabus documents and DET literacy policies, which stipulate ongoing assessment as:

an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle and should be the starting point for all instruction.
(New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a, p.18)

Departmental policy documents also stipulate that a variety of assessment and evaluation procedures, including reflective evaluation, be used throughout the year in assessing student outcomes. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.20) The use of the homework sheets in School A indicated that, despite an attempt to appear to be meeting the new literacy policies the staff were, in fact, subverting them.

There was also evidence of subversion of assessment procedures in School B. Informant B2 stated during an interview that they had given their year 10 class access to an assessment question the day before their exams, so that they could practice for the question at home beforehand. B2 was aware that it was against faculty policy to do so and stated that they had done it in an attempt to improve students' marks. (B2:11)

Informants B3 and B7 also appeared to subvert the assessment procedures of their year 11 HSC preliminary course. The new course included assessment of skills in viewing, based on aspects of visual literacy. Part of the assessment for the course was the design of a collage relating to a television show being studied. Guidelines stated clearly that students were not to be given advance notice of the task and were not
allowed to work on the task in class time. (Archive:Bf12) During observations both informants informed their classes of the task two weeks prior to the date set for student notification. They also had students practice the task in class for two weeks, providing marking and feedback on how to improve their work. Both Informant B3 and Informant B7 stated that they had done so in order to improve the assessment marks of their students. Comments included:

... to help lift their marks. Just a practice.
Q: Are you supposed to do that?
B3: Probably not, well, not according to the rules, but I think it’s more important to give them [students] a chance.
(B3:fnB13)

B7: I don’t care, it just helps them to get better marks. It’s just too hard, otherwise, I don’t think they’ll [students] get it if they don’t get practice first.
(B7:fnB13)

Subversion of the principles of the new literacy policies, and of the theories of literacy and language learning which underpinned them, also appeared in data collected during assessment tasks set for junior classes at School B. I was invited by Informants B1 and B2 to visit their classes to observe across-the-year speaking assessment tasks being conducted with year 8. B1 stated that the formal team debates were designed to meet the new literacy policies focus on all four language modes and to prepare students for the HSC. (B1:fn35) The one question was set for each class in year 8 and they were given two one hour lessons to prepare for their debate. Preparation was done in the classroom and no access to research facilities was provided. Debates were held across the faculty over a one week period, with teachers grading their own classes. (B1:fn31-39 & B2:fn1-5)

The speaking and listening task was not related to any other unit of work and did not integrate any other aspects of language use. The task was very much run as a competition between teams of students, where individuals competed for marks against one another. There were no marking guidelines provided to students and both teachers recorded a mark out of 10 in their mark book for each student. Neither informant teacher conducted any lessons on public speaking or language skills, beyond listing the protocols for a debate. (B1:fn31-39 & B2:fn1-5) Students’ grades were the only feedback they received, as Informants B1 and B2 did not ‘want to single them [students] out’. (B1:35) At the time I summarised my observations of the tasks in the following brief entry in my notes and reflective journal:
From field notes:
Yr 8 speaking assessment task

2 periods to prepare
Little assistance given, periods used to do other work.

No discussion beforehand
Prescriptive instructions about what to do.
No discussion of purpose or audience or how evolved
B1 taking notes into side of lesson planner in margin
Gave no comments on speakers
Not related to any other work
Not related to any further speech experiences.
Not related to any themes studying
No modelling or examples
No immersion
4 students (chairpersons) no debate - left till ‘next term’
No discussion at end re: relevance; usefulness or even how kids felt about it all.
Did congratulate students on working well together.

B1: I don’t want to single them out.
(B1:fn31-39 & Refs: dtf)

I observed a number of other assessment tasks at School B and examined the school English programs. Assessment tasks were conducted for all years, including HSC classes, as four separate tasks which were intended to assess language modes in isolation. Of all the assessment tasks only those integrating speaking and listening skills were intended to assess more than one language mode. (Archive B:f12)

A vivid illustration of the undermining of the new policies by informants was given in the assessment schedule for the new HSC course. The new HSC syllabus stipulated the course weightings reproduced in Table 5.10 to be allocated to the different language modes in school HSC assessment tasks:

Table 5.10: BOS stipulated HSC internal assessment weightings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Mode</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing/Representing</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c, p.114)
Modern approaches to language education stress the importance of the integration of language modes and the new HSC syllabus reinforced the importance of adopting such strategies in the HSC course, stating:

These modes are often integrated and interdependent activities used in responding to and composing texts in order to shape meaning. It is important to realise that:

- any combination of the modes may be involved in responding to or composing print, sound, visual or multimedia texts; and
- the refinement of the skills in any one of the modes develops skills in the others. Students need to build on their skills in all language modes.

(Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c, p.8)

The syllabus and support documents clearly indicated that a number of assessment tasks should be used to integrate the modes 'to give students the opportunity to demonstrate outcomes in different ways and to improve the validity and reliability of the assessment'. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999c, p.111) The syllabus support documents also supply details for establishing a spreadsheet capable of calculating the weightings from assessment tasks graded out of a total mark of 100 per assignment. The documents state that teachers should use multi-modal tasks to assess the various modes over a number of tasks. (Board of Studies New South Wales, 1999b)

Despite the requirements of the policies and the trend in modern literacy pedagogies to integrate language modes, informants at School B separated them completely from one another and from the units being studied. Table 5.11 reproduces the HSC course assessment task schedule from the HSC program at School B:

Table 5.11: HSC course assessment schedule School B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Task Weighting</th>
<th>Outline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viewing/Representing</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Create a promotional poster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Individual speech on 'change'. Area of Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 Year Examination:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Conducted in School Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Response to dialogue on audio tape. Module A, Elective 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial Examination:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Conducted in School Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Archive:Bf12)
I discussed the isolation of language modes for assessment purposes with informants a number of times. B4 informed me that the separate assessment procedures met the minimum requirements of the syllabus and that it was the preferred method as it reduced the amount of work demanded of teachers in conducting and marking assessments. (B4:fn43) In addition the above allocation of marks from exams exceeded the limit of a total of 30% imposed by the BOS. When I raised this point with Informants B4 and B5 they insisted they could modify the grades later, if need be. (B4:fn44)

Both School A and School B had whole-school assessment policies whereby each of the four language modes was assessed in isolation from the others. For example, students in all years at both schools were set topics to research and on which to give an oral presentation as the assessment task for their spoken language. No marks were awarded for researching or writing their topic. They were marked solely on their oral presentation. When queried staff simply stated that such assessment tasks were the easiest way in which to meet the new literacy policies. (A:fn54 & Archive:Bf1)

Teacher informants subverted the principles of the new literacy and assessment policies by allocating only four assessment tasks, with one allocated to each language mode. There was no attempt to integrate the language modes or to integrate the tasks with the content being studied in class. The strategies developed by informants appeared to undermine the principles of both policies and current literacy and language learning theories.

Subversion and ELLA

The data also suggested that teacher informants subverted the processes of the ELLA tests, both during the holding of the exams and during the marking process. Informant B2 stated that they had been party to a deliberate strategy within the English Faculty at School B of marking the year 7 ELLA test in a deliberately harsh way, and the year 8 ELLA test in an easier manner, in order for students to improve their results between year 7 and 8. The following data slice illustrated the way in which teachers had subverted the ELLA marking process:

Well, Yeah, well I had ELLA last year, they were a top class, though, so they all did very well anyway. And I’ve got Year 8 this year, but I didn’t have them last year, so that has kind of...
me. I mean ___ has said to me, ___ is the only one that didn’t improve from last year, but all the rest had, which they usually do anyway.

I know, from my last school and here, teachers tend to mark really hard, you know, so that their marks tend to be lower than they would have been and so, this year, when they did it again, they were, obviously, going to improve anyway ...

Q: So, what do you mean they marked really hard?
B2: Well, because you’ve got a guideline, right, all the multiple choice and the guideline, like if they don’t mention a certain word or something, that’s wrong, so they can’t get any credit for that, so they tended to mark you know, ‘aww, maybe we could give him a mark here or there’, which you tend to do, well they didn’t. So, marking, I was aware of that.

Q: And that was deliberate? So the kids could improve in the marks later?
B2: Oh yeah! We talked about all this, it was definitely deliberate, so, that they would improve. (B2:6-7)

The ELLA test for year 8 had not been introduced at the time of data collection at School A, however, the Principal of School A reported that they considered the ELLA testing in year 7 to be ‘inflexible’, ‘harsh’ and ‘inaccurate’ in gauging student literacy levels. (A1:9)

ELLA marking procedures changed during the course of the study, with most marking taking place away from schools. Informants at School B appeared to continue their subversion, despite the change in the marking system. During observations of ELLA tests for year 7 at School B I witnessed the teacher in charge of the tests inform staff not to assist students at all during the test, even in ways allowed by guidelines, and, if asked questions, the teacher said, ‘give them the wrong answers so their marks stay down’. (B:fn14) The teacher also ended the ELLA test 30 minutes prior to the time supposed to be allowed for it. The informants involved in this study appeared happy with ending the tests early and joked about it in the staff meal room immediately afterwards. (B:fn15) On two occasions at School B staff completed students’ tests, deliberately giving incorrect answers and writing with their left hands to make it appear that students had completed the written components. Staff commented that they had taken similar action in other schools. When I asked the teacher who was in charge of conducting the test about the incidents, they stated that it didn’t matter, as:

It keeps the marks down so they can improve next year.
(B:fn13)

Data indicated that the subversion of the ELLA tests caused problems for informants during a subsequent review of the achievement of students in English by the DET. At a meeting I observed the District Superintendent cited the constant student improvements
between years 7, 8 and 10 as evidence that teachers were performing comparatively poorly in HSC results. The DET bureaucracy had tracked five full cohorts of students through the various assessment tasks and calculated that the rate of ‘improvement’ between years 7, 8 and 10 indicated that most students at School B were under performing in the HSC. Teachers were given copies of the results in statistical forms and submitted to an internal revue of their teaching practices by the Principal of School B. (Archive:Bfl1) Teacher informants appeared unaware that the students’ results were being tracked by officials in the district office.

Subversion and Literacy Policies

Evidence emerged that teacher informants at both schools were undermining the principles of the Agenda 97 literacy policies, particularly the implementation of a Functional View of Language, the use of Functional Grammar, Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and the call for a focus on explicit teaching of language skills. I attended the state-wide student-free staff development day at School B day in 1997 and observed the morning literacy session, where the Agenda 97 literacy initiative was introduced. Data collected at the session showed that the literacy coordinator for School B, Informant B4, emphasised erroneously that the focus of the strategy was in primary schools and on early intervention, stating that it had ‘really nothing to do with us in high schools’. (B4:26)

Staff were directed to ‘work out the literacy areas in your discipline’ for the introduction of literacy specific lessons using Text Type Scaffolds. (B4:27) The inference was clearly that literacy lessons were meant to be separate to normal subject content and lessons. That perception was reinforced when the school literacy policy was developed, singling out one Text Type to be focused on in each subject area for a six month period, although the policy was never fully implemented. (B:cf11)

School B also instigated a ‘RAGE’ reading program for year 7, as a strategy under their Agenda 97 school literacy plan. Observation of a number of ‘RAGE’ lessons revealed that they consisted of students sitting in the library while the librarian read aloud to them, followed by time during which they were allowed to borrow books. There was no time allocated to students for their own reading. The librarian stated that, due to a lack of support within the system for such programs, that they were not
prepared to do much more with other teachers’ classes. (B6:fn2) They also repeatedly indicated during data collection that they had been unsuccessful in encouraging English teachers at School B to initiate reading programs using the library with their classes. Informant B6 claimed that no English staff from School B used the library as a source of books for students to borrow, stating that the library was seen only as a resource for researching factual assignments, rather than as a source of reading material. (B6:fn3-5) A check with teacher informants revealed that the only books students read during English were the ones distributed by the teacher for compulsory novel studies. All teacher informants stated that they believed students would not read any books they borrowed and that they believed students should attend the library in their own time if they wished to borrow books. (B:fn9c)

A Functional View of Language builds on the approaches adopted in Whole Language and Process-based approaches. (Derewianka, 1990, p.5) Whole language and Process approaches are based on psycho-linguistic models of learning and encourage wide reading and student choice in selection of content, in order to encourage participation and language development, as outlined in Cambourne’s conditions of learning. (Cambourne, 1988) It can be argued that teacher informants’ strict adherence to a prescribed reading list was more in keeping with English as skills type approaches to the study of English than a Functional View of Language.

Informant B4 claimed that subversion of policies had been responsible years earlier for misconceptions amongst secondary English teachers about Whole Language approaches and the teaching of grammar. B4 claimed that teachers simply misinterpreted the policies and undermined the intention of Whole Language approaches because of the affects of the conditions inherent in NSW schools. The following extended data slice shows B4’s views:

R: What happened to grammar, spelling and punctuation amongst all that?
B4: Oh, well see that is what got neglected, because the idea was that people just pick it up. Now, here again, I think that that’s part of the swinging pendulum, because there is an assumption made, hang on I’ve got to go back and think about this.

It’s a reaction to things, you know, so much spelling and grammar had been so boring and deadly, so the pendulum swung away from it but then people stopped teaching the spelling and grammar in a consistent or conscientious manner, because it was just an irritation or something and so then, it was just neglected because it’s harder to put that into a unit and have continuity from year to year to year.

R: It seems a lot of people just think whole language means you don’t have to teach grammar or spelling?
B4: Yep. That’s right.
R: Do you think that is a correct interpretation of whole language?
B4: No. The thing is, here again, it's a time and resources management thing. Right? Because what you do, when you see a need then you teach it, well if you've got five classes of thirty kids each, you've got a hundred and fifty needs at different times. So, it doesn't work to have individual programming for everybody. So, you think well, it just gets left in the too hard basket.

R: Is that your experience? That a lot of teachers did leave it in the too hard basket, because of those system constraints?
B4: Yeah, I mean I think so, I mean, this is another thing, too you see, we used to sit around in the staff rooms in the late 70s and early 80s and actually talk more about things I think. We had more time, somehow. Whereas, now I couldn't tell you what other people do in their classrooms, the only things I know what other people do are what we do as common tasks. I have no idea what other teachers do in their classrooms.

R: How does the amount of professional development you were getting back then compare to today?
B4: There's nothing now. There was much twenty years ago.
(B4:20)

Informant B4, who was literacy coordinator at School B, claimed that similar strategies were being used by teachers at School B in response to the new literacy policies issued under Agenda 97. Comments included:

B4: Well, most teachers just say, oh well, I mean, my age at least, they just say, okay, well, we're going to be here when all these people are gone and we just let things roll on, you know, what's the next wave, what's the next wave, what's the next wave, what's the next.
So, unless you're ambitious, or um, young, or you are a certain kind of personality I suppose, um, people that have been in it for a long time and are just looking towards the end and don't see any real opportunity for them, then they become cynical and jaded, they just have an attitude, well, I'm just going to do what I'm going to do in my classroom, and who cares about anything else?
... Which is part of the history of department of education in this state, and which is why teachers say, right, this is the latest thing, it will blow over, the next group will come in and have their ideas, so I'll just ignore the lot of them.
(B4:50&56)

Informant B2 supported the view that teachers were not implementing the new policies, claiming that if Head Teachers did not take an active interest in teachers' lessons there was 'no accountability' other than through assessment and many teachers ignored the requirements of the new policies. (B2:8-11) Informant B5 illustrated this point when they described the way they selectively subverted the policies, according to what they perceived as the needs of their students. Informant B5 was critical of the focus in the policies on a Functional View of Language and Text Types. They believed the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds was restrictive and did not seem to offer much to many students. (B5:3-5) Informant B5 stated that they took the parts of the new policies which they thought might work and 'threw the rest out the window'. (B5:12) B5 explained their approach in the following data slice:
If you have only one system, you have blinkers on your eyes. You can’t. I mean the whole world isn’t functioning just one way. You’ve got so many different learners, and it really depends on the teacher, and his or her clientele, for what they are going to be using with class.

