SENIOR SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM POLICY
REFORMS IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT:
A FOCUS ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2005 TO 2015

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This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work and no part of it has been submitted for a degree at this, or any other university. All sources have been acknowledged appropriately.

Signed: 

Date: December 2016
ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyse the production and enactment of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in an Australian context, with a focus on Western Australia (WA) from 2005 to 2015. The study captures a significant period of change in Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy when high-stakes examinations were introduced in WA for the first time and where the introduction of an Australian Curriculum intersected with State reforms to impact the curriculum policy landscape. How PE curriculum policy evolved in light of the complex and dynamic processes involved was the focus of this study, which spanned from global influences to local (school) level policy practices. The study also highlighted the ‘messy realities’ of policy processes that are evident with curriculum policy in Australia’s federal system along with the increasing role of the Federal Government in creating national-State-local policy tensions in a context of accelerating globalisation.

Two theoretical paradigms guided this study. First, interpretivism was used to understand the perspectives of key policy actors and the meanings they were making of PE curriculum policy reforms. Second, critical theory was applied for an analysis of the power relationships between stakeholder groups across the different levels (global to local) of the relevant curriculum policy processes, focusing on issues of social justice and equity. The concept of a ‘policy trajectory’ shaped the framework for this study’s design and the reporting of findings. This framework consisted of four contexts: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. Research questions were generated for each of these contexts. Data was collected through interviews and documentary sources at national (Australia), State (WA) and local (schools) level, with the greatest focus being on how Western Australia Certificate of Education (WACE) - Physical Education Studies curriculum policy was enacted in
schools. Consequently, at the school level, a case study approach was undertaken where teachers from three different schools (Government, Independent and Catholic) were interviewed. Approaches to data collection and analysis were consistent across the three case study schools thereby facilitating cross-case comparisons. Subsequent comparative analysis along the policy trajectory from global to local levels facilitated a ‘bigger picture’ of the PE curriculum processes involved.

The research findings revealed several major themes in each context of the policy trajectory. For the contexts of policy influences, policy text production and policy practices, themes emerged around a series of tensions that were embedded in policy processes. Within the context of policy influences these tensions revolved around: government control; the ideology underpinning PE curriculum policy; accountability; and competition. For the context of policy text production, tensions revolved around: curriculum policy intentions; the relative power of different discourses in PE; and consultation processes. For the context of policy practices in schools, tensions revolved around: resourcing support for schools; WACE syllabus and classroom pedagogy; and WACE assessment types. Finally, for the context of longer term policy outcomes, three major themes encapsulate how equity and social justice are impacted as a consequence of the curriculum policy reforms: student opportunity and achievement; teaching for quality; and teaching for equity of student outcomes in PE. The major themes in each policy context (influences, texts, practices and outcomes) formed the basis of propositions presented in the penultimate chapter of this thesis. The thesis concludes with a number of recommendations that potentially provide ‘food for thought’ beyond the localised settings of this study, as well as possibilities for further research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THESIS ................................. 1

- Introduction and Aim ............................................. 1
- Central Concepts .............................................. 2
- Methodology .................................................. 4  
  - Theoretical underpinnings of this study ................... 5
  - Policy trajectory framework ................................ 5
  - Research questions ......................................... 7
  - Methods ..................................................... 8
- Positionality of the Researcher ................................. 9
- Significance and Contribution ................................. 10
- Structure of this Thesis ..................................... 12

## CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND ........................................ 14

- Introduction .................................................. 14
- Historical Contexts to the 1970s .............................. 14
- International Developments from the 1980s .................... 18
- Australian Developments from the 1980s ....................... 20
- Western Australian Developments from the 1980s ............... 25
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 32

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ................................................................. 33
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 33
Globalisation, Neoliberalism and Education Policy .......................................................... 33
Conceptualisations of Physical Education Curriculum Policy ........................................ 37
Teachers as Enactors Curriculum Policy ......................................................................... 47
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 58

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY ................................................................................. 59
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 59
Aim of the Study .................................................................................................................. 59
Theoretical Underpinnings of this Study .......................................................................... 60
The Policy Trajectory Framework .................................................................................... 63
Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 65
Case Study Research ........................................................................................................ 66
Methods ............................................................................................................................. 68
  Data collection .................................................................................................................. 69
  Data analysis ..................................................................................................................... 74
Trustworthiness of Findings ............................................................................................. 77
Ethical Considerations or Issues ...................................................................................... 79
Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 80

CHAPTER FIVE: NATIONAL (MACRO) LEVEL FINDINGS ........................................ 81
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 81
The Context of Influences ................................................................................................. 82
A new federalism ................................................................. 82
Curriculum trends in Physical Education ........................................ 85
Accountability ................................................................ 87
Competition in education markets .......................................... 88
The Context of Policy Text Production ...................................... 89
Equity ............................................................................. 90
Quality ............................................................................. 92
Dominance of social-critical discourses .................................. 94
The role of the professional association: The Australian Council for
Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) ............. 96
The Context of Policy Practices .................................................. 98
School resources .................................................................. 98
Teacher engagement with change .......................................... 100
The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes ......................... 103
The equity of inputs ................................................................ 103
The equity of outcomes for students .................................... 105
Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE .... 106
Conclusion ........................................................................ 108

CHAPTER SIX: STATE (MESO) LEVEL FINDINGS ......................... 110
Introduction ........................................................................ 110
The Context of Influences ...................................................... 110
A new federalism .................................................................. 110
Curriculum trends in Physical Education ............................... 112
Accountability ....................................................................... 114
Competition in education markets ...................................... 115
The Context of Policy Text Production ................................................................. 115
Rescientised discourses ..................................................................................... 116
Quality ................................................................................................................ 118
The power of the State dictates ......................................................................... 119
Policy consultation .............................................................................................. 121
The Context of Policy Practices .......................................................................... 123
School resources ................................................................................................ 123
Teacher engagement with change ...................................................................... 126
Teacher accountability ......................................................................................... 128
The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes .................................................... 131
The equity of inputs ............................................................................................. 132
The equity of outcomes for students .................................................................. 133
Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE .................................. 135
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 136

CHAPTER SEVEN: LOCAL (MICRO) LEVEL SCHOOL FINDINGS ........ 138
Introduction ........................................................................................................ 138
School Settings .................................................................................................. 138
The Context of Influences ................................................................................ 140
Case study school 1 (Government): Influences ................................................. 140
Case study school 2 (Catholic): Influences ....................................................... 144
Case study school 3 (Independent): Influences ............................................... 147
The Context of Policy Text Production ............................................................. 149
Case study school 1 (Government): Policy text production ............................ 150
Case study school 2 (Catholic): Policy text production .................................... 153
Case study school 3 (Independent): Policy text production ........................... 156
The Context of Policy Practices ................................................................. 159
Case study school 1 (Government): Policy practices ......................... 160
Case study school 2 (Catholic): Policy practices ......................... 164
Case study school 3 (Independent): Policy practices ..................... 168
The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes ........................................... 171
Case study school 1 (Government): Longer term policy outcomes ....... 172
Case study school 2 (Catholic): Longer term policy outcomes .......... 177
Case study school 3 (Independent): Longer term policy outcomes ...... 180
Conclusion ............................................................................................. 184

CHAPTER EIGHT: META-ANALYSIS ALONG THE POLICY TRAJECTORY AND DISCUSSION: GLOBAL TO LOCAL LEVELS .... 187
Introduction .......................................................................................... 187
The Context of Influences along the Policy Trajectory ...................... 188
Tensions between national and State government policy agendas ....... 190
Ideological tensions between social-critical and rescientised approaches in Physical Education curriculum ................................. 192
Accountability tensions between internal (schools) assessment and external (State and national) examinations ................................. 194
Competitive tensions between public and private providers .............. 195
Propositions: The Context of Influence .................................................. 197
The Context of Policy Text Production along the Policy Trajectory ...... 198
Curriculum policy intentions: Equity and quality ............................... 200
The relative power of discourses in PE texts:
Social-critical and rescientised ideologies ......................................... 202
Consultation processes: Government policy elite and teacher participation .... 204
Proposition: The Context of Policy Text Production ............................ 207
The Context of Policy Practices along the Policy Trajectory ........................................ 207

Resourcing support for schools: Centralised government versus localised networks .......................................................... 209

WACE syllabus and classroom pedagogy: Sequential versus concurrent ........ 211

WACE assessment types: Range of assessments versus examinations .......... 213


The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes along the Policy Trajectory ....... 216

Student opportunity and achievement ................................................................. 218

Teaching for quality ............................................................................................... 219

Teaching for equity of student outcomes in Physical Education ..................... 222

Propositions: The Context of Longer Term Outcomes ....................................... 224

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 224

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ......................................................... 226

Introduction .......................................................................................................... 226

Policy Developments since data collection was completed in 2015 .................. 227

Policy developments in the Context of Policy Influences ........................................ 227

Policy developments in the Context of Policy Text Production ....................... 229

Policy developments in the Context of Policy Practices ...................................... 230

Policy developments in the Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes .......... 232

Recommendations for Policy and Practice ......................................................... 232

Recommendations for policy and practice at the National Level ...................... 233

Recommendations for policy and practice at the State Level ............................ 234

Recommendations for policy and practice at School (local) Level ..................... 235

Implications for Further Research ....................................................................... 237

Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 238
REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 239

APPENDIX A – Participant information letter ................................................................ 254

APPENDIX B – Consent to participate in research project .............................................. 256

APPENDIX C – Interview questions ............................................................................... 257
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACARA  Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

ACHPER  The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation

ACHPER WA  The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Western Australia

AITSL  Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

ATAR  The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank

CAF  Common Assessment Framework

CSE  Certificate of Secondary Education

HoLA  Head of Learning Area

HPE  Health and Physical Education

MCEETYA  The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

OBE  Outcomes-based education

PE  Physical Education

PES  Physical Education Studies

PSA  Private Schools Association

SCSA  School Curriculum and Standards Authority

UK  United Kingdom

UWA  The University of Western Australia

WA  Western Australia

WACE  Western Australian Certificate of Education

WACE-PES  Western Australian Certificate of Education – Physical Education Studies

WA-HPE syllabus  Western Australian, Health and Physical Education Syllabus
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Introduction and Aim

The aim of this study was to analyse the production and enactment of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in an Australian context, with a focus on Western Australia (WA) from 2005 to 2015. A major curriculum policy reform in WA during this decade was the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) which was associated with new policy and practice in relation to tertiary entrance examinable subjects. The primary focus of this study was the new course of Physical Education Studies (PES) for Year 11 and 12, drafted initially in 2005, which emerged out of a need to offer students a tertiary entrance pathway in Health and Physical Education for the State of WA. Consequently, Year 11 and 12 PES became an examinable course for the first time in 2007. For WA’s physical educators, this was a curriculum policy reform that was highly contested, and it continued to evolve over a decade. The introduction of an Australian Curriculum (Australia’s first national curriculum) within this time frame significantly added complexity to Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy processes and challenged the status quo in regards to Health and Physical Education curriculum policy in Australia. How policy reforms played out, in WACE-PES (State of WA) and an Australian Curriculum (national), would determine the future curriculum policy landscape for PE in WA.

HPE curriculum policy differs in every State and Territory of Australia as a product of the variable influences impacting upon education policy debates in different settings (Davis, 2006). Areas of contestation have arisen from the way PE is conceptualised by stakeholders and what they perceived curriculum policy to be, given their own beliefs and
values. Issues at the forefront of the debate have involved: the role of physical activity in senior school curriculum; links between physical activity and applied theoretical knowledge; social-cultural understandings; social-critical inquiry; and the ‘scientisation’ (where knowledge of science concepts is privileged over other knowledge) of PE. How teachers deal with new PE curriculum policy in light of these influences was of particular interest to this study. Furthermore, in understanding the ‘messy realities’ of policy processes (Ball, 1994) and the increasing role of both globalisation and the Australian Federal Government’s educational policies, the study also highlights the global-national-State-local (schools) tensions embedded in PE curriculum policy processes.

What follows in this chapter is an overview of the study. The next section is an introduction to the study’s central concepts (elaborated in Chapter Three). This is proceeded by a brief explication of the methodology employed (elaborated in Chapter Four), including a short description of the theoretical paradigms on which this study is based, and the ‘policy trajectory’ framework which is the central element of the study’s design. To conclude this chapter, the positionality of the researcher and the significance of this study for key stakeholders in curriculum policy development and enactment is discussed. The chapter finishes with a description of the structure of this thesis.

Central Concepts

There are several concepts central to this study, which are introduced here but elaborated on in Chapter Three of this thesis. First, the concept of ‘education policy’ is defined and how, in an era of globalisation, policy processes extend from global influences to local (institutional) levels of enactment. Here, the notion of ‘neoliberalism’ is discussed and why education policy is increasingly influenced by the international economy. Second, the concept of ‘curriculum policy’ is defined and explored, followed by a discussion of
how PE curriculum policy is conceptualised by policy actors. Finally, attention is given to how teachers enact curriculum policy and, particularly, the enactment of PE curriculum policy over the decades. A brief précis of these concepts are presented here.

‘Education policy’ is defined by Blackmore & Lauder (2005, p.97) as a form of social action that includes “documents, processes, discourses, decisions, programs and outcomes”. This view of ‘policy’ is more than just official documents produced by the authoritative body, but operates more broadly to include the interrelationships of key policy actors (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This definition is multi-dimensional to include whether the intentions of policy makers are actualised by those whose role it is to enact policy. For this reason, contemporary policy analysis goes beyond a mere dissection of the actions of government or institutions in terms of securing particular outcomes (Ball and Shilling, 1994) because policy is seen as contested and negotiated (Ozga, 2000; Vidovich, 2007). In other words, policy production and reproduction occur at various levels where policy actors are engaged in interpreting and enacting policy as part of an extended process. Such a view of policy as a ‘process’ is adopted by this study. Education policy processes increasingly encompass global trends including a dominance of neoliberal ideology where market principles prevail, placing “a nation in a competitive position in a rapidly globalising world” (Vickers, 2013, p.234).

How ‘curriculum policy’ is conceptualised is the second concept explored in this study, particularly with regards to PE curriculum policy. While no one definition encapsulates ‘curriculum policy’ and its processes (Marsh, 2009), curriculum often comprises flexible frameworks that include content, pedagogy and assessment (Kelly, 2004; Marsh, 2009; Penney, Brooker, Hay & Gillespie, 2009). These frameworks are open to interpretation by those who implement them because teachers are often given decision-making space to
adapt the intended curriculum to local school conditions (Vickers, 2013). However, over the decade of this study in WA, these frameworks have been replaced by ‘syllabuses’ and represent the main documents (artefacts) in wider curriculum policy. In this thesis, the WACE-PES syllabus was the main curriculum document containing statements of rationale, teaching and learning, content and assessment.

How teachers enact curriculum policy becomes the third concept in this study. Marsh (2009) suggested that a useful starting point in conceptualising curriculum policy is to view policy at three levels: the ‘planned’; the ‘enacted’; and the ‘experienced’ curriculum. In proposing this conceptualisation, Marsh acknowledged the relationships that existed between various sites of policy production and enactment that have led to different curriculum intentions and outcomes. He argued that the ‘rationale’ in policy documents reflected the beliefs and values of policy writers and have wider implications for policy actors. For this reason, this study investigated the coherence between the beliefs and values of key policy players on the one hand and the enactment of curriculum policy and PE curriculum policy on the other. As all policy is essentially a political activity, it is subject to an array of influences that contribute to the actualisation of the curriculum itself and include the values that are implicit within the nature of the curriculum, schooling and the classroom (Kelly, 2004; 2009). In other words, policy is translated in different ways as it is enacted.

**Methodology**

This section is a brief explanation of the methodology employed in this study which is elaborated further in Chapter Four of this thesis. Here the theoretical underpinnings, the concept of a policy trajectory, the research questions and the methods are introduced.
Theoretical underpinnings of this study

Two theoretical paradigms guided the methodology of this study: interpretivism; and critical theory. These two theoretical lenses were employed at different points in the study. Interpretivism was described by O’Donoghue (2007) as an approach that “emphasises social action as a basis for knowledge” (p.9) and seeks to “understand how others understand the world” (p.10). An interpretivist approach allowed the study of the perspectives of participants and examined the social interactions between policy actors as policy was negotiated and renegotiated. However, as policy construction and enactment is essentially political, framing the meta-analysis of findings around the second paradigm, critical theory, allowed an investigation of the dynamic interactions between policy and policy actors, especially in regards to power relationships, resistance, equity and social justice (Crotty, 1998; Giroux, 2003; 2011). For this reason, interpretivism and critical theory were the two complementary paradigms adopted for this study.

Policy trajectory framework

The concept of a ‘policy trajectory’ formed the framework for the design of this curriculum policy analysis. Ball (1994) originally proposed a ‘policy trajectory’ framework for the analysis of education policy that viewed policy as a process from the production of policy through to the enactment by policy actors in schools. Ball’s (1994) early conceptualisations of a policy trajectory framework identified five contexts for education policy production and enactment. These were: the ‘context of influences’ (including the drivers that operate in the policy process); ‘context of policy text production’ (the characteristics of the policy text and its production); the ‘context of practice/effects’ (how policy is refined through enactment); the ‘context of outcomes’ (the impact on equity and social justice); and the ‘context of political strategies’ (actions for policy improvements). For the purposes of this study and given the close relationship
between the last two contexts, the ‘context of outcomes’ and the ‘context of political strategies’ have been combined to represent the longer term ‘outcomes’ relating to the wider issues of equity and social justice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Vidovich, 2007; 2013).

In this study of PE curriculum reform processes, the following policy contexts were adopted as part of the policy trajectory framework. First, the ‘context of policy influences’ examined the influences upon policy actors such as global influences or the prevailing ideological, economic or political conditions. Second, the ‘context of policy text production’, investigated the struggles leading to the production of policy such as, who was included in these processes and the influences of particular stakeholders compared to others. Third, the ‘context of policy practices’ framed investigation around how policy was interpreted, resisted or changed, especially at the local level. Finally, the ‘context of longer term policy outcomes’ looked at notions of power, equity and social justice upon the policy process and how they related to the implications for policy change. Each policy context represents the struggle of conflict and compromise over the policy cycle and gives this study a sociological interest in the relationship between educational practices and social inequalities (Ball & Shilling, 1994).

In light of increasing globalisation impacting upon education policy, Vidovich (2007) built upon Ball’s (1994) work to introduce a stronger focus on the ‘macro’ (global and international) level influences and the interrelationships within policy processes from ‘macro’ (global/international/national) to ‘micro’ (local/school) levels. These levels are described as the ‘macro’, ‘meso’ and ‘micro’ levels of the policy trajectory framework.

In the study reported in this thesis, the ‘macro’ level refers to national curriculum policy processes in Australia; the ‘meso’ refers to the State level PE curriculum policy process
in WA; and the ‘local’ levels refers to selected case study schools in WA. Empirical data was collected at the macro (national) level at the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), at the meso (State) level at School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) and at the micro (local) level of case study schools in each of the three sectors (Government, Independent, Catholic).

In all, the policy trajectory framework offers a comprehensive approach to policy analysis across the levels of policy production and enactment across global to local levels (Ball, 1994; Ball, Maguire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). In this study, overarching global influences impacted on national (Australian), State (WA) and local (school) levels of PE curriculum policy processes. The policy trajectory framework was used to generate the research questions for this study.

**Research questions**

The aim of the study was translated into a series of specific research questions guided by the policy trajectory framework outlined above. Each research question was structured to align with the ‘policy trajectory’ (Ball, 1994; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Vidovich, 2007; 2013) and included the contexts of policy influences, policy text production, policy practices and longer term policy outcomes.

This research sought the perspectives of key policy actors, at each level (national, State and local), on the following questions derived from the policy trajectory framework:

1. What were the wider **influences** acting to initiate senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015?
2. What were the main characteristics of the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy texts in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and how were these texts produced?

3. How were teachers enacting the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in case study schools in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and why?

4. What are the anticipated longer term outcomes and implications of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms from 2005 to 2015 in Western Australia?

**Methods**

Data was collected using document analysis at the national (macro) and State levels (meso) as well as semi-structured interviews of key policy actors at all three levels of the policy trajectory (macro, meso, micro). As the main focus of this study centred around the perspectives of teachers and to what extent policy intentions were actualised in schools, a multiple case study approach (Creswell, 2007; Punch, 2009; Yin, 2009; 2012; 2014) was used at the school (micro) level to compare teacher perspectives from each of the school education sectors in WA. This included one school each from the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors.

The initial analysis of data was conducted using the Miles and Huberman Framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Punch, 2009). This initial analysis of the perspectives of policy actors was underpinned by the theoretical paradigm of ‘interpretivism’. Themes and sub-themes were identified from the data for each level of the policy trajectory (macro, meso, micro). ‘Critical theory’ was then used as part of a meta-analysis where major themes and sub-themes were compared and contrasted along
the whole policy trajectory from macro (national), to meso (State of WA) and to micro/local (schools) levels. Critical theory allowed for a ‘bigger picture’ analysis of PE curriculum policy, including the implications for equity and social justice (Kellner, 2003). Although perspectives of key policy actors at all levels of the process were sought, the main focus was on teachers and policy enactment in schools. From the meta-analysis along the policy trajectory, a series of tensions embedded within the PE curriculum policy processes under investigation were identified. Finally, theoretical propositions stemming from the findings, in relation to influences, policy texts, practices and outcomes, are presented.

**Positionality of the Researcher**

The researcher, as a Head of Health and Physical Education at a WA government school and a former member of working parties for School Curriculum and Standards Authority (State of WA) and the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (national), had observed the issues experienced by teachers in the enactment of this curriculum policy reform. Consequently, how curriculum policy was operationalised by teachers became the focus of this study, although the researcher’s school was not one of the case studies.

Prior to the study, the researcher had observed, in a number of schools, that time constraints had led teachers to adopt content-driven approaches to PE curriculum which were not necessarily consistent with the intent of the syllabus or the skills students needed to succeed in examinations. To add greater complexity, an Australian Curriculum in Health and Physical Education was introduced within the timeframe of this study which complicated the curriculum reform policy process in WA. How PE teachers dealt with new curriculum policy and the influences upon them as crucial policy actors was soon
recognised by the researcher as a compelling focus for this study. Just as important was the need to understand whether the intentions of curriculum policy reform were interpreted in similar ways by different schools and whether global influences were having an impact at the local level.

Significance and Contribution

O’Donoghue (2007) and Punch (2009) identified three ways in which qualitative studies can be significant in education research. Using these as a guide, there are three main areas where this study makes a contribution. First, the study hopes to add knowledge and bring change to the curriculum policy reform process. Second, theory generated from this study has implications for other policy situations in broader contexts beyond the primary focus in WA, such as the Australian Curriculum and potentially in curriculum policy development internationally. Finally, this study assists teachers and policy actors in general with the enactment of current and future curriculum policy, especially through an emphasis on professional learning and democratising aspects of the policy process. Each of these contributions will now be discussed briefly in the following three paragraphs.

The findings of this study can make a contribution towards knowledge and bringing change to the learning area of HPE, particularly Physical Education. In an analysis of the literature around human movement, pedagogy and curriculum, there have been few qualitative studies contributing to knowledge about PE curriculum policy at senior school (Years 11 and 12) level, although this is slowly changing. The uniqueness of this study in the field of PE is in its use of a policy trajectory where PE curriculum policy is analysed at the global, national (macro), State (meso) and school (local) levels which has the potential to enlighten understanding of curriculum policy processes and struggles. This should help inform PE curriculum policy for the future.
A second area of contribution this study can make is to improve curriculum policy processes, and potentially help bridge the policy-practice gap. Caldwell (2006) advocated for a greater understanding about the work of teachers in schools to better discover whether current and future policy implementations work efficiently. The enactment of curriculum policy reform involves negotiation and re-negotiation between many stakeholders. Therefore, how teachers cope and enact curriculum policy has value for future PE curriculum policy development. The findings of this study are expected to be of interest to the authorities involved in curriculum production in Australia such as: the national authority, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA); the State (WA) body, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA); and the national professional organisation, the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER). Theoretical findings could also be of wider interest in other national settings.

Thirdly, the findings from this study have significance for professional learning programs involving Australian teachers, and potentially beyond in other national settings. The findings from this study may assist in developing reflective practitioners who, as O’Donoghue (2007, p.65) explained, can “understand, challenge and reform”. The significance of this study is in its knowledge contribution to educating teachers for new curriculum policy. This includes the benefit to PE teachers in WA, whose role it is to cope with curriculum policy reform and enact a high-stakes examinable course within wider reform processes. Enhancing teacher knowledge about how they can give the best opportunities for their students has relevance beyond this study’s context.
It is important to reiterate at this point that while there is potential significance of the research findings from this study for other settings, beyond the primary focus on WA, there is no intention to generalise from the specific empirical findings at particular sites. Care has been taken to appropriately contextualise this research, such that policy actors in other settings might make their own judgements about any ‘policy learning’ they may take from these findings. That is, the study provides ‘food for thought’ in other contexts.

**Structure of this Thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters of which Chapter One, the Introduction, is the opening chapter. Chapter Two provides a contextual background to PE curriculum policy which includes international, national and WA contextual overviews, along with the identification of the key policy documents that have had influence on policy construction and enactment. Chapter Three is a review of literature around the central concepts embedded in the study, such as: globalisation, neoliberalism and education policy; curriculum policy and particularly, PE curriculum policy; and teachers as enactors of PE curriculum policy. This includes a critical and analytical synthesis of conceptual literature which has relevance to PE curriculum policy. The contests and struggles existing in PE curriculum policy processes are highlighted. Chapter Four is a discussion of the theory and methods this study has employed. This chapter describes in more detail the theoretical underpinnings, the conceptual framework of a ‘policy trajectory’ which structures the research questions and the methods for data collection and analysis. Chapter Five signals the start of the findings of this research which are initially presented at the national (macro) level. Chapter Six presents findings at the State (meso) level of WA. Chapter Seven presents findings from within the three case study schools, with one school from each sector in WA: Government; Catholic and Independent. It also presents a cross-case analysis of the findings at school level (‘horizontal’ analysis). Chapter Eight
is a meta-analysis along the entire policy trajectory from macro to meso to micro levels (‘vertical’ analysis). In this chapter, emerging meta-themes are discussed, as they relate to the research questions and the literature. This thesis concludes with **Chapter Nine** and a discussion of the implications and recommendations from this study, including considerations for future research in relation to PE curriculum policy.
CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND

Introduction
This chapter presents an overview of the contextual background relevant to this study of Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy in an Australian setting. It commences with the historical influences on PE curriculum policy, in Australia and internationally, from the early 1900s to the 1970s, and how these influences helped shape its formation. Following the historical background is a discussion of international perspectives from the 1980s where changes in the meaning of the term ‘physical education’ were evident. How these changes influenced curriculum policy development in Australia ensues, with a more detailed examination of the national context and how debate about PE curriculum policy has progressed. This chapter concludes by exploring State issues influencing Western Australia (WA) as well as the changing national-State dynamics in Australia’s federal system, and the impact upon PE curriculum policy development in the lead up to the 2005 to 2015 timeframe of this study.

Historical Contexts to the 1970s
The study of human movement and PE has been around for centuries, but in more recent times, PE curriculum has been linked to some aspect of nation building (McLaughlin, 1992). In the 18th and 19th centuries, movements in Europe saw PE under a holistic health banner aimed at improving the strength of boys as part of social initiatives in health, education and social engagement (Guedes, 2007). The beginning of the 20th century marked the emergence of PE as a phenomenon around the world, originating from the military as ‘physical training’ to prepare countries for war. In Australia, much of the philosophy of ‘physical training’ was derived from Britain with a military emphasis upon gymnastics and callisthenics, aimed at installing discipline and national character. English
boarding schools adopted physical training as part of their curriculum to generate fervour, to “teach boys to be men” and curb the high spirits of students (Singleton, 2009, p.325). The early physical educators were ex-military personnel and consequently, physical training was predominantly the domain of males in the early part of the 20th century. Physical Training had its origins in Science, Psychology and Medicine with the measurement of performance a large part of its operations. This partly was the foundation for a scientific and political discourse that was contested territory in PE curriculum policy (Singleton, 2009).

In the United States of America, PE took on a socio-cultural emphasis in response to problems experienced with inner city living in the 19th and 20th centuries. Azzarito, Munro and Solman (2004) called this the ‘playground movement’ where recreational areas became sites for play and social interaction. PE at this point in time, like physical training, was viewed as having holistic social and health benefits for participants. With immigration, industrialisation and urbanisation causing profound social and economic change, the United States experience generated more of a social and cultural discourse involving gender, ethnicity, power and opportunity.

By the 1930s, a stronger emphasis on boys’ competitive games and a wider range of physical activity opportunities for girls started to emerge (Ennis, 2006). There were academics in the United States who were attempting to create PE as a university subject in its own right. However, to obtain recognition for research and undergraduate courses in the academic field, PE had to establish sub-disciplines that saw it lean towards sports science. This historical development has implications for how policy actors view contemporary PE curriculum policy. As Guedes (2007) reasoned, the discourse chosen to
define the field of PE remains a source of contest and struggle on curriculum policy development in the 21st century.

In Australia, the development of PE into a human movement science mirrored approaches in Britain and the United States. ‘Physical Education’, as a subject of study in Australia, was pioneered by Dr Fitz Duras who arrived at the University of Melbourne from Germany in the 1930s and became interested in teaching a small group of teachers about physical culture based on “the anatomy of bodily exercise” (Tinning, 2008, p.22). The course was a sub-graduate diploma that was eventually phased out in the 1960s and replaced with movement science at undergraduate level. The 1956 Melbourne Olympics was an impetus on which the Australian identity around sport became prominent and a momentum towards expanding PE courses was enhanced. Initially, as Tinning (2008) explained, these courses had a “strong militaristic discourse” (p.23) because national service in Australia existed through to the 1960s as a consequence of Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War. However, the 1970s saw human movement studies gain momentum, particularly in WA, due to the work of Professor John Bloomfield. In 1973, as a result of Australia’s declining Olympic sport success, Professor Bloomfield was commissioned by the Federal Government to produce a report entitled *The Role, Scope and Development of Recreation in Australia* (Bloomfield, 1973). This report would be a precursor to the establishment of the Australian Institute of Sport, with the notion of ‘sport’ being an even more dominant discourse in PE curriculum policy.

In WA, courses in PE teaching began to be offered by the University of Western Australia (UWA) in the mid-20th century. By the 1970s, the UWA introduced studies in sub-disciplines like Biomechanics, Exercise Physiology, Functional Anatomy (measurement), Growth and Development, Acquisition of Skill and the Sociology of
Sport. At this and other educational institutions, studies in sport had a high profile and were underpinned by the teaching of motor skills. Participating in sport was separated from the coursework with limited or no content integration between the two. For many WA teachers educated this way, teaching which integrated practical and theory components as required by Year 11 and 12 PES did not seem a ‘natural’ progression as, in their own education, theory and practical components of learning were considered as separate although related entities.

To sum up this historical perspective to the 1970s, several dilemmas for the subject emerged as a result of the type of discourse that dominated the PE curriculum policy landscape. First, militaristic origins through ‘physical training’ gave rise to a focus on measurement and performance. Second, the playground movement was a response to changing social and economic conditions that came with urbanisation and immigration in the United States of America. Third, as the PE movement gained academic recognition, the subject moved to sub-disciplines that were predominantly science-based. Fourth, the games movement and the progression to competitive sport consolidated the discourse around ‘sport’, one which was identified with the ‘science of sport’. Arguably, these four historical contexts up to the 1970s are still seen as contested territory in PE curriculum policy in the 21st century as various organisations and agencies attempt to define the field variously as Physical Education, Science, Health, Sport or a combination of these. Consequently, how policy actors conceptualise the subject influences curriculum policy development and practice. What follows is a discussion of the international, Australian and State (WA) developments from the 1980s, which reveal a variety of ongoing influences on the development of the subject as policy actors attempt to position PE curriculum policy according to their own beliefs and values.
International Developments from the 1980s

The first substantial International Charter in PE and sport was published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1978, heralding significant changes in the 1980s. The wording in this charter included ‘physical education’ and ‘sport’ as two separate but related entities with an emphasis on equity and human rights. This document held some importance in the way PE as a subject in schools was conceptualised by UNESCO during this time as it highlighted some of the differences between developed and developing nations, stressing the need for equal access to participation in all forms of physical activity. Some key elements of the charter included:

- The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right for all;
- Physical education and sport form an essential element of lifelong education in the overall education system;
- Physical education and sport programmes must meet individual and social needs.

(UNESCO, 1978, p.32-33)

While equity was a major emphasis in the charter, links with the health of individuals and groups seemed to have played a minor role. In part, the UNESCO charter helped conceptualise and establish PE as an important field and it was not until later that notions of healthy populations increased in emphasis in response to societal need (McNeely, 1980; United Nations Resolution, 2003).

The emerging prominence of ‘health’ under the PE banner occurred in the 1980s and through to the 1990s. The World Health Organisation was one international body that highlighted the role of preventative health. A report in Europe on building active communities (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006) pointed to the role of physical activity as a community lifestyle concern. While links between health and physical activity were strongly associated in the report, after the 1990s the support for PE in schools appeared to be declining:
Unfortunately, physical education has been given reduced priority and curriculum time . . . and students (especially girls) in intermediate schools have been shown to be less active during breaks at school.

(Edwards & Tsouros, 2006, p.28)

For the World Health Organisation, growth in the incidence of childhood obesity became a focus for a preventative health role for PE in schools and this shifted PE curriculum policy towards a ‘crisis’ discourse, a term referred to by Tinning (2008) and Penney (2010) to describe a PE curriculum response to lifestyle health concerns. In a report entitled Physical Activity and Young People (World Health Organisation, 2010), specific references to the amount of physical activity per day were made and statements in the report recognised the role that PE in schools plays in achieving particular health goals. PE curriculum policy was being conceptualised in the preventive health domain in response to societal health needs that were having social as well as economic impacts upon the population.

The early 2000s were when PE as a school subject was considered to be in crisis (Kirk, 2010; 2014; Reid, 2011a). PE associations across Europe and Australia demanded mandatory physical activity time in the school curriculum and Prime Ministers Blair in Britain and Howard in Australia (Howard, 2004) responded. For example, Prime Minister Blair made a declaration to set a target of two hours per week of PE curriculum by 2010 (Harris & Cale, 2010). This international development had a flow-on effect to Australia, but the mandate was a little less clear as the words ‘physical activity’ were used, leaving any statement about PE curriculum time open to interpretation by schools. Some State Premiers insisted that 120 minutes a week be allocated in schools for active PE. However, this flow-on effect was short lived in WA, because the introduction of the Independent Public Schools policy in 2010 meant schools had greater flexibility within curriculum provisions under the Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Policy (Government of Western Australia, Department of Education, 2015a) to allocate curriculum time to
learning areas and consequently, mandatory time for school PE in schools was again under threat.

In the 2000s, concerns about physical inactivity became a ‘globalised’ issue and caused a great deal of introspection and discussion by physical educators (Tinning, 2007; 2008). Schools were being influenced by accelerating market forces, competition and standardisation which were accompanying neoliberal globalisation changes to education policy (Apple, 2011; Welch, 2013; Yates & Young, 2010). Such changes were placing tensions upon the subject of PE in terms of allocated curriculum time and course content.

**Australian Developments from the 1980s**

Australian schools have not been immune from the progression of neoliberal globalisation occurring in education policy across the world since the 1980s (Bagnall, 2013; Bottery, 2006). Education in Australia is constitutionally the domain of the States but, despite this, there had been a council of State education ministers contributing to national agendas, especially in the 2000s, culminating in Australia’s first national curriculum (referred to as the Australian Curriculum) from 2008. What PE curriculum policy should look like at the national level became problematic as scholars and teachers tried to conceptualise content knowledge with competing and entrenched perspectives on the subject in schools. This section of the chapter explores these developments and describes the role the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) played in setting the agenda for national curriculum policy in PE.

The Hobart Declaration (the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1998) was the beginning of a new Australian collaborative approach to schooling between the Federal and State Ministers of Education
in 1989. Among some of the outcomes of this forum was national collaboration on curriculum development and agreed National Goals for Schooling, providing a framework on which cooperation of schools, States and Territories and the Commonwealth took place. Among these national goals was one directly linked to PE: “to provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time” (MCEETYA, 1998, p.11). This statement included aspects of health and physical activity, and like other goals, was directed to the future needs of Australian society for the 21st century. Arguably, this statement places PE firmly within the field of ‘health’ although references to the social, mental and emotional dimensions of the learning area were not explicitly expressed. ‘Sport’ was not mentioned in the Hobart Declaration.

The Hobart Declaration was superseded by the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 2000) a decade later in 1999 and this saw a focus on ‘quality’ and the measurement of educational outcomes. Stated as one of the purposes of educational policy at the time was the following:

Increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

(MCEETYA, 2000, p.40)

The National Goals for Schooling established by the Adelaide Declaration included Health and Physical Education (HPE) as a compulsory learning area for a comprehensive and balanced national curriculum policy. While this seemed to be an advancement for the subject, the national goal referring to PE was changed to describe its role in promoting healthy lifestyles, which was a shared goal with ACHPER. However, measuring and evaluating this goal became problematic in light of emerging outcomes and standards frameworks in all States of Australia around the turn of the millennium, along with a call
for measuring effectiveness and efficiency of schools as part of new accountability agendas. While ‘sport’ was implicit under the banner of ‘healthy lifestyle’, the teaching of sport formed a large part of the PE curriculum in Australia and dominated PE curriculum policy enactment in schools.

National curriculum policy had gained momentum by the time of the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), which produced a report involving national educational goals for young Australians. Three aspects of national education policy began to take shape in this report, including responses to: increasing global integration and interdependence; globalisation and technological change; and increasing accountability and transparency. National testing in literacy and numeracy, called the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), became mandatory in all Australian schools. At the time of the Melbourne Declaration, the Minister for Sport in Australia commissioned an investigation into sport that represented a potential change in direction for PE in schools. The Crawford Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) was a paper produced by an independent panel consisting of business leaders and sport representatives to investigate the future of elite sport and community participation. Statements about physical activity were broad enough to include notions of “life-long participation” and “the health and well-being of our population” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, p.3). However, ‘elite sport’ within the context of Australian success at international competition was the dominant theme and this had potential implications for PE in schools. For ACHPER, the British National Curriculum experience where dominant sport discourses prevailed over more contemporary views of the learning area, appeared to be repeated in Australia. ACHPER’s concerns were exacerbated because the body responsible for the development of the new Australian Curriculum, now the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), had not confirmed HPE as
a learning area in the spirit of the Melbourne Declaration of 2008. This prompted the national president of ACHPER to release the following statement to the media:

ACHPER is committed to the pursuit of active and healthy lives for all Australians and believes that both Physical Education and Health Education should be given equal attention in the national curriculum . . . . Through Physical Education children develop the skills and knowledge for successful lifelong participation in sport. In challenging times, schools provide the only consistent opportunity we have to ensure that all young people, regardless of their economic circumstance or locality, receive quality instruction and experiences that support them in being active and healthy for life. A clear mandate through the national curriculum to support this is critical.

(Quelch, 2009, p.1)

This statement was an attempt by ACHPER to re-conceptualise PE to include a broader discourse of health and physical activity. With the possibility of an Australian Curriculum, protecting school PE from the influences of lobbyists for sport (Stolz, 2010) and reforming policy enactment away from Physical Education-as-sports techniques (Stolz & Kirk, 2015) was gaining traction in Australia.

The Australian Curriculum commenced Phase One implementation in 2008 with just four learning areas: Mathematics; Science; English; and History. At this stage, it was unclear whether other subjects would be included in the Australian Curriculum in their own right, and so began intense lobbying to government by subject professional organisations to be included in Phase Two of curriculum writing to secure status in the changing curriculum landscape. Due to lobbying by ACHPER, the HPE learning area was scheduled to be included in Phase Three of the Australian Curriculum development planned for 2012.

Having secured inclusion for HPE in the national curriculum agenda, ACHPER was now playing an important role in generating debate about how this policy should evolve. However, several competing discourses were playing out in the literature as part of the debate about national HPE curriculum policy. As Reid (2011a) explained, the lack of clarity and consensus over PE policy from within the profession was a major obstacle to
national curriculum development. Therefore, the debate was expected to be complex, as State curriculum policies in the learning area vary across the country in regards to syllabus intentions, content, level of performance integration and assessment. Differences in senior school curriculum across the States was even more evident. For example, the State of Queensland’s syllabus reform of Years 1 to 10 leading into senior school had a leaning towards health and movement cultures (Macdonald, Glasby & Carlson, 2000) while the Victorian State offered a pure sports science course with no examinable performance component (State Government Victoria, 2015). Year 11 and 12 courses across Australia were different and Penney (2010) highlighted added complexities, namely that senior school PE curriculum policy was having a major influence over lower school PE programs and was influencing debate about national curriculum policy directions for the learning area.

The difference between States is a point raised by Davis (2006) in her appraisal of PE in Australian schools. Davis observed the key drivers valued by curriculum policy developers in the States and Territories as: the type of content; the emphasis given by teachers to particular content; and the pedagogy used to deliver the curriculum. In the development of national curriculum policies in HPE, ACHPER remained a significant voice and influence over its formation. Emmel (2008), the National Executive Director of ACHPER at the time, urged the debate to draw upon practice across all States and Territories and be flexible enough for all States and Territories to be responsive to local learning needs and contexts. Teachers remained the key to turning curriculum policies into practice (Davis, 2006).
Western Australian Developments from the 1980s

In WA, the 1970s saw the consolidation of PE as a subject in Years 8 to 10 of schooling. However, it was not until 1984 that the first Year 11 and 12 Physical Education Studies (PES) subject appeared in WA with the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). Topics in the course included: Body Systems and Exercise; Community Sport and Recreation; and Health and Fitness in Year 11 (Blanksby, 1987a). Year 12 included: Skilled Movement; Sports Coaching; and Sociological Issues in Australian Sport (Blanksby, 1987b). The course and early texts were influenced largely by the Department of Human Movement and Recreation Studies (formally known as the Department of Physical Education) at the UWA in cooperation with ACHPER (WA branch) and teachers. The choice of topics represented an integrated approach to the theoretical components of the subject as opposed to the academic sub-disciplines that were operating at university level. Practical experiences in sport made up 50% of the course assessment, but with little integration between theoretical concepts and students’ movement experiences, they were assessed separately. While other senior school courses in WA were tertiary entrance examinable subjects, PES was not, and consequently it attracted students who preferred non-tertiary, post-school destinations.

