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# A short history of state education policy for gifted and talented children in New South Wales 1788-1989

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**A SHORT HISTORY OF STATE  
EDUCATION POLICY  
FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN  
IN NEW SOUTH WALES  
1788 - 1989.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)**

**from**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**by**

**JANICE M. HALL, Dip. Teach., B.Ed., M.Ed.**

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1991**

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my three children  
Rod, Matt, and Rebecca,  
all gifted and talented  
in their own way

and

to the many gifted and talented children  
with whom I shared the privilege  
of learning...

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Janice M. Hall.

## **ABSTRACT**

The recent recognition by educationists in general, and the New South Wales Department of School Education in particular, of the educational and social needs of gifted and talented children, has raised many questions for educators to consider. Before these can be answered it is necessary to review the New South Wales history of State Education Policy for gifted and talented children.

This thesis describes an investigation of the history of education policy making for gifted and talented children within N.S.W. Department of School Education from 1788 to 1989. This investigation has revealed that no formal Government Policy existed until 1983, but due to the efforts of individual schools, teachers and several prominent individuals, some provision was evident. In the absence of official policy, other policies appeared. These policies have been found to fall into three broad categories closely linked in chronological order. These categories are: Elitism - from settlement in 1788 to 1949, Pluralism - from 1950 to 1980 and Corporatism from 1981 to 1989.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*Deliberately hindering the development of able children, or even passively hindering it through neglect, may have deleterious effects which are difficult to eliminate later.*

McLeod and Cropley, 1989

The debate over the education of gifted and talented children has existed for many years in most countries of the western world with Australia being no exception. From the beginning of European schooling in our humble convict beginnings we have always been cautious about special education of the elite or the chosen few and while the majority exhorted non provision of resources for these children, because of political or personal reasons, there have always been identified interest groups who were very vocal in their exhortations to governments and other policy makers to ensure provision for the education of gifted children. Progress tended to thrive on the immediacy of a person's or group's commitment and energy, which obtained and sustained recognition and support. This progress has been spasmodic, interrupted and diverse.

In 1985, Dr. Eddie Braggett stated in his report to the Commonwealth Schools Commission:

the talented are possibly the most disadvantaged group for they generally have not received sufficient stimulation to achieve their full potential.

Braggett 1985, p.5.

Sir John Carrick, who chaired the N.S.W. committee that released the report Excellence and Equity in 1990, also emphasised the fact that these children were a labelled and disadvantaged group:

Children with exceptional gifts and talents ... have sometimes been overlooked and inadequately nurtured in regular schools. Such children must be regarded as a highly prized resource for our nation's future.

Carrick 1989, p.25

Strong feelings of egalitarianism are still prevalent in many policy debates, and while there have been many phases in policy development for gifted and talented children, the majority of the resources that are allocated to exceptional children are assigned to the severely and profoundly developmentally disabled (Sydney Morning Herald, 1988)

In recent years with an increasing number of educators becoming aware of, and concerned about, exceptional children, the interest displayed by educators for the education of the gifted and talented has also sharpened. The NSW State Minister for Education, Dr Terry Metherell, clarified the Government's position on 16th June 1990 when he released the Student Excel Program (SEP) which clearly contained several strong recommendations. In this program, the Minister recognised the fact that children with special talents are a labelled and disadvantaged group and that they required immediate specialised attention.

In light of the above, the objectives of this study are to briefly outline the history of education policy developments for gifted and talented children in NSW and to attempt to analyse the factors that led to the formulation of policy. In the light of this information this thesis will identify future directions for policy. It has to be noted that this thesis will only cover the time span from 1788 to 1989, and will not take into consideration the very recent government statement *NSW Government Strategy for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students*.

In studying the information available there arose the issue of how best to present the material; to use either a chronological or thematic approach. Either method would have proved to be effective, but there seemed to be a natural chronological tendency emerging during the compilation of the data. It was therefore decided to present a chronological approach to the historical narrative, by placing events, developments, issues and outcomes in broad periodic chapters. Various models of policy process, in which positions of power were displayed, were subsequently used to analyse this data.

When applying these models, the history of education of gifted and talented children in NSW fell into three broad historical periods. In each of these periods, evidence of power was observed in the relationship between the various individuals or groups of individuals. By recording the chronological events and highlighting characteristics, these periods were able to be identified as Elitism (1777 to 1950), Pluralism (1950 to 1985) and Corporatism (1985 to 1990).

From the early 1800s to the turn of this century, the most prominent feature of State education was an increasing standardisation of curricula and limited opportunities for higher learning in a colony where parents were largely excluded from decisions about the formal schooling process, where the Churches or the State were unable to meet the increasing demand for education as settlement spread to the interior of this vast land, and where there always existed the fear that the lower class might rise and exercise political influence (Barcan, 1987). In the first forty years of the twentieth century, increasing quality of opportunity brought improved provisions for higher ability pupils. However, two World Wars and the vast and varied population expansion of the mid-fifties resulted in some undermining of this quality education. Quantitative expansion was at the expense of quality, and the extensive and rapid expansion of the teaching service produced deterioration of the quality of teachers (Barcan, 1987). There was

also renewed concern for higher ability pupils in the areas of science and mathematics; areas singled out as a response to the surprise launching of the Russian Sputnik in 1957.

The sixties and seventies saw dramatic changes in the ideologies that motivated educators and this led to an influx of documents and policies that confused and overloaded teachers. These also led to unrest among educators and vocal interest and lobby groups were formed to canvass change. Responding to this new challenge, interest in gifted education also flared and the formal policy 'Children with Special Talents' was released in 1983, it being the first public statement on gifted education to be released by the Department of Education in N.S.W.

There is no reason to believe that talented children have not been present in State schools since their foundation in 1848, although there is no statistical or historical evidence provided to support this assumption. There was limited provision for the social elite through the corporate schools such as Sydney Grammar and the Kings School and there were selective state high schools from 1883. However, it was not until 1983 that the N.S.W. Department of School Education (formerly the N.S.W. Department of Education) formalised a policy to address the needs of what Braggett (1985, p.2) describes as 'Australia's most disadvantaged, labelled group of children'. This mandatory policy, revised and reissued in 1987, stated that talented children were to be identified in all school communities irrespective of culture, race or position in socio - economic structure. It also reiterated that schools must build into their organisation provision for talented children and that parents and the wider community be encouraged to participate in the provision of specialist support services and also assist in identification which was to occur as early as possible.

A major area of dispute in gifted education has always been the actual identification of gifted and talented children. If identification procedures are inaccurate or inappropriate, then the provision made for these children may also be inaccurate or inappropriate. In the literature, there is little consensus on what means of identification should be used for these children. One of the reasons cited is that, because of lack of clarification as to the actual definition of 'giftedness', the giftedness may be taken to be academic, physical, cultural, or social. As a general overview statement, what seems to have happened in past practice is that definitions and identification procedures were tailored to particular programs. Groups of dedicated and energetic teachers designed a program, and identification procedures were then instigated to screen the students who fitted the demands of the program. How many students of high potential remained unidentified as a result of these procedures remains an unanswered question.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK...

*Each culture appears to feature the type of giftedness that it rewards or values. The ancient Greeks produced orators, the Romans who followed them produced engineers...the Renaissance - artists, the Germans - composers, and the English - writers.*

James Gallagher, 1985 p5.

Education for gifted and talented children has often been associated with conflict and confusion in the literature and the press, and definitions and concepts used by writers in this field are very varied. When coupled with the study of 'policy', another term commonly seen throughout the literature and press and associated with a variety of meanings, clarification of terms becomes essential for the reader. In order to fulfill this purpose, this Chapter will be divided into three major sections: policy (definitions), policy process, and policy content all viewed within the context of gifted and talented education. The following understandings and definitions will be used in this study.

#### **Definitions of policy**

The term 'policy' is elusive. It is being used by professionals, academics and lay people in a variety of ways. One only has to read a quality newspaper over a period of a week or two, to note how often the word occurs and in how many different contexts. It is sometimes used as a synonym for words such as 'plan' or 'program', or to describe a set of ill-defined goals or intentions. It oftentimes describes decisions of governments, desired purposes or states of affairs, outputs, outcomes or processes. The literature and the media provide information about formal and informal policies, and explore even wider implications of policies used in the strict political context, which leads to policy being referred to from time to time as part of an election campaign, a second reading speech on a Bill before Parliament, or an 'off-the-cuff'

account of the government's achievements given during election campaigning (Birch 1976 p2).

Writers from varying backgrounds and disciplines seldom agree on definitions of policy and the following attempts to define policy illuminate the difficulty of treating it as a specific and concrete phenomenon.

Determining a precise definition of policy has attracted a great deal of interest over the years, but has eventuated in little agreement. Heclo (1972 p85) suggests that 'a policy may usefully be considered as a course of action or inaction, rather than specific decisions or actions.' Policy can be the result of:

1. definite action, deliberately taken by the policy makers, or
2. lack of action, a deliberate choice not to make a decision.

Events are set in motion by decision makers, but it is not only the decisions that they do make which determine policy. In many cases, it is the lack of decisions taken by governments that lead to policies by default. This has been the case in many government policies, and it is particularly relevant in education of gifted and talented children in NSW.

Easton (1953 p130) describes policy as 'consisting of a web of decisions or actions that allocate values'. Values play an extremely important role in policy formulation and implementation because every individual makes decisions in the light of his/her own personal value system. It is impossible to be value-free or value-less and the most publicly displayed values are those that are held by the current power brokers. Their value systems are reflected in their policy decisions which they are able to implement because of their own position of power. Lindblom (1959 p32), in his rational decision



making model of policy analysis, explains the importance of defining governing values, specifying objectives compatible with these identified values, identifying all relevant options and calculating the consequences of those options. All these steps must maximise the benefits of the values and outcomes defined in the model.

Jenkins (1978 p15) sees policy as 'a set of interrelated decisions concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation'. He places less emphasis on values and more on the decision making processes involved. The underlying values form the basis on which decisions are made. These decisions then result in implicitly or explicitly stated values, which need not be identical with the underlying value structure, and consequent action (or inaction). The absence of any resultant action need not indicate non-existence of values or decisions, but may imply a conscious decision to take no action. The policy formulation will therefore include the value basis on which decisions were made (or avoided), the complex series of decisions themselves, and the stated value structure and resultant action(s) which emerge(s) from the process.

Policy, as defined for this study, is as concerned with the absence of decisions, and the reasons for this, as it is in their existence.

### **Education policy**

The above definitions allude to policy in the most general sense and are acceptable and understandable in everyday literature. When these definitions are extrapolated to a specific field of activity or expertise, the meaning takes on the slightly different perspectives of that particular field e.g. education.

Defining 'education' also presents problems similar to those encountered when attempting to define policy. A broad definition may be used to refer to the activities of

persons associated with the institutionalised teaching and learning that is carried out in pre-schools, primary or secondary schools, and a variety of post school organisations such as technical colleges, universities and business or professional colleges. Likewise, the concept of policy, as understood by the users of the policy, most commonly varies from situation to situation: a school principal for his/her staff, student bodies for their members, parent and community groups for their supporters, vice chancellors for their academic staff. These policies, while all classified under the heading of education can certainly be very diverse, as each management team applies its own interpretation of policy. These are all genuine and legitimate models of 'policy' but are more likely to be effective in implementation if the policy makers have the power and the authority to operationalise the policies. Inherent in each one of these models, is the reference to power and in the absence of this power, the policy would not be formulated or implemented.

Over the years, many educational topics have been vigorously debated by the media, educational and societal experts. All of these topics have, at one stage or another, been in the centre of the policy arena; some remained there for prolonged lengths of time, such as basic skills (or the apparent lack of them), teaching conditions and salaries, physical conditions of pupils in relation to overcrowding and lack of resources and facilities. Some other issues waxing and waning on the policy front have enjoyed brief notoriety, or lasting political reaction. These issues cover such areas as multicultural education, Aboriginal education and gender issues, and have been able to extract quite significant political mileage both at State and Commonwealth level. Issues, such as the education of gifted and talented children which appear to enjoy spasmodic notoriety, continue to appear as historical and sociological indicators to provoke resurgent action. This multiplicity of social groups were indicative of the new ideology where equality of status was sought by all. In situations such as this, the power struggle for recognition and support becomes very intense.

## **Policy process**

Ham and Hill (1987 p13) suggest that despite the varied nature of policy, some form of categorisation is possible. One form they suggest is policy as process. Its identifying characteristic is its evolution of structure over a period of time. Some other forms they suggest such as policy as a model, policy as outcome, and policy as a program, focus on the static in contrast to the changing scene. Policy as a process, as discussed below, is more appropriate for this study.

Policy process consists of one or more of the following stages:

1. Formation -the demand for the policy emerges.
2. Formulation -the actual construction of the policy.
3. Implementation.
4. Evaluation/Change.

One aspect of this process is policy analysis the purpose of which is 'to draw on ideas from a range of disciplines in order to interpret the causes and consequences of government action'.(Ham and Hill 1987 p10). This analysis is an attempt firstly, to identify the theories that underlie the policy and secondly, to examine the theories for internal consistencies in order to validate the assumptions on which the theories are based. This is particularly effective when one focuses on the processes of policy formulation (Ham and Hill 1987 p11). While this appears to be a straightforward and manageable task by definition, it becomes a little more complicated by the very nature of the definition and interpretation of the policy.

The nature of policy itself does not allow it to be treated as a static entity. Even when there is a definite date attached to the release of the policy, and the policy is formulated clearly and explicitly, it may continue to evolve throughout the implementation stage. This may occur for several reasons which are outlined below.

Firstly, in any bureaucracy there are various levels of authority. In Australian, education authorities have usually tended to disseminate from a central controlling body and permeates down through several other layers to its final place of implementation. For example, in the first 150 years of Australian education a central, State control existed in each capital city. Each State was broken into Regions which were controlled by a Director, and these Regions were again divided into smaller geographical regions called Inspectorates or Divisions. Any policy implementation had already proceeded through three bureaucratic levels before reaching the Principal of the school and finally the teacher at the workplace. All in all there were five possible levels of 'interpretation' of policy, five levels of people with power and authority to influence its implementation.

A second reason as to why policy may continue to evolve during implementation, is outlined by Ham and Hill (1987 p12) who state that policy making involves 'a course of action or a web of decisions'. Under the previous model, the Department of Education was a prime example. Decision networks, often of considerable complexity, existed in a pyramidal structure throughout all the states of Australia with the control firmly embedded in a central authority. During the seventies, those departments adopted the consultative process to policy making. This was based on the management principle that those who were finally implementing and working within the policy, did so more effectively when they felt ownership of it because of being involved in the process. Hence many educators, from senior officials to classroom teachers, were

involved in 'webs of decisions' which could extend far beyond the initial policy making process and over long periods of time. This was the model used for the formulation of the NSW Department of Education policy *Children With Special Talents* released in 1983 (Macdonald C. 1990 Personal Communication).

A third reason why policy formulation can continue throughout the implementation stage is the fact that policy changes over time because yesterday's statement of intent may not be the same as today's. Policy process tends to be dynamic rather than static, due to sometimes major changes in direction (as in shifts in policy emphasis due to change of government) or incremental decisions or adjustments (as in policy change to absorb new salary or staff structures).

Discussed above are examples of policy making where decisions are deliberately and carefully made as part of the policy process. Situations also exist throughout the process where, either intentionally or unintentionally, the decisions are never made.

Heclo (1972) refers to this lack of decision as 'non decisions'. These can be used to suppress conflicts and to prevent them from entering the political process 'by manipulating the dominant community values, myths, political institutions and procedures' (Bachrach and Baratz 1963 p632). This, in practice, means that the power relations and forces that exist at the time can either alone or together, 'prevent certain items or grievances from either entering the agenda or from developing any sort of force or power of their own to become fully fledged issues' (Heclo 1972 p2). Heclo continues to elaborate in these terms:

The concept of non-decision making has become increasingly important in recent years and it has been argued that much political activity is concerned with maintaining the status quo and resisting challenges to the existing allocation of values.

(Heclo 1972 p3)

In surveying the literature, several major influences appeared to emerge. They were the State Government, prominent government officials, resources, events outside education, and more recently, parents' associations and teachers' unions. Historically, these have been of great importance in the development of policy and therefore provide a recurring theme throughout this thesis. A most evident trait that consistently appeared was the power base of the stakeholders (the prominent individuals or groups) and the relationship of power that existed between them. Power is inherent in all stages of the policy process, in the formation, the formulation, and the implementation stage. As stated above, the effectiveness of the policy depends to a large extent, on the authority and the power of the decision makers.

Thus a conceptual framework using the power models as described by Ham and Hill in their book The Policy Process in the Modern Capitalist State (1987 p23 - 36) was deemed the most appropriate for this study. These models of Elitism, Pluralism and Corporatism are described in detail below.

### **Elitism**

C. Wright Mills, described by Ham and Hill (1981) as one of the modern fathers of elite theory, based his work on the elite theorists, Pareto and Mosca (1939 in Ham and Hill 1987). Mills maintained that in all societies, from barely civilised to powerful and sophisticated, two classes of peoples appear, a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class, always less numerous and more select, monopolises policies, functions and power. The second class is controlled by the first class, often arbitrarily and/or violently, and usually within the confines of a legal system created by, and for the benefit of, the first class (Ham and Hill 1981 p29).

Mills calls this first class the 'political elite'. He maintains that the political elite achieves and maintains its authority by a variety of strategies, some using a single source of power, others using more than one. These sources may be in the form of military conquest, revolutionary dissent or control of key economic resources such as food or water.

Bottomore (1966) divides these elites further into what he calls 'political elite' being composed of 'bureaucratic, military, business and aristocratic elites' and 'political class' being 'the political elite together with elites from the areas of social life [above]' (p14-15). He claims that this suggests that while elite power may be based on a variety of sources, these resources, such as institutional power, wealth, official office, and technological expertise, may also be cumulative. The actual power is not dependent on any one source hence adding to the likelihood of the permanency of the elites.

Institutional position can also be an example of modern day elite power where key positions are held in both the institution and the government. C. Wright Mills observes in his study of the USA in 1950, (Mills 1956 p69) that those who were in government at that time were also in prominence in their own respective military, business or corporate field, and 'the overlap and connection between these leaders helped to create a relatively coherent power elite' (Ham and Hill p30).

Smith (1974 p106) in his article 'Elite Theory and Policy Analysis', has a slightly different understanding of political elites. He describes them as 'that minority of participating actors' characterised by 'power, wealth, deference and skill and a monopoly of written information'. These 'actors' can be participants in the formulation of any policy, irrespective of discipline area, and inevitably play a leading role in policy making by influencing and shaping policy outputs by virtue of their

exceptional access to information and position. This can be done either at formal or informal access points during either the formulation or implementation stage.

Convicts dominated the colony up until the 1830s, following which free immigrants began to flood into NSW and a new interest began in academic and vocational schooling, a different kind of interest to the moral and religious ideals that had been paramount till then. In the historical data of this period between 1780 and 1950, there is evidence to support the existence of elitism, where the ruling class were the powerbrokers who determined policy for both classes. The lower class, consisting mainly of the convict population, were kept powerless by the continuation of elitism, especially in relation to education. Neither teachers, parents or pupils of this lower class, were ever able to become agents of change. While it is reasonable to believe that gifted and talented children did exist in the NSW State Education system, provision could not be made for them while this elitist attitude was so prevalent.

### **Pluralism**

The popular understanding of democracy implies active and direct participation in the election of a government. During election times, competition between individuals and groups of individuals usually runs very high as they vie for positions of power. Some of these groups speedily and efficiently mobilise and quickly regenerate into vocal pressure groups with effective platforms. These groups can be representative of single or multiple issues. Initially, conflict may occur between these groups. In spite of this, the representation of opinion by these pressure groups has flourished alongside and within the formal structures of government. Beer (1965 p27) theorises that 'as governments sought to manage the economy they were led to bargain with organised groups of producers, and in particular worker and employer associations'. He also believes that all governments, despite their political affiliations, seek the cooperation



and consensus of some of these groups, needing their advice and approval. Similarly, these pressure groups, also vie for government attention especially when it is realised in terms of financial or human resources.

In terms of pluralist theory this representative power is widely distributed among all the groups and no group is without power to influence decision making. At the same time, no group is dominant but it is feasible for any group to achieve its ends if it is sufficiently determined and gains enough power, support and publicity. Dahl (1961 p78) goes so far as to say that even the voice of the least powerful is heard at some stage during the proceedings, but the effect that this has on policy, is usually in proportion to the 'decibel rating' of that particular group.