What I’ve done is gone into it and said, ‘oh, yeah, I can relate to this and I can relate to that’ and I’ve taken the best bits that I could from all these different systems and I use it in my classes and I feel comfortable with it but someone else might not feel comfortable with what I’m doing.

...I threw the rest out of the window. That’s what I’m focusing on, that’s what I need to help my students and I found it workable.

(B5:12)

The School B literacy policy also appeared, in itself, to be subversive of the focus in the new DET policies on a Functional View of Language. By seeking to address one Text Type per faculty, per semester, the policy undermined the principles of contextualised language learning through real, meaningful experiences using language for social purposes. The school policy sought to impose a particular Text Type on each subject, rather than allowing the Text Type to emerge from the subject content. This approach also placed the focus on the Text Type, rather than the subject content and the social purpose that the Text Type structure served. (B:cf1-20)

It was, in itself, significant that within the School B literacy policy the teacher informants chose to focus on the teaching of the narrative Text Type. A major criticism of secondary English teachers by the Genre school and one of the driving forces behind the development of generic Text Types was the notion that English teachers had in the past failed to address Text Types other than narratives. Indeed, much of the impetus in the Genre movement was to encourage a focus on Text Types other than the traditional story structure favoured in schools. (Callaghan et al., 1993; Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Christie, 1990b; Cope et al., 1993; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993b; Macken & Rothery, 1991b; Martin & Rothery, 1980, 1986) NSW policies mirrored these concerns and much of the documentation pertaining to Text Types centres on the teaching of factual Text Types. (For example, see New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.8) In that way, the literacy policy developed by School B actually undermined the theoretical tenets of a Functional View of Language. Indeed, it reinforced the focus on narrative texts in English which the Genre school had sought to change. The undermining of the principles of the new DET literacy policies was further illustrated by the use of grammar sheets and Text Type Scaffolds as decontextualised ‘literacy lessons’, separated from ‘normal’ English lessons in both Schools.
Chapter 5: Analysis

Subversion and Grammar

The use of subversion by informants was not always deliberate but often appeared to be the result of the condition conceptualised in this thesis as ‘theory deficit’. Theory deficit in particular areas meant that informants were often unaware of their subversion of theories or policies. Subversion appeared to be closely related to survival and visibility within both schools. The *Agenda 97* policy states:

> The English K-6 Syllabus underpins reading, writing, talking and listening in all key learning areas. The syllabus is based on a functional view of language.  
> (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a, p.12)

The *Agenda 97* literacy initiatives were clearly intended to implement holistic, contextual approaches to literacy and language education in English. The policies detail strategies based on Whole Language, a Functional View of Language, Genre-based approaches and Critical Literacy pedagogies. The grammar used throughout policy documents is clearly Hallidayan Functional Grammar, sometimes with traditional grammatical terminology imposed over it. Grammar drills and old-fashioned traditional grammar exercises would appear incompatible with the new policies.

As already discussed, teachers at School A had almost no detailed knowledge of Functional Grammar and introduced traditional grammar homework sheets to their teaching programs in an attempt to address a perceived need for visibility in implementing the new policies. Samples of the grammar sheets are included in the earlier section dealing with Theory Deficit. Further samples are reproduced in Figure 5.13:
Informant A3, a member of the executive team which implemented the sheets, stated that the sheets served the purpose of making it appear that the policies had been implemented. Given that staff had little knowledge of Functional Grammar, they
introduced traditional grammar as a means of meeting the policy demands for explicit teaching. A3’s comments included the following data slice:

Q: Why do you use the grammar sheets?
A3: Just for policy, really, to satisfy the ELLA requirements.
Q: Isn’t ELLA based on functional grammar?
A3: Yes, but who knows anything about that? This is the only way we can do it. At least we can work with these. We’ve got to cover our arse somehow.
(A3:fn3)

The data showed that School B introduced similar grammar sheets at the same time, although the sheets were not compulsory and appeared to lose favour with teachers over time. The Head Teacher English in school B confirmed that Informants B1, B3 and B4 all had an allocation of a year 7 class for one period per fortnight during which they were expected to cover ‘language work’. (B1:fn24) Each of the informants used the periods as ‘literacy lessons’, whereby the class worked their ways through Text Type Scaffolds and grammar sheets separate from the English work being done with their regular teacher. Informant B1 stated that the approach was implemented to prepare students for the ELLA tests in years 7 and 8. (B1:fn24&45; B2:10) A sample of grammar sheets from School B are reproduced in Figure 5:14:
The Head Teacher English, Informant B1, stated that teachers were expected to use the above sheets once a week and that they believed that they were the best way to teach students ‘basic skills’ in literacy. The strategy behind the sheets was based on rote learning of rules and skills in isolation from real, meaningful usage. Informant B1 stated:

I think they are the best way, if you’re dealing with basic skills. Yes, they are good for that, I mean that’s the way they learn these things. You hammer them in one at a time until they remember them. The idea was to do one sheet at a time in class each week. That’s a good way to do these, they learn, what the rules are on one side and fill in the other.

(B1:fn24)

School staff appeared to perceive the sheets as meeting the demand for ‘explicit teaching’ contained within the policy documents of *Agenda 97*. (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a, p.15) The approaches to explicit teaching advocated in the policies were taken from the work of Freiberg and Freebody (1995), Adams (1990) and Hill (1995). (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a, p.13-15) All of those researchers advocated that worthwhile, contextualised and
meaningful literacy practices be utilised in such explicit teaching, not isolated and fragmented grammar drills. The implementation of such sheets appeared to be a subversion, whether deliberate or otherwise, of the intent of the new policies. Indeed, they appeared to hark back to the days of ‘language as skills’, as described in the review of literature.

The use of prescriptive, decontextualised traditional grammar exercises appeared more in keeping with conceptualisations of literacy as skills than with modern approaches to language and literacy education. Informants’ perceptions that they were fulfilling the new literacy policies, or at least appeared visibly to be meeting the policies, seemed to actually be subverting the tenets of modern literacy education to some degree.

Informant DET9 stated that they had seen such sheets used in numerous other high schools within the District and that the trend had ‘caused concern at Ryde [DET head office of the curriculum directorate]’. (DET9:fn1)

There also appeared to be at least some subversion of school policies at the level of the teacher. Informant A6 stated that they did not agree with all the sheets and that students disliked them, so A6 had refused to implement them. Instead, they had given other activities and submitted the marks as if they had been collected from the grammar sheet exercises. (A6:9-10) Likewise, Informant B2 stated that they believed the new literacy policies were just old approaches with new names and had ignored the new literacy strategies advocated in policy documents. B2 stated they ‘just tacked the activities on the end’, in an attempt to meet the new programming demands. (B2:26)

Subversion and Text Type Scaffolds

The explicit teaching of Text Types was a major component of the strategies stipulated in the Agenda 97 policies. The use of Text Type Scaffolds was meant to be implemented using strategies associated with a Hallidayan (1985; 1996) Functional View of Language and Critical Literacy pedagogies modelled on those developed by Luke and Freebody (1990 & 1999). (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.8-10) The policy documents gave examples of units of work based on the ‘curriculum cycle’ developed by the Genre School of Systemic theorists. (See review of literature) The proposed pedagogies incorporated Process Writing, Whole
Chapter 5: Analysis

Language, Genre-based approaches and Critical Literacy strategies, including modelling and joint construction. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, p.32-112) The policies clearly encompassed a broad range of modern literacy and language learning theories. Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds represented only a small component of those policies, however, as stated earlier scaffold kits were issued to all NSW high schools with the policy documents.

The data indicated that those Scaffolds had become the focus of both literacy strategies in both schools. As indicated earlier, both School A and School B implemented the teaching of writing using the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds issued by the DET. Student work was judged by its compliance with the structure and sequencing outlined by the headings of the Scaffolds. The data showed that teacher informants generally interpreted the Scaffolds to mean that students' work should always follow the sequence and structure outlined on the sheets. As discussed in earlier sections, teacher informants held little knowledge about modern literacy and language educational theories. That situation appeared to arise due to the inadequacies of teacher education programs within the area of literacy and due to government control of teacher professional development. It was not surprising, therefore, that teacher informants reacted as they did to the issuing of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds.

For example, School A implemented a process of allocating one Text Type for each class to learn each week. The scaffold was copied and issued to each student to draft their work on, using the headings of the scaffold. The work was then generally published into a workbook in the same form. Teachers stated they judged the success of students work and allocated marks according to compliance with the scaffold. (A6:fn3; A4:fn8; A7:fn5; A9fn:A4fn8) Informant A6 summarised the process in the following data slice:

A6: That's the new thing [scaffolds], that's what they gave me, so that's what I do.
Q: How do you use them?
A6: They do a writing task once a fortnight, or so, I hand the sheets out and the kids draft on them. Then I get them to write them out without any mistakes. That's how we all do them, I'm pretty sure.
Q: Does it work?
A6: Yeah, I just tell them what to put in the spaces.
Q: How do you decide which one to use?
A6: I did the first one, then the second one, then the third one, etcetera.
(A6:fn3-4)
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Scaffolds were used in one-off literacy lessons, usually about once a fortnight and were taught as content separate from normal class work. (A6:fn4; A3:a13 & Archive:Afl)

The Data showed that similar strategies were adopted in School B. During observations at School B Informants B1, B2, B3, B4 and B5 generously offered to demonstrate for me the ways in which they had implemented the use of the DET Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. Informants stated that they chose the lessons because they considered them to be exemplary demonstrations of the use of the new strategies in explicit teaching of literacy skills. During one series of demonstration lessons Informant B4 instructed the students of a year 9 class on the procedure they expected students to follow when writing a narrative. As part of the first lesson in the series Informant B4 issued students with the DET issued Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold reproduced in Figure 5.15:
Informant B4 informed me that the class had some experience with Scaffolds, having used similar ones throughout the year. The first lesson opened with 20 minutes of
instruction detailing the sections of the Scaffolds and giving details of characterisation and theme building, using literary terms. The only explanation of what a narrative was came in the second lesson the next day, when Informant B4 informed the class that ‘A narrative is the same thing as a story’. (B4:15) B4 told the class not to include a resolution in their narratives, claiming it was ‘too difficult, let’s just forget about that, okay’. (B4:fn4) B4 instructed students not to ‘worry’ about filling the forms in sequentially, as long as they eventually went back and filled in each section before publishing their story. Informant B4 instructed students that various parts were important to achieving the ‘correct’ content for a narrative, stating:

Throw them all together and you have an interesting story.
(B4:fn5)

Students were given half an hour to draft their narratives on the forms. (B4:fn7) While students were writing I asked B4 what attributes they thought good writing exhibited. B4 cited the following qualities:

interesting; inspired; challenging; introspective; thoughtful; flowing; creative; imaginative.
(B4:fn7)

Informant B4 also instructed students not to share their writing because B4 did not believe that conferencing ‘worked’ in writing. B2 told students:

You can’t write in a group, it is pretty much a cliché that writing is a solitary occupation, you need to get into your imagination.
(B4:fn8)

The narrative drafts were published by copying the drafts from the scaffolds into workbooks during the second lesson. Informant B4 instructed students to ‘correct’ their drafts while coping them into the published version by correcting their spelling and punctuation. While students were working B4 offered some advice on the use of ‘point-of-view’, ‘characterisation’ and the development of ‘themes’. (B4:fn15-17)

Informant B4’s focus during the ‘literacy lessons’ appeared to be oriented towards the study of literary theory and did not appear to embrace any of the strategies encompassed in Genre-based approaches to writing or a Functional View of Language. The data suggested that Informant B4 was undermining the theoretical frameworks on which underpinned the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds they were using. The omission
of a resolution of conflict from the narrative scaffold being used also appeared to undermine the value of explicitly examining generic structure, as called for in a Functional View of Language. The data showed that during observation of the lessons I reflected that the Scaffolds were being used largely as a type of structural overview to prescribe a sequencing of text structure, to which students were forced to conform. (B4:fn18) Informant B4 later stated that they did not think Text Types were a very worthwhile teaching methodology and that they felt Scaffolds limited students’ writing. The following data slice illustrated B4’s view:

I used to think they [text type scaffolds] were worth pursuing. But, with the work we’ve done on the literacy committee, now I’ve changed my mind, I think they are too narrow. They dominate everything and at the end of the day I don’t think they change much, you need lots of other approaches. (B4:25)

I also observed lessons with two other classes of B4’s over a period of several months and noted that literacy classes rarely focused on language structures or explicit teaching, but rather seemed to be aimed at addressing issues of visibility with the new policies. The data showed that I repeatedly noted literary approaches being used in classes but did not record any specific literacy or language strategies associated with the new literacy policies, other than the use of scaffolds and grammar sheets in isolation from the normal English lessons. For example, during assessment tasks for years 10 and 11 speaking and listening skills Informant B4 verbally instructed classes on speaking skills. I recorded the following list of instructions during the preparation class:

**What not to do:**
- Don’t slouch
- Don’t put your hand over your mouth
- Don’t use hackneyed phrases

**What to do:**
- If you are interested in what you are talking about so will your audience be.
- Be warm and enthusiastic
- Speak well
- Build rapport
- Make eye contact
- Think about what makes the best impression on your audience.
- You are in a classroom but not in a university graduation or a shareholders meeting for Fairfax.

(B4:fn29-36)

When asked by a student how a teacher knows what grade to allocate for a speaking task Informant B4 replied:
Because I know when I listen, I can tell, I know how much preparation you’ve put in.

(B4:fn36)

During marking Informant B4 listed a mark out of 20 for each student in their roll book. There were no marking criteria or detailed strategies to be addressed in the speaking task given to students. The so called ‘literacy lessons’ appeared to be subverting the principles of effective literacy education and assessment issued under *Agenda 97* policies.

The Head Teacher English at School B, Informant B1, invited me to observe a series of lessons with a year 8 class designated as ‘gifted and talented’. The class were engaged in a unit of work based on the novel *The Hobbit*. The class was chosen by Informant B1 to exemplify the ways in which the school was implementing the new literacy policies, particularly the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. (B1:fn10) Informant B1 set the class the task of writing a set of ‘instructions on how to rescue a dwarf’, using the actions depicted in the novel as the basis for the ‘instructions’. (B1:fn10-12) Students were issued copies of the ‘description scaffold’ reproduced below in Figure 5.16:
Figure 5.16: DET issue description Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold
(Bfl:fn10a & Archive:Bf1)
Informant B1 instructed students to use point forms for their descriptions and wrote the following list on the blackboard:

- Introduction.
- Step 1.
- Step 2.
- Step 3.
- Step 5.
- Conclusion.

Students were directed to look in the novel and recount the steps taken to free the dwarves in the story. It became obvious during the lesson that Informant B1 was asking students to write was more like what Genrists might call a ‘procedural recount’ than a ‘description Text Type’. It appeared that the informant had issued students with the wrong Text Type Scaffold to achieve the purpose for which they were being asked to write. When asked about the discrepancies Informant B1 said:

No, no, it’s a description of what happened in the book. Well, that’s the way I see it, mind you I’m only going off the forms that they sent us and those new books we bought. No, that’s right.

The data collected during the following lessons for that unit of work showed that there was no explicit focus on language structures or techniques beyond the use of the Pro-forma Scaffolds. Inspection of student work completed during the lessons revealed that no students in the class were writing in paragraphs and that sentence structure was extremely long. It also appeared that student instructions did not match the sequence in which the ‘steps’ to ‘rescue the dwarves’ might logically be taken. During discussion with students Informant B1 focused on the literary devices, such as characterisation, themes and point of view, used within the novel. Such a favouring of literary approaches, over language and literacy pedagogies, appeared common among informants throughout the data.