The CSE course was unchanged for several years and the teaching of sport using a motor skill learning paradigm was further reinforced by the introduction of Unit Curriculum in Years 8 to 10 in the 1980s. Unit Curriculum (Beazley, 1984) consisted of compartmentalised sport modules that teachers could teach without much need for lesson planning. It involved a series of six week modules to allow students the opportunity to experience a range of sports and physical activity contexts, learn motor skills and eventually play a game at the end of a unit. There appeared little continuity between Unit Curriculum in lower school and the CSE Physical Education Studies course in Years 11
and 12 except for the dominant pedagogy of teaching physical activity through motor skill learning.

The first major change to senior school PES in WA occurred subsequent to the national Mayer Report (Mayer, 1992) on key competencies, which was driven by the then Federal Education Minister, John Dawkins. These key competencies became the discourse on which students were up-skilled for a growing and demanding future workforce. A review of post compulsory education in WA Schools by Parker, Browning and Crawford (1990) reported that CSE courses were viewed by school communities as ‘alternative’ courses for students who could not do tertiary examinable subjects. Consequently, CSE courses did not enjoy status as there was no clear articulation to further study and they were considered of little value. However, aligning CSE courses with key competencies and further education became a priority. While this was an easy task in some courses, in PES, few Technical and Further Education institutions (post-school destination for non-tertiary entrance subjects) had adopted studies in this field. Nevertheless, PES assumed the same curriculum model as other CSE courses and this gave rise to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). CSE courses were then called CAF subjects or wholly school assessed subjects. Much of PES content did not change with this reform. However, a new assessment structure did have a profound effect upon how the subject was taught.

CAF tasks were devised centrally by the Curriculum Council of WA, with the help of some teachers, and then disseminated to schools. Statements about student competency helped teachers judge student achievement against descriptors for ‘very high’, ‘high’, ‘satisfactory’ or ‘not demonstrated’. Schools had little autonomy with their assessment as the CAF was mandatory. This change in senior schooling represented a shift in focus towards the ‘outcomes’ of learning, as opposed to the ‘inputs’ of learning, but little time
and resources were invested in developing teachers about how to make this change as
evidenced in subsequent ‘outcomes’ curriculum reforms (Berlach & O’Neill, 2008).

The move towards ‘learning outcomes’ was reinforced with the arrival of the Curriculum
Framework in WA (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998). For physical
educators, the learning area statement provided a significant new rationale and direction
for the future of the subject. In Years 8 to 10, teaching around the principles espoused in
the Curriculum Framework represented a focus upon pedagogy and its contribution to
standards. Practitioners started to develop strategic thinking skills in students with
teaching strategies such as ‘game sense’, ‘sport education’ and ‘teaching games for
understanding’ experiencing higher profiles in PE delivery. While the value of the
Curriculum Framework was warmly applauded among practitioners, the difficulty in
implementing the Outcomes and Standards Framework (Education Department of
Western Australia, 2005) meant that teachers fell back upon what they knew to be
successful in the past. Some teachers confused the ‘outcomes’ of the senior school CAF
course with those associated with the Curriculum Framework in lower secondary school,
although the two curriculums had different origins and purposes. Consequently, advances
in the teaching of PE were hindered by a reliance upon Unit Curriculum and CAF course
resources. What Parker, Browning and Crawford (1990) had hoped to change in regards
to the status of non-tertiary entrance subjects was not achieved and it wasn’t until another
post-compulsory review in the 2000s that fundamental change in Year 11 and 12 PE
curriculum policy began to take place.

The first attempt to extend the Outcomes and Standards Framework into Year 11 and 12
was the result of a Post-Compulsory School Review (Government of Western Australia,
2002). The English Course of Study was the first to be trialled under the direction of the
Curriculum Council of Western Australia. These first attempts were considered onerous and confusing. Opponents to the change criticised prescribed new approaches to teaching and learning as cumbersome and responsible for excessive teacher workload, as well as a decline in student achievement. One example of this criticism came from Berlach and O’Neill (2008) who argued for a clearer understanding of the Outcomes and Standards Framework, as without that understanding, concepts had no chance of successfully being operationalised. Berlach and O’Neill concluded that the Outcomes and Standards Framework reduced rigour and privileged the process of learning and applied knowledge over content.

Year 11 and 12 PES did not have a history of being an examinable subject and this meant that syllabus writers could steer a new direction with a tertiary pathway. The first draft of the Physical Education Course of Study in these years of schooling contained social and cultural content through a focus on the development of values in physical activity (Penney, 2005). Four outcomes were identified as precursors of course content: Physical Activity Skills; Knowledge and Understandings of Physical Activity; Self-Management and Interpersonal Skills; and Values and Attitudes for Physical Activity (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2005). These outcome areas were not aligned to the sub-disciplines of sports science at university level so the intent was to teach concepts in an integrated way with students’ movement experiences. However, many social and cultural understandings appeared foreign to teachers in terms of their own pre-service education and previous teaching experiences. In subsequent feedback to the Curriculum Council of WA, PE teachers began to contest the Values and Attitudes for Physical Activity outcome and the assessment weightings given to it. The Curriculum Council of WA eventually embedded attitudes and values with other course content and many teacher concerns were taken into consideration for subsequent drafts of the syllabus.
Widespread public criticism of the Outcomes and Standards Framework and a consequential change in State Education Minister saw the outcomes-based assessment structure disappear in favour for more traditional assessment procedures (e.g. A to D grades) early in 2007 (McGowan, 2007). This was also the first year of implementation for Year 11 PES so teachers and students were adapting to the changes through the delivery of the first study unit. Schools began implementing the second version of the PES syllabus which contained four content areas: Skills for Physical Activity; Self-Management and Interpersonal Skills; Knowledge and Understandings of Movement and Conditioning Concepts for Physical Activity; and Knowledge and Understandings of Sport Psychology Concepts for Physical Activity (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2007a). This version of the syllabus, like the previous one, was intended for students to learn through movement and have movement integrated as part of their knowledge and understandings through a three step process of: performance; investigation; and response (linking back to performance). The latter term became more synonomous with tests and examinations after 2008. Samples of student work showed a variety of classroom practices and interpretations of the syllabus, but more noticeable was the absence of assessment protocols for performance. Some teachers used CAF tools although these were no longer appropriate, whilst others chose investigations which did not link performance with content or they adopted a test-retest strategy in an effort to prepare students for external examinations. Moderation meetings failed to address these inconsistencies as these meetings were conducted by teachers and peer evaluations showed a reluctance to criticise colleagues about practice.

By the end of 2008, the first Tertiary Entrance examination paper for Year 11 and 12 PES was conducted and a review of the course was put before schools for comment. Members
of a newly formed Assessment, Reporting and Moderation panel, consisting of teachers from each school sector in WA (Government, Catholic and Independent) and representatives from ACHPER (WA branch) and the universities, suggested a move back to a model with sport science sub-disciplines as content areas. Specifically, these were: Functional Anatomy; Motor Skill and Coaching; Biomechanics; Exercise Physiology; and Sports Psychology (Curriculum Council, 2009). This fuelled a debate about whether the course should contain any performance component at all, but the rationale in the syllabus was maintained as a central pillar to the curriculum policy:

Learning in Physical Education Studies cannot be separated from active participation in physical activities and involves students in closely integrated written, oral and physical learning experiences based upon the study of selected physical activities. (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2009, p.1)

However, assessment weightings in physical activity were reduced from 50% from the first draft syllabus in 2005 to 30% in the 2009 version. Despite the statement of rationale being preserved in the 2009 syllabus, practical participation weightings were reduced and, by 2011, practical performance external assessment was restricted to a set list of sports (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2011). Political tensions may have been a trigger for a return to sports science sub-disciplines, including the pressure to deliver standardised external practical performance assessment, which changed the discourse as policy actors attempted to define the nature of PE and its content.

Deciding the characteristics of ‘best practice’ represents a major challenge for curriculum policy actors. As it has been already noted within the WA experience (Marsh, 2011), teachers argue from positions they know will work for them and it is these positions that are identified by Marsh as both constraining and enabling forces for success. This observation was not lost on Penney (2007) in a paper on the possible future direction of the Australian Curriculum HPE debate. Penney believed that policy construction in the
past had been a process of borrowing and copying pieces from elsewhere. This practice, she stated, had resulted in curriculum content that was compromised, reworked and constantly tinkered. She suggested that there was a danger that a new Australian Curriculum HPE could be less than perfect for all concerned. Penney went on to argue that educators needed to take seriously the views of many stakeholders and find a position which was politically realistic and educationally powerful.

The political and social influences on policy actors and curriculum development was acknowledged as important, but it had to go beyond a mere ‘cut and paste’ of what already existed in curriculum policy around Australia (Penney, 2007). There needed to be a clear understanding of the intentions of policy and whether those intentions were articulated and delivered through appropriate curriculum practice. Commenting on the WA context, a similar argument was taken up by Blanksby and Whipp (2004) who suggested that curriculum involved three influential aspects: the developmental stage of the learner; the teaching and learning strategy; and the nature of the task itself. Blanksby and Whipp described effective teachers as those who were able to manipulate student tasks, change pedagogy, and provide authentic opportunities to learn, as well as monitor and support the assessment process. The degree of integration between physical activity and classroom learning concepts also seemed vital to their argument.

In WA, teachers were having a role in policy directions despite the tensions that existed between the political and educational influences on curriculum. The 2011 Western Australian Certificate of Education – Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) syllabus marked a new discourse on how the subject was perceived through a change in content headings, new concepts and the exclusion of previously taught material. By 2013, teacher inclusion in the policy process was waning and for 2015, the syllabus had evolved to be
located in tight and prescribed assessment parameters that signalled a renewed focus on quality and standards, being driven by both global and national developments.

**Conclusion**

The background to this study has revealed a number of economic, social and political influences that have impacted upon PE curriculum policy at the national (Australia), State (WA) and school (local) levels. This chapter discussed some of the historical origins of the subject, highlighting the contests and struggles influential in defining PE and its content knowledge, pedagogy and assessment. Part of this struggle began with the way PE emerged as an academic field. An exploration of the Australian context demonstrated how PE had, at times, been a tool for national building and identity. Interest groups from sport and public health spheres attempted to change the PE policy landscape and possibly contributed to a lack of clarity in what PE curriculum policy represents. There has been no better example of this than what occurred in WA with the development of Year 11 and 12 Physical Education Studies curriculum and how it moved from social-cultural leanings to a return to a science-based (rescientisation) approach, evidenced in practice in the second decade of the 21st century. How curriculum policy is operationalised by teachers at the school level is crucial to understanding the ‘big picture’ of curriculum policy processes in the field of PE in WA and nationally in Australia (with the Australian Curriculum), and there are potential implications for other settings internationally. The key concepts underpinning this study are explicated further in Chapter Three, where the research literature will be reviewed.
CHAPTER THREE
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction
This chapter of the thesis, the Review of Literature, overviews the key concepts underpinning the study, through an analysis of the international literature. It begins with an exploration of education policy and how it has been shaped by discourses accompanying globalisation and neoliberal ideology. The second section focuses more specifically on curriculum policy, particularly in the field of Physical Education (PE). It includes an examination of the extent to which neoliberal educational policy intentions have come to dominate these conceptualisations in recent decades. The third section of the chapter draws from the literature on teachers as enactors of curriculum policy and how they operationalise change when dealing with the challenges of curriculum reform. This has repercussions for how the intentions of curriculum policy are translated into practices during enactment in schools (micro level) of policy processes. This chapter concludes with identification of major tensions embedded in PE curriculum policy processes, as revealed in the literature.

Globalisation, Neoliberalism and Education Policy
The relationship between policy and practice is rarely seen as linear and hierarchical. Consequently, in the 2000s, the term ‘policy’ is increasingly used to include processes that extend between policy intent and subsequent practices. These policy processes are ‘contested terrain’ (Ozga, 2000) and in an era of globalisation they often extend between global and local (institutional) levels (Vidovich, 2013). Education policy is considered a ‘messy’ process and it is often viewed in the literature as part of a continuous ‘policy cycle’ (Ball, 1994; Ozga, 2000; Vidovich, 2007; 2013). Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.15) explained the different positioning of policy actors throughout the policy cycle:
In considering a national policy and its implementation at school level . . . we can see the different positioning of different policy players; those involved in policy text production compared with those involved in policy implementation or practice will often have different and competing interests. Both sets of players are also located within different logics of practice and differential power relations.

In other words, ‘policy’ is linked to the struggles between various policy actors as part of an entire policy cycle. Therefore, during radical economic, social and educational change there are many contradictory elements of education policy process that have to be mediated, compromised and struggled over in people's daily educational lives (Apple, 2003).

To better understand how policy struggles are actualised, it is important to explore how education policy is being shaped by globalisation. Bottery (2006) described ‘globalisation’ as the interconnectedness of the world, particularly in terms of the market economy. Education policy is increasingly influenced by the international economy, and policy reforms in one country have flow-on effects for others. Due to these flow-on effects, education policy and practice can become ‘homogenised’ across different countries, States and specific locales, and what differs is how struggles in each specific policy context play out (Apple, 2011). Consequently, education policy studies no longer examine policy in just one localised context but must consider the global influences that are impacting on the whole policy process. Accelerated policy ‘borrowing’ across national borders is a new global reality (Bagnall, 2013; Ball, 2009). To understand globalisation is to recognise the emergence of new ‘discourses’ that are evident in contemporary educational policy.

A ‘discourse’, is a term used to describe language characterised by a set of rules by which policy actions are explained and contested (Sapsford, 2006). It is important to recognise the impact discourses have on debate, conflict and resistance, especially in the way power
is used to define the beliefs and values behind policy actions and outcomes. A discourse which has come to dominate in educational policy processes in the 21st century is ‘neoliberalism’, a construct which foregrounds free market ideals, heightened competition, giving parents increased choice between schools, deregulation and re-regulation, performativity and accountability (Apple, 2001; 2008; Ball, 2000; Macdonald, 2011; Reid, 2009). All of these neoliberalist trends are relevant to the study reported in this thesis.

Increasing globalisation and the emergence of neoliberalist discourses have implications for how governments and agencies use education policy to prepare students for participation in the global economy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This view of education policy potentially causes contradictions as a consequence of policy being burdened with multiple responsibilities and purposes (Tsoidis, 2011). A growing number of policy commentators have argued that education policy is increasingly characterised by neoliberal discourses pertaining to competition, national standards, centralised curriculum, school performance, increased accountability and surveillance of teachers (e.g. Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Ozga, 2009; Spring, 2008; Taylor Webb, 2005; White, 2010). Grumet and Yates (2011) maintained that neoliberalism promotes a growing disharmony between the economic imperatives of nations and the social and cultural goals of education.

Further, Davies and Bansel (2007) have asserted that neoliberalism has changed education in a way that is “moralistic and fear driven” (p.251) by promoting the entrepreneurial conduct of individuals through restructuring, deregulation and advancing the values of competitive economics. They argued that neoliberalism represents a shift in ideology from social welfare to market driven forces where the concept of the citizen is
defined by their rights, duties, obligations and expectations in a globalised world, which highlights individualism. Apple (2008) proposed that this places an emphasis on the values of enterprise and capitalisation over societal collective responsibility. Apple also noted that neoliberal and neo-conservative educational reforms create an immense pressure toward marketisation and privatisation through a push for national standards, national curricula and national testing. Apple believed these education policies have influenced every sphere of education including the economic, the political and the cultural, thereby changing the ways in which we evaluate our educational institutions. Neoliberalism generates new identities and experiences that are reflected in the way schooling is portrayed. One example was provided by Rizvi and Lingard (2010) who observed a different style of governance in schools, referred to as ‘new managerialism’, where new public and private agency partnerships were developed to improve the competitiveness of schooling. This competitiveness is sometimes defined by a return to the ‘new basics’ where student testing (especially literacy and numeracy) has accelerated a growing ‘audit culture’ within education systems and schools (Yates & Young, 2010).

What follows is a discussion of two more fields of knowledge that are prevalent in the literature and relevant to this study. The first introduces ‘curriculum policy’ as a concept, and examines how general trends in curriculum policy are impacting on the conceptualisation of PE curriculum. The second is how teachers enact curriculum policy within the constraints they operate under in schools. What will emerge is a picture of the struggle between the social and civic nature of PE curriculum policy and the influences of neoliberalism (with an economic focus) at global, national (Australian) and local (schools) levels. In particular, two distinct curriculum policy positions have emerged in PE curriculum policy and have at times been in tension: the ‘rescientised’ curriculum and the ‘social-cultural’ curriculum.
Conceptualisations of Physical Education Curriculum Policy

‘Curriculum policy’ guides what teachers do as enactors of curriculum but their actions are increasingly framed in neoliberal terms (Vickers, 2013). Vickers (2013) describes ‘curricula’ as comprising four elements: content (what is to be learned); pedagogy (how it is taught); scope and sequence (the topics, their order and their depth); and student assessment (what have students learnt). Curriculum documents (often the artefacts of curriculum policy) provide the frameworks that address the four elements described above (Kelly, 2004; Marsh, 2009; Penney, Brooker, Hay & Gillespie, 2009). However, as Vickers (2013) noted, these frameworks can give teachers varying degrees of decision-making ‘space’ and they are open to interpretation. For this reason, Marsh (2009) suggested that a useful starting point for conceptualising curriculum policy is to look at the ‘planned’, the ‘enacted’ and the ‘experienced’ curriculum, to reflect the relationships between curriculum policy production and enactment. While this may be useful in understanding ‘curriculum policy’ at one level, Yates, Collins and O’Connor (2011) noted that curriculum policy makers now increasingly frame curriculum policy in terms of ‘standards’, ‘resources’ or ‘assessment’, focusing less on what is to be taught in schools. This re-framing, they claim, is because curriculum policy is essentially a political activity, subjected to international comparisons and argued over by policy actors all over the world.

PE curriculum policy shares similar tensions and challenges for enactment. In this section, the literature mainly refers to PE curriculum policy as ‘school Physical Education’ and includes all forms of the subject at school level. While this study was predominantly concerned with senior school curriculum policy, senior school curriculum is increasingly having influence over lower secondary school conceptualisations of the subject (Penney,
2010; Reid, 2011b). Therefore, the general concept of PE curriculum policy in secondary schooling is examined here.

The introduction of new curriculum gives stakeholders the opportunity to reconceptualise a subject and change the discourses surrounding it (Apple, 1983; 1990; Ball & Youdell, 2007). This change is true of PE curriculum policy both internationally and in Australia. Consequently, PE curriculum policy has been an area of contestation in terms of content, construction and teaching approaches as scholars in the field attempt to define the subject’s content knowledge, pedagogy and assessment. One example where contest over PE curriculum policy has occurred is the national curriculum in England and Wales. Apple (2003) examined how PE in the national curriculum in those countries was constructed and enacted. He was particularly concerned about an increase in competition, surveillance of schools in terms of their performance and the subsequent effect upon curriculum policy and teaching. Apple (2003) uses PE as a case in point:

> The state may legislate changes in curriculum, evaluation or policy (which is itself produced through conflict, compromise, and political manoeuvring), but policy writers and curriculum writers may be unable to control the meanings and the implementations of their texts. All texts are “leaky” documents. They are subject to “recontextualisation” at every stage of the process. (p.14)

Apple argued that initial curriculum documents contained both progressive and traditional curriculum perspectives, but as curriculum policy became reconstructed towards the end of the last century, an emphasis on basic skills, competition and performance testing began to dominate at the expense of student-centred approaches. Competitive performance, both within the subject as well as between subjects and schools, was employed as a regulatory device contributing to the reconceptualisation of PE curriculum policy in line with conservative education policies and practice. This, Apple concluded, reduced teaching to a limited set of skills and de-skilled teachers in their effort to deliver curriculum effectively.
The underlying assumption of national curriculum in England and Wales was to prepare students for a demanding future workforce with a strong focus on the changing world of work (Penney & Chandler, 2000; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This was aimed at framing educational policy towards building a strong national economy. Penney and Chandler (2000) saw a revision of the National Curriculum of Physical Education in England in 1999, as an opportunity to reconceptualise PE for the 21st century and create a shift in the subject to develop critically informed citizens for a more socially just society. They argued that initial conceptualisations of the subject were too broad and served many sets of interests. These broad conceptualisations, they claimed, were responsible for PE curriculum being unchanged in form over many years. Consequently, Penney and Chandler called for a re-definition of the subject that allowed a radical change in PE curriculum policy. This redefinition advocated a new and critical pedagogy that would: reclassify PE; weaken the frame of the subject area from its historical sub-disciplinary roots; change the discourse; and develop new messages in teaching. However, as Apple (2003) observed, progressive approaches encompassing this new definition soon saw the subject re-aligned with conservative educational policy practices.

Conservative educational policy practices in schools were recognised as a globalised trend adding to the tensions embedded in PE curriculum policy reform. This trend caused debate about content knowledge with researchers in the field redefining the subject in an effort to ensure its survival. An example comes from the United States of America where Connor (2009) asked ‘What is a physical educator?’:

A physical educator is not an exercise physiologist, a biomechanist, a motor learning or motor development person, an athletic trainer, a theoretical pedagogist . . . Rather, a physical educator is a highly trained, broad-based, experienced professional practitioner who can bring anatomical, physiological, mechanical, psychological, and maturational aspects of human movement together, and
combine an extensive activity base with sound philosophical and pedagogical principles. (p.6)

Connor was responding to a growing fragmentation evident in PE curriculum policy caused by competing agendas with the subject’s historical sub-disciplines around sports science. In western education systems at least, PE curriculum policy had become ‘scientised’ where the sub-disciplines were the discursive basis on which the subject was conceptualised. For some, a sub-disciplinary structure represented a return to the subject’s scientised roots. However, Connor disagreed and called for PE practitioners to have the skills to integrate and synthesise each sub-discipline in teaching the curriculum.

Debate about content knowledge came to the forefront of discussion when school PE was considered to be in crisis. One influential researcher in PE from the United States of America was Siedentop (2002), who attempted to respond to the problem:

Teacher educators in physical education, have largely given up the historic content knowledge of our field, and, in so doing, have virtually eliminated the possibility of developing a serious body of pedagogical content knowledge for teaching physical education. Pedagogical content knowledge is the “main stuff” from which effectiveness and expertise in teaching and coaching derives. But, this much is clear: You can’t have pedagogical content knowledge without content knowledge, and all of our advances in pedagogy in physical education can’t change that simple truth. (p.368)

Debate about PE curriculum policy became polarised as writers attempted to define the future of the subject. Siedentop had stated a position that seemed to question the perspectives of the progressivists who saw school PE curriculum policy as failing in the new world of neoliberalism. While recognising this knowledge as important, Siedentop observed pre-service curriculum as lacking in integrated physical activity experiences and consequently, did not prepare teachers for curriculum challenges or pedagogical change. His position was in response to a growing practice where schools offered physical activity experiences that lacked context and meaning. Expecting criticism from his detractors, Siedentop attempted to clarify his position by not advocating a return to the way PE was
taught in the past, but by demanding content knowledge be inclusive of all perspectives, integrated in ways which were meaningful to the movement experiences of students.

Siedentop’s position was supported by Tsangaridou (2002) in a case study in Europe designed to understand the development and nature of pedagogical content knowledge in PE. Data collection included observations, documents, teacher journals and interviews, each analysed using constant comparison and analytic induction methods. Two findings from the study appear significant. First, pre-service teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge affected teachers’ actions and practices. Second, content decisions and actions were influenced by beliefs on how best to enhance learning and understanding in students.

In conclusion, Tsangaridou believed ‘transformational’ knowledge to be the key to making content meaningful and in contexts that are practical to students. This practical knowledge formed the cornerstone of Siedentop’s (2002) argument on how PE should be conceptualised. However, an interesting perspective was offered by Tinning (2002a; 2002b), in response to Siedentop’s position on content knowledge, suggesting that the professional relationship between pupil and teacher had a greater influence on learning: “subject matter content knowledge is not a sufficient condition for effective teaching with respect to the development of Siedentop’s physically educated citizen” (p.382). This is an example of the complexity and contestation surrounding PE curriculum policy.

In New Zealand, conceptualisations about PE curriculum policy were just as complex and contested in the context of their national curriculum. Culpan (2000) examined how PE curriculum policy was constructed and reconstructed using Ministry of Education Research Unit data in that country. He believed that the rationale statement of this national PE curriculum policy promoted the importance of ‘attitudes and values’ development and argued that this was a justification for ‘socio-cultural’ approaches to be advanced using a
critical pedagogy. However, as national PE curriculum policy in New Zealand evolved, it was evident these intentions communicated through the rationale were not realised at school level. Teacher perspectives and pressure from interest groups were cited in that study as having the greatest influence on curriculum restructure. Culpan argued that these influences returned the syllabus back to techno-rationalistic origins:

Simply ignoring the social, cultural, political, economic, ethical and physical contexts of people’s lives would be to produce a curriculum statement which simply repeats the mistakes of the past and continued the interests of the dominant ideology. For physical education this would mean a curriculum characterised by individualistic endeavour, scientised/technocratic content laced with cogent fitness regimes and a bias towards patriarchal middle class traditional games. (p.26)

Culpan (2000, p.18) attributed this change to ‘market economy’ influences in educational policy characterised by “strong, monetarist, social and economic” agendas. Teachers, he argued, failed to realise this political reality and their feedback on PE curriculum policy showed a degree of naivety about socio-cultural approaches. Culpan (2005) and Culpan and Bruce (2007) maintained that PE curriculum policy in New Zealand was reconceptualised to a position where the experiences of students became mechanistic and driven by science-based approaches, leading to a narrow, performance-based view of the subject. In effect, the conceptual narrowing of the subject had resulted from a ‘rescientisation’ of curriculum policy that was too narrow for socio-cultural advocates. Consequently, Culpan and Bruce lobbied for several changes to PE curriculum policy in New Zealand including: a shift from motor-skill, sport driven instruction to a more integrated and broader perspective called ‘movement culture’; critical inquiry and reflection; and inclusion of the learning of values and ethical dimensions of knowledge, not just the scientific dimensions that are measured by performance. Like Apple (2003) and Connor (2009), Culpan and Bruce (2007) saw the scientific or technocratic view of PE curriculum policy as limiting, leading to the de-skilling of teachers in terms of curriculum implementation. The British and New Zealand examples have served to
illustrate how curriculum policy in PE, as in other educational policy fields, is a ‘messy’ and contested terrain (Ozga, 2000; Vidovich, 2007).

The New Zealand Physical Education curriculum was revised and re-introduced at the end of 2007. A study by Ovens (2010) used document analysis to critique this reform and explore the discursive dilemmas that shaped practice in schools. This analysis was framed in terms of socio-cultural issues and coupled with the practice of a social-critical pedagogy. Several competing discourses emerged with the dominant discourse being one that contributed to the development of New Zealand in an economic and social sense. Ovens assigned this discourse to human capital theory where, in this case at least, curriculum was seen to be linked to individual productivity and economic wealth. The critical orientation of this PE curriculum reform was a ‘socio-cultural’ discourse, one that was in competition with other discourses present within sites of policy and practice. This led Ovens (2010, p.30) to conclude that, “a socially, critical intent does not translate unproblematically from policy to practice”, a position supported by Penney, Brooker, Hay and Gillespie (2009) in regards to PE curriculum policy in Australia.

Pope (2014), in observing how the political and economic forces of neoliberalism has affected the school curriculum in New Zealand, highlighted the pressures in schools to give greater emphasis to literacy and numeracy as a result of national testing. This has led to academic subjects becoming more dominant in the school curriculum. He argued that this placed HPE programs in a precarious position and were under threat of being outsourced to private companies as part of ‘pay to play’ options. With new assessment and accountability regimes introduced to New Zealand schools, Pope (2014) also believed that teachers had become managed professionals, depriving them of a voice for curriculum reform. Consequently, Pope (2014) agreed with Kirk’s (2010) analysis of the
future of HPE being framed within three possible scenarios: radical reform, more of the same or extinction.

PE curriculum policy in Australia had been just as problematic and followed other countries in terms of how curriculum policy was conceptualised and reconceptualised. Dodd (2002) considered PE to be in ‘crisis’ because of a dualism or separation of mind and body and this, he argued, was the reason for PE curriculum policy having a fragmented knowledge base. What Dodd was alluding to was the emergence of ‘individualism’, where curriculum ideas were centred on individual performance at the expense of exploring the social and cultural connections relevant to the lives of students. Also in an Australian context, Davis (2006) described the interconnectedness of health, physical education and sport as a possible way forward in this debate. Three challenges were identified by her as crucial to curriculum policy enactment by teachers: the need to stay relevant to students; working within rapidly changing social parameters; and the changing nature of schools. Davis’ position recognised the impact of neoliberal values upon PE curriculum policy.

The influence of neoliberalist values upon curriculum policy is subject to much scrutiny in the literature and a theme which is increasingly being analysed in PE curriculum policy reform. While policy makers may communicate one set of values, in reality, the forces acting upon schools create implications for practice that are quite different from policy intentions. To illustrate this, one case study (not specifically in Physical Education) examined these discursive influences by studying two leaders and their styles, which had relevance to schooling and teacher decision-making. Gewirtz and Ball (2000) compared the styles of ‘welfarism’ and ‘new managerialism’ to observe any discursive shift that may have taken place as a result of curriculum change. Gewirtz and Ball’s study revealed
that market forces don’t just happen through a change of structure and incentives, but as “a transformational process that brings into play a new set of values and a new moral environment” (p.266). Consequently, they reasoned that ‘new managerialism’ represented a discursive language that served to act as a conduit for the implementation and dissemination of new agendas, one that asserted the rights of management to manipulate and influence. While these are contested styles within the case study schools cited in their study, Gewirtz and Ball demonstrated how a discourse in enterprise, quality and excellence conflicts with a pre-existing welfarist discourse in schools, causing policy intentions to be altered.

PE curriculum policy has not been immune from the discourses of neoliberalism (Ennis, 2006; Reid, 2011a). On this, Reid suggested that ‘new managerialism’ narrowed educational vision and marginalised important cultural, social and relational aspects of education. In order to stay relevant, Reid (2011a; 2011b) pointed to the need to reconceptualise HPE and its purpose in Australia. However, in doing so, he argued that teachers must be mindful of the political realities that were impacting upon their schools. Similarly, Macdonald (2011) asked PE practitioners to reflect on who is driving PE agendas, where the power is residing and how teachers might question notions of neoliberalism.

Evans (2014) in commenting on neoliberalism and its effects on schooling observed in a number of countries, including Australia, identified an emphasis on ‘sport’ and performativity, measurement, accountability and a heightened sense of surveillance of teachers. Notably, he highlighted how changes to assessment and the introduction of testing had a reductive tendency on pedagogy by giving importance to those things in the curriculum that can only be quantified and measured. This caused Evans to use a term
coined by Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.99) as “policy and pedagogy by numbers” to illustrate how the focus on measured outcomes has affected education policy developments. While he acknowledged that the subjectivity of teachers and students have capacity to adopt, resist or adapt to policy trends, Evans (2014) noted that the power and the control of teachers through neoliberal practice limited their ability to do so. Consequently, Evans (2014, p.554) stated: “If PE is to retain ‘education’ in its title, then it should be liberal, liberating and lifelong and not reduced to narrow measured outcomes”. He went on to advocate for the pursuit of social-educative principles in PE.

Macdonald (2014, p. 496) asked: “Is the shaping of physical education by global neoliberalism inevitable in the Australian context?” In prosecuting an argument, she stated: “At one level ‘yes’, it seems that the discourses of markets, opportunity, choice, and competition as paths to excellence are very seductive for all those with an interest in physical education” (p.496). Macdonald also believed that this may result in curriculum solutions that do not suit twenty-first century learners, create unreasonable expectations on teachers and students or limit the access to PE in schools across Australia. By better understanding how neoliberalism affects PE is to better detect trends in practice and intervene or support its future direction.

In the preceding discussion, several tensions have emerged relating to the way policy actors conceptualise and influence the purpose and content knowledge of PE curriculum (Macdonald, 2013; Penney, 2012; Siedentop, 2002; Tinning, 2002b). These tensions have given rise to new discourses, often alongside existing ones, which are worthy of note. One example is the ‘crisis’ discourse (Penney, 2010; Tinning 2008) used to describe PE curriculum policy responses to social crises such as obesity, diabetes and other lifestyle diseases. While this discourse of ‘crisis’ is not used extensively throughout this thesis, it
has been referred to in the literature as being responsible for past conceptualisations of the subject. However, two other expressions are dominant in the literature and are used in this thesis. The first is ‘socio-cultural’ discourse, a curriculum approach where the study of social and cultural issues in PE is largely underpinned by contemporary, critical pedagogy. Social-cultural discourses were evident throughout the policy cycles reported in this study, but as PE curriculum policy evolved in WA, contestation around social-cultural knowledge by policy actors was notable. Consequently, over the time period of this study, ‘social-cultural’ discourses diminished and sometimes blurred with ‘social-critical’ discourses or those pertaining to social, critical inquiry. Another term used in the literature to contrast with socio-cultural or social-critical approaches, is a ‘rescientised’ discourse or a return to the science disciplines on which sports science were founded. These different discourses point to the struggles and contests that operate in PE curriculum policy reform. The next section of this chapter examines the literature surrounding teachers as policy enactors and how they make decisions for themselves and students, schools, the profession and society as well.

**Teachers as Enactors of Curriculum Policy**

Curriculum policy reform requires teachers to make alterations to the ways they have operated in the past (Fullan, 2007). In regards to teaching PE effectively, scholars have argued that attention needs to be given to the ‘cognitive’ aspect of student learning, but this view is dependent on how teachers initially conceptualise PE content knowledge (Heitmann 1988; Siedentop, 2002). Fullan (2007) described three main areas where curriculum policy can be reformed: curriculum materials; teaching approaches; and teacher beliefs and values. According to Fullan, the first and easiest to implement is changing the curriculum materials, but this has the least impact upon change. He maintains that a greater impact is achieved with changing teaching approaches and, more
importantly, the ‘beliefs and values’ of teachers, which are also the most difficult to reform. Fullan described teacher ‘beliefs and values’ as the pedagogical assumptions they hold when curriculum reform requires a new way of thinking about teaching. Understanding these assumptions by investigating teacher perspectives in this study should contribute to this field of knowledge.

An early study in WA examined aspects of teacher receptivity to curriculum change in schools. Waugh and Punch (1985) were interested in the variables that contributed to teacher receptivity relating to teacher beliefs, attitudes and feelings about reform. Findings indicated that the attitudes of teachers towards any new curriculum policy initiative was a major determinant of implementation success. ‘Teacher attitudes’ appeared to be influenced by their own beliefs about administration and assessment systems as well as the degree of teacher ownership throughout consultation processes. Similar conclusions were found in a case study in Canada by Fraser-Thomas and Beaudoin (2002). In this study, in response to curriculum reform, teachers felt under-prepared to teach newly introduced curriculum and were concerned about change in assessment and evaluation methods. In trialling these new methods, teachers in the study believed they did not achieve the intended outcomes of curriculum and this affected their efficacy regarding curriculum policy reform. It was found that existing teacher values and beliefs in that study were in direct competition with the intentions of the policy makers.

Understanding how the beliefs of teachers influence the enactment of curriculum policy was the focus of a study conducted by Carroll (2007) in New South Wales (Australia) with History curriculum. This study involved a survey of 238 history teachers of which 28 were interviewed. The most significant reform for teachers in this example was the introduction of new assessment structures. Here, the belief systems of teachers were seen
as having a greater impact on the degree of acceptance than the curriculum texts themselves. Carroll concluded, when dealing with new curriculum, teachers needed to reconcile differences between their own pedagogical beliefs and the values expressed by policy makers and texts. To add support to this argument, teachers in that study reported a drop in self-efficacy and Carroll suggested that this may be a result of higher levels of accountability demanded by schools and governing authorities.

Ideological contests in curriculum where teacher belief systems differ from policy intentions, have also been noted in Science and may hold insight for PE curriculum policy. Van Driel, Bulte and Verloop (2007), in a study of 996 teachers in The Netherlands, examined the relationship between teacher beliefs on teaching and learning with curricula beliefs as it applied to senior school chemistry. Two main belief structures were discovered. First, those who held a subject-matter, content-led belief and second, teachers who believed chemistry should be taught within the context of societal issues in a learner-centred classroom environment. Two other groups of teachers were also identified according to the degree of integration between the two ideologies. In their conclusions, Van Driel et al suggested that new curriculum be written in flexible ways to allow for the operationalisation of two sets of teacher beliefs and that curriculum policy be context-structured where teachers of a particular belief could choose the context that best suits their ideology. However, it is unclear from this study whether teachers working in the realm of their own personal ideology about teaching will serve to reinforce their belief systems or whether teachers revert to content-led approaches as a consequence of neoliberal forces acting upon schools. Van Driel et al proposed that teacher networks should allow a cross fertilisation of ideas from both types of beliefs systems to ensure ideological isolation doesn’t happen, but this strategy seems oversimplified in a complex policy field. Therefore, it is important to understand the restraints placed upon teacher
decision-making in the current policy environment to extend Van Driel et al.’s findings and ascertain the extent which teachers may become de-skilled as a result of the nature of schooling in the 21st century (Apple, 2003).

Teacher enactment of curriculum policy not only involves the decisions they make to deliver curriculum but also the feedback they give to policy makers. MacPhail (2007) examined the perspectives of teachers about senior PE curriculum policy reform in Scotland. The Scottish Physical Education curriculum reform was considered more flexible than what teachers had known previously as this policy was expressed as a framework. Initially, teachers perceived content flexibility in the curriculum as valuable because it was less prescriptive and allowed greater scope to make decisions about student learning in their local school context. However, as control by the policy making authority became tighter, teacher flexibility was reduced with the introduction of new content and assessment procedures. This led to requests by teachers in that study for professional assistance about ‘what’ and ‘how’ they should be teaching. However, requests for more professional development were not met and the exercise of power over assessment by the policy making authority appeared to decrease any notion of flexible teacher decision-making within the curriculum. In other words, greater accountability of teachers around assessment and student performance had a restrictive effect on the range of choice in the curriculum for teachers. While MacPhail (2007) suggested teachers be included in system-wide curriculum decision-making, the Australian and New Zealand experience has suggested that there is no guarantee of successful curriculum policy reform, as other restraints may operate to drive PE curriculum policy back to techno-rationalistic origins (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Macdonald, 2003; Ovens, 2010).
A study considering the constraints placed upon teacher decision-making was conducted by Morgan and Hansen (2008) in New South Wales (Australia), who investigated the barriers to achieving quality PE programs in schools through a study across 72 schools. Like MacPhail’s (2007) study in Scotland, many of the barriers to policy enactment appeared to be institutional; that is, beyond the range of teacher control. Time restraints and pressure to allocate resources to other areas in the school were cited as micro-level tensions impacting upon teaching programs. However, unfamiliar content and the introduction of new pedagogical approaches also made teachers feel less confident in developing different learning experiences for students as part of the intended constructivist approach. Consequently, teachers were inclined to return to methods they knew best that were consistent with their own beliefs and values about teaching.

Not building teacher capacity for curriculum reform was identified by Moy and Renshaw (2009) as a major constraint to the adoption of new pedagogical practices across Australia, United Kingdom and the United States of America in a review of teaching practices in PE in those countries. They believed that pedagogical practice was constrained by outdated theories of skill acquisition, preventing practitioners from adopting a range of teaching styles. This is despite the growth of new pedagogical strategies that have emerged such as Sports Education, Teaching Games for Understanding and Game Sense (Kirk & Kinchin, 2003; Light, 2002; Singleton, 2009). Adhering to outdated theories of skill acquisition, they concluded, had been shaped by a number of historical, political, social, cultural and environmental influences. Consequently, Moy and Renshaw (2009) called for writers of curriculum policy to move away from outdated, historical views of PE and be cognisant of more contemporary learning theories. However, from studies like those by Van Driel et al (2007), MacPhail (2007) and Morgan and Hansen (2008), changing teacher beliefs systems requires
negotiation and consultation with an obligation to build capacity within teachers to deal with curriculum reform. The Moy and Renshaw (2009) position places curriculum policy as a precursor to changing teacher behaviour and they presented an argument for curriculum policy reform to be based on more contemporary learning theories of skill acquisition. While such a position has value, a linear view of policy interaction does not represent the more ‘messy’ reality of influences impacting upon teacher decision-making in globalising contexts.

For Moy and Renshaw, socio-cultural approaches to PE were examples of contemporary learning practices. In Australia and New Zealand, a significant number of researchers in PE have advocated for a socio-cultural approach to curriculum policy and have been influential in determining policy developments. One example comes from Macdonald, Hunter and Tinning (2007) who performed a document analysis on rich (comprehensive, deeper learning) tasks in the Queensland (Australia) curriculum to investigate how curriculum knowledge is constructed by teachers. As a reference point, the researchers used a more contemporary knowledge-base for PE from the socio-cultural sphere on which to compare and contrast the tasks under study. Macdonald et al concluded that these tasks represented evidence of a narrow and often inaccurate knowledge base leading to two key propositions from their analysis. They argued that, first, a narrow knowledge base reflected the techno-rationality of the curriculum and, second, that this gave rise to outdated knowledge and skills in the classroom. These conclusions were similar to an earlier study in Queensland by Dinan Thompson (1998) in an analysis of curriculum policy construction and also to a subsequent critical discourse analysis conducted by Rossi, Tinning, McCuaig, Sirna and Hunter (2009). In the latter, curriculum policy text production and enactment promoted a certain type of use by teachers, that of an official manual or guidebook that added to ‘techno-rationalistic’ appeal. Indirectly, narrow
Curriculum policy was attributed to rationalist decision-making by teachers in their approaches to teaching and learning. However, it is unclear from these studies whether teachers use scientific, rationalist practices as a way to deal with content and time constraints (MacPhail, 2007) or alternatively, whether they choose to return to past methods as a consequence of schooling or their own values and beliefs.

The above discussion of key literature identified curriculum policy makers and their policy texts as major change agents in producing better quality and more relevant PE learning experiences for students. A contrary view is provided by Brooker and Clennett (2006) in an analysis of policy discourses and curriculum texts in schools in three States of Australia. While professional support for PE teachers was cited as significant, the findings indicated that resourcefulness alone did not build capacity for change in teachers. Importantly, the study suggested that new curriculum documents needed to be context-specific and not written differently to those written in the past. This curriculum policy writing, they argued, avoided creating unfamiliar contexts in which teachers were asked to operate, making change incremental. This is an interesting argument as it appears contrary to other viewpoints calling for curriculum writers to use contemporary knowledge and skills for the teaching of PE. Brooker and Clennett (2006) justified their position by citing perspectives of teachers who felt they did not have sufficient tools to navigate new curriculum terrain such as new content, assessment or implementation methods. Consequently, Brooker and Clennett believed that curriculum policy texts, as part of the reform, had become marginalised and not put into practice, as teachers were reluctant to change from a position of what they knew best.