In pluralism theory, the role of the government is viewed differently by different writers. Larham (1952) argues that the government plays the role of a referee maintaining a purely neutral role, while Dahl's (1961) work reflects his belief that government agencies are just one of the many sets of pressure groups and therefore cannot remain neutral throughout the process. He reiterates that 'the government both pursues its own preferences and responds to demands coming from outside interests' (as mentioned in Ham and Hill 1987 p23).

Max Weber (1947) in his strong attack on the changing role of the bureaucracies, states that 'bureaucracy has turned from an ally to an enemy of capitalism' (in Ham and Hill 1987 p48). He clearly stresses the importance of the authority system to explain political relations within the state, and implies that the bureaucracy actually empowers the state to free itself of the middle class restraints. The danger in this is that the power then can become concentrated in just a few hands. These selective groups can then become the most powerful and most vocal lobby groups, and the trend away from pluralism to elitism may have begun. Mosca (1939) also supports this theory stating

that pluralism 'must be sustained to protect democracy from the bureaucrats' (in Ham and Hill 1987 p50).

This powerful interplay becomes very obvious when one examines the history of 'gifted and talented' policy in NSW in the years 1950 to 1980. The historical data from the years 1950 to 1980 provide clear evidence of the effects of pluralism on policy development in education, particularly in education for gifted and talented children. As outlined above, the pluralist model is based on the existence of a number of sources of pressure, each of which is able to affect policy outcomes to some extent. This pressure is usually explicitly applied by the respective lobby groups who have particular gains to be made. This pressure can also operate differently by its visibility, or in some cases, its lack of visibility or directedness.

### **Corporatism**

Corporatism occurs when major interest groups and corporations are involved in the processes of government. This process assists in maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict by allowing these groups to share the power (Ham and Hill 1987 p37). Sharing may occur by including these groups in their own right or subsuming them into the government process. Middlemas'(1979 p85) theory of corporatism means the inclusion of these groups and the development of a very close relationship between corporate and union interests to the benefit of the governing body. Though the power struggle may surface periodically, the final decision-making benefits all the actors, including the government.

Ham and Hill (1987 p37) in their interpretation of Winkler (1976) describe corporatism as a 'system of private ownership of the means of production combined with public control'. This entails the development of policies on prices and incomes revolving around planning agreements with industry. These policies are often worked out in

collaboration with business or union groups or elites. The danger here, as pointed out by Middlemas (1979 p372), is that these same power groups made up of businesses, unions, corporations, and other similar organisations, become the governing institutions, because they escalate to be more than just interested groups. They come to share in the State's power.

Schmitter's (1974 p93) analysis goes further. He claims that the stakeholders are recognised (even licensed) by the government and granted a representational monopoly. The trade off for these privileges is that the government may exert pressure on, and maintain control over these stakeholders: their managers, their demands, and their 'decibel rating'.

Another definition put forward by Milward and Francisco ( in Ham and Hill 1987 p173) is that corporatism is based on 'policy sectors which cut across both territorial boundaries and different parts of government'. These policy sectors are based on government agendas, and within these sectors, policy formation results from the support of pressure groups by state organisations. They stress the importance of 'cooperative mutual interaction' at the leadership and management levels.

Dye (1976 p191) states the majority of the research makes the assumption that the relationships are important because of their affects on government policy. But the economic power brokers, 'the corporatists', have other means of influence called 'policy forming organisations' such as Business Councils, Foreign Relations, City Councils, Committees for Economic Development or other wealthy foundations and corporatist sponsored research such as found in Universities. It is by these means that corporate and personal wealth provides both the financial resources and the overall direction of policy research planning and development.

Overall, the critical elements in the majority of the theories appear to revolve around the role of the State and its relationship with the major economic interest groups. The corporatist premise is that 'the State has moved from a position of supporting the process of capital accumulation to the position of directing the process (Ham and Hill 1987 p41).

One common factor of elitism and corporatism emerges here. In both elitist and corporatist situations there are only a few actors, because in both cases the opposition pressure groups are all deprived of power. The government remains an equal partner in both cases, and may change position from centre stage but it always remains an equally powerful and important actor. Because of this, a new balance of power, new relationships and new patterns have emerged which both directly and indirectly, affect the formation of policy.

### **Policy Content**

This policy content section of this study will be directly related to the education of gifted and talented children in schools provided by the NSW Department of Education. The section will be divided into three subsections described as definitions, programs and values.

### **Definitions of Giftedness**

Over the past century, the meaning of the term 'gifted' has changed from a single dimension - that of high I.Q. - as defined by Terman in 1925, to one in which multiple abilities and intelligences are recognised (Gardner 1983; Sternberg 1982; Parke 1989). Through this transition, ways have been found to obtain greater understanding of the students themselves and of their specific needs in school (Parke 1989).

It is apparent in all educational systems that there are many students who, by virtue of their exceptional abilities, require programs that are beyond those typically offered in schools. It is because of this, that the process of defining and identifying students as gifted and talented must be made clear in order to avoid discrimination against these students.

There are throughout the literature a number of definitions employed to describe people who are gifted and/or talented. Modern definitions recognise that giftedness has multidimensional traits for there are many different areas in which students may have exceptional abilities. The Marland Report *Education of the Gifted and Talented* to the Congress of the United States of America by the United States Commissioner of Education in Washington D.C. in 1972 appears to form the basis of many commonly used definitions in recent literature.

Gifted and talented are children who are identified at the preschool, elementary and secondary level as possessing demonstrated potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic or leadership ability or in performing and visual arts, who by reason thereof require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school.

There are a number of facets to this definition that modern day advocates of special education for gifted and talented children rigourously support. It states that students may be gifted in one or more areas and that (as Gross (1990) energetically advocates) 'demonstrated potential abilities' deserve valid recognition. It also contains a mandate to provide teaching programs for these students.

But when one surveys the literature on identification procedures for gifted and talented children the most notable feature is the lack of uniformity or clarity. Educators often view giftedness as something calling for a label but the literature establishes that there is a 'labyrinth of confusion' about what giftedness actually is (Guskin et al 1986 p36).

This is consistent with the vague definition of 'gifted children' as evident in the policy statements of educational departments of all the Australian states (see Appendix). All policy statements refer in general terms to children of outstanding ability who have demonstrated high levels of performance or potential in one or more areas. This lack of clarification between performance (what the gifted child is actually doing at the time of assessment) and potential (what assessors believe the gifted child is capable of in future development) leads to subjective assessments being made by personnel who may be unqualified or inexperienced in this area. There is sometimes confusion concerning the validity of an identification of one or more areas of giftedness which may be social, intellectual, creative and/or physical. Similarly, the identification of such children is seen as a multifaceted procedure combining available information of various aspects of the child's development. Specific directives are not given, only generalised guidelines, thus providing educators with a dilemma which can lead to conflict and misunderstandings with colleagues and parents. This dilemma is not only present for the policy-implementors, but also for the policy-writers.

One of the major determiners of school based conceptions of giftedness is Renzulli. His three-ring concept of giftedness was first presented in 1978, and proposes three interlocking set of traits of giftedness - above average abilities, creative capacity and task commitment (Renzulli 1978 p180). He stresses that it is more productive to focus on gifted behaviours than to attempt to determine whether or not children are gifted. He also emphasises the idea that giftedness is a set of traits that can grow with nurturance not just a condition 'bestowed on some and denied to others' (Feldhusen 1989 p109).

Methods of peer, teacher and parent nomination involve identification of accepted characteristics of giftedness. A variety of systems have been trialed with scales developed to allow quantification of these characteristics. For example, Dunn and Griggs (1985 p43) report that learning styles of gifted children can be characterised by

the following descriptors: independence; internal or external control; persistence; perceptual strengths; nonconformity; task commitment and high self motivation. Despite the increasing availability of effective identification procedures, teachers still more readily nominate as gifted, those who belong to dominant cultural groups and those who are already succeeding in the school setting. This highlights one of the main intellectual difficulties in implementing any policy on identification of gifted and talented children: the area of values.

### **Values**

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) describe values as 'beliefs, ethics, standards ... which affect policy making processes at all levels ... through guiding and restraining the behaviours and actions of participants' (p112). Decisionmakers and policymakers who hold positions of power, select their own preferred behaviour alternatives in terms of their own value system. Members of the public, who constitute vocal lobby groups, also take action in line with their beliefs and standards.

The difficulty in implementing any identification policy is to ascertain normative propositional statements whereby there is clarification in the mind of the reader as to the socio-moral perspective of the thesis. These are commonly called values and involve making value judgements on the data presented. The education of gifted and talented children is such an example of an issue where the grounds of dispute are located in strongly held and widely differing value judgements related to ethical, philosophical, political and economic beliefs. Other examples of highly emotive value laden areas would be capital punishment and abortion.

In practice, the contributions made to the formulation and implementation of policy, advanced by contending parties, often complicate the value differences underlying the debate. In NSW, for example, the strong egalitarian attitude is always so evident in

both the factual and fictional literature. When debate is invited on matters such as OC classes (opportunity classes for gifted children), selective high schools (where entrance is subject to academic qualification), and acceleration (grade skipping), egalitarian attitudes are prevalent as advocates call for equal opportunity in education. Allocation of the finite resources available to education always strikes debate between those perceived as 'have's' (exceptional children: gifted and talented) and those who are perceived as 'have not's' (exceptional children: learning disabled). As is sometimes the case, value-laden issues like this become one of low priority with bureaucrats as decisions 'won't' or 'can't' be made due the prevailing political climate.

Within the area of education for gifted and talented children itself, two very strong, but often opposing ethical stands are prominent throughout much of the literature. These tend to exemplify two basic values which are egalitarianism and elitism. Both these are discussed later in this chapter.

### **Programs for the Gifted**

A question continually posed in education of gifted and talented children is the suitability of educational programs for these students. While many advocate adaptation of instruction in the regular classroom, there are two other distinctive issues which emerge; those of 'acceleration' and 'enrichment'. The implementation of either of these usually involves organisational and administrative changes at the level of the school, and/or the system.

Although often regarded as quite distinct, and even antithetical (Stanley 1977), acceleration and enrichment can be, and often are, two sides of the same coin (Fox 1979). Enrichment may well involve courses of study from a higher grade and go well beyond the boundaries of the regular curriculum for that age group. This then becomes a form of acceleration.



### **Acceleration**

Feldhusen (1989 p 36) describes the process of acceleration as one of bringing gifted and talented youth up to a suitable level of instruction commensurate with their achievement levels and readiness so that they are properly challenged to learn new material. It allows unusually able children to move through the stages of the curriculum at a pace best suited to their ability. Gifted children spend much time in school encountering new material at far too slow a pace or being instructed in what they already know. This demotivates the gifted child and is at the heart of the widespread problem of underachievement among the gifted (Whitmore 1980 p57).

Acceleration may take several forms: early entrance (where children are permitted to commence school under the conventional age), grade skipping (where children are promoted ahead of their chronological peers), selective acceleration (where students remain with their age peers, but are accelerated in certain subjects) and adaptive acceleration (where a student remains with their peers the majority of the time but may complete four years of study in two either by independent or additional part time study.)

Opponents of acceleration view it as rushing children through the curriculum without concern for their social or emotional development. However a recent review of social-emotional adjustment and maturity of gifted youth by Janos and Robinson (1985 p5) concluded that gifted and talented youth are often precocious or advanced in their social adjustment and often prefer older playmates. Gifted youth are generally socially and emotionally well adjusted but this emotional and social development of exceptionally gifted children still remains an area of great concern for educators.

## **Enrichment**

Enrichment for the exceptionally able involves making provision for them to study in greater depth, topics which are part of their regular curriculum. It has primarily been provided by the regular classroom teacher. Enrichment may also include services provided by itinerant teachers, resource teachers or mentors who can provide experiences directly or in cooperation with the classroom teacher.

Opponents of enrichment claim that it can degenerate into 'busy work', 'fun and games activities', or 'cute games' which are purported to develop critical thinking and analytical skills (McLeod and Cropley 1989 p202). Renzulli, a most prolific writer and researcher in the education of gifted and talented children warns thus:

There is a vast difference between the types of mental growth that result from a thirty minute exercise in creative ways of pasting macaroni on oatmeal boxes and the kind of disciplined inquiry and task commitment that sparked the work of anyone...that history has recognised as a truly gifted person

(Renzulli 1980 p6-7).

Enrichment is less costly than most alternative special programs, as nominal enrichment can be provided quite cheaply within the limits of already existing resources (McLeod and Cropley 1989 p203). Alternative times can be found during normal school hours using flexible or alternative staffing, and dedicated teachers involving themselves in courses outside of normal school hours.

## **Egalitarianism**

Proponents of special programming for the gifted, indeed proponents of special programming for all children with special educational needs, would clearly advocate equality of opportunity rather than equality of access. In some of the literature that emerges from the United States of America, for example, there appears to be a conflict of ideology which perhaps may be traced back to American writers' interpretations of

the term 'democracy'. McLeod & Cropley, (1988 p7) describe this succinctly as the clash between 'Jeffersonianism - equality of opportunity' and 'Jacksonianism - equality of provision'. This difference has added significantly to the egalitarian issue because while opportunity has been provided by law for all exceptional students, provision in the form of funding and resources has only been made available to the exceptionally learning delayed students.

'Egalitarianism', a word frequently occurring in the literature of education for gifted and talented children, has come to mean more than just unequal opportunity. It also labels the special privileges that are only available to those deemed to be more deserving because they have been unfairly treated in the past by nature or society. It also appears to now possess a strong characteristic of homogeneity, where:

..egalitarians seek a world where all are identical: as a result they see special educational treatment as something which should be employed only to eliminate differences between special outgroups, and the great homogenous mass constituted by the average or everyday.

(McLeod & Cropley 1988 p8).

There is nothing vastly incompatible in equality of opportunity and special education provision for gifted students, as long as it is remembered that there now must be equality of opportunity for all and not a built-in bias which limits that opportunity to a discrete section of the population.

### **Elitism**

In 1978 and again in 1979, Dr. Miriam Goldberg, Professor of Education and Psychology at Columbia University, visited Australia at the request of the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Her report examined and evaluated the provision for education for gifted and talented children throughout Australia. Goldberg claimed that a major deterrent to the progression of education for gifted and talented

children, was 'elitism'. She reported that those who advocated special provision for gifted and talented students were viewed as elitist by those who were non-advocates. This tended to create resentment between these two groups. On analysing this resentment, she stated that it was more political and social, than educational or philosophical (Goldberg 1981).

Sisk offers one explanation for this prevalent elitist attitude:

'By and large, active parents in organisations supporting special programs for the gifted, tend to be affluent, well educated, articulate and white - such an organisation is an easy target for accusations of elitism.'

(Sisk 1978 p3)

Not all writers hold this view of gifted students. Havighurst and Newland regard them as a resource with potential for future economic and societal improvement. Havighurst (1958 p50) recommended that the most promising 20% of children should be given special encouragement and support because of their promise of outstanding performance. Newland (1976 p107) estimated that 5% of the population must be prepared for work at a highly conceptual level in order to meet the needs of a technologically complex society. This rapid process of change which is so evident in our world in recent years, serves to emphasise the role of gifted people as a resource, not only as highly able thinkers 'capable of dealing with breathtakingly complex transactions ... but also as leaders who emerge from among the gifted whenever the political and social climate is ripe.' (McLeod & Cropley 1988 p12.)

This study does not attempt to survey every principle, definition and concept in gifted education. Those that have been discussed in this Chapter viz enrichment, acceleration, egalitarianism and elitism are the most prevalent in the literature and are appropriate for this study.

## **Legitimation in Gifted Education**

If educational provision for gifted children is to be permanent and effective, it must be legitimated within the school system. This provision must cease to be regarded as special or different, and be recognised as a routine measure within the established school system. It must be recognised that there are many authors who list mandatory criteria for legitimation, and these are wide and varied. But Mossenson (1981 p16) in his role as a member of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, listed seven conditions which he regarded as mandatory and an adaptation of his list appears below. (This author believes that an additional condition should also be included and this appears as the eighth in the following adaptation of Mossenson's list.)

While each State system satisfies some of these conditions, the presence of all of them is required to indicate that legitimation has recognisably occurred. An adaptation of his list is as follows

1. The conceptual and theoretical bases of the provision for gifted and talented children are expressed in such a way as to allow informed debate and consistent planning. The longevity of some firmly entrenched ideas will present a challenge to those who wish to bring about change, even when it is based on recent research.
2. The identification and classification of gifted and talented children ceases to be an issue of major contention. Present practices in some systems allow identified students entrance to qualitatively different programs than those who are marginally different on the same selection instruments.
3. Implementation of curriculum and strategies occurs through all levels of schooling and especially in early childhood education.
4. The continuation of this provision at both system and school level no longer depends on 'voluntarism or evangelism'. Teachers are already under constant stress to do more with less' so any change which would demand more teacher time and greater effort could be very short-lived.

5. The continuation of this provision is not conditional on the activities of militant pressure groups, either within or without the system. Vocal parent and community groups have certainly evoked interest and support and perhaps, as yet, have not realised their own full potential, but gifted and talented education must not depend on their support for its existence.
6. Open evaluation of this provision is accepted as a routine part of teaching practice. It is generally believed that there has never been any deliberate attempt to conceal planning and program initiatives. In fact, it has been the opposite as dedicated and energetic teachers have anxiously sought forums and audiences for recognition for themselves and their students. Thus, the absence of any formal evaluation strategy has served to detract from the legitimisation of the present policy.
7. Funds and resources are routinely allocated rather than being delivered through special purpose grants from government bodies. As long as the latter is the case, funding is susceptible to changes in the political climate where budgets can be drastically altered by power shifts or changes in policy. Funding for gifted and talented children must become part of the normal funding of education, and be provided under the umbrella of normal school routine expenses.

(Mossenson 1981 p16).

Although Mossenson only identifies seven conditions, this researcher believes that there is an eighth condition which must exist for legitimation. This eighth condition is as follows:

8. There is recognition of the need for further research into education of gifted and talented children commissioned by credible and highly visible funding sources.

By way of conclusion, it can be seen that when a policy or policy process is placed under scrutiny, there is an attempt firstly, to identify the principles that underlie the policy and secondly, to examine those principles for internal consistencies in order to validate the assumptions on which the theories are based. This is particularly effective when one focuses on the policy process (Ham and Hill 1987 p11). While this appears to be a straightforward and manageable task by definition, it becomes a little more complicated by the very nature of the definition and interpretation of the policy.

## CHAPTER THREE -

### METHODOLOGY

*Social reality is regarded as a creation of individual consciousness with meaning, and the evaluation of events a personal and subjective construction.*

R B Burns, 1990, p.23.

#### Introduction

Traditional approaches to research have been strongly influenced by scientific paradigms, the methods and purposes of which have been formed by generations of scientists who have collectively built a foundation of premises and beliefs. The methods adopted are based on the assumption that there are social facts which have an objective reality apart from the beliefs of individuals. 'They seek to explain the course of change in social facts primarily through objective measurement and analysis' (Firestone, 1987, p.916). While this has been the case, it has also traditionally been recognised, that 'the human element is also a critical and determining factor in the definition of truth and knowledge'. The difficulty in quantifying this 'human element' has led some researchers to explore the use of other methods. These methods which stress the validity of multiple meaning structures as opposed to the criteria of reliability and statistical compartmentalisation are increasingly being accepted by educational researchers (Burns, 1990). The growth in naturalistic research methodologies is proof that this growing emphasis exists.

This study is of the type usually described as historical research. In a general sense research in education is directed to one or both of two ends - the extension of knowledge and/or the solution of a problem (Weirsmas, 1986). This study falls into both categories as it attempts, through detailed investigation of the literature, to analyse past and present policies developed to cater for the education of gifted and talented students in NSW. Critical characteristics which determined the methodology in this study were the historical nature of the data, and the interpretative analysis of events through a conceptual framework determined by the author.

### **Policy research**

Rossi (1978, p.173) describes policy research as 'a mixture of science, craftlore and art' and Wildavsky (1979, p.281) supports this by emphasising that 'there can no more be only one mode of policy research.' Operations undertaken in the name of policy research will vary not only with the nature of the content material, but with the style, judgement, and creativity of the researcher and his/her paradigms.

Policy research involves more than substantive knowledge of the content material. It also involves more than expertise in the application of different methodological and analytical tools. Majchrzak (1984, p.12) describes policy research as 'the process of conducting research on, or analysis of, a fundamental social problem in order to provide policy makers with pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem.' The emphasis placed here by Majchrzak is on the 'action oriented recommendations' - that the policy research is effective if the decisionmakers can translate the recommendations into a pragmatic course of action. This could then be a valuable framework for future policy decisions.