When negotiating access to classes at School B I was encouraged by all staff to observe the classes of Informant B3. Informant B3 was considered by other informants to be leading the way in the use of Text Type Scaffolds and a Functional View of Language within the school. Informant B3 was a member of the Literacy Team at School B and was responsible for liaising with DET consultants about the implementation of the ELLA tests in years 7 and 8.
Among others, I observed year 10 and year 9 English classes conducted by Informant B3. Informant B3 stated they had chosen the lessons to illustrate the value of using explicit teaching, as advocated in the new policies, to teach the writing of response Text Types using Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. B3 was particularly emphatic that the use of modelling was a strong point of the approach and suggested I attend their classes to observe modelling in action. (B3:fn1-3)

The year 9 class was categorised by B3 as ‘low ability’ and the year 10 class as ‘high ability’. The same unit of work on poetry was used for both classes. Informant B3 stated that the stated aim was to prepare each class for an assessment task in which they would be required to write an essay on a set poem. Both response and Description Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds were issued to students, on which they were instructed to draft their responses to the poetry being studied. (B3:fn1-3) The description Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold used by Informant B3 was the same as the one used by Informant B1 and presented above in Figure 5.16. A copy of the response Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold used is reproduced below in Figure 5.17:

Figure 5.17: DET issued response Text Type Scaffold School B
(B3:fn3a & Archive:Bf1)
The data revealed that Informant B3 had previously given students lessons detailing literary devices used in the writing and critique of poetry and they were expected to draw on those lessons during the writing of their responses. Informant B3 read the selected poem aloud to the class and then instructed the class to ‘fill in their Scaffolds’ using the literary devices they had studied. (B3:fn1-3) Informant B3 wrote the following list on the blackboard for students to use as a guide:

* Theme
* Audience and Purpose
* Language Tone and Mood
* Style and Structure

(B3:fn1-30)

Informant B3 then instructed students to write about one point in each of the paragraph sections of description Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold. Informant B3 then spent the rest of that and subsequent lessons dictating topic sentences and other content for students to write into the spaces provided on the scaffolds. (B3:fn3-30)

The data shows that same formula was followed for both the year 9 and the year 10 class. Informant B3 went through each poem, instructing students to write down one of the above headings, then recited sentences to be copied down, verbatim, into their drafts. The drafts were to be re-written, ‘correcting full stops, spelling and punctuation’, and handed in for marking. (B3:fn8-10) Informant B3 instructed students that each paragraph had to begin with a topic sentence and recited the topic sentence to be used. Students were informed that if they did not have the ‘correct’ topic sentence they would lose marks. (B3:fn3-22)

During the lessons I recorded the exact words used by B3. The following data slice contains excerpts of the instructions given by B3 to the year 10 class:

_The Road Not Taken_ by Robert Frost.

Write four paragraphs under headings of:
Theme
Audience and Purpose
Language Tone and Mood
Style and Structure

Choosing to be yourself or fit in is the theme of the poem.
High school people are the audience of the poem. Write it down in a sentence.
Language Tone and Mood.
In The Road Not Taken, not a lot of language devices used.
In The Road Not Taken, language not as important.
Has everyone got the topic sentence for mood and language?
Thoughtful mood.

Structure and Style
We’re up to the fourth paragraph in the body, which is about structure and style.
Start it, ‘A formal style and structure is used or a traditional style, is used to express the ideas of
the poet’.
Don’t forget to put an example or two in.

To student who had been away previous lesson:
‘_____ just get the topic sentences for the four paragraphs from someone else.’

Informant B3 was quite emphatic on a number of occasions that their approach was
what the new policies called ‘modelling’ and that they believed the technique was
extremely successful in helping students to produce good writing. (B3:R; B3:3;
B3:fn15a) The following extended data slice consists of notes of the exact wording used
by Informant B3 in modelling a response to a poem titled In Just Day to a year 9 class:

[Reads poem to class.]
What is the poem about?
Write down a topic sentence.

Next heading, ‘Mood’, write it down, please.
The mood is the feeling you get when you read the poem.
Write down what the mood is, how the words create the mood.

Next heading, ‘Form’, write it down.
Does it rhyme? Is it in stanzas or just 1?
Write down one stanza, no rhyme.
Do you know what rhythm is?
Formal or informal?

Images.
We are going to write down a number of examples here and you are going to write them down. I’ll
read out the line and tell you the image, you write it down.
‘It is alive’ - metaphor, definite, it is better because it is definite.
‘Brilliant with blueness’ - write it down.
Starts with an ‘a’ here, what is it? Alliteration, write it down.
‘Nature is awakened’ - metaphor, right, write it down.

Next poem, don’t write just listen. [reads poem]
Topic.
Write it down please.
‘The poem is about the contrast of the seasons’.

Mood.
Have a think about the mood. Does each have a mood or is there one mood overall?
Four different seasons, four different moods. You should have written four different moods.
Form.
What would you say about shapes in the poem?
Different shapes connect with ideas in poem. Write down about form now please.

Images.
Very first image is a metaphor.
That ‘when spring comes it comes with a burst’ part. When you’ve had a northern hemisphere winter.
Simile - ‘her tears fell like autumn because of that word ‘like’ it is a simile.
Write it down.

Mood.
Not going to use sad or happy again, from this day on.
I am going to go through them, we are going to copy words down and I am going to explain them as needed.
Put a dash, if I think they need explaining, I will explain them.

‘Despondent’ ... it comes from despair, no hope, I’ve told you now you tell me and then write it down.
[Class given list of words to describe poetry. Gives definition. Tells class to write them down.]
List: despondent; bantering; satirical; business-like; emotionless; factual; disgusted; dramatic; passionate; fatalistic.
Use those words to describe the poems.

Right, finish it and hand it in tomorrow.
(B3:fn18-30)

As Informant B3 read the poem and dictated the response to students they were expected to write their responses into the description Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold. At no time did B3 go into any detailed examination of the purpose of the text or the way in which the structure assisted that purpose. Indeed, there was no detailed discussion of the Text Type Scaffold whatsoever. The data indicated that Informant B3 appeared to believe that modelling, as called for in the Agenda 97 literacy policies, consisted of merely dictating correct forms to be copied verbatim by students.

Informants at School B also cited a year 7 gifted and talented class conducted by Informant B3 as being an exemplary use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds, claiming that the approach used with the class was the one being adopted across the faculty.
(B:rp3) As a result I carried out observations of the class during a number of lessons.
(B3:fn32-50) The unit of work I observed being taught was based on the assignment sheet reproduced in Figure 5.18:
The class was set the task of researching an aspect of Ancient Egypt and writing a report on their topic as if they were a secret agent reporting back to the teacher. Students were informed that their reports had to be written in the 'correct' Text Type (B3:fn32) and were issued with the report Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold reproduced below in Figure 19:
The data shows that the instructions given to the year 7 class did not include any of the strategies outlined in either the literature regarding a Genre-based approach to writing or in the *Agenda 97* literacy policies. The following data slice contains excerpts of the key instructions given to the class regarding the writing of the report and serves to illustrate the point:

If you’ve only got three lines are you going to go into much detail? No.
Use the scaffold as your rough draft.
Features are numbered [on scaffold] 1,2,3,4. Is it going to be most important to 4th important, or random?
Random. Write it randomly.
If some are not important at all, should you leave them till last?
Condense the information and make it smaller.
Are you going to rave on if you’ve only got 3 lines [on the scaffold]?
Keep it in your own language, your own words, eg. ‘Gladiators suck, they have dumb names like Starlight and Storm’.
[to student] No, that’s a story, not a report, because to me it’s more a personal thing.
Just make it up, how you think it would be, if you don’t know what it was like.
Right, start by writing a description. First thing describe briefly and simply what your thing is.

(B3:fn32-44)
There appeared to be no prewriting activities, modelling, joint construction or independent construction used during the lessons, as called for in the Agenda 97 literacy policies. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 1998e, 2000a; New South Wales Department of School Education, 1997a) The nature of the report being written appeared to subvert the notions of writing for social purposes which underpin the use of Text Types and Genre Theory. Derewianka has summarised the Systemic view of the report Text Type in the following:

The function of an Information Report is to document, organise and store factual information on a topic. Information Reports classify and describe the phenomena of our world. ... the term Information Report is being used in a very specific way to refer only to texts used to store information about a class of things. To use the term in this restricted way might at first prove a bit confusing when we are used to using it in a very broad way to refer to virtually any factual text. But unfortunately there is no readily available word in English for this type of text, and so, until one is coined, we’ll have to use an expression like Information Report. (Derewianka, 1990, p.51-2)

The use of non-technical language and fiction in writing a report advocated to students by Informant B3, therefore, appears incompatible with the view of a report Text Type outlined in a Functional View of Language. Informant B3 appeared to use the Systemic Pro-forma Text Type Scaffold to teach students to write very different form of report than was intended by the theoretical framework which informed the design of the Scaffold. The following data slice is taken from the reflective notes I made while observing the lessons:

Seems to be a narrative form of report, using scaffolds as formula for kids to work out themselves. Give scaffold and leave to figure out, no modelling, examples or discussion of purpose of genre. Just that exposure will teach them.
(Refs:B3:36)

Informant B3 supported my perceptions when they stated that their main strategy for teaching writing was the use of the Scaffolds for getting the structure ‘right’. The following data slice illustrated the point:

Q: Do you get kids to organise their writing beforehand or use an approach for drafting?
B3: Well, like I said, the scaffold. Write your stuff in and then write it out polished. The scaffold helps them get the sequence right.
(B3:fn45)
The data also showed that Informant B3 believed that ‘drafting and polishing’ writing meant only that students should:

just correct mistakes and put in capitals and full stops
(B3:3 & Ref:B3:fn2)

The data indicated that staff at School B appeared to have interpreted the structures of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds as representing ‘correct’ forms to be learnt and adhered to, in a prescriptive, rule-based manner. That interpretation of the Scaffolds appeared to represent a major subversion of the principles of both modern language and literacy learning theories and NSW educational policies. Whether by default or by design, it appeared that teacher informants were subverting the aims of a Functional View of Language with the practices they had implemented regarding Text Types.

Data supplied by informants at School B reinforced such a perception. Informants B1, B2, B3 and B4 suggested that I collect work samples from the year 7 gifted and talented class in order to see the value of the use of Text Type Scaffolds and the ‘new’ approaches. B3 provided samples from the class, including a class set of writing tasks using exposition Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and writing on the theme of ‘survival’ after the class had read the novel *The Silver Sword*. (B:fn32 & B3:fn18a) A selection of the work samples was presented in the section dealing with ‘Theory Deficit’ and are reproduced again below in Figure 5.20:
Close inspection of the above pieces reveals that each was extremely similar to the others. In fact, they were almost identical. Examination of the class set revealed that the entire class had written almost identical pieces. The sequencing of teacher supplied
information was almost identical for each member of the class. The topic sentences of each paragraph were generally at the beginning of each paragraph and contained almost identical wording.

Informant B3 stated that they had used modelling and explicit teaching techniques with the class and that the strategies had been ‘hugely successful’. (B3:fn18 & B3:32) They stated that the ‘strength and uniformity’ of the topic sentences evident in the work samples was evidence of the successful mastery of the Text Type by the class. According to B3 grades were allocated to students based on whether or not they had used the topic sentence that had been given by the teacher. (B3:32) B3 and B1 both stated that the samples proved that the use of the scaffolds ensured that students produced ‘wonderful pieces of writing’. (B3:fn32a) Neither informant appeared concerned that all the work samples were almost identical in wording and structure. Indeed, they considered the conformity a sign of success. According to B3 the class had mastered the exposition Text Type and so had moved on to report writing the week after. (B3:fn32-33)

That the implementation of the Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds was a subversion of policies and the theories which underpinned them was supported by data collected at a subsequent meeting with senior DET officials. During the meeting I showed the class sets of work samples I had collected at School B to Informants DET1,2,3,4 and 5 they appeared shocked and angry at the methodologies and the writing they had produced. They demanded to know which school had supplied the samples so that they could discipline the teachers involved. (I naturally declined to identify the school or teachers.) At the time they stated that the Principal, even the District Superintendent, would be disciplined if the school was found out. (DET1:fn1)

The data also suggested that Informant B2 appeared to subvert the new policies and that they treated the use of Text Types in lessons merely as a means of visibility, in an attempt to make it appear that they were implementing the new approaches. Despite claiming that they preferred to teach Text Types in context B2 went on to state that they did so by setting Text Type Scaffold writing exercises as extension activities for students who had already completed what B2 saw as more worthwhile work. The example given by B2 was the use of report writing scaffolds for writing a report on a topic in a novel studied by year 8. Students were given the Scaffold only if they had completed the other class tasks. (B2:23)
Informant B2’s apparent low regard for teaching factual Text Types such as report writing appeared to be linked to their view that most Text Types did not relate to English as a subject. B2 did not appear to understand the focus on generic language structures, as revealed by the use of Systemic theories in the samples provided in the new policies. B2 maintained that factual reports had no place in subject English and were merely ‘tacked on’ to meet the demands of the new policies. (B2:8-10 & 23) B2’s comments included:

that’s one of the problems we’ve found with a lot of the material that came through, as well, was subject based, so like, instead of doing like report writing for science or essay writing for science and sort of having all the material there for your thing, it was spread out. So all the report stuff was on the Coroner, which has nothing to do with English.
(B2:10)

B2’s response, then was to subvert the intention of explicitly teaching the structures in holistic ways and to use them as ‘fill in’ activities at the end of their teaching units.

Informant B5, who had some postgraduate qualifications in Systemic Linguistics, stated that they also taught Text Types in isolation from their main units of work. In the following data slice B5 states that they had doubts about the effectiveness of completing such work in such a decontextualised manner:

Generally, I mean my method of teaching is I mean, I want them to have a section, just on text-types, like they bought these books, which are all great, you know, ... Yeah, but then, I think in some ways its sort of forcing. It’s good for some of the kids, you know, not competent English writers. But then I think give it to them, I’ll bore them too much. If I just order it, so if it was in units of work it might be better.
(B5:5)

Informant B5 stated that they taught explicit knowledge of language by instructing students in the theory, providing examples and that they then preferred to have students analyse a piece of writing to find the components of language they had been instructed in. (B5:6) The method appeared reminiscent of the parsing of sentences using traditional grammar, however, B5 did use terms from Functional Grammar, such as ‘nominalisation’, with students. (B5:6) B5 stated that such instruction in grammar was not a problem for year 10 students, claiming that, ‘The teachers find it harder to understand than the kids’. (B5:5-6)
Chapter 5: Analysis

Subversion and Genre Theories

As discussed in the review of literature, there has been some division amongst leading Systemic theorists regarding the development of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds and the use of the curriculum cycle as a model for the teaching of language features and structures. Theorists such as Kress, Kamler, Kalantzis, Cope, Hasan and Threadgold have claimed that the use of such explicit models carries the danger of leading to prescriptive methodologies and education through duplication of set skills. A number of researchers have claimed that such a reliance on reproduction of socially powerful language forms based on the rote learning of structure undermines the very tenets of social theories which have driven Systemic research and a Functional View of Language. (Cope et al., 1993; Hasan & Williams, 1996b; Kamler, 1997; Kamler et al., 1997; Kress, 1993a, 1993c; Threadgold, 1997)

As already discussed, the data indicated that the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds appeared to be doing just that, leading to prescriptive, fragmented approaches to teaching language. In short, teachers appeared to be fitting the Scaffolds into their old teaching practices, rather than changing their practices to reflect the pedagogies outlined in the new theories and policies. Such findings were in keeping with the research carried out by Wignell (1988), who found that ‘tasks which involve disruptions to classroom order are hardly ever done’ and that teachers ‘still used the texts to achieve [the] traditional aims’ of prescriptive teaching. (Wignell, 1988, cited in Cope et al., 1993)


Such perceptions of the reliance on Text Type Scaffolds as a central platform of the new literacy policies in NSW were reinforced by the author of much of the new policy documents issued to teachers, Informant L5. After making observations of the ways in which Text Type Scaffolds were being used in classrooms I checked my perceptions with Informant L5, who concurred that the practices I was observing were, indeed, corruptions of what was meant by a Functional View OF Language in the policy documents they had authored. In addition, L5 claimed that the development of the Scaffolds was a subversion of the DET ban on the use of Functional Grammar and, in fact, a subversion of the very theories on which they were meant to be based. The following data slice illustrates L5’s position:
Chapter 5: Analysis

Q: It seems to get teachers in and they respond to it well, but it also seems to be leading towards this notion that there are only set text types.