In many studies, assessment contexts were seen as a constraint upon teacher capacity to implement curriculum change. For example, the Western Australia Certificate of
Education - Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) syllabus in WA was first drafted in an era where outcomes-based education was dominant. This involved assessment around statements on standards of achievement communicated as ‘levels’ from 1 to 8. These ‘levels’ were not aligned with the levels of schooling. In lower secondary school, assessment and reporting on student performance in ‘outcomes’ had been implemented by teachers for several years, but the expansion of the model into senior school became problematic. A study by Whipp, Anderson, Yeo and Tan (2006) pre-empted this in a quantitative study of thirty teachers across all sectors of schooling in WA. With 40% of teachers in this sample reporting a desire to return to grading (as opposed to levelling) and another 28% uncommitted, the authors concluded there was a gap between current practice and theoretically sound grading principles. This, they argued, called for a re-alignment of teacher beliefs and values with the necessary resources to cope with the reform into senior schooling.

A study on Year 11 and 12 PE curriculum policy was conducted by Penney and Hay (2008) who found that social-cultural and social-critical perspectives added value to curriculum delivery and learning outcomes. In this example, Penney and Hay compared the learning experiences of WA students with others in Queensland (Australia) and found that the physical activity context chosen by teachers for their students had a major impact on student achievement. They concluded that physical activity that matched the lived experience of students made it easier for teachers to integrate learning concepts using ‘learning in, through and about’ movement (Arnold, 1979a; Brown, 2013a). Findings from an earlier study by Fitzpatrick and Pope (2005) in New Zealand also shared this perspective. Penney and Hay (2008), cited earlier, went on to claim that their study was designed for practitioners and policy writers to advance discourses of inclusivity and lifelong learning across State boundaries in Australia as part of a new approach to PE.
The pedagogic discourse of assessment in PE curriculum policy was a theme in a study emanating from Queensland (Australia). Chan, Hay and Tinning (2011) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing teachers and students across two learning phases of schooling: the middle phase typical of lower secondary school; and the senior phase where PE is chosen as a subject for secondary graduation and tertiary entrance. In comparing the two phases of schooling, the middle phase was characterised by a ‘participatory’ orientation where students were encouraged to participate in various forms of physical activity. The senior phase was predominantly a ‘performance’ orientation where emphasis was placed upon measuring student performance both academically and physically. One of the pedagogic consequences Chan, Hay and Tinning identified from senior school PE was its emphasis on accountability. Here, curriculum narrowing was evident with content focusing on the science of performance. Also, Chan, Hay and Tinning reported that teachers chose to sacrifice PE curriculum time in the senior school for lessons in examination literacy, as a means to enhance student performance in external examinations. The middle phase of schooling was not bounded by these constraints but the discourse of performative assessment was pushing downwards into the lower secondary years as schools sought to prepare students early for secondary graduation in their school journey. Chan et al.’s study highlighted how pedagogic consequences arose from discourses transmitted by systems of assessment. The high-stakes nature of senior schooling was strongly influencing how teachers enact curriculum policy.

In this discussion about teachers as ‘enactors’ of curriculum policy, two patterns have emerged. First, teachers’ work is shaped by what Basil Bernstein called the “three message systems of schooling” (Rizvi & Lingard 2010, p.93): curriculum; pedagogy; and evaluation. Bernstein (1971) claimed that educational knowledge has both ‘power’ and
‘control’ components. Consequently, the three messages of schooling frame “the core of teacher work” and “informs their logics of practice” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.94). To illustrate, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) reasoned that neoliberal reforms have led to increased testing and competition whilst reframing these message systems of schooling through the demands of accountability. They argued that control over teachers’ work has meant that teachers are often unaware of policies that have implications for the work they do. This realisation has led to the second pattern emerging from the literature. In response to neoliberal changes in schooling, scholars have called for a social-cultural or a social-critical approach to curriculum policy. For example, Giroux (2003) maintained that “teachers and students lost their capacities to become critical agents, serving as ideological gatekeepers or as spineless lackeys of the state” (p.6). He argued that teachers were under siege in neoliberal times and that students were governed by values promoting consumerism as the only form of citizenship, driven by the logic of the market. Giroux framed his argument around a call for a ‘radical pedagogy’, one that resisted the forces of neoliberalism and promoted values associated with democracy and civic life. He asked policy actors to be critical, social agents of change through a lens that embraced a critical pedagogy. Giroux (2011, p.144) called this the “pedagogy of intervention”. This notion of ‘critical pedagogy’ had become a theme in the PE literature and in literature surrounding the Australian Curriculum, Health and Physical Education (HPE).

The Australian Curriculum HPE represents a curriculum policy response along the lines of what Giroux (2011) was suggesting and discourses were introduced as a consequence of its publication. These discourses included terms like ‘health literacies’, ‘strength-based approaches’ and ‘critical inquiry’, but the most significant was a concept cited in the literature as an ‘Arnoldian dimension’ called, ‘learning in, through and about movement’
(Arnold, 1979a). This dimension referred to making-meaning through movement and had been used in justifying PE for schools (Brown, 2008; 2013a).

Arnold’s (1979a; 1985; 1988) dimensions are important within “the scholarship of physical education” (Brown & Penney, 2013, p.43) as they articulate perspectives about education and learning. For example, education ‘in’ movement refers to the outcomes students acquire as a result of thoughtful participation in movement (Brown & Penney, 2013). These experiences Arnold explained as ‘self-actualising’ because the learner “derives meaning from a social-cultural environment” (Arnold, 1979b, p.87). Education ‘through’ movement views physical activity as a means by which physical, social, intellectual and emotional outcomes result from participation. Here, the inherent values of various forms of movement give rise to examples like the appreciation of performance, personal fitness or life-long commitment to health-related values. Education ‘about’ movement refers to the study of human movement usually from multiple perspectives (Brown, 2013b). Arnold (1979a; 1985) considered this dimension to be about rational forms of inquiry where students acquire knowledge through studying their participation in movement (Brown, 2013a; Brown & Penney, 2013). However, Arnold (1979a) explained that ‘knowledge’ was capable of being presented in a discursive way, highlighting how some forms of knowledge can be promoted or marginalised. Each of Arnold’s dimensions are interrelated and provide a framework to critically examine the pedagogical intent of PE curriculum (Brown & Penney, 2013). To this extent, Brown (2013b) argued that this Arnoldian vision has been lost as PE curriculum policy has evolved.
Conclusion

The review of literature began with a discussion of globalisation, neoliberalism and education policy, highlighting how policy reform in globalised times is often ‘borrowed’ from elsewhere, transcending international borders. This was followed by a consideration of two major dimensions in PE curriculum policy reform; that is, how PE curriculum policy is conceptualised and how teachers enact PE curriculum policy. What has emerged from this review is that curriculum policy development is a complex and ‘messy’ landscape, influenced by a number of economic, political and social tensions that require analysis from a variety of points of view. Consequently, the intentions of policy actors at macro-levels may not be realised in the practices of policy actors at micro-levels. Therefore, how teachers enact PE curriculum policy represents the major focus for this study. What follows in Chapter Four is a discussion of the methodology adopted to analyse the production and enactment of PE curriculum policy reforms in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015, with close attention also given to the impact of the new Australian Curriculum as well as international developments.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

Introduction
This chapter examines the theoretical and methodological framings involved in conducting this study. It commences by restating the research aim followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of interpretivism and critical theory. Then, the concept of a ‘policy trajectory’ is detailed as it formed the framework for the design of the study and reporting of the findings. The research questions for this study were generated from the policy trajectory framework and they are presented next. The perspectives of key policy actors at each level of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy processes under investigation in different types of Australian education contexts (macro/national, meso/State and micro/schools) were sought in relation to each research question. While data collection and analysis were framed by a ‘policy trajectory’, extending from macro to micro levels, the main emphasis of this research was on senior school PE curriculum policy enactment in case study schools at the micro level. Therefore, this chapter also examines the nature of case study research. There was a greater reliance on documentary data at the macro and meso levels (with the addition of several interviews), and on interviews at the micro (school) level. The chapter concludes with a discussion about trustworthiness of the findings and the ethical considerations that were involved.

Aim of the Study
The aim of this study was to analyse the production and enactment of senior school PE curriculum policy reforms in an Australian context, with a focus on Western Australia from 2005 to 2015.
Theoretical Underpinnings of this Study

Walford (2001, p.149) stated, “one way to think about theory is that it acts to simplify, to restrict the focus such that a story can be told”. This section discusses the theoretical underpinnings that shaped this study and the contribution theory made to the methodology. Several concepts are considered, including the nature of qualitative studies and the theoretical perspectives of interpretivism and critical theory, which were used in different points in the study. These theoretical foundations, along with the policy trajectory framework, guided the conduct of this research.

This was qualitative research that sought the perspectives of key policy actors on PE curriculum policy reform. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) described qualitative research as having two aspects. The first aspect views qualitative research as being a naturalistic, interpretive approach, and the second aspect is more critical. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) emphasised that:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (p.8)

Terms used by Denzin and Lincoln (2011; 2013) like ‘interpretive’ and ‘critique’ reflect the two theories that underpinned this study: interpretivism and critical theory.

The theoretical paradigm of interpretivism underpins the initial phase of data collection and analysis in this study. Interpretivism is concerned with the meanings that phenomena have for people in their everyday settings and how the actions of participants are significant (Schwandt, 2003; O’Donoghue, 2007). In respect to this study, the perspectives of policy actors at each level of the policy process (macro to micro) became
important in understanding the actions people took in relation to PE curriculum policy reform and why. Equally significant were how patterns of interactions emerged over time.

The value of interpretivism lies within its ability to generate new theory from participant actions and intentions (O’Donoghue, 2007). However, the extent to which findings can be generalised from this type of inquiry is highly contested. For example, Crotty (1998) described interpretivism as an uncritical form of research because it sought merely to understand real-life situations in terms of social interactions, accepting the status quo. In policy studies, researchers like Ozga (2000), Ball (2007) and Vidovich (2013), called for a more extended analysis that examines ‘bigger picture’ implications of findings, especially in relation to changing power relationships. Attention to ‘bigger picture’ understandings is expected to add to the potential generalisability of qualitative studies like this one. Vidovich, (2007, p.294) asserted: “There is a need to add more critical perspectives to expose the dynamics of power relationships between actors in policy networks”. Critical theory guided the second phase of analysis in this study, where comparisons and contrasts were made along the whole policy trajectory from macro to micro levels. This meta-analysis formed the basis for development of theoretical propositions at the end of this thesis.

Critical theory was considered valuable as it allowed an investigation of the dynamic interactions between curriculum policy production and teacher decision-making around policy enactment within schools, affording priority to notions of power, resistance and social justice (Crotty, 1998; Giroux, 2003; 2011). For Crotty (1998), critical theory is a framework that challenges the status quo by reading situations from the standpoint of conflict and oppression to address the wider implications of findings. In other words, critical theory is considered transformative, aiming to emancipate and restore more equal
power relationships within policy settings (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Lincoln, Guba & Lynham, 2013).

Proponents of critical theory, such as Kincheloe and McLaren (2003), have identified the potential of a critical theory approach to be disruptive and hence increase the potential for change. However, opponents of critical theory maintain that it has limited value for education research and that the goal of critical emancipation is a lofty and unattainable one, as people are never free from the social and political conditions that shaped their perspectives (Tubbs, 1996). It is important to emphasise that critical theory is more than just criticism and that it is “a central process in promoting quality education even in the face of an uneven and unjust world” (Leonardo, 2004, p.14). In other words, critical theory has more to do with critical analysis than mere criticism.

Contemporary critical theory research takes on a more productive guise in light of the challenges presented by a globalised and technological society. Current socio-political conditions call for a greater understanding about concepts such as dominance, power, struggle, resistance and conformativity in ways that recognise the interrelationships of agency, people and movements to build better societies (Apple, 2011). Kellner (2003) explained critical theory this way:

A critical theory of education must be rooted in a critical theory of society that conceptualises the specific features of existing capitalist societies and their relations of domination and subordination, contradictions and openings for progressive social change, and transformative practices that create what the theory projects as a better life and society. (p.8)

In a policy analysis of PE curriculum policy reform, critical theory allowed an examination of power relationships throughout the relevant policy processes extending from global influences to national and State levels to policy enactment by teachers in schools. As Kellner highlighted, critical theory is a way of seeing and conceptualising
education in a way that can help generate social change. Therefore, employing interpretivism and critical theory as theoretical framings, at different points in the study, enabled a more holistic view of the curriculum policy processes under investigation. Next, the ‘policy trajectory’ which forms the framework for the detailed investigations in this study will be explained. Importantly, this framework informed the construction of research questions.

The Policy Trajectory Framework

Ball (1994) initially proposed the ‘policy trajectory’ framework which was the foundation for the policy analysis of this study, albeit in a modified form. Five contexts of policy making were identified in Ball’s original policy trajectory framework: the context of influences (focusing on the drivers that influence the initiation of new policy); the context of policy text production (where policy text is created and refined, usually by the policy elite); the context of practices/effects (where policy is often re-created, and mediated as part of enactment); the context of outcomes (policy impacts on equity and social justice); and the context of political strategies (actions to overcome disadvantage). For the purposes of this study, the latter two policy contexts of the policy trajectory (outcomes and political strategies) were combined as both are concerned with the ‘bigger picture’ issues of social justice (see Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In this study, the fourth context is referred to as the ‘context of longer term policy outcomes’.

Vidovich (2007; 2013) further developed Ball’s (1994) work for education policy analysis. Several different features were included in her approach: taking greater account of the processes of globalisation which is accelerating in the 21st century; giving State-centred constraints more emphasis in an era of greater national ‘steerage’ of education policy in the ‘national interest’ of increasing competitiveness in the global arena; and
highlighting the interrelationships between different levels of policy processes within complex global to local policy networks. In all, the policy trajectory framework spans from the global influences to local (school) policy practices.

For the study reported in this thesis, Vidovich’s (2007; 2013) use of ‘levels’ in policy processes, was adopted, and three levels of the PE curriculum policy trajectory were identified for empirical data collection:

- The ‘macro’, national (or Australian) level, including the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) which has taken an important role in national PE curriculum policy development;
- The ‘meso’, State (or WA) level, of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) of WA, which is responsible for the Western Australia Certificate of Education – Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) and which has input into the new Australian Curriculum HPE policy on behalf of the State of WA; and
- The ‘micro’, school (or local) level, of teachers in selected case study schools in each of the three sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent).

It is at the micro-level where policy enactment occurs and ‘practices’ are likely to be different from school to school (Vidovich, 2007; 2013).

In all, the policy trajectory framework represents an investigative process that conceptualises the interactions between contexts, agencies and individuals (Ball, 1994; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Vidovich, 2007; 2013). A particular focus of this study was whether there was disjunction between the intent of policy from the policy elite on the one hand, and the enactment of the policy by teachers in schools on the other hand, including why any disjunction may have occurred.
Research Questions

The policy trajectory framework guided the construction of research questions for the study. As explained in the previous section, this included the contexts of: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. Consistent with the approach taken by Vidovich (2007; 2013), empirical data was collected at the national (macro), State (meso) and school (micro/local) levels of policy trajectory. The ‘national’ level referred to Australia; the ‘State’ level referred to Western Australia (WA); and the ‘school’ or ‘local’ level referred to the case study schools in WA from the three sectors of Government, Catholic and Independent.

This research sought the perspectives of key policy actors at each level (macro to micro) on the following questions derived from the policy trajectory framework (Vidovich, 2007; 2013):

1. What were the wider influences acting to initiate senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015?
2. What were the main characteristics of the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy texts in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and how were these texts produced?
3. How were teachers enacting the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in case study schools in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and why?
4. What are the anticipated longer term outcomes and implications of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms from 2005 to 2015 in Western Australia?
While it is recognised that the perspectives of students, parents and other stakeholder groups would also be insightful, this study was limited to staff, in particular, ACHPER (national), SCSA (State) and teachers in schools (WA). As the major focus of this study was how curriculum policy was enacted at the micro-level, choosing a school from each of the education sectors in Western Australia was important as part of a multiple case study approach. What follows is a description of the case study method employed at the micro-level of the policy trajectory.

**Case Study Research**

At the local/school (micro) level, this study involved three cases across the main sectors of schooling in WA: Government, Catholic and Independent. Consequently, this research embedded a multiple case study design that allowed for a cross-case analysis between each of these schools. This section discusses this approach by defining what is meant by a case study, the role of theory in determining how these multiple cases were chosen and finally, as part of the analysis, why data is triangulated across case study schools at the micro level. Subsequently, comparisons of findings were also made between the micro (school) level, and the meso (State) and macro (national) levels of the PE curriculum policy trajectory.

Case study research is described as a close-up and in-depth understanding of cases in their real-world settings (Punch, 2009; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Silverman, 2006; Yin, 2009; 2012). For this study, the adoption of case study method was considered appropriate because of the complexity and contextual nature of policy settings in schools. As Punch (2009) pointed out, a case study is a bounded system where research attempts to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of each case. This occurred in this study by selecting
one school from each of the education sectors in WA with every case considered as a single entity nestled within its own specific context in the first part of data analysis.

Case studies are an evolving methodology and have not always been seen as credible due to confusion with quasi-experimental research designs (Yin, 2012). This has attracted questions concerning the potential generalisability of case study findings. Some of these criticisms were summarised by Silverman (2006) as five common misunderstandings about case study research. These erroneous assumptions included: theoretical knowledge being considered more valuable than practical knowledge; findings cannot always be generalised beyond the case; case study method is more useful in generating hypotheses in the first stage of a total research process (a positivist perspective); potential biases towards verification of the researcher’s own beliefs; and difficulties in summarising and developing general propositions. However, in light of developing case study methodology, Yin (2009; 2012; 2014) described several features about case study research which addressed these concerns. For example, multiple case study designs were better than single case-studies as methods because they allowed for multiple sources of evidence to be triangulated for analysis to proceed to a point of convergence (Yin, 2012).

Theory plays a major part in case study design by organising the study and helping with its generalisations (Yin, 2012; 2014). Theory also frames analytic generalisations, potentially allowing for theoretical propositions to be generated for consideration in other situations. To achieve this, Yin (2009; 2012) suggested several strategies for data analysis to be embedded into the research design including pattern matching, explanation building, construction of logic models and cross-case synthesis. A major strategy for this study was cross-case synthesis. A ‘replication logic’ (Yin 2009; 2012) aided case selection and the interpretation of findings between cases as part of the analysis. The cases were expected
to produce both varying and contrasting findings due to the differing context of each school. Yin (2012) called this ‘theoretical replication’.

What follows is a description of the methods of data collection and analysis employed in this study. The methods utilised in this research were designed to collect data from more than one source at each level of the policy trajectory through documents and semi-structured interviews.

**Methods**

This policy trajectory study included the analysis of documents relating to WACE-PES curriculum policy from 2005 to 2015 and interviews with policy actors, once in 2012 and again one year later in 2013, given the rapidly changing and highly contested nature of this curriculum policy, and the emergence of Australia’s first national curriculum during the period under investigation. This introduction of national curriculum policy meant that senior school curriculum policy in WA (WACE-PES) would intersect with the Australian Curriculum, Health and Physical Education (HPE) and changing national-State dynamics became a significant feature of the PE curriculum policy reform which was the focus of the study. Data collection and analysis needed to take new national-State dynamics into account. Limited analysis of national documents and interviews were added to the bulk of document and interview data collected and analysed within the State of WA. This section discusses the methods employed for data collection and analysis. It concludes with a discussion about trustworthiness and the ethical issues in the conduct of this research.
**Data collection**

Qualitative researchers study the written and spoken forms of human experience and use multiple sources of evidence to guide the collection of data (Punch, 2009). Yin (2012) suggested data be collected from multiple sources to enable it to be compared and contrasted. For this study, the collection of data included evidence obtained from documents and semi-structured interviews with a range of key policy actors allowing for triangulation. In the first instance, documentary evidence crucial to the policy process was collected at national (macro) and State (meso) levels. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at all levels of the policy trajectory, although they were the major data collection method in case study schools.

**Documents**

Documents are considered as sources of “social facts that are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways” (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p.58). According to Silverman (2006), documents as ‘text’ are described as data consisting of words and images free from the interventions of the researcher. The use of documents in data collection was seen as advantageous because of their richness, relevance and effect, as they are naturally occurring and freely available (Silverman, 2006). In policy analysis, texts are seen as interventions into practice and are open to interpretation by those whose role it is to read and implement policy documents and put them into practice (Apple, 2011).

Using documentary evidence alongside semi-structured interviews enabled a greater depth of interpretation of the meaning documents have for policy actors and the subsequent implications of those interpretations (Mason, 2002). It was important to include documents in this study that were contextually significant to the policy actors and contained evidence where policy was a site of contest among policy actors (Punch, 2009).
Therefore, the collection of documentary data was at two levels. At the national level, documents produced by the curriculum authority, ACARA, were the main source of data on the Australian Curriculum HPE, which had a major impact on State (WA) curriculum policy; they were evolving simultaneously. These national documents were collected in conjunction with media releases, committee reports and statements of rationale as they pertain to the professional organisation, ACHPER, the main advocate for national curriculum development in HPE. At the State (WA) level, documents included the WACE-PES syllabuses at staging points in curriculum development - 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014. While confidential letters and submissions to the WA curriculum authority, SCSA, from interest groups at these staging points were not accessible, ‘teacher jury’ reports on reforms and ongoing policy changes found in the SCSA’s publications to schools were included in this study (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2007b). At both national and State levels, public documentation was easily accessible from websites or relevant organisations. There was no intention to collect documentary evidence at the micro-policy level as no formal documentary data existed and any school-level impacts of policy were expected to arise in interviews with teachers.

**Interviews**

In-depth, semi-structured interviewing allowed for deeper probing of curriculum policy interpretations along the policy trajectory, especially at the micro (school) level. In this study, interviews occurred in two blocks which were one year apart (2012 and 2013) to coincide with teacher planning, feedback to ACARA and SCSA, and preparing students for the first Year 12 PE examination at the end of the WACE-PES course. Having interviews span over two calendar years facilitated an investigation of rapidly changing policy parameters to capture the ongoing dynamics of the curriculum policy processes.
The planning of semi-structured interviews raised several issues to be considered before the collection of data commenced. Punch (2009) highlighted these issues as: why particular participants were chosen for interview; the frequency and length of interviews; where the interviews took place; and establishing rapport as part of accessing and organising the interview situation. It was important to this study to be sensitive to individual participant situations and flexible in different interviewing contexts (Berry, 1999), especially when interviewing participants from schools. This was done without compromising the integrity of the research questions.

The policy trajectory framework was used as the basis for selecting participants. At the macro (national) level, three participants were selected for inclusion in this study. One was a representative from ACHPER (head office) whose responsibility included leading the organisational response to ACARA and the Australian Curriculum HPE. ACHPER membership includes teachers, academics and other professionals whose feedback on national curriculum policy would be insightful. It was not possible to interview participants from ACARA, so selecting participants from ACHPER had the advantage of capturing the close relationship the organisation had with ACARA in curriculum policy development. The other two participants at this level were employees of SCSA in WA but they were also active in the national curriculum policy development, one as a board member of ACHPER Australia and the other as an advisory committee member for ACARA. Both were ACHPER members. These two participants were selected because they shared both a national perspective on the Australian Curriculum HPE and, with ACHPER, played an important role in the political process of policy making.

At the meso (State) level in WA, three participants were selected for interview from the SCSA. SCSA is responsible for WACE-PES curriculum policy and its dissemination to
schools. Participants at this level were expected to have a wide range of perspectives through their interaction at both the national and school level that would include aspects of State curriculum policy processes from construction to enactment. These participants were also instrumental in leading WA’s response to the Australian Curriculum HPE, both as representatives of their organisation, SCSA, and as observers of enactment of PE curriculum policy in schools. These participants were able to provide a perspective derived from the national level on one hand and the practice of teachers on the other. This was seen as an advantage to this study as it allowed for conceptual relationships to be observed between the levels of the policy trajectory.

At the micro (local) level, a school was selected for this study from each of the school sectors in WA (Government, Catholic and Independent) according to the following criteria for inclusion: WACE-PES had to have been taught to the highest level in Year 12 at the school; at least three teachers in that school had to have experience in teaching WACE-PES for examination; and those teachers selected had to have taught the curriculum for at least one year. In the selection of schools for this study, it was important to choose schools with similar size and demographics so that comparisons could be made. To assist in this goal, each school was treated as a separate case and a rich description of each school appears at the beginning of Chapter Seven. The identification of participants from within a school was carried out by asking the school Head of Health and Physical Education for their recommendations as part of a snowballing strategy (Creswell, 2007; 2013). Where possible, participant selection was limited to those teachers who had experience with the curriculum from the first draft in 2005 to its formal inception in 2007 and through to latter versions of the syllabus. However, where a school was able to offer participants of varying teaching experience, participants were selected to include this variation. For the Government and Catholic schools in this study, the three participants
from each school were experienced teachers of WACE Physical Education Studies. For
the Independent school in this study, two experienced teachers and two beginning
teachers were selected. In the three case study schools, all teachers of WACE-PES in
those schools volunteered to participate with the exception of the Head of Learning Area
at the Independent school. A sample of the participant information letter and consent form
are presented in Appendices A and B.

At all levels of the policy trajectory, participants were interviewed face-to-face at their
place of work with each interview about forty minutes in duration. Interviews were
recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis. Participants at the
national level were interviewed first to aid the collection of data at other levels of the
policy trajectory, followed by State (meso) level and school (micro) level participants.
Interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy with participants, called ‘member
checking’ (Yin, 2012). With all participants, rapport was established with introductory
phone calls before the interview dates where participants were able to ask questions about
the study and discuss issues of concern. As the researcher is also a practitioner in the field,
the establishment of rapport and trust were readily forthcoming. Follow up questions
about ongoing policy changes were disseminated to participants one year later by email
and their responses attached to the interview transcript. This follow-up email one year
after the initial interview was to focus only on the ‘changes’ to senior school PE
curriculum policy and allow for participants to add to their perspectives as a result of any
observed changes over 12 months.

The research questions presented earlier guided the collection of data using semi-
structured interviews. These research questions were broken down into interview
questions using Vidovich’s (2007) ‘menu’ of questions relating to different contexts of
the policy trajectory as a guide. That is, interview questions were structured according to the policy contexts of: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices (the enactment of policy); and longer term policy outcomes. Questions for semi-structured interviews appear in Appendix C of this thesis. Interview questions varied slightly depending on who was interviewed. For example, participants from the national level were interviewed in relation to their policy experiences which differed when compared to teachers in schools.

**Data analysis**

Data analysis in this study was conducted in two major phases: first using the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework to analyse the perspectives of participants (interpretivism) and second, to conduct a meta-analysis along the policy trajectory from macro to micro levels, underpinned by critical theory. This section describes the process of analysis, including the coding and memo-ing of documents and interview transcripts, and how this led to the development of propositions.

*Analysis of documents and interviews - Miles and Huberman framework*

Documents and interview transcripts were analysed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework. Punch and Oancea (2014) described the Miles and Huberman framework as consisting of three main components: data reduction; data display; and drawing and verifying conclusions. These three components occurred concurrently using strategies of coding and memos that led to the development of themes and propositions (Punch, 2009). ‘Data reduction’ continued throughout the analysis by editing, labelling and summarising data early in the process to assist the progress of themes. Labels that were frequently occurring were tallied as part of the data reduction process. The second aspect of the Miles and Huberman framework involved ‘data display’ where the quality
of analysis was determined by repeated and iterate displays of data (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Data display in this study was through tables of themes and sub-themes that enabled important relationships to be identified and explored. Key themes and sub-themes emerged as part of the final component of the Miles and Huberman framework of ‘drawing and verifying conclusions’. These were authenticated through using constant comparisons and peer reviewing of data. An example of coding and labelling is given in Table 4.1. Major themes emerged from the frequency of a particular code throughout the data reduction process.

Table 4.1 An example of ‘codes’ used in this study showing a sample of transcript for a State (meso) level participant and the codes assigned for key themes/sub-themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
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| In the transition from '05 to '07, it did become a bit more scientific, I suppose, because it needed to be – because around the same time, policy here shifted to compulsory examinations through every kid in Year 12, so for the stage 2s and the 3s that agenda, write an exam, meant that teachers felt the pressure to be able to teach explicitly to an exam and examiners wanted explicit content. | Rescientisation.  
Social-critical omitted.  
Content needed to be measureable.  
Compulsory exams made teachers accountable.  
Accountability of teachers & examiners.  
Writers’ response: explicit, measureable outcomes. |

This process of data analysis occurred in a systematic way from the documents to the first set of interview transcripts and finally, to participant follow-up by email one year later. In analysing documents, attention was drawn to their: form and function; persuasiveness; and authorship and consumption (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). The purpose of coding relevant documents was to inform interview questions and provide a basis for comparison between the intentions of policy writers with that of other policy actors. Initially, codes used for document and interview analysis were descriptive before becoming more inferential as bigger picture patterns became clear. This allowed for conceptual memoing to take place concurrently for the building of theoretical concepts emerging out of the data. At this stage of analysis, verification techniques such as code checking and constant
comparisons were utilised. Some member checking (Yin, 2012) with participants took place where clarification was sought.

At the micro-level of analysing the transcripts of interviews with teachers, each case study school was considered as a separate case in this phase. This followed the advice of Yin (2012) who suggested each case be treated individually to represent the significance of findings for a particular school. Each case was subjected to parallel procedures in following case study protocols to allow for cross-case analysis.

The cross-case analysis between schools in this study (Government, Catholic and Independent) provided the basis for synthesis of subsequent propositions. Yin (2009; 2012) suggested several techniques for meta-analysis that were employed in this study. These included pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis and replication logic. Replication logic was demonstrated in choosing case study schools representing the three types of schooling in WA with each ‘case’ being treated uniquely in the first phase. However, in meta-analysis, pattern matching and explanation building became key strategies in developing propositions. To facilitate this, word tables were used to search for commonalities and differences between cases. Creswell’s (2007; 2013) template for coding using a multiple case study approach also aided the development of propositions that emerged through the cross-case synthesis.

**Meta-analysis**

The second phase of analysis in this study is a meta-analysis using critical theory to guide the development of propositions. The meta-analysis involved comparisons between the macro, meso and micro levels of the PE curriculum policy trajectory. This meta-analysis involved comparing and contrasting findings at all three levels (macro, meso and micro)
at different times. In doing so, the meta-analysis coincided with the cross-case (micro) analysis to capture changes over time at all three levels. This was aided by adopting Yin’s time-series analysis in bringing together key themes in respect to time in conjunction with pattern matching and explanation building. As data from documents occurred over the entire period of study (2005 to 2015) and interviews conducted over one year (2012 to 2013), a time-series analysis enabled an insight into changing perspectives and the outcomes of those perspectives. This was particularly important in understanding the findings related to the final research question of this study pertaining to longer term policy outcomes. Analysing policy changes over time (Yin, 2012) became significant when using critical theory to develop propositions to explain PE curriculum reform in Australia.

The meta-analysis involved a contrast and comparison along the policy trajectory from macro to meso to micro levels enabling a holistic view of the PE curriculum policy processes to be constructed. As there were three levels of the policy trajectory (macro, meso and micro), these sources of data were triangulated and compared to reveal the power relationships between policy actors, consistent with a critical theory approach.

**Trustworthiness of Findings**

Issues surrounding the trustworthiness of the findings include limiting opportunities for bias and using several tactical strategies to limit participant reactivity and ensure the dependability of data. Strategies from constructing the research questions to determining participant selection and analysis, was part of a disciplined inquiry approach to ensure trustworthiness. As the major focus in this study involved interviews with teachers in case study schools, discussion is centred around this aspect of trustworthiness and how the principle of rigour is applied more widely to other aspects of this inquiry.
Yin (2009) described trustworthiness using terms like content validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. However, qualitative researchers tend to refer to these as dependability, validity, reactivity and transferability (O’Donoghue, 2007; Punch, 2009). Dependability is related to the stability of data over time and whether the analysis is consistent with what other researchers would find in the data. Code checking was one strategy employed in this study by which bias and theoretical sensitivity errors were limited. For Yin (2009), the establishment of a chain of evidence, using multiple sources of data collection and adhering to case study protocols were key factors contributing to the dependability of case studies. These protocols were built-in to the design of this study allowing for three levels of policy analysis and cross-case analysis between various sites. Reactivity, where data may be influenced by the data collection process itself, is always present in this type of data gathering and this is why the researcher’s own school was not included for study. Member checking between researcher and participants along with ensuring participant confidentiality (O’Donoghue, 2007; Punch, 2009) were strategies that guarded against participant reactivity.

Validity was enhanced through triangulation and making constant comparisons in the data within transcripts, between transcripts and within documents (Punch, 2009). Again Yin (2009) made several comments to enhance validity, especially in the analysis phase. These included: pattern matching; explanation building; addressing rival explanations; and using logic models. In conceptualising and developing propositions, Punch (2009) argued that case studies can produce potentially transferable results. Therefore, the findings from this study provide ‘food for thought’ for other policy settings. School site selection was representative of three school types in WA and by adopting a critical theory approach to the meta-analysis, wider implications of the study are explored. However, it must be acknowledged that using only three school sites is also a limitation although the
conceptual themes to emerge from these sites may provide for theoretical generalisability to other contexts (Punch and Oancea, 2014; Walford, 2001).

**Ethical Considerations or Issues**

This study complied with the rules and regulations of the University of Western Australia (UWA) in regards to ethical research. Apart from Human Rights and Ethical approval procedures, there were several other considerations involving: relevant ethics permissions from school systems; the interest of key stakeholders; the significance of the findings to others; the position of the researcher; informed consent and privacy and; research integrity, ownership and use of results (O’Donoghue, 2007; Punch, 2009). While the essential stakeholders are the researcher and the participants, this study is considered to have a high degree of worthiness for others. It was necessary to protect the privacy of participants by not identifying them by name, school or association with colleagues and professional organisations. Informed consent was in writing once permission to conduct the study was obtained. A letter to participants (Appendix A) contained information about the study’s purpose, methodology and timelines for completion as well as details on privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage. No participant withdrew from this study, although it should be noted that in the follow-up emails one year after interviews, some participants had nothing to add to their initial responses. This study was conducted under the rules of the University of Western Australia (UWA) and consequently, the issues mentioned above are governed by their procedures under its charter. Data is stored securely for seven years as required by the UWA Ethics Committee.
Conclusion

This chapter of the thesis has discussed the methodology of this study. This included the aim of the study followed by how interpretivism and critical theory provided the theoretical underpinnings at different points in the study. Substantial discussion was devoted to the ‘policy trajectory’ framework on which the design of this policy study was based. This ‘policy trajectory’ framework guided the construction of research questions for the study. Four research questions were adopted according to the policy contexts identified as being relevant to this study: the context of policy influences; the context of policy text production; the context of policy practices (or the enactment of policy); and the context of longer term policy outcomes. Then a description of the methods used in this study ensued, including how data was collected from documents and semi-structured interviews. Documents were analysed at the national (macro) and State (meso) levels of the policy trajectory while participants were interviewed at all levels of the trajectory (macro to micro). It was the interviews with teachers across three case study schools that represented the major focus for this study. Data analysis involved a cross-case analysis at the micro (local or schools) level and then a meta-analysis comparing and contrasting findings along the whole policy trajectory from macro to meso to micro levels. As part of this analysis, changes in time in the data at all three policy levels were noted. The meta-analysis included a focus on power relationships between policy actors at different levels of the policy trajectory. The researcher has ensured all data was collected, maintained and reported to protect the anonymity of participants, as outlined in the UWA ethics requirements.

The findings of this study are now presented in the following chapters: Chapter Five presents the findings from the national (macro) level; Chapter Six, the findings from the State (meso) level; and Chapter Seven, the findings for each case study school.
CHAPTER FIVE
NATIONAL (MACRO) LEVEL FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter presents the findings from research conducted at the national (macro) level of the Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy processes under investigation in Australian settings. It is the first of three findings chapters, with Chapter Six and Chapter Seven presenting findings from data collected at the State level (Western Australia) and schools (local) level, respectively. These three chapters follow the same structure and consider findings in each of the contexts: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. Within each context, major themes (italicised section headings) were identified and they include sub-themes (indicated in bold type) within the discussion. Themes and sub-themes should be viewed as interrelated rather than discrete entities but are separated in these chapters for clarity and analytic purposes. As one of the main aims of Chapters Five to Seven is to give voice to the participants in this study, these chapters do not refer to the literature; this will occur in a meta-analysis and discussion in Chapter Eight. To identify the voice of participants in this and the next two chapters, each participant is coded by ‘N’ for national level, ‘S’ for State level or ‘L’ for local (schools) level of the policy trajectory, followed by a number. This chapter will now present this study’s findings at the national level. It reports findings from document and interview (three participants) analysis. In the presentation of findings in this chapter, it is important to note that participants N2 and N3 were policy actors at the national level, and also had direct firsthand experience of Western Australia (WA). Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that Year 11 and 12 Physical Education Studies (PES) became the Western Australia Certificate of Education – Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES)
course in 2012. For coherence purposes, the term WACE-PES will be used unless otherwise stated.

The Context of Influences

The four main themes that emerged from the data in relation to influences on the PE curriculum policy trajectory are: a new federalism; curriculum trends in Physical Education; accountability; and competition in education markets. Each theme has been prominent in the period 2005 to 2015. The order in which they are discussed below has been determined by the magnitude of the influence in the sequence of events through which the WACE-PES and the Australian Curriculum, Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum policies have been developed. It must be emphasised that influences cited were ongoing and interconnected.

A new federalism

Australia’s curriculum policy landscape is often influenced by action at Federal and State/Territory levels concurrently. A ‘new federalism’ in education policy was emerging in 1989 when a meeting of Australia’s Federal and State education ministers embarked on a national approach to curriculum and schooling called the Hobart Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1998) which was a statement of the overarching goals of schooling in Australia. A significant development came with the Adelaide Declaration of 1999 (MCEETYA, 2000), which saw education ministers establish National Goals for Schooling, catalysing policy thinking towards this new federalism in education. One of these goals included a statement on HPE, ensuring a place for this learning area in the curriculum of Australian schools. However, by the mid-2000s, HPE was not included in the first plans for the Australian Curriculum proposed by the conservative Coalition
Federal Government in 2007. Lobbying by professional associations, including the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) ensued on behalf of HPE advocates. One national level participant stated: “It was chaotic and unnerving for people in the other learning areas [those not included in the first Australian Curriculum] who for many decades had a key place in the curriculum in the States and Territories” (N1). According to this participant, the Melbourne Declaration of 2008 (MCEETYA, 2008) under a new Federal Labor government consolidated a national approach to curriculum and schooling in Australia by acknowledging the eight learning areas stated in previous declarations: “The Melbourne Declaration was pivotal because all the Ministers of Education then said, ‘This is what schooling is all about in Australia.’” (N1). The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established and the status of HPE was restored on the national policy agenda as part of the Australian Curriculum in the latter half of 2008.

This new federalism meant that curriculum policy at State level was being heavily influenced by national policy trends. New curriculum pathways needed to be established for students to progress to post-school destinations, but for PE in WA, there was no precedent for a tertiary pathway as there had been in other States. One participant from WA who was also a policy actor at the national level explained: “Physical Education as a tertiary entrance subject didn’t count in Western Australia. It counted in most other jurisdictions, so we were viewed like ‘peasant cousins’ yet we had a strong curriculum heritage” (N2). This was seen as a gap that needed to be corrected if a nationally consistent approach was to be achieved. With the introduction of Year 11 and 12 curriculum reform in WA after 2007 (later to be called ‘WACE’), every State in Australia had a HPE pathway for tertiary entrance with subjects included in a new
Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). The ATAR began in 2010 and is used to compare students across States for entry into any university in Australia.

To allow comparisons across education jurisdictions, a **nationally consistent approach to standards** emerged out of the Adelaide Declaration in 1999. This focus upon standards demonstrated a national commitment and collaboration for the purpose of “increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated” (Standing Council on School Education & Early Childhood, 2012, p.1). In WACE courses, scales of student achievement played a role in comparability between schools, teachers and subjects. As one participant explained, there was a focus on “*student achievement through assessment as 'standards of achievement’ and that was influenced by the writers of Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Compulsory Education Review who were keen to apportion standards to what student achievement might look like*” (N3). In the period 2005 to 2007, standards in WA were descriptive statements represented as numerical levels of achievement as part of an outcomes approach to education. This participant went on to clarify: “*There was a tension to line up what teachers were currently doing with what was going to be produced*” (N3), referring to the structure of the syllabus documents. However, in WA, outcomes education was highly contested and by the time Year 11 courses commenced in 2007 there was a political change that meant the importance of outcomes began to “*diminish over time*” (N3). This prompted one participant to comment: “*There may be some disharmony*” (N1) between the Australian Curriculum HPE and PE practice in WA. Thus, ‘new federalism', reflecting changing national-State relations in education, was a key influence on HPE policy across Australia.
Curriculum trends in Physical Education

At the time of the initial writing phase of Year 11 and 12 PES (now ‘WACE-PES’) in 2005, a conscious decision by the then Curriculum Council of WA was to pursue a practical senior school course aimed at ‘learning in, through and about movement’. This learning concept was articulated in the rationale of both WACE-PES syllabus and later in the Australian Curriculum HPE. In the 2012 version of the WACE-PES syllabus, the rationale asserted: “Learning in Physical Education Studies cannot be separated from active participation in physical activities and involves students in closely integrated written, oral and physical learning experiences based upon the study of selected physical activities” (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2011, p.3). However, this statement had been stronger in the 2005 version of the syllabus where “emphasis is on learning through movement and personalised learning experiences to achieve progress towards the course of study outcomes” (Curriculum Council of WA, 2005, p.5). Despite this apparent change over several versions of the syllabus, ‘learning in, through and about movement’ remained a key pedagogical principle as this participant explained: “By pursuing something practical it kept that ‘classroom-to-the-court’ focus in the course rather than it being study about physiology or anatomy which a lot of other States have” (N2). In the Australian Curriculum HPE, ‘learning in, through and about movement’ was stated as being central to the teaching of PE.

Another ‘global’ trend in PE curriculum policy influenced specification of content in Australian Curriculum HPE by redefining content in terms of a social-critical approach. According to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (ACARA, 2012), a social-critical approach is founded on notions of equity and access for physical activity participation, using inquiry and movement as the key pedagogical vehicles. Similarly, the first draft of senior school PES in 2005 had a strong
social-critical element as this participant explained: “There was an influence on the sociocritical style of looking at Physical Education in terms of local, regional, global contexts and those factors that influenced physical activity participation” (N3). Social-critical perspectives were strongly promoted by academics both across Australia and internationally at that time. Their influence was evident early in senior school PES curriculum policy development by writers and advisors in WA when contemporary perspectives of content knowledge were canvassed.