Policy research often tends to consider only a small set of variables, focusing far too much on the present instead of future trends, and failing to consider explicitly the role of values. Majchrzak (1989, p.20) sums it up:

The policy researcher must be able to consider all aspects of the multidimensional problem, identify and maintain a focus on the most malleable variables, consider the effects of both past and future trends explicitly incorporate values into the research process and be responsive to study users despite their numerous and sometimes conflicting demands.

Policy research may appear to consist of competing inputs, complex problems and seemingly irrational decisionmaking styles. It is a complex process consisting of different actors, often operating at different policy making levels and managing a myriad of policy mechanisms with differing intended and unintended outcomes (Majchrzak, 1984).

'The applied, socially relevant, multi-disciplinary, integrative and problem directed nature of policy analysis,' (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, p.3) characterises a multi-dimensional approach and thus determined the methodology of this researcher in the selection of forms of data collection. Of the forms available, and in the light of the aim of this study, it was decided that the three forms discussed below were most likely to produce reliable and extensive data. They are reports in professional literature, archival documentation and interview.

The subject of policy for the education of gifted and talented children in NSW is relatively new, and little direct data is available. The majority of the data were obtained from: primary sources such as reports, memoranda and documents from both Government and Departmental sources; and secondary sources, such as historical literature and factual information which provided a background to the formulation of policy.

### **Archival Information**

The primary source of data was requested from the NSW Department of Education. Archival artifacts were sought in the forms of original documentation, memoranda, correspondence, policy statements, annual reports, commissioned reports, identification and relocation procedures and evaluation strategies.

Given the extensive time period covered, the nature of these sources varied enormously over time. The official documents in which there was evidence of schooling in NSW between 1788 and 1858 were the Historical Records of New South Wales and the collected correspondence of the missionaries found in the Mitchell Library. The Minister of the Department of Public Instruction (later to become the Department of Education) wrote annual reports from the early 1800s and the Inspectors' reports remained until they were replaced by Directors' reports in the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition there were letters between Government Departments, correspondence with members of the public and unpublished reports on special investigations made by departmental personnel.

### **Reports in professional literature**

Since the events are in the past, the researcher cannot depend on direct observation or experimentation, but must make use of reconstruction which 'is designed to achieve a faithful representation of a previous age' (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p.48). These facts and events are recorded with apparent accuracy in many historical volumes but the possible subjectivity and selectivity of the authors must be borne in mind. The relationships between these facts and events are also open to interpretation by those who attempt to evaluate and synthesise the evidence and draw conclusions about these past events. The nature of this study made historical research mandatory to investigate the past and analyse present policy formulation in the light of these findings. The majority of these data were obtained from references in historical books and articles.

Sources of data in historical research may be classified into two main groups:

- 1 primary sources - which are the 'life-blood' of the historian, the original or first hand account of the event or experience, and
- 2 secondary sources - these are accounts that are at least once removed from the event, and those that do not bear a direct physical relationship to the event being studied. They are made up of data that cannot be described as original but which may be used in the absence of, or to supplement, primary data

(Weirsmas, 1986, p.220).

Working in the field of historical research, much data were gathered from records and documents which then had to be carefully evaluated to attest to their worth for the purposes of this study. To complete this process effectively, the historical criticism of the data was taken in two stages suggested by Cohen and Manion (1989, p.57). Firstly the authenticity of the source was appraised (external criticism) and secondly the data was evaluated for the meaning, accuracy and trustworthiness of the content of the document (internal criticism). This then produced a body of evidence that could be accepted as trustworthy and could then be a valid basis for the interpretation of a hypothesis. This was particularly relevant when dealing with matters of policy to determine continuity in expressions of intent. Tracing issues and concerns through various sources over time was a very useful strategy which tended to render the intent of governments or departments more visible.

## **Interview**

The interview as a research technique is normally considered one of a range of survey methods in social research and as such is considered 'non-experimental'. This survey research may take the form of a status study or include the interrelationships of sociological or psychological variables (Weirsmas, 1986, p.177).

The interview, while varying in presentation (depending on individual, group or large samples of respondents) and purpose (education, analysis, promotion, selection, testing or data gathering) share one common denominator - the transaction that takes place between seeking information on the part of one, and supplying information on the part of the other (Tuckman, 1972, p.68).

As a distinctive research technique, interview is unusual since it involves the gathering of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals and provides further flexibility in that the interviewer can pursue the responses with the interviewee and ask for an elaboration or redefinition of the response if it appears incomplete or ambiguous. The response may also reveal factors or feelings that the interviewer may choose to pursue or probe, for elaboration, justification or qualification, thus adding to the quality and quantity of the data collected.

Interviews with a number of personnel who were involved with the policy for the education of gifted and talented children in several different ways, were conducted only in relation to the last two chronological chapters - from 1950 onwards. Therefore this study makes no claim regarding the representativeness of the interviewees. There is sometimes a discrepancy in intent and affect in policy formulation and the interviews were conducted to give a human voice to the policy processes of the time. Interviews were also conducted because they are a major source of valuable primary data, which were unavailable for the other historical Chapter from 1788 to 1950.

Interviews were conducted between May 1990 and November 1990 with the following with the number of interviewees indicated in parenthesis:

1. Executives of the NSW Department of Education who were closely involved with the formation and formulation of the policy in 1983; (7)
2. Teachers and ex-teachers of OC (Opportunity) classes; (6)

3. School executives who were in schools at the time of the implementation of the policy; (8)
4. Academics associated with gifted education in Australia; (4)
5. Authors who write in the area of gifted education (4)

Each of the interviews was conducted on an informal basis in various locations in three major cities in Australia, and were semistructured in nature. In the semistructured interview, certain information is desired from all the respondents. This type of interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined beforehand. This allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging viewpoint of the respondent.

The Departmental Officers, one now retired, were interviewed in Sydney as were teachers and ex-teachers of Opportunity Classes. Academics, working and researching in the field of education for gifted and talented children, were interviewed in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Wagga Wagga. The interviews consisted of semistructured questions to make allowances for the differing expertise of the interviewees. The answers to the questions therefore, acted only as a guide for the researcher in the interpretation of the data. While the interviews were taped, there was little attempt to triangulate the data as the interview was in itself triangulation for the primary and secondary sources of data.

The interviews were analysed in much the same way as the written documentation. Portelli (1981, p.101) discusses the similarities of both oral and written sources in relation to historical data:

There is always a greater or lesser lapse of time between the event and the written record...But what is written is first experienced or seen, and is subject to distortions even before it is set down on paper. Therefore the reservations applying to oral sources ought to be extended to written material as well.

In this study the researcher, while employing strategies to ensure accuracy and avoid bias, is poignantly aware that differing views surrounded the subject of education for gifted and talented children, and attempted to allow for the possibility of conflicts among different value positions. The reality can not be viewed as single and convergent, but rather as multiple and divergent (Guba and Lincoln, 1985).

The strictly quantitative researcher typically employs experimental or correlational designs to reduce error or bias, and remove any other factor that keeps one from clearly perceiving the social facts. The ideal quantitative researcher is 'detached to avoid bias' (Firestone, 1989, p.18). This study, the greater part of which is historical, is therefore of a qualitative nature.

Researchers, whether they be sociologists, policy analysts, ethnographers, anthropologists, linguists or psychologists, all possess their own set of biases. Hill and Kerber (1967, p.71) suggest that personal traits of the investigator, such as interest, motivation, historical curiosity and educational background for the interpretation of historical facts, tend to influence the selection of the problem to some extent. Evaluation and formulation of a problem associated with historical research often involve the personality of the researcher to a greater extent than in other basic types of research. The biases of this researcher are a long history of association with the Department of Education, and therefore an intimate working knowledge of the system, and a deep concern for the lack of provision for the education of gifted and talented children in State schools in NSW. Throughout the study, international and

national trends and events are referred to but only those which this author perceived to be relevant to this study. (A more comprehensive account is included in the Appendix). The author acknowledges that other events and data exist, but it is not the aim of this study to present a complete historical account of this subject.

The presentation is in chronological order to allow the reader to consider each historical event in light of preceding events.

## CHAPTER FOUR .

### ELITISM - 1788 - 1949

*I met a variously articulated fear that special attention to the gifted represents a form of elitism...there was an anxiety lest singling these children out in any way might lead them to view themselves as better than the rest*  
Goldberg, 1981, p.8.

#### The Beginnings to 1913.

When Governor Arthur Phillip established the first settlement at Botany Bay in 1788, there were thirty six children, eight of whom were between the ages of six and twelve. By 1798, this number had increased to five hundred and twenty six, thus establishing very early, the need to introduce some form of schooling (Statistical Returns, 1839-1863) There was also the religious motive, for the inculcation of religious beliefs was considered to be of major importance for lower class children. The obedience to authority, a very central element in religious instruction, was expected to assist greatly in the discipline of the colony and assist in the reshaping of what was perceived to be a 'criminal and uncivilised population' (Wilkins, 1865, p.25).

If any hopes are to be formed of any reformation being affected in this colony ... no steps can be better adopted or pursued than due attention be paid to instruction and morals.

Johnson to Secretary of SPG, 1794.

Education in NSW was formalised with the introduction of the State system in 1848. Free, compulsory, secular education was 'created' in 1880, but the 'free' clause was not enforced until 1906, and the 'compulsory' clause not until 1916.. The 'free compulsory and secular' acts tended to be more symbolic than factual almost up to the 1920s, a good example, perhaps of the difference between policy formulation and policy practice.



The State system functioned under the name of the National Education System. Parallel to this State system, the Church system and the independent system, also flourished. All three systems of education promoted basic competencies with 'fair average quality not denoted by extremes of excellence or depression' (Barcan 1988 p67), with very little change from the strictly controlled curriculum and organisation of the early settlement era. The convict character, so characteristic of the early settlement days, dictated stringent requirements to those who made the laws. The Military and the Church became partners in satisfying the 'sudden unforeseen demand for education' which then could be used as a tool for social reform (Cleverly, 1971, p.13).

Primary education in colonial times was founded on the basis that uniformity and conformity in education were desirable. Schools were controlled by very strict limitations on curriculum and organisation, with minimum requirements in English, Mathematics and History set for each grade, in a lockstep progression (Cleverly, 1971, p.15). Teachers were trained to teach to these grade requirements and the benchmark of success was if the children having learnt by rote, could recite basic information in order to complete the prerequisites thus proving that they were ready to progress to the next step (Grimshaw, 1985, p.28). Parents themselves had had little or no education before being transported, and there were no facilities to improve this situation in the new colonial state (Cleverly, 1971, p.34). The common expectation was that the children from working class families were 'not very bright' and the implication was therefore that gifted and talented children did not exist in government schools (Braggett, 1884, p.89).

Inspectors were appointed with great care by the Department of Education to police schools so that no teacher could demonstrate unwanted independence and deviate from the set curriculum. Teachers were systematically discouraged from becoming

divergent thinkers and therefore, rarely demonstrated such thinking in their teaching. As a consequence, their expectation was that it would never be explicated in their pupils. Teacher power was non-existent, so these actions and practices contributed to the continuation of elitism. 'Decisions of what to teach and the sequence of instruction were too important to be left to teachers' (Barcan, 1988, p.78).

In the absence of any formal training institution, teachers were trained in the schools under a Master Teacher who ensured the enculturation of those ideals considered to be of importance. There was, as mentioned above, considerable emphasis on moral education, and the development of a population strong in integrity and honour.

As is evidenced continually in this thesis, practices became policy in the absence of any formal policy as educators attempted to be effective in the society where the powerbrokers were the State, the Church and the military and the overlap between the three constituted a force far too powerful for any convict or working class influence to be effective.

Several members of the ruling class, holding positions of power and/or wealth, characterised early education in NSW. One of these powerful 'stakeholders' was William Wilkins, whose decisions in relation to educational policy for giftedness were detrimentally far-reaching although his stated intention was the opposite. Wilkins' philosophical stance was very strong indeed, as he was adamant that all children's growth followed the same path, reached the same stage at about the same time, and consequently all children were able to be taught in the same way (Barcan, 1988).

There were two training schools in Sydney at this time - Fort Street Training School 1850 - 1906 and Hurlestone Training College for Women 1882 - 1906. Both of these schools had various curriculum adaptations and were highly academic in nature. Entry to them was highly selective and only a few elite students gained entry. Wilkins took up his position as Master of the Fort Street Training School, after arriving from England in 1851, and very quickly became the most prominent figure in the National Education system. In 1854 he was appointed as Inspector and Superintendent of the National Schools (later to be referred to as Department of Education ) after having a Member of the Parliament comment in the Legislative Assembly that 'a more competent person in every respect could not be found among teachers in the schools either in England or Ireland'. With this recommendation Wilkins developed a firm friendship with Sir Henry Parkes, the emerging democratic politician of the time. Wilkins gained access to Parkes' newspaper *The Empire* as a vehicle for public support which served to confirm Wilkin's position of power. Wilkins speedily reorganised the Model School, grouping the pupils into classes according to sex, and age. There was fixed rhetorical justification for this philosophical stand when Wilkins argued that the faculties of the mind developed in the same fixed logical order in every case and that stressing the similarities of children was the most appropriate teaching philosophy.

In 1886, Wilkins published *The Principles that Underlie the Act of Teaching* which was to become the mandatory text for his pupil - teacher training system. He presented five axiomatic propositions:

- 1) The faculties are essentially the same in all normally constituted minds.
- 2) These faculties develop in a fixed order.
- 3) The like faculties unfold themselves at about the same age in all children.

- 4) Nevertheless, there are so many slight variations in each of these points among children that each pupil requires to be studied individually.
- 5) Similar methods of teaching are suitable to all children in the same stage of development.

Barcan, 1988, p.174

Wilkins attempted to determine that each child remain an individual by including point 4) above, but there was so much emphasis on similarities and fixed progression in the other four points, that this reference to individuality was ignored.

It was a tidy arrangement for administrators. It also served to reconfirm the powerlessness of teachers to effect any recognisable change in education as standards were specified in terms of minimum attainment for all. Similarities were stressed, individual differences were not acknowledged and variations from normal behaviour were regarded as deviations to be corrected or eliminated at all costs. This practice became policy by default, with no consideration given to the existence of, or identification of, giftedness.

The rote learning inherent in this method of teaching is totally inappropriate for gifted and talented children (Gross, 1990; Start, 1990). Because gifted students have less need to memorise facts they find this form of learning boring and use different, more insightful methods for the solution of problems (Feldhusen, 1989). Not only would they not have received commendation for having insight, they would probably have been made to repeat their work using a more routine method.

For several generations after the colony was established, the social strata of NSW, while still very convict in mentality, attempted quite unsuccessfully to model itself on the English society of its origins (Grimshaw, 1985). Similar to practices in England, children of the wealthy were usually educated in the home and tutors, many brought

from Great Britain, were retained specifically for this purpose. Children from these upper class families rarely, if ever, attended schools, either government or non government, and those who demonstrated any form of giftedness usually were sent to England to complete their education. The emerging urban 'middle class' was too young and therefore too weak to organise itself into an effective pressure group, and therefore its children remained at a disadvantage. The absence of a strong rural middle class produced the same disadvantaged situation for country children (Barcan, 1988). This absence only served to reinforce the continuing powerlessness of the lower class and the continuing power of elitism.

Braggett (1985) sums up:

Uniformity and conformity in education were desirable. Courses of instruction were imposed on teachers by a centralised administration. Standards were specified in terms of achievements for all pupils to reach. Similarities were highly significant while individual differences were regarded as unimportant. One teaching method was suitable for the whole class(group).

(Braggett, 1985, p146).

Wilkin's very powerful influence was maintained on State Education until the end of the nineteenth century when the work of the German philosopher and psychologist Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776 - 1841) rose to popularity. Herbart's proponents wished to lift to prominence the moral and social aspects of education, making the development of sound character the central purpose. The implication of this curriculum was that Literature, History and other studies which were related to man and his society, in which highly desirable characteristics and values could be inculcated, were to receive the utmost prominence. In descending order the status of Science, Latin, Greek and Mathematics were proportionately reduced (Barcan, 1988).

This followed very closely on Wilkins' theory of prerequisite knowledge being mandatory for future development. Neo-Herbartian theory argued that the processes of

mental growth in each child recapitulated the stages of intellectual development of the human race throughout history. Its major attributes were: a new emphasis on the moral aim of education; an emphasis on the importance of literature, history and science; the principle that subject matter should be organised on the recapitulation theory; an assertion of the psychology of associationism; the doctrine of interest; and (as listed below) the 'five formal steps of lesson procedure'(Curtis and Boulton, 1958, p.358). Some of these major attributes of Neo-Herbartian theory were applied to teacher training and came to be known as the 'five formal steps'. These were inflexibly applied by classroom teachers in a rigid lock step method:

- 1) Preparation (child's mind prepared by recalling appropriate ideas to which new material can be related)
- 2) Presentation (of new material)
- 3) Association (connections made, comparisons formed differences shown);
- 4) Generalisation or abstraction (individual cases considered leading to formulation of new principles)
- 5) Application (general principles applied to specific examples).

Barcan, 1988, p.173

A child would take a 'microscopic journey' discovering scientific truths step by step. Gifted children, whose learning is quite divergent from the lock-step process, often possess pre-requisite knowledge much earlier than their peers. Already in control of the knowledge and skills being taught, gifted children were often forced to sit, bored, frustrated and powerless in chronological age-based groups in classrooms.

The disadvantage of this lock step method for gifted children was that it was regarded by most teachers of the times as the maximum requirement. Teachers strove to ensure every child achieved these levels. Gifted children easily met these requirements and

teachers, satisfied that their objectives had been achieved, made no provision for extension or enrichment. It was, however, an improvement on the previously established teaching methods which emphasised silent reading, reading aloud, memorising and repetition (Barcan, 1988; Braggett, 1985). Even so, there was no thought given to the fact that children could possibly accelerate through the stages or be involved in any enrichment tasks. Segregation of children existed only for the elite who continued to send their children to England for their schooling.

In the absence of any formal policy, progressive teachers extended individual pupils in much the same manner as they do today. These teachers did not possess any power and therefore were unable to initiate or formalise any educational change. So Barcan's description of education of this period, 'fair average quality not demoted by extremes of excellence or depression' is never more appropriate than in the case of exceptional children in general and, more specifically, in the case of the gifted and talented.

Policies of this time dictated that children fit the norm. Any deviation in behaviour was to be regarded with concern, and rigorous attempts at correcting such behaviour should result. Caning, isolation, lines, being forced to wear labels pinned to their clothing, and extensive cleaning of school property were typical of the harsh nature of punishments meted out to students (Snow, 1989). Current thinking dictated that physically disabled and learning disabled children were regarded as a source of embarrassment to families and therefore remained invisible to society. Because of insignificant medical attention many died at an early age, while those who survived were institutionalised for life or remained sheltered and hidden by the family. No facilities had to be made available and there was no compulsion to cater for their needs. Exceptional children, (both disabled and gifted) their teachers and their parents were powerless to bring about change.

Gifted and talented children were also viewed as 'non-existent' in government schools. The elite or ruling class, (mainly the Church and the Military) were mostly of the opinion that the lower class (consituted of convict lineage and working class) were incapable of producing gifted and talented children, but, in any case, the elite class had no inclination to encourage such children who might eventually prove a threat to their pre-eminence. The elite catered for their own children and imposed rules and sanctions which precluded any attempt to acknowledge or identify gifted and talented children from the lower class.

Aberrant behaviour was simply attributed to the common 'basic evil' theory and it was never considered that it might be due to the fact that the children could be atypical i.e. learning disabled or gifted or talented. The elite class's prime purpose, therefore, for the education of the lower class was the inculcation of religious belief in the children to constitute 'good moral men and women of the colony' (Cleverley, 1971, p.12).

The lack of recognition of any concept of gifted and talented children in the public schools meant that no policy formation or formulation ever occurred. Non-recognition of gifted and talented children became the policy by default.

### **The Campaign for Educational Reform.**

The Education Act of 1880, and its ensuing implementation, heralded the onset of major changes to education in NSW. Inherent in the Act was the patently clear attempt by the State to disempower religion and increase its own monopoly in Education with the introduction of 'compulsory schooling'. The State declared that its intentions were to remove the child from the 'careless unnatural parent' and provide a 'fair decent primary education' for all, but the mandate of compulsion was applied only to State schools (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1880).



With Federation in 1901, the States agreed to a different allocation of their former powers. Education was one of the portfolios that remained with the States because it was agreed that the educational issues of the time could more effectively be addressed at the State level. Criticisms of educational practices echoed in the press and, supported by public agitation, were levelled by the prominent educationist Francis Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University.