L5: That’s right, they then get stuck down here, they forget about the genre bit and they just go straight to the text types, whereas if they started here, they would see that there is a lot more scope for doing,

See, it was developed by Met. West DSP and Met. West, in contradiction to the ban [on functional grammar] it was Met. West that started to develop the pro-formas.

Q: Hmm. Kress was very critical of it, too.
L5: No, but Met. West say they are Kress people, as opposed to Martin people.

Q: Yeah, yeah, but Kress is quite adamant that you can’t break genres up like that, identifying set text types and creating formulas for them.

L5: It’s always been a mystery to me how they could say they are Kressites and they are pro-process, which is how they interpret genre, and where these are the products, and yet come out with those [text types and scaffolds]

Q: Whereas, according to Kress, the text types here are fluid and you can’t identify them, that they are part of the process, and yet here they are saying this is a product, this is concrete.

So the question begs, at which point does that then change to suit another purpose or involving the language.

L5: And, is it helpful to say to teachers, well, there’s infinite fluidity, and you can’t really come to grips with it. It’s terribly important but, you know, we can’t really give you anything concrete. So, it’s a pragmatic decision, but you also then have to temper the concreteness with, well, yeah, but let’s allow for a little bit of [flexibility]

Q: Now, the obvious problem that Kress says is that these then become prescriptive.
L5: Yes. Yes. Exactly

Q: That you’re then converting the grammar to a prescriptive grammar?
L5: Yes. Exactly.

Q: Which then defeats the purpose of having a functional grammar?
L5: Yes.

Q: Am I right in saying that this is the danger here?
Because what I am seeing in my research is that is exactly what is going on, in high schools, it’s exactly what they are doing.
L5: Except that they haven’t got down to the grammar, of course.

Q: Well, to the point where they actually now the schools around here now form grammar classes and the kids are sent to grammar lessons once a cycle.
L5: Not to learn the grammar of the genres. I bet to learn traditional grammar.

Q: Yeah, well, a bit of a mish mash, using traditional approaches. Like, parsing sentences, rote learning, reciting words, working with spelling lists. Umm. And they are doing it in the name of genre.
L5: Well, that is obviously nothing to do with the genre based approach.

In 1993 prominent members of the Genre School hoped that:

As the concept of a genre-based literacy pedagogy becomes more widely understood, misunderstandings of this type will gradually become less of a problem. Of course, the only way to ensure this is by educating the educators. The Language and Social Power, the LERN, and Social
This study uncovered conditions which ensured that the problems identified by Genre School members were exacerbated and ensconced in teacher practice. The conditions conceptualised by the grounded theory revealed that the ‘concept of genre-based literacy pedagogy’ appears not to have become ‘more widely understood’, but perhaps more narrowly implemented. In keeping with the predictions of the members of the Genre School, teacher knowledge and practice did, in fact, appear to be much more than just a matter of ‘in-servicing’ and were shown to have been entwined in the complex condition of the grounded theory presented herein.

The data indicated that teacher informants and school bureaucracies subverted the principles of policies relating to assessment and the teaching of literacy and language practices. That some teachers did not use explicit modern educational theories to inform their classroom practice was not necessarily significant in itself. A lack of knowledge about new approaches, or an unwillingness to implement new policies did not necessarily offer new insights to teacher practice. The location of such subversions of the intent of policies and theories was, however, significant when considered within the contexts which surrounded and influenced those subversions.

The positioning of subversion within the grounded theory presented here allowed for the paradigmatic relationships to emerge within a considerably more holistic manner. Teacher informants operated within complex contexts and the influences on their system subversions were just as complex. It now serves to examine the influence of subversive practices on the processes of policy development in NSW.

**Subversion and Policy Development**

As discussed previously, the data suggested that a small group of people appeared to hold the majority of power regarding literacy and language policies in NSW schools. The ultimate control of policy development remained at the political level, where the State Premier and Minister for Education held absolute veto over policy decisions. There was also evidence from professional groups that they had minimal input to the decision making process. The data also indicated that individuals subverted policy
making processes in order to maintain the influence of their ideological persuasions on policies. As part of the process of maintaining that influence individuals appeared, as has been examined, to develop strategies related to the conditions of survival and visibility. Informants also revealed that subversive strategies were also employed to achieve those ends. It is now intended to examine those subversions of policies and the policy making process.

Subversion and Political Control

The data indicated that informants acted to subvert the political ban on the use of Functional Grammar in NSW schools. Informants indicated that they had acted to subvert the directive and to maintain the influence of the new grammar in policy documents. The subversion appeared to be operating on several levels.

At a meeting with the senior bureaucrats responsible for language and literacy policy development within the DET I was informed that Functional Grammar was ‘dead in the water, it will never come back’. (DET5: 21/5/99) Informant DET5 also informed me that the DET expected teachers to adopt a ‘Social View of Language’ and ‘that’s what we want, nothing else matters’. (DET5: 21/5/99) DET informants were open at the time that such a move was based on directives from the Premier of NSW and from the Minister for Education. (DET: 21/5/99)

Such a claim was rather astonishing. While it might well be argued that there are significant differences between a Functional View of Language and a Social View of Language it must be stressed that the similarities far outweigh the differences. Each is based on the Systemic Functional Linguistic tradition of M.A.K. Halliday and each relies on the use of Halliday’s Functional Grammar as a metalanguage for the analysis of language features and functions. (Cope et al., 1993; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Halliday, 1978, 1985a, 1996; Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Kamler et al., 1997; Lankshear et al., 1997)

The grammar contained in NSW syllabus documents during this study was undoubtedly Hallidayan Functional Grammar, with traditional terminology imposed over the definitions and rhetorical discussions of language functions. As discussed earlier, L5 stated that they had re-written the grammar in a bid to ensure that Functional
Grammar and a Genre-based approach to writing were retained as the dominant theoretical framework informing NSW policies.

Informant L5 was heavily involved in the writing of both BOS and DET policy documents and was single-handedly responsible for re-writing the grammar used in the new *K-6 English Syllabus* (1998). L5 was convinced that the DET informants were mistaken about the swing away from a Functional View of Language, given that a Social View and a Functional View are almost identical conceptualisations. Informant L5 claimed that all the DET informants were known to them and that they were all ardent Systemicists and supporters of a Functional View of Language. In fact, L5 claimed that they had conducted a workshop for teachers in Functional Grammar with Informants DET2 and DET5 at a DET-sponsored workshop for primary teachers just days before our interview. The following is an excerpt from the interview with L5 illustrating their point:

people in the Department, and I know all of the ones you are talking about, quite well, except for and we are about to name names, the usual confidentiality things apply. Except for , that all of the women, that’s typical isn’t it? and there are probably four or five other people there, all the women very strongly, or are, come from a very strong systemic background and I was presenting with one of them on Saturday and she just did a straight field, tenor, mode analysis for the teachers on a text, using functional grammar and was there with the Department’s blessing.

Q: Really? And she was using functional grammar terminology?
L5: Yes. [nodding]
R: See, this is why,
L5: I was surprised last time you mentioned it, that you thought they were anti [functional grammar] and I’m not quite sure what they might have been referring to when they said they were anti [functional grammar].

(L5:4-5)

L5 stated that Functional Grammar was, in reality, ‘in favour’ with both the DET and BOS, despite the banning of the terminology, and for all public appearances the grammar itself, by the political controllers of the school system. (L5:4-6) Subversion of the political process of control of the syllabus appeared to be at the root of the smokescreen behind which Functional Grammar was hidden in policy documents. Informant L5 stated:

R: ... The thing about the department [DET], it seems like they are saying one thing and everyone is subverting it.
L5: Yep. I don’t think they are intentionally subverting, but I think at a certain level and is involved, they are being very careful and um, that is the same with the Board of Studies, it’s almost as if they are in this pivotal position where they have to act for the people above them, who haven’t got a clue about grammar or literacy or anything.
R: This is the Board of Studies people?
L5: Board of Studies and the Department.
And out there they have got the community, and people like Alan Jones who, again, have very different opinions about these things, so they have to answer to them in very simplistic terms and try to make it look black and white, 'no, we are not doing functional grammar', etc etc, but to the teachers, who and I think there is still a groundswell of support for functional grammar and at the workshop on Saturday, people, the first thing that started it off was, what do you see as the main issues? And a lot of them said, 'Look, we were just getting into functional grammar, just coming to grips, just coming to appreciate what you can do with it, and it was cut off at the knees'.
Now these weren't dyed in the wool Systemicists, by any means, these were just regular classroom teachers. Nobody would say, 'Oh, that terrible functional grammar, you know, thank goodness it's gone.'
So, with the teachers, I think that both the Board and the Department recognise what usefulness there was in functional grammar, and they both say it would be a travesty to go back to straight traditional grammar, taught the way it used to be taught. Nobody wants that.
So, from my perception, there has been quite an effort, in fact, with both the Board and the Department, to come together on this issue.
(L5:6-7)

The data showed that Informant L5 was aware that both the DET and BOS were engaged in the subversion of policies and theories as a means of political and ideological survival. It appeared that they had participated in developing strategies of survival, visibility and subversion aimed at ensuring the dominance of policies by Systemic pedagogies. In fact, Informant L5 suggested that the process of subversion in NSW was similar to Bernstein's conceptualisation of 'recontextualisation' of pedagogy and policy. (Bernstein, 1977, 1990, 1996) The following data slice illustrated L5’s position:

L5: All the policy people, [DET5], [DET2] and [DET3], they're all Systemicists who have done their masters with Jim Martin [of the genre school at Sydney University].

Q: Yeah, I interviewed them, it surprised me, they had a very big problem with Jim Martin and it seems to have created a lot of the problem there.
L5: Yeah, but again, in the past, I would be very sad and surprised if that was still being touted round as an issue.

Q: Oh, I'm only saying what they told me, they told me that functional grammar was dead in the water. I found it a bit hard to understand, because I knew their backgrounds, I knew where they were coming from
L5: Yeah, I wonder if they felt like they had to say that to you.

Q: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, the policy is quite different to what is really going on.
L5: Yes. Yeah.

Q: And there is this constant system subversion going on. I mean classroom teachers do it, too.
L5: Yes, are you familiar with Bernstein’s notion of recontextualisation? That would be interesting for you to look at. I was at a talk a few years ago, where he did talk about how models developed by theoreticians are then interpreted and recontextualised at that consultant level and then recontextualised by teachers in the classroom. And just what was going on in each of those phases. And I think that Departmental consultant level is playing a very interesting role in terms of supporting and subverting at the same time.
(L5:34)
While it is possible to draw similarities between the condition of subversion and Bernstein’s notions of ‘recontextualisation’ there are stark differences. Bernstein argued that teachers ‘recontextualise’ theories based on the contexts of their social, cultural and ideological viewpoints. The grounded theory developed in this thesis suggests that such ‘recontextualisation’ is greatly influenced by all the conditions of the grounded theory, with one of the most influential being that of theory deficit. If teachers have no knowledge of theory bases which inform policies then their constructions of understanding of the policies represent individual constructs, often untouched by the theories which underpin them. The theories are not ‘recontextualised’ but ‘constructed’ from the ground up, guided by the experiences, knowledge and paradigms of the teacher, which the data suggests are often not influenced by actual conceptualisations of literacy at all.

Subversion and Functional Grammar

The data suggested that the DET and BOS bureaucrats had, in fact, ‘come together’ and used subversive methods to ensure the survival of a Functional View of Language and Functional Grammar in NSW schools. As discussed earlier, Informant L5 was involved in the re-writing of the English K-6 Syllabus and the construction of the hybrid grammar contained within it. Informant L5 and Informants DET1, DET2, DET3, DET4, DET5 and DET 9 also confirmed that the used of Functional Grammar had been banned at the political level. Informant L5 described just how control the Minister for Education had exercised during the process thus:

R: Trying to unravel it is pretty complex, because we’ve got the Board and the Department, both trying to meet the needs of their bosses, at a State level,

L5: In fact, the worst ones were the Ministry. So you’d have both the Department and the Board and it was the Ministry that was interfering. Everything, all the documents had to go to the Ministry for approval, and the syllabus was sent back with incredible things like there was mass and count nouns in there, which of course were very traditional terms and it was sent back saying, ‘Ah, you’re still trying to keep Systemics in there, underhandedly, get rid of these two’ you know, just so, controlling and petty.

R: And yet, really, realistically, that was pretty much what was done anyway, it was trying to keep Systemics in there anyway.

L5: Well, yes, which was the brief. The Eltis brief was that it had to be a functional, view, using conventional, not even traditional, conventional terminology.

R: Was there an idea given of what functional is?
As already discussed, a search of the K-6 English Syllabus and support documents revealed that the following terms did not appear anywhere within the documents:

- Functional approach
- Functional grammar
- Systemic
- Linguistic


A further examination of the only text published detailing the grammar and terminology contained in the *K-6 English Syllabus* revealed that it, too, failed to mention the merging of traditional grammatical terminology over the Hallidayan Functional Grammar on which the grammar was based. That text was also authored by Informant L5, who claimed that the Primary English Teachers’ Association had published the book after the BOS had refused to publish it with the syllabus support documents for fear of political reprisals relating to the retention of Functional Grammar. (L5:30) (The name of the text has been omitted to protect the anonymity of Informant L5)

One of the most accepted criteria of a profession, as discussed in the review of literature, is access to and control of a knowledge base which informs the profession in question. (Australian College of Education, 2000a, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Australian Teaching Council, 1996; Brock, 2000; Cumming, 1996; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 1995; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997; Ingvarson, 1998; Richardson, 1995; Schon, 1988; Seddon, 1996; Sheldon, 1993) The absence of the accepted terminology of the theoretical underpinning of the documents meant to inform literacy and language education throughout the entire range of the NSW school system appeared to represent a massive subversion of professionalism in NSW literacy education. The subversion of the language of systemic structures denied teachers easy access to (and critique of) the theories underpinning the policies.

Archival data suggested that the profession remained largely unaware during the study that the *K-6 English Syllabus* was based on Functional Grammar and not
traditional grammar. In a paper critical of the ELLA tests the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) complained that:

ELLA is simply an attempt to re-introduce functional grammar through the backdoor in NSW after its rejection by the current government in the K-6 English Syllabus. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998)

The paper was critical of Functional Grammar and the authors appeared unaware that the grammar contained within the new syllabus was actually Functional Grammar with traditional grammatical terminology imposed on it. (Australian Association for the Teaching of English, 1998; Board of Studies New South Wales, 1998b)

In fairness to L5 it should be pointed out that they claimed that the imposition of traditional terminology over a Functional Grammar did not corrupt the theories behind Functional Grammar. Informant L5 did, however, indicate that their belief was based on the notion that teachers did not require as detailed a knowledge base as a ‘purist or theoretician’. This was in keeping with the Systemic tradition of asserting that teachers only require that knowledge which Systemicists select for them. The following data slice illustrates L5’s views:

And at that point the syllabus hadn’t developed its own and they weren’t allowed to use functional terms, so at that point, they developed some of these mongrel terms, which are fine, I don’t agree with you that they can’t work either.

R: Well, I think you know what I mean,
L5: Yes, yeah, for a purist and a theoretician, and someone who does research there is certainly a need to have a much better model than that, but as a classroom teacher I think it’s quite good.

R: You don’t see a problem between the fact that they are building a structure that is not based in the literature or in the knowledge that informs the other areas involved?
L5: Well, in fact, it is. As the person who wrote it, I researched it fairly thoroughly and there are grammars that are called functional grammars which aren’t systemic, that use those terms and I worked through it with _____ and ______ and all the Systemicists and they are quite happy with it and I’ve spoken to traditional grammarians.

Informant L5 justified the blending of grammars by claiming that the blend met the traditional demands for ‘accuracy’ in language and the more modern focus on ‘meaning’. (L5:20-21) It was significant, however, that L5 also stated that no research had been done which justified this assertion. Informant L5 stated they had not been implemented in a prescriptive manner, although they did concur that they believed secondary English teachers were still focusing on accuracy. Comments included:
Umm, yes, so I have no problem with them co-existing, I don’t think that you need to break down that barrier, either, I think there are places where you just focus on accuracy.