However, from 2007 to 2009, senior school PES started to move away from the social-critical approach and underwent a rescientisation, meaning a return to science-based understandings that could be easily measured from an earlier time. When the Curriculum Council of WA started to look at overseas examples, PE curriculum in the reference countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America had become more science-based. The UK curriculum was one example which was considered as part of a Year 11 and 12 PES course review in WA in 2007, as one participant explained about the need to change the social-critical approach: “People were going, ‘there are these big vague, outcomes-type chunks of whimsical stuff written in a language no-one relates to,’ and so we started looking at what other people were doing. What have other jurisdictions written? Let’s look overseas!” (N2). As a consequence of a 2007 senior school PES review, the course was “built around recognising areas of more explicit content or practice that could sharpen up some of that language and not lose the glue that might be in a course” (N2). With the introduction of WACE in 2012, WACE-PES began to move towards attaining specific content that was explicit and measurable, thereby mirroring trends in PE curriculum policy in a number of other countries.
Accountability

The first **external examinations** in Year 11 and 12 PES occurred in 2008. With no history of examinations in the subject in WA prior to this time, the search for overseas examples began, as outlined by one participant:

*There was a chance for some professional renewal of what Physical Education meant in Year 11 and 12, to go back and ramp up the rigour, ditch a few things, focus on more contemporary research. We spent time looking at what was going on in the UK* (N2).

Two participants referred to the UK as a model for both the written and practical examinations in Year 11 and 12 PES. WA would be the first State in Australia to introduce a practical examination in senior school PE. As one participant described, the course review period of 2007 enabled them to prepare examination briefs for 2008: “*That’s when we looked at examining authorities in the UK, like OCR [Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts examination board], and their materials which were clear, succinct and read well*” (N2).

After the WA Year 11 and 12 PES course review in 2007, **school-based assessment and moderation** structures tightened to reduce variance in teacher judgements. Examples included a reduction in weighting of practical assessment from 50% to 30% and an increase in tests and examinations from as low as 30% to 40-50%. This tightening of assessment occurred in tandem with the national release of the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). In this statement, a commitment to strengthening accountability and transparency of schools was a primary goal because “schools need reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for improving student outcomes” (MCEETYA, 2008, p.16). The Melbourne Declaration also made clear how schools were to be accountable to parents and families through “data that allows them to assess a school’s performance overall and in improving student outcomes” (MCEETYA, 2008, p.16). School rankings and comparisons became more public and, in
WA, schools which performed well in WACE-PES were published in the State’s newspaper in January each year. This and other information about school performance was seen by the chair of ACARA as “an extremely valuable tool for educators and communities to understand what is going on inside classrooms” (McGaw, 2013, p.1) aimed at providing parents with an informed choice of selecting the education for their child in a newly created, competitive education market.

**Competition in education markets**

The recognition of HPE as a part of Australian schooling is a product of a long battle for legitimacy as practitioners engaged in competition with other learning areas. For the Australian Curriculum, one participant explained that “the whole thing became a battle to see [which learning areas] were going to get recognised in the national curriculum” (N1). This participant also described how learning area lobby groups “ran a strong political campaign to ensure that they would be included in this national curriculum process” (N1). From this participant’s account, ACHPER and the professional associations of other subject areas embarked on long campaigns to have their learning area included in future national curriculum policy. Membership of the national professional association, ACHPER, comprises of teachers, academics and allied health professionals. The organisation produced a statement for the future of HPE in Australia advocating for a national curriculum entitlement, as this participant elaborated: “We wanted an entitlement for every kid in Australia in HPE in a national curriculum. That was the basis of our lobby, our advocacy” (N1). Another participant highlighted that ACHPER (WA branch) was just as active in the establishment of Year 11 and 12 PES to bring WA in line with other jurisdictions.
Competition between education jurisdictions, sectors and institutions over PE curriculum policy was increasingly evident. For example, in the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education* (ACARA, 2012), the New South Wales syllabus was the major State syllabus document to be referenced. This was not to say that WA had not contributed to the national conversation in the past, as one participant clarified: “The [WA] K-10 health syllabus was seen as a landmark document in health education around the country. We had a strong legacy of sport and physical education instruction but we didn't have a senior school course” (N2). That is, different jurisdictions competed to influence new directions in PE curriculum policy.

Comparisons of PE curriculum between jurisdictions have both competitive and cooperative dimensions. To include an examinable practical component into Year 11 and 12 PES was a landmark event in Australia but was not without its struggle according to this participant: “All the other jurisdictions are still ‘gob smacked’ that we [WA] have been able to get up a practical component, value it and keep it there” (N2). For senior school PES in WA, wanting to influence the national landscape through strategies like a practical examination was paramount. While examples from other jurisdictions informed senior school course policy decisions in WA, the impact of WA on national policy is less clear. Competition, whether between or within jurisdictions, has added to the shaping of WACE curriculum policy in PE.

**The Context of Policy Text Production**

This section examines major themes in PE curriculum policy text production at the national level. While the main policy text in this study is the WACE-PES syllabus in the State of WA, the key features of the Australian Curriculum HPE was the major policy text at national level. Four themes emerging from national curriculum policy texts were:
equity; quality; dominance of social-critical discourses; and the role of the professional association, ACHPER.

**Equity**

All participants at the national level shared the perspective that accessibility to all students was a key feature of new curriculum policy texts as part of an intention to promote equity. Equity is addressed by setting clear directions for teachers in knowing what to teach regardless of geographic location, ethnicity or gender. One example was given by a participant who made this observation about the Australian Curriculum’s HPE intention: “You can say right across Australia, we know what every Australian kid is going to have to learn, then map that across the bands of schooling and provide what that means for teachers” (N1). Curriculum policy texts communicate the “non-negotiable areas of learning” (N1) through topics and the content statements within them. However, participants were adamant they did not prescribe how content was to be implemented as this was for “State jurisdictions, employers, Education Departments, Catholic and Independent schools to work out” (N1) and this represented a major challenge to the equity intentions contained within policy texts.

To fulfil equity intentions, participants described how flexibility was built into curriculum policy texts to allow teachers to teach to local conditions. For example: “In any Australian Curriculum there are places in Australia with different demographics, with different characteristics” (N1). This was elaborated further by this participant referring to a WA example: “If you’re in North-West WA working in an Aboriginal community, it’s going to be different in terms of delivery and the emphasis you put on some of the topics than if you were in the middle of Perth” (N1). Content differentiation was seen as essential to allow local decisions by teachers in response to teaching their students. Again,
participants emphasised the responsibilities of jurisdictions, like State and Territory education departments, to ensure the equity intentions in policy texts are achieved. For example:

We must look at access and equity for all children in terms of our Australian Curriculum. As that plays down into the school, every school will adhere to that policy of making sure that every child has access and equity and isn’t disadvantaged. It’s the jurisdiction’s job to make sure that they can do that (N1).

While ACARA developed the Australian Curriculum for equity purposes, whether equity is realised falls within the realms of jurisdictions.

Another feature seen by participants in curriculum policy texts was entitlement and the right of every student to undertake PE. Here, equity is viewed by participants as “non-elitist” (N3) and “inclusive” (N1). Referring to WACE-PES within the national landscape, one participant portrayed the policy text as “not for kids who were elite [athletes], but for kids who were reasonable, adequate performers” (N3). This is an important distinction as it aligns WA curriculum policy intentions with the Australian Curriculum HPE, as this participant went on to explain: “In terms of the intent, it was very much about being active, being a ‘mover’ and the teaching of theory in the practical” (N3). The concept of ‘learning in, through and about movement’ underpinned this participant’s perspective by “not catering to any particular kid from either end of the spectrum, but rather from the very elite to the non-elite by improving performance through the practical” (N3). For another participant, the concept of ‘entitlement’ reflected a particular world view:

We didn’t want any kid left out, we wanted a kid in every part of Australia to have the right to have a quality Health and Physical Education experience. When you look at the principles undertaken by the World Health Organisation, by UNESCO, the issues they look at are across countries and they see such massive inequities, both in terms of socio-economic status, access, etc. (N1).

The professional association ACHPER, in advocating to governments, used this as part of the argument for the inclusion of HPE in the Australian Curriculum.
Quality

The establishment of ACARA and the Australian Curriculum was not the only outcome of the Melbourne Declaration as intergovernmental cooperation saw a national move to improve **standards** as part of a ‘quality in schools’ agenda. Policies were designed to produce open and transparent information on school performance which saw the fruition of, under a Federal Labor Government, the establishment of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the introduction of the ATAR and the ‘My School’ website, where schools are ranked and compared on their performance against national standards. To address standards, ACARA included in the Australian Curriculum policy text a set of ‘general capabilities’ designed to be applied across learning areas. This drew the following comment from one participant: “*The general capabilities are really pivotal. . . literacy can be done in a number of ways and it has bought into focus how other learning areas can contribute*” (N1). However, the Australian Curriculum HPE policy text did not include assessment protocols on which to judge standards, so this meant that school comparisons on National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy and ATAR were to be the dominant discourse within jurisdictions to compare school progress across Australia.

In the absence of any assessment protocols in the Australian Curriculum HPE policy text, a tension began to emerge between **policy intentions and quality** agendas. The intention of the national policy text was to have descriptive standards of achievement in each learning area that would be consistent across Australia. One participant issued this warning regarding the Australian Curriculum’s HPE: “*Assessment through the standards of achievement is going to be critical. We need to be vigilant to make sure that achievement standards aren’t unrealistic*” (N1). However in WA, descriptive standards
of achievement (formally known as ‘outcomes’) were part of Year 11 and 12 PES from 2005 to 2007 and they were strongly opposed by teachers. This provided a conundrum for the reviewers and writers of Year 11 and 12 PES in WA, having transitioned from descriptive standards of achievement to a statistical model of numerical marks and letter grades in senior school courses after 2007. Consequently, the tension between writing the Australian Curriculum HPE policy text for “access and equity for all” (N1) contrasted with existing quality agendas operating within jurisdictions, especially in Year 11 and 12 because of the influence of high-stakes examinations and university entrance scores. The States have “a responsibility to look after standards and do better, to exemplify work at the assessment end” (N2) and much of this is geared around senior school curriculum. Consequently, discourse about ‘standards’ centred on senior school and jurisdictions tended to frame ‘standards of achievement’ in terms of their senior school policy texts.

For this reason, State and Territory jurisdictions are quality controllers in the curriculum policy production process. Along with Federal Government assistance, State and Territory Governments are the major funders of government education in Australia, and they have legal responsibility for education. As one participant pointed out regarding the contribution of State and Territory education departments to the Australian Curriculum’s HPE: “They were going to make sure that it will work for them” (N1). Crucial to this perspective is their defence of their own State and Territory curriculum policy texts. For example: “They have a fantastic State [curriculum] framework, they don’t want it ripped apart into some national tokenistic curriculum. They [the States] were vocal from that point of view” (N1). People within State and Territory education departments were advising their respective ministers in the early consultation phases of the Australian Curriculum, and they acted in a way to preserve the basis of their own policy texts. After all, as the providers of education they were also accountable for the
standards of achievement and school performance. Consequently, this participant explained: "They were able to put that message through their Ministers, and right through the process, you will see key people from the States and Territories in advisory groups or in the consultation process" (N1). Despite this, all three participants at the national level observed a decline in HPE personnel in State and Territory education departments since 2008, as a renewed focus by governments saw much of the curriculum support roles for teachers disappear.

**Dominance of social-critical discourses**

The professional association, ACHPER, provided a new direction for curriculum policy text production at the national level by promoting strong social-critical discourses through its National Statement of Learning released in 2009. ACHPER’s own national statement on the Australian Curriculum, developed by a working committee and chaired by a leading academic, was the catalyst for advocacy to government and it contributed to ACARA’s processes for policy text production in HPE. For example: “There was an initial workshop [with ACARA] and ACHPER was well represented” (N1). This representation was influential and with the appointment of another leading professor as the chief writer, who was an ACHPER member and advocate for social-critical curriculum perspectives, ACHPER’s perspective steered a new direction for HPE in Australia. All participants noted that academics were a large part of advisory groups both at the State and national levels, many of whom were ACHPER members. This participant elaborated: “It was inspirational to see many ACHPER people committed from universities and those people have been great” (N1). Participants also noted that advisory groups operated under consensus but saw university representation on these groups as the source for expert advice based on contemporary research in the curriculum area.
The emergence of social-critical discourses became evident when ACARA released early shaping papers and draft texts in 2012 on the Australian Curriculum HPE. These texts promoted social-critical inquiry as a pedagogical approach to teaching HPE. From documentary evidence, similarities existed between the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (ACARA, 2012) and the Year 11 and 12 PES syllabus of 2005 in WA, mainly due to expert advice provided by academics. In other words, both national and State policy texts had evidence of a social-critical discourse. One participant explained this about the Australian Curriculum’s HPE: “It had adopted a positive strengths-based approach that didn’t want to get stuck in the deficit model where a teacher’s role was to fix up, say obesity in society - it looked beyond that” (N1). Pedagogy statements in curriculum policy texts were considered by participants as something unique as it was generally seen as the role of jurisdictions and sectors to determine how best to deliver curriculum. For example: “ACARA also included an inquiry-based approach which was good but you could argue that that’s pedagogy. I thought they stuck their neck out” (N1). In writing the Australian Curriculum HPE, the challenge was to also reconcile curriculum policy texts from various States and Territories, as this participant went on to explain: “It tried to pick up on the best that was in Australia. You have to understand there is always going to be three or four drafts of papers” (N1). Feedback from teachers on curriculum policy texts is often grounded in current practice (that is, trying to maintain the status quo) and this poses challenges for writers of new curriculum as tensions arise about refocussing PE curriculum policy.

This highlights the tension between a rescientised WACE-PES curriculum and the Australian Curriculum HPE which was underpinned by a social-critical discourse. In referring to this national-State intersection, one participant stated: “The national stuff won’t be an automatic fit into Year 11 and 12. There will be a difference that schools will
have to cater for and think carefully about how they manage it” (N3). The State (WA) view of the Australian Curriculum HPE and how it intersected with WACE-PES is an example of tensions over social-critical and scientific discourses in PE.

The role of the professional association: The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACPER)

ACPER played a key role in advocacy and contributed strongly to a process that changed the direction of PE with the Australian Curriculum HPE. All three participants commented that embarking upon the production of new policy texts provided an opportunity to reform the HPE learning area. One participant explained: “This is about Physical Education as a ‘beast’” (N2), meaning that the policy text defined the subject. This participant went on to describe the global aspects of what PE is and how re-defining the learning area became a core activity for advocacy to government, curriculum authorities and school communities. ACPER’s National Statement of Learning in 2009 was crucial, as this participant described: “We provided it to ACARA and said, ‘this is what Health and Physical Education is about so you better take notice because this is important’” (N1). Other interest groups became involved in a coordinated advocacy action that targeted the appropriate political level. For example, this participant explained how one interest group was an effective co-agent in writing to government: “We wrote to a number of kindred bodies and we got some terrific support from them” (N1). In particular, one organisation, “the Rural Health Alliance, who looks after the interests of a range of health professionals in rural areas, was a wonderful ally. They wrote directly to the Prime Minister” (N1). Other interest groups came from health and sporting associations who shared a common “interest in a healthier and active country” (N1).
On the national stage, ACHPER members played important roles in writer and advisory groups. ACHPER’s goal in 2008 was to produce a national statement to lobby for inclusion of HPE in the Australian Curriculum. One participant noted: “A lot of key people around the country were involved. [One member of the policy elite] and a number of highly credentialled people came together from five or six States to help us develop that statement” (N1). As this participant elaborated, University of Queensland academics took a key role in the shaping of an advocacy strategy for the inclusion of HPE in the Australian Curriculum. One of these academics went on to be chief writer for the Australian Curriculum’s HPE: “[An academic] from the University of Queensland became chief writer. That’s good because [this person] is one of our Professors and to have a Professor of Human Movement Studies who understands health issues as well, gave us considerable status” (N1). That status gave ACHPER currency in the national curriculum landscape for the processes that ensued in policy text production.

A decline in HPE representatives in State and Territory education departments and sector organisations meant ACHPER filled some of the void by conducting video conference workshops to obtain feedback on draft policy texts. For example: “We as an organisation were able to organise video consultation responses where the project officer from ACARA could do a presentation and people could ask questions. We did that through every State branch” (N1). This participant elaborated on issues that arose from teachers during these workshops: “The majority of the questions were constructive. I don’t think there was a huge amount of displeasure with any of the concepts that were being put up” (N1). Despite this, there were concerns about content and balance: “Any disagreements were about emphasis. Even though it was explained clearly that ACARA had no role in implementation, a lot of teachers had questions about implementing it” (N1). WACE-PES, while following a similar process in policy text production, had been shaped more
by teacher feedback and implementation issues than the Australian Curriculum’s HPE, according to two participants. However, feedback on the Australian Curriculum HPE obtained through ACHPER branches led to this summation by a participant: “There was concern about the relative emphasis . . . Is this more important than that?” (N1). It was unclear whether feedback obtained through ACHPER branches helped consolidate the organisation’s own perspective on the learning area or whether feedback was representative of all teachers in any one State.

The Context of Policy Practices

Interview findings from policy actors at the national level about their perspectives on practices at local (school) level will now be presented. Two themes emerged: school resources and teacher engagement with change. Again, the Australian Curriculum’s HPE is considered in light of its ongoing influence on the development of WACE-PES curriculum policy.

School resources

Participants highlighted that school resources significantly impacted on the way policy plays out in schools. They singled out the provision of the following resources to schools: support materials; financial resources and infrastructure to schools; and localised networks, as elaborated below.

Providing support materials to schools was identified by participants as having a major impact on policy practice in schools. One participant stated: “If you impose a new set of rules regarding curriculum then someone has to provide support, in terms of quality professional learning and support materials that back up curriculum documents” (N1).

In respect to the Australian Curriculum, the Federal Government created Education
Services Australia to coordinate the construction of support materials with help from professional organisations. As this participant explained, ACHPER aspired to be involved: “We want to help develop those materials to help teachers interpret [the policy] and make it easier for them” (N1). This participant indicated that the construction of these support materials was a challenge for ACHPER. It was believed that if these materials began to specify pedagogy in the delivery of the curriculum then such materials could constrain schools in meeting their local needs.

Support to schools was also seen by participants to be in the form of financial resources and infrastructure. In PE, this included access to quality sport facilities, transport, equipment, technology and funding. As one participant explained, quality teaching is reliant on the resources available to schools like courts, gymnasiums and equipment as well as the expertise in using them. This was alluded to by another participant who highlighted: “In any profession you’ve got great practices, while some are not doing so well in places for a whole range of reasons. They haven’t got the expertise, the facilities and the opportunities” (N1). However, two participants stated that having spaces and facilities alone was not enough as the standard of such resources must be sufficiently high. Examples of rural and remote communities were cited as having issues with sports facilities especially when access to high quality, yet affordable, community sporting infrastructure was limited.

The third resource identified by participants was localised networks and how human capital is harnessed to encourage support in schools. The development of local networks was seen by participants as supporting Australian HPE policy practices. For example:

*It has to be as local as you can get it. It’s your staff room, your planning, your department sitting around your table saying, ‘this is not negotiable, our government have signed up to it, our jurisdictions have signed up to it, now what does it mean for us?’* (N1).
This participant cited the example of local ‘hubs’ practised in South Australia as a model for local networking. These networks were formed on a regional basis consisting of about six schools. While local networking was seen by participants as essential, the implementation strategy also needed to include additional workshops and professional development opportunities. Again, ACHPER was considered by ACARA as a key provider, as this participant highlighted: “They [ACARA] are keen to make sure, through our State and Territory branches, we are a part of it and can be seen to be providing quality support” (N1). This may see ACHPER working as a provider of resources and professional learning for jurisdictions and sectors or, through its membership base, directly involved in local school networks. However, opportunities for local networking are complicated by what participants observed as a decline in support personnel in systems and sectors. As one participant recalled, this trend had not been restricted to HPE: “The number of people provided by systems or sectors to support nearly all of the learning areas has dwindled” (N2). In WA, no HPE representative had been in the State’s education department since 2012. Consequently, professional organisations like ACHPER were keen to be involved in the provision of resources and teacher development which, according to one participant, was an opportunity to “strengthen the way they operate as a professional association” (N1). This gives ACHPER considerable influence in the way curriculum policy is both constructed and interpreted.

Teacher engagement with change

A second theme emerging from the findings about policy practices is teacher engagement with change in new curriculum policy. Two sub-themes encapsulate this idea: adapting to new policy directions; and engagement with new teaching strategies. The first factor identified by participants as contributing to the success of new curriculum policy is the extent teachers are adapting to new policy directions. One participant encouraged
teachers to reflect on current practice and evaluate what needs to change: “I’d be saying to schools, ‘don’t shy away from it and look at it as a way of strengthening what you already do’. That to me is the critical part of it” (N1). For those interviewed, engagement is determined by teachers reflecting about their practice. This participant gave an example: “It’s an opportunity for every teacher to find a new spark, a new way of doing something, I hope that they think this is going to improve the way they do things and make it more interesting as a teacher” (N1). For another participant, teacher engagement was seen as “professional understanding” (N2) in knowing what is in the curriculum and contemporary ways in which to teach it. However, participants also acknowledged ‘change fatigue’, especially in WA after outcomes-based education, as a possible obstacle to engagement among more experienced teachers. To explain further, one participant commented on the order of concepts in the Australian Curriculum’s HPE compared to the State curriculum: “Some teachers will say, ‘I’ve got to change what I am doing’ but I don’t think they are going to be changing the key concepts and topics they’re teaching” (N1). However, the rationale in the Australian Curriculum HPE called for a change in teaching strategies.

A second sub-theme from the findings referred to teacher engagement with new teaching strategies in PE. Contemporary pedagogies in PE are the teaching approaches identified by writers of the Australian Curriculum HPE as key practices in implementing curriculum concepts. An example given by this participant highlighted critical thinking: “We want kids to be curious, ask questions, respond, think critically and think strategically when they are involved in movement” (N1). Inquiry and ‘learning in, through and about movement’ was viewed as essential. This was supported by the account of another participant who described good teachers as using experiential inquiry through movement as opposed to a “didactic teaching methodology or pedagogy” (N3). A key indicator of
these methods was seen to be the engagement of students in their own learning. For example:

The way teachers engage kids comes from their own personality and their capacity to make something interesting as opposed to doing it solidly. There are teachers that can engage with kids and there are teachers who can do the same ‘stuff’ very methodically, very conscientiously, but the kids aren’t necessarily motivated or driven (N1).

To achieve this, another participant suggested a differentiated curriculum for lower ability students by “individualising learning programs wherever you can” (N3). This re-focus on learning and engagement implied that current practice in schools may be inadequate and in need of change.

Participants increasingly saw teachers who were disconnected from the profession as a constraint to engagement with teaching strategies. For one participant, this was part of the reason why existing practice in schools had become fragmented or outdated: “It’s disconcerting for me that at a professional level, teachers disconnect themselves as a professional educator, as a Health and Physical Education educator” (N2). Consequently, the challenge is to reconnect teachers and engage them in professional discourse. This participant suggested that teachers needed “to talk from that professional practice perspective and have a more informed conversation” (N2). However, teachers seem to be a product of their initial training at university, as encapsulated in this response: “We know there are two things that determine the way a teacher teaches: the way they were taught to teach and what they observed in their university training” (N1). Teaching practices that had currency at the time of that training were implied by this participant as inadequate for the Australian Curriculum’s HPE and he believed teachers should be encouraged to strengthen and adapt what they already do. For example: “The Australian Curriculum provides opportunities for teachers to re-look at what they are doing. Can they make it more exciting? Can they make it more relevant? Can they link it to something
that opens up new pathways to learning?” (N1). Consequently, new curriculum policy was seen by participants as an opportunity to reconnect the profession.

The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes

This section presents findings from national (macro) level participants in respect to longer term outcomes of PE curriculum policy. The Australian Curriculum’s HPE is contributing to a shift in the curriculum policy landscape and consequently, participants have framed their responses in light of this change. Three themes were identified from the findings: the equity of inputs; the equity of outcomes for students; and equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE.

The equity of inputs

Curriculum policy that aims to provide equity and opportunity for all students across Australia, especially in a diverse and expansive State such as WA, raises challenges for policy actors. One key factor is related to equity in the ‘input ‘of school funding and the ability of schools to provide curriculum opportunities for students. All participants alluded to examples of rural and remote schools which may not have access to funding in the same way as larger, metropolitan or regional schools. One participant explained it this way:

There are a range of barriers that operate against a school getting the optimum curriculum delivery. As much as teachers and schools try, we know that school ‘X’ can’t raise the amount of money through its strawberry fete than the one that is going to pull $40,000 (N1).

In 2012, the Federal Labor Government commissioned a school funding review called the Gonski Report to address the funding needs of schools across Australia. This funding report was seen by one participant as constructive for addressing the future resource needs of schools: “The new funding model will be interesting. The Gonski Report can have a positive impact without getting into the politics of public and private school funding”
The premise of the proposed funding policy was to distribute funding first as an equal amount for each student across the country, then using an extra resource pool to distribute extra funds on a needs basis, thereby explicitly addressing the goal of national equity in education expressed in the Melbourne Declaration of 2008.

School funding also determines the quality of facilities and equipment a school can access. Participants saw accessibility to facilities as critical to the learning experience of students and described inequalities between schools across all sectors. One participant explained: “There are always differences [between schools] in the standard of equipment and spaces” (N1) and “if we can get to the point where facilities, equipment and access improves in schools that will give them a better chance to implement a new Australian Curriculum” (N1). One other important point in relation to school funding came from the findings. While participants made references to technology as the future for PE, no participant considered it a critical feature for the implementation of curriculum reform in that learning area.

Another factor identified by participants was quality teachers and the professional support that surround them in schools. Here, participants highlighted a difference between small schools and larger schools where teachers have a greater capacity to network and share ideas. One participant described it this way: “We are seeing inequity in the capacity of some schools to support teachers and others not being able to support teachers. It’s a simple workload issue” (N3). In smaller schools, teachers do not have as much capacity to network and share the tasks of providing curriculum experiences for students. Here, workload can limit their opportunity to professionally connect with other practitioners. Part of the solution indicated by participants is for jurisdictions to provide worthwhile professional development and support. One participant highlighted that this is about
support for the Australian Curriculum’s HPE: “It’s got to be handled well by the jurisdictions and if they go, ‘here it is, we are doing it,’ - with no support it will fall on fallow ground” (N1). This participant also commented about change-weary teachers and the support needed to assist them to implement change.

**The equity of outcomes for students**

Participants maintained that new curriculum policy gives opportunity for improving student learning outcomes. In particular, the Australian Curriculum’s HPE has an emphasis on achieving prescribed learning outcomes and standards regardless of geographical location, ethnicity, gender or cultural persuasion. Such values underpin the social-critical approach as part of a strategy for implementation. To explain this reform further, one participant described the status of PE in Years 7 to 10 in Australia at the time of data collection as “a pedagogical wasteland and a bit of ‘keep them happy’ and run them around. That’s not the ‘education’ in Physical Education!” (N2). Commenting specifically on learning outcomes for students, this participant claimed there had been “no measurable difference at all, apart from that [schools] fill up a Physical Education class” (N2). Consequently, the Australian Curriculum HPE was seen by participants as a chance to “re-invigorate” (N2) and “unify” (N1) the identity and purpose of the subject while at the same time enhance the quality of learning outcomes for students.

In comparing senior school courses across States, their learning outcomes and the way ATAR scores are achieved by WA students, one participant highlighted how WACE-PES students appeared disadvantaged when compared across Australia through scaling procedures. This participant described other States as having less rigorous social-critical content in their courses while WACE-PES does not. This participant explained this from a WA perspective regarding the learning outcomes of senior school students:
Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, even South Australia, have a bunch of stuff in theirs which is actually putting our kids at a disadvantage. We are pushing our kids harder but we get scaled against that mob when students get their ATARs. There are quite a few agendas (N2).

Perhaps such an assumption was aimed to preserve the status quo in WA because of a long history of trying to get WACE-PES right in terms of equity of learning outcomes for students. For example: “Our psychometrician would say it takes five years to get the teacher, the course, the assessments and the examination in some sort of alignment” (N2) and WACE-PES is where “we have actually done something decent” (N2). Clearly, where the Australian Curriculum’s HPE and WACE-PES intersect is a challenge for curriculum policy actors.

**Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE**

A major challenge is achieving agreement among the States on the future structure of senior schooling in Years 11 and 12:

> It’s a challenge for the next stage of the Australian Curriculum. Inevitably, [ACARA] have to look at Year 11 and 12 across the country and do it in a way that enables the States to have some differences in interpretation (N1).

A possible senior school curriculum model suggested by this participant included a national ‘core’ unit of study that was not negotiable and optional units that would allow States to have some flexibility in their curriculum offerings. In other words, every State would have the same core unit in their senior school course. This idea was seen by this participant as getting a “good compromise across the country” (N1) but it needed to contain “enough core material in human physical performance” (N1) to ensure compromise is successful. However, another participant who was commenting from a WA perspective, claimed: “We are the only State which has a practical component. On the national landscape, WA isn’t the power broker. Perhaps New South Wales and Victoria are in terms of their size” (N3). This view was also shared by another participant and highlighted the complexity in achieving national consensus on curriculum policy.
The future structure of senior schooling will likely give rise to ‘push-down’ and ‘push-up’ effects. That is, the high-stakes impact of senior schooling means that senior schooling influences the curriculum in the lower secondary years; it has a ‘push-down’ effect. Consequently, a second challenge is to overcome the impact of Year 12 examinations on equity in the early secondary years. As one participant described, in WA “the ‘push-down’ effect of WACE Physical Education Studies” (N2) influences “what is going on in Years 10, 9, 8 and even 7” (N2). In contrast, the Australian Curriculum’s HPE as a Foundation (pre-primary) to Year 10 policy, is designed to have a ‘push-up’ effect. This prompted a response from a participant about the ‘push-down’ effect of senior school curriculum on the Australian Curriculum’s HPE:

That’s ‘the tail wagging the dog’! Year 11 and 12 programs are used for tertiary entrance, that’s a critical part of why we have those subjects, but we don’t want to take away that choice that kids make that’s in their interests (N1).

Year 12 examinations form a crucial part of school pathways and are a measure on which schools are compared. However, according to one participant, the culture of examinations between States is different:

In New South Wales, the examination is viewed as the end of a course and contributes to you getting your high school certificate because you want to go to university. In WA, our focus for 20 years or 25 years is a cultural thing, it’s part of the course (N2).

It is the dynamic between the external examination and school assessment that sets WA apart from New South Wales in this example. This participant elaborated: “It is the impact of how people have gone about their teaching, with the combined function of school assessment and an examination” (N2). Regardless, universities play a significant role in specifying the requirements for tertiary entrance and this cautionary note was expressed by one participant: “I don’t want the universities, in Year 12, to be that ‘tail that wags the dog’ for the rest of the curriculum” (N1).
A final challenge concerning the implementation of new curriculum policy rests with decisions made by the States and Territories. As the States and Territories come from the historical perspective of their own curriculum policies, a new Australian Curriculum’s HPE poses a disjunction. This observation was made by one participant: “I’m hoping the jurisdictions won’t after two years say, ‘we can improve on this,’ and write their own [curriculum], which happened in the 1980s when we had the national statement and profile. That would defeat the whole purpose” (N1). For this participant, professional support is the key: “If MCEETYA [the Ministerial Council] keep hold of the reins, commit to providing support for teachers across the country through professional learning and materials, it has a good chance of being a very positive influence” (N1). ACHPER considered it has a role in the Australian Curriculum’s HPE, as this participant described:

ACHPER would commit a huge crime if it didn’t engage itself with this. We have engaged in it right from the word ‘go’, now we are engaged through its development, then we have to be engaged in it through the delivery and support for teachers (N1).

ACHPER, as a service provider to jurisdictions, would be considered highly influential.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings from the data collected at the national (macro) level, through the four contexts of the policy trajectory: the context of policy influences; the context of policy text production; the context of policy practices; and the context of longer term policy outcomes. Within the context of influences, four themes were identified: a new federalism; curriculum trends in Physical Education; accountability; and competition in education markets. Within each theme, sub-themes were identified and many of these contained embedded tensions that impacted upon eventual policy enactment in schools.

The context of policy text production examined the key features, players and processes associated with the Australian Curriculum HPE at the national level, given its importance
in influencing WACE-PES. From the data, four themes were identified: equity; quality; dominance of social-critical discourses; and the role of the professional organisation, ACHPER. Again, tensions were identified within policy text production processes, especially those emanating from the competing agendas of different key players.

Within the context of policy practices, two themes were considered key determinants of how PE policy is enacted in schools: school resources and teacher engagement with change. These factors were operating with declining support to schools, witnessed by participants in every jurisdiction, and so the establishment of local networks was seen as critical to future curriculum policy implementation.

Finally, the context of longer term policy outcomes considered the longer-term effects of national curriculum policy, especially as it related to its impact on WACE-PES. Three themes came to light: the equity of inputs; the equity of outcomes for students; and equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE. School funding, quality teachers and high standard facilities were seen as crucial inputs, whereas testing in senior school were seen to have a ‘push-down’ effect on new curriculum policy throughout the earlier years of schooling. This is a possible site for disjunction between the Australian Curriculum’s HPE and WACE-PES. The high-stakes impact of the measurement of learning outcomes in senior school (especially admission to university courses of choice) has created this ‘push down’ effect. It is senior schooling at State (meso) level in WA that becomes the focus for the next chapter.
CHAPTER SIX
STATE (MESO) LEVEL FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter is a discussion of findings from the data at the State (meso) level of the curriculum policy processes under investigation. It is structured in the same way as Chapter Five in that it examines findings according to: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. In this chapter, participant voice is labelled ‘S’ for ‘State’ level of the curriculum policy trajectory, and analysis centres mainly on the Western Australian Certificate of Education - Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES). Again, for coherency, WACE-PES will be used to represent Year 11 and 12 PES over the time period of 2005 to 2015 unless otherwise stated.

The Context of Influences
Within the context of influences, similar themes emerged from the data at State (meso) level as the national (macro) level. These themes are: new federalism; curriculum trends in Physical Education; accountability; and competition in education markets. However, despite the similarities with the national (macro) level themes, they played out in very different ways at the State (meso) level of Western Australia (WA).

A new federalism
The retention and graduation of school students in WA became a focus when the need for new curriculum pathways for senior school emerged as a consequence of intergovernmental cooperation in the Adelaide Declaration of 1999. In WA, curriculum policy was defined by the Curriculum Framework in Western Australia (Curriculum Council of WA, 1998) but it was largely a Kindergarten to Year 10 policy document until
recommendations from a review into Year 11 and 12 schooling were implemented. WA’s, *Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Compulsory Education Review* (Government of WA, 2002), represented the first attempt to extend aspects of the Curriculum Framework into Years 11 and 12 in WA schools. As one participant asserted: “Syllabuses were constructed on the recommendations of *Our Youth, Our Future* and clearly articulated what things a syllabus should or shouldn’t look like” (S2). To achieve consistency between senior school courses, the writing of the first examinable syllabus for Year 11 and 12 PES was “to keep a structure that was consistent with what people were familiar with” (S2). This format was considered restrictive as participants felt “it came from the top-down” (S3) and they were “forced” (S1) into that model of policy text construction. In 2005, coinciding with the release of the Year 11 and 12 PES draft syllabus, amendments to the *Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions Act 2005* occurred, meaning that students had to remain at school or be involved in approved training or employment to school graduation age of 17 years. Schools catered for students by providing pathways for the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) examinable subjects, general courses and Vocational Education and Training for secondary school graduation. Due to new senior school pathways for study, the *Curriculum Council, Government of Western Australia Annual Report 2007-2008* (Curriculum Council, Government of WA, 2008) recorded an increase in the retention of students to Year 12 as well as higher senior school course enrolments at Year 10 as schools explored ways to increase graduation rates.

Similarly, in line with the national Hobart Declaration of 1989 and the Melbourne Declaration of 2008, State policy was also being influenced by a need for a **nationally consistent approach to standards**. To achieve consistency between senior school courses, the policy direction in the early writing phases was to align with national directions and “follow certain protocols, structures and procedures” (S3). All three
participants at State (meso) level believed this writing model was a constraint complicated by outcome-based education (OBE) statements expressed as written standards. Resistance from teachers emerged in the period of 2005 to 2007 and one participant recalled: “Everything with OBE was starting to fall apart and the Minister at the time was getting lobbied, thinking, ‘there are 10,000 teachers going crazy! There is probably something wrong’” (S1). As a result of an independent inquiry into OBE (Louden, Chapman, Clarke, Cullity & House, 2006), the State Education Minister announced a return to traditional methods of marking, including grades linked with common standards and a change towards explicit curriculum content. Many teachers felt OBE in senior school courses “added to their workload but had not improved student results” (McGowan, 2007, p.2). This was the catalyst for a review into Year 11 and 12 courses after 2007 where teachers would have a greater say in policy development.

**Curriculum trends in Physical Education**

A *rescientisation* of the syllabus (a return to science-based understandings around the sports sciences) began after 2007 in WA when teacher advisory groups were constructed to give teachers more say in policy text changes (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2007b). One participant described: “Teachers had a huge influence when the 2007 version was already in place. The first review went for six months and is the biggest review I’ve seen” (S3). The course changed in 2009 away from integrated content areas to discrete topics aligned with sports science sub-disciplines. The social-critical elements of former syllabus texts were removed as the discourse changed to embed more explicit content descriptions of sports science. One participant recalled teacher feelings about the social-critical content of the 2005 syllabus:

*Questions asked by teachers were strong in the area of social-critical content and ‘where did this come from’? We seemed to have shifted from where we were. So there were questions from teachers and a lot were against it going ‘this isn’t what we are about’* (S3).
Despite the former non-examinable PES course prior to 2007 containing content around the Sociology of Sport (Blanksby, 1987b), the social-critical approach was new to practitioners. This participant questioned: “I was puzzled as I didn’t have that background of where this had come from, ‘why the shift in focus?’” (S3). Consequently, social-critical content with an emphasis on ‘values for physical activity’ was initially integrated into other content and eventually omitted.

A rescientisation of the syllabus was consistent with the sports discourses already existing in WA schools and was largely influenced by universities and their undergraduate sports science courses. When a new Year 11 and 12 PES examinable course was being conceived, one participant recalled that it “opened a Pandora’s box because suddenly there are 5000 experts! There were philosophical and pedagogical differences, particularly in constructing the first learning area committees” (S1). Other influences on PE were at play. One key caveat was to ensure physical activity was embedded in curriculum policy as a pedagogical approach to ‘learning in, through and about movement’ as part of a conceptually integrated model of curriculum enactment. In the transition from a non-examinable course (Common Assessment Framework, CAF) to an examinable one, this participant described a tension “between maintaining what was good in the previous CAF stuff, which had quite a practical focus, but enriching it to bring the theoretical construct up to par with rigorous subjects” (S1). Universities provided early advice for course construction. As this participant recalled, academics at Edith Cowan University advocated for “education in the physical. People in the early days were keen to pursue that, it is not about just doing Human Biology, Physiology or Sport Science!” (S1). However, the University of Western Australia (UWA) argued against a practical component creating an ideological tension: “This institution [UWA] had a focus which was like that biomedical, sport science sort of thing. We were trying not to make the
course, exercise physiology 101” (S1). Despite this, as curriculum policy processes evolved, the rescientisation of the syllabus became more dominant and consistent with wider influences related to measurability and accountability.

**Accountability**

The first **external examinations** in Year 11 and 12 PES in 2008 meant PE teachers needed to deal with greater accountability in terms of publicly visible measures of student performance. According to participants, two major trends emerged: a move towards content that was explicit for examinations; and, in light of this, trying to retain the physical activity component of the course. For one participant, the external examination was a major influence driving the subject: “In the transition from ’05 to ’07, it became more scientific and it needed to be – because around the same time, policy shifted to compulsory examinations for every kid in Year 12” (S1). This participant explained how teacher input drove the need for clarity: “That agenda meant that teachers felt pressure to teach explicitly to an exam and examiners wanted explicit content” (S1). Furthermore, practical examinations in sports performance maintained a focus on physical activity as this participant elaborated:

> There was tension in the syllabus committee around, what are we going to do? In Music kids get to play music, in Drama and Dance, they get to perform. There is a lot of this practical ‘stuff’ going on to value the learning, the skills and abilities of kids (S1).

All three participants indicated their involvement in advocacy with the Curriculum Council of WA to have physical activity legitimised through examination. However, one participant observed how external examinations have been counterintuitive: “The assessment agenda is what I don’t think we’ve got right. We have always wrestled with it and if you put an exam on the end? We had lots of conversations about ‘this is physical as well as education’” (S1).
A new examinable PES course provided a challenge for school-based assessment and moderation. The practices associated with CAF PES prior to 2007 were considered inadequate by one participant: “There was a perception that people would just take the old ‘D’ and ‘E’ code subjects [CAF subjects], re-brand them and that will be enough but a few of us knew that wasn’t enough” (S1). This participant also observed: “Over the journey I have seen people rise to that challenge or really struggle because the last time they did anything about real study in the area was 25 years ago” (S1).

**Competition in education markets**

WACE-PES as an examinable course meant increased competition with other learning areas. This competition was partly a search for legitimacy for the subject by obtaining recognition from other learning areas. One participant explained it was:

> An opportunity to elevate the status of HPE and professionals because there is an opportunity for teachers to work at the pointy end, to elevate your subject, talk about your profession, sit at the table as equals because you’ve got a subject that is a pathway for kids to go to university (S1).

This participant referred to a new reputation for PE being “one as a profession, seeking, getting and building that status. When people say, ‘we are professionals’. Well, this is your chance to step up, preparing kids for tertiary entrance examination” (S1). For another participant, attracting students to enrol in the subject was implicit: “The way it is shaped at the moment has a lot to do with what teachers felt worked, what is important and what would attract students” (S3).

**The Context of Policy Text Production**

The main policy text produced for WACE-PES is the syllabus, which contains: a statement of rationale; content descriptions; assessment frameworks for each unit of study; and examination design briefs. The curriculum authority charged with the production of this policy text was the State body, the School Curriculum and Standards
Authority (SCSA) formerly known as the Curriculum Council of WA. Four major themes about policy texts emerged from the data: rescientised discourses; quality; the power of the State dictates; and policy consultation. Each is presented and discussed in turn.