Teaching is too mechanical and stereotyped, teachers are not properly trained or educated, the curriculum is overcrowded, the examination system oppressive, the opportunities for higher education too restricted and the standards of students embarking on university studies is too low.

Anderson, 1901.

Public concern heightened over the recent unprecedented spread of the public examinations and the new Primary School Syllabus which had been issued in June 1904 (Sydney Morning Herald, 1904). This new syllabus, the first in NSW, replaced the Standards of Proficiency and placed increased emphasis on the humanities such as English, History and Human Geography, as well as on practical subjects related to the physical world such as Manual Work and Nature Study (Barcan, 1988, p.183).

Provision for gifted and talented children received little or no attention in this period when society was more concerned about the upgrading of basic standards for the average child in school. The situation was also exacerbated by the growing number of what Ramsland (1986, p.34) refers to as the 'neglected and destitute children', related to the increasing number of family breakdowns. The Depression of the 1840's, the departure of many men to the goldfields, and unemployment, had all added to family disunity. and as a result the number of neglected and delinquent children had increased

proportionately (Barcan, 1988). This problem had been somewhat addressed by the opening of the Orphan Schools by both the Churches and the State for the homeless and neglected children who were frequently found living in the streets (Report of the Minister, 1849).

Both Church and State continually advocated that every child should receive a 'basic education' and the question of resources quickly reached the political agenda. In a young expanding country of the geographic proportions of Australia, human and material resources were already stretched very thinly. Staffing of the Orphan Schools threatened to stretch even further these limited resources. Many schools were grossly underequipped, and there was little emphasis on meeting the individual needs of children who were deemed special or different (Grimshaw, 1985).

By 1904 the stage was set for general reform. Universities, concerned about what they saw as falling standards of their University entrants, were applying pressure to Departmental administrators. The community of parents, as well as vested interests of a commercial and industrial nature, gave momentum to the reform movement as the new democratic political movement also gathered momentum. These groups called for reforms, which, with other selected educational practices, were an attempt to raise educational standards (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1939).

A powerful stakeholder in this reform was Inspector Peter Board, appointed, at the age of forty six, to the position of Director of Education. He retained this position from 1905 to 1922. Board had come through the ranks of teaching being a Headmaster by the age of twenty six. He joined the first group of evening students at Sydney University, graduating with his M.A. in record time. His first action as Director General was the reissue of the 1904 Primary School Syllabus, with its abolition of external examinations held by inspectors.

One of the major thrusts of this syllabus, which quite incidentally jeopardised the progress of the gifted and talented child, was the reorganisation of the primary school. Quarterly and half-yearly promotion, a standard practice to this time, was abandoned. The significance of this was that a child would now spend one year in every grade, irrespective of ability and that each primary class in large primary schools would have its own classroom. This introduction of annual promotions for students facilitated administration, but it also strengthened the conviction that all children were similar and therefore each should progress at a rate identical to his/her chronological age. Because of this strongly held conviction of similarity of children, no policy for giftedness was ever countenanced.

At the turn of the century, economic revival, social change and new developments in educational theory overseas had combined to produce an interest in educational reform (Barcan, 1988). There was now a strong belief that universal literacy, and education for citizenship would produce political improvement and diminish crime, and that the diffusion of knowledge would produce a better society (Inglis, 1977, p.50). Mounting pressure from the educationists in Universities, Technical Colleges and State schools, was heralding the formation of vocal interest groups of parents and employers. Tenuous links were established between primary, secondary and tertiary education and some attempts were made to provide, in both city and country, a similar standard of primary, secondary and technical education (Sydney Morning Herald, 1916).

The 1880 Public Instruction Act had, as mentioned before, made 'schooling' compulsory. It also increased access to high school education, but only the ambitious and rich parents took advantage of the offer. In the view of the majority of parents and children, high schools were dominated by the pressures of the examination set by The

University of Sydney, and were generally 'too far removed from the predominantly vocational interests of the general population' (Whiteman, 1973, p.3).

Between 1911 and 1950, little attempt was made for any provision for gifted and talented children in NSW and no policy was formulated that recognised or catered for giftedness. Education was still viewed as an 'educational ladder' stretching from infants school through primary and high schools to the University, Teachers Colleges and Technical Colleges. There were three external examinations, one at the end of primary school, the second midway through secondary school, and the third at the end of secondary school, success at which offered access to higher education (Education Gazette, 1946). This system did seem to condone the selection of the 'intellectual elite' since selection was made on academic merit rather than social or financial performance (Barcan, 1988). The 'upper class' made the assumption that its children were more educable than those of convict lineage, and therefore no specific label was needed or required (Cleverly, 1971).

### **The Impact of the 1914 - 1918 War.**

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, it is not only internal decisions which effect changes in policy. Events that occur outside a specific area or field can affect policies within that field and can have far reaching unforeseen effects. For example, it would have to be said that education in NSW suffered badly because of World War I.

The first noticeable effect was the closing of schools due to the shortage of teachers as a result of enlistment procedures. Class sizes also increased as seven hundred and fifty five state school teachers (nearly 10%) had enlisted in the armed forces by 1918 (Barcan, 1988). In addition there were constraints upon the economy from the general war effort resulting in unemployment and hardship. This hardship was also reflected in teacher unrest as inflation reduced the value of their salaries. This in turn led to a

further decline in teacher intake and a drift away from teaching to more lucrative professions. A shortage of resources, both human and material, led to a severe teacher shortage and a decline in the quality of teaching (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1918). Outstanding academic achievement was not a high priority within families whose energies were concentrated on daily basic needs.

When the powerful Peter Board retired, S. H. Smith became Director of Education, a position he held from 1922 to 1930. Smith immediately took steps to 'modify the liberal approach taken to primary education by Board (Braggett, 1988, p.206) with a concentrated swing towards 'back to basics' incorporating renewed emphasis on writing and grammar, and no recognition of individual differences in children. This was in line with public demand for a 'good education' and was administratively economical with the limited resources and manpower available in immediate postwar Australia (Carmichael, 1985).

Another prominent stakeholder entered the educational arena in 1927, when the former leader of the Country Party, D. H. Drummond, was appointed as the new Minister for Education. He was appalled at the physical conditions of the schools and the quality of educational standards. His first report detailed some of the conditions under which teachers worked:

1,451 classes comprising 38,741 children were improperly housed in weathersheds, corridors and makeshift buildings and accommodation in the secondary departments over the previous decade had not kept pace with enrolments. Underqualified, poorly paid teachers in often deplorable working conditions, struggling with teaching 'basics' had little knowledge or skill to identify and develop talents in gifted children.

(Barcan, 1988, p.208)

There were however, several prominent changes in educational theory in the late 1930s which profoundly influenced the direction of education in the following years. One of these, the growing interest in the measurement in education, included debate on the subject of intelligence testing. The Neo-Herbartian psychology, while still retaining some degree of popularity, showed signs of weakening as other psychological theories, such as 'progressive education', were advanced from the United States of America. These advocated that 'all subjects had equal status and value for individual pupils' (Barcan, 1962, p.243). The economy, reviving after the Depression years, was making some form of educational improvement possible. The influence from overseas was not only in the area of research, but also in the ideological arena with the advancement of fascist and communist totalitarianism.

This period is extremely significant in NSW's history for the education of gifted and talented children. For the first time the Department of Education acknowledged the existence of gifted and talented children in State schools and that some provision was required for them.

Influenced by the enthusiasm of the then Minister of Education, C R McRae (later to become Professor of Education at Sydney University), and Harold S. Wyndham (later to become one of the most prominent Director Generals of Education in NSW), Mr G Thomas (then Director General) sanctioned the commencement of an experiment with special classes for academically accelerated children in Sydney in 1931. Thomas had been heavily influenced by the Victorian experiment which had been commenced as a result of a report by K Cunningham, a postgraduate student, who had recently returned from studying at Columbia University. Wyndham's own recent American experience of his travelling scholarship from the New South Wales Teachers' Federation, had enabled him to visit classes for talented and gifted students, observing their policies

and programs. He had witnessed a growing trend to stream classes and group children according to ability.

In 1931, Wyndham conducted a study of grouping methods in Sydney schools. Results showed that most classes were composed of children of similar chronological ages and attainments. IQ tests were being administered but were not used as any indication for grouping of students into classes. What concerned Wyndham even more was the fact that students with I.Qs greater than 111, were not only underachieving but there was no provision for teaching, guidance and supervision adequate for their exceptional needs. 'These children differ so markedly in unalterable innate ability that they need special education' (Wyndham, 1932). He believed in the constancy of IQs and the importance of mental ages in grouping students of similar intellectual ability. His philosophy met with opposition in the stringent society of NSW State education.

While the presence of the bright child in a class may act as a leaven for the mediocre lump, there is the constant risk that any benefit which the class may derive is gained at the expense of the bright child himself. Placed in a group where his capacity is not adequately challenged, the bright child is in danger of developing habits of laziness and irresponsibility which are an enormous moral and social price to pay for a doubtful benefit to his less able contemporaries

(Wyndham, 1932, p.101)

Consequently, with the support of the then Minister of Education, Wyndham recommended the establishment of special classes for academically accelerated students, based on enrichment rather than acceleration techniques. Thus in 1932, the first 'opportunity classes' (OC) were established at Erskinville and Woollahra Public Schools (Braggett, 1989).

McRae and Wyndham selected the forty most promising boys and the forty most promising girls of class 5 standard. Selection was based on the estimates of the

headmasters and headmistresses concerned and the results of an oral group test of general ability ( McRae, 1931).

The classes commenced in 1932 at Erskinville and Woollahra Public Schools, with four special sixth classes, two classes of boys and two classes of girls, The original establishment was meant to be three special fifth classes for boys and three for girls, with a view to extending to years 5 and 6 the following year. These classes were increased in 1933 to twelve groups including classes at Sydney Boys' High School and Sydney Girls' High School. From 1933, the children were selected at the end of year 4, so that they could spend two consecutive years in the special primary classes, a practice still employed today.

There was a small group of educators (responding perhaps to pressure from parents of OC children) interested in gifted children and OC classes grew very slowly to a maximum of 42 in 1968. As in the previous years , there was no formal policy written. Even though there was tokenistic support of OC classes by the Department of Education this could perhaps be attributed to strong support mounted by parent lobby groups (Burnswood,1981).

In announcing the establishment of the 'experimental classes' the Minister in an interview with the Sydney Morning Herald stated:

It is remarkable that not withstanding the large expenditure incurred by the Department of Education on the training of delinquent children, children of low mentality and physically handicapped children, the child of superior ability has been neglected. If in the best interests of the State and the individual one class of child merits special consideration, it is probably the child of superior ability.



In 1936, special fifth classes opened at Artarmon Primary School, with two more at Hurstville and Summer Hill in 1937. Eastwood commenced OC classes in 1941, Fort Street in 1943, Orange Grove in 1944, Kensington in 1945, Berala in 1951, Enfield and West Ryde in 1952, and Chatswood in 1954. (Macdonald et al 1956 p156) These classes came to be known as OC Classes (Opportunity Classes) and experienced slow growth until 1968 when they numbered forty two, including two at Newcastle and two at Wollongong (McRae, 1931).

The Official Year Books of the Department of Education between 1941 and 1946 list enrolments of one thousand and fifty pupils distributed over thirty classes in nine different metropolitan centres. In the early years, the Department of Education supported the structure of the new classes with some selective staffing, but, in later years, this was withdrawn and teachers of OC classes were appointed from general staffing of the school, on a voluntary basis or allocation by the Principal (Education, 1965).

Jan Burnswood (1981), in her history of Erskineville Public School, notes that the establishment of these special classes evoked a strong negative response on the part of the regular teachers in the school. In 1936, while regular class sizes ranged from forty two to seventy six, total enrolment in the boys' special fifth was thirty seven and in the special sixth, thirty four. Even though the OC classes were regarded as 'experimental' and 'special' (McRae, 1931, p.16) they were housed in the grounds of local public schools. Because of this difference, educational 'extras' were allocated to the OC classes, which were regarded by the mainstream classes as discriminatory. For example, the two boys classes at Erskineville occupied three adjoining rooms, with one central room serving as a library/reading area and a place for group projects. The Special Class' Parents' Association, formed in 1934, had purchased a gramophone,

records, bookcases and tools. They also persuaded the Department of Education to install electric lights and a power point. In the meantime, a mainstream class was housed in an enclosed weather shed which the School Medical Service doctor noted was 'far too cold in winter especially when most of the boys were inadequately dressed' (Burnswood, 1934, p.18).

Another form of criticism came with the preferential treatment of the students in relation to excursions. At this point of time, excursions, as we now know them in schools, were virtually non-existent. But both Jessica Auld, (Headmistress at Woollahra) and Gordon Dodd (classroom teacher) were given permission to take the students of the special classes to inspect pictures and exhibits at Sydney Teachers' College and to visit Parliament House, the Law Court and the Glass Works (Burnswood, 1934). B C Harkness, the Chief Inspector of the time, granted permission with a very strong warning that 'this was not to form a precedent' (Cunningham and Pratt, 1939, p.238).

These classes did not expand with consensus or acclaimed approval. When Wyndham, a strong supporter of OC classes, was appointed Research Officer for the Department of Education in 1934, he immediately commenced an intensive research study of the benefits of these classes and their long term effects on the students. This was in answer to the newly elected Minister of Education, David Drummond who, in his former Opposition role, had been the leader of the Country Party. While holding this portfolio Drummond had forecast 'certain economies' which would not be popular to the metropolitan section and had voiced strong criticism of the then Labour Minister and his policies. Drummond, a strong decentralist, held the position of Minister for Education from 1932 to 1940 and saw the OC classes as only advantaging the chosen few in Metropolitan areas. Drummond claimed the OC classes were an unfair allocation of finite resources to a chosen few, and they were highly discriminatory towards children in rural areas (Barcan, 1988).

Being aware that this could foreshadow the closure of the OC classes Wyndham, in his capacity as Research Officer, wrote about his misgivings in the Report of the Minister of Public Instruction in 1935: 'The results so far achieved by these classes have been sufficiently favourable to warrant additional classes being established.'

Again in 1936 Wyndham stated:

Supervision was maintained over the special classes for gifted children. The progress of the children passing from these classes into post-primary spheres of education is being closely observed and interesting and useful records of their performances and abilities are being built up.

Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1936.

In 1936, Wyndham wrote to the Chief Inspector, describing the benefits of these special classes. Wyndham noted that all of these OC students achieved higher results in the Primary Final Examination, but it was never determined if these results could be attributed to the OC opportunity class or to the students' own accelerated academic ability. In fact, no research paper was ever released and in spite of the *Follow-up Study of Gifted Children* mentioned in the 1937 Minister's report, no measurable results were available by the time of publication of the 1938 Minister's report (Radford, 1961, p.67). In his BA(Honours) thesis at Sydney University, Phillip Jones attempted to find the results of this research but discovered Wyndham had become heavily involved in the evacuation of British children at the outbreak of World War 11, and that 'later evidence strongly suggests that the project was never completed' (Jones, 1954, p.39).

To formulate and implement a policy throughout the State would have met with fierce opposition from the then Minister for Education, David Drummond. A strong decentralist, and interventionist, he was very vocal about the discriminatory nature of the OC classes, as geographically they serviced only metropolitan students. Parental

pressure while in existence in the country, was geographically isolated, and many parents overcame this difficulty by enrolling their gifted children in metropolitan or selected boarding schools.

Perhaps if Wyndham had concluded his report, and provided strong statistical evidence of the success of the OC classes, and perhaps if there had been a more equitable allocation of resources to the newly formed classes, then the criticisms of Drummond and the community could have been forcefully refuted. This new structure threatened traditional practices and to many was reminiscent of the elitists once again.

It is interesting to note that in his book Australian Education in the Twentieth Century Cunningham (1972) commented on this entrenched traditionalism he found in education after the war years and as the 1940s approached. 'Subject matter dominated over children's needs, inspection stultified innovation, uniformity of studies was apparent, and there was lack of encouragement or incentive for each school and each teacher to show originality' (Cunningham, 1972 p67) Policies prevented any deviation in learning and originality of thought was regarded as subversive.

As mentioned above, the OC classes did experience strong selected growth for almost twenty years but only in certain metropolitan areas. In the strong wave of egalitarianism in the 70s they were disbanded along with selective high schools in all but two regions of NSW. The other exemption was to Hurlstone Agricultural High School, intended to cater for rural academically accelerated children (Macdonald, 1990).

## **The Depression**

Another 'outside of education' event that had far reaching effects on education policy was The Great Depression in the 1930s. Its most immediate impact on education was financial because education was one of the easiest items to cut in the State budget (Barcan, 1988). This had vast repercussions on the resourcing level of staffing, capital expenditure, and general maintenance. In 1932, the government passed the 'Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act' which led to the retrenchment of two hundred and twenty of the one thousand women teachers between 1932 with some dismissals as late as 1940. Talented, dedicated teachers were dismissed, a great wealth of teacher expertise was dismantled and many pupils were deprived of quality teaching (Barcan, 1988).

The Depression also brought about a severe reduction in the acceptances of offers in Teacher Training institutions and increased enrolments in the later years of high school due to the inability of youth to find employment (Newling, 1928).

Other pressures being brought to bear were the demand for faster access to secondary school with entrance examinations still quite prevalent and the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen years. The major motive for these reforms was not educational but to relieve the pressure of the large number of unemployed resulting from the Depression and to increase the level of 'vocational preparedness' of the workforce.

The education scene remained fairly constant until the outbreak of World War II when patterns similar to that of World War I were evident. Once again teachers enlisted, schools closed and resources became scarce. The centralised education system continued to function with the government rationalizing its diminishing resources to service the state (Grimshaw et al, 1985).

From 1938 to 1949, NSW and Tasmania, instigated a series of educational reforms whose full effect was not significant until well into the 1950s. The central aim of these reforms was to reach adequate standards in basic education motivated by the strong social and economic thrust indicative of the times. The main thrust of these reforms was to place more emphasis on vocational subjects designed to equip the children in the current school population to meet future employment needs in the new growing industrial economy which was destined to take Australia to postwar prosperity (Spaull, 1987). David Drummond (Minister for Education) continually advocated that high quality technical training, implemented by these reforms, would be the saviour of the future economy. He countenanced support for provision of technical-practical-manual courses to run parallel to academic classes.

During the post war recovery years, many teachers and parents found that their previously conservative attitudes were being challenged by a flood of ideologies brought back to Australia by the returning ex-service men. The Australian Council for Educational Research, set up in Melbourne almost a decade before, encouraged a flow of publications that encouraged 'progressive ideas' in education (Sydney Morning Herald, 1936). In 1936, the British Parliament had legislated to raise the school leaving age to fifteen years from the commencement of 1939. In the same year, the Australian Education Council ( comprising the Ministers for Education from every State and Territory ) also recommended a similar practice (Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, 1940). The current high unemployment rate may also have had some influence on this decision, for keeping children at school for another year did have a dramatic, but temporary, effect on the number of unemployed youth.

The two wars had emphasised the fact that Australia could no longer remain isolated from the increasing technology and political philosophies that were being developed in other countries. This new 'progressivism' was one of the key principles underlying the

new Primary School Curriculum with its emphasis on child centred activity and greater freedom of curriculum choice which was released in 1952. To many, this meant a lowering of standards as teachers struggled with the new approaches, new curriculum content, and a new philosophy. While many educators pressed for improved standards, there was a growing interest in cultivating the egalitarian philosophy and attempt to improve education for all children. It was aimed at keeping basics in line with overseas standards, with no thought at all of 'doing better'; just more of 'doing the same' (Barcan, 1988, p.233).

During this time education was again affected by another 'outside' event which once more demonstrated the common belief that all children were the same with no individual needs or differences. Resources, such as staffing and capital, were already stretched to absorb the increase in population as a result of the 'postwar baby boom'. Additional strain was now to be placed on these already scarce resources, to accommodate the influx of post war immigrants from war torn Europe. The new immigration policy, formulated by the Federal Government, impacted dramatically on the education system in NSW, leading to sudden upsurges in enrolments in schools adjacent to the migrant hostels' (assisted housing for new immigrants) (Official Year Book of New South Wales, 1961, p.551). This policy not only led to a rapid increase in the proportion of children in schools who spoke a language other than English, but it exacerbated cultural differences by merging families with differing values, cultures, philosophies and beliefs (Grimshaw, 1985). The Department of Education hastily declared that the policy for these children of migrant families was to be one of assimilation, which, the Department assumed, would be 'natural and speedy'. The Minister for Education in his Annual Report in 1948 stated: 'It is not the policy of this Department to segregate migrant children, and generally speaking, they will be absorbed in the normal public schools' (p16). It was believed that the migrant children, in school situations similar to

gifted children, would relate without difficulty to their new age peers and therefore would have no 'special needs' (Johnson and Tyler, 1984, p.90).