But the thing is, that this one model of language allows you to do that, whereas before you’d have to have traditional grammar for this [accuracy] and functional grammar for that [meaning]

R: So, are you trying to blend them in together?
L5: Yes.

R: Has there been any follow-up, that you are aware of, to see whether or not they are coming in, in a blended way in schools?
L5: No.

R: What I am finding, so far, is this [meaning] seems to be going backwards in secondary English and there seems to be a lot more time being spent on this [accuracy].
L5: I don’t think secondary English ever took this on board. Primary certainly has.

The data suggested that policies had been implemented using frameworks which had not been trialled in classrooms or monitored for impact. This indicated that the traditional professional criteria of relying on an internally accountable knowledge base had been subverted during policy development. The DET informants and Informant L5 appeared unconcerned that policy development processes were not transparent and easily accessed or understood by overloaded practising teachers. The data indicated that ideological control was a motivating factor in the subversion of teachers’ professional processes.

Subversion and Ideological Control

Informant DET1, the most senior subject English curriculum official within the DET system, stated that they had attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the issuing of the Proforma Text Type Scaffolds to schools. According to DET1 a more junior official arranged for the Scaffolds to be sent out with the *Agenda 97* packages against their explicit directions. Informant DET1 stated that they held concerns that the scaffolds could be interpreted as prescriptions for writing forms, rather than as a small aid in a Genre-based approach to writing. (DET1: 21/5/99)

At a meeting with a number of senior DET officials I showed those present data samples I had collected, which indicated that the scaffolds were being implemented in prescriptive, simplistic ways. While the DET informants expressed anger that schools had reverted to using traditional grammar and isolated ‘literacy lessons’ there was consensus among the officials, apart from DET1, that how the scaffolds were used was
irrelevant. Informants stated that all that mattered was that teachers were using the Scaffolds. (DET:21/5/99) Informants stated that they believed secondary English teachers generally had not used explicit teaching of language skills with students in the past and that any use of explicit teaching was better than none. Comments included:

It’s better than nothing. It’s a start. At least we’ve got them thinking about text types.
(DET3:21/5/99)

As long as it is a social view of language, language as a socially constructed thing, that’s what we want, nothing else matters, if they take care of that, that’s a major achievement.
(DET5:21/5/99)

Informant L5, a renowned expert in Genre Theory, was critical of the proliferation in high schools of text books and resources centred on Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds. I checked with Informant L5 about my own perceptions of the theoretical validity, within a Systemic framework, of the use of Pro-forma Text Type Scaffolds in the manner indicated in the data. Informant L5 was clear that there were genuine theoretical concerns about the validity of the Text Type approach developed by the DET, claiming that it was not in keeping with a Genre-based approach to writing. The following extended data slice illustrated both my own and L5’s theoretical concerns over the use of Text Type Scaffolds:

See, it [text types and scaffolds] was developed by Met. West DSP and Met. West, in contradiction to the ban [on functional grammar] it was Met. West that started to develop the pro-formas.

R: Hmm. Kress was very critical of it, too.
L5: No, but Met. West say they are Kress people, as opposed to Martin people.

R: Yeah, yeah, but Kress is quite adamant that you can’t break genres up like that, identifying set text types and creating formulas for them.
L5: It’s always been a mystery to me how they could say they are Kressites and they are pro-process, which is how they interpret genre, and where these are the products, and yet come out with those [text types and scaffolds]

R: Whereas, according to Kress, the text types here are fluid and you can’t identify them, that they are part of the process, and yet here they are saying this is a product, this is concrete.
L5: And, is it helpful to say to teachers, well, there’s infinite fluidity, and you can’t really come to grips with it. It’s terribly important but, you know, we can’t really give you anything concrete. So, it’s a pragmatic decision, but you also then have to temper the concreteness with, well, yeah, but let’s allow for a little bit of flexibility.

R: Now, the obvious problem that Kress says is that these then become prescriptive.
L5: Yes. Yes. Exactly

R: That you’re then converting the grammar to a prescriptive grammar?
L5: Yes. Exactly.

R: Which then defeats the purpose of having a functional grammar?
L5: Yes.

R: Am I right in saying that this is the danger here? Because what I am seeing in my research is that is exactly what is going on, in high schools, it's exactly what they are doing.
L5: Except that they haven't got down to the grammar, of course.

R: Well, to the point where they actually now the schools around here now form grammar classes and the kids are sent to grammar lessons once a cycle.
L5: Not to learn the grammar of the genres. I bet to learn traditional grammar.

R: Yeah, well, a bit of a mish mash, using traditional approaches. Like, parsing sentences, rote learning, reciting words, working with spelling lists. Umm. And they are doing it in the name of genre.
L5: Well, that is obviously nothing to do with the Genre-based approach.

While Informant L5 stated they believed use of the Scaffolds undermined the principles inherent to a Functional View of Language they did, however, also agree with the DET informants' claims that the use of such resources were better than what teachers had been doing beforehand. L5's comments regarding the proliferation of Text Type Scaffolds in NSW schools included the following data slice:

L5: Oh yeah, yeah, I wouldn't put that down to either the Board or the Department as such, I'd put that down to fairly ill-informed consultants in Districts and to commercial publishers.

R: And to a need in schools for simple documents that make life easier?
L5: Yes, yes.

R: Certainly, what I've found is that teachers love them because they can just grab them, photocopy them and give them out.
L5: Yes, yes and it's better than what they've been doing. You know, so many teachers still write up notes on the board and have kids copy them down. Anything is better than that.

The data indicated a level of ideological subversion inherent to the disguising of Functional Grammar and the simplification of Genre theories in the new syllabus and policy documents. Informants who were involved in the hiding of the theoretical framework of the policies appeared to justify the subversion on the grounds that their own ideologies were preferable to those of practising teachers. Even when teachers were shown to be subverting the principles underpinning a Functional View of Language and teaching traditional grammar in decontextualised ways, reminiscent of the skills-based era, the DET informants and Informant L5's main concern appeared to
be the retention of their preferred theory bases in policies. The data also indicated that those involved in policy development appeared more concerned with controlling teacher practice than informing it. Democratic, informed professional criteria were abandoned and informants appeared to subvert both political and professional processes to ensure the survival of their own agendas for teacher practice.

The extent to which policy developers were prepared to subvert professional practices was illustrated by the way in which Informant L5 was single-handedly allowed to re-write the grammar of the new K-6 English Syllabus and the definitions of the approach to literacy education to be adopted by all teachers in NSW schools. The ad-hoc nature of the policy development process was illustrated in the following data slice from an interview with Informant L5:

Q: The process, how did you get involved with the Board of Studies? How did you manage to get on these committees? Which committees were you on?
L5: Ohh, I was involved in the first English K-6 as, that was more interesting, a very unofficial consultant, where,

Q: An unofficial consultant?
L5: Well, there was some very gung-ho people who did that first K-6 who had got very excited about functional grammar and it had to all be in there, and they didn’t quite know it well enough, they didn’t know how to apply it and all that sort of thing. So they’d written the first draft, it was out in schools and they didn’t have anything else, they had to have all the inservicing materials, they didn’t have a clue.

So, at that point, anyone who knew anything about functional grammar was just pulled in, you know, kind of just read this draft, or you know, give us feedback or develop in-service modules or whatever. And so, I ended up being brought in on that basis.

I don’t know if I ever told you the story of how, at one point, just before the modules had to be in serviced, they were just about to have this great big inservicing day, with about 80 consultants in this great big hotels in the city, with about 3 days of inservicing on the new syllabus and here are your inservicing modules and this is what you are going to take out into schools and a week beforehand they hadn’t even written them yet.

And I was dragged in by ____ , with whom I had a very odd relationship, I mean she was very active against functional grammar and here she was with a functional grammar syllabus which she had endorse.

And I sitting in my office and I got this phone call saying, ‘Could you please’, from ____, ‘Could you please come to Sydney and give us a hand with this tonight?’

And I stayed in the hotel room up there for three days, I just got pulled out of my office up to there, and we worked with [DET1], ____ and another 2 or 3 other people from the Department [DET2; DET3; DET5].

They just hired this apartment for 3 or 4 days and we just worked solidly for these modules. And then they were virtually still hot off the presses at the time we took them to go and in-service all the consultants.

So, nobody trialled them or anything.

(L5:38)

The data indicated that officials and academics appeared to subvert professional and political control of policy development to ensure the survival and dominance of their own ideologies, without wide consultation within the profession. Subversion of the
policies meant to control the majority of teachers in NSW appeared to be controlled by an elite few.

Subversion and Teacher Preservice Education

As discussed in the section dealing with visibility in teacher preservice education, there was evidence within the data that grading within the GDE program was unusually soft and that it appeared that no students had failed the program in recent years. The fact that the vast majority of students within the GDE program received grades of Distinction (75% or higher) or higher was, in itself, evidence of subversion of the policies of the university. The data not only indicated subversion of the processes of teacher preservice education but also suggested that such subversions held serious implications for the professionalism of school education in general.

Teacher Concerns About Low Standards

Teacher informants stated that they believed low standards at the GDE level subverted professional practice. Informant A1 claimed that problems of low standards at the entry level to the profession had long term consequences for schools. Based on their experience as a Principal A1 claimed that it was even more difficult to remove poor teachers once they had been in the school system for a number of years than it was to fail students at the entry level. According to A1, accreditation to enter the profession needed to ensure that teachers who were ‘barely adequate’ in the classroom were identified before beginning practice. (A1:35-36) A1 claimed:

>You know, I see people now at 45 and 50 and that should have happened to them when they were 20 and now, you can’t tell them, see I think we’ve got the grossly inefficient and the people who are unsafe and do stupid things can be moved on, but the marginal, the people who shouldn’t be teaching but are still doing a barely adequate job, we can’t do anything about them when they are 45 or 50. They are locked in. (A1:36)

Informant B1, a teacher and Methods lecturer, also expressed concern about the quality of graduates in recent years. B4 claimed that the ‘intellectual quality’ of teachers appeared to be declining as both standards of entry to and within teacher education
dropped. B4 also linked standards to professional status and working conditions. (B4:56-57) Informant B4’s comments included the following data slice:

And my big fear is, that the kind of people you are getting in teaching, in the last ten years, are not the kind of people who were into teaching twenty years ago, because a lot of people who could have done anything twenty, thirty years ago, went into teaching.

Because it was a good occupation, it paid well, you know, it was a much higher status profession for people of my age, or five or ten years older, than it is now. So, I think the quality, the intellectual quality, of teachers is declining, so they will be less able to critically analyse what they are expected to do.

R: You don’t think they have the knowledge-base to know what they are doing?
B4: That’s right. (B4:57)

Informant concerns were in keeping with the findings of two major studies into teacher preservice education. (Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Ramsey, 2000) Those studies showed that teachers generally appeared to be concerned that low standards within teacher preservice education programs threatened the quality of teacher professionalism overall.

**Lecturer Concerns About Standards**

University A employed six Methods Lecturers during the course of the study. All were part time lecturers and all were senior teachers in their subject areas, with most being Head Teachers. At a meeting of all faculty staff involved in the GDE program in 1998 Methods lecturers complained about the fact that no one had ever failed the GDE program, despite being failed by teachers on practicums. (LM:1-6)

The group discussed one student who had failed two practicums each year for three consecutive years before the Program Director, Informant L1, ‘found’ a teacher who would pass the student. (LM:4) The lecturers also claimed that it was common for students who had been given fail grades to be allowed repeated chances to resubmit assignments, despite university regulations stipulating that assignments were never to be allowed to be resubmitted. The GDE Program Director, Informant L1, replied that university regulations did, in fact, state that students were not allowed to resubmit assignments or to repeat subjects more than once, but that:

in reality the education faculty allows them to keep trying.

(L1:LM:1-5)
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The spokesperson for the Methods Lecturers stated that the matter deeply worried the methods lecturing staff, claiming that ‘no one can fail’. (LM:4) L1, the Program Director, responded by saying:

I think it is a credit to the staff that no one fails, ultimately we get them all through. (LM:4)

I later spoke to L1 and a number of senior faculty staff in a small group and asked if the comment meant that no student had ever actually failed the GDE course. L1 stated:

We have some people who for some reason or other drop out during the course but no, no one has failed as such. Not that I am aware of. And, as I said, I think that it is a credit to the staff here that we manage to get everyone through. (LM:fn5)

It is possible to argue that motivation for such a subversion of standards within the GDE program was linked to the conditions of the grounded theory. As discussed in earlier sections, political control of entry criteria and funding of teacher education and the lack of power to resist that control led to a situation where all applicants who met the DET approval criteria were accepted for enrolment in the GDE. The need to fill enrolment quotas could be perceived as a survival strategy in the face of teacher shortages and a need to maximise government funding. The evidence examined in the section titled visibility indicated that part of the survival strategies employed by university informants was the illusion that all students met high standards, despite a belief that the content of the program was inadequate.

The data examined within this section indicates that the condition of visibility was closely aligned with the actions of individuals involved in subversion of both university policies and the criteria by which professionalism is most often judged. Those subversions appeared to be facilitated by the other conditions presented by the analysis. The void created by a lack of professional structures, similar to other professions aligned with university faculties, appeared to also facilitate the subversions.

There was further evidence in the data to support this analysis. The following two cameos taken from the data illustrate the depth of subversion within the GDE program and the implications for the nature of teacher professionalism.
Two Cameos of Subversion Within the GDE

During my time lecturing at the university I experienced the subversion of teacher preservice education standards first-hand. It also became obvious to me that other lecturers were experiencing similar subversion but were reluctant to speak out about their experiences. The following two examples of the subversion of professional criteria within the GDE program were, therefore, included within the data analysis.

Subversion Cameo 1

At the end of my first semester as a lecturer I submitted my grades list, as shown for Subject C in Table 5.7, to the faculty executive. I was informed by the course director that none of the students who had been awarded fail grades would, in fact, fail. The course director informed me that all the marks for the four subjects were absorbed into one overall mark, allowing students to fail one or more component and still pass the overall subject. I objected to that process as it was stipulated in both the faculty handbook and course outline that a pass mark be had to be obtained in all components of the subject in order to pass the GDE program. The following excerpt was included in all GDE course handbooks during the course of the study:

PROGRAM AND SUBJECT ASSESSMENT IN THE GDE.

In order to graduate with a GDE it is necessary to complete all subjects in the program to Pass level (50%) or better.

Assessment Policy for all GDE Subjects

In order to obtain a passing grade in each subject it is necessary to demonstrate a reasonable level of performance in each component and each assessed task of the subject as well as achieving an overall score of at least 50%.

Thus, for example, to obtain a pass in EDUC803 Perspectives in Education it is necessary to demonstrate reasonable achievement in each of the History, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology components and on each assessed task. Normally a score of less than 40% would not be regarded as a reasonable level of achievement.

(GDE Program: Archive:L:f3, p.7)

The handbook went on to claim that the reason for the standards was tied directly to the quality of professionalism in teaching:
The reason for this requirement is that each component and task of each subject relates to an important aspect of a teacher's professional work and to graduate with a professional qualification you must be able to demonstrate competence in each assessed professional area. Each subject coordinator will provide you with a statement of the assessment requirements of the subject as part of the subject outline issued at the commencement of the subject. These requirements will conform to education Faculty policy on student assessment.

(GDE Program: Archive:L:f3, p.7)

The Program Director, Informant L1, stated that such rules were not adhered to and 'everyone gets given a pass otherwise they can’t graduate'. (L1:fn4) The following data slice illustrates Informant L1’s position:

Q: What is happening about the students I failed?
L1: Well, I think they will pass overall.

Q: What do you mean?
L1: Well, we need to give them the chance to resubmit or to review their marks to be fair to them.

Q: I did. Some resubmitted their work 3 times, with no changes.
L1: I don’t think it is fair that they can’t graduate because of one subject, I think we need to give them the opportunity to pass.

Q: But they failed the course.
L1: But I don’t think that means they should fail, it’s just one subject.

Q: But no one fails anything in the dip. ed.
L1: Yes, like I said [at the meeting] it’s a credit to us that we get everyone through.

Q: Do you think it is right?
L1: Yes, I think so.