**Rescientised discourses**

A **return to science-based, sub-disciplines** (rescientisation) began in WA in 2007 when a major review of Year 11 and 12 courses took place. Whilst the syllabus retained its sequential format intended to be integrated with physical activity experiences, topic headings were aligned with the sub-disciplines of sports science which teachers could group together and teach concurrently in the annual teaching cycle. One participant explained how changes in policy text were meant to align discourses with those familiar to teachers: “*If we teach, say physiology, or anatomy, then let’s call it something that is easily researched and recognisable*” (S1). Teacher perspectives formed a large part of this review and a catalyst for science-based topics, as one participant explained: “*The public opinion of the group was to build topics that way*” (S1). The sentiment of the rationale remained in the new policy text, but State level participants involved in producing the policy texts were quick to clarify that stipulating pedagogy within policy texts was limited. For example: “*We’ve spent an extraordinary amount of time trying to refine content, within the realms of what is jurisdictional and what an organisation like ours [SCSA] can do within a syllabus*” (S1). However, another participant noted: “*Content drives delivery in terms of what teachers should teach. So it is very clear in how it articulates what should be taught*” (S2). Consequently, rescientised discourses were promoted and the syllabus went from “*three broad chunks of interrelated stuff to six fairly discrete topics*” (S1). Participants also indicated that curriculum producers used content elaborations as a policy tool for defining the subject with implications for practice in schools.
Participants argued that the introduction of rescientised discourses achieved a **clarity of content, skills and understandings for assessment**. One participant explained: “Our previous Director of Curriculum would always say ‘as a teacher, what do I teach about that?’ and I think we have got that pretty well nailed” (S1). This participant described the syllabus as “probably the equal of any in Australia in terms of its explicitness” (S1). The changes in content emerging from the 2007 senior school course review was “very teacher driven” (S3) and involved teachers researching pieces of content, looking at how it could be taught in the classroom and whether learning of that content was measureable. SCSA “hand-picked” (S3) these teachers from different school sectors with decisions made through consensus. As a consequence of the change, one participant noted: “how content is taught and assessed, has really boomed” (S3). For another participant, greater clarity meant “better relationships between school assessment and exam performance” (S1). However, a challenge was to preserve the interrelatedness of content, skills and understandings. A participant recalled: “When we ‘tweaked’ the syllabus, we put the word ‘interrelationship’ into content areas of the syllabus which it never used to be” (S3). This participant also explained: “Content areas are not stand alone. You don’t teach Biomechanics and then put it aside and teach Physiology. The relationship between syllabus content areas is really important” (S3). Similarly, the relationship between content and movement experiences was deemed worthy of preservation in the policy text. For example: “The better teachers take the written component and introduce it onto the Basketball court or Soccer field to show kids how you apply this content” (S3). This intention was to keep ‘learning in, through and about movement’ a feature of the policy text through statements expressed in the rationale.
Quality

A renewed emphasis on quality and standards marked the period after the 2007 course review. The WACE-PES policy text saw a return to traditional assessment of marks, percentages and grades (away from an outcomes approach). Assessment types were identified and weightings given to each, including examinations and investigations. Participants considered “how the prescription of assessment types are structured and the weightings of those assessment tasks” (S2) to be a key feature of the policy text. The 2008 version of senior school PES allowed some teacher flexibility through ranges of assessment but with each version of the syllabus since, school assessment parameters in the policy text tightened. One participant commented: “We’ve rebuilt some of the assessment stuff. We are still not convinced or happy as we could be, curriculum is always a work in progress” (S1). In 2014, the WACE-PES course syllabus did not contain ranges of assessment for teachers and prescribed greater weightings to invigilated tests and examinations. This gradual change over several versions of the syllabus meant that teachers needed “more evidence in how they apportion marks” (S2). Quality became the focus of assessment policy, as this participant noted: “Add to that moderation and accountability where people present their assessment material for review/moderation” (S2). The tightening of assessment schedules also coincided with an amendment to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1991 in 2012, where SCSA’s role was stronger in the regulation of standards.

An emphasis on standards meant any disconnect between external examinations and school assessment needed to be identified. For example, in commenting on SCSA’s role one participant emphasised: “We have a responsibility to look after standards, to do better, to exemplify ‘stuff’ about assessment” (S1). However, another participant highlighted “an ongoing tension in relation to the examination, certain components of
the written examination and the connection between the written examination and the syllabus” (S2). SCSA received complaints from teachers over external written examinations which participants attributed to a misinterpretation of the syllabus. One participant’s explanation for this was: “We hear from a minority of people who have problems making connections between interpreting content and how they might best teach students by generating their own understanding” (S2). Another questioned whether three school-based assessment types stipulated in the policy text were a good fit: “I’m not convinced that they are a good snap for courses with a practical and theoretical component . . . that tension between the production/practical making side, is really integrated?” (S1). This participant questioned whether the school-based assessment types were actually working and suggested SCSA may need to revisit this aspect of the policy text in the future.

**The power of the State dictates**

A key factor in policy text production was the power of State (WA) Government. Three staging points were identified by participants as being significant to the development of the syllabus text. Prior to 2007, the report commissioned by the WA Government, *Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Compulsory Education Review* (Government of Western Australia, 2002), saw the policy text align with outcomes-based education and descriptive standards of achievement. In 2007, under the direction of a new State Labor Minister of Education, a course review saw a move away from outcomes-based education to a marks and statistical approach to assessment. In 2013, the WA Government announced that students must do either an examinable or a vocational accredited WACE course to graduate from school, prompting another review of the policy text in conjunction with Australian Curriculum implementation. It was during this last review that the Board of SCSA resolved to increase the test and examination component of WACE-PES in school-
based assessment, including the introduction of an invigilated practical test as a school mark.

At all of these staging points, it was the responsibility of SCSA (curriculum authority) to produce policy texts consistent with WA Government policy settings. For SCSA, that meant juggling multiple agendas, as this participant explained: “The tricks in writing curriculum to examination level, is what our previous CEO would argue, ‘you are not writing it for the kids getting 95%’. We actually write a curriculum that is do-able for the middle of the curve” (S1). SCSA is not only responsible for writing the policy text but for the standards of student achievement and the publishing of school rankings in WACE course performance.

SCSA, in producing the policy text, were limited in the writing of the syllabus, as one participant pointed out:

"We are not allowed to write in syllabuses ‘this is how you teach it’, that’s the tricky bit. We gather data, look at it and if some areas of the syllabus are doing better or worse, then we direct some of our energies there (S1)."

After several years of examinations from 2008, more longitudinal data on student achievement was available to assist in refining the policy text. However, a greater agenda was revealed by one participant who claimed WACE-PES had the potential to change practice in schools. For example:

"We were mindful this was an end of a pathway for kids from Years 7 to 12. At the time we were writing and workshopping, there were many teachers who said, ‘this is going to look great! We need to do something about what goes on in 8, 9 and 10 if we are going to give kids a chance to be successful in 11 and 12’ (S1)."

WACE-PES was seen as a vehicle for reform in Years 7-10 prior to the introduction to the Australian Curriculum’s HPE and this was welcomed by some teachers. However, the influence of WACE-PES and the degree of control exercised by the State through its
Policy settings, provided the lens through which the Australian Curriculum HPE would be judged.

**Policy consultation**

In establishing a new examinable senior school course for implementation in 2007, a **reference group** was established and this became the source of both advice and an avenue for advocacy by various interest groups. The reference group was set up before the release of *Our Youth, Our Future: Post-Compulsory Education Review* (Government of Western Australia, 2002) in preparation for PES becoming an examinable subject. Membership of this group consisted of leading physical educators who had a historical role in the development of PE in WA schools as well as those employed by the Curriculum Council of WA. Another participant elaborated further: “The reference group was a diverse group of players and that was intentional. There was a directive that we consult a wide variety of people. So they drove the initial writing and direction around the content structure” (S2). Advocacy also took place over the inclusion of a practical examination component in the course. Here, one participant explained that it was about: “Valuing the skills and abilities that kids bring as they would in a lot of other courses” (S1).

From the 2007 senior school course review, the **course advisory group** was established in an effort to engage teachers more in the curriculum policy production process. This process saw a rescientisation of the syllabus and the significant reduction of social-critical or social-cultural content. One participant recalled:

> We had the major review with a big group of teachers. There was a lot of content in the syllabus, probably more the social-cultural stuff that people thought was hard to teach and more difficult to get students absorbed into the content as opposed to sports science. Teachers found the sports science easier to teach (S3).

Another participant described the composition of these groups as having: “70% teacher representation” (S2). Decisions were made by consensus and teachers were expected “to
consult widely with their constituents, which is why there was representation across sectors” (S2). While this representation was a criterion for membership, one participant indicated that SCSA had control over choosing that membership: “We hand-picked the teachers across the board of different systems, sectors and types of schools. We had a good mix of young teachers and experienced teachers so it was a really good group” (S3). Participants did not indicate whether membership to this group had an ideological balance between social-critical and sports science perspectives. Instead, participants highlighted that advice was given by members of the committee according to whether content worked in the classroom. One participant elaborated: “It’s not for us to say ‘this is what you should teach’. Teachers will go, ‘out in the classroom, it doesn’t work’. I have to listen to what teachers do in the classroom” (S3).

Universities were well represented on these advisory groups, as one participant explained: “The UWA, Edith Cowan University and Notre Dame were the main players. We have others now. They were having input into content asking, ‘is this preparing them for university or is the [syllabus] pitched too high or too low?’” (S3). One university was quite influential in promoting discourses around the sports sciences to further align WACE-PES with their own university course. For example: “holding off those influences, particularly from a tertiary perspective, where one university was a bit more research oriented. I wouldn’t use the word ‘elitist’, but they had a narrower view” (S1). This same university produces and markets textbooks for WACE-PES. After changes to the syllabus content were completed, advisory groups met less often and coinciding with an amendment to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1991 in 2012, assessment parameters tightened to align school assessment with external examinations.
The Context of Policy Practices

The same themes and sub-themes emerged about policy practices from State participants as from national participants (previous chapter). However, at this State level, participant voice has a different emphasis to that at national level, as it applies directly to WACE-PES, and its enactment, with only limited reference to the Australian Curriculum. The themes are: school resources; teacher engagement with change; and teacher accountability.

School resources

Resources have a diverse effect on the way curriculum policy is enacted in schools. One of the factors impacting upon policy practices is the provision and availability of localised support materials. When Year 11 and 12 PES was first released in 2005 in draft, support materials were provided in line with the OBE model of curriculum delivery. However, after 2007, the provision of support materials and professional development was not a function of SCSA and this meant that teachers gathered materials through local networks. One participant explained how teachers initially wanted a textbook similar to that in the previous assessment framework, CAF Physical Education Studies course: “The textbook we had, you could start from page one and keep flicking through the study questions, taking you to the end of the year. So with the new course, people would go ‘where’s the textbook’?” (S3). Consequently, a shift in thinking was required for WACE-PES, as this participant elaborated: “Well, it doesn’t work the same. You’ve got to get your resources [support materials], bring them all in and work out your own textbook” (S3). This participant suggested sample materials be gained from a variety of sources like the internet and commercial providers. To assist in the sharing of local support materials, teacher development centres were established by the Education Department of WA where schools formed networks, and one school in a network was assigned to gather and
disseminate teacher generated materials. SCSA also brought teachers into large meetings as part of a review of senior school PES. One participant explained how, in the period of 2007 to 2009, this approach had “huge money to bring people together but again, we spent it on an old paradigm professional development model” (S1). This participant went on to question the effectiveness of this implementation strategy in generating worthwhile support materials and subsequently observed the following about some teacher practice:

*They’ve [teachers] almost adopted a minimalist approach: ‘if I find a textbook that has got an exercise unit where you study these things and here is twenty revision questions, then I don’t actually have to think about and engage with the deeper level, conceptual interrelationships’* (S1).

This participant suggested future support materials be written to contain teaching strategies along similar lines to how literacy and numeracy support materials were provided to schools in the late 1990s. In particular, the participant proposed: “Do the same in Physical Education Studies and share them with a bunch of others to help teachers move kids from getting 45% to 55%” (S1). It was this aspect of the student achievement scale that was of most concern about practice in schools.

Another factor that had played out in schools concerned the effects of financial resources and infrastructure differences. While all three participants at State level acknowledged physical infrastructure like gymnasiums and sports facilities were important and diverse amongst schools, technology infrastructure was identified by one participant as crucial.

Several examples were given by the participant below, including biomechanics laboratories, global positioning systems and high cost equipment for movement analysis.

The participant elaborated on how this infrastructure affects practice:

*It’s the degree you can teach content rather than whether you can or cannot. Everybody can teach it with just a computer and internet access but it is to the degree that you can teach by preparing your students with opportunities to absorb the content and apply it that makes the difference* (S3).
Schools that generate high income tend to be able to provide the funding for such infrastructure. This participant offered a comparison of resource-rich schools with other more disadvantaged schools: “Anybody can teach [the course] regardless of where you are, in the middle of the bush you can still teach Physical Education Studies but you are restricted” (S3). Smaller schools, such as those with low student enrolment in WACE-PES are also disadvantaged in the practical sporting contexts the school can offer and limited in the ability to link content understandings with that sporting context. For example: “If you have six kids in your class, you are restricted to badminton or tennis. Not much more” (S3). Schools with greater course enrolment have a larger student fee base for sport and technology infrastructure.

The third sub-theme of school resources cited by all three participants was problems with harnessing human capital. This was best described by one participant: “We now have a body of knowledge because in the early days we didn’t have exams but we have now built a body of experience” (S1). Having increased the knowledge base amongst teachers since the Year 11 and 12 PES course’s inception in 2007, one participant identified a challenge in trying to utilise this school resource: “We now have a more experienced teacher cohort. Where they are and how to access them is an interesting question” (S2). Accessing and sharing expertise became more difficult when the SCSA was no longer involved in providing professional development for teachers. This participant described a forum that was the responsibility of the SCSA for the sharing of knowledge and expertise:

We don’t provide a lot of opportunities for schools to network. Networks do exist but we don’t broker those, apart from consensus moderation [meetings]. These meetings are a good mechanism for doing that informal stuff apart from the cross marking of student files. Teachers get to talk about issues in relation to course implementation, so that provides a forum for people to share views and pick up things that other schools are doing (S2).

Despite consensus moderation meetings being an opportunity for teachers to contribute to ideas about practice, all participants questioned whether teachers actually share this
knowledge. For example: “I’m not sure within schools there is that collegiate approach where teachers work together and moderate tasks amongst each other” (S2). Increased competition between schools to perform well in the subject could be one reason why collaboration between teachers had waned, as another participant alluded: “I still worry schools are driven by other agendas rather than us trying to capture the best out of the schools that do well and share that with others” (S1). The capacity to share that knowledge is clearly linked to the degree of teacher engagement with change.

Teacher engagement with change

Two sub-themes emerged from the findings concerning teacher engagement. The first involved connecting school practice with a new external examination which was a core activity of practice identified by the participants in meeting new demands for the WACE-PES course. For example: “[Teachers] have done more professional learning or gone back to university because you don’t get too many goes at playing at this level. If we don’t do it to a good level, kids will vote with their feet” (S1). While for some teachers becoming familiar with new concepts was a priority, for others engaging with different content delivery was important. This participant elaborated: “In terms of implementation, we’ve seen some schools ‘grow the farm’. They’ve engaged in professional learning, reflected about their instruction, embraced technology and have looked at being innovative” (S1). For another participant, reflection about student examination performance and adjusting practice was crucial: “Because the learning area never had a history of examinations, it probably took a while for teachers to see that as the end point and how that might influence what they do” (S2). Achieving connection between practice and student examination performance, according to this participant, “had been harder for teachers to accept and digest” (S2), referring to the reflective ability of teachers to gain insight from student achievement data and adjust their practice in response.
Another sub-theme identified by participants was teacher engagement with **new teaching strategies** and, in particular, linking conceptual understandings to student movement experiences. This was referred to earlier in this chapter as ‘learning in, through and about movement’. One participant commented: “good teachers integrate content with the practical and some of the material that I have seen developed just blows me away. Especially with investigations, labs and research” (S3). Another participant described good teachers as giving students:

*As much experience in a practical context as possible as opposed to didactic teaching methodology or pedagogy. That helps kids see the connection between the theory and the practical, not having a reliance on any set of resources or textbook. Having a range of different teaching materials is what the better teachers do* (S2).

While the practice of ‘good’ teachers is aligned with the intent of the syllabus, this participant commented: “The integration of the practical and theory, and whether the intent was actually picked up on by every teacher, is questionable” (S2). All participants shared this perspective from insight gathered through assessment samples at teacher consensus moderation meetings or from student performance data in external examinations. However, according to one participant, new teaching strategies were reliant on showing the interrelationships between conceptual understandings so that students can apply these concepts in an examination setting:

*You have to put it into context, ‘this is a principle and how you apply it in sport’. The good teachers do that, good kids understand that and they do well in the examination. It’s an important thing we are trying to get across to teachers. You don’t just teach in pigeonholes, you pull from other content areas and show how each interrelate with each other* (S3).

The ‘pigeonholes’ (above quote) referred to the topics that are outlined in the curriculum policy document. This participant continued: “The assessment material often reflects what happens in the classroom . . . There are teachers when you look at their assessment tasks, you know exactly how they teach and it will be exactly like their assessment task”
For the three participants at State level, teacher experience with making links between the policy text and the theoretical aspects taught in the classroom (participants referred to this as ‘theory’), and applying it to movement was also crucial.

**Teacher accountability**

A key factor that participants identified as vital to the way curriculum policy plays out in schools is **aligning school practice with syllabus intent**. One participant stated: “*A lot has to do with teacher experience and whether they are teaching the course for the first time or had a few goes at it*” (S2). Teacher experience narrowed the disconnect between the intent of the syllabus and practice in schools, as this participant explained: “*The people that have paid attention, come to professional development, engage and read well, have narrowed the disconnect. In other words, they have been able to line up their practice*” (S1). This participant continued: “*We see disconnected people teaching by worksheets. They line up forty dots of content, start at 1 and finish at 40. They haven’t applied or taught what we provided*” (S1). This disconnect represents a challenge for SCSA and teachers, especially since 2010 when fewer professional development opportunities coincided with a decline in HPE support personnel in systems and sectors.

This participant elaborated:

*We are not an employer, we supply the material. How do we talk to systems and sectors that are increasingly disconnected with the profession because they are more about putting bodies into schools? How do you pick up what it’s like in your class? How do you pick up the kids that are struggling and encourage them to do better?* (S1)

Consequently, aligning school practice with syllabus intent also involves discourses about student achievement.

WACE-PES was designed as a ‘spiralled’ curriculum, meaning it had a construct of two units in Year 11 and two units in Year 12, with each unit being progressively harder in
concepts (sequential). The intent of this curriculum policy was to encourage ‘scaffold’ learning with a practical context or sport attached to a unit. ‘Learning in, through and about movement’ underpinned practice and, typically, two hours per week would be devoted to the classroom and two hours a week to physical activity. Both the classroom work (‘theory’) and the physical activity (participants referred to this as ‘practical’) were intended to be integrated. However, after the 2007 course review, assessment structures changed to 70% ‘theory’ and 30% ‘practical’ and consequently, one participant observed how school practice and syllabus intent became maligned:

We hear stories from teachers about the way they teach. It is one practical lesson followed by three theory lessons or some combination of that in a week. So, there is a disjunction straight away between how the theory and the practical might interrelate (S2).

Another participant alluded to content and time constraints as having an influence on this practice. For example, one participant commented specifically about the ‘theory’ or conceptual understandings of the course: “It behoves teachers to teach all the content. If you haven’t taught the content or you haven’t taught the content well enough, then that’s a wrestle but I worry about people who teach every page in a textbook” (S1). Textbooks on WACE-PES are organised concurrently and not sequentially. In other words, in Year 11 or 12, conceptual understandings are grouped by topics where textbooks provide detail far beyond what was required by the syllabus. Some participants believed that this may be a constraint for integration between the conceptual understandings and students’ movement experiences. However, better teachers, according to one participant, are able to achieve flow in their teaching structure over the length of the course: “They have a better grasp of how to integrate the theory and the practical. There is that consistency of message as they progress. It’s not, teach this bit of content for two weeks and then drop it off” (S2). What delivery structure teachers adopted appeared highly influenced by the school and the teaching philosophy of the Head of Learning Area, as one participant explained: “Heads of Department [learning area] are critical because they have a
profound influence on how that curriculum is implemented in their faculty in a school” (S1). Participants indicated that most schools teach concurrently by topic rather than sequentially, as the syllabus intended, possibly due to ease of teaching and compatibility with textbooks.

Course assessment moved from levels (OBE) to letter grades and scores after 2007, and had a marked impact upon syllabus implementation and approaches to student assessment. One participant explained: “Teachers had to have more rigorous assessment schedules and added evidence in how they apportion and allocate their marks” (S2). This perspective was shared by all three participants at State level from their involvement in teacher consensus moderation meetings where teachers present their assessment material for review. This participant continued: “In terms of teacher accountability, there is a lot more all of a sudden. For the way the syllabus is implemented, it would have been an important foundation for teachers to get their head around” (S2). Participants acknowledged that it had taken some years before teachers had adapted their practice accordingly. This participant explained a method through which reflection about practice is incorporated into curriculum policy: “We are very strong on analytical marking. It wasn’t done well in the early years but teachers are getting better at it and we see the evidence through the work teachers do” (S2). Analytical marking uses diagnostic and longitudinal data about student performance to inform present and future practice. This participant elaborated: “With an analytical approach, there is more transparency for students, parents, other staff and teachers in terms of comparability within and between schools. That would have had a big impact for teachers” (S2). The nature of this impact and whether it was positive or negative, was not stated explicitly by participants.
An example of where student assessment has meant greater teacher accountability was in the assessment of students’ practical sports performance. Students are examined externally in a sport of their choosing from a list of sports provided by SCSA. This has created great variability in the way sport is structured in WACE-PES, as this participant elaborated:

_The implementation of the syllabus is different between schools and how people structure their assessments in the practical. So, whether they have 10 kids doing 10 different sports and 10 different assessment tasks, and there are half a dozen schools that do that, or whether schools take an alternative approach_ (S2).

Teachers who structure a course this way, according to participants, do so in order to prepare students for the external practical examination, but they are working in opposition to the intention of the syllabus. Other schools choose to specialise by outsourcing the practical component. This was explained by this participant:

_Schools are starting to specialise and you get into the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. That’s changed the interaction between teacher and student. The syllabus says students have to be assessed by their teacher. I don’t know if that happens all the time_ (S3).

Specialisation for the external examination meant that there were practices and effects contrary to the intent of the syllabus, especially in regards to ‘learning in, through and about movement’.

**The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes**

This section reports the findings regarding potential longer term outcomes of WACE-PES at State (meso) level. Parallel to the corresponding section in Chapter Five, there are three major themes: the equity of inputs; the equity of outcomes for students; and equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE.
The equity of inputs

Earlier in this chapter, one participant identified schools according to the “have’s and have nots” (S3) referring to inequities in the ‘input’ of school resources. School funding can make a difference to the learning opportunities schools can provide. All participants at the State level acknowledged some inequity in funding between schools especially in a school’s ability to prepare students for external examinations. For example:

*If schools have resources to allocate specialist instruction in preparing kids for a practical exam, then that reeks of inequity. A school can get in a specialist golfer or swimmer, but the syllabus is written so that particular person is not to assess the kid* (S2).

The SCSA had identified a problem where larger, highly funded schools hired sports specialists, not necessarily teachers, to conduct the practical aspects of the course. This gave classroom teachers more time to teach the conceptual understandings. To address this, the SCSA included a syllabus statement insisting students be assessed by the designated teacher of the course. However, as schools seek an edge for their students over other schools, the hiring of sports specialists to prepare students for external practical examinations continued. While this is not against curriculum policy, it was a privilege of schools who could afford to hire specialists or pass that cost onto students. Consequently, bigger schools tended to have greater capacity to hire expertise because they have more student enrolments and higher financial contributions through student fees.

One factor related to school funding is class size. While one participant saw smaller class sizes as an advantage for teaching the conceptual understandings of the syllabus, another considered smaller class sizes as a disadvantage for teaching the practical aspects of the course. For example, one participant stated:

*Class sizes in some schools run to maximum capacity and are trying to cater for a range of kids, whereas other schools have 10 or 12 and are in a better position to do more with fewer numbers. That is an inequity between schools* (S2).
Lower teacher to student ratios were generally seen as beneficial in the delivery of a course. However, in WACE-PES a low class size was also thought to restrict a teacher’s capacity to provide a variety of movement experiences and integrate those experiences with the conceptual understandings. One participant explained: “You have more opportunities to demonstrate to kids the implementation of different theories, concepts and models. The bigger schools have an advantage” (S3). Schools with larger classes are identified by this participant as those with larger school populations as compared to rural or smaller metropolitan schools.

A second sub-theme in relation to the equity of inputs is quality teachers. All participants acknowledged that since the course’s inception, the professional knowledge of teachers had improved. This prompted one participant to make this observation:

A teacher to commit to WACE Physical Education Studies goes above and beyond what the average teacher does. It takes a lot of outside of hours commitment. We see an inequity in the capacity of some teachers to support others (S2).

Teachers at rural and remote schools were seen by participants to have had a reduced capacity to network due to their size and location. Schools with larger student numbers were more likely to have a Head of HPE who meet with other Heads on a frequent basis. However, the lens through which Heads of Department interpret the course may influence classroom practice.

The equity of outcomes for students

At State (meso) level, longer term outcomes are expressed in regards to student performance and enrolment numbers. With greater accountability for learning outcomes and standards in schools (see ‘influences’ section), teachers have been asked to reflect on practice and improve school performance data. As one participant commented: “Students feel more empowered to go back to the teacher and say ‘How
come I only got 5/10? Where’s the evidence? What can I do next time to improve?” (S2). However, from SCSA’s analysis of course enrolments, the course wasn’t attracting the type of student that they expected, as this participant explained: “There was no atypical student doing the course. There were some strong in the written and weaker in the practical and vice versa. The kid we thought might be strong in both areas wasn’t the typical student we encountered” (S2). This meant that teachers were faced with wider challenges in providing successful course outcomes for students. When teachers were not meeting these challenges, criticism was expressed about the need for teachers to narrow any disconnect between ‘pedagogical inputs’ and student achievement (outputs), as this participant went onto propose:

We still see inequities about how people are interpreting the syllabus and how they are delivering it. I get concerned that people haven’t got the arrows in their pedagogical quiver to understand how to take the theoretical in the classroom out onto the court, the pitch or the field and make connections in kids’ heads about what we are talking about and how it works (S1).

A number of longer term outcomes have emerged directly related to the learning achievement of students. One of these outcomes is the ‘top-down’ effect of WACE-PES in lower secondary school, typically Year 10. One participant highlighted: “Some schools are going, ‘if we are going to offer [ATAR] in senior school, let’s introduce units in lower school’, so it’s starting to flow backwards” (S3). The justification for this decision was to improve student performance in examinations in Year 12. However, for another participant, the “need to re-invigorate Physical Education” (S1) in the lower school meant schools created pathways which would prepare students for success in senior school courses. This also enabled schools to gain enrolment in these senior school courses. Commenting on State-wide enrolment in WACE-PES, one participant asserted: “We’ve had about 3000 kids enrolled in the [examinable stage] this year. There’s about 11,000 doing Physical Education Studies altogether. It’s looking pretty healthy” (S1). Another participant highlighted how the status of the course should be judged by: “The
kids we attract, the number who are in the early 90% mark and use [WACE-PES] as one of their four ATAR courses, the material that has been produced and the type of teaching that is done” (S3). Consequently, external examinations in Year 12 have had a profound influence on curriculum in Years 7 to 10.

**Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE**

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum HPE in the longer term poses challenges for WACE-PES. All participants identified several aspects of curriculum policy which they wanted maintained. One of these was to **retain the practical examination in senior school.** One participant stated:

> An influence might come from other States to move away from what we have, especially with the practical exam. The syllabus content is working really well. I know our course has gained popularity across the rest of Australia since we’ve implemented it (S3).

Another participant believed that in WA, the current curriculum structure could be maintained under the Australian Curriculum: “While examination and assessment remain the jurisdiction’s responsibility, we will be able to preserve the practical examination, which has been a key plank in attracting kids” (S1). All participants acknowledged a determination to retain this aspect of curriculum policy.

Another challenge identified by a participant referred to maintaining a spiral or developmental approach to curriculum policy. One participant explained the **differences in PE curriculums between WA and other States:** “Their model is kids will do it for say, three weeks and that’s it! It’s part of a more compartmentalised collection. NSW and Victoria deal with it this way” (S1). Concepts in the WA curriculum are developmental and continuous, allowing teachers to scaffold a concept over a period of time. The concepts in curricula of other States are discrete or packaged. This participant continued: “It is a challenge for us because our content is like ‘spirals’” (S1). Should future WACE-
PES become compartmentalised then this is expected to change the way the course is enacted in schools. Furthermore, participants feared the return of social-critical or social-cultural curriculum perspectives with the Australian Curriculum’s HPE. This produced the following reaction in one participant: “There will be teachers when we go to consultation, who will go ‘This isn’t PE Studies! We’ve tried this and it doesn’t work! Kids don’t get into it!’” (S3). For another participant, social-cultural content was seen as a threat to the current WACE-PES course: “I have an aversion to that social research stuff about determinants of physical activity participation in Australia, which is almost like a social studies perspective” (S1). With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum’s HPE in 2016 and 2017, WACE-PES will be reviewed by the SCSA as this participant explained: “The wrestle for us at reflection time is about how we review senior school courses because of the impact of ACARA’s work” (S1).

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings of this policy trajectory study at State (meso) level through four policy contexts: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. The focus of this chapter has been on WACE-PES in WA but some consideration was given to the future of curriculum policy when the Australian Curriculum’s HPE is introduced in 2016 and 2017.

In the context of policy influences, the following themes emerged: new federalism; curriculum trends in Physical Education; accountability; and competition in education markets. Influences cited by some policy actors included a rescientification of the subject, an increased demand for accountability of student performance and competition between schools. Consequently, there was a shift towards more explicit curriculum content consistent with the measurability of concepts at examination level.
In the context of policy text production, the following themes emerged: rescientised discourses; quality; the power of the State dictates; and policy consultation. In particular, policies emerging after 2007 which focused more on quality and standards, produced a very different curriculum policy text, one which is explicit with science-based understandings that can easily be measured. Over time, the State was shown to tighten assessment policy which has an impact upon the way policy texts are interpreted.

In the context of policy practices, the following themes emerged from the findings: school resources; teacher engagement with change; and teacher accountability. There was evidence to indicate that practices in schools were not often what the policy text intended, especially in regards to the integration between conceptual understandings (‘theory’) and the physical activity elements (‘practical’) of the course. This is because resources and the way the course is structured vary considerably between schools and consequently, the curriculum policy played out in different ways. Teachers appeared to increasingly focus on examinations and have structured their practices to maximise the performance of their students.

The themes for the context of longer term policy outcomes were: the equity of inputs; the equity of outcomes for students; and equity across States with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum HPE. According to participants, some schools were advantaged over others, and teachers sought to maximise opportunities for students by introducing the conceptual understandings into Year 10. This ‘top-down’ effect of curriculum policy identified a clash with the Australian Curriculum’s HPE. How WACE-PES plays out in schools (micro/local) level is now the focus for Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER SEVEN
LOCAL (MICRO) LEVEL SCHOOL FINDINGS

Introduction
This chapter presents findings in relation to the local (micro) or school level of the Western Australia Certificate of Education - Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) policy trajectory and how it interacts with the Australian Curriculum, Health and Physical Education (HPE), showing the complexity of curriculum policy with federalism. Again, the chapter is organised according to: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. It starts with a description of the settings for each of the three case study schools, followed by the findings in relation to the four policy contexts, in turn. Findings are presented separately for the three schools involved to maintain the integrity of each case study, and to highlight similarities and differences between them. Tables summarise comparisons of emergent themes and sub-themes for each policy context from the different case study schools.

School Settings
There were three case study schools, one representing each of the three sectors of education in Australia (Government, Catholic and Independent). Participants are coded ‘L’ for the local (school) level policy trajectory followed by either ‘G’ for Government school, ‘C’ for Catholic school or ‘I’ for Independent school. A number differentiates participants from the same school. It must be noted that student performance in WACE-PES was similar in all three schools.

The Government School is a large, co-educational metropolitan senior high school of approximately 1800 students from Years 8 to 12 that opened in the 1970s. It is located in
the suburbs of Perth and draws students from a medium socio-economic area. The school is considered a high achieving school in WACE examinations but is in close proximity to other high achieving government and non-government schools against which it is often compared. This school is an Independent Public School (IPS) under the State government policy of devolving decision-making and enhancing autonomy to the school level, which means it constructs business plans and reports on its performance in much the same way as non-government schools. The three participants at this school were the teachers who teach WACE-PES at an examinable level. The total of Health and Physical Education (HPE) staff was 14 and included those who work part-time.

The **Catholic School** is a co-educational, metropolitan college catering for Years 7 to 12. The school opened in the 1980s and has an enrolment of approximately 1250 students. Students attending this college come mainly from the suburbs where other large metropolitan government and non-government schools are situated. This school draws from a medium to high socio-economic area and is organised with a middle school (Years 7 to 9) and senior school (Years 10 to 12). Four out of eight HPE teachers at this school teach WACE-PES at an examinable level, and three were participants in this study.

The **Independent School** is a Kindergarten to Year 12 Christian, co-educational school whose secondary campus caters for Years 7 to 12. Located in the northern suburbs of Perth, it has a secondary school enrolment of over 900. The school commenced in the 1980s and services an area of medium socio-economic status. The four participants in this study were teachers who taught WACE-PES, from a department total of eight teachers, some of whom were part-time with other duties in the school.
Many of the themes emerging from the three case study schools parallel those which emerged at national (macro) and State (meso) levels, although there were several significant differences in themes and more differences in sub-themes. Discussion of each theme in each school is succinct as possible, while detailed enough to allow for a good understanding of site-specific policy enactment. Detailed comparisons and contrasts along the whole policy trajectory (macro to micro levels) are presented in the meta-analysis of Chapter Eight.

The Context of Influences

This section presents the findings from the three case study schools within the context of policy influences. Four major themes were identified as influences: curriculum trends in Physical Education; accountability; competition in educational markets; and pathways in Physical Education. Table 7.1 (overleaf) reveals the similarities and differences across the case study schools, including sub-themes within major themes. The themes and sub-themes appear in order of prominence in participant responses at each school.

Case study school 1 (Government): Influences

Participants at this school had a direct link with the course advisory group for WACE-PES because one participant was a member of that group. Participants framed their perspectives according to their teaching experiences and the feedback they had given to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) of Western Australia (WA).
Table 7.1
*Major Themes and Sub-themes for the Context of Influence in Case study Schools.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government School</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rescientisation (teacher influence)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Measurability</td>
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<td>• Standardisation through moderation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Competition in education markets</td>
<td>• Between government schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pathways in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Retention &amp; graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rescientisation (university influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Impact of external examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition in education markets</td>
<td>• Textbooks as political interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition with Private Schools Association (PSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent School</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rescientisation (university influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Impact of external examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pathways in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Pathway to university</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Curriculum trends in Physical Education**

Participants at the Government School identified a *clash of ideologies* underpinning WACE-PES as a significant influence on policy and practice within the school. Two ideological differences emerged. The first was between the ideological positions of Year 11 and 12 PES before being an examinable course as compared to the examinable WACE-PES syllabus after 2008. The second was how versions of WACE-PES syllabus before 2008 were encompassed within a social-critical approach and how this was problematic for teachers. One participant, who was on the course advisory group for SCSA, explained the impact of introducing an examination:

*Because we had come from a non-university entrance-based course, it meant a significant shift in ideology, in content, curriculum materials and teaching methodology. We needed to adapt to the standard that was required. I saw that as the biggest political push to influence what was going on (LG1).*
Versions of the syllabus prior to 2007 included social-critical perspectives that created ideological tensions between the policy writers and practitioners. This participant elaborated: "The writers had a big influence because there was a fair bit of social content in it. That came as a result of their background which can also be seen in the Australian Curriculum HPE" (LG1). However, social-critical content was described by another participant as: "too 'out there', too airy" (LG3) and by another: "It's alright to come up with the idea but to do it practically is a different story. Writers must listen to teachers who teach it in a practical setting" (LG2). At the end of 2007 and after the outcomes-based education (OBE) era, the SCSA consulted more with teachers and social-critical content was ultimately removed from the syllabus.

After 2007, a rescientisation due to teacher influence took place where the syllabus moved closer to the concepts of sports science and away from social-critical content. The following three participant quotes describe teachers’ reactions to rescientisation:

"There was a shift away from the social dimensions to more of the biomechanical, sports science streams because it was not as subjective" (LG1).

"The changes [to the syllabus] were what we wanted. We have the same opinions as other schools and someone is taking notice" (LG2).

"The course is better than what it was. It's more concrete, the structure is better and tighter" (LG3).

Participants concluded that the biggest driver for reform came from teachers themselves as a consequence of being more empowered in curriculum policy processes immediately after the shift from OBE in the latter part of 2007. However, the participant who was a member of the course advisory group had indicated that this group no longer met after 2012, when the course syllabus had undergone significant change.
Accountability

Increased teacher accountability that accompanied the school’s transition to becoming an Independent Public School (IPS) was a significant influence according to participants. That is, syllabus content was judged by its **measurability**, as one participant explained: “As an IPS, I am asked to be accountable for every grade so that is having a dictatorial relationship to the style of delivery and the preparation of kids” (LG1) and: “Assessment shouldn't shape your course but we are accountable” (LG1). The assessment structure in the syllabus was tightened in several versions after 2007 to reduce the variability in marking between schools.

Reducing teacher marking variability saw a focus on **standardisation through moderation** of teacher assessments. One participant explained why assessment structures were tightened in the syllabus: "There was debate about assessment weightings and the three types of assessment: investigation; response; and the practical. We have set amounts because teachers were using prescribed ranges to manipulate their marks” (LG1). This began with the first real change in the assessment schedule in 2008 after OBE was abandoned in WA. For example: "Outcomes were very subjective. Now it has shifted to number-based assessments" (LG3). This affected the way teachers were assessing, as this participant observed from consensus moderation meetings: “Teachers started doing one assessment with many layers, now they do smaller assessments and more tests” (LG2).

**Competition in education markets**

Competition between government schools was cited by two participants at this school as a consequence of their IPS status. This school compares its course performance annually against similar schools, as one participant explained: "We have a school down
the road that we get compared to a lot because they are high profile. It creates pressure” (LG1). Enhanced competition was seen as a negative influence: "That school is competing against us, who are competing against another school. What for? To get the best league table scores? I don't agree with that!” (LG3). This participant had observed a decline in cooperation between government schools in the region because of competition: "Schools should work together, but really schools are competing because they want to have more exhibitions [awards]” (LG3) and: “In the old days it didn't matter because we would share stuff around but we don't anymore” (LG3). School comparisons are required under Education Department of WA policy for all government schools as part of reporting student performance and school accountability.

**Pathways in Physical Education**

For two participants at this Government school, WACE courses were thought to be constructed for the purpose of **retention and graduation**. For example: "The Department of Education and SCSA saw this as a way of offering units for graduation purposes” (LG1). The policy intention was to create a curriculum that spiralled in levels of difficulty: "It was set up sequentially” (LG1) and: "The push from above was that kids could change units mid-year” (LG1). However, teachers chose to teach topics concurrently, as another participant commented: “Playing around with what to teach in each unit has been a big influence” (LG2). Whether the syllabus retained its sequential intentions and logical pathway through Year 11 and 12 is arguable and is discussed later in the chapter.

**Case study school 2 (Catholic): Influences**

Participants in this school did not have direct input into the course advisory group for WACE-PES but framed their perspectives from teaching the course and involvement as WACE examination markers.
Curriculum trends in Physical Education

Participants identified a clash of ideologies between sports science and social-critical perspectives in the 2005 and 2007 versions of the PES course syllabus as significant influences on WACE-PES curriculum policy. In particular, social-critical content appeared to be hard to teach, as this statement reflected: "It needed to be engaging and it didn't fit in the category of 'engaging'” (LC3). Similarly, another participant added: “It was difficult to assess in a practical setting and to examine because content was not specific” (LC2). Participants welcomed the topics around sport science that were introduced to the syllabus after 2008.

According to participants, content changes in the course syllabus saw a rescientisation due to university influence. One participant explained: “The change came from universities. The lecturers I have talked to say that the course is in line with their own university” (LC2). This participant also believed the course was easier to teach as a consequence of its rescientisation: “The transformations have been good because they have simplified the course” (LC2). All participants welcomed the omission of social-critical content because it reduced the total amount of content.

Accountability

Participant responses revealed that the impact of external examinations as a new form of accountability was a significant influence on WACE-PES in this school. WACE-PES has two external examinations, a written paper and a practical examination in a student’s chosen sport. To assist schools in analysing student performance, SCSA began providing a breakdown of student results, as this participant explained: “They gave us a split of practical and theory results. We realised our theory was right but our practical was not”
This data allowed teachers to respond to examination performance and participants found student performance in the practical area was not consistent with external practical examination scores. This disparity prompted another participant to comment: “The importance of external practical examinations caused angst as to which direction we should be pointing our kids” (LC3). Consequently, examination performance became the focus for this school.

**Competition in education markets**

An influence cited by participants at this school referred to textbooks as political interventions reflecting competition between two significant individual policy actors. One textbook was written by the School of Sports Science, Exercise and Health at the University of Western Australia (UWA) and the other, by a leading Private Schools Association (PSA) school. One participant stated: “There are big power players within the physical education realm. One PSA school puts together Physical Education Studies seminars. Another PSA school has a textbook and so does UWA” (LC2). Textbooks were seen by participants as political interventions because the editors are the same policy players who had influence with SCSA through membership on course advisory groups. However, textbooks have been problematic: “With any textbook you have your issues so you need multiple ones to work out what you are doing” (LC1). These different textbooks have led to multiple interpretations of the syllabus, causing confusion. For example: “UWA are using terminology they use in their university courses as opposed to what appears in the syllabus” (LC1). The UWA also leads the Physical Education Studies Teachers Association which acknowledges teachers of award winning students in the subject every year.
Competition with Private Schools Association (PSA) member schools was cited as an influence on curriculum policy and practice. Participants at this school indirectly tried to emulate the practices they saw in highly funded PSA schools. For example: “PSA schools with their resources are able to have labs which link to theory. I need to improve on that part” (LC2). Two participants thought that PSA schools have an unfair advantage in the way they choose to assess the practical component within their school sporting structures leading to their ability to achieve course awards on a regular basis.