In line with the Department's policy of parallel classes, teachers in N. S. W. schools now had in their classrooms, a wide range of academic abilities and in addition, large numbers of children who had a wide range of ability in spoken and written English. Many of these teachers felt they were not adequately prepared or skilled to cater for the needs of these individual children and complained of exhausting and stressful classroom situations (Education, Sept. 1961). They claimed that it was necessary to devote much time and energy to fulfilling minimum departmental requirements, and catering for the needs of individual children in overcrowded classrooms was almost impossible (Sydney Morning Herald, 1963).

In contrast to the provision for the education of gifted and talented children, exceptional disabled children were the object of formal policies. By 1938, all states other than NSW had compulsory attendance for deaf and blind children. It was not until 1944 { The Public Instruction (Blind and Infirm Children) Act } that education was made compulsory for deaf and blind children in NSW but it was not implemented until after World War II. Victoria and South Australia also had compulsory education for learning disabled children in special classes attached to regular schools, rather than special schools (Cunningham, 1939).

In the early forties, NSW Departmental classes for disadvantaged children with special needs were officially formed and the prefix 'Opportunity' was again officially adopted to label these classes. In 1942, one hundred and seventy learning disabled children were placed in 'Opportunity A' classes in four separate schools throughout the metropolitan area. This number had risen to one hundred and eighty eight pupils in 1946. Also in this year there were two hundred and four pupils who were 'normal but



backward because of illness or late enrolment' in 'opportunity B' classes. Class size was restricted to twenty two pupils. In 1948, sixty two pupils were placed in 'opportunity D' classes. These pupils had been diagnosed with a learning disability due to hearing impairment. Class size was restricted to ten pupils (Official Year Books 1941 - 1946). In 1945, the Spastic Centre at Mosman was established for sufferers of infantile cerebral palsy aged between five and twenty five years. Four teachers were provided by the Department of Education to assist with staffing and basic curriculum.

It would be a fair statement of fact that during this time the Department of Education was recognizing the fact that some exceptional children - learning disabled - were an identified, funded and resourced group. Exceptional children - gifted and talented - while identified, did not receive supplementary funding or specialised resources as in the case of special education.

At the end of this period of elitism where the ruling class exercised control and power to maintain their positions, it is interesting to note the rise now of vocal lobby and interest groups who were heralding the beginnings of the pluralistic movement. This new social order labelled 'permissive, pluralistic or corporative' by Barcan (1988, p.264), was characterised by the multiplicity of social and interest groups seeking equality of status. The salaried middle class had by this time become the largest of the social classes, but no single social class was large enough to be able to impose its ideology singlehanded. Thus pluralism, where smaller groups with similar interests could combine to gain strength and power was inevitable.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PLURALISM 1950 - 1980

*'In examining developments which have occurred over the past two decades, I believe responses of school authorities towards special provision for gifted children have already moved through two stages - one of relative complacency and one of rather active experimentation.'*

Mossenson, 1981, p.3

In 1955, R. Freeman Butts, a visiting American dignitary, questioned what he saw in Australia, as the carry over of nineteenth century attitudes towards education, into the twentieth century. This was evident in the form of a system which had been formalised by stressing the similarities, not the differences of children. The rigid educational structures that had existed for over a century, had previously deflected any attempts at change within this system that emphasised uniformity and common standards (Foster, 1987).

Sharp (1980) suggests that formal education functions to reproduce the class relations in society and that central issues in education evolve over time to achieve the hegemony of the ruling class. By establishing hegemony over these issues the ruling or dominant class continue to impose their ideas on the subordinate class. Thus Elitism was so predominant in the first century and a half of formal education in NSW.

Sharp also suggests that 'the traditional academic curriculum favoured by the ruling culture serves to empower the young of the ruling class', and both Foster (1987) and Sharp (1980) agree that some of the youth from the working class will also be coerced into acquiring such knowledge and techniques to enable them to negotiate successfully in the world of the middle class in their adult life. Those who do not wish to remain fixed in their present location in the social structure find a platform to voice their

dissatisfaction, some using more acceptable methods such as interest groups, rallies and explicit literature, while others resort to subterfuge and violence. Elitism, so prevalent for all these years, was beginning to weaken as small groups combined to gain power. The beginnings of Pluralism were becoming evident.

By the mid 1950s, with the continuing international influence, the philosophy underpinning education was again subject to change and more recognition was being given to the individual differences of children. There were many influences impacting on education at this time: visiting educationists, like Freeman Butts, spoke at length on the need for change in education throughout Australia; the influence of immigration; Australia's own increasing awareness that she could no longer remain remote from international influence; and the rise of a strong egalitarian movement. These events led NSW education policy to the next stage (Foster 1987).

### **The Wyndham Era 1952-1968**

Harold Wyndham was appointed Director General in 1952. He was the first Director General since before Peter Board not to progress through the progressive ranks of teacher, principal, inspector and senior administrator. Instead, Wyndham came from a background of research, lecturing, and administration. Wyndham has gone down in the annals of history as the reorganiser of secondary schooling in NSW and being largely responsible for introducing what is now known as the 'comprehensive high school' (Barcan 1988 p241).

Because of his position, his background, and his length of service, Wyndham had a very powerful influence in education policy for that time. Functioning under the nomenclature of The Wyndham Scheme he stated that all children could proceed from primary to secondary without examination, and that all high schools should provide a core of subjects common to all schools. He diversified and broadened the curriculum,

and extended secondary schooling from five to six years, with external examinations at the end of the fourth and the sixth year. This final examination was to be suitable for University matriculation (Report of the Committee Appointed to Survey Secondary Education in New South Wales 1957). The Committee also expressed a strong recommendation that these new high schools were to be co-educational and that all pupils in the local area could have equal access to quality education. This decision heralded the end of the selective academic high school and aroused bitter public controversy (Sydney Morning Herald 6 11 57). It was generally agreed that the comprehensive high school was beneficial to the student in travel time and for purposes of socialisation and it was also acknowledged that it aided community consolidation by 'avoiding socially sensitive selection processes, but it unwittingly handicapped the intellectually gifted child' (Stephens 1960 p42).

... the emergence of the view that secondary education is the education not of a select minority, whatever the basis of selection, either social or intellectual, but of all adolescents, irrespective of their variety of interests, talents and prospects ... Yet ... this ... is only to pose the problem in another and more difficult form. When secondary education was conceived as the education of an elite, the only point that could be at issue ... was the criterion upon which that elite was selected. Organisation, curriculum and method, all flowed largely from that determination. Today the issue is not so simple ... to provide suitable education, not only for the 'average' student, but also, and on the same social and moral grounds, for the adolescent of talent and for the adolescent who is poorly endowed.

(Report of the Committee Appointed to Secondary Education in NSW 1957 p63)

The Wyndham Scheme, while theoretically and philosophically aligned to provision for individual differences, did in practice produce a serious problem for gifted and talented children (Drummond 1978 p82). Because each subject was to be offered at three levels (advanced, credit and ordinary), all classes in a particular subject in each form had to be timetabled simultaneously. This often meant that each teacher had to prepare and teach 28 original lessons each week. In addition to other teaching duties, this

proved to be a very time consuming and demanding task. In the new large comprehensive high schools, where there was some flexibility in staffing, students' differing ability levels could be taken into account when forming classes. But, where student and staff numbers were small, the three levels had to be taught in the one class and, as a result, the majority of teachers taught to the 'average'. Situations similar to this existed in many classrooms, and students of higher and lower ability levels tend to be neglected (Rand-Whitmore and Maker 1985).

On August 7th 1959, media pressure was added to the controversy as the Sydney Morning Herald printed its defence of selective high schools:

'It cannot yet be assumed that the mentally very bright children will achieve just as much in comprehensive schools as they now do in selective ones. The U.S.A. experience suggests the opposite.'

The Sydney Morning Herald continued its attack, and the Department of Education, recognising the mounting public pressure from parents of pupils in the selective high schools, modified its Departmental policy and allowed eleven high schools in Sydney, four in Newcastle and one in Wollongong to retain some degree of selectivity. (Official Year Book of NSW 1960). Allowing these particular schools to remain open, advantaged academically accelerated children who resided in the specific geographical areas of Wollongong, Newcastle and Sydney. But rural gifted and talented children were severely disadvantaged as a result of this decision; so were metropolitan gifted students in the geographical regions in the cities where there was no provision for the academically accelerated (Macdonald 1990).

While some documentation was in existence on selective high schools which catered for secondary students, there was still no official policy which addressed the needs of primary students - only policy by default. OC classes were in existence but there was no official policy on them. Perhaps it was due to the fact that they were operating in

only three regions throughout NSW, that it was considered unnecessary to formulate a state wide policy. In fact, to formulate and implement such a policy throughout the state would have met with fierce opposition from the then Minister for Education, David Drummond. A strong decentralist and interventionist, (Spaull 1987) Drummond was very vocal about the discriminatory nature of the OC classes, as geographically they serviced only metropolitan students.

In spite of these difficulties, there were, according to Braggett (1985 p261) three different strategies in existence making provision for gifted and talented children during this time. Firstly, there were the Opportunity Classes (OC), where gifted and talented children were identified and placed in special classes with some amendments to curriculum organisation and minor adjustments to the teaching staff. There was no qualified staffing of these classes by teachers with expertise in gifted education, only reorganisation on an internal and/or voluntary basis. OC classes existed only in certain geographic areas in the cities, and functioned only within the basic staffing of the school as selective staffing was no longer available. Secondly, principals elected to use streamed classes, graded on ability, to attempt to cater for the wide range of academic abilities. This was in direct contrast to the department's ever strengthening egalitarian directive of parallel classes. No exceptional provision was made and there was no noticeable deviations from the existing rigid curriculum. The third method was attempting to cater for the talented inside the mainstream classroom and within the standardised curriculum. This involved contract work or independent research, but again due to the strong egalitarian educational climate of the day, met with little success. This provision for the academically able student was again regarded as 'giving more' to those who already appeared to be advantaged (Macdonald 1983 p6).

The new social class, the white collar worker emerged, and the pioneering spirit, with its practical utilitarian interests rooted in survival, was fast disappearing. Education, for perhaps the first time in Australian history, was being seriously regarded as instrumental for the social and economic advancement of the individual (Australian 8.9.1959).

During this period, education, according to Barcan (1988 p265) 'underwent a transitional crisis'. Educational change occurred due to general shifts in ideology, morality and social class. 'Crisis in education' became a common catch-cry (Education March 1959). In spite of commonly held belief, the crisis was not financial in nature, for the early fifties were ones of economic prosperity and full employment. The crisis was one 'of aims, of curriculum, of structure, and of standards' (Education March 1959).

Barcan (1988 p184) philosophises of this era: 'The education ladder envisaged by Peter Board at the beginning of the century was now being replaced by an educational conveyor belt.' The protracted secondary school years now were characterised by two major concerns for the education of gifted and talented children. Firstly, the extended schooling led to mammoth problems of overcrowding where, for example, in 1967 42% of the two hundred and seventy four high schools in NSW had enrolments of between one thousand and one thousand two hundred pupils even though they had been originally designed for much smaller numbers (Report of the Minister 1968). This presented mammoth problems for resourcing both in quality and quantity of teaching. Secondly, in these large high school, the individual tended to be lost among the masses. Gifted children found it increasingly difficult to survive as individuals, for the Australian attitude of 'cutting down tall poppies' was gathering strength in the fertile breeding ground of ever expanding school populations (Macdonald 1977). The existence of gifted and talented students was now acknowledged but with derision and

ridicule by peers, press and parents, and both teachers and pupils were powerless to effect any change (Lilianthal 1990).

It was during these years that new training institutions for teachers were constructed: two in country locations, Wollongong and Bathurst, and one in the Sydney metropolitan area. Due to the increased number of graduates, there were many teachers now seeking employment in Primary Schools (Official Year Book of NSW 1963). Trainees entering these colleges, with firm resolve to graduate as primary teachers, were often diverted into 'junior secondary' courses to address the shortage of secondary teachers. These graduates, newly appointed to 'difficult to staff' areas, were vastly inexperienced at coping with children whose first language was one other than English, and the high proportion of discipline problems exacerbated by overcrowded classroom (Johnson and Tyler 1984). Gifted and talented children were still not on the educational agenda as many teachers coped with their own inexperience and falling morale and added to the rising resignation rate (Education December 1968). A new term was also being used to describe this growing multicultural state, a population with growing unemployment and increased financial strain. It had come to be known as the welfare state (Foster 1987).

The new radical leadership of the Teachers' Federation was another strong force for educational change (Drummond p84). These union leaders canvassed in material terms for improved working conditions for their members and called for the Governments, both State and Federal, to increase funding to education (Sydney Morning Herald 5.8.67). There was also developing a growing frankness in the media, and rapid sociological change brought about by the onset of the Cold War which supported the egalitarian ethos. Added to these developments was the continued growth of the welfare state, and all of these continued to place pressure on the Department of Education to reconsider traditional policies. Thus, the 1950s and 60s witnessed not



only a State, but a nationwide scrutiny of secondary education (Foster 1987). State after State critically examined their present ideology and practices and opted to affect changes for the future. In primary education, it also led 'to a distinctive shift away from the educational aim of cultural transmission to that of individual development' (Foster 1987 p153) and opened the flood gates to new curriculum and policy documents in all states. In NSW it resulted in the Aims of Primary and Secondary Education (November 1973), Curriculum for Primary Schools - Languages (1974) and Curriculum for Primary Schools - Social Studies (1975)

While on the surface these documents heralded the introduction of 'guidelines' as opposed to 'syllabi', many saw them as 'cloudy generalisations which provided cliché ridden glimpses of the obvious, and downgraded knowledge' (Sydney Morning Herald quoted in Leader 14.10.1977).

Also strongly characteristic of the strong support given to egalitarianism, was the conferring of equal status to all 'interest groups, all ideologies, and all peoples' (Barcan 1974 p66). In education, this led to the new understanding that all subjects were to be of equal value and equal status, irrespective of the amount of skill or knowledge required to achieve high performance. In some cases, the interpretation was to confer equal status to both teachers and pupils. As a result, high performance in academic subjects was not openly encouraged in state schools, as there was a tendency to divert emphasis away from the cultivation of intellectually talented groups (Birch 76). This emphasis centred around the advancement, through education, of a great range of 'minority groups' such as isolated children, Aboriginies, ethnic groups, the handicapped, and girls (Barcan 1983). Because of their emotive and/or political nature, their demands tended to remain high on the issue attention cycle of the media and the public.

A strong indicator of this movement in education, was the shift in emphasis from teacher centred classrooms to pupil centred classrooms, a movement which many teachers, well trained in the traditional behaviouristic methods of teaching, found very threatening (Lilianthal 1990). Dissatisfaction was mounting and the Teachers' Federation was becoming more militant in its approach to negotiate improved conditions for state school teachers (Federation March 1975). Smaller vocal groups such as State Parent and Citizen. Associations, Independent Teacher Unions, NSW Association for Gifted and Talented, and Special Education Advisory Committees, were also combining their 'voices' in an attempt to become powerful enough to stand against the reigning elitism.

These changes in education placed a great emphasis on the individual differences of children, and resulted in two new documents, the Aims of Primary Education and the Aims of Secondary Education published in 1977 by the NSW Department of Education. These statements acknowledged the vital roles of home and community, and, while serving to support the cause of exceptional children who were mildly, moderately and profoundly intellectually disabled, did not give any special consideration to those children who were mildly, moderately, and profoundly intellectually gifted.

From 1974 onwards new Primary School Syllabi were introduced with a heavy emphasis on processes and skills and less emphasis on content. In addition some primary schools were experimenting with team teaching, open classrooms and other more flexible ways of presenting learning (Cambourne 1986). Some enthusiastic and innovative teachers, adapted these methods with great success and some are in practice in various forms today. With these more relaxed approaches to teaching and learning it could be said that there were greater opportunities for gifted children to work more independently on a contract system or individualised program, and to further their

knowledge and skill about a subject in which they were extremely interested and motivated.

Another interesting side effect opportunity for students gifted in leadership, was the emergence of militant leaders in the senior Secondary School years. The Wyndham six year secondary school plan had given a new and older leadership to the student body. Student councils were formed in quite a number of high schools, and they took issue not only on internal controversies such as uniforms, homework, more money for schools, drugs and discipline (the issue of caning), but also external issues like conscription, nuclear free zones, the Vietnam war, the abortion debate, the newly emerging Women's Liberation Movement and other international issues (Johnson and Tyler 1984). The movement was not an attempt to usurp the authority in schools, but rather a rejection of the authority with its rigidity and inflexibility, and its lack of relevance to changing social standards. Many schools produced newspapers, so gifted writers were able to demonstrate exceedingly high performance in a real life situation, using real life skills (Braggett 1990). At the same time the Department continued its egalitarian push towards comprehensive, co-educational six year high schools throughout NSW, and between 1973 and 1978, closed four selective high schools in Newcastle and two in Sydney. Wollongong High School was also converted from a selective to a comprehensive High School between 1978 and 1984 (Barcan 1988).

Another powerful stakeholder in education emerged in December 1972 in Canberra when the Labour Party came to power lead by E. G. Whitlam. In his election speech he stated:

The most rapidly growing sector of public spending under a Labour Government will be education. Education should be the great instrument for the promotion of equality.

(Matthews et al 1975 p8).

These moves were to change the role of the state in education not only for the seventies but for decades to follow (Spaull 1987). True to his word, Whitlam ensured that Commonwealth funds flowed quickly into State education, a matter causing great friction as the monies flowed to minority groups in particular and, in the case of grants from the Innovations Commission, directly to schools (NSW Official Year Book 1973). Another form of intervention was the Disadvantaged Schools Program, which was administered by another Federal body, the Australian Schools Commission. These Commonwealth funds were funnelled through the State Government to the Department of Education and were allocated to specially targetted schools on the basis of their submission for the funds. One stipulation was that the funding was to be provided for 'labelled disadvantaged children' but was not to be allocated with any provision for gifted and talented children (D S P. Regional Conference Participants Notes 1987).

In October 1974, the chairperson of the Committee on Specific Learning Disabilities, Race Matthews, discussed the inadequacy of school leavers in basic skills. This committee requested the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to conduct an Australia wide survey into literacy and specific to learning problems across Australia. In addition, Commonwealth pressure was also being exerted. Sir John Carrick, the Commonwealth Minister for education, was seeking statistics on educational standards which, to his consternation, could not be provided (Spaull 1987). Carrick was convinced that national monitoring of standards was essential. In October 1974 all 10 and 14 year olds were tested in basic literacy and numeracy and revealed 'Australia's Educational Scandal' (Bulletin May 1976). Interestingly enough, over 70% of primary teachers and 65% of secondary teachers considered 'developing basic skills of reading, writing and maths to be essential.' (Nay 1976 p14) and Dr John Vaughan, Director General of Education, placated parents by informing them that 'in this country if you can read at about age 10 or 12 level, you can cope with all the newspapers and weekly magazines that are produced.' Once again parents were

coerced into believing that these lower abilities of performance were acceptable, and remained powerless by being kept in ignorance (Barcan 1983).

Principals and teachers now had increased flexibility in curriculum matters and teaching methods as the new State Aims of Education were implemented into schools. Great increases in in-service funding from the Commonwealth Government, allowed teachers release from schools to attend courses, engage in discussions, and attend seminars and conferences (Report of the Minister of Education 1976 p19). Many of these teachers, gifted and talented themselves, utilised every opportunity to attend to individual differences in pupils, but burgeoning class sizes, increased enrolments, compulsory unionism, increased concern over pupil discipline, and the increasing number of students who spoke English only as a second language, were reducing, still further, a teacher's very limited time and resources (Report of the Teachers Association of Victoria 1973).

In 1981 and 1985, two reports were written highlighting the difficulties of these 'labelled, disadvantaged students' and making strong recommendations for provision for them. In 1981, Deschamp, Robson and Nash, from the Research Branch of the Education Department of Western Australia, wrote in their report:

Many exceptionally able children manage to overcome social and economic disadvantage; however many others do not. It is important that children from such backgrounds are not doubly disadvantaged by schooling which produces expectations of achievement based on social origin.

(Descharp, Robson and Nash, 1981 p1).