Q: But some of the students have severe literacy problems themselves and they are going to be English teachers. [Showed assignments again]
L1: Well, I think it is up to us to get them through. It’s our job and I know the Dean feels the same way. If others pass them, how come they fail your subject? Maybe your demands are too high.

Q: But, _____ it looks like everyone else just gives distinctions or high distinctions.
L1: Yes, it is a bit soft but that is at least in part due to the nature of the course. It’s not as rigorous as say, their degrees, I don’t know that it needs to be, though.

Q: So, what's going to happen to them?
L1: If they pass everything else then I don’t see why they shouldn’t pass the course.

Q: But look at this assignment. These people obviously can’t write competently, how are they going to teach kids?
L1: Mmm. [silence] Look, I’ve got to go. Talk to ____ about it.
(L1:fn4-7)

Despite complaints by two lecturers all eight students who had failed the subject were awarded passes. The following data sample reproduced in Figure 5.21 serves to illustrate the standard of the work submitted by the failed students:
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Figure 5.21: Sample of failed GDE assignment passed by University A
(Archive:Lf8)

The set task was an end of semester major assignment in which students were asked to compile a 10 lesson unit of work outlining their strategies for addressing the literacy needs of their students. The above work sample was submitted by a student with no other attachments. The student refused to revise their work and resubmit, despite being given repeated opportunities to do so. The work sample was typical of the eight assignments submitted by students and awarded fails but which were later awarded passes by executive staff at University A. All work samples have been retained in data archives. (Archive:Lf8)

Subversion Cameo 2

Further evidence of the undermining of professional standards for entry to the profession is contained in another cameo from my time lecturing. In 1999 I shared marking of an assessment task in the GDE program with another part-time lecturer. The task had been to prepare a unit of work taking into account aspects of educational theories covered in classes. A student handed in a major assignment which obviously
was not their own work. The other lecturer contacted me, as the lecturer responsible for the subject, to discuss their concerns and to instigate an investigation into the matter.

It transpired that the student had photocopied a unit of work from a text book and changed the headings in an attempt to make it look as if the work was their own. After three days of denying the matter the student admitted to the Subject Coordinator that they had plagiarised the work. Plagiarism is generally considered a serious matter in university circles and University A has a policy of taking action against offenders. A fail mark was lodged for the student concerned and the matter referred to the faculty executive for action. The Program Director, against university rules, allowed the student to resubmit the assignment. The GDE Course Handbook, in keeping with common university guidelines, clearly stated that students were not allowed to resubmit assignments:

**Education Faculty assessment policy includes the following:**

3. Assignments may not be resubmitted.

(Hence it is very important that if you are uncertain about any aspect of an assignment, about what is required or your ability to meet the requirements, you consult with the appropriate lecturer well before the due date. See Education Faculty Policy for further information on student assessment. (GDE Program: Archive:L:f3, p.7)

My colleague and I both refused to mark the resubmitted assignment and again submitted a fail for the student. The program director and the subject coordinator then informed us that they had awarded the student with a credit grade for the assignment. (L1:fn8) (Copies of all assignments and correspondence were retained in L:Archivef8)

The data suggested that individuals acted within institutions to subvert the intent of institutional policies which sought to fill the voids in professional accreditation for entry to the profession. There was no higher, teacher-based, professional authority to which such matters might be reported. Grades within the GDE program appeared to be affected by the conditions of survival, visibility, system subversion and alienation. The criteria of a profession appeared to be severely undermined by the subversion. Lecturers, including myself, withdrew from empowered processes of self-regulation and conformed with the subversions to make a visible standard appear to be in force, which ensured our survival as ‘professionals’. That withdrawal from the processes which would normally govern the criteria for the profession was conceptualised as part of the
final condition of the grounded theory presented in this thesis. It remains now to present that final condition of the disempowerment of the profession.

**ALIENATION**

The analysis of data revealed that informants experienced alienation from a variety of aspects of professional teaching life. As with the other conditions the parameters of alienation were extremely blurred and overlapped with the other conditions examined in this chapter. The condition of alienation appeared to operate at multiple levels, ranging from alienation from (and through) the political control of policies through to the perpetuation of alienation itself. The most obvious examples of alienation revealed by the analysis of data are examined within this section of the chapter. As with the rest of the thesis, this section needs to be considered with other components of the thesis.

**Alienation and Teacher Perceptions of Theory**

*What is right in theory must work in practice. And if it does not there is a mistake in the theory: Something has been overlooked and not allowed for and consequently what is wrong in practice is wrong in theory too.*

_Schopenhauer, 1818._

(cited in Parker, 1985, p.7)

Probably the chief way in which the data indicated that teachers were alienated from professional processes was regarding their perceptions about the value of educational theories and research. There appeared a general view amongst informants that theories about language and literacy education did not ‘work’ in the classroom. Obviously, the fact that few informants actually appeared to hold detailed knowledge of literacy and language learning theories was likely to be a major factor in shaping their perceptions. They simply did not appear to value (or know) what they did not appear to know (or value).

Early in the data collection process it became apparent that teacher informants’ held educational theories in low regard. All teacher informants stated that they had a low opinion of educational theory, believing that it offered little insight into classroom
teaching. Few teacher informants saw connections between educational theories and practice. Comments included the following data slices:

Theory is useless. These guys sitting up there who haven’t been in a classroom. Don’t you think you learn best by doing, by experiencing something?
(A3:fn1)

A theory base doesn’t teach you how to do something.
(A8 in A3:fn1)

Oh, what’s in theory, and what happens in theory, doesn’t really happen in practice, does it? It’s the same as classroom management and all these things you try, that, it doesn’t usually work ... it’s fine to maybe theorise targeting one student, but when you’ve got a whole lot, it makes it very difficult. Yeah.
(B2:13)

Most teachers don’t want theory, you want something you can teach.
(A7:fn1)

I couldn’t care less about educational theory. I want something to help me teach.
(A8:fn1)

Q: Are you in the English Teachers’ Association?
B7: Listen mate, what’s the point if they don’t give me a unit of work I can use? Why should I pay the money?
Q: What do you mean?
B7: Well, some of it is okay, the units of work, you know, HSC stuff, but the rest is crap. Who cares about some obscure research at a uni or a private school? I need stuff to help me here, in the classroom.
Q: What do you think of educational research?
B7: Well, it’s got very little to do with what we do here, doesn’t it? How is it going to help me survive? Not one bit. It might be okay if you’re at a uni but what’s it got to do with teaching?
(B7:fn4-5)

All teacher informants stated that they did not value articles dealing with educational theory as ‘professional development’ but preferred practically-oriented teaching material, especially units of work relating to the study of literature. A5 summed up the general perception regarding professional development material while criticising journal content for being too theoretical. A5 stated they had resigned from the English Teachers’ Association (ETA) because the journal had become too theoretical, claiming:

I don’t want theoretical articles because I can’t use them teaching, units of work are good.
(A5:fn1)

Informant DET9, District Literacy Consultant for both schools and responsible for providing specialist assistance to them regarding literacy policies, stated that they often had to hide theoretical content when conducting in-service training in schools
‘otherwise teachers become abusive’. DET9 claimed ‘most teachers believe theory is useless’. (DET9:1)

Informant B4, Literacy Coordinator at School B and Methods Lecturer in the GDE program, downplayed the importance of theories to teachers, linking them to ideological battles:

these are some of the theories, theories mind you, they’re just theories, and theories are just languages systems that give us a way of working with information.
R: Okay, while we’re on that, with your experience of educational theory, what do you think about educational theory?
B4: ... I think it is too political. I think people are pushing their own political agendas too much.

(B4:33&48)

Most respondents did not connect learning through experience with developing personal theories about teaching or combining such theories with other knowledge bases. Like others, Informant A3 argued that educational theory was ‘useless’ for teachers and that practice and theory ‘are different’. (A3:fn1) This led into a long conversation about the nature of theory and learning between us. A few days later I interviewed A3 again and, after reflecting on our conversation, A3, a Head Teacher, stated:

As far as educational theory, teaching learning theory, it’s good, but it has limited relevance to the real world of 8.4 period 5 Friday. Where the basic rule, there, is crowd control first, teaching second. It’s crowd control at the start of the year, then you can teach, right through the year. If you don’t do that, you won’t teach.
What I am saying is probably far too basic for you. But it’s what I believe in.

(A3:8-9)

During data collection I often reflected on teacher perceptions about educational theories. I was perturbed that most teachers seemed to have such illogical arguments about the relationship between theories and practice. Those reflections led me to ponder whether there was more to the attitudes than merely what was being stated by informants. For example, in the following data slice I began to wonder whether teachers were expressing frustration at their apparent lack of control over theories and policies:

Reflections:

[A3] didn’t accept that when a teacher tells another (or a student for that matter) about something that works, then this is a theory.
Claims that this is experience and that the two are different.

Yet openly admitted asking a friend, who is a counsellor for advice on his 15 year old daughter’s behaviour and how to handle it. Relying on a theory to assist.
Often when I have these conversations with people this “contradiction Theory vs. Practice” comes up. eg. conversations with __ and __.

Does this reveal a poor understanding of what a theory is? Or does it disclose an animosity towards theorists? - those who have some control over professional knowledge?? (A3 & Afn:1)

I held doubts that teachers’ understandings of the role of knowledge in professional education were as shallow as they first appeared. Those doubts combined with other deductions during data analysis and drove the collection of further data, which is presented in the earlier sections of this chapter. The alienation of teachers from the theories which informed policies, and which might inform teacher practice, appeared to parallel their perceptions of educational research and their need for practical assistance within the overloaded system in which they worked.

A number of informants connected their perceptions of educational theories with their perceptions of universities. For example Informant A9 stated:

Q: Well, what do you think about educational theory?  
A9: Not much.  
Q: Why?  
A9: Well, look at them, Uni people don’t know, most of them have never taught. How could they know anything about what it is like? The sit in their ivory towers, how would they know? Most of it is bullshit... I did a course, a graduate certificate, the lecturers really had no idea it, it was all pie in the sky stuff. (A9:fn7)

This was not surprising, given that universities were generally perceived as the pinnacle of education and most educational research is carried out in universities. Informant A1, a school Principal and part-time university lecturer, did not connect academic achievement or knowledge of theories with effective teaching practice. Like most teacher informants they seemed to focus mainly on negative aspects of their experiences with education within academia:

See, I don’t think academia makes you a good teacher. In my university experience, I’ve come across some excellent teachers but I’ve also come across academics who have gotten out of teaching because they couldn’t teach. (A1:36)

While discussing their role as literacy coordinator at School B Informant B4 generalised that:
I don’t think most teachers pay any attention to what is happening on a theoretical basis, or at universities.
(B4:48)

Informant A3 claimed research was removed from the real world of schools and suggested teachers resent that distance:

Probably because people who work at the chalk-face consider that it’s a good cop, I suppose. They think that they’re not, that educational researchers are living in a musty, hollow world that’s not the reality of working at a high school, period 5 on a Friday.
(A3:2)

Informant A1 claimed that their experiences with researchers had forced them to place research as a low priority within the school. Research was viewed generally as adding to the burden of the school without contributing to school outcomes. Of particular concern for A1 was the lack of feedback from past research projects conducted in School A. While discussing the matter Informant A1 produced a large file filled with dozens of research projects conducted in the school and claimed that the school had not received feedback from any of the projects. (A1:6-7) The following data slice illustrates the points made by A1:

Q6. What perceptions have you developed about the research that is going on in schools?
A1: Ahhh. Well, I’ve never had any feedback from it, for a start. I perceive it as basically someone trying to get a postgraduate degree. We say, I say “no” to a lot of it now, because of the time factor involved and there is not feedback to the school. We are just too easy a target, I think.
Q7. Too easy a target, what do you mean?
A1: Well, it’s not positive, I haven’t had a great positive experience from it. They generally come in and get their data and leave.
Q8. Researchers don’t come back and share their findings with you?
A1: No. That includes _____. We had a significant survey here ... and we were the control group to see what the impact was here. Now we never heard back. That was, went for some 8 weeks, where kids were noting what their ____ things like that. They just never got back to us. That’s just one example, there are quite a few others.
Q9. Do you think the research that is related to education is of benefit to the profession?
A1: Yes. But I think that people, that yes comes from my Masters ummm, degree, where I had to draw upon a lot of research material, through journals etc. I found it quite interesting and illuminating.
But I think, many teachers though, are pretty closed to it. Because they don’t see it as very, at the coalface type of thing ...
Q10. Roughly, since you’ve been at this school, how many research projects do you think you have been involved in?
A1: I would say, not me personally but at this school, [Respondent goes to filing cabinet and takes out file of all research applications for past 10 years] A1: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. [taking records from file as examples] Nothing back from any of them. They all came in. One from staff member, doing his Masters last year. Obviously we got some feedback
from him. That’s the ___ one that we had. Here’s another ___ one. ___ one. What are we up to half a dozen, already. Another ___ one.

... Here’s one for master of psychology. I always make sure they get Department approval. Here’s one ___. Right back to 95, no feedback from any of them.

Q13. How does this make you feel about research?
A: Ahhh, well. As you picked up already. I’m not unpleasantly negative, but it doesn’t figure high on my priority, so if it comes in at a time, I’m happy to help people like yourself here in the school etc. and with your feet on the ground, but obviously it’s not going to figure high on my priority, so if it comes in at a busy time I’m going to forget it.
(A1:7)

Informants at School B also reported that past experiences with researchers had tainted their perception of educational research and theories. One of the negotiations I had to undertake to gain access to teaching staff was to assure them of feedback through member checks and peer debriefing. Teachers in the English Faculty at School B claimed they had participated in a lengthy research project into literacy and language practices with staff from the Education Faculty of a university but had never received the promised feedback. (B: PR1) Inquiries revealed that two papers detailing the results of the research had been published. (B:Archivef2)

The experience had obviously caused bitterness towards research and it was only after I taught at the school for a period of six months that I was able to gain the trust of the staff and they agreed to participate in this project. Teacher informants from School B regularly reminded me of my obligation to provide member checks and peer debriefing opportunities. Comments made by informants included the following:

They just came in and got what they wanted and said, ‘bugger you’ to us and took off again. It was really annoying actually.
(B5:RP3)

Well, quite frankly, I was offended they were in my classroom for six months on and off with their video camera and they took off and nothing. Like, we weren’t, you know, you’re only teachers you wouldn’t understand. I heard they published some papers but they never told us.
(B4:RP4)

As indicated above, a general theme which ran through teacher informant’s responses to questions about theory bases was a preference for ‘practice’ over ‘theory’. Teacher informants generally did not consciously view educational theories as informing teaching practice. Informant A4 claimed that teacher’s work was grounded in practicalities, rather than a theoretical or philosophical base:

basically everyone has had good and bad teachers and every one has experienced it, so everyone feels qualified, eminently well qualified to make judgements.
And in a sense, the reason that they are justified is that we don’t exercise, that we don’t go about the job, I don’t mean professionally, but with applying a set of professional criteria, if you like. We learn by practicalities, we have a practical philosophy rather than cerebral or philosophical approach.

(A4a:8)

The Head Teacher of English at School A claimed that the lack of knowledge about and lack of concern for educational theories disadvantaged teachers, in that they were often unable to contribute to debates about education policies. (A2a:2-3) A2 claimed that lack of a knowledge base also denied teachers the opportunities to reflect on their teaching that a broader knowledge base might facilitate:

I think teachers are very practical, when it comes down to it. Anything theoretical is of momentary interest but the practical always takes the precedent. Which is sad a lot of the time I think, because that’s the other appeal of that the fact that it gives you the chance to stop and reflect.

(A2a:2)

Informant B4 concurred with that perception, also linking problems in schools to a perception that researchers in universities are removed from the realities of schools:

B4: I think that makes teachers not, again they forget about what is the purpose, they lose this reflective ability. Now look, a lot of things at the university were really good, and one of the things was um, like the idea of reflecting [sic] teaching. I think that is really important but it is kind of a joke in school, because nobody has time for that, or energy, there is no space provided for it, it is not built into the system, the schools are built on an industrial model.