Case study school 3 (Independent): Influences

Participants at this school have framed their perspectives from teaching the course and participation at consensus moderation meetings for WACE-PES.

Curriculum trends in Physical Education

Participants perceived a clash in ideologies between sports science and social-critical curriculum as an important influence on policy and practice. Two early career participants had stronger views about the sports science ideology than others. For example: “Physical Education is actually a Science! There is a lot that relates to chemistry, physics and physiology” (LI4). All participants felt a change in the syllabus to sports science topics had been worthwhile. One participant reflected about earlier versions of the syllabus: “It didn’t feel as focused as it does now” (LI1) and the social-critical elements of earlier versions were considered “unwieldy” (LI1) and “woolly” (LI1).

A rescientisation due to university influence was cited by participants as a significant perspective at this school, as one participant explained: “I am happy with the clear differentiation we have and the direct relevance it has for kids. It brings a rigour necessary for a Physical Education course” (LI1). This move towards sports science was
attributed to the influence of universities: “Whether it is Notre Dame University, the UWA or Edith Cowan University, the focus is heading away from the social dimensions” (LI3). Participant perspectives appeared to be influenced by their own university studies at different institutions and were reflected by their choice to teach the syllabus concurrently rather than sequentially as intended by the syllabus writers.

**Accountability**

Accountability for school performance due to the impact of external examinations was cited by participants as an influence on curriculum policy particularly in regards to having consistent standards. Inconsistencies between school and external scores prompted participants to seek positions as WACE examination markers to better understand the standards in those policy settings. For example: “Three teachers have done WACE marking so they have an opportunity through standards settings to feed back quite a bit” (LI2) and “marking both practical and theory examinations means you have a loud voice” (LI2). Examination marking was another avenue where teachers took an active role in shaping curriculum policy, although they often bought different perspectives on standards. One participant commented: “I’ve worked with SCSA with assessment development. I am in the elect few” (LI3). Teachers from this school, as examination markers, were able to have direct input into policy settings on standards.

**Pathways**

A push for WACE-PES to provide a pathway to university, and in particular to Human Movement Studies, was seen as an influence on policy and practice. For example: “My students are learning second year university stuff now and it’s ‘full-on’, particularly in biomechanics” (LI4). This participant believed syllabus changes made after 2007 were influenced by universities to align pathways to their own tertiary courses. Similarly: “We
give students the best pathway to tertiary study. There are parts of the degree I did at the UWA incorporated in the syllabus and this sets students up well (LI3). This link with the UWA was also significant for its role in textbook publishing and setting examinations, as this participant explained: “The editor had a strong voice about the examination. The school of thought was that the examination didn’t suit his textbook and so, he was getting on the front foot before his textbook could be attacked” (LI2). This editor also sat on the course advisory group which offered an interesting dynamic between that group and textbook publishing.

The Context of Policy Text Production

This section presents findings within the context of policy text production which is concerned with the views of local (schools) level participants about the key features, players and processes involved in the construction of curriculum policy texts at the national and State level. The major policy text participants were responding to was the WACE-PES syllabus that was produced at State (meso) level for Years 11 and 12. However, as the Australian Curriculum HPE was introduced during the time frame of this study (2005 to 2015), participant perspectives about this policy text at national (macro) level were also included. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the findings are presented in Table 7.2 (overleaf) and shows the similarities and differences between each school context.
Table 7.2  
*Major themes and sub-themes for the Context of Policy Text Production in case study schools.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government School</strong></td>
<td>• Relevance to physical activity</td>
<td>• The practical component</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The new policy elite: course advisory group</td>
<td>• Range in assessment policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• SCSA Project Officer, selected teachers, academics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Head of Learning Area (schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic School</td>
<td>• Relevance to sports science</td>
<td>• The practical component</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Role of administrators &amp; interest groups</td>
<td>• Range in assessment policy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• Head of Learning Area (schools)</td>
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<td>• Textbook writers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent School</td>
<td>• Relevance to sports science</td>
<td>• As WACE markers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Role of interest groups &amp; administrators</td>
<td>• Consensus moderation meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• School administrators</td>
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*Case study school 1 (Government): Policy text production*

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Government School’ about policy text processes in relation to the WACE-PES syllabus.

**Relevance to physical activity**

Content relevance to the **practical component** of the WACE-PES course was identified by participants at this school as a key feature of the WACE-PES syllabus. One participant explained: “*The application of theory to sport allows a greater foundation of knowledge. If the course removed the physical component, then it would lose the capability to cater for different learning styles and to create a motivational learning environment*” (LG1). Another participant saw ‘sport’ as a factor for attracting students to the course: “*We attract clientele that usually want to be involved in sport*” (LG2). Therefore, making a link between sport and theory concepts was considered important: “*I can give relevant*”
examples to elite teams, teams within the school or their own club teams – that’s being relevant to kids” (LG3). This statement suggested that concepts were applied to practical sporting examples rather than ‘sport’ being a vehicle where theory concepts are learnt. The rationale stated in the syllabus documents encourages ‘learning in, through and about movement’, but this comment gave some insight into teacher thinking: “The rationale statement of the syllabus is OK; it is good for the academics, but practitioners concentrate little on that” (LG1). The rationale of the syllabus does not seem to hold significance for these participants.

Another feature identified by participants was the range in assessment policy in keeping with the accountability agendas of this school. The assessment framework in the WACE-PES syllabus has three components: practical assessment in a sporting context; investigations; and tests and examinations, called ‘response’ style questions. One participant explained its significance: “These three areas became the most important part of the document because they shape the course” (LG1). However, despite having a variety of assessment types, another participant described how the focus must remain on preparing students for the external examinations: “There’s that examination and students have got to be able to do it. We have thrown in more tests to keep students skilled in performing in exams” (LG2). Nevertheless, all three participants were in favour of maintaining the three assessment types.

The new policy elite: course advisory group

Participants at this school considered the SCSA Project Officer, selected teachers and academics as key players in WACE-PES curriculum policy text production. The Project Officer’s role was described by one participant: “He has influence over the paper itself because he is used as a conduit between different spokespeople and stakeholders” (LG1).
Teachers became important policy actors after 2007 when SCSA established the course advisory groups to guide WACE-PES policy text production. For this school, communication with the SCSA was made through their own representation on the course advisory group: “We suggested changes to those who dictate what the syllabus is going to look like. Our representative is speaking for us and is getting the changes we want as classroom teachers” (LG2). This participant went on to explain how feedback in other forums, like consensus moderation meetings, also made a contribution: “Teachers are the guiding ones, as opposed to any one particular person changing the syllabus. That is, groups of teachers with a concentrated voice getting changes to happen” (LG2).

For two participants, the Head of Learning Area (HoLA) at this school was seen as a key player in the policy text produced by the interaction of State (and national) and school levels. For example: “The HoLA does a lot of work regarding the order we teach things. He has the most scope being the person in charge and is invested with what we do” (LG2). HoLAs could be viewed as ‘reformers’ adopting State agendas for change or as ‘gatekeepers’ who actively filter State policy, selecting those that sit most comfortably with their own ideologies as they interpret State (and national) Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy texts. This comment from the HoLA gave further insight: “I have been able to influence things and pick individuals who have commonalities with my own style” (LG1). All three participants conceded that they share similar perspectives on the course.

**Teacher participation in quality processes**

All three participants at this school saw the course advisory group and teacher representation on that group as a key process for policy text development. This meant providing feedback to SCSA on policy text changes: “The HoLA brings us the findings from the course advisory group so we can give our opinions. He takes these opinions on
board when he goes back to that group” (LG2). Clearly, having a representative on this group was an advantage in promoting a shared perspective about the policy text at school level: “Normally our feedback was what was best for our school” (LG2). However, the dynamic of the course advisory group revealed a possible power struggle between teachers and university representatives. For example: “Universities dominate and don’t often listen to the practitioner’s side” (LG1) and university staff: “Protect themselves and want a better base for kids to be more successful in the courses they do” (LG1). With university representatives having had a role in constructing the written external examination paper, tensions between universities and practitioners were exacerbated.

Opportunities to contribute to policy text production also occurred through teacher consensus moderation meetings conducted by SCSA. These were annual or bi-annual meetings of teachers to ensure standards in marking between teachers from different sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent) who review the work of others. This forum was another avenue for feedback: “In moderation events, you hope they are listening to our voices and comments. It is always up to us to make our comments known” (LG2). The changes made to the policy text after 2007 seemed to be in line with the perspectives of this participant: “What we asked for has happened. We have the same opinions as a lot of other teachers” (LG2). From this participant’s experiences of moderation, there was consensus from teachers about the policy text and how it should be enacted in schools.

Case study school 2 (Catholic): Policy text production

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Catholic School’ about WACE-PES policy text production highlighting the interaction between State and school levels.
Participants at this school considered the policy’s sport science content and its relevance to the practical component as a key feature of the WACE-PES policy text. For example: “Having gone to the UWA and knowing the content, it aligns itself with content taught at these institutions [universities]” (LC2). While participants were critical of the practical component in the policy text, all conceded that it was the direct application to sport that made content relevant: “Having a practical component means you are able to develop a far better rapport with students. It allows for a thorough way of teaching it” (LC2). However, ‘learning in, through and about movement’ was not seen by participants as key feature. Instead, practical settings were described as ‘laboratories’: “Learning theoretical concepts through practical laboratories allows for different concepts to happen” (LC1). This participant went on to describe an example of a laboratory-based lesson plan gained from professional development provided by the UWA’s Physical Education Studies Teachers Association.

The HoLA at this school cited the range in assessment policy as a key feature. This participant stated: “I like the range in assessment so it can be tailored from school to school and find what fits best for your clientele with the teachers who assess it” (LC1). However, this participant did not consider content statements in the policy text as having clarity and this had been problematic for assessment: “There are five or six distinct topics and I think that is a positive thing but it’s very open-ended and a negative side of it. It’s open to interpretation” (LC1).
Role of administrators and interest groups

All participants at this school saw Heads of Learning Area (HoLA) in schools as key players in policy text production, given the decentralisation of responsibility of curriculum policy to schools from the Catholic Education Office. One participant described how a HoLA’s perspective was influential: “When the course first came out, the Head of Department [learning area] at my school took it on straight away. The current Head of Department wasn’t into teaching it so it was given to someone else” (LC1). Another participant worked with their Head of Department in constructing the course in this school but noted: “It’s been the Head of Department and I; I don’t feel that we have had great opportunity to feed back [to SCSA]” (LC3).

Other key players identified by participants were textbook writers. For example: “When you are unsure how to interpret the syllabus, you go to the textbook and how that is interpreted depends on which one you are using” (LC1). Participants at this school seemed to have had a closer connection with textbook writers through their own professional learning opportunities: “The UWA author, who I know, has had a big influence on [policy] text. So has the other author at a PSA school; he’s been prepared to present to colleagues in our learning area which has had a positive influence” (LC3). Therefore, the professional connections teachers make impact on their interpretations of this policy.

Teacher participation in quality processes

Varying perspectives were identified about the key processes in policy text production. One participant saw teachers who became WACE markers as a way to input into curriculum policy, as teachers in this role contribute to examination marking keys. However, in light of this involvement, an important group dynamic was observed:
It was interesting to sit as a WACE marker and listen to the dialogue between different teachers across the State. They were all passionate and trying to do the best for their students. With that, there were discrepancies in how their content had been taught and so they pushed for that content [interpretation] to be included in the marking key (LC2).

Tensions appeared over the depth of understanding required by the content statements in the policy text. This participant continued: “[As WACE markers] we debated a concept for forty minutes which was unnecessary at a consensus meeting at the start of an examination period” (LC2), in preparing a marking key for the external written examination. While using teachers as WACE-PES examination markers was an important part of the policy process, some self-interest seemed inherent as they interpreted the policy text.

For another participant, consensus moderation meetings played a role in policy text production, as samples of student work from schools helped inform SCSA of how the policy text was interpreted in schools: “Moderation [meetings] are an effective process because they require you to keep your files and student portfolios in order” (LC3). These meetings would involve the sharing of assessment outlines and student work samples for the moderation of grades. However, in commenting on the contribution of student work samples as a form where the State curriculum policy text interacted with practices in schools, this participant did not view these meetings as “efficient or productive” (LC3), noting a lack of collaboration and sharing among teachers. This lack of collaboration would seem to limit the effectiveness of feedback to the SCSA over the policy text.

Case study school 3 (Independent): Policy text production

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Independent School’ about WACE-PES policy text production.
Relevance to sports science

The participants at this school saw the relevance of the practical component of the course as a key feature of the policy text. One participant described how the policy text was a template for practice: “There’s the practical component, there’s the theory component and I think the third feature (in our school at least) is underutilised, and that is where the practical meets the theory” (LI1). The ‘third feature’ quoted here was consistent with the curriculum policy text ‘rationale’, that is, to ‘learn in, through and about movement’ or to teach theoretical constructs through physical activity. This participant continued: “There are explicit practical things that you need to teach in theory but the more you can actually exist in that central space where you are learning or embedding the theory in the practical context is good” (LI1). This was the only participant at this school with this viewpoint; others saw the practical or physical activity component as existing solely to attract student enrolment in the course.

Two participants at this school saw the explicitness of content statements as a key feature of the policy text. For example: “I like that it is clear and prescriptive. When they made changes, it made it easier to see exactly what the kids needed to know” (LI4). For another participant, the topic headings aided clarity but were weighted heavily towards two areas: “Biomechanics and Exercise Physiology get quite a good run. I’d like to see Sports Psychology get more of a gig” (LI2). As early career teachers, these two participants valued the explicitness of content statements when teaching the course for the first time. However, another perspective highlighted how content statements were more consistent with sports science at university: “The course allows you to be an elite performer or be in a position to assist an elite performer whether that would be as a sports psychologist, an exercise physiologist, or a coach” (LI3). Not all participants
shared the same elitist perspective and some tension between teachers at this school was evident because of different perspectives over the intent of the course.

**Role of interest groups and administrators**

Three of the four participants at this school cited the interest group of *textbook writers* as key players in policy text production. One participant stated: “*Those who have written textbooks had a big role*” (LI4) despite SCSA not endorsing an official textbook. Another participant made this connection: “*Each lecturer at the UWA wrote a particular topic for the textbook. They are all listed as the authors*” (LI2). Consequently, participants at this school endeavoured to send their students to seminars conducted by textbook writers to prepare them for external examinations: “*We send our kids to the UWA PE Studies revision seminars and the PSA one. Student feedback is that the UWA one is really good*” (LI2). This may have added to the perception that these policy players had undue influence over changes to the policy text.

Two of the four participants also identified *school administrators* as players in policy text production and its interpretation at school level. Here the interaction between State and local levels again highlighted the complexity in curriculum policy processes and the factors that are at play in its interpretation. One participant referred to the HoLA as representing their views in local networks as well as overseeing the policy’s enactment: “*We work as a team and always have common assessments. The HoLA has moved people around to build capacity in the department*” (LI1). The HoLA was seen as a powerful player because the policy text was often interpreted through their lens. Just as important is how the policy is interpreted for practice by others, as another participant explained: “*Our Deputy Principal of Curriculum has had an impact on how we teach the syllabus in that we are very accountable to her*” (LI4). How this influence by the school’s
curriculum coordinator contributed to assessment and performance is vital in understanding how the assessment part of the curriculum policy is interpreted.

**Teacher participation in quality processes**

Teachers at this school sought to become involved as WACE markers in response to a perceived problem with the marking of student performance in the external practical examination. One participant commented: “The difference between the WACE mark and the school mark undermines confidence in how often we are getting it right” (LI1). This difference was attributed to the way assessment criteria in the curriculum policy were interpreted. Another participant explained: “There are issues between the SCSA and schools. Teachers are always having ‘a crack’ at the way the course is run [by SCSA]” (LI2). Part of the problem was with the application of the assessment criteria in the practical setting: “You hear rumours where marks are given by the ‘look of someone’ [appearance] and that was a big driver” (LI3). Consequently, some teachers at this school became WACE practical markers to have influence over policy: “So, we tried to get some of our teachers doing practical marking” (LI1). This created opportunities to feed back to SCSA but had consequences for how policy at the school level operated: “We have had to be more accountable with each other and rigorous in our record keeping. It has upped the ante and you have to defend the decisions and assessments you make” (LI1). These participants had a vested interest in ensuring the policy text portrayed a consistent message on assessment as part of school accountability.

**The Context of Policy Practices**

This section presents the findings from each case study school in respect to the context of policy practices. Three major themes were identified: the WACE course structure in the
school; teaching and assessment; and school resources. Table 7.3 presents the major themes and sub-themes in order of prominence as indicated by participants.

Table 7.3  
Major themes and sub-themes for the Context of Policy Practices in case study schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government School</strong></td>
<td>WACE course structure</td>
<td>Concurrent topic-based teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time allocation 50/50 for theory/practical</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balance between specialised &amp; unspecialised sports</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching &amp; assessment</td>
<td>Clash between curriculum intent &amp; school accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School resources</td>
<td>Competition &amp; the lack of sharing between schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School</strong></td>
<td>WACE course structure</td>
<td>Concurrent topic-based teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time allocation 70/30 for theory/practical</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moving towards sports specialisation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching &amp; assessment</td>
<td>Examination &amp; test-centric</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School resources</td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited teacher collaboration at consensus moderation meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent School</strong></td>
<td>WACE course structure</td>
<td>Concurrent topic-based teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time allocation 70/30 for theory/practical</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student specialisation in their examinable sport</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaching &amp; assessment</td>
<td>Common teaching programs, fewer investigations &amp; more tests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School resources</td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
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Case study school 1 (Government): Policy practices

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Government School’ about WACE-PES policy practices in the school.

WACE course structure

One feature that defined the practice of this school was concurrent, topic-based teaching. The syllabus was designed to be a spiralled, developmental curriculum where
concepts are taught within movement contexts. However, teachers chose to organise their teaching practice by combining topics over a year. One participant explained:

In WA, we are given the option to teach concurrently or sequentially which means I can look at the whole syllabus and chunk stuff. We saw it as an important way of making sure kids had a good foundation. We could then delve deeper, show more application within a sport while not having to revert back to previous knowledge (LG1).

This meant that some topics were examined in one semester while others were examined in the next, as part of school-based assessment. Another participant described how concepts and movement were linked under this structure: “We try and see how concepts link within content. If there’s a good link, we make sure we highlight it, whether it is through our PowerPoints or our worksheets. In the practical settings we just mention it” (LG2). Teachers reported that a concurrent structure was easier because topics were aligned with textbooks and other resources: “We’ve found it easier to chunk rather than to do that bit here and then in a couple of sessions get into the next bit” (LG3). Concurrent teaching and assessment was supported by all three participants at this school.

Within a concurrent course structure, teachers gave a **time allocation of 50/50 for theory/practical** each week. However, pressure to teach content in this time allocation was cited as an issue, as one participant explained:

I’m trying to keep my two practical sessions and two theory sessions. If I make it one practical and 3 theory, I could teach a bit more depth but kids want to do sport. Depending on our results, we may have to look at it (LG3).

Another participant asked: “Most schools get three or four hours a week to cover the course, and one and half or two of those hours are sport. How are we going to get through all that content?” (LG2). For this school, attracting enrolment into WACE-PES was the basis for this time allocation: “Students love sport and that’s the reason they are doing it. Sometimes there is a struggle getting through everything you need to in the time frame” (LG2). Participants indicated that the pressure to change their time allocation to more
theory sessions came from external examination performance and prescribed school assessment weightings.

This school considered a **balance between specialised and unspecialised sports** in preparation for the external practical examination. However, with an external practical examination worth 30%, there was a trend to specialise. In other words, practical sport within the school became the environment where students practise their external examination rather than a vehicle to learn through movement. One participant stated: “There was a push to offer only one or two sports so kids can refine their skills over an expanded period of time and use them in their WACE examinations” (LG1). Another participant described how they were: “Working on mirroring what WACE does” (LG2). This included conducting mock practical examinations in examinable sports with expert markers, using the same marking criteria as those used in WACE-PES external practical examinations.

**Teaching and assessment**

The assessment framework in the curriculum policy featured strongly in the practice of teachers at this school but there was a perceived **clash between curriculum intent and school accountability**. In other words, the intent to ‘learn in, through and about movement’ was often compromised by concerns about the performance of students in the WACE examinations. For example: “The ultimate test is the WACE exam. We look at that, how many questions are allocated to a topic and what is in the answer” (LG2). Participants then adjust teaching programs accordingly: “We do an analysis of how many kids answer a question right to know if an area is a strength or weakness. It goes back to accountability in our business plans” (LG1). Accountability appeared to increase the pressure to move away from investigations towards tests or what the WACE-PES syllabus
terms ‘response’ style assessments: “The assessment matrix is dictating the style of assessment that we use and the number of assessments. We are going to offer more response-style, invigilated activities to get kids used to that style” (LG1). The external written examination brief in the syllabus required students to apply their knowledge to various sporting contexts.

A focus upon common assessments at this school meant teachers aimed to keep content delivery the same across multiple classes. In other words, curriculum delivery was ‘standardised’ in the same way assessment tasks were standardised. One participant explained: “Content is a big driver. The content and ideology is where it is headed. My teachers engage directly with the syllabus and the assessment structure” (LG1). As the HoLA, this participant also acknowledged that he had influenced the way the course was taught. For example: “We standardise it across the board. We’ve gone down the path where our form of delivery is common amongst the teachers involved, because we are very like-minded in how we deliver” (LG1). This was supported by another participant who indicated: “We have been led by the HoLA who has input into how he wants it set up. We keep everything the same and match up the assessment tasks” (LG3). Such practice allows for internal moderation between teachers but can limit alternative views on practice. This was acknowledged by the HoLA: “I have been able to influence a fair bit of that [practice]” (LG1).

**School resources**

After 2010, consensus moderation meetings were the forums where support materials were potentially shared between teachers. However, participants at this school noted competition and the lack of sharing between schools to be a feature of these meetings. One participant explained how competition between government schools may be a reason
for this: “I meet with the Principal every year and provide a detailed analysis of our WACE Physical Education Studies. We compare marks between us and other schools as well as show a statistical analysis of our mock and WACE examinations” (LG1). Competition appeared to limit the sharing of resource materials between schools, as another participant explained: “We should have a group of people we can go and bounce off. Then again, do we share stuff?” (LG3). Ownership of support materials seemed to be a factor leading to a lack of collegiality at consensus moderation meetings, as this participant went on to elaborate: “We haven’t got that collegiate thing because we are so busy. Do we share stuff? We keep it and hold it because our school is competing against you and want more [subject top performance] exhibitions than you” (LG3). Participants did not cite any other professional learning forums that helped overcome this lack of collegiality. However, with a decline in learning area support personnel in the Education Department of WA and a change in role for SCSA after 2008, teacher-generated support materials became an important part of policy practice which could account for a lack of sharing between schools due to teachers ‘owning’ their own resources.

Case study school 2 (Catholic): Policy practices

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Catholic School’ about WACE-PES policy practices in the school.

WACE course structure

Participants at this school use concurrent, topic-based teaching to deliver the course. One participant commented: “I like the topics and the people who have written the textbooks have written their chapters based on these topics” (LC1). This statement reflected how textbooks were viewed as unofficial policy texts, leading teachers into the topic structure. This participant continued: “What came first? I am assuming the syllabus
came first and then the textbooks. There are five or six distinct topics within the course, that’s a very positive thing” (LC1). A comment from another participant reinforced this approach: “Some schools teach [sequentially], but I feel it is better by topic [concurrently]” (LC2). This position is consistent with participants’ own training at university and the sports science perspectives reported earlier in this chapter. For example:

At university, how you best learnt was through labs. Get teachers to professional development where they can see how these labs run and to network meetings so they can speak to other teachers. Keep to your textbook or your program (LC1).

Collaboration between teachers was not evident, nor were there indications of utilising ‘learning in, through and about movement’ as a teaching strategy.

Participants at this school adopted a time allocation 70/30 for theory/practical in line with the assessment weightings of the syllabus. This appeared to have reduced time pressure to cover content and allow for topic assessments: “You always get through it. I don’t think there is too much in the course” (LC1). This participant described how schools with similar time allocations further reduced practical time if more was needed to teach classroom concepts. An example given by another participant described how five, forty minute periods are divided so that more time is given to theory concepts: “I do one laboratory, one practical and three theory periods” (LC2). This school had moved to a time allocation weighted heavily towards theory concepts which mirrored the assessment policy when the syllabus changed to theoretical concepts 70% and practical performance 30% of a student’s final score.

This school was moving towards sport specialisation to better reflect what was required by the external practical examination. This meant assessing students in the same sport as the one chosen in their external WACE-PES examination and restructuring practical
sessions to prepare students for that examination. For example: “For the first time we are doing mock practical exams. We are tailoring it to what students are going to come across in the WACE practical examination. That is something we got from speaking with other schools” (LC1). This included hiring specialist practical examination markers and replicating the physical activity assessment practices in PSA schools because participants thought this was an advantage. For example, one participant described how their own school sport structure could be used to an advantage: “If I am going to assess football, I am going to watch students as they represent the college in football” (LC2). This practice appeared contrary to curriculum policy that prescribed that students be assessed within the structure of class practical sessions.

Teaching and assessment

Practice at this school appeared examination and test-centric as participants focused strongly on the external examinations. For example: “Students are going to be assessed on WACE at the end of the year. Investigations are never assessed in WACE. So, I have five tests, one in each topic and two extended responses under ‘investigation’” (LC2). No weighting was given to research assignments; instead the assessment framework was manipulated to give additional extended response questions in examination settings. This focus on examination performance was a consequence of accountability and league tables, where school rankings are published according to school performance in WACE examinations. For example: “[School] administration always apply pressure when the league tables are coming out. These subjects are above average, these subjects are average and these subjects were below average. They are questioning, ‘what are we doing to improve?’” (LC1). Consequently, practice decisions by teachers at this school were to simulate external examination settings as part of the delivery of the course.
**School resources**

Earlier in this chapter, it was reported that participants were concerned about content statements in the syllabus and the depth required when teaching students. These concerns were exacerbated by using textbooks as support materials. For example: “I have used a lot of resources like textbooks and they all go into different depths. So, how is one to know what is required?” (LC2). This was seen as more of an issue for early career teachers, as this participant elaborated: “I have taught it for a few years, I know the depth required but for new teachers they would not have a clue” (LC2). Another participant concurred with this perspective: “If you don’t have time to prepare then you teach by textbook, particularly when you have only taught for one or two years” (LC1). Textbooks have created a tension between content statements in the syllabus and the understandings expressed in textbooks. For example: “Kids are going to face a WACE exam going, ‘which terminologies are they going to use, out of which textbook?’” (LC1). To negate this problem, participants used multiple textbooks to cover any differences in interpretation over syllabus content.

The lack of sharing between teachers of different schools was a concern for participants, especially of limited collaboration at consensus moderation meetings. One participant explained the value of teacher collaboration: “The networking opportunity is the best way to get feedback on whether what you are doing is good, how you can improve and things to avoid” (LC1). However, this participant also observed reluctance by teachers to give feedback at these meetings: “On the flipside, if you are doing something that people think is not good, they won’t tell you. You don’t get that feedback because very few people come to look at what you do” (LC1). This lack of sharing would appear to be due to the focus on moderation, assessment and grading rather than on ideas for practice.
Case study school 3 (Independent): Policy practices

This section presents the perspectives of participants from ‘Independent School’ about WACE-PES policy practices in the school.

WACE course structure

This Independent school structured their course for concurrent, topic-based teaching in line with participant perspectives about sports science:

It is easier for students to get all the information on a topic in one go. I don’t think kids need to know what [each unit] is; they just need to know what is ‘Biomechanics’ and this is what you need to know for that (LI4).

Teaching concurrently risks reducing the capacity for integration between classroom and sporting contexts. However, the decision to teach concurrently seemed more to do with the ease of teaching rather than student learning, as reflected in this statement: “It is better now. I remember when it was integrated content but separating units into content areas has been good” (LI1). All participants were in favour of topic compartmentalisation even though opportunities to integrate content by ‘learning in, through and about movement’ seemed constrained. However, a limitation for teaching concurrently was identified by one participant, as this example suggests: “We had a short Term One and only nine weeks of content to assess in the first semester examination, so our examination was a big test on Biomechanics and some Exercise Physiology. That wasn’t effective” (LI2). To gain more time in Year 12 courses, this school was considering commencing Year 12 courses in the eleventh year of schooling. This participant described how this would affect the school calendar: “That will release pressure and give more time for assessments. We will be able to get a lot more quality teaching in” (LI2).

In tandem with a concurrent approach, participants at this school adopted a course structure with a time allocation of 70/30 for theory/practical. For one participant, the
time allocated represented a tension with the syllabus: “It was designed to be a practical course with a real solid theory element to it but it has become more a theoretical course, which I hear happened in Victoria” (LI1). Participants favoured a time allocation that mirrored the syllabus assessment weightings which was why more time was spent on theory concepts than practicing sport. This participant continued: “It’s becoming way more theoretical as a lot of energy is focused on excellence in the theory exam” (LI1). This emphasis on examination performance had become part of this school’s cultural practice but had also created a new tension: “We get pressure from above to teach and you would be frowned upon if they saw you outside doing a practical” (LI3). ‘Learning in, through and about movement’ was not a feature of practice at this school.

A focus on school performance had seen this school restructure student sport choices to allow student specialisation in their examinable sport. This was partly in reaction to the high external practical scores achieved by students in PSA schools compared to their own: “In specialist sport [PSA] schools, kids reach a level of excellence. Whereas I find it hard with a group learning a sport for the first time to move them to a point where their skills are good enough [for examination]” (LI1). This participant saw specialist sports schools as having an advantage: “Some schools because of their level of expertise, have an advantage and we all want that advantage” (LI1). Consequently, participants described how they adapt the PSA model to gain an advantage in their school: “We assess the kids in their WACE sports and its worth 10% of their school mark. A lot of schools don’t do that” (LI4). This had drawn some criticism from teachers at other schools: “I have had discussion with people saying, ‘That’s not really fair that you do that’ and I say, ‘There is nothing that says that we can’t’” (LI4). Such a practice could be an unintended outcome of having an external practical examination.
Teaching and assessment

Two participants defined their school practice by common teaching programs with fewer investigations and more tests. This was in response to maximising student performance in external examinations: “We have moved away from learning through movement as we struggle with moderation and put more labs in because of the shift in focus to elite athletes” (LI4). This reference to elitism is not a term from the syllabus but an interpretation by two participants in line with their own sport science ideology. Consequently, examination-centric perspectives on practice emerged from interviews, highlighted by this example: “I am not big on investigation tasks because they are not representative of what students are asked to do in WACE examinations” (LI4). This is despite the WACE examination brief in the curriculum policy indicating that students should apply knowledge to various movement scenarios. Another participant reiterated: “Students who have been tested on recalling, recognising what the key components are, are going to be better at their WACE examination” (LI3). In this school, investigations are replaced with in-class, long response examination questions to mirror external examination settings.

Two other participants wanted to be more innovative and less test-centric. One response highlighted this tension:

There is a danger to teach ‘chalk and talk’, we all do it through PowerPoints these days but it is an out-dated way of educating. We have to present it differently because all the push for rigour means people take fewer chances and innovate less (LI1).

Some disconnect between quality teaching and assessment agendas seemed evident. Another participant alluded to a pedagogy that was more towards ‘learning in, through and about movement’ as opposed to direct instruction and testing:

There are two teachers that are quite elitist; we put too much pressure on kids. By teaching it from a practical point of view, it gives kids a chance to learn
naturally and enjoy it more. If kids are enjoying learning then they will learn more effectively (LI2).

However, this participant was bound by common teaching programs at the school that meant that teachers were “teaching the same things at the same time” (LI2) and consequently, were limited in their capacity to innovate and expand teaching repertoires.

**School resources**

**Textbooks** as support materials were seen as crucial school resources but participants highlighted cautions with their use in practice. For example: “I know a colleague was teaching directly from the textbook, chapter after chapter, and that was the way he set up his year. I don’t think that is a healthy way of teaching the course” (LI2). SCSA do not recommend a textbook for the course so the marketplace determines which textbook is used in schools. However, overreliance on textbooks can lead to multiple interpretations of content or the teaching of concepts to greater depth than required. One participant expressed this caution: “To make sure there is enough rigour, teachers want to teach everything instead of what is in the scope and sequence. I had to be disciplined myself and go, ‘I could include this but it’s not actually in the course!’” (LI1). Adhering to the statements in the syllabus rather than following content in textbooks was a prevention against teaching in too much depth.

**The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes**

This section presents the findings for each case study school with respect to the context of longer term policy outcomes. Three themes were identified as such outcomes: the equity of inputs; the equity of outputs; and equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE. While these themes are consistent with those presented in Chapters 5 and 6 (macro and meso levels of the policy trajectory), the sub-themes differ with what
participants at the micro-level (schools) thought were important. Table 7.4 presents a summary of these sub-themes.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Level</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government School</td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between government &amp; PSA schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Fairness of external written examinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity of moderation between schools with increased testing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Resisting practice adopted by other States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic School</td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between all school sectors</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emulate the practice of PSA schools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Fairness of the external written &amp; practical examinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Support for a theory-based WACE course</td>
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<td>• ‘Top-down’ effect of WACE-PES</td>
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<td>Independent School</td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between government &amp; PSA schools</td>
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<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Fairness of external practical examinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Trends towards greater testing</td>
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<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Fear of change to a theory-based WACE course</td>
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<td>• ‘Top-down’ effect of WACE-PES</td>
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**Case study school 1 (Government): Longer term policy outcomes**

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Government School’ on PE curriculum policy outcomes in the longer term.

**The equity of inputs**

Participants at this school perceived a **funding differential between government and PSA schools** as an equity issue with the implementation of WACE-PES curriculum
policy. Greater funding meant better facilities, access to technology and an opportunity to utilise experts in the practical examination area. For example, “PSA schools are a case to themselves. They have what we perceive as an unlimited budget so they will get the best” and “there is an inequity as access to resources isn’t always there in government schools. The facilities, the environment they can create and the availability of technology are easier for them [PSA schools]” (LG1). Another participant also highlighted inequities; “PSA schools have money to throw around. There is a definite disparity with what they can provide and what we can.” (LG2). According to participants, highly funded ‘elite’ private schools also have the capacity to outsource sport in the school curriculum, hire sport specialists to prepare kids for examinations and have the power to choose their own clientele. Most comments came from the HoLA who framed his perspectives around competition. This example again referred to PSA schools:

_They do their practical outside the boundaries of the syllabus. There is a statement in the syllabus that says it’s got to be done within. It is inequitable because they might be delivering 18-20% of the course because they are getting the benefit of that practical component being outsourced, so they can dedicate 4 hours or so to the theory (LG1)._ 

A similar observation was made by another participant over the way PSA schools use external providers to prepare students for the external practical examination: “They are able to outsource a lot. While we grab some coaches for three weeks, they may get coaches for the whole time” (LG2). The collective view at this school was that PSA schools were able to better prepare their students for examinations. However, one participant went further to suggest that some private schools were able to pick and choose their clientele by selecting high performing students: “There’s a perception that some schools in the private sector isolate kids and say, ‘Don’t sit the exam,’ because they will weigh course marks down. These kids then flow into the public sector and that influences our marks” (LG1). Government schools in WA are obliged to enrol students wishing to go to a government school if students live within the designated school boundary.
The equity of outcomes for students

Concerns by participants about the equity of outcomes related to examinations and the subsequent effect on teacher accountability for student performance. Specifically, participant perspectives highlighted tensions over the fairness of external written examinations and the gap between teacher and examiner interpretations of the syllabus.

One participant explained the situation up to 2011:

*I don’t know if we have had a paper yet that has been well received. That is due to the average of just over 40% over the last 4 or 5 years. The standard is 60%. We are questioning why the paper is still 40% after all this time* (LG1).

The 2011 PES external written examination was particularly controversial. According to this participant, examiners claimed teachers were not teaching the course properly or didn’t understand content. This participant described, as a member of the course advisory group, how that examination was challenged: “*The group refused to suggest it was a fair and equitable paper. SCSA looked at that and coerced another group to have a look at the paper and give opinions to see if it reflected the same opinion*” (LG1). While the participant claimed that no feedback from this review was ever received by the course advisory group, written examination papers in subsequent years were considered more favourable as a result of this action. This meant that teachers could account for their own student performance in a more favourable light as course averages increased after 2011, according to participants. However, some gap still existed between teachers and examiners, as highlighted by this participant: “*The gap has been getting closer to what I think but I still don’t know what they want with the depth*” (LG3). Likewise, another participant described how examinations influenced their teaching:

*I am not quite sure what they are looking for. The examination guides what you teach because next year you might change a few things. Each year you look at what examiners have done and try and pre-empt what is going to happen in the next paper* (LG2).
The alignment of examiner and teacher interpretations seemed crucial to teacher accountability for student performance. For example: “While we are becoming more accountable, we are now asking SCSA to be more accountable in terms of the exams” (LG1). This represented a power struggle between teachers and the governing authority, the SCSA.

Achieving consensus between teachers from different schools highlighted tensions with the **equity of moderation between schools with increased testing**. Participants at this school were critical of how teachers in public/private sectors moved to tests at the expense of investigations and how this was not consistent with their own perspectives. For example:

> Some people, in the process of moderation, don’t have a big understanding of the syllabus or have a ‘she’s right’ sort of attitude. They test things that don’t need to be tested or give kids inflated marks for the things that they shouldn’t really give marks for (LG1).

This participant had seen some schools improve their school marks through a manipulation of the assessment framework and this had an effect on the moderation of others. Another participant observed: “I have noticed other schools are doing a lot of tests. That was my biggest surprise. I guess they save time and are easier to create” (LG2). Adding tests at the expense of investigations was seen as unfair when schools that do investigations are compared to those that do all tests: “Is it equitable for me to have 15 tasks that relate to the response area and all marked out of 2%? Is that an equitable form of assessment between schools? I am not so sure!” (LG1). The number of tests representing the response area of the assessment framework in the policy is a school-based decision.
Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE

Participants identified concerns about equity across the different States with the overlay of the Australian Curriculum HPE on the diverse State-based curricula. In particular, participants were resisting practice adopted by other States such as theory-only senior courses and the social-critical or social-cultural content in other courses in Australia. For example: “I have a strong opinion about the practical component. It’s not the ideal model and the testing of it still needs to be refined but the premise behind it is reasonable” (LG1). However, with WA being the only State in Australia with a practical component in its senior school course, participants suggested keeping that component may be a challenge. Other participants elaborated: “My biggest worry is that we will be eastern States dominated” (LG3) and: “I am hoping they listen to teachers and think about our practical component that we need” (LG2). These participants considered the practical aspect of the course and its examination worthwhile.

Participants in this school were also in opposition to social-critical content presented in the Australian Curriculum HPE even though such content included the study of equity issues in physical activity participation. While social-critical content is evident in the curriculum of other States, in WA it was abandoned in Year 11 and 12 PES after 2007. For example: “We’re probably going to be dictated to by the NSW model. I’m not sure that’s the best way. We’ve actually moved in the opposite direction. We’ve been there, gone away and now we have to swing back again?” (LG1). The jettison of social-critical curriculum content in Year 11 and 12 PES after 2007 was in the difficult period of outcomes-based education and a return to such content through the Australian Curriculum HPE may be rejected by WA teachers. This participant explained: “There is going to be an upheaval within schools. Teachers could say, ‘We are not going to do it’ or there will be a loss of high stage WACE courses offered on the timetable” (LG1). From another
participant’s perspective: “People quit teaching because of that fad and I hope they are going to get this one right” (LG3). Participant scepticism about returning to social-critical content in the Australian Curriculum HPE was founded in experiences with Year 11 and 12 PES from 2005 (in draft) to the first examinations in 2008.

Case study school 2 (Catholic): Longer term policy outcomes

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Catholic School’ about longer term curriculum policy outcomes in PE.

The equity of inputs

Funding was a sub-theme identified by participants at this school with regards to the funding differential between all school sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent). Here, one participant explained where they thought the Catholic sector sat in respect to funding inputs:

There is a stigma attached to government schools that they don’t get much funding from the government and could be disadvantaged. The Independent schools have funding and run good courses. The Catholic system falls in the middle; some are funded well like this school, but compared to an Independent school? It’s not the same (LC2).

Participants believed high levels of funding are an advantage to delivering the course. Comparisons with highly funded PSA schools were evident but participants acknowledged there were schools in every sector limited by funding. For example: “It comes down to resources, the smaller or lower socio-economic schools would tend to run something on campus. They wouldn’t have access to a lot of laboratory equipment than perhaps some of the more affluent schools” (LC1). Participants conceded that they tried to secure extra funding to emulate some of the technological equipment that they had observed in PSA or highly funded schools.
What was clear was that participants sought to emulate the practice of PSA schools. Influenced by laboratory-based professional learning provided by UWA, participants were of the view that learning through laboratory activities was the key input to success. For example: “PSA schools are able to have labs which can link to theory” (LC2). Similarly, this participant saw advantages in PSA schools with outsourcing and specialising the practical sport component. This participant added: “I am aware some PSA schools go out and watch their performers in the sport of their choice on a Friday or Saturday” (LC2). This comment implied that PSA schools achieve higher scores because they are able to have students specialise in sport outside of the formal curriculum.

**The equity of outcomes for students**

Tension over the fairness of external written and practical examinations was a major concern for participants and was the result of their students performing poorly in external practical examinations. Two issues were identified: being the reliability of one practical examination against another and whether the criteria used for assessment were valid. In relation to the external practical examination, one participant asked: “How is a touch rugby pass commensurate with a freestyle or breaststroke kick? How do you compare those two things?” (LC2). Similarly, another participant explained:

> When you get assessors going, ‘I don’t agree with these criteria’ because I coach it differently, that’s when you start going, ‘This isn’t the be all and end all. Why are we assessing to these criteria?’ That’s concerning because you have got different interpretations. (LC1).