Similarly Braggett, in his report for the Schools Commission in Canberra in 1985, pointed out:

The term 'disadvantaged group' ... is used by Australian educationalists to include Aboriginies, children from non-

English speaking backgrounds, children with disabilities, economically deprived children, isolated children and girls. ... there are proportionately as many gifted children among these groups as there are in the wider population.

(Braggett, 1985, p1543)

With the move towards school based curriculum (as opposed to centralised curriculum) as a result of the new school based approach to education, teachers were exercising greater control over local curriculum content and procedures. Many of them, coping with the other previously mentioned pressures in the school community, interpreted this freedom as a relaxation of the standard of content to be taught. Severe problems also arose from the fact that these teachers were not trained to teach the skills and processes students now required. Often children became bored with the demands being made upon them, and this period was clearly marked by a distinct rise in behaviour problems (Schools Commission, Report for the Triennium 1979 - 81). The response to this type of problem, tended to be met by an authoritative stand from the bureaucracy who wished to apply more stringent methods of control over both teachers and students (Barcan 1988).

Meanwhile, the continuing, confusing and changing nature of the selectivity debate, reflected a degree of community and industrial pressure which was still calling for the abolition of the selective high schools (Sydney Morning Herald 25.8.1975). The Department's view was that selective high schools were supporting an elitist minority and that the comprehensive high schools provided the most effective education for NSW children. The Teachers' Federation also strongly supported this view (Federation September 1979). Even though there was no formal policy on selective high schools, this formal provision had existed, and did make provision for academically able students in select geographical areas, but it was slowly being dismantled in response to union demand.

The existence of 'area' high schools (local comprehensive) adjacent to 'selective' high schools caused severe problems on maintaining the selective nature of the older school, and restrictive and shrinking zoning policies meant smaller and smaller intake areas for the selective schools. As the comprehensive schools flourished, their Principals' demanded stringent boundaries to ensure continuing, and if possible increasing, enrolments. Thus the drawing area of the selective high school became geographically smaller and evoked heated debate between Principals (Macdonald 1990 Personal Communication). The parents of students attending selective high schools, advocated strongly for these schools' continuing existence. Their common perception at that time was to view giftedness in terms of high intellectual performance, provision for which had historically been made through these schools, catering for their select clientele (Macdonald et al 1983).

The NSW Teachers Federation restated its long standing objections that the retention of this small group of selective High Schools was based on administrative, social and political considerations that ran contrary to the espoused egalitarian philosophy of the Department (Sydney Morning Herald 8.9.1975). Seeking to clarify this issue, the Minister for Education, The Hon Sir Eric Willis, in October 1975, bowed to pressure from these lobby groups and set up a committee to review the position of selective high schools under the Chairmanship of Colin L. Macdonald (Macdonald, 1990).

This Committee first met in November 1975, and quickly agreed that this question of selectivity was only one of a broad range of issues to be addressed on the educational provision for talented children. To demonstrate its willingness to properly advocate public opinion, the Minister sanctioned a major enquiry which ran for a period of seventeen months and received over two hundred and fifty submissions in written form in January 1977 and in oral form in February 1977 (McConville 1977).

Those on the committee were representatives from all areas of education. They included regional directors, inspectors, principals, consultants, teachers, parents, academics, unionists from both state and private systems, an exchange teacher from England, counsellors and other visiting departmental officers (Roseth 1979). Sir Eric Willis, Minister for Education, a strong advocate for the abolition of selective schools, stated that these selective schools were only established in certain specific geographical locations on the north shore and the eastern suburbs of Sydney, thus discriminating against any student from the outlying suburbs or rural areas (Macdonald 1990).

The egalitarian attitude of equal opportunity and equal outcomes was very prevalent. When surveying this situation in retrospect, Yates posed the question: 'How can equality be viewed when education and society appear to be moving further apart?' (Yates 1985 p59). It had already been demonstrated in the Whitlam era that creating greater access to particular kinds of education did not ensure all the desired or required outcomes. Yet the Hawke Government in later years used a federal funding initiative to increase what the Prime Minister termed 'participation and equity'. This changed the accountability criteria to participation, and equity had now replaced equality or equality of opportunity. Under these auspices;

minority groups such as girls, working class, ethnic, aboriginal, rural and disabled students, were given recognition but deflected attention from the education's contribution to real social inequalities.

(Foster 1987 p158).

Against this background, the Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister for Education to enquire into the education of the talented child, was tabled at the first cabinet meeting held in the country at Casino in August 1977. The report had been completed in April of that year but due to the fact that there had been a state election and Willis had lost his portfolio to the new Labour Minister, Eric Bedford, it had been held over until August. Bedford, an ex-teacher, saw the merit in the report and introduced it



into Parliament, stating the existence of a number of selective high schools was of concern to his Labour colleagues (Report of the Minister 1978). At his press conference, Bedford personally supported the selective high school issue, but made very little of the talented child aspect or associated recommendations (Macdonald 1990). The Macdonald Report, while identifying the talented as 'possibly the most disadvantaged group in our schools' achieved little impact in the area. The report also strongly rejected the assumption that 'the talented could survive satisfactorily without identification and special provision'. The report also recommended the closure of the academically selective school, the Conservatorium of Music High School, and the selective agricultural high school (Macdonald 1984). It appeared that these closings were inevitable due to political pressure, and the committee, with this knowledge, supported the recommendations. Members of the Committee speculated that political 'mileage' could perhaps be gained from this move to gain support for the Committee's other recommendations (Macdonald 1990).

The movement to provide more appropriately for gifted and talented students in NSW gathered strength after the publication of the Macdonald Report and it became a stated priority of the NSW Department of Education to formulate a policy on the education of children with special talents (Braggett 1985). The Association for Gifted and Talented Children was formed by parents in Sydney in 1979 to provide opportunities 'for parents of gifted and talented children to meet and discuss their mutual problems in a supportive atmosphere' (NSWAGT Newsletter Vol.1 1980). Such associations had already been formed in South Australia, Victoria, and Queensland.

Meanwhile, the debate continued in the secondary arena around such issues as selective high schools, the retention of single sex high schools, and senior high schools for years 11 and 12. Criticism was also becoming more apparent in the primary field (Braggett 1985). In 1977, at the North Sydney Region Primary Principals'

Conference, T.W. Payne, the Regional Director of North Sydney Region, quoting from a letter to the secretary of the Neutral Bay P & C. Association, on the subject of Opportunity Classes for talented children said 'transportation of able children to special classes was both undesirable and unnecessary.' He reiterated the improving quantity and quality of teachers within the government schools, and that 'organisational flexibility, small group work, team teaching and stimulating educational materials adequately catered for the talented.' (Braggett 1985 p 261). The parents in that region were not satisfied with that response and petitioned the Minister for Education. He compromised the Regional Director's decision and extended the life of the Opportunity Classes for another two years. Ironically, these classes still exist today and are a vital part of that particular school and region's function (Official Year Book 1986).

Another new development, cited by talented and gifted advocates as extremely providential, was the appointment of another prominent stakeholder, Dr. John Vaughan, to head the Departmental Committee of Review to examine the practical implications of the implementation of the Macdonald Report. To attempt to determine existing provisions for talented children in NSW primary schools, the Committee, under the auspices of Dr. Vaughan, sent a questionnaire to one thousand, six hundred and sixty six principals in NSW in November 1978. With a 65% (one thousand and eighty two) return rate, only 19% (two hundred and two) of those reported any special provision for catering for the needs of gifted and talented children, the largest number (20%) being in the Metropolitan North Region. Of the 81% who reported no existing provision, 58% of these considered there to be no talented children within their school (Roseth 1979). It is interesting to note at this time that the reasons cited for lack of provision were not ideological or educational but technical and practical e.g. insufficient resources, space, and staff, and inadequate identification measures (Roseth 1979 p4). It appeared it was simpler to rationalise the lack of provision by criticizing programs rather than teacher inadequacies. Roseth (1979 p5) also reported that 'the closer the

principals were to OC classes, the more likely they were to favour their discontinuation'. This may have been because of the conflicting debate and the rise of vocal interest groups beginning to exert pressure but this comment was speculative in nature as the survey did not clarify this information.

By conducting this survey, NSW had demonstrated its concern by launching a major enquiry into the provision of gifted and talented children in schools and after publication of the report the Committee had made a series of recommendations to the government. In fact, NSW was the first Australian state to formulate any official enquiry into the needs of gifted and talented children (Braggett 1987). One aspect of the report that the Department of Education did accept was the suggestion that 'an enormous amount of ignorance and misinformation in schools' existed, and that any attempt to change present attitudes, 'was going to require a concerted, consistent and unified effort throughout all levels of education' (Macdonald 1977).

Once again confusion seemed to reign as the issue of provision for talented children, the issue of Opportunity Classes for the academically able and selective entry into high schools became confused. Pressure groups promoted often opposing platforms: advocates to continue special provisions while others verbalised strong educational and political philosophies to hasten their demise (Braggett 1985).

Even though the Report of the Macdonald Committee had been released in 1977, the actual task of formulating a policy was not commenced until 1979 (Lilianthal 1990). The developmental stage, 1979-1980, was a slow process for the executive of the Department, who, being aware of the issues associated with the education of gifted and talented children, chose to utilise the collaborative model using a network of educators who met across the state. The Department seconded teaching staff to assist in the policy writing and disseminated drafts back to regions for consultation and feedback

(Braggett 1987). This method of utilizing action research throughout the ten regions, was time consuming, but had the effect of raising awareness and giving some ownership of the policy to those nearer the workplace. One of the major drawbacks however, was explained by Lilianthal, a committee member, in an interview conducted in Sydney in October 1990:

We each took drafts back to our own regions and gave it to people in our various networks, but from my view point it was often the blind leading the blind. We would all be the first to admit that we need assistance in teaching the handicapped but when it comes to gifted and talented, everybody was an expert.

During this developmental stage, the Department established 4 priorities:

1. the formulation of a policy statement.
2. the structuring of inservice education on strategies for coping with talented children.
3. the publication of position papers which schools might use as a basis for staff development.
4. the development of materials for use with talented children.

(Macdonald 1984 p 280.)

The Committee of Review organised three residential conferences in Sydney between 1979 and 1981, with representation from all of the ten NSW regions (Braggett 1985 p 263). One of the co-ordinators Ms. Fran Colley, (a curriculum consultant with the Directorate of Studies), had a state wide consultancy responsibility similar to the one that exists in Queensland today. This position existed right up to the launching of the policy statement by the Director-General of Education Mr. Doug Swan, in March 1982 (Macdonald Personal Communication 1990). When asked about this long passage of time from the actual tabling of the report in 1977, to the policy statement in 1982, the Chairperson remarked: 'It had the advantage of allowing time for emotive issues raised by the Ministerial Report to wane, and time for a wide range of people to contribute ideas' (Braggett 1985 p 235).

A distinct characteristic of this period was the rise of the special interest and minority groups with an ensuing struggle for control in education. These groups were legitimised by the acceptance of the commonly held view that Australia was a multicultural or pluralistic society and by public recognition of Commonwealth funding. Older agencies, such as the Church and the Family, were now less effective as agents of education (Foster 1987). Some reaction against prevailing educational enthusiasm was developing as parents, pupils and employers became more interested in mastery of basic skills and vocational subjects in an attempt to guarantee employment (Birch 1976). The challenge from the Commonwealth Government heightened as it continued its attempts to intervene in State education.

The dominant socialisation agencies of Church, employer and family were less influential in this rapidly changing society. All these factors impacted upon education, and the growing conviction that recognition of, and provision for, gifted and talented children must become a priority. Brian McGowan, the Chairperson of the Select Committee on the School Certificate said in his address to the Annual Conference of the Teachers' Federation in December 1980:

Over the years of the Wyndham Scheme, there has been a decline in response from the pupils. The apathy of mediocrity, the deviation towards the norm from lack of motivation ... broader but vaguer curriculum were introduced. We were shocked to discover that the kids were just as uninterested as before.

Perhaps A. Dixon, a representative of the Queensland Gifted and Talented Association, touched upon one of the greatest concerns of educators that comes to the forefront whenever provision for academically able children is discussed. When giving evidence to the Senate Select Committee in Canberra in 1987, he observed:

... one of the biggest problems that we face is the attitudes of principals and teachers towards the education of the gifted ... people pay lip service to the needs of the gifted but when they

actually come to making provision in their schools and classrooms, they seem to be saying that they have limited resources and in that case those resources should be directed towards the non-achieving or under-achieving child.

It would appear to be the case to the outside observer for in 1950, the Commonwealth and State Governments funded Professor A.W.G. Ewing and Dr Irene Ewing to visit Australia from Great Britain. They were invited to make recommendations to the various governments regarding the needs of exceptional hearing impaired children (OD). In NSW this action resulted in special classes being set up almost immediately with two counsellors being funded to study in Manchester under these two leaders in their field. On their return these selectively trained teachers were to be involved in training, inservicing and teaching, as more classes for hearing impaired were established. (Year Book of NSW\1952)

Mossenson (1981) in his Commonwealth Schools Commission report attempts to give an overview of gifted and talented education in NSW. He recognises the period from 1960 to 1990 as being divided into three distinct phases (in relation to education of gifted and talented children). The first from 1960 to 1975, Mossenson claims, was a period of modest and disjointed interest in gifted children, where spasmodic private and public interest was noticeable. The second phase from 1976 to 1980, saw considerable experimentation in provision for gifted children and resulted in a state wide enquiry, which coupled with growing interest in other Australian states, impacted on the Commonwealth scene with Senate and School Commission Committees. The third, stage from the early 1980's, he calls the 'crucial' stage. During this period increased interest in gifted and talented children resulted in the formulation of government policies for provision for their education. This stage will be addressed in the next chapter as the scene changes from pluralism to corporatism.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CORPORATISM 1981 - 1989

*Schools will have a high level capacity for strategic planning and marketing...with a broader range of potential competitors than in the past...with a new focus for marketing and a restructured source of public funding.*

James C. Sarros 1990

Yates draws attention to the very different historical and economic factors operating in the 1960s in contrast with the 1980s. The booming economy, the large expenditures on education, the optimism about the role of education to support expanding and diverse occupational structure in the 1960s are contrasted with the economic recession, cutbacks in education budgets and frustration over perceived failure of education to avert the contraction in the labour force with consequent unemployment and underemployment in the 1980s (Yates 1985).

The early 1980's were characterised by what the sociologists called a 'marked deterioration in the social environment' especially in the specific area of children's education (Foster 1987 p56). In 1981, the Senate Standing Committee on Education and The Arts, published an urgent call for the reduction of graphic violence available to children via television and video recorder. The Child Sexual Assault Task estimated that twelve thousand children a year were subjected to child abuse. In April 1985, the NSW Drug and Alcohol Authority estimated the consumption of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes by minors had doubled since 1975 (Sydney Morning Herald 29 3 1985). According to the 1981 census, 13 percent of all Australian children aged under 15 years, lived in single parent families, the sociological perspective of this being that

'these children were less likely to succeed at school and would therefore provide more discipline problems' (Carmichael 1985 p16).

Against this background of rising truancy, vandalism, disciplinary turmoil, 'anti-educational neighbourhoods', 'blended families' and families living below the 'poverty line', the government reacted by passing, in haste, several major pieces of legislation: the Community Welfare Bill which in effect repealed the Child Welfare Act (1939) and the Public Instruction Amendment Act (1916) which, according the Sydney Morning Herald (1985) 'will assist children to leave home and divorce their parents' (in Barcan 1988 p305).

The Australian colonial working class, in contrast to the English, had obtained political and economic status before, and without, formal education (Snow 1990). Previously, the persistent shortage of labour, characteristic of a pioneering community, proved an obstacle to education at all social levels. Lower class children were frequently sent to work rather than school for schooling had held little importance as an agent of social mobility (Griffiths 1957). But the great growth of the salaried middle class - the white collar class - during the 60s and 70s had encouraged a steadily rising retention rate in schools and increased dramatically the competition in education for those declining employment opportunities. This served to renew an interest in gifted education as young talented students were being viewed as a future economic resource (The Australian 4 5 1983).

The government was becoming aware of mounting dissatisfaction with its social and educational policies, and the subsequent decline in teacher morale (Education October 1980). There seemed to be an ever increasing number of vocal lobby groups (the multiplicity of groups which were characteristic of pluralism) all intent on keeping their particular cause high on the issue attention cycle and therefore constantly the focus of



media and government deliberations (Australian 15 6 1981). The lobby groups for the education of gifted and talented children, having become a recognisable voice, were determined to further the demand for more equitable provision for gifted and talented children.

In line with this emphasis, Dr. Miriam Goldberg, Professor of Education and Psychology at Columbia University, was invited to visit Australia in 1978 and again in 1980. Her brief was to examine, evaluate and report on, the state of Australian educational provision for gifted and talented children (Gross 1986 p2). In the conclusion of her report, Goldberg stated that the opposition to provision for gifted education was more political and social, than educational or psychological. As mentioned in an earlier chapter she concluded:

'I met a variously articulated fear that special attention to the gifted represents a form of elitism...there was anxiety, lest singling these children out in any way might lead them to view themselves as better than the rest'

Goldberg 1981 p8.

In many schools acquiring socialisation skills was viewed as being more important than the acquisition of knowledge. Goldberg (1981 p23) also observed, after her visit to Australia in 1980 that :

... the major deterrent to the provision of any form of differentiated curriculum for the gifted was the conviction, among both educators and laymen, that the 'ability to get along' with everybody was of major importance. The fear that any school procedures which singled children out as more able than the generality, might jeopardise their sense of identity with, and acceptance by, 'the common man'.

Late in 1979, a drafting committee of the Schools' Commission was set up in Canberra to 'contribute to the examination of the issues involved in the education of gifted and talented students, through the preparation and distribution of a discussion paper' (McKinnon 1980 p1). This was to form the basis of a paper to be included in the

Report for the 1982 - 84 Triennium. McKinnon was very insistent that this paper be regarded only as a discussion starter and 'not as a statement of Commission policy'. The final report, while giving broad coverage to a wide range of issues associated with the education of gifted and talented, concluded with three questions and five broad recommendations, none of which mentioned formation of a policy. The report did recommend further 'action - research' in the area, but the limited funding that the Commission granted to education of gifted and talented, was earmarked for overseas visitors and some selective pilot projects (McKinnon 1980 p18).

In May 1981, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Select Committee on the School Certificate, chaired by Brian McGowan, handed down its report which also recognised the fact that special provision needed to be made available for academically able students. This report attempted to reclaim the essence of the Wyndham system's provision for individual variations by catering for lower ability, average and talented students, to raise standards and exercise more rigid control over curriculum content (McGowan 1981 p198 ).

The McGowan Report contained some innovative recommendations which, if implemented, would have satisfied some of the more urgent needs for gifted and talented children. These were: advocating semesters instead of terms to allow for acceleration or remediation; dezoning to give students access to subjects of their choice not on offer at their own comprehensive school; and publication of all school courses for the information of both students, parents and the business community. McGowan strongly supported acceleration for talented and gifted children where appropriate recognising the need to avoid boredom and repetition. Gross (personal communication 1990) supported this principle:

To confine academically able pupils into the rigid lock-step system in existence in most high schools was to invite frustration, boredom, resignation, or misbehaviour.

One aspect of acceleration ignored by McGowan was early entrance into primary school for academically accelerated preschool children. Gross (1987 p1851) in her evidence to the Senate Select Committee on the Education of the Gifted and Talented raised this issue by stating that overseas research supported the theory that 'when children are academically, emotionally and socially ready they should be allowed to enter school.' She reiterates:

If children are not recognised at an early age and are allowed to just sit there in the classroom, they will be turned off learning and if teachers get them too late in life, they find it very difficult to rescue them.

Gross 1990 Personal Communication.

In the early eighties, the Teachers' Federation, becoming more militant with a strong media voice, presented fierce opposition to the McGowan recommendations (Education March 1981). The Minister for Education, conscious of the attack, requested Dr. Ken McKinnon (former chairman of the Commonwealth Schools Commission) and Mr. Doug Swan, (Director - General of Education), to formulate some form of response. McKinnon and Swan published *Future Directions in Secondary Education - The Report* in June 1984. The major proposal was to remove the gap that existed between planning for Years 7- 10 by the Secondary Schools Board and Years 11 - 12 by the Board of Senior School Studies with the introduction of the Board of Secondary Education with responsibilities for years 7 - 12. It could be said that the ulterior motive was an attack on the influence of the universities over the secondary school curriculum and the final examinations in high school as this was regarded by some as control by the elite for the elite (Australian 4.9.1986). This report further restricted the influence of the universities by reducing their representatives on the Board of Secondary Education to only two. This strong egalitarian attitude, aggressively fostered by the

Federation and condoned by Australian society, again ridiculed any hint that talent should be rewarded.