Right? I think the universities are great for understanding why we have schools the way they are, for deconstructing schools, but I still think that there is too much politics, in my experience, that people are pushing their own agendas, they are not pushing the agendas of what is good for all students, they are pushing agendas of how they are going to have more influence than other people.

And their experience is based on what happened to them, twenty years ago, you see? And that is the problem, it is the same as, it is the same as um, I think, anybody who works in the bureaucracy of the education system, who hasn’t actually worked in a school for ten or fifteen years, they’re out of touch or anybody in the union who hasn’t been in schools for ten or fifteen years, they are out of touch. And what they do, then, they keep pushing, it’s this lag, I don’t know what you can do about it, but there is this lag, it happens all the time, by the time you get to a position of influence, that world that you came from has changed, but you’re still fighting the battles that were there fifteen or twenty years ago.

And it is also made more difficult by the squeezing of funds, the user pays principles, you know, the idea that everybody has to account for themselves. It’s this whole kind of looking over your shoulder mentality all the time.

(B4:48)

Informant B5 had recently completed a Masters Degree in Systemic Functional Linguistics and assisted teachers in two schools with the introduction of the Agenda 97 literacy policies. B5 reported that the teachers didn’t know anything about the theories behind the policies and that lead to difficulties in helping in-service the staff. Informant B5 claimed that resistance and animosity towards the new policies from colleagues
eventually led to B5 withdrawing their assistance. According to B5 most teachers just wanted practical material to use during lessons, rather than to learn a new approach to language and literacy. (B5:2-3 & 7)

Informant A2 also claimed that poor knowledge bases disempowered teachers in public debates over educational issues. A2 claimed that, despite having practical experience in educational matters, teachers often lacked a language with which to describe and defend their positions. The following data slice illustrates A2’s concerns:

there may be things you don’t know, even if you’ve picked up techniques which are thought to be generally educationally successful, but the fact that you don’t know it is, you are disempowered aren’t you, because, whenever anyone says anything in that realm, you’re shot, because you don’t know what to say. You might be right, and someone says, what a lot of rubbish, but you don’t know what to say.
(A2b:3)

It was interesting to note that many of the informants responses, such as B4 and A2 above, hinted at the possibility of a lack of a theory base fostering the conditions of survival, visibility, system subversion and alienation amongst informants.

**Alienation, Accreditation and Professionalism**

Earlier sections of this chapter outline some of the ways in which the data suggested that teachers did not appear to have control of processes normally regulated by professional bodies. There was evidence that the denial of normal professional structures within education facilitated a sense of alienation from policy development and normal professional interactions.

As discussed earlier, a check with a number of other professions revealed that professional associations in NSW normally administer the functions related to the criteria needed for professionalism, such as accreditation of individuals, institutions, professional representation and regulation. Data indicated that teachers in NSW were alienated from such traditional professional processes.

It has been shown that, in the absence of conventional professional accreditation, the NSW DET accredits both individual teachers and teacher preservice education institutions in NSW. Data indicated that teacher accreditation, as implemented by the DET, failed to meet the rigour normally associated with professional accreditation. Despite DET standards for accreditation as an English teacher being quite low the data
indicated that even such low expectations were not being met and that a high number of NSW English teachers appeared to be alienated from the body of knowledge available to teachers of secondary English.

The following Table 5.12 shows data regarding teacher accreditation to HSC and subjects of competency collected from the DET Staffing Unit late in 2001:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.12: Number of teachers accredited to teach English in NSW DET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category of Teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Accredited to teach English to HSC level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as 1\textsuperscript{st} competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as 2\textsuperscript{nd} competency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employed as Sec. Eng.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(DET:29/11/01)

The data showed that 2,383 full-time permanent teachers were employed with the DET in 2001 with secondary English as their first competency, while 665 teachers were registered with the DET as having secondary English as a second competency, while being employed in another subject area, usually history. This represented 3,048 full-time permanent secondary English teachers practicing with the DET in 2001.

(DET:29/11/01) It is important to remember that DET accreditation standards during the course of this study required only a minimum of 2/9 of a degree in Arts Literature to qualify for accreditation as an HSC English teacher and 1/9 of a degree to qualify for English as a second competency. There were no compulsory requirements for qualifications in language or literacy education. (New South Wales Department of School Education, 1995)

The DET was unable to supply the number of part-time, casual relief or teachers of other subjects who carried partial or whole loads of English in their teaching loads. The number is likely to be considerable at any given time, as Principals in NSW have a large degree of freedom in allocating teaching loads to staff. My own experience in a number of high schools over eleven years of teaching has shown that most schools have at least a few teachers who pick up a some English lessons as part of their fortnightly teaching workload.
A check with the English Teachers Association (NSW) (ETA) revealed that at the end of 2001 the ETA had just under 2000 members, although the Secretary of the ETA was unable to give an exact figure. (ETA: 29/11/01) (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1998) Given that the ETA offers discount memberships to staffroom memberships, casual and part-time members, it would appear that somewhat less than two-thirds of the total number of secondary English teachers employed on a full-time basis by the DET are members of the ETA. It is reasonable to argue that the true number would be far less than such a conservative estimate. This analysis is strengthened by the fact that membership of the ETA is open to teachers outside the NSW state system. The number of teachers from the private and independent school systems in NSW who were members of the ETA executive during the course of the study would indicate that a number of teacher members of the ETA work within other school systems. The ETA was not able to provide further data on the makeup of its membership.

The role of the ETA in providing professional structures was also called into question by data collected during the study. A check of back issues of *mETAphor*, the journal of the ETA, for the past fifteen years showed that it has been dedicated almost entirely to the printing of lesson plans and units of work. In addition the long-serving Editor of the journal wrote during the study that:

*mETAphor* will publish articles, units of work, essays, letters, and reviews that can be used in the teaching of English. Whilst we will publish the occasional theoretical work the emphasis of the journal is on classroom practice / implementation / usage. Unfortunately, *mETAphor* does not publish surveys by post-graduate students and / or teachers for the simple reason that information which may be accrued through surveys has to be cleared by our members' respective teaching systems.

(English Teachers' Association (NSW), 1996b, p. 5)

The data indicated that the 'professional association' of English teachers in NSW operated in a manner somewhat different to most professional associations and their associated journals. The main purpose of the ETA during the course of the study appeared to be the provision of teaching resources aimed at meeting the policies of the NSW BOS and DET. For example, a check of the four issues of *mETAphor* issued during 2001 showed that the majority of material published consisted of units of work aimed at meeting the demands of the new HSC system, which was examined for the first time in late 2001. (English Teachers' Association (NSW), 2001a, 2001b, 2001c)
knowledge generated by research within the system and that the professional association has little authority in the research process, as opposed to the ethical guidelines and reporting provided by other professional associations.

This is not to suggest that the ETA has not been active in supporting teacher professionalism. I have been a member of the ETA since I commenced to teach and value my membership greatly. The point to be made here is that the ETA appears alienated from conventional professional processes, as observed in other professions, and that teachers appear alienated from the ETA, as evidenced by the low membership figures.

Alienation and Professional Representation

It became obvious during the study that a number of informants saw the NSW Teachers' Federation, rather than a professional association, as representing their professional interests. (Reflection A3:1) For instance Informant A2 separated industrial from professional issues but saw both as the responsibility of the Union:

"the Teachers Federation should set up a research, curriculum “Big E” education section, which is kind of separated, really, from industrial issues. And that it builds some sort of real credibility, by the quality of it’s publications and research."

(Informant A2b:2)

The data indicated that reasons given by informants for turning to the Union on professional issues related to professional power and representation. Teacher informants generally perceived the Teachers Federation [union] as being the only body powerful enough to represent their interests. Comments included:

Q: Are you in any professional associations?
B3: Yes, just Federation. They are the only ones who will do anything for you.
(B3fn: 54)

B6: For my teaching, the Federation, obviously. There’s noone else who will go to bat for you.
(B6fn: 4)

B7: Federation, I mean why would you join the others? What are they going to do for me? At least Federation stands up for us.
(B7fn: 3)

Q51. Which bodies do you see as representing the profession?
A3: The Federation. Has to be. If I get into strife, I expect to have barristers etc. provided by the union, provided that I thought that I had a fair case.
(A3:25)
Q: Are you in any professional associations?
A9: No. Just Federation ... why would I waste money on the others? What do they do for me?
At least Federation speaks up about syllabuses and stuff like that.
(A9fn:7)

A survey of all teacher informants involved in the study revealed that they were all financial members of the NSW Teachers' Federation but none were current members of the English Teachers' Association. (A:fn41 & B:fn2a) Two informants stated they had been members of ETA a few years before but had allowed their membership to lapse. Both stated it was because the ETA had begun to publish articles on theory, rather than produce teaching resources. The following data slices summarise their views:

I was really annoyed last year ... because every journal that came out was based on educational theory, or computers in English ... I thought, stuff this, I've had enough.
(A5: 16)

I used to be but I quit it. It's just theory, I quit it, they weren't producing enough units of work.
(A7: fn3)

Alienation and Perpetuation of Political Control

During 2001, as a direct result of the Ramsey report, *Quality Matters*, (Ramsey, 2000) the NSW Minister for Education established a task force to conduct a review of teacher education in NSW. One of the task force's prime responsibilities was to investigate Ramsey's recommendation that:

the Government support the establishment of a professional body for teachers - an Institute of Teachers - with responsibilities for:

- Developing explicit standards of practice for teachers
- Accrediting teachers against these standards, at three levels
- Endorsing the quality of teacher education and professional development programs
- Accrediting schools for the provision of teacher education
- Advising the Government on teacher quality issues.

(New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2001b)

There have been long and continuing calls for teacher ownership of such professional accreditation and professional structures. (Australian College of Education, 2000b, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c; Australian Education Council, 1990; Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations, 1999; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1995; Australian Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, 1998; Australian Teaching Council, 1996; Brock, 2000; Department of Employment
Despite these calls the Minister, in establishing the Review Task Force, appointed only one teaching association representative to the task force, in a committee of some 13 members, to represent the more than forty professional teaching associations in NSW alone. There was no representation of national teacher or teacher educator bodies appointed to the committee. (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2001b)

In addition to the make up of the committee, the ultimate decision making responsibility was once again retained by the NSW Minister for Education. This was despite the fact that, at the national issues forum convened by the Australian College of Education in April, 2001, representatives from a broad range of educational organisations re-iterated the Ramsey report’s assertion that, given the long history of past failed attempts at accreditation, the key to successful professional standards and regulation lay in teachers ‘ownership’ of the process. (Australian College of Education, 2000a, 2001c)

The Australian College of Education (ACE) acknowledged the reluctance of politicians to cede their control of teachers’ professional lives. The National Issues Forum (2001) claimed that one of the key challenges for the development of professional mechanisms was for teachers to develop the ability to:

understand and operate effectively within both ‘professional’ and ‘political’ contexts.
(Australian College of Education, 2001c, p.2)

In attempting to develop strategies for advancing professionalism the forum developed a model of ‘characteristics of teachers’ operation in political / professional contexts’. That model is presented in Figure 5.22:
Chapter 5: Analysis

Figure 5.22: Characteristics of teachers’ operation in political/professional contexts. (Australian College of Education, 2001c, p.3)

It is interesting to note that some elements of the model developed by the ACE, as outlined above, are in keeping with the model developed by this study. Alienation is shown in the above model and in the grounded theory presented here to result from high political control and low professional control. It is interesting to note that the model above was devised after the model of the grounded theory presented in this thesis was developed.

It is also important to note that there are distinct differences to the ACE model uncovered by this study in relation to teacher behaviour in a context of high political control and low professional control. The model above presents teacher characteristics as being ‘compliant’ and ‘directed’ whereas the model presented in this thesis shows teachers as being survivors, visibly attempting to meet the demands of their political masters, while subverting processes in the classroom and becoming professionally alienated in the process. The forum also found that:

energies and resources should be directed towards ensuring that all teachers are engaged, supported and accountable in relation to teacher standards, quality and professionalism [i.e. operating in the upper right hand quadrant of Figure 5.22] (Australian College of Education, 2001c, p.3)
Chapter 5: Analysis

It is the very heart of this matter which is explored within this thesis. The model developed in this thesis seeks to offer insights which might assist in developing politically supported, professionally empowered teacher practice.

Alienation and Teacher Preservice Education

Both teacher informants and student teacher informants held the GDE in low regard and claimed that GDE programs generally had not adequately prepared them for teaching. Evidence of the nature of GDE programs appeared to support those views, particularly regarding knowledge of literacy and language theories and policies. In keeping with other studies the data suggested that the GDE program was grossly inadequate for the task of preparing teachers of English. The use of the grounded theory paradigm showed that experience with teacher preservice appeared to be a major influence regarding the condition of alienation. Teacher preservice education surfaced as a causal condition, intervening condition, an action/interaction strategy and a consequence throughout the other conditions examined within this chapter.

Alienation and Student Teacher Perceptions

Data showed that there appeared to be a general feeling of disdain, bordering on aggression, towards theory amongst students in the GDE program. For example, Informant S2 expressed a belief that educational theories offered little to inform practice and expressed anger towards the notion of theory in the following data slice:

Q74. What have been your impressions about educational theories so far?
S2: I don’t think I’ve really come across much educational theory in the dip. ed. at all.

Q75. Do you feel that what you have come across has had much value?
S2: Dislocated from the classroom. I feel like I’ve gone through sociology again, really. Sociology is hard to grasp because it’s so abstract and that is the way I find education theory, really. It’s just totally different, you can learn as much theory as you want, but once you implement it and practice you just find that it’s totally different. I just don’t see how relevant it is to everyday classroom activities. I mean if it was a bit more specific, if it was more narrowed down, fine, I’d have something to work with but at the moment I’m a bit annoyed with theory. You know, just what is the theory, what is it that they’ve told me, what good is it?
(S2:17)
In a similar way to many teacher informants, student informants often did not perceive their own views of successful teaching to be personal theories or to value the theories of others. Inherent in those views there appeared to be a separation of practice and theory, rather than a connection between the two. The following data slice illustrated the point:

Q. Do you follow any specific theories in your teaching?
S3: No. I use a bit of everything, whatever works. Theory doesn't really come into it.
(S3:3)

Informant S3 held a view typical of students within the GDE program, in that they did not believe that the GDE would help to equip them to teach. Student teachers generally expressed a belief that theory was irrelevant to teaching and that they preferred practical teaching experience to theoretical knowledge. For example, Informant S3 stated:

Q. Have you gained an understanding of how kids learn from your course?
S3: No. I think I'll get that from experience. Built on experience
(S3:2-3)

Some informants indicated that the GDE had turned them against educational theories. S9 offered a stark example, both of the misconceptions about theories which appeared to be held by students and of their animosity towards theory and the GDE, in the following exchange:

Q.5 What are the most influential theoretical orientations that affect your approach to teaching English?
S9: I prefer not to rely heavily upon theoretical bases because they can be quite limiting. In my teaching approach I actually challenge current theories through units I'm teaching to the class, I dislike theory, probably because of the Dip. Ed.
(S9:2)

S9 echoed the views of other teacher informants regarding the GDE program when they stated:

To put it quite frankly, the Dip. Ed. is a load of crap. Why? Well, the subjects that I've had to complete have not helped me at all during my pracs at ____ and ____ High Schools. Theory is different when it is put into practice.
(S9:6)

As indicated in the data slices above, the view that practice and theories were not compatible appeared to be prevalent amongst both student informants and teacher informants. While collecting data during an English Methods class at the university I
asked student teacher informants if they were familiar with theories such as Process Writing, Whole Language, Systemics, Genre or Text Types. Despite the fact that I had a good relationship with them the group of 23 students became quite agitated by the questions. All were very keen to become involved in the research project, but objected to any focus on theories, in favour of practice. (S6:fn4) The following were some of the responses recorded during the session:

That’s educational theory bullshit, we just want to teach.  
(S7:4)

I don’t want anything to do with that.  
(S8:4)

It’s all crap, what about literature.  
(S10:4)

[Educational] Theory doesn’t teach you how to teach.  
(S11:4)

What about good books and plays, that’s how you learn English, not through some airy fairy theory.  
(S6:fn4)

It was a common occurrence during data collection in Methods lectures for the lecturer to engage the students in arguments aimed at encouraging them to embrace educational theories and allow them to ‘inform’ their practice. The students appeared reluctant to accept that position. After one such session L2 stated:

It’s quite distressing that they don’t see that, given that they already have a degree.  
(L2:fn5)

Another Methods Lecturer who was present later claimed the theoretical content in the GDE program was so ‘light’ that students got frustrated from not ‘having access’ and formed the opinion ‘it must be bullshit’. (L6:3) This data, along with data examined in earlier sections of this chapter, indicated that student teacher informants were alienated from the very knowledge which was intended to inform their practice.