Participants questioned whether external practical examinations should be part of curriculum policy but this participant was circumspect as he weighed up the merits of attracting students to the course against the equity of the practical examination: “It wouldn’t bother me if the practical went, but kids choose the course because they like sport” (LC1). In response, participants were planning to assess students at school level in the same sport they will choose to do in their external examination.
Teachers at this school became involved as WACE-PES examination markers to better understand the external examination process. From this experience, they also identified tensions with the written external examination. As a marker, one participant recalled a power struggle over answer keys for the external examination in one meeting: “What was interesting about WACE marking was that everyone thought they had a right to voice their opinion. However, there were so many different opinions, there were too many ‘chefs spoiling the broth’. It’s the way questions are interpreted” (LC2). This participant also gave an account of how teachers wanted an item included in a marking key that fitted their own interpretation of the syllabus. A clear advantage can be gained by teachers who participate as external examination markers from those who don’t, but a consistent interpretation adds to the reputation of the course and attracts future students. This point was picked up by this participant who mentioned ‘scaling’ when the course is compared to other subjects: “I hope that SCSA doesn’t see PES as something that gets scaled down every year. If it was to be elevated amongst higher echelon subjects, the landscape would be far brighter” (LC2). The other subjects referred to are the ones with a long examination history in WA like Chemistry and Physics. Participants believed equity issues surrounding the WACE-PES and its examinations would need to be resolved before such status could be achieved.

**Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE**

Two participants at this school expressed **support for a theory-based WACE course** with the overlay of the Australian Curriculum HPE because of the problems with the practical examination. However, the influence of the eastern States was one factor surrounding their perspective: “Victoria has a senior school PE program that doesn’t have practical exams, New South Wales the same. When you have got those two big
States, it’s going to be hard to win that argument” (LC3). A second factor surrounded the practical examination as it exists in WA, as this participant continued: “I am not a huge advocate for the practical examination in its current form so it’s hard to argue to keep it.” (LC1). Similarly, negotiation over the senior school component in the Australian Curriculum HPE would be compromised by problems with the practical examination: “The jury is still out for me on which direction to go because it’s causing a lot of angst and teachers are feeling that a lot of kids are being disadvantaged” (LC3). Therefore, teacher experiences with the practical examination would become pertinent when negotiation to retain it in WACE-PES curriculum policy is undertaken.

In anticipating forthcoming structural changes in WA where Year 7 would move from primary to secondary schools, to bring WA in line with other States for the Australian Curriculum, one participant believed that this policy would encourage a ‘top-down’ effect of WACE in that it would impact teaching in Year 10 or lower. One participant projected: “Now you have six years in secondary school [instead of five years], kids have the opportunity to do WACE courses preparing them for Year 11” (LC1). While there will be some compulsion to teach the Australian Curriculum in Year 10, schools have curriculum flexibility for senior school courses to filter down into Year 10 meaning a ‘top-down’ effect would take place. This participant continued: “Year 10 is senior school. In the Australian Curriculum it’s probably not and that should be an interesting tension” (LC1). The influence of high-stakes examination courses will be a challenge for future curriculum policy decisions.

**Case study school 3 (Independent): Longer term policy outcomes**

This section presents the perspectives of participants from the ‘Independent School’ about PE curriculum policy outcomes.
The equity of inputs

Participants identified the **funding differential between government and PSA schools** as a significant input differential. One participant stated: “We luckily have the finances and the resources” (LI2) and compared this school with the government school in the same region: “I know the government school often struggle for things we get easily, like facilities. We are lucky to be able to get different things, whereas they can’t” (LI2). Funding and facilities were identified as a significant input for providing PE curriculum opportunities to students. This participant also saw a disadvantage for country schools in terms of the facilities and the quality teaching a school could provide: “Certain schools struggle without access to facilities. You would like to think that a kid from the country has the same chance of getting the same mark as a kid from my school, but the reality is inequity” (LI2). This participant based his perception on accounts from teachers at country schools.

As a consequence of school funding, the advantage of PSA members was seen by participants as an inequity in providing curriculum to students. For example: “What PSA schools can do, we can only dream of and yet I am sure there are some low fee, parent controlled schools that are struggling to provide what State schools have” (LI1). However, it was the gap between PSA schools and other schools that concerned participants most: “It is all about resources. Not all schools have the same resources. That’s what is going to create imbalance between schools, to the point where PSA schools have so much” (LI4). Another participant went further, citing PSA schools as having an advantage in the way sport was conducted. This participant implied his school was not able to compete for course success given the resources at hand: “The biggest inequity and
frustration for me was that PSA schools have their own school sport system. Those schools have been greatly advantaged by their systems and that is not fair” (LI3).

The equity of outcomes for students

Participants described tensions over the fairness of external practical examinations as an equity issue. For example: “There have been glitches with the practical and we have given feedback. We are still developing our skills in examining practical content but we have a way to go” (LI1). The perceived subjectivity of the practical examination and the number of people involved in marking seemed to be reasons for discrepancy: “There will always be variation and I don’t think teachers are always objective either, but there has been a few examples for us when we went ‘how did that kid get that mark?’” (LI1). There are two sites of tension, the way teachers derive a school mark and the external examination itself. For another participant, resolving these tensions was necessary for the subject to be respected:

The biggest hurdle to WACE-PES becoming a quality subject is having no discrepancies. We have had students not pick [the course] because their siblings have said it’s too vague. Teachers don’t give marks where they should and in practical exams, a lot of kids get sub-marks. How do you make it equitable? (LI2).

Participants anticipated that subsequent versions of the WACE-PES syllabus would direct teachers to conduct a practical test at school level using the same criteria as the external practical examination in an effort to achieve greater consistency between school and external examination scores.

One participant observed trends towards greater testing in the written and practical areas as teachers sought to achieve consistency between school and external marks. In the practical area of PE curriculum policy, this participant claimed: “We have come away from learning through movement as we struggle with moderation in the practical component of the course” (LI4). The original intention of policy was ‘learning in, through
and about movement’ but, in this participant’s view, this had disappeared. In terms of the written component, this participant considered testing this way: “So many schools are using tests. I didn’t like the assignments that I saw; my viewpoint on assignments is that I don’t like them” and in justifying testing in practice: “Testing and external examinations are asking for similar things” (LI4). Therefore, when comparing the practices at this school with others, this participant concluded: “I have seen assessments from other schools during moderation. I came out of it going, ‘I like our assessments! We are doing well and I like them’” (LI4). An examination-centric approach by schools may have prompted changes to the assessment framework in 2014 which saw a reduction in investigation weighting and a greater proportion of the school mark attributed to tests and examinations.

**Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE**

In regards to the future of the practical examination in a senior school course under the Australian Curriculum HPE, participants were in disagreement as to whether it should be retained. The strongest perspective was given by one participant who was in fear of change to a theory-based WACE course. This participant explained lessons learnt from WACE-PES: “In some ways, a move to greater theory gives greater certainty” (LI1), referring to the controversy surrounding the practical examination. The participant continued: “Resistance has come from people who are concerned about equity or predictability. The new assessment framework has reduced teacher flexibility but you need some predictability and certainty so people can go ahead with confidence” (LI1).

This participant then concluded the following about the future of WACE-PES under a future Australian Curriculum:

*My concern would be we will get an even more theory-centric course imposed on us from over east. What I would like to see in 10, 15, 20 years’ time is a healthy practical component course where teachers have confidence in the standards,*
both internally and externally, but have consistency and predictability. If it is all a theory course, we could just put it in Science” (LI1).

The participant saw the impact of the other States as part of a future debate about senior school curriculum policy in WA.

Finally, one participant described the ‘top-down’ effect of WACE-PES curriculum on Years 7 to 10 as a challenge for future curriculum decisions. For example: “I hope that upper school influences K-10, that we prepare kids to be able to do PE Studies and hopefully go onto a PE career” (LI4). This effect had already begun, as this participant explained: “That’s what we have done. That’s why we do units like biomechanics and physiology in Year 10. We are trying to prepare our kids to deal with [Year12] Stage 3” (LI4). Consequently, the high-stakes examinable course was expected to influence lower school curriculum as schools seek to maximise student performance. This represents a tension between WACE-PES and the Australian Curriculum HPE, not only in the senior school years, but also in lower school curriculum as well.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings at the local (micro) or school level for each of the four contexts of the WACE-PES policy trajectory: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes. In this conclusion, key similarities between themes and differences between sub-themes emerging from the three different schools are highlighted.

Within the context of policy influences, a clash of ideologies was identified by participants at all case study schools between sports science and social-critical perspectives of PE curriculum. However, the different influences on each case study school were related to the roles participants played as policy actors and their professional
proximity to the WA curriculum authority, SCSA. Accountability for school performance seemed to be greater in the Government school in this study, while universities and other policy players had a strong influence in the non-government schools.

With the context of policy text production, participants from the Government school had a greater voice in policy text production because of representation on the course advisory group. However, participants from other schools sought to have input through their involvement as WACE-PES examination markers. From this involvement, different interpretations of the policy text emerged between examiners, textbook writers and teachers themselves. However, Heads of HPE learning areas were seen as major policy actors in interpreting policy at all three schools as they engaged more closely with accountability agendas, than teachers.

Within the context of policy practices, three major themes emerged: WACE course structure; teaching and assessment; and school resources. In WACE course structure, concurrent, topic-based teaching was similar in all case study schools but the time allocated to classroom and physical activity was different. While the Government school was trying to maintain 50% of their allocated time to sport, the other two schools had committed more time to teaching theoretical constructs. The non-government schools had also moved to greater sports specialisation to provide students more time for the sport in which they were to be externally examined. The non-government schools were also more examination-centric with a greater testing regime in place. Little collaboration was evident between schools which appeared to be due to competition over examination results.
With the context of longer term policy outcomes, participants in case study schools highlighted the divide between their schools and highly funded PSA schools. According to participants, PSA schools were able to provide greater curriculum opportunities in WACE-PES because of better resources and facilities. The sporting structure in PSA schools allowed those schools to outsource their practical movement experiences to their school sporting teams, allowing WACE-PES teaching more time for teaching theory concepts. However, participants from the Government school went further by highlighting the differences between public and private school funding, while those participants in non-government schools indicated how they changed their practices to try to compete with PSA schools. Furthermore, tensions were identified over the written examination, the practical examination and moderation. The written examination was a major issue for the Government school in this study arising out of tensions between teachers and examiners and their different interpretations of the syllabus. The practical examinations were an issue for non-Government schools in this study because school marks were higher than external marks and were moderated down. Both issues are seen through the lens of participants concerned with student performance scores and competition between schools.

Chapter Eight is a meta-analysis along the policy trajectory from macro (national) to meso (State) to micro (school) levels. It forms the synthesis of findings that have been presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.
CHAPTER EIGHT
META-ANALYSIS ALONG THE POLICY TRAJECTORY
AND DISCUSSION: GLOBAL TO LOCAL LEVELS

Introduction
The primary focus of this study is Western Australia Certificate of Education - Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) with a strong emphasis on the State and local (school) levels of this policy trajectory. However, the Australian Curriculum - Health and Physical Education (HPE) has had such a significant influence on curriculum policy in WA during the period under investigation (2005 to 2015) that the policy trajectory analysis was extended to the national level. This chapter draws together a meta-analysis of the findings along the whole trajectory which extends between the global level influences and the local (schools) level practices.

As part of this meta-analysis, critical theory was employed to examine patterns in relation to power, resistance, conformativity, struggle and social justice (Crotty, 1998; Giroux, 2003; Simmons, Olssen & Peters, 2009), with particular attention given to the interrelationships between agency, people and movements (Apple, 2011). This chapter explicitly links the findings of this study back to the literature outlined in Chapter Three and develops theoretical propositions for each research question as ‘food for thought’ in settings beyond the specific contexts of this research. The specific contexts that generated the data in this study are explained in detail in the findings chapters so that readers can make their own judgements about potential relevance to Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy in other settings. As with the rest of this thesis, the structure of this chapter is organised around the four contexts of the policy trajectory: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes.
The Context of Influences along the Policy Trajectory

Research Question 1:
What were the wider influences acting to initiate senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015?

To inform this meta-analysis, significant themes and sub-themes in the context of influences are identified in Table 8.1. That table (overleaf) highlights major similarities and differences in the findings from data collected along the policy trajectory at national, State and local (school) levels. It must be noted that this analysis includes global influences, revealed by participants, which increasingly impact on national, State and local levels of policy processes as globalisation accelerates.

In the data from participants along the national to local curriculum policy trajectory there were strong similarities in the themes relating to influences, but more differences were revealed in the sub-themes. In making comparisons and contrasts along the policy trajectory, four significant meta-themes emerged about ‘influences’: tensions between national and State government policy agendas; ideological tensions between social-critical and rescientised approaches in PE curriculum; accountability tensions between internal (school) assessment and external (State and national) examinations; and competitive tensions between public and private providers. It must be highlighted that all meta-themes were interrelated, although they were separated for analytic convenience.
Table 8.1

**Context of Influence**: Major themes and sub-themes revealed by participants along the curriculum policy trajectory (national-State-local).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Trajectory</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Level</strong></td>
<td>• New federalism</td>
<td>• National approach to curriculum &amp; schooling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• ‘Learning in, through &amp; about movement’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social-critical approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Level</strong></td>
<td>• New federalism</td>
<td>• New curriculum pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Nationally consistent approach to standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Rescientisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• External examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School-based assessment &amp; moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Level:</strong> Government School</td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rescientisation (teacher influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Measurability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Standardisation through moderation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Competition in education markets</td>
<td>• Between government schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Rescientisation (university influence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Impact of external examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition in education markets</td>
<td>• Textbooks as political interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Competition with Private Schools Association (PSA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent School</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum trends in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Clash of ideologies</td>
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<td>• Rescientisation (university influence)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accountability</td>
<td>• Impact of external examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pathways in Physical Education</td>
<td>• Pathway to university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the meta-themes which were identified as tensions within the ‘context of policy influences’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-Critical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rescientised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal (school) assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td>External (State &amp; national) assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public providers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8.1. Meta-themes: A series of tensions within the ‘context of policy influences’ in schools as revealed by participants along the PE policy trajectory in the Australian settings studied.**

These tensions are discussed below in relation to both the findings of this study and the relevant literature.

**Tensions between national and State government policy agendas**

As a consequence of federalism in Australia, tensions were evident between national (Federal) and State government educational policy. Intergovernmental (national and State) cooperation resulted in the Melbourne Declaration in 2008, which formed the basis for the Australian Curriculum. However, with later changes in the political parties in government, both at Federal and State levels, this cooperation was soon subsiding and subsequent Federal coercion, including the use of financial policy levers in attempting to dominate the States (like the Gonski funding reforms), was evident to many participants in this study. Importantly, with declining intergovernmental cooperation, the States began to reassert their control over curriculum, especially in senior school (Years 11 and 12) courses which have remained a strong bastion of their control. In WA, power resides with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) in the regulation of standards.
through syllabus development, moderation and assessment. State (WA) level participants in this study explained how the intent of WACE-PES was not only to focus on Years 11 and 12, but also to influence curriculum change in Years 7 to 10, thereby demonstrating a degree of parochialism that was contrary to the national agenda. This has led to tensions between the assessment and examination focus of senior schooling in WA on the one hand and the Australian Curriculum HPE target of lower secondary years on the other.

The literature has also reported national-State curriculum policy tensions. In an appraisal of educational policy in WA, Marsh (2011) concluded that WA remained sceptical about the politics of policies emanating from the Federal government. Referring to a national curriculum, he claimed that senior education officials in WA were not prepared to accept it regardless of its pedagogical benefits, thereby highlighting State parochialism or distrust of external intervention. This was consistent with trends seen in other States as revealed in a review of the Australian Curriculum conducted by the Coalition Federal Government elected in 2013 (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014). In commenting on this review, Lingard (2014) saw little commitment by the States and Territories to the Australian Curriculum and attributed this to the States expressing more independent views about curriculum policy. Consequently, Lingard concluded that federalism was ‘under review’ as national and State tensions played out within varied policy contexts. Tensions around the gap between the intended goals of curriculum policy from the national level and what is enacted through schooling in Australia at the State level, were noted in the literature elsewhere (e.g. Allen, 2015; Reid, 2011b). This gap is attributed to contrasts between the public purposes of education and the standards settings introduced by regulatory authorities, especially when high-stakes examinations were involved (Collins, 2011; Reid, 2011b; Reid, Cranston, Keating & Mulford, 2011). In observing these trends in a range of developed countries, Apple (2008) concluded that this tension
had been caused by neo-conservative or neoliberal policy agendas and the push to measure and compare the performance of education institutions.

**Ideological tensions between social-critical and rescientised approaches in PE curriculum**

Ideological tensions embedded in PE curriculum policy emerged between a social-critical perspective and a renewed emphasis on scientific knowledge (a ‘rescientised’ approach). This ideological tension was most prominent at the intersection of the Australian Curriculum HPE (national level) and WACE-PES (State level) in the second decade of the 21st century. The Australian Curriculum HPE represented a socially progressive curriculum based on contemporary notions of PE for Foundation (pre-primary) to Year 10, while WACE-PES for Year 11 and 12 had become rescientised. Two factors seemed to be at play here in WA: the prevailing science perspectives of policy actors which serve to define the subject; and the emerging neoliberal ideas in schools that reinforced those perspectives because of the more readily measurable science-based understandings. Neoliberal ideology dominated the discourses and favoured scientific knowledge over other forms of knowledge.

In the literature, the rise of ideological tensions was linked to the different purposes of curriculum policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Tsolidis, 2011; Vickers, 2013). In noting trends seen in Australia and worldwide, Yates (2013) believed education was becoming strongly influenced by ‘measurable outcomes’ which could be compared nationally and internationally, and consequently there was growing disharmony between the social and cultural goals of education and the economic imperatives of nations (Grumet & Yates, 2011). This can be seen in respect to PE curriculum in a number of countries especially where social-critical approaches to PE were introduced. Commenting on PE trends in
England and Wales, Apple (2003) described how the neoliberal discourses of competition and accountability had strengthened conservative educational positions, returning the subject back to its traditional roots of a scientised ideology. This was also evident in a recent study of PE curriculum in Ireland where Coulter and Ní Chróinín (2013) found that sports-based ideologies dominated, causing the authors to question whether key policy actors could move beyond them. It is for these reasons, Enright and O’Sullivan (2012; p.255) encouraged teachers to “challenge formal Physical Education curricular boundaries” to provide students with a more meaningful PE experience.

A social-critical approach had been promoted in the literature as a way to steer the subject away from its traditions (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Giroux, 2003; Penney & Chandler, 2000) and indeed, early versions of WACE-PES attempted to do so. However, the curriculum policy’s return to traditional sub-disciplines of sports science is consistent with PE curriculum trends in other States of Australia. For example, in analysis of PE curriculum in New South Wales, Cliff (2012) reported the marginalisation of social-cultural and social-critical perspectives in favour of science perspectives. Similarly, Brown and Penney (2013) examined senior school PE in Victoria and saw a leaning towards science or biophysical ‘ways of knowing’ which marginalised other perspectives (such as socio-critical) in the curriculum. Attempts to distance PE from its traditional roots by introducing social-critical or social-cultural curriculum perspectives have largely been unsuccessful (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Penney & Chandler, 2000), possibly due to neoliberalism and its emphasis on measurability. Connell (2013a) asserted that neoliberal policy encourages its own knowledge base and does not allow other kinds of knowledge to enter the agenda. This is particularly poignant with the high-stakes assessment and competition in senior schooling, which Collins (2011) saw as influencing curriculum policy from the top (senior school), downwards (Years 7 to 10) in Australia.
Accountability tensions between internal (schools) assessment and external (State and national) examinations

Increasing accountability of schools was a feature often observed by participants in this study. In particular, growing accountability has caused tensions between internal (school) assessment and external (State & national) examinations, in the pursuit of consistent standards and better comparability of teacher assessment and student performance. This was reflected in the WACE-PES syllabus through tighter assessment policy settings, with a greater emphasis on external accountability through invigilated tests and examinations that prepare students for high-stakes external examinations. This growing emphasis on external accountability can be seen in the findings through: the Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) and the comparison of school performance (national level); the moderation and tightening of WACE assessment parameters by SCSA (State level); and the comparisons of WACE course performance between schools (local level). The push towards consistently high standards and the introduction of the ATAR has meant that school performance across Australia is increasingly compared in the public domain. Consequently, at State level, WACE-PES course performance is compared between schools, having a flow-on effect to the local level, and resulting in greater accountability of teachers across all school sectors. The findings also show how rising external accountability causes tensions over testing, standardisation, moderation, consistency; the tightening of assessment schedules by the State (SCSA); and the comparative performance of case study schools with highly funded Private Schools Association (PSA) institutions.

The effect of rising accountability in education is well documented in the literature and is often associated with neoliberal ideologies underpinning national standards, leading to
performativity and surveillance (Ozga, 2009; Spring, 2008; Taylor Webb, 2005; White, 2010). Importantly, the State constrains and controls teachers’ work through accountability mechanisms using prescriptive content and assessment frameworks (Connell, 2013a; Keddie, 2015; Ranson, 2003). In effect, rising external accountability imposes an ‘audit culture’, one where performance is judged in quantifiable terms and to which the high-stakes examinations in senior schooling contribute (Grumet & Yates, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Yates (2011) attributed this trend to: a priority to economic goals; vocational inadequacy; retention and expansion of university participation; and competition on university entrance scores. Tensions emanating from these goals show the struggle between the economic imperatives of the nation and the social-cultural goals of education (Reid, Cranston, Keating & Mulford, 2011). Senior school curriculum policy has had influence over the entire curriculum (Penney, 2010; Reid, 2011a) in a ‘trickle-down’ effect and its intentions shape the way curriculum policy is articulated and promoted (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Consequently, tensions arise between schools and policy makers as policy is contested and struggles play out in each policy context (Apple 2011), especially when teachers and schools compete in a new market place. Assessment continues to be the greater challenge for PE due to the uncertainties surrounding how success is viewed in the subject (O’Sullivan, 2013) and this adds greater complexity to the tensions surrounding what is driving the assessment agenda.

**Competitive tensions between public and private providers**

New competitive tensions between public and private education providers have emerged, especially at the local (schools) level. While findings pointed to competitive tensions between States and between courses within a State, particularly for the enrolment of students, it was within case study schools that participants particularly noted public/private competitive tensions. These tensions included: case study schools
comparing school performance against highly funded PSA (private) schools; the provision of resources and professional learning by universities and PSA schools; and the outsourcing of practical examination preparation to private providers. Private providers have considerable power to influence both the syllabus and syllabus delivery. Consequently, the division between the public and private domains of policy becomes blurred as curriculum is negotiated and refined. Content knowledge appeared market driven, representing another facet of emerging neoliberal influence impacting upon WACE-PES curriculum policy.

Public and private competitive tensions in education are increasingly reported in the literature. Commenting specifically on PE in Australia, Macdonald (2015) saw new providers as being able to broker knowledge and have a profound influence on curriculum policy. To be a knowledge broker also meant status, and schools with status have an enhanced ability to attract students in a competitive market (Welch, 2013). In this light, markets and private partnerships treat students and staff as consumers as schools seek competitive advantage (Mathis, 2011; Reid, 2011b; Welch 2013). Schools become subjected to market accountabilities, involving a variety of providers and causing the system to be patchy and diverse (Ball, 2012). In effect, Ball asserted that education turns a full circle from what it was in the 1800s with a “patchwork of providers with enhanced institutional autonomies” (Ball, 2012, p.89). To achieve a ‘market edge’, schools engage in competitive behaviours in the marketplace to enhance their school performance and status.

Overall, the four meta-themes identified in relation to ‘influences’ on Physical Education curriculum policy (Figure 8.1) capture the extensive and often conflicting influences over WACE-PES curriculum policy. Neoliberalism has been a dominant discourse influencing
curriculum policy not only in WA, but as the literature revealed, in wider settings with accelerating globalisation. In relation to PE it has been argued that neoliberalism privileges the development of particular forms of PE curriculum policy (Tinning, 2012) and marginalises other ‘ways of knowing’ (Brown & Penney, 2013). In general terms, neoliberalism has been criticised for narrowing educational vision (Connell, 2013a) and treating students as consumers or potential workers (Mathis, 2011). Reid (2011a), in asking what kind of PE serves a neoliberal agenda, concluded that it is one similar to the nineteenth century in preparing fit workers for the labour market. However, as Macdonald (2014) stated, the discourse of neoliberalism and its “seductive paths to excellence” (p.496) are highly influential upon PE curriculum policy.

The following propositions have been developed from the findings about policy influences.

Propositions: The Context of Influences

1. Neoliberalism has been a powerful overarching ideology influencing curriculum policy discourses in Physical Education in the Australian settings studied.

2. The differential power of various stakeholder groups to influence Physical Education curriculum policy, in the Australia settings studied, has created tensions over the decade of 2005 to 2015, including:

   - Tensions between national and State policy agendas;
   - Ideological tensions, especially between socio-critical and rescientised perspectives;
   - Accountability tensions between internal (school) assessment and external (State and national) examinations; and
   - Competitive tensions between public and private education providers.
The Context of Policy Text Production along the Policy Trajectory

Research Question 2:

What were the main characteristics of the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy texts in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and how were these texts produced?

This section analyses the main characteristics of the curriculum policy text production along the policy trajectory (national-State-local) in Australian settings during the period of 2005 to 2015. Again, the main focus is on State (WA) and local (schools) levels of WACE-PES curriculum policy, but the Australian Curriculum HPE at the national level has interacted significantly with the State and local policy texts, yielding complex dynamics in policy processes at all levels. Table 8.2 (overleaf) is a summary of the key themes and sub-themes stemming from the findings about policy texts along the policy trajectory between national, State and local levels.

At the national and State levels, the major differences were more between the themes, but at the local school level, the major differences were between the sub-themes. It is important to note at this point that these themes and sub-themes capture the ongoing evolution of policy text production over the period of a decade, highlighting the complex policy processes involved.
Table 8.2  
**Context of Policy Text Production:** Major themes and sub-themes revealed by participants along the policy trajectory (national-State-local).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Trajectory</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Level</strong></td>
<td>• Equity</td>
<td>• Accessibility to all students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Entitlement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td>• Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy intentions &amp; quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Jurisdictions are quality controllers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dominance of social-critical discourses</td>
<td>• The professional association</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shaping papers &amp; draft texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The role of the professional association</td>
<td>• Advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Writer &amp; advisory groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Level</strong></td>
<td>• Rescientised discourses</td>
<td>• A return to science-based, sub-disciplines</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clarity of content, skills &amp; understandings for assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td>• Return to traditional assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The power of the State dictates</td>
<td>• The power of State (WA) Government</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• SCSA (curriculum authority)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Policy consultation</td>
<td>• Reference group</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Course advisory group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Level:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Government School</strong></td>
<td>• Relevance to physical activity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The practical component</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Range in assessment policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The new policy elite: course advisory group</td>
<td>• SCSA Project Officer, selected teachers, academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Head of Learning Area (schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• Course advisory group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Consensus moderation meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School</strong></td>
<td>• Relevance to sports science</td>
<td>• The practical component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Range in assessment policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of administrators &amp; interest groups</td>
<td>• Head of Learning Area (schools)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Textbook writers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• As WACE markers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Consensus moderation meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent School</strong></td>
<td>• Relevance to sports science</td>
<td>• The practical component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explicitness of content statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of interest groups &amp; administrators</td>
<td>• Textbook writers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher participation in quality processes</td>
<td>• As WACE markers</td>
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In comparing and contrasting the major themes and sub-themes for PE curriculum policy text production, a number of key tensions emerged which formed the meta-themes along the policy trajectory. These meta-themes and their associated tensions are depicted in Figure 8.2: **curriculum policy intentions; the relative power of discourses in PE texts;** and **consultation processes.** While these three meta-themes are closely interrelated, they have been separated for analytic purposes.

Each of these meta-themes and tensions in relation to policy text production will now be discussed.

**Curriculum policy intentions: Equity and quality**

A major tension evident from the findings was the curriculum policy intentions (as expressed in policy texts) between the goals of equity and quality. On the one hand, policy texts articulate an intention of enhancing quality (especially standards) as well as equity for all students despite geographic location, ethnicity, gender or the socio-economic status. On the other hand, equity is clouded by competing definitions (e.g. equity of inputs or outcomes), and in some instances changed by the quality settings communicated in the policy text. This was part of an evolving dynamic over time, including a shift in balance.
away from equity concerns towards quality and standards settings to increase international competitiveness.

Tensions between equity and quality agendas have been symptomatic of government intentions over PE curriculum policy. At the national level, the Australian Curriculum HPE has a strong emphasis on equity, as was intended by the then Federal Labor Government’s purpose when setting up ACARA and the Australian Curriculum. At State level, equity featured strongly in the rationale of early versions of the WACE-PES course syllabus, but as policy was contested and changed, a greater emphasis was also placed on standards. That is, intentions over equity appeared to be overpowered by quality and standards agendas, despite governments claiming to achieve greater equity through markets and competition.

Similar tensions were reported in the literature regarding the changing dynamic between equity and quality (standards). Commenting on curriculum in Australia, Yates, Collins and O’Connor (2011) identified how the management of equity and diversity in the context of heightened competitiveness was a major challenge. They raised issues in light of this challenge; the purposes of senior schooling and how schooling caters for diversity and specialisation. They emphasised that curriculum ought to be about ideas and values and not just measurement, and highlighted that equity and excellence (quality) should not be in opposition to each other. However, Reid (2011b) saw the quality and standards agenda as counterproductive to equity goals even though governments claim to address them through neoliberal reform. For example, in an analysis of the Australian Curriculum, Reid (2011a) observed a lack of alignment between the intentions of education policy and the strategies designed to achieve them. These strategies are those of standards and competition in the education marketplace, something which Yates (2013) believed
embeds its own failure and creates pressure to preserve advantage rather than address disadvantage.

The shift in the dynamic towards quality and standards has been associated with a re-emphasis on assessment policy. This was not lost on Penney (2013a) who viewed assessment in senior school PE as a key driver or impeder of the curriculum-pedagogy-assessment dynamic. With a focus on assessment, different values are promoted that drive curriculum and delimit the scope of freedom within schools (Collins, 2011). Assessment creates a different orientation to curriculum decision-making (Grumet & Yates, 2011) by changing the dynamic between equity and quality. In an analysis of the role assessment played in senior secondary curriculum reform in WA, Leggett and White (2011) observed how teacher resistance to an outcomes-based approach was borne out of a lack of clarity about content and assessment. The approach required teachers to adopt a new discourse in assessment with which they were not familiar. However, as Leggett and White (2011) point out, the Australian Curriculum was not dissimilar to the outcomes-based approach which drove curriculum reform in WA in the first decade of the 21st century. As the States increasingly exercise control over the way curriculum is implemented (Lingard, 2014), WA is not expected to return to outcomes assessment regimes because of the overwhelming rejection of an outcomes model in that State.

*The relative power of discourses in PE texts: Social-critical and rescientised Ideologies*

A second tension evident in the findings derives from the changing emphasis between social-critical discourses and rescientised discourses in PE policy texts in the 2000s. The authority given to a discourse is related to the changing power of different stakeholder groups over time; that is, those who were instrumental in promoting a discourse within
the realms of policy text intentions. The Australian Curriculum HPE is an example of a curriculum which promotes a social-critical discourse, and which has a clear epistemological impact on what knowledge matters in PE. This discourse was also evident in early versions of the WACE-PES policy documents but as new influential stakeholder groups emerged, WACE-PES curriculum policy was contested and rescientised discourses became more powerful in line with a changing emphasis on quality (standards). Consequently, the social-critical discourse that underpinned curriculum policy texts at the national level are in tension with the rescientised discourse that dominates WACE-PES and, this has resulted in a political power struggle over knowledge in PE.

The literature highlights ideological struggles over curriculum policy texts. One example is the struggle over which knowledge is to be valued and how policy players are located within different logics of practice, such as the logic of markets and competition or social equity (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The Australian Curriculum HPE and the first version of WACE-PES are curriculum examples of what Vickers (2013) referred to, in general, as a curriculum based on social constructionism. Here, knowledge derives meaning from specific cultural contexts and is usually characterised by a critical pedagogy. This type of curriculum represents one philosophical position about knowledge, which in the case of WACE-PES, was contested and displaced in favour of a more conservative, discipline-based knowledge akin to the subject’s traditions. As Vickers highlighted, these conservative philosophical positions view knowledge as stable and legitimate to the point that it should not be contested. This represents a point of tension between Australian national curriculum documents and those policy texts developed by the States (Collins & Yates, 2011; Vickers, 2013).
Apple (2003) commented on how documents are recontextualised at every stage of the policy production process. In the recontextualisation of WACE-PES, the discursive change over time is reflective of the changing power of different stakeholder groups. Penney (2013b) observed curriculum development as a complex network of agencies and people who reconfigure discursive relations to the point where shifts in discourses and practices are legitimised, promoted or marginalised. For example, in a comparison of senior school PE across Australia, Brown and Penney (2013) observed the tensions between the intended purposes of education which they considered intrinsic and worthwhile, with schooling that was described as extrinsic and instrumental. This reflected the struggle between progressive discourses and those associated with high-stakes assessment in senior school (Penney, 2013a) or the neoliberal influences of key stakeholders. Consequently, powerful discursive relations at every stage of the policy production process give particular discourses power and authority (Jung, Pope & Kirk, 2015; Penney, 2013a), something that can be witnessed in curriculum policy text production for WACE-PES. This shift in balance from a social-critical discourse to a rescientised discourse is explicitly linked to the next tension, that of the degree of consultation in the policy production process and how different levels of government can influence this discursive landscape.

**Consultation processes: Government policy elite and teacher participation**

Tensions about consultation were evident in the findings between the ‘top-down’ processes of the government policy elite and the ‘bottom-up’ processes with teacher participation in policy text production. Along this continuum are various stakeholders who, at different points in time, have had input into the consultation process. Here, the government policy elite consists of policy actors within curriculum authorities such as SCSA at the State level or ACARA at the national level, who set and control policy
settings. In WA, power resided with SCSA and its advisory group, and while the intention was to consult widely, consultation appeared limited or filtered through the regulatory body. Nevertheless, evidence from the data suggested that teachers in this study were in favour of moving the curriculum to a science-based approach, and it was unclear if other curriculum approaches were advanced. Once curriculum content reform was established, the role of advisory groups waned and SCSA’s focus shifted towards improving standards through tighter assessment and regulatory parameters. Teachers wanting to have input into the policy production process took roles as examination writers or markers to have closer access to policy makers. Clearly, to be a member of the policy elite was a privileged position because it enabled members to advance their own agenda and ideologies in policy text production. A divide existed between those stakeholders who were considered privileged and those who were not, especially when competition between schools over course performance was paramount. As accountability pressures increased, ‘top-down’ policy text production dominated as the State resumed greater control through quality (standards) agendas.

The literature drew attention to similar trends of state-controlled or state-dominated policy processes where invigilated assessment regimes have become the norm. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) pointed to a new relationship between the context of policy production and the context of policy practice where the state is “steering at a distance” (p.119) using performance and testing measures as a new form accountability. Similarly, centralised decision-making was a theme taken up by Marsh (2011) in an analysis of curriculum processes in WA. Marsh (2011) highlighted a diffusion model, where a superordinate group creates ‘knowledge’ then persuades others to make decisions. It is then the role of the subordinate group to implement and communicate those decisions. At first glance, some evidence of ‘bottom-up’ processes identified in this study contradicts this, but with
SCSA recruiting its own members to a consultative group and not reinvigorating that group over time, there is an argument that consultation for WACE-PES is consistent with Marsh’s (2011) observations about steerage from ‘the top’. Certainly, this study confirms that consultation processes became more ‘top-down’ after 2012 and while teachers were considered central to curriculum reform, their work was manipulated through tighter assessment regimes and a greater emphasis on testing. In other words, teacher work is controlled through assessment and accountability structures typical of a neoliberal agenda (Connell, 2013a). However, in the study reported in this thesis, where ‘integration’ was intended, segmentalised action existed and where individualised learning was encouraged, ‘content knowledge’ was imparted by mass production. Participants indicated that content knowledge was taught through PowerPoints then tested with little value given to critical inquiry. Furthermore, theoretical knowledge appeared divorced from the practical movement experiences of students and clearly this was seen in each of case study schools with WACE-PES. Macdonald (2015) suggested that this has the potential to hinder policy development and consequently, teachers abandon aspirations to be creative and intellectual knowledge brokers as they become more circumscribed in the curriculum policy production process.

Three significant meta-themes emerged relating to tensions in policy text production (Figure 8.2). These meta-themes capture the often complex and divisive tensions operating in policy text production explaining how struggles and political contestation are the result of discursive networks that promote or marginalise a particular view of curriculum. While this study has centred on WACE-PES curriculum policy, the intersection with the Australian Curriculum HPE has heightened complexity in the dynamics between agencies and individuals as they engage with policy text production. These tensions have resonated with policy actors embedded in other education policies,
such as those policies related to school competition and the marketisation of school curriculum. From the tensions highlighted in the meta-themes, the following proposition emerged within the context of policy text production.

**Proposition: The Context of Policy Text Production**

3. Physical Education policy text production, in the Australian settings studied, is characterised by struggles and political contestation at every stage of the policy production process, leading to tensions over:

- Curriculum policy intentions, particularly between equity and quality agendas;
- The changing balance of power in Physical Education policy texts between social-critical and rescientised discourses;
- The degree of ‘top-down’ (dominated by the policy elite) or ‘bottom-up’ (consultation with teachers) in policy production processes.

**The Context of Policy Practices along the Policy Trajectory**

Research Question 3:

How were teachers enacting the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in case study schools in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and why?

This section is a meta-analysis of the findings for the context of policy practices along the policy trajectory. To aid this analysis, the major themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 8.3 (overleaf) showing the similarities and differences between the different levels of the policy trajectory as well as between case study schools. Although the themes that emerged were similar, some significant differences occurred between the sub-themes across schools.
**Table 8.3**

*Context of Policy Practices*: Major themes and sub-themes in schools as revealed by participants along the policy trajectory (national-State-local).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Trajectory</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| National Level    | • School resources | • Support materials  
|                   |        | • Financial resources & infrastructure  
|                   |        | • Localised networks  
|                   | • Teacher engagement with change | • Adapting to new policy directions  
|                   |        | • New teaching strategies |
| State Level       | • School resources | • Localised support materials  
|                   |        | • Financial resources & infrastructure differences  
|                   |        | • Problems with harnessing human capital  
|                   | • Teacher engagement with change | • Connecting school practice with a new external examination  
|                   |        | • New teaching strategies |
|                   | • Teacher accountability | • Aligning school practice with syllabus intent  
|                   |        | • Student assessment |
| Local Level:      | • WACE course structure | • Concurrent topic-based teaching  
| Government School |        | • Time allocation 50/50 for theory/practical  
|                   |        | • Balance between specialised & unspecialised sports  
|                   | • Teaching & assessment | • Clash between curriculum intent & school accountability  
|                   | • School resources | • Competition & the lack of sharing between schools |
| Catholic School   | • WACE course structure | • Concurrent topic-based teaching  
|                   |        | • Time allocation 70/30 for theory/practical  
|                   |        | • Moving towards sports specialisation  
|                   | • Teaching & assessment | • Examination & test-centric  
|                   | • School resources | • Textbooks  
|                   |        | • Limited teacher collaboration at consensus moderation meetings |
| Independent School | • WACE course structure | • Concurrent topic-based teaching  
|                   |        | • Time allocation 70/30 for theory/practical  
|                   |        | • Student specialisation in their examinable sport  
|                   | • Teaching & assessment | • Common teaching programs, fewer investigations & more tests  
|                   | • School resources | • Textbooks |
The comparisons between themes and sub-themes have generated three significant meta-themes for the context of policy practices that are depicted in Figure 8.3: **resourcing support for schools; WACE syllabus and classroom pedagogy;** and **WACE assessment.** These meta-themes have revealed tensions between the intentions and the enactment of WACE-PES curriculum policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>resourcing support for schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centralised government</td>
<td>→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WACE syllabus &amp; classroom pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential (movement integrated, unspecialised)</td>
<td>↔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concurrent (topic led, specialised)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WACE assessment types</td>
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<tr>
<td>Range of assessment types</td>
<td>↔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased examinations &amp; testing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8.3. *Meta-themes: A series of tensions within the ‘context of policy practices’ in schools as revealed by participants along the PE policy trajectory in the Australian settings studied.*

Each of these meta-themes and tensions for the context of policy practices will now be discussed.

**Resourcing support for schools: Centralised government versus localised networks**

A tension was revealed in the findings between a centralised model of resourcing schools and the use of localised networks for the sharing of support materials, professional learning and local infrastructure. Notably, a new curriculum like the Australian Curriculum HPE has a degree of centralised support through ACARA and the national professional organisation, ACHPER, in providing support materials and exemplars. However, within the States and Territories, a more devolved and localised model of resourcing was evident. This had coincided with a decline in personnel representing HPE
in education departments and sector organisations across Australia. Decisions about resourcing were devolved to schools for the purpose of implementing curriculum for local conditions. However, in a climate of neoliberalism where competition between schools has been heightened, a local network model of resource sharing could be seen as problematic. Furthermore, the tension between centralised resourcing and localised networks in WA was exacerbated by criticism from the curriculum authority, SCSA, about narrow classroom practices observed in schools. Also, importantly, financial resources and infrastructure differences appear to exist between the highly funded, resource-rich schools and others, and since schools are increasingly shaped by practices that give them a competitive edge, these practices are not shared in local school networks as part of a wider professional learning model.

In the literature, the move by systems and sectors to create localised networks is part of a wider agenda of self-determination within the realm of a market ideology. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) described this phenomena as moving from bureaucratic hierarchies to horizontal relationships in an effort to decentralise power. However, these networks are loosely coupled and subjected to cellular politics, leaving teachers to act in ways that are positioned by political and policy discourses (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). In this study, genuine collaboration between schools was not evident because of the political nuances of competition. This supports Keddie’s (2015) observations about school and professional segregation, and while network collaborations have potential, she believed they represent uncertainty, complexity and inequity for schools. She argued that governance was more likely to be exclusive rather than inclusive in networks such as these.

Teachers and practices are influenced by a myriad of policies and decisions in their schools. Teachers shape policy and policies shape teachers (Ball, Maguire & Braun,
For example, education discourses have focused more on curriculum and evaluation than pedagogy in recent decades (Lingard & Keddie, 2013) and this has implications for pedagogy and curriculum coverage in a climate of high-stakes testing (Stobart, 2008). Furthermore, curriculum policy has tended to shift from school effectiveness to teacher effectiveness as a consequence (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). In part, teachers become what Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) describe as ‘transactors’ because they are required to evidence policy activity and its effects. Consequently, the political discourse of empowering local sites has produced a “pedagogy of sameness” (Lingard & Keddie, 2013, p.433) because teachers make practice decisions centred on success in examinations. The case study schools reflected this notion; that is, teachers focused on the technical aspects of the curriculum rather than being intellectual and creative (Macdonald, 2014). In another study examining success in senior school PE courses, Bowes and Tinning (2015) found that teachers working collaboratively in local networks can affirm aspects of current practice while challenging them to explore new pedagogies. Collegiality is seen as crucial to the success of these networks where democratic participation of all stakeholders is a priority (Keddie, 2015). However, the more power being exercised from ‘above’ a local network, the less scope for educational encounter and the sharing of knowledge and pedagogy (Connell, 2013b), something which was observed in this study on WACE-PES.