As Gross (1986 p6) observes:

'Talent in Mathematics, Sciences or Humanities, ... is seen as a vehicle for personal gain for the individual and as such is viewed, in our culture, with wariness and/or derision.'

The original Committee of Review, which had been formulated to examine the implications of the Macdonald Report (1977) had its brief extended and was renamed in July 1983 the State Coordinating Committee on the Education of the Talented Child. Representatives on this committee included the Gifted and Talented Association of NSW, academics, teachers, Teachers' Federation, and departmental consultants and executives. It was this committee that supervised the reissue of the completed policy statement, with the accompanying support documents, and the production of a resource kit, funded with a \$20,000 grant from the Sidney Myer Foundation. Each Primary School in NSW was issued with this resource kit, and the Department ran inservice and retraining courses both at Centre and Regional level (Braggett 1985).

Similar to the USA Marland Report of 1972, the NSW Policy Statement of 1983, *The Education of Children with Special Talents*, accepted that talented children may possess one or more exceptional abilities and were capable of outstanding performance. It also came out very strongly in favour of educating the talented child in his/her neighbourhood school while at the same time advocating that special provision must be provided to develop his/her individual capacities and abilities. Identification should be completed as early as possible with support from the Region and the Centre (Macdonald 1983).

In spite of these broad recommendations, this policy had little impact on the schools.

During the eighties, throughout the state, at school and inspectorate level, successful teacher initiated programs in gifted education were well documented, with some excellent results, but they were more often than not, school based attempts to meet local needs rather than a concerted departmental policy effort within the wider context (Braggett 1985). The wide geographic and cultural spread throughout the ten regions of the NSW Department of Education, led to differences in policy implementation to suit each region's distinctive needs. While it must be acknowledged that the NSW education system was very centralist in nature, the method used to promote this policy was much more active at regional and school level (Lilianthal 1990). Macdonald, still playing a significant role in planning and organization, concentrated most of his energies at the central level of the Department of Education (Braggett 1986).

Similar to existing departmental policies, the central administration role was still to be maintained, but individual student and school information was to be recorded for local dissemination and sharing. Regional and inspectorate policies were formulated to facilitate implementation. Schools, within this supportive network, were to assist in procedures of identification, curriculum flexibility, and effective community communication networks (Macdonald et al 1983).

The Policy Statement was issued in most regions in April 1982, but the promise of support documents encouraged some Regional Directors and Principals to withhold distribution. These documents were:

1. Characteristics, Needs and Support
2. Identification
3. School Policy and Organization
4. Curriculum and Teaching
5. Parents and Community.

The date on each of these documents is August 1983, but some were not finalised until late in 1984 when the policy statement complete with support documents was relaunched (Macdonald 1990).

There were several important stakeholders who impacted dramatically on education policy in this period. With the appointment of Rodney Cavalier as the NSW Minister for Education in April 1984, a shift in power was produced (Spaull 1987 p272). Cavalier believed it possible to reconcile equality of opportunity with a solid academic grounding, and stated in Parliament in May 1984, that all existing selective high schools would be preserved. He met with strong opposition from the Teachers' Federation and reasserted 'the right of the Minister to control his own time and movements and set his own agenda' (Barcan 1988 p309). The Sydney Morning Herald of July 3rd 1984, reported that it was witnessing a 'basic change in the power politics of education.'

The Department of Education reiterated its authoritative stand and reissued an updated version of the Managing the School document which attempted to increase the rigour of the accountability procedures of schools. The Department stated that it could not function 'on an ad hoc basis on particular issues raised from time to time by the Teachers' Federation' (Sydney Morning Herald 29 9 1987).

There were also two major events in Australia during the 1980's which allowed the gifted and talented issue to remain on the issue attention cycle with wide media coverage and arousal of public interest. These were the First National Conference on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children in Melbourne on 28th -31st August 1983 and the Eighth World Conference on Gifted and Talented Children: *'The Challenge of Excellence - A Vision Splendid'* in Sydney, in July 3-7 1989. These served to attract national and international visitors, media coverage, and publicised the debate over delivery of educational services to gifted and talented children.

In NSW during this period, the State adopted an unusually prominent role through the Minister for Education, Rodney Cavalier and later with Dr. Terry Metherell who succeeded Cavalier when Labour lost the election in May 1988. Metherell quickly gained the reputation of being a very confrontationist Minister (Sydney Morning Herald 8 8 1988). Metherell refused to bow to Union pressure and continued the reforms commenced by his Labour predecessor (Sydney Morning Herald 8.8.1988). Cavalier had introduced a new staffing formula to secondary schools in 1985, increasing the student/ staff ratio, and in an effort to exercise greater control over the efficiency of teachers Cavalier had introduced the ill-fated Teacher Efficiency Review (TER). Although he was successful in the first matter, the TER scheme had to be abandoned in the wake of militant objection from the Teachers' Federation. Cavalier also negotiated with the Special Education lobby, opening the doors for the new Integration policy which Metherell also continued to support with government funding of just over \$80 million in the 1990 - 1991 funding allocations (Report of the Minister 1989).

During these years and especially the latter half of this decade, the Department attempted to increase its regulatory practices in order to make teaching more effective and efficient. Coupled with this, was the growing awareness of telecommunications and computer technology which opened the doors for the idea that much of the learning currently occurring at school, could be transferred to homes or the work place. This, of course, gave rise to the idea of schools becoming delivery centres for school support services (Caldwell 1990). This heralded the move from a pluralistic model described in the previous Chapter to a corporatist model whereby the role of the State becomes synonymous with private enterprise, sponsorship and outside funding (Ham and Hill 1987).

Running concurrently with this NSW state scenario was the Commonwealth's role in Education. Both Ministers (Senator Susan Ryan and her successor John Dawkins)

while less confrontationist than their state counterparts, were none the less able to effect considerable change in education policy. A major change, indicative of the new direction for Education, was in the title of each respective Minister's portfolio: Susan Ryan was Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, while, under John Dawkins, the title was significantly restructured to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training. The thrust of Ryan's programs were an attempt to alleviate the already existing problem of high unemployment. Dawkins, inheriting the same problem, made much more explicit the link between education and employment. It has been speculated that this could be either due to the link in his personal background discipline of economics, or reflective of the common international trend of linking business with education with increased economic output (Walker 1990).

Pressures from lobby groups, growing dissatisfaction with current educational policies from both staff and community, a declining economy, unfavourable media coverage, and outspoken business representatives complaining about the unemployable 'youth of today', prompted the government to mount an enquiry into public education to examine present day standards and practices and make strong recommendation for the future (Sydney Morning Herald 9 9 1988). Excellence, as well as equity was to be investigated. Metherell's own words, in the preface to the *Excellence and Equity* document were:

It is a paper committed to the Government's twin aims of excellence and equity in education.

These words were to later form the title for the Government Strategy which was released in September 1989 as *Excellence and Equity*. Although a document which did cause 'lively debate and discussion' (Excellence and Equity 1989 p2) it did acknowledge gifted and talented children as being 'neglected and discouraged' and contained three specific proposals (items 76 to 78) for immediate provision for those



children. The first was in relation to a 'more satisfying and flexible curriculum' and 'a system sufficiently flexible to allow them to move ahead'; the second was an immediate review in the existing provision for gifted and talented children in Government schools; and lastly the Government promised a 'comprehensive strategy for the education of gifted and talented children' to be released in 1990.

To support any administrative changes, 'the Schools Renewal' document was commissioned with Dr. Brian Scott, a management consultant in private enterprise, as the chairperson to investigate methods to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of schools. While officially titled *Schools Renewal: A Strategy to Revitalise Schools Within the NSW Education System*, it came to be known colloquially as 'The Scott Report.'

This action of appointing a consultant from outside the education field, appeared synonymous with other governments, both nationally and internationally. Thus when the NSW government appointed Dr Scott to chair the Committee it was supported, at least in principle, by the higher executive of the Department (Sydney Morning Herald 6 6 1988). Previous enquiries with the Department of Education had commonly been chaired by educationists, but this review was to streamline administrative procedures thus an economic manager, as opposed to an educational manager, was invited to carefully scrutinise and evaluate current educational administrative procedures and practices in NSW. By so doing the government made clear its intention to restructure economically and invited the support and sponsorship of the business community. This costly exercise was to be financed by the sale of property and by closer links with business and community to gain further financial support in the form of sponsorship. Education was no longer to be funded solely by the government (Caldwell 1990 p3).

Concurrently with the 'Scott Review', the Premier of NSW, Mr Griener, on September 16th 1988, also announced the appointment of a Committee of Review of Schools chaired by Sir John Carrick to investigate curriculum and teaching/learning structures. This committee consisted of, among others, Professor Sam Ball, University of Sydney, Mr. Ray Cavenagh, President of the NSW Teachers' Federation and Mr. John Lambert, Senior Executive from the Department of School Education. When this report was tabled late in 1989, it gained immediate notoriety as the Carrick Report. The objective of this committee was to undertake a comprehensive review of education in NSW with a view to making recommendations for additional and/or alternative legislation to the new Education Act of 1990, which was also being formulated. For the advocates of gifted and talented children, several categories to be investigated were deemed of the utmost importance.

1. the needs of disadvantaged students,
2. the means by which effective and meaningful freedom of choice by parents, both between government schools and between government and non-government schools, might best be guaranteed and extended.
3. the principle of equality of opportunity
4. the aim of achieving the highest possible quality of education for all.

Submissions pointed to the tension between expectations of teacher professionalism on the one hand and increasing demands for the teacher accountability on the other. While professionalism implied agreed standards of practice, self regulation, professional autonomy and responsibility for own professional and client welfare (applauded attributes for all children but especially for gifted and talented) accountability implied closer monitoring, compulsory professional development and more rigorous teacher appraisal (Carrick 1989). Thus once again teachers were subjected to unprecedented

external pressures which detracted from their main purpose of teaching and forced them into situations for which they were ill-prepared and in many cases, untrained and unskilled (Education August 1989).

It is interesting to note that the enormous restructuring that has been recommended by 'The Scott Report' has been only in the administrative area. Changes in zoning, promotion structures, budgeting, and employment conditions did not involve any deep rooted pedagogical change. Researchers such as Guba and Lincoln (1985), Cambourne (1986), Smith (1985), and Johnson (1986) all state this as a major impediment to educational change in areas such as curriculum, ideology or philosophy. Ham and Hill (1987) also raise the point in relation to public officials and bureaucrats who continually may have to change their political masters. They claim these departmental officials find these changes easy to adjust to, so long as 'they do not involve violent ideological shifts' (p57). Where the changes in government do involve deep pedagogical change, the changes are short lived and ineffectual.

This was evident when in NSW the Liberal Government swept to power in May 1988. Far reaching changes in the structure of the Department of School Education were instigated under the new Minister for Education Dr. Terry Metherell. His policy changes while resisted fiercely by community and teachers alike, were instigated in the first eighteen months of his being in office. Although Dr. Metherell's term of office was terminated suddenly, this action resulted from personal causes not political, and had no relationship to his policy for the education of gifted and talented children. Ms Virginia Chadwick was named as his successor. The educational bureaucracy did change under both new Ministers, because the changes were mainly administrative not pedagogical.

Implementation of these new government strategies, with increased participation from the business and community world was commenced immediately following the release of the government documents. Caldwell (1990) describes this change in the following words:

The scope and pace of change in education at the start of the 1990's is nothing short of breathtaking, with commentators suggesting that it is the most far-reaching this century. Moreover, these changes have been continuous since the 1980's, with all evidence pointing to their acceleration.

Caldwell 1990 p1.

With this acknowledged change, the question now remains whether the provision for gifted and talented children will alter as dramatically.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

*It is unfortunate that children's futures rest in the hands of politicians rather than professional educators.*

Yvonne Larsson, 1986.

#### Conclusions

1. *Historical evidence shows that there were no formal policies developed for the education of gifted and talented children for the greater part of Australian and N.S.W. educational history.*

During the period identified as Elitism (1777 - 1949) there was little recognition of and limited provision for the gifted and talented in State education. The reigning elite controlled the education system, providing their own children with private education which catered for individual differences, while continuing the myth that no convict or working class children could ever be bright. With total decision-making power in the hands of the elite, no formal policy was considered necessary for State and non - State schools.

During the period identified as Pluralism (1950 - 1980) widespread public dissatisfaction with education and the low morale of teachers provided the impetus for the formation of diverse pressure groups interested in public education. Postwar immigration and the "baby boom" led to overcrowded classrooms which were staffed by a young, inexperienced teaching force hastily assembled in the post war period. Overcrowding and inadequate provision for non-English speaking students and children with learning disabilities led to increasing parent concern and public demands

for educational reform. The government was under increasing pressure from education lobbyists who kept educational issues in the media. The increasing power and recognition of these groups had dramatic effects on educational policy from the 1960s onwards.

The egalitarian philosophy was still predominant in N.S.W. and the government appointed a committee to inquire into the effectiveness of selective schools with a view to dismantling them. This committee quickly decided that it could not adequately address the issue of selective schools without a full discussion of the education of gifted and talented children. In 1975 the minister reluctantly bowed to pressure and thus began the first government policy debate in N.S.W. on the gifted and talented. Thus, through the combined force of small pressure groups, a policy statement was finally formed (Macdonald 1975).

During the period identified as Corporatism (1981 - 1989) the policy *The Education of Children with Special Talents* was formulated in 1983 and released in 1987. It had very little impact on N.S.W. education. It lacked government and departmental commitment and was never legitimised by effective implementation. Major time delays in its formation, formulation and dissemination, the lack of any accountability or evaluation procedures, indicated the department's lack of commitment to the policy, and detracted from its importance to the teachers who had to implement it. The strong egalitarian attitudes that Goldberg (1981) found so prevalent raised tremendous opposition to its implementation.

*2. In the absence of formal or mandatory policies, policies existed by default .*

When central authority provides no specific direction, responsibility for determining policy devolves to the school principal and ultimately to the classroom teacher. The methods and procedures of these practitioners become policy by default.

During the period of elitism, there was no recognition that convict or working class children could possess exceptional gifts and talents. Policy by default ensured that all children received the same education with no specific provision for any individual differences. Educational philosophy concentrated on the sameness of children - any variation from the norm was considered to be behaviour obviously in need of correction. With the multiplicity of racial and class differences, existing in the period of pluralism, gifted and talented children were again not seen as a priority. In the absence of any formal policy, diligent teachers did their best to cater for individual differences across a wide range of ability, culture and class.

*3. Even though OC classes and selective high schools were in existence from 1932 onwards, there was no official policy on them.*

Because they were in existence in only three regions throughout NSW it was deemed unnecessary to formulate a state wide policy. In fact, through much of this century there has been evidence of what could be termed a continuous battle between elitism and egalitarianism. The Government, while investigating the concerns at very high levels and instigating Senate Enquiries, School Commissions and several reports by such people as McGowan, McKinnon, Wyndham and Braggett, took no further action after the release of the reports. The question for future answering is: Was this lack of action due to apathy, strong opposition, egalitarianism, or mismanagement?

*4. The variety of definitions of giftedness has caused problems with agreed identification.*

The single - dimensional (high IQ) definition was used consistently for many years but attracted criticism because it only measured academic ability and ignored skills and talents in areas such as creativity, leadership, visual and performing arts. This definition has now been replaced by a multi - dimensional measure which attempts to address these criticisms and identify all exceptional abilities. Because of this diversity a single agreed definition is yet to be determined.

*5. The difficulties of effective identification led to a reluctance to formulate specific policies.*

Inherent difficulties in identification of gifted children have persisted and encouraged some educators to argue that, until this problem is overcome, policies are of secondary importance. This has resulted in some reluctance by State educators to formulate policies for gifted and talented education.

*6. However limited, the provision for gifted and talented students has served to strengthen claims of 'elitism' from the egalitarian platform.*

While O.C. classes and selective high schools only served a small percentage of the gifted and talented children they were nevertheless viewed as catering for the elite. Their existence was used by proponents of egalitarianism as evidence that the main body of students was being disadvantaged to allow favoured treatment of the "already privileged, bright children".



*7. Difficulties of identification of gifted and talented students have also been used to strengthen the egalitarian platform.*

Opponents of provision for gifted and talented students have argued that there are considerable inherent difficulties involved in identification, and unless all gifted and talented children can be accurately identified, they advocate that an egalitarian approach should prevail.

*8. The power brokers of each period in our educational history have recognised the existence of their own gifted children, and have attempted to cater for them .*

During the colonial years, children of the elite were sent to private schools or taught by private tutors, and were usually repatriated to England or Europe to complete their education. The Church, too, was a powerful entity in the infant colony and established an active interest in education which it still maintains.

For the greater part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the power brokers changed but still catered for their own gifted and talented children. The relatively few selective high schools were located in the higher socio-economic areas, and a small number of selective agricultural high schools catered for the country elite. In addition, the private independent and a number of church schools, were well patronised. The end of the pluralist and the beginning of the corporatist period saw wide dissatisfaction with comprehensive schools and state education in general, and significant growth in the private school sector. Wealthy and middle, and even working class parents, sought to avoid public education, and even made substantial financial sacrifices to send their children to private schools. They believed that the private schools provided better quality education which they believed was synonymous with academic achievement and realisation of the child's full potential. This would inevitably produce gifted graduates

and leaders (Sherington et al 1987 p 5). Ethnic minority groups, placed great importance on quality of education, usually choosing to send their children to private schools and in some cases, establishing their own. During the 1980's, schools of distinct beliefs and culture were established throughout both country and metropolitan areas e.g. Japanese and Iranian schools in Sydney, Montessori and Steiner Schools in Wollongong and Western Sydney, and Christian Community Schools in many large city areas (SMH 4 9 86). Parents believed that these schools, while founded for specific religious or cultural reasons, catered most appropriately for the child's overall development, but more specifically for the child's unique gifts and talents. Successive governments, whose leaders' children often attended non-government schools, tended to increase state aid to private education, creating an elite in the society of schools.

*9 In general legitimization has not occurred.*

With reference to Mossenson's (1981 p16) seven criteria for legitimization

1. There has been little informed debate and no consistent planning.
2. Identification and classification continues to be an issue of major contention.
3. Implementation of curriculum and strategies is yet to occur through all levels of schooling.
4. Provision still depends to some extent on "voluntarism or evangelism".
5. The activities of pressure groups are still critical
6. Open evaluation is yet to be accepted as a routine part of teaching practice.
7. Routine funding and resourcing is yet to be implemented.

According to these criteria as listed by Mossenson, the education of gifted and talented children has not yet been legitimated. These criteria could provide the basis for a set of guidelines to formulate a future legitimization policy.

10. *There is little recognition of the need for further research commissioned by credible and highly visible sources such as the Government or the Department of School Education in NSW.*

There has been little research in the area of education for the gifted and talented and none in the area of policy for gifted and talented children. The 1975-76 and the 1976-77 annual reports of the Education Research and Development Council in Australia indicate no single project specifically concerned with the education of gifted and talented children. By the end of 1989, the final year reviewed by this thesis, still none had occurred.

11. *The title of the policy in 1983 only referred to those children with special talents. It did not refer to giftedness, or exceptional ability in any area..*

This policy, by omission even in the title, refused to acknowledge the existence of those exceptionally talented children in state schools. It was politically unacceptable at the time of the release of the policy *Children with Special Talents* to acknowledge 1) that gifted children were present in State schools and 2) that any special provision was necessary for them.

## IMPLICATIONS - RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions drawn above could perhaps lead to some action in the future, to be undertaken by both the State and the Department of School Education. Some recommendations for this action could be:

**Recommendation 1:** It must be recognised by Governments, and education authorities, that gifted children exist in the classrooms of the state and cannot be ignored. Conscientious and capable teachers will endeavour to cater for the needs of gifted and talented children in their classes whether there is a formal policy or not. Failure to provide specific, formal policies does not result in an absence of policy but in policy by default.

**Recommendation 2:** The N.S.W. Department of School Education should urgently formulate and implement an effective policy to maximise the educational outcomes of schooling for gifted and talented students. The State Departmental philosophy states that each child should be assisted to achieve his or her full potential. Provision of opportunities to children with special abilities is inherent in this statement and formalisation into a policy would assist in the legitimisation process. The 1983 policy, while disseminated to all schools, did not achieve this objective.

**Recommendation 3:** The new policy must be legitimated to ensure its effective implementation. Mossenson's criteria for legitimisation, as listed in this study, could provide a working criteria to commence this process.