**Alienation and Lecturers’ Perceptions**

While lecturer informants generally held the theories with which they worked in high regard, some appeared to feel that mastery of such knowledge was not important in the
GDE program. Given informant concerns about the nature of the GDE program I was curious as to why universities don’t demand prerequisites in education subjects, as part of applicants’ undergraduate degrees. Director of the GDE program, Informant L1, stated they did not believe education was an important subject for GDE students and that subject disciplines were far more important to secondary teachers. The following data slice illustrates L1’s position:

Q: How come there are no prerequisites for the Dip.Ed?
L1: Well, there is, they come from completing their degrees.

Q: Yes, but they don’t have to complete any compulsory subjects, education subjects, in order to gain entry to the Dip. Ed.
L1: Well, if we did require that it would rule out many students. Most in the Dip. Ed. don’t make up their minds till late in the piece and they might not qualify if we did that.

Q: But wouldn’t it make them better qualified?
L1: No, not, well if they want to study education, if they want that to be their focus they do other courses, not the Dip. Ed. The Dip. Ed. focuses more on their subjects like physics etc.

Q: But they can’t do another course.
L1: Yes, if they want they do the B.Ed. to study more education.

Q: But they can’t do a B.Ed.
L1: Yes, they do.

Q: It doesn’t exist anymore, it was phased out about 8 years ago.
L1: Oh, are you sure? No, I suppose maybe you are right.

Q: So, have you considered the question of prerequisites in education to enter the Dip. Ed.?
L1: Well, there are subjects in education that they can choose to do as part of their B.A.s and B.Science. If they wish. I think it’s important that they focus on their degrees first.

Q: But if they want to be teachers and their is limited time in the Dip. Ed. wouldn’t it make sense to expect prerequisites?
L1: Well, no. I think it is more important to do a degree than education. I see education as less important they need that grounding that they get in their discipline, in their degree.

That a senior academic with a long history of research and administration of the GDE should hold educational theories in such low regard stood as testament to the strength of the alienation that existed between high school teachers, teacher educators and the theories which were meant to inform educational policies and practice. It was a common occurrence for me to have to explain to teacher educators that there was no other method to train as a secondary English teacher during the study and that other professions operated very differently. The following excerpt from an interview with Informant L5 illustrated the point:
Q: Well, the Dip. Ed. The only compulsory components of the Dip. Ed. that are determined by anyone outside the faculty are Learners with Special Needs, child protection, PDPEH and their coaching certificates.

L5: I think that’s fair enough, because the Dip. Ed, unlike the B.Ed., is a professional degree, teaching qualification. And I think that probably most employing bodies, or employers, would say, you know, if you want to work in our system, these are the qualifications that you need. Policies that they would have, doctors, engineers.

For their professional qualification, not their undergraduate degree.

Q: It’s certainly very different to engineering or any of the ones I’ve looked at. And they are quite horrified by the idea that BHP would come along and say, this is what they must have.

L5: No, not BHP, as a company, but their would need to be, the employing bodies, as such, I mean if its virtually and employment certificate, and that’s what the Dip. Ed. is. It’s a teaching qualification, as opposed to your, I mean their B.A. or whatever, B.Sc. is their professional development, their stamping, you are now able to go and teach at a school, is the Dip. Ed.

Q: So, you don’t think their Diploma in Education informs their profession, it’s more their degree?

L5: Yes. Their B.A., B.Sc. is absolutely untouched by the Department and mores the pity, quite frankly.

[Not true - they must submit their degree to the Dept. for approval]

There are so many things they do that aren’t relevant to teaching. But no, the Dip. Ed. is, it’s the same as our certificate in TESOL, we would be absolutely stupid if we just went off and did our own thing, without saying to the employers, what is it that you require your teachers to have, to be employed in your institution?

[This role fulfilled by professional associations in other professions]

So, we modelled our certificate around the employers requirements.

(L5:43)

The data suggested that the two most senior academics involved in the GDE program failed to grasp the importance of the limited time available as the only focused contact prospective teachers had with educational theories prior to beginning their professional lives. It was not, therefore, surprising that teacher and student informants indicated that their alienation with educational theories appeared to stem from their experiences with GDE programs. (See the section dealing with theory deficit)

There was evidence that some lecturers held the ways in which some teachers taught literacy skills in low regard. Such evidence indicated that teachers, educational researchers and teacher educators were alienated from each other and, therefore, from the generic professional criteria vital for fostering a healthy, empowered teaching profession.

I was quite surprised to find that some lecturer informants were quite open in stating that they thought that teachers were generally ill-informed about educational theories and that teachers did not value such theories. Lecturer informants linked this to what has often been called the ‘nexus’ between theory and practice. The view generally was that teachers held complex, interwoven ‘personal’ theories constructed from both
practice and educational theories but lacked the ability to engage with either using the
discourse of the profession. This was generally perceived to alienate teachers from those
involved in the development and teaching of educational theory. Informant L1, Director
of the GDE program, summed up the general view among lecturer informants in the
following data slice:

Q: I’ve certainly picked up a certain thread running through the profession towards educational
theory. Have you picked up on anything?
L1: Sure, yeah. It’s universal. They think it’s worthless.

R: Why do you think that is?
L1: Well, it’s like every other question, it’s very complicated. One part of the answer is that
teachers do have all sorts of theories, part of which they have picked up from people like me, and
other when they have done their courses.
   And partly they’ve picked up from colleagues and partly they’ve built up through
   experience. But they do have theoretical underpinnings, which on a day to day basis they may not
   be aware of but if they thought it through they would realise that they do have.
   But at the same time I would say that most teachers would be better off if they had more of
   that and were able to articulate it more explicitly and spent more time on those sorts of things, on
   thinking through what they do and why. As a full professional should. That’s not to say teachers
don’t behave professionally but I think teachers would gain through being more explicit about it
and more up front and more conscious of it.
(L1:12)

Informant L1 was heavily involved in not only the GDE program but other postgraduate
courses in the Faculty of Education. L1 claimed that the lack of ability to engage in
issues central to the profession differentiated teaching from other professions:

Yeah, it seems to me, it illustrates to me the difference between teaching and the other professions.
That sort of thing wouldn’t happen in engineering or medicine, would it?
   I mean there are controversies in the margins in medicine, but the bulk of it is
   straightforward, isn’t it? Whereas in education, again, it’s complex, it’s value-laden, it’s society
   inter-related and all these sorts of things. It makes all these fundamental issues controversial and
   how on earth can a professional who has been working in a profession find themselves in a
   situation where they can’t understand the fundamentals of what they are being asked to do? It
   couldn’t happen in these other professions.
(L1:30)

Informants were particularly clear about their perceptions of English teachers’
knowledge about theories specific to language and literacy learning. Informant L4
claimed that teacher education failed to keep pace with the changes in theories during
the 1970s and 1980s. According to Informant L4, as new conceptualisations of literacy
evolved teacher education courses failed to empower students to introduce the
approaches to schools by grounding them fully in the theories in which the emerging
approaches were based. L4 claimed that the new focuses in Process, Whole Language
and Genre-based approaches meant that generations of teachers graduated without specific knowledge relating to language and literacy learning. (L4:2) L4 summed up their views with the following statement:

Yeah, and English teachers are great with poetry and novels, and plays but get a kid who can’t read and they don’t know what to do with them. (L4:3)

Informant L3 supported this assessment, particularly regarding the implementation of a Functional View of Language. L3 also linked a perception of a deficit in teacher knowledge with the fact that most English teachers are educated in literature studies in Arts faculties. According to L3 an Arts focus denied student teachers the knowledge of language and ‘the metalanguage’ necessary to work with language and literacy. The following is an excerpt from an interview with L3:

L3: Well, they [English teachers] don’t know anything about language. Of course not, this is the problem, you see, it’s political. They do Arts degrees in literature and naturally there is no way the Arts Faculty will let us in there.
In the undergraduate program we can do something, because we’ve got them the whole time ... but the Dip. Ed. is hopeless, too short.

Q: So you think the GDE causes this lack of knowledge of language in high school English teachers?
L3: Yes, of course it does. I mean most teachers do the Dip. Ed., not a degree. If we don’t get them to teach them about language how can they know it? The theories and frameworks, the metalanguage, it’s the metalanguage they need, it’s too complex to grapple with on their own in schools.
(L3:fn3&4)

Informant L5 was a senior academic responsible for much of the work on which the NSW literacy policies and BOS K-6 English Syllabus (1994 & 1998) were based. Indeed, L5 claimed to have written the definition of a functional view of language used by both the DET and BOS. (L5:24) Despite their close association with schools L5 was quite clear that they considered secondary English teachers to be ‘anti-theory’. (L4:23 & 47) When asked what caused this L5 linked it to the often cited Australian ‘tall poppy’ cultural syndrome, saying:

I don’t know why they are, I think it’s part of the whole Australian thing, that you would hope that teachers would not perpetuate it, you’d think they would be the ones who speak up, with a little bit of intellectual inquiry and, but they don’t. (L5:47)
Informant L5 stated that, despite being an ex-secondary English teacher, they found secondary teachers difficult to work with during professional development courses because of teacher attitudes towards educational and language theories. In the following data slice L5 claimed that such attitudes made it difficult for English teachers to understand new policies and accept change:

L5: I think it leads to a lot of teacher frustration, trying to implement policies they don’t understand. Yes. I mean I’ve got a secondary background, I was a secondary teacher, and of course, because of that I know what secondary teachers are like and they are least amenable to working with and, you know, effecting change and I think primary teachers are much more open to that sort of thing.

R: Why do you think that is?
L5: I don’t know. I don’t know. My impression of secondary teachers is that most of them, and I’m cautious about generalisations, but most of them quite smug in what they think is, you know, their subject area, the academic content. They are quite complacent about what they do, noone can teach them anything, I’m thinking mainly about English teachers, secondary English.

(L5:29)

Lecturer informant L6 was another senior academic with a history of publishing language and literacy professional development material aimed at secondary school teachers. They had also been involved in policy writing with the DET Disadvantaged Schools Program. L6 had a long history of involvement with secondary English teachers but was adamant that English teachers had a very negative attitude towards educational theories, stating:

I don’t think they know about theory. It’s a cultural thing. They are negative about theory because they don’t know it.

(L6:fn3)

L6 also claimed that secondary English teachers had particularly limited knowledge about language and literacy matters. The following is an extract from an interview with L6:

L6: English teachers wouldn’t know about language. English has nothing to do with language.

Q: But, according to DET language and literacy is considered the special responsibility of English teachers.
L6: Well, that’s their first mistake, it’s doomed to fail. English teachers are the last you’d pick for that.

English is literature, not language.
English is art, interpretation of art, not language development.

(L6:fn1)
Informant L6 also linked the perceived lack of English teacher knowledge to the nature of teacher preservice education. (L6:fn3) The data also suggested that there was evidence of systemic disapproval of educational qualifications within the NSW school system. Informant L7 linked teacher perceptions of educational theories with a systemic disregard for educational qualifications within DET. Informant L7, a teacher working as a part time Methods Lecturer, informed me that their District Superintendent had recommended that they take their Doctoral qualifications off their resume when applying for Principal positions in high schools. Informant L7 stated:

I don't know what it is with the Department, but they just don't value any qualifications. I guess it's just the tall poppy syndrome, they just feel threatened, it gets really depressing. I was advised by my District Superintendent to leave my PhD off my resume, that it would only go against me. I certainly seem to have had problems getting promoted. People seem quite hostile when you mention a doctorate.

(L7:fn1)

L7 was promoted to Principal at School B during the course of the study and they informed me that they believed that taking their doctorate off their resume had helped them to achieve the promotion. (L7: fn3) Once again, the key point which seemed to emerge from the data was not that lecturers felt that English teachers were not equipped to teach language and literacy skills but rather that there was disjunction between teacher educators and teacher practitioners. Alienation between the two key sectors of school education held serious implications for teacher effectiveness and professionalism. A key component of the alienation between the two appeared to be that there was no professional mechanism, as evidenced by the stated aims of the ETA, by which the two could come together under one umbrella and end the estrangement.

**Alienation and the Cyclic Nature of the Grounded Theory**

The condition of alienation was originally conceptualised within the grounded theory process as ‘a-theory’, a term I borrowed from leading NSW educator Trevor Cairney. Cairney (1989) claimed that a major problem with NSW school education was:

that teachers are not too theoretical in nature, but instead are a-theoretical.

(Cairney, 1989, p.22, cited in Grant, 1994, p.33)
My conceptualisation of teachers as ‘a-theoretical’ stemmed from findings already discussed, where teachers indicated both a low regard and little understanding of language and literacy learning theories. Those interpretations of the data were at first reinforced by numerous studies, notably by members of the Genre School, which claimed that secondary held little knowledge or regard for literacy and language pedagogies in teaching secondary English. (Callaghan et al., 1993; Carr, 1996; Cazden, 1988; Christie, 1991, 1997, 1990b; Cope et al., 1993; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993a, 1993b; Fasano & Winder, 1991; Gilbert, 1993, 1994; Green, 1996; Green et al., 1997; Kamler, 1981, 1995, 1997; Kamler et al., 1997; Lankshear & McLaren, 1993b; Martin et al., 1987b; Martin, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Parker, 1985; Ravelli, 1996; Rosenshine, 1997; Threadgold, 1995, 1997)

My initial, simplistic interpretation of the data, however, was challenged by the data reduction process I undertook as part of the grounded theory procedure, after Strauss and Corbin (1990). It became apparent that the condition emerging from the data was more than merely a judgement concerning professional knowledge.

A conceptualisation of the condition of alienation emerged where informants appeared not only to develop disdain for aspects of professional knowledge, but also became estranged from other professional processes which offered professional autonomy and power. A number of informants appeared to be disaffected with the very criteria and processes which might deliver them professional power and satisfaction. Within the personal phase of professional disempowerment that alienation appeared to lead to an attitude which perpetuated the notion of survival, visibility, system subversion and their own alienation within professional processes. In that way, the personal phase became a cycle of personal actions within the broader model of disempowerment. That cycle was represented during data analysis and diagramming in the diagram reproduced in Figure 5.23:
Alienation posed barriers to the development of action/interaction strategies which might have influenced political control and the other conditions within the three phases. As already discussed, teachers lacked the professional power needed to take control of the criteria crucial to the maintenance of a healthy profession. The data also showed that informants often felt alienated from the bureaucratic processes which controlled and influenced their professional lives. Teacher alienation meant that teachers were not only excluded from both the professional and institutional phases, but were less inclined to take action to empower themselves. In many ways it appeared that school teaching and education were, in the minds of informants, two separate disciplines.

The use of the grounded theory paradigm during the process of data reduction revealed that the conditions examined within this chapter were the key conceptual categories of the major category of professional disempowerment. Figure 5.24 illustrates the recursive nature of the influences among the conditions of the grounded theory:
Alienation from professional processes and criteria appeared to contribute to situation which assisted the maintenance of the status quo. Informants became estranged from the very processes and criteria which define a profession. Such alienation from the criteria for professionalism, as outlined by Darling-Hammond, Wise and Klein (1995), appeared during analysis procedures to be an integral component of the perpetuation of the professional and institutional phases of disempowerment for NSW teachers. Particularly, without the desire or ability to challenge the professional phase of disempowerment informants appeared to be locked into a cyclic action, where the disempowerment cycle became self-perpetuating. That cycle is represented below in the model of the completed grounded theory in Figure 5.25:
Having extricated the theory from the data it now remains to explicate the theory and to then examine the implications it holds for the profession.