**WACE syllabus and classroom pedagogy: Sequential versus concurrent**

In this study, tensions were evident between the ‘intended’ curriculum espoused in the syllabus and the ‘actual’ curriculum, as defined by practice in case study schools. The intended curriculum for WACE-PES was one which is sequential, underpinned by the integration of student movement experiences with conceptual understandings. ‘Learning in, through and about movement’ was seen as central to the enactment of a course with a
less specialised sports structure. However, the actual curriculum was more often reported by participants as one that was concurrent, topic-based and specialised, geared towards the external examinations. This difference between the intended and actual curriculum was indicative of the overarching tensions between social-critical approaches in PE and more conservative, rationalistic styles of curriculum delivery. As the WACE-PES syllabus evolved, more concurrent teaching dominated in line with the rescientification of syllabus content, tighter assessment parameters and an emphasis on external examinations. Policy enactment appeared narrow and homogenised with little difference in classroom practice between schools and sectors. Power seemed to rest with the proponents of traditional forms of PE knowledge and their associated curriculum delivery, as neoliberal discourses dominate conceptualisations of school success.

There are similar examples in the literature that highlight the distinctions between the intended and the enacted curriculum (Vickers, 2013). Connell (2013a), in commenting on neoliberal policy regimes in schools, emphasised that neoliberalism produces its own knowledge base at the expense of other forms of knowledge. This was the case with WACE-PES, as traditional forms of knowledge remain legitimised, dominant and totally unchallenged. In referring to senior secondary PE in Australia, Penney (2013b) saw new curriculum developments as redefining what constitutes legitimate knowledge and pedagogic action. However, in the study reported in this thesis, where ‘integration’ was intended, segmentalised action existed and where individualised learning was encouraged, ‘content knowledge’ was imparted by mass production. Little critical evaluation was evident. Theoretical knowledge was divorced from the practical movement experiences of students and clearly this was seen in case study schools with WACE-PES. As Brown (2013b) pointed out, making meaning through movement is quintessential to the experiences of the PE learner and must be afforded greater status in
the curriculum. However, teachers rarely move beyond the initial implementation of any new ideas and policies (Goodyear, Casey & Kirk, 2016). So, for teachers to challenge existing traditional forms of knowledge is to confront the very nature of neoliberal ideals by changing the pedagogy-assessment construct. In the literature this is referred to as ‘pedagogical or practical activism’ (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2012; Kirk, 2014).

**WACE assessment types: Range of assessments versus examinations**

Assessment, as an integral part of the growing accountability agenda, has increasingly underpinned contemporary curriculum practice in schools. This study reported a tension in case study schools between a range of assessments types and more invigilated styles of assessment, like tests and examinations. A range of assessments was seen as a key feature of policy text production because assessment types, like investigations and inquiry, were part of a wider assessment strategy. However, over several versions of the WACE-PES syllabus, a stronger emphasis on tests and examinations eventuated. Consequently, schools have responded in practice by reducing investigations (assignments that use critical inquiry) to increase testing, particularly topic testing, in a concurrent style of curriculum delivery. The State of WA has exercised its power in calling for teachers to align practices with better examination performance, meaning that practice became examination-centric with more student testing in both the written and practical components of the course. External practical performance examinations have also meant that inquiry learning and ‘learning, in, through and about movement’ was replaced by more direct instruction. The State exuded its power through its quality (standards) settings, ensuring tighter assessment weightings towards invigilated assessments thereby influencing the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment relationship. This reduced pedagogical practice to teaching-to-the-test as teachers became more accountable for the performance of their students in high-stakes examinations.
The effect of high-stakes examinations has been well documented in the literature. Taking Ball, Maguire and Braun’s (2012) notion of ‘policies shaping teachers’, high-stakes testing changes the pedagogical behaviour of teachers. A neoliberal mindset changes teacher values to what Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012, p.97) called the “logic of conformity” and in turn, influences the way ‘teachers shape policy’. In this study, it can be seen that the introduction of external examinations in WACE-PES curriculum policy has contributed to teachers demanding clarity from the syllabus and feeding that back into the policy process. However, with teachers increasingly the focal point for enhancing student learning, practices were limited to teaching-to-the-test and imparting decontextualized metacognitive strategies to address examination performance (Taubman, 2011). This argument was supported by Connell (2013a; 2013b) who, in referring to university entrance examinations, observed how curriculum was narrowed to the knowledge and skills being tested, with teachers drilling their students in the specific performance they needed to demonstrate in the test. Similarly, Lingard and Keddie (2013) argued that testing and high stakes accountability has a reductive effect on pedagogy in schools which contributes to a ‘pedagogy of sameness’. They refer to a scripted ‘pedagogy of indifference’ where teachers teach-to-the-test through limited direct instruction. Indeed, the ‘pedagogy of sameness’ was a feature of practice in the schools in this study.

Similar themes were found within the PE literature. Referring to Ball’s notion of performativity, Cliff (2012) argued that efficiency and accountability provided little space for pedagogical risk-taking and called for a re-introduction of constructivist pedagogies to promote change. Similarly, Dinan Thompson (2013) argued that teachers knew little about the link between pedagogy and assessment, suggesting the need for ‘deeper
pedagogical action’ to build assessment literacy in teachers. However, this may be difficult whilst teachers, as policy enactors, are what Macdonald (2015) termed ‘technicians’ and functionaries of the state-sponsored surveillance systems and student performance standards.

This section has been a meta-analysis of the findings in the context of policy practices from which there were three meta-themes (Figure 8.3). As a result of powerful neoliberal policies shaping teachers, there is a ‘reductive’ effect on teacher pedagogical responses to curriculum. In other words, as teacher work was influenced by neoliberal ideals their contribution back into the policy process is one that works to reinforce neoliberalism. That is why there are calls from within HPE for new pedagogical action (Dinan Thompson, 2013; O’Sullivan, 2013; Penney, 2013a) as a means for critical reform. What follows is the proposition that emerged from the meta-analysis of the context of policy practices.

**Proposition: The Context of Policy Practices (enactment)**

4. The **enactment** of Physical Education curriculum policy, in the Australian settings studied, revealed pressure toward a ‘pedagogy of sameness’ across schools in different contexts due to the dominance of neoliberal influences. However, the hegemony of neoliberalism was not complete as tensions arose between:

- Centralised (government) models of resource support for schools versus localised networks;
- The syllabus and classroom pedagogy, especially sequential (integrated) versus concurrent (segmentalised) modes of delivery;
- A range of assessments versus examination-centric practices.
The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes along the Policy Trajectory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 4:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the anticipated longer term outcomes and implications of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms from 2005 to 2015 in Western Australia?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section is a meta-analysis of the major themes and sub-themes for the context of longer term policy outcomes for WACE-PES curriculum policy. This meta-analysis includes attention to any unintended consequences of the PE curriculum policy reform and the associated implications for future policy enactment. Table 8.4 (overleaf) depicts the significant themes and sub-themes from the study’s findings. It must be noted that the major differences were between sub-themes and this formed the basis of this meta-analysis.

As this meta-analysis is future orientated in its focus on anticipated longer term outcomes and the implications for policy change, meta-themes are not presented as a series of tensions embedded in policy processes as emerged in the previous three policy contexts considered in this chapter. The outcomes and implications include: student opportunity and achievement; teaching for quality and; teaching for equity of student outcomes in Physical Education. In the discussion of the first two meta-themes, the findings are compared and contrasted with the general literature and eventually drawn together for the third meta-theme on the future of PE curriculum policy.
### Table 8.4

**Context of Policy Outcomes**: Major themes and sub-themes in schools as revealed by participants along the policy trajectory (national-State-local).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Trajectory</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Level</strong></td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• School funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Achieving prescribed learning outcomes &amp; standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• The future structure of senior schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The impact of Year 12 examinations on equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Level</strong></td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• School funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Greater accountability for learning outcomes &amp; standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Top-down’ effect of WACE-PES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Retain the practical examination in senior school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Differences in PE curriculums between WA &amp; other States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Level: Government School</strong></td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between government &amp; PSA schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fairness of external written examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity of moderation between schools with increased testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Resisting practice adopted by other States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catholic School</strong></td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between all school sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emulate the practice of PSA schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The equity of outcomes for students</td>
<td>• Fairness of external written &amp; practical examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Support for a theory-based WACE course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Top-down’ effect of WACE-PES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent School</strong></td>
<td>• The equity of inputs</td>
<td>• Funding differential between government &amp; PSA schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fairness of external practical examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trend towards greater testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Equity across States with the Australian Curriculum HPE</td>
<td>• Fear of change to a theory-based WACE course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Top-down’ effect of WACE-PES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student opportunity and achievement

Equity as it relates to student opportunity and achievement, was a goal of WACE-PES curriculum policy and a major feature underpinning the Australian Curriculum HPE. However, with a funding differential perceived by participants between highly-funded and lesser-funded schools, they believed highly-funded schools were able to provide better facilities and equipment, select more experienced teachers and potentially deliver richer PE learning experiences for their students. Highly-funded schools tend to be larger, more populated urban schools enabling greater support for the teaching of WACE-PES syllabus. While some disparity between the ‘inputs’ (resources) of government and non-government schools was evident, the difference between the schools in this study and Private School Association (PSA) members was stark. PSA members with their own sporting structures were viewed by many participants as ‘privileged’. This perception of ‘privilege’ was reinforced by the performance of these schools in external examinations, as sporting competitors and the power they possessed through their own corporate enterprises. PSA schools were also seen by participants as ‘elitist’ in their achievement, their enterprises and the portrayal of PE knowledge for the elite within their own sporting structures. In response, teachers of case study schools tried to emulate the practices of PSA members as much as possible or sought involvement in curriculum policy processes in an attempt to privilege their own students. However, student equity appeared to be the casualty when elitism, power and privilege prevailed. To add to this, curriculum knowledge and practice seemed hierarchical, in itself a form of elitism, from university to elite schools to the ‘masses’, where policy enactment was cloned and standardised. This has unintended implications for student equity in terms of opportunity and achievement.
The downward pressure of universities and university admission authorities, Vickers (2013) argued, sustains a curriculum hierarchy at senior secondary level similar to what was seen in this study. She contended that competitive academic curriculum is socially discriminatory and privileges those who most have the pedagogical resources to do well in examinations. In effect, academic competition is a reflection of privilege and in turn, produces its own privilege (May, 2011). This point was taken up by Connell (2012) who identified new forms of inequity due to these market systems, where schools compete as ‘firms’ and students as competitive individuals. This, she contends, is a consequence of ‘achievement through competition’ and the only contemporary remedy used to address student inequity in schools. Similarly, Bonnor (2013) argued that competition fails many students because curriculum becomes impersonal and standardised, exemplified by the force-feeding students with dry information as part of a school culture of mass production. Arguably, the more homogenous curriculum policy enactment becomes, the more equity and diversity is sacrificed. As schools are impacted by performance and between-school comparisons, the more likely disadvantaged schools turn to teaching-to-the-test (Yates, 2013). Yates (2013) described the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged schools as ‘segregated communities’ where neoliberal market thinking preserves advantage over addressing disadvantage. In giving examples, Yates made reference to highly-funded private schools in Australia by describing how their historical sporting traditions feed difference and elitism at the expense of community, thus privileging students at these schools. Better funding for disadvantaged schools is a possible solution, but as Lawrence (2012) pointed out, such funding models have been limited in Australia.

Teaching for quality

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that ‘equity’ and ‘quality’ need not be in opposition to each other. However, an analysis of the ‘equity of inputs’ and ‘learning
outcomes for students’ revealed a ‘disconnect’ between effective teaching and quality (standards) in that ‘limited direct instruction’, prevalent in case study schools, teaches to external examinations. This disconnection has unintended implications for equity in terms of curricular justice or the ability to tailor curriculum that suits the experiences, culture and needs of students (Connell, 2012). In part, this disconnection has been a criticism of teachers by the State in WA, especially the SCSA, who over time responded by setting tighter school-based assessment parameters to reduce teacher discretion and gain greater consistency with student performance in external examinations. It could be argued that the State exhibits a lack of trust in the workforce. Regardless, the State’s insistence on tighter control over teachers’ work, with more reliance on tests and examinations, creates a paradox between effective teaching espoused in the rationale of syllabus documents on the one hand and ‘quality’ agendas on the other. Curriculum strategies like inquiry learning and ‘learning in, through and about movement’ appear compromised with greater teacher accountability towards student examination performance. Practices like teaching-to-the-test narrows the focus of learning outcomes and favours those students who are expected to do well in both the external written and practical examinations. In other words, curriculum practice is not inclusive or aimed at equity of learning outcomes for all. When a disconnection between effective teaching and quality is accentuated, as evidenced in this study by teachers criticising the State for setting unfair or inequitable external examinations, there exists a struggle between quality agendas and what teachers perceive as effective teaching for enhancing learning outcomes. Consequently, ‘equity’ could be a fading discourse in the future of PE curriculum policy if these trends continue.

The ‘disconnect’ similar to what was described above has been widely observed in the literature. Bonnor (2013), in claiming that secondary schooling only caters for students who adapt to a particular structure and culture, believed there are too many State and
Federal Government policies in Australia which inhibit innovation, of which testing is one example. Similarly, Connell (2012) argued that high-stakes testing leads to a standardisation of curriculum so common performances can be measured; a phenomenon that was observed in this study over time. She also asserted that this standardisation takes curriculum decision-making away from local school contexts and locates power with regulatory agencies. This shift in power gives rise to tensions between standards and inclusion (Ball, Maquire, Braun & Hoskins, 2011). To illustrate further, an Australian government-commissioned study of 24 schools in Queensland mapped the pedagogy of classroom teachers and found accountability and high-stakes testing had a reductive effect on pedagogy in schools (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). In this study, classrooms lacked learning differentiation due to the dominance of limited direct instruction, leading to a ‘pedagogy of sameness’ between schools which tended to produce social inequities. Lingard and Keddie (2013) concluded that policies on teacher quality and high-stakes testing limited the potential positive effect of schools and contributed to growing inequity. Furthermore, Keddie (2015) argued that schools or teachers who do not measure up to the success required by the quality agenda were considered as ‘deficit’, something that may account for criticisms of teachers by SCSA in this study. A consequence of this criticism is a lack of trust between regulators and teachers, especially when school reform is manipulated through external levers like assessment and accountability to standards (Bonnor, 2013). A just education system, according to Connell (2012), is one where learners are trusted without the discipline of examinations, and teachers are trusted without the whip of the audit. However, in looking forward, Penney (2013a) believed that curriculum policy developments like the Australian Curriculum HPE is an opportunity to extend both quality and equity in the learning area. The findings from this study would suggest that while curriculum reform intends to enhance quality and equity, this may not play out in practice.
The impact of high-stakes examinations at the end of Year 12 has had a profound ‘top-down’ effect on lower secondary curriculum in WA. In a climate of marketisation and competition, a loss of equity is becoming an unintended consequence as schools and systems focus their attention on quality. This loss of equity takes various forms including what knowledge in PE is privileged, who it actually privileges and whether all students have opportunities to succeed with the resources available to them. This represents challenges for the introduction of the Australian Curriculum HPE, a curriculum supposedly underpinned by ‘equity’ through its proposed pedagogical framework. As States and Territories have different senior school courses, a ‘top-down’ effect repeated across Australia would mean the Australian Curriculum HPE cannot be implemented as intended because the States will act alone with their own versions of HPE curriculum. WA’s willingness to protect WACE-PES curriculum is an example where State parochialism was strong, coupled with a concern about being unduly influenced by the curriculum decisions of other jurisdictions. If senior school courses dictate what knowledge is privileged in lower secondary school, then a prediction by one national level participant in this study of the ‘tail wagging the dog’ (assessment in senior school driving curriculum and pedagogy in lower secondary school) is expected to eventuate. In moving forward for WA, PE curriculum policy writers need to reflect about the knowledge it privileges and whether ‘equity’ remains a cornerstone of policy and practice.

The PE literature considers ‘equity’ as a necessary discourse for the future of HPE curriculum in Australia and for this reason, the Australian Curriculum HPE is well supported by scholars in the field. In referring to the possibilities with curriculum reform, Penney (2013a) believed equity and social justice needs to be at the forefront of any
engagement with policy. Indeed, in commenting upon equity in general, Connell’s (2013b) notions of curricular justice and social encounter appear to feature within this curriculum policy in the way content and pedagogy constructs are communicated. Penney (2013a) recognised the significance of these factors for HPE and challenged policy actors to question the merits and shortcomings of current practices so as to recognise the potential in the Australian Curriculum HPE. However, this would require policy actors to acknowledge how their own senior school courses legitimised knowledge and created discourse around a homogenised, sport technique-based curriculum (Dinan Thompson, 2013; Kirk, 2014; Penney, 2012; 2013a). For this reason, Brown (2013b) believed that to challenge the status quo within traditional PE curriculum would be risky because science discourses and content segmentalism are well entrenched in practice. Part of the problem, Penney (2013a) maintained, is that PE lacks concrete examples and alternative organisational structures to challenge current practices and build social equity.

To develop and model new ways of knowing and doing PE would require policy actors to network and engage in alternative discourses that would promote Connell’s (2012) notions of curricular justice and social encounter. Change would require policy actors to consider other pedagogic possibilities and take part in ‘pedagogic action’ as a means to ensure that equity is a worthwhile discourse in the future of PE curriculum policy. Instead of curriculum policy being solely organised around the experiences of the most advantaged students, as it tends to do in WACE-PES, such policy must engage with the experiences, culture and needs of the least advantaged as well. Furthermore, curriculum enactment must cater for diversity through shared learning experiences or social encounter. These notions of equity offer possibilities for change through the Australian Curriculum HPE.
What follows are three propositions for the context of longer term policy outcomes. This policy context is of a different order than the first three policy contexts as it projects into the future to predict the ongoing outcomes of the 2005 to 2015 PE curriculum policy reforms. While the propositions for the other three policy contexts were structured around tensions embedded in the curriculum policy processes, these propositions are more tentative in predicting ongoing outcomes in the longer term.

**Propositions: The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes (future predictions)**

5. Student equity in Physical Education curriculum policy may be compromised when funding differentials between schools influence the resources a school can provide for its students.

6. Physical Education curriculum policy may lead to an increasing disconnection between what is considered effective teaching espoused in the Australian Curriculum HPE and the learning standards (quality) advocated in WACE-PES, as teaching-to-the-test in senior school may have unintended implications for equity.

7. Physical Education curriculum policy in senior school may exacerbate the ‘top-down’ impact of senior school curriculum policy on the lower secondary school curriculum, potentially marginalising equity and, in turn, losing the intent of the Australian Curriculum HPE.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has been a meta-analysis of the themes and sub-themes that have emerged along the PE policy trajectory from global influences through national and State levels to local (schools) level. Each of the four research questions has been presented in turn, followed by the emerging meta-themes along the policy trajectory. Propositions were developed in relation to the findings for each research question. For the context of policy
influences, the context of policy text production and the context of policy practices, research propositions were represented by a series of tensions arising from the meta-analysis over the period of 2005 to 2015. For the context of longer term policy outcomes (future predictions), three propositions were presented about the possible unintended consequences of WACE-PES curriculum policy on equity. These unintended consequences may impact ‘equity’ as a future discourse in the Australian Curriculum HPE. What follows in Chapter Nine are the recommendations for future policy and practice as well as implications for further research.
CHAPTER NINE
CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction
In light of the dynamic and shifting nature of education policy, the aim of this study was to analyse the perspectives of key policy actors on the production and enactment of Physical Education (PE) curriculum policy reform in Western Australia (WA) from 2005 to 2015, within the context of accelerating influences from global and national levels. The policy analysis framework described earlier in this thesis allowed for a deeper understanding of relevant policy production and enactment, and how the intentions of curriculum policy were not necessarily realised in schools, as outlined in the findings chapters and discussed in relation to the literature in Chapter Eight.

The concept of a ‘policy trajectory’ (Ball, 1994) as modified by Vidovich (2007; 2013) was the conceptual framework on which this study was based. This framework focused attention on the following policy contexts: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and the longer term policy outcomes. Data was collected at three levels of the policy trajectory: the national (macro) level, particularly the Australian Council of Health and Physical Education (ACHPER); the State of WA (meso) level, particularly the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA); and at the local (micro) level within three case study schools. One case study school was selected from each of the three school sectors in WA: Government; Catholic; and Independent. An interpretivist theoretical lens guided the collection of participant perspectives on PE curriculum policy changes at macro, meso, and micro levels separately. Then in a meta-analysis of the findings, critical theory was used to examine the changing power relationships along the policy trajectory from macro to micro levels, and findings were discussed in relation to
the literature. The analysis provided the foundation for the development of propositions about PE curriculum policy developments which featured in the previous chapter.

Data collection in the form of documents focussed on the decade of 2005 to 2015 and data from interviews was collected between 2012 and 2013. However, policy evolution went on beyond 2015 and continued to have an impact on the themes highlighted in this study. Continuing policy announcements set an important context for the implications and recommendations of this thesis. This chapter will examine these ongoing policy developments (beyond the period of data collection) by highlighting the changes in 2015 and 2016 that have impacted on the production and enactment of PE curriculum policy in schools. This is followed by recommendations for policy and practice, and the implications for further research. In presenting this chapter, there is no intention to generalise the study’s findings from WA and Australia to other settings, but some of the recommendations may provide ‘food for thought’ for reflection in other policy contexts.

**Policy Developments Since Data Collection Was Completed in 2015**

This section discusses policy developments relevant to the production and enactment of PE curriculum policy in Australia, and particularly WA. This discussion will take place along the lines of the policy trajectory: policy influences; policy text production; policy practices; and longer term policy outcomes.

**Policy developments in the Context of Policy Influences**

During 2015, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, published at the national level by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), became a significant influence on schools in Australia. In WA, these standards were implemented through policies on performance management, recruitment and teacher
registration. The introduction of these teaching standards, when combined with other quality agendas, have contributed to greater accountability of teachers. These agendas have been discussed earlier in this thesis.

At State level in WA, the policy response to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* saw changes to the general regulations of the *Teacher Registration Act 2012*, where teachers were required to log, under the category of ‘professional engagement’ of the AISTL standards, one hundred hours of professional learning per year. This prerequisite coincided with a State initiative for compulsory classroom observation of teachers by their line managers as part of a wider government system policy. To illustrate the intent of this initiative, the Education Department of WA policy vision for 2016 and beyond was written to include an: “Increased consistency of practices among teachers through collaboration, agreed curriculum scope and sequences, and classroom observation” (Government of Western Australia, Department of Education, 2015b, p.3). While ‘increased consistency of practices’ was not elaborated in this policy vision, the statement is interesting in light of growing accountability mechanisms to improve quality. In this study, a ‘pedagogy of sameness’ was used to describe how the enactment of the Western Australia Certificate of Education-Physical Education Studies (WACE-PES) curriculum policy was similar in case study schools, largely due to the power of neoliberal reforms of government. However, to promote equity and curricular justice, it has been argued in this thesis that schools need a differentiated curriculum response to better meet the needs of a diversity of students. How this 2016 Education Department of WA policy vision is interpreted in WA schools, especially in relation to PE curriculum policy, will be interesting to teachers if the goal is to achieve a consistency of practice. If this goal is realised then questions about equity with standardised policy enactment may increase in future years.
Policy developments in the Context of Policy Text Production

At State (WA) level, SCSA published a 2014 version of the WACE-PES syllabus as part of a ‘new WACE’ policy direction to align this senior school course with the Australian Curriculum. While few changes were made for Year 11, in 2016 the school-based assessment structure for Year 12 changed to include: 30% practical performance consisting of a school-based practical examination; and a 70% written component made up of investigations (20%), response-style test questions (25%) and school examinations (55%). This represented an increase in the weighting of tests and examinations over what was prescribed in earlier syllabuses. This shift in weighting, also seen in other WACE courses, was based on a decision by the SCSA board and did not involve wider school/teacher consultation. Two issues can be raised from this new syllabus. First, an increase in tests and examinations appears to be consistent with increasing neoliberal approaches to quality and measurable standards. However, it is unclear whether this policy response was in reaction to the testing regimes in schools or as a consequence of State government ‘top-down’ policy settings. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this new WACE-PES syllabus was the precursor for WA ‘going it alone’ with its own version of the Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education (HPE).

The WA Curriculum, Health and Physical Education syllabus (WA-HPE) was produced as a Foundation (pre-primary) to Year 10 policy text that replaced the Australian Curriculum HPE (Government of Western Australia, SCSA, 2015). There were significant changes made to the Australian Curriculum HPE in the construction of the WA-HPE syllabus. These included: limited reference to pedagogical direction; the omission of some learning outcomes; a back-mapping of content from WA senior school courses into the lower secondary school; and a re-wording of content statements that
deleted verbs or actions guiding teacher enactment. This last point appeared to enable a sharper focus on assessment for accountability purposes. The WA-HPE syllabus was developed by SCSA and released without a teacher feedback period, although they had advisory committees which included teachers. Schools were asked to trial its implementation in 2016 before the release of the State’s ‘judging standards’ resource material to support its full implementation in WA schools in 2017. In comparing the new WACE-PES syllabus for Year 11 and 12 with the WA-HPE syllabus for Foundation (pre-primary) to Year 10, it is evident that the ‘top-down’ effect of examinable courses in Year 11 and 12, which some participants predicted in this study, is being realised. Furthermore, the reservations expressed over the Australian Curriculum HPE by one national level participant reported earlier in this thesis, is worthy of repeating here: “I’m hoping the jurisdictions won’t after two years say, ‘We can improve on this,’ and write their own curriculum, which happened in the 1980s when we had the national statement and profile. That would defeat the whole purpose” (N1). While it is acknowledged that WA has not written a ‘new’ curriculum, the back mapping of senior school course content into the lower secondary years signals a significant development.

_Policy developments in the Context of Policy Practices_

‘School resources’ was identified as one of the major themes impacting on PE curriculum policy enactment. Issues around school resources were cited by participants and, in particular, funding to schools was seen as significant in providing curriculum opportunities for students. In one example, a national participant referred to the ‘Gonski model’ where it was proposed that funding should be distributed to schools first as an equal amount for each student across the country (whether in public or private schools), then an extra resource pool to distribute extra funds on a needs basis (Gonski, Boston, Greiner, Lawrence, Scales & Tannock, 2011). This model was designed to address the
goal of national equity in education. However, since the election of the Federal Liberal-Coalition Government in 2013, and their policy to disband ‘Gonski’ funding, followed by a moratorium on any changes until the 2016 election which was forced by community backlash to the proposed withdrawal of the Gonski model, there remains uncertainty about school funding distribution models at the time of thesis submission. Arguably, funding is central to issues about balancing ‘quality’ and ‘equity’ goals in education and, on this, policy evolution continues.

In the State of WA, the Liberal-Coalition Government did introduce a funding policy similar to the ‘Gonski” model for government schools, called Student-centred Funding Model and One Line Budgets: A New Way of Resourcing and Working (Government of Western Australia, 2014). While the premise of the funding allocation was the same as the ‘Gonski model’, the decision as to how government schools allocate their funding was made at school (local) level. This is why the policy was called ‘one line’ budgeting and included a funding figure that accounted for most of a school’s operations. Whether this funding was adequate is subject to great debate. For government schools at least, the Education Minister of WA linked this model of funding to the movement of Year 7 students to secondary school and the revision of WACE courses. He then wrote as part of the policy announcement: “The changes come with increased accountability for using resources from Government and other sources each year effectively and efficiently. Regularly assessing school performance and reporting on progress against clearly stated priorities, targets and outcomes will continue to be vital” (Government of Western Australia, 2014, p.2). While the implications of this policy are expected to differ across the diversity of government school settings, in the researcher’s own school, WACE courses without a significant number of students (determined by schools themselves) were considered no longer cost-viable and were to be excluded from the timetable.
Alternatively, to include an examinable course on the timetable meant that these WACE subjects had to admit students who did not meet school-determined prerequisites and who were potentially in danger of not passing examinations, given the new assessment structure assigned to WACE courses. For WACE-PES, this may have the potential to negatively impact course performance when a school is compared to other schools which do not operate under this constraint.

**Policy developments in the Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes**

WACE course performance is published annually by SCSA which compares school performance in externally examinable courses (Government of Western Australia: SCSA, 2016). A list of the highest performing schools for WACE-PES was included in the 2016 SCSA report. There were 15 schools cited as high performing schools in a list that was dominated by highly funded private schools and Private Schools Association (PSA) members. Of the two government schools that were considered high performing in WACE-PES, one was a school for selected gifted and talented students and the other, in a high socio-economic area of Perth. In this study, the concept of ‘privilege’ emerged from the meta-analysis to describe those schools that have privilege in the PE curriculum policy processes and while caution must be exercised in coming to hasty conclusions, it was observed that three of the PSA schools listed as high performers were cited by participants in this study as having significant influence in PE curriculum policy processes. The implications for the schools that were not in this high performing list are unclear but are worthy of further examination.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

The meta-analysis and propositions presented in Chapter Eight allow for recommendations to be made from this study’s findings. In presenting recommendations
for policy and practice, it was important to frame them as policy action at the national, State and school (local) levels. In doing so, it is hoped that key policy actors at these levels will engage in reflection about policy evolution, both generally and specifically in PE, as they journey through the curriculum policy processes. Recommendations for policy and practice between the national, State and local levels are now presented.

**Recommendations for policy and practice at the national level**

In framing recommendations about PE curriculum policy at the national level, consideration is given to the role of governments and the formation of national education policy that developed as a consequence of the Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne Declarations between 1989 and 2008. Attention is also given to how the professional body, the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), could be a proactive agent in influencing HPE curriculum policy across Australia.

**Recommendation 1**: A renewed intergovernmental cooperation of the nation’s education ministers be established by the Australian Federal Government for a review of the state of balance of equity and quality goals in Australian education.

**Recommendation 2**: As part of this renewed intergovernmental cooperation, education ministers review the state-of-play of the Australian Curriculum, particularly in senior school, with consideration of the narrowing of curriculum and its potential to undermine achievement of creativity and innovation for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century.

**Recommendation 3**: The Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), in cooperation with its own State branches, build upon its own national statement to develop an agreed body of knowledge in PE and identify or endorse
the pedagogical principles necessary for effective teaching and learning in PE; that is, construct a new national statement on teaching and learning in consultation with teachers.

**Recommendation 4:** ACHPER seek a working collaboration with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) with the goal of producing a HPE version of the AITSL standards, using consultation with teachers, and advocate these teaching standards with the organisation’s new national statement on teaching and learning (see recommendation 3).

**Recommendation 5:** ACHPER, in association with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and [State and Territory] jurisdictions, construct exemplars of assessment in PE for all phases of schooling to model how its new national statement on teaching and learning operates as part of the curriculum-assessment-pedagogy construct.

**Recommendations for policy and practice at the State level**

The following recommendations at State level pertain to the State of WA, but may provide points for reflection in other jurisdictions in Australia. In framing these recommendations, attention is given to agencies that might better resource support for schools with regards to WACE-PES and the wider curriculum.

**Recommendation 6:** The Education Department of WA employ a Health and Physical Education teacher-consultant whose role is to collaboratively liaise with SCSA and ACHPER WA, broker teacher professional networks, conduct professional learning opportunities and publish exemplars of teaching, learning and assessment consistent with the practices of equity and curricular justice.
**Recommendation 7**: SCSA re-establish course advisory groups (including PE) that allow for a number of curriculum perspectives to be advanced and where membership to this group is renewed every two years. The role of this group should be transparent and countenance wider consultation in the policy process to enable ‘bottom-up’ consultation.

**Recommendation 8**: SCSA review WACE-PES school assessment and examination policy with the view to reducing the weightings towards tests in favour of critical inquiry and change the discourse in curriculum policy texts to include verbs that guide teacher action. This review should also see amendments to the examination design brief to reflect student critical thinking and application to movement contexts.

**Recommendation 9**: SCSA, in the interests of equity in the examination writing and marking process in PE, access people with independence from the policy production process, and introduce strategies that will improve coherency between the examination and the curriculum outcomes stated in the syllabus.

**Recommendation 10**: ACHPER (WA branch) be active in engaging teachers in professional learning surrounding the organisation’s national statement on teaching and learning (see recommendation 3) and broker networks for teachers as part of a cooperative approach to sharing resources.

**Recommendations for policy and practice at school (local) level**

In framing the following recommendations for the school (local) level, the call from within the literature for pedagogical action (Dinan Thompson, 2013; Penney, 2013b) or activism (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2012; Kirk, 2014) are very much at the forefront.
Consequently, these recommendations represent actions that schools and their teachers can make as part of the enactment of policy, both as practitioners and advocates for the profession.

**Recommendation 11:** HPE teachers analyse the effects of competitive comparisons upon curriculum policy enactment and teacher behaviour with the view to improving teaching and learning in schools.

**Recommendation 12:** HPE teachers explore in practice how a ‘critical pedagogy’ can be utilised in the classroom as a means of enacting curriculum policy. This has been used to describe social and cultural practices that differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of students.

**Recommendation 13:** Teachers of WACE-PES consider adopting a sequential approach and incorporate ‘learning, in through and about movement’ as a strategy to enhance curriculum policy enactment. This would be consistent with the intention of WACE-PES curriculum policy and would enable stronger linkage with the WA *Curriculum, Health and Physical Education Syllabus*.

**Recommendation 14:** HPE teachers, particularly teachers of WACE-PES, adopt a greater balance between formative and summative (testing) assessment strategies.

**Recommendation 15:** HPE teachers, particularly teachers of WACE-PES, seek professional learning opportunities and participate in networks that will see the development and sharing of resources. The five pedagogical principles of the Australian Curriculum HPE could be a useful starting point for teachers.
Implications for Further Research

This study has shed light on the enactment of Physical Education curriculum policy in WA with regards to WACE-PES and more generally with the Australian Curriculum HPE. However, as is the case with any research, a number of issues have arisen that are beyond the scope of this study that would merit further attention, as outlined below.

**Further Research 1:** International comparative studies of senior school curriculum in PE and its influence on curriculum practice in the lower secondary years (the ‘push-down’ effect). Such comparative research across international jurisdictions can provide a valuable source of ‘policy learning’.

**Further Research 2:** Investigations of State comparisons of HPE curriculum policy in Australia. In making these comparisons, an emphasis on whether the Australian Curriculum HPE has been enacted as intended or if States have diverged from the central intent to develop their own versions of the policy. Such research could provide insights into why the policy processes of some States generate different policy outcomes when compared to others, within a supposedly ‘unified’ national system.

**Further Research 3:** Research into wider (global) education policy priorities of equity and quality and how they are balanced (or not) in different locales, including the extent of trade-offs that occur because of economic and social realities, in general and in relation to HPE.
Further Research 4: Studies on how pre-service training and teacher professional learning can make a difference to curriculum policy enactment within schools would be insightful, especially in relation to closing the policy-practice gap.

Conclusion

The production and enactment of PE curriculum policy reform focused mainly on the State of WA but with clear evidence of the impact of national and global forces. The policy trajectory analysis extending between global, State and local (schools) levels provided significant insights into the struggles involved in PE curriculum policy processes. Yates (2012, p.260) considered: “If we look at schools we wonder whose answers to the question ‘What is education for?’ should get priority - those of economists? politicians? parents? educators? students themselves?”. Struggles over the purposes of education remain a feature of the global competitive market (Yates, 2011). While the findings of this study are relevant to the WA context, they also provide ‘food for thought’ in other policy settings in Australia. Furthermore, the findings are reflective of wider policy trends that are being witnessed globally.

In concluding this thesis, a statement from one State (WA) level participant captures both the constraints and the possibilities of WA and national HPE curriculum policy moving forward:

_We still see inequities about how people are interpreting the syllabus and how they are delivering it. I get concerned that people haven’t got the arrows in their pedagogical quiver to understand how to take the theoretical in the classroom out onto the court, the pitch or the field and make connections in kids’ heads about what we are talking about and how it works . . . Schools are driven by other agendas rather than us trying to capture the best out of the schools that do well and share that with others_ (S1).


239


240


Curriculum Council of Western Australia. (1998). *Curriculum framework for kindergarten to year 12 education in Western Australia*. Osborne Park, W.A.


Government of Western Australia. (2014). *Student-centred Funding Model and One line Budgets: A New Way of Resourcing and Working*. Perth, Western Australia: Bigger Picture Education.


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

Letter for

Teachers of WACE Physical Education Studies

Dear

DOCTORAL STUDY: SENIOR SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM POLICY REFORMS IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT: A FOCUS ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2005 TO 2015

I would like to introduce Barry Paveling to you, who is a doctoral student undertaking research at The University of Western Australia (UWA).

I am writing to request consent for you to participate in a research project being undertaken by the Graduate School of Education, UWA. The project is entitled The Production and Enactment of New Senior School Physical Education Curriculum Policy in Western Australia.

This study is about giving voice to policy participants in how curriculum policy is constructed and put into practice. By looking at how WACE Physical Education Studies was implemented in Western Australia, participant perspectives may give insight for new curriculum policy introduction such as the health and physical education component in the Australian Curriculum. This is why participants are being considered for this study at the National and State levels of physical education curriculum policy. Of particular interest is how the syllabus was constructed, the influences upon it, the practice effects and the outcomes of the curriculum. The study also hopes to explore the issues and the contests that occurred with policy implementation. The project is being conducted with the supervision of W/Professor Lesley Vidovich and W/Professor Grace Oakley at the University of Western Australia.

I would like to invite you to take part in the project. Your college is one of three schools participating which also includes an Independent school and a Government high school from Western Australia.

What does participating in the research involve?
You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview in 2012 and again twelve months later in 2013. The duration of each interview is expected to be 45 minutes. Interviews will be recorded by digital voice recorder and then transcribed.

Do I have to take part?
No. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. All decisions made will be respected by members of the research team without question.

What if I wanted to change my initial decision?
If you wish to participate, the decision will need to be made by term 3, 2012 for you to be included in the project.

Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time.

There will be no consequences relating to any decision by an individual or the school regarding participation, other than those already described in this letter. Decisions made will not affect the relationship with the research team or the University of Western Australia.
What will happen to the information I give, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?

Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data collected. The data is then stored securely in password-protected electronic files with transcripts stored in locked cabinets and can only be accessed by researcher and his supervisors. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by electronic and paper file shredding.

Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all times, except in circumstances where the research team is legally required to disclose that information.

The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from you.

It is intended that the findings of this study will be by thesis and reported to the University of Western Australia. A summary of the research findings will also be made available upon completion of the project. You can access this by contacting myself and expect it to become available in December, 2016.

Is this research approved?

Permission has been granted by the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia and a copy of the letter granting permission is with the Principal.

The research has also been approved by Research Ethics and Biosafety Office, Research Services, University of Western Australia (Ref: RA/4/1/4796) who can be contacted on 6488 3703 or email hreo-research@uwa.edu.au.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss the project further?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study with a member of the research team, please contact me on the number provided below. If you wish to speak with a person about the conduct of the project, please contact W/Professor Lesley Vidovich (tel ________) or email (__________________) or Barry Paveling (tel ________) or email (______________).

How do I become involved?

If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to become involved, please complete the Consent Form on the following page and return to:

Mr. Barry Paveling
Address
Contact No.
Email:

This information letter is for you to keep.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

W/Professor Lesley Vidovich
Mr. Barry Paveling

16 September 2012
APPENDIX B

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

DOCTORAL STUDY: SENIOR SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM POLICY REFORMS IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT: A FOCUS ON WESTERN AUSTRALIA 2005 TO 2015

Consent Form

- I have read and understood the information letter about the project, or have had it explained to me in language I understand.
- I understand that I can contact W/Professor Lesley Vidovich or Mr. Barry Paveling and request additional information about the study.
- I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntarily.
- I have been advised as to what data is being collected, what the purpose is, and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research.
- I am willing to become involved in the project, as described.
- I understand I am free to withdraw that participation at any time without affecting my relationship with the University of Western Australia.
- I understand that I can withdraw data from this study up to December, 2014.
- I give permission for my contribution to this research to be reported in a thesis, provided that I or the school are not identified in any way.
- I understand that I can request a summary of findings once the research has been completed.

Name of Participant (printed): ________________________________
Signature of Participant: ________________________________ Date: / / 

Please complete the Consent Form on the following page and return to:

Mr. Barry Paveling

[Redacted]
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Context of Influences:

Research Question 1: What were the wider influences acting to initiate senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015?

- What ‘big picture’ influences impacted upon Physical Education curriculum policy in Australia/Western Australia?
- What were the major factors that influenced the formation of Physical Education curriculum policy?
- Which of these factors were most influential and why?
- Have there been any influences that have caused PE curriculum policy to change over time?

The Context of Policy Text Production:

Research Question 2: What were the main characteristics of the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy texts in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and how were these texts produced?

- What do you see as the key features of Physical Education curriculum policy texts/documents and why?
- Who were the key players (or groups) that were most influential in shaping Physical Education curriculum policy? How were they influential? When? Why?
- What were the issues or tensions in the development of Physical Education curriculum policy? Can you explain why these were issues or tensions?
- What processes led to the production of Physical Education curriculum policy texts/documents? How has assessment/reporting impacted on the way texts/documents have taken shape over time?

The Context of Policy Practices:

Research Question 3: How were teachers enacting the senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms in case study schools in Western Australia from 2005 to 2015 and why?

- How is this Physical Education curriculum policy enacted in schools? Do you think the curriculum policy is implemented as intended? Why?
- How different is this curriculum policy between schools? What features define practice in schools?
- What factors do you think impact on how teachers enact this curriculum policy in schools? Why?
• How has assessment and examinations impacted upon practice? Has the Physical Education Curriculum policy been received? Has there been any resistance? Why?

The Context of Longer Term Policy Outcomes:

Research Question 4: What are the anticipated longer term outcomes and implications of senior school Physical Education curriculum policy reforms from 2005 to 2015 in Western Australia?

• What do you think are the longer term outcomes with the introduction with this new Physical Education curriculum policy?
• How will this curriculum policy impact upon equity and social justice? Do see any differences developing between schools or States?
• How will the Physical Education curriculum policy landscape change with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum? Are there any implications for equity and social justice?

Additional Questions:

• How is the curriculum policy fair and just?
• How have recent policy changes in schools influenced practice?
• How were earlier versions of curriculum policy different to now? Why?
• What are the main similarities and differences between the Australian Curriculum and WACE-PES? What are the implications?