Recommendation 4: Education authorities must recognise the myriad of different forms of giftedness. It must be understood that any single, all encompassing definition of giftedness will be too wide to be of real value. Instead a variety of definitions appropriate to the various forms of giftedness is needed.

Recommendation 5: The issue of identification must be addressed. This is, of course, related to the complex question of definition, but proven, acceptable standardised and non standardised procedures do exist. These should be investigated and a policy on identification be formulated without delay.

Recommendation 6: It is essential that a more flexible approach to the education of gifted and talented children be promoted within the school system. Research at an international level, has provided information of programs and strategies, that have been proved effective with children of superior abilities (see Appendix). Implementation of this recommendation has strong implication for teacher training both at the preservice and inservice level.

Recommendation 7: Extensive and validated research must be undertaken in the area of gifted and talented Education in NSW. To this date the research in this area has been almost non existent. The 1977 report of the Australian Education Council highlighted this deficiency.

It is important to note that there has been a paucity of investigations dealing with gifted children. ... There is still a need for further research specifically into such areas as the efficacy of various curricula and the different methods of teaching and organization

(Australian Education Council 1977 p2).

More recently, the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented children in Canberra in March 1988 were informed by the Victorian Government in their submission:

Compared with other countries, research in Australia (in the area of education of gifted and talented) is almost non-existent. The Commonwealth needs to undertake its own applied research. Great benefit could be derived from an examination of

1. Current policies relating to the education of the gifted and talented, both at national and international level, and

2. Support for research on the education of gifted and talented. An analysis of the domains in which further research is needed would emphasise the possible future effects of the current lack of information and support.

In light of the wide array of educational concerns which have received funding, is it to be assumed that the special concerns of children with high level abilities is either not of interest to the research community, or that grant applications in this area have not been funded? This state of affairs still continues despite the Schools Commissions' clear recognition of this need.

It was only in the latter part of the 1980's, sparked by the return of a state Liberal government after more than a decade of Labour egalitarian rule, that some form of recognition was given to the existence of gifted and talented children in the state school system. Bob Hawke's references to the 'clever country' at Commonwealth level, the economic recession and general public dissatisfaction with state education in general, have perhaps prompted a revival of interest in the education of gifted and talented children as a future economic resource. Coupled with this was the Liberal government's intense drive for privatisation of many of the government sectors, encouraging sponsorship led to recognition of business interests in schools. 'Business'- the employing authorities - had already expressed dissatisfaction with the

educational product - the young school leaver - and wanted a greater say in the process of schooling to ensure a higher quality finished product.

This brief history has attempted to describe events in relation to the provision for gifted and talented children in NSW over a period of two hundred years. To this stage, this provision has been far from adequate. If NSW is to provide equality of educational opportunity for the gifted and talented child in the future, it will be necessary to provide an educational environment conducive to the development of every child's potential and hidden capacities.

With a mind to the careful co-ordination and rationalisation of existing educational resources for the education of gifted and talented children, there is scope within this State for the establishment of a network of communication and personnel, with both formal and informal functions. This could perhaps create considerable opportunity for a synergy between the State and the Department of School Education at both administrative and educational functional level.

It may be well to note the words of Anthony Flew, past Professor of Philosophy at the University of Reading whose statement contains a timely warning:

If we are to go on describing and abusing as elitist, any kind of discrimination and selection for quality, then we all need to recognise what we are doing. We shall - in the name of the strange false god of equality of outcomes - be repudiating all standards of excellence in every field of human achievement.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **An International Perspective.**

It is a matter of fact, rather than of choice that educational policy is interwoven with other policies of government. In all westernised countries, as well as in the developing countries, education under a variety of names, appears in every government portfolio, and it is this factor that determines the implementation of provisions for gifted and talented children. Larsson (1986) presents a comparative world view of government policies and suggests that while provisions vary widely from country to country, it is not an unreasonable generalisation to claim that westernised governments are prone to expostulate 'equality of opportunity for all' and equate this with comprehensive high schools and mixed ability classes. The practical classroom interpretation of this, is that teachers are faced with the task of implementing 'individualised learning programs' to provide 'meaningful learning experiences', an extremely difficult task noting the amount of basic resources, let alone supplementary resources, that are provided at government level. However skilful and well intentioned a teacher may be, catering for individual differences in for example six classes of thirty pupils in a comprehensive high school situation would be beyond the capacity of most teachers (Larsson 1986).

In the United Kingdom, although there has been no legislative provision for gifted and talented programs, acceleration has always been an option for the academically gifted in that it is possible to take 'O' and 'A' levels at the 'age of readiness', enter University and complete requirements for degree qualifications while their chronological peers were still completing secondary school. The United Kingdom education system is decentralised similar to the USA and Canada, making local authorities responsible for education. This has led to geographical selectivity (similar to that in NSW) with the preservation of local 'grammar' schools where conservative elite authorities have



maintained local office. The Thatcher Government's Assisted Placement Scheme (1980) has made it possible for disadvantaged gifted students to be offered placement in independent schools. This, in effect, has led to the continuation of the provision of a selective academic education for the middle class and the upwardly mobile working class (Larsson 1986). The prevalent attitude of the Teacher Unions, (similar to that of Australia), maintains that 'equality of opportunity' is best demonstrated in comprehensive high schools with mixed ability classes. They reject selectivity on the grounds of the effects on both those selected and those not selected, drawing attention to the invalidity of selection procedures and the resultant isolation from the real school community (McConville, 1977; Larsson, 1986).

The issue of gifted education in Western Germany has profound political ramifications and the Sixth International Conference on Gifted and Talented Children which was held in Hamburg in 1985, highlighted the dichotomy existing in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Conservative forces headed by the Federal Minister of Education and Science, identified that exceptionally gifted children have needs that must be met if their academic talents are to develop and so 'The Gifted Education Department' was formed. This external differentiation presented the need to establish separate gifted programs and even separate schools, including boarding schools. This was met with enthusiastic opposition from the socialist left who expressed the view that emphasis on the elite 1) distorts the normal construction of society and 2) could lead to the reconstruction of the 'master race' of Nazi Germany (Larsson 1986).

Canada in recent years, through its provincial system of education has taken the initiative in introducing 'responsibility' legislation, whereby school boards make provision for the gifted and talented children. 1985, in Ontario, for example, was marked by widespread implementation of programs, the majority of which were within the mainstream school environment. Support was provided for teachers in the form of

preservice and inservice training, assistance with identification processes, curriculum development and program implementation.

By contrast to most other westernised countries, Israel and Japan have implemented successful provision for gifted children as part of their normal mainstream education . In Israel, pressure from the Universities instigated a report to the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1970, detailing concern for Science and Mathematics. As a result, government policy made educational provision for the gifted a priority. With typical nationalistic pride, the policy was accepted without question by the public (Don Bitan et al, 1985).

In Japan, consideration of education for gifted in the mainstream is not a priority as their education system is already programmed to high skill acquisition for all students. Japan's trialled one policy based on early identification, where two year olds were accepted in to programs for gifted children providing their I.Q. scores on a Binet test were over 120. Teaching materials were developed to stimulate the ninety intellectual factors of each child based on the Guildford figural, symbolic and semantic factors. In the evaluation of these preschool programs, the claims were made that the average I Q increase was over twenty points with significant growth in the areas of divergent and convergent production (Chiba 1981).

The strong thrust of the South African policy was fostering leadership qualities among the white students only, to prepare potential leaders for the challenges of leadership in structured experiences such as schools, and later in real life. Students at tertiary level were strongly encouraged to study educational and youth leadership up to doctoral level, to foster leadership programs in schools( Larsson 1986; Ginka Nikowa et al.,1985, p37).

The United States of America does have a large number and variety of programs for gifted and talented students, especially following the Marland Report (1972) which implemented a per capita grant for gifted programs. Although it provided only limited funds, it did at least provide an impetus for teacher initiative to cater for the gifted, whether in schools, colleges or Universities. One of the most recognised initiatives of the USA is the recognition of the need to train teachers specifically for the gifted and talented with a variety of courses being offered at tertiary institutions right through to Doctoral level.

Two ideologically egalitarian countries, the Soviet Union and China, both have policies which support schools for gifted and talented students. China has many 'key' schools where academically able students are taught by specially selected teachers who are given superior facilities. According to Cleverley(1985) China's key schools aimed at reaching world standards quickly and were designated teaching centres for experimental curricula, teaching methods and administration procedures. Cleverley estimates that in the early 80's there were ten million students in key primary and middle schools in China. In U.S.S.R as early as 1960, there were highly selective schools for artistically gifted children in music and ballet, and foreign language specialist school. In addition boarding schools specializing in Sport, Mathematics and Science, whose sole purpose was to produce a 'scientific and technological elite'. Like Japan, these students were identified early, and sent to the specialised school to foster their individualised talents. It appears obvious that Soviet and Chinese educational authorities have few qualms about recognizing and stimulating the talents of able youth, despite what may appear to be a paradoxical situation(Smith 1986).

From this evidence, a conclusion may be drawn that the international trends appear to be moving away from enrichment programs which attempt to raise the level of general

achievement and creativity, and are moving towards encouraging field-specific forms of giftedness (Cleverley 1985). But as is pointed out continually in the literature, there is 'no unique solution, no panacea, no fail-safe system or approach, no single prescription to serve equally well all the differing needs' (Smith 1986). There is however, a wide variety of methods claiming varying degrees of success both at the international and national level. These methods reflect the educational philosophies of the different countries and states and the choices of policy makers peculiar to the time, culture and society in which they function.

### **A National Perspective**

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to review in detail every state's policy for provision of gifted and talented children, a brief description of preferred options in other states of Australia will place in perspective NSW's policy position.

#### **Victoria.**

A period of radical reform eventuated in Victoria in the late 60's and early 70's, as many of the rigidities of the traditional curriculum were swept aside, integrated studies were introduced and school based experiments increased in popularity. Due to the unremitting pressures from people like Professor Brian Start of Melbourne University and H.P. Waller, the Departmental representative to the First World Conference on Gifted Children in London in 1975, a Gifted Child Task Force (GCTF) was established in 1977, when the concept of giftedness was relatively exclusive, under the direction of K.W. Creed, a member of the Board of Inspectors of Secondary Schools. Several programs worthy of note eventuated from their recommendations.

The first at Mt. Waverly High School, involved seventeen Year 8 students of outstanding academic ability, on a withdrawal project for one day per week, on an enrichment program which did not encroach upon the subject content of the regular

curriculum. The Footscray experiment again involved a one day a week withdrawal program for 29 students drawn from 8 schools who attended Footscray Technical College for accelerated Mathematics, English and elective enrichment topics. This program revealed the organizational difficulties when additional units were made compulsory (GCTF1979c) although both student and parent responses positively supported the program in spite of the student difficulty of catching up with a whole days school work. The Footscray group quickly accepted that acceleration was essential to challenge the most outstanding students. The third innovation was the Doncaster experiment, based on a cluster organization and involving tutors from Gordon Technical College and Deakin University, and modified to rotate over different days of the week thus creating greater flexibility for both students and lecturers. It became increasingly obvious from these experiments that students of high intellectual potential were most challenged when they were permitted to proceed at an accelerated pace and to cover some aspects of the curriculum in reduced time (Braggett 1985).

In 1981, an acceleration program for gifted students was established at University High School to enable students on the basis of high intellectual ability, academic attitude, high motivation and social/emotional adjustment, to complete the normal six year curriculum in four years (Nagorcka 1984). Specially selected teachers adapted curriculum and syllabi to give increased flexibility to both students and teachers. This program continued to meet with unqualified success for the next five years (Braggett 1985).

Another highly successful Victorian innovation was the Mentor Contact Program, where personnel from tertiary institutions, schools and the general community, were requested to act as mentors on a one to one basis with identified highly able students with recognised potential and ability. (Braggett 1985)

Over the past decade the Victorian definition of giftedness has broadened from an exclusive four percent of the age group identified in narrow academic terms to a figure of twenty percent of academically able and otherwise talented children who are educated as far as possible in their neighbourhood schools (Smith 1986).

The GCTF's future was under threat because of mounting union and labour government pressures, and under the premiership of John Cain's Labour government it was dismantled during the 1980's. In spite of the criticisms, it must be acknowledged that it had a significant influence in raising and developing educational and community awareness of gifted children in Victoria, in developing and organising programs for more able students and in assisting teachers and administrators in coming to terms with the difficulty of implementation of curriculum at the local level. The GCTF was a pioneer in that time when there was virtually no information available on gifted children available in Australia. It has, by its research and its publications positively influenced the policies of all other states in Australia.

### **Tasmania**

Tasmania helped to pioneer the way in Australia in democratising public education, reducing inequality and introducing comprehensive primary and secondary schooling with strong social purpose. Its long standing tradition of grouping children based on social maturity and chronological age rather than on ability or academic achievement is indicative of its respect for egalitarianism so firmly entrenched in its educational policies. Tasmania's policy firmly states that 'it is the task of the regular teacher to foster the gifts and talents of every child within the existing comprehensive school' (Smith 1986). Identification is to be made on the basis of peer, teacher, self and parent nomination with requests for both human and material resources to cater for such children. All policies are school based and reflect the egalitarian framework of the

state's official policy which defines giftedness in the broadest possible fashion, recognizing that the fear of elitism is very strong. It reveals the importance of embedding provision for gifted students within the mainstream of educational practice, and the impossibility of long term commitments where programs are dependent on regional discretionary allocations, themselves based on priority considerations.

### **South Australia**

The policymakers in South Australia were at the forefront of moves to decentralise decisionmaking in the early 1970's and school principals were given discretionary and innovationary powers long before their counterparts in other states. Community involvement and interest in local schools has led to widespread use of school facilities outside school hours. In this context provision of talented students in South Australia is encompassed under the extension of abilities and talents of all students within their comprehensive neighbourhood school. Stress is placed on 'school based programs designed to cater for a wide range of abilities and talents', rather than on 'specific provision for gifted and talented students' (Our Schools and Their Purposes 1981). Seemingly at odds with this philosophy, is the establishment of Special Interest Centres in Music, Foreign Languages and Agriculture. Students, teachers and curricula are rigorously selected. It is argued that they provide for subject areas which are not viable in the majority of secondary schools and cultivate excellence in those curriculum areas where schools are most vulnerable (Giles 1984, Buxton 1984). It is common knowledge that they were commenced for political reasons : the Minister of Education at the time desired them and they were introduced as a result of his initiative (Braggett 1985).

This should not detract from the gains that have been made and the willingness of the South Australian Department of Education to raise awareness of the wider problem of individual differences, encourage new organisational methods and support curriculum

implementation at the local school level. But for the most part the state does remain committed to providing for talented children within local schools, by raising awareness of both teachers and community, and providing subsequent resources.

### **Western Australia**

Western Australia is without a doubt one of the leading states in provision of special programs for gifted and talented. 'It was the first state to develop an overall policy based on enrichment and extension for students in Years 11 and 12' (Braggett 1985). It is impossible to detail all the policy programs but several of outstanding note will be described.

Events in Western Australia must be interpreted within a philosophical framework. Prior to 1980 school based programs with an emphasis on enrichment and extension had evolved and had been officially sanctioned in the Department's Policy Statement of 1978. At the commencement of 1980, a new policy had been suddenly introduced under the direction of the centrally appointed Project Team, involving standardised testing, identification of discrete groups with specialised programming, and the creation of a 'pyramid type structure'. This continued until 1984, when the Kelly committee (commissioned by the new Labour Government), sought to return to the favoured school based egalitarian system (Mossenson 19860).

In 1980, several projects were launched which, with modifications in 1984, as a result of the Beazley and Kelly reports. They continued successfully for several years under the titles of Special Interest Centres (SPICE) for academically able Year 3 Students and Full Time Extension Classes (FUTEC) for the top two percent of intellectually talented students. Western Australia was also the first state to graft specialist subject departments onto existing comprehensive school, a policy commenced in 1968, and still effective in the 1980's. State wide Talent Search selects year 7 students for Special



Secondary Placement with talents in Art, Music or Academics. Its aim was to promote excellence but it also hoped to arrest the drift to independent schools (Minister's Report 1987).

The existence of the Gifted and Talented Children's Program Project Group, the annual state-wide Talent Search, and the high visibility of SPICE, FUTECH and SSPP (Special Secondary Placement Programs) classes all provide striking evidence of Western Australia's commitment to the education of outstanding children (Braggett 1975). The early emphasis on extension and acceleration has given way to a combination of extension and enrichment; there appears now less concern for accelerated progression and more emphasis upon providing a broader and deeper understanding of the curricula offered (Smith 1986). With pioneers like Mossenson, Goodridge and Beazley Western Australia has led the way in centralised provision for gifted education. 'The Department has legitimised and embedded this provision within the mainstream of educational practice, creating an educational structure that enhances planning, design, implementation and evaluation, the only state to have achieved this distinction' (Braggett 1985).

### **Northern Territory**

The first signs of interest in gifted education at system level came from the incoming Director, Dr. J. Eedle in 1985. With the transfer of the education function in mid 1979 from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory, a new era had commenced in educational development, and with it came an 88 page report to the Northern Territory Department of Education entitled *The Educational Needs of the Gifted and Creatively Talented Child in the Northern Territory*, in 1980. This resulted in the formulation of the policy in 1983. This was formulated in answer to strong response from parents who no longer wished to follow the previous practice of 'sending the bright children south' to complete their education, often at great emotional and financial cost to the

family (P & C Report 1982). The parents demanded that the Department of Education, while strongly egalitarian in nature, make provision for academically able children within the current system. This move was strongly supported by T R Crawford, (who had been appointed as Temporary Advisor in 1977) and Dr J Eedle, (the Director of Education in 1985). Dr. Eedle was receptive to requests from, and implementation at, system level. With the formulation of the Policy, came formal identification, selection and placement procedures, but with the majority of initiatives occurring at the Primary level. There is still an obvious need for secondary schools to develop differentiated programs for outstanding students, and the formidable problem of identifying traits of Aboriginal giftedness with the implementation of policies appropriate to the cultures of the many Aboriginal groups present in the Northern Territory (Braggett 1986). Against a background that differs from the rest of Australia, it appears that the Northern Territory now has to put practical foundations under its philosophical statement.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

The Australian Capital Territory gained its educational independence from NSW in 1967 with the establishment of an Interim Council under the leadership of Sir George Currie to design an autonomous Education Authority. There was a widespread desire to break free from traditional educational approaches and create a new system responsive to local needs. Two courageous developments, freedom from central control and the ability to develop curriculum appropriate to the local school without the pressure of an external exam, has afforded considerable scope for individual initiative and experimentation (Braggett 1985). Despite this, virtually all parents and teachers were willing to endorse the Authority's Neighbourhood School concept, with enriching and stimulating environments which catered for gifted children in the regular classroom.

In 1976, a request from the Australian Education Council for a paper outlining the provision for gifted and talented children was met with the response that 'no specific

system-provision for pre-school, primary, or secondary pupils existed,' with no 'conscious attempt' to identify these children by the Counselling and Guidance Section (Australian Education Council 1977). Simultaneously in July 1976, all Canberra schools were approached by the Convenor of the Australian College of Education to ascertain the extent of provision for gifted and talented children. No school claimed specific provision for these children, with the majority accepting that these students were very well catered for by their respective schools and communities with no 'groundswell of opinion' indicating provision be made either in separate schools or separate classes (Australian Education Council 1987). The interesting anomaly existing was the separate provision for over 1,000 pupils in special education classes indicating a clear differentiation of policy between developmentally delayed children and developmentally accelerated children. There were isolated programs in individual schools but in general little specific provision was made and even the term 'gifted' was avoided at system level (McKenzie 1984).

Within the framework of local responsibility, on-going school based enrichment and extension programs have provided differentiated provision for more able students. The Policy formulation from the Authority was a 'protracted exercise which gave no indication of urgency' and it was not until August 1983 that an official policy described as a 'guarded statement which reflected a cautious acceptance of a need within a strong egalitarian philosophy', was adopted after an approval process of some 28 months (Braggett 1985).

With the formulation of the policy came some resource funding in the form of the first full time consultant. It is interesting to note that a similar request in 1981 was responded to by Dr B Price, the then Director of the Curriculum Branch, with the suggestion that recommendations would only be acceptable requesting resources or programs' at no additional cost or that could be implemented with existing resources'.

The Authority did accept that the average ability of most ACT students was 'higher than in most states, largely due to the atypical ACT population,' but it continually stressed the intellectual and cultural richness of the Canberra environment where 'the gifted and talented student could pursue his/her interests as an individual' (Price 1984).