SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Critical Perspectives on Policy Enactment

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Declaration

"I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously published or written by another person, except with due reference."

Signature:

Karin Oerlemans-Buma

Date:

The Journey

The following poem was crafted at a bleak point during the journey.

Today

Today
Searched seventeen journal articles
Read two books
Found 3 obscure references
Understood a new concept
And…

I wrote two hundred words today
The sun called me
To come and dance
And smell the roses
And asked my spirit to join the birds in wheeling and diving in the azure sky
But I sat behind my computer screen
With my back to the window
So I would not heed its cry.

I wrote two hundred words today
My friend called me
To come and relax
And do a coffee
And asked my soul to join the shoppers hunting bargains in the lunch time throng
But I sat in my home office
With the phone off the hook
So I would not hear her call.

I wrote two hundred words today
My children called me
To come and play
And build towers
And asked my body to join the game of hide and seek and lets pretend
But I sat at my desk
With the door closed tight
So I would not feel their joy.

I wrote two hundred words today
My supervisor rang
And asked how I went
How did I go?
And wondered about the progress I made in the writing of my endless theme
And I told her with pride
That I felt I'd achieved
"I'm really getting along,
Today…"

Karin Oerlemans
April 2003

Dedication:

To Hank, my husband with love and admiration for his unfailing support

also

To Neil, Katie and Sean

and

To friends

In memory of my father, Cornelis Buma, a great friend and mentor

Abstract

Michael Fullan (1991) commented that little was known about how students viewed educational change, as no one had thought to ask them. By 2004 there was a small but growing literature seeking the views of students on a range of issues associated with schooling. This thesis presents the findings and analysis of a study of students' perceptions of educational change. Much educational change involves shifts in power and responsibilities between the different actors, such as governments, school administrators, teachers, parents, the community and students. Despite widespread interest in educational change it is usually the macro-level policy elite who exert the most influence, using their power, privilege and status in order to propagate particular versions of schooling; students continue to be the 'objects' of policy initiatives, submerged in what Freire referred to as a 'culture of silence'. Students are frequently excluded as participants in both the process and decision making phases of change. This research was based on exploring the exclusion of students from the processes of change in schools, resulting from a top-down policy initiative by the State department of education in WA, the *Local Area Education Planning (LAEP) Framework*. How policy is defined and acted on is explored, and the roles students could have, but often do not, are highlighted. An eclectic hybrid conceptual framework drawing on both critical theory and a postmodern policy cycle approach was used to analyse the *LAEP Framework* policy processes and students' perceptions of the changes that ensued.

The research comprised in-depth case studies of three schools undergoing substantial educational restructuring as the result of the macro-level *LAEP Framework* policy in the State of WA. Key elements of the policy were school amalgamations, closures and the creation of Middle Schools. Data collection methods included focus group and semi-structured interviews with students from the three schools, as well as document analysis, staff interviews and field notes. The research found that students were very perceptive about educational change, that they were deeply impacted by educational change and that they wanted to participate in restructuring agendas. Several meta-level themes emerged from the students' 'voices', including issues associated with disempowerment, and competing social justice and economic discourses. The findings foreground the often messy and contradictory tensions evident in policy processes. The thesis concluded by developing theory on ways in which students could be included meaningfully as participants in educational change.

Acknowledgements:

My first and most grateful thanks and praise goes to my Heavenly Father, for whom He is and all that He has done.

To Hank, Neil, Katie and Sean, what can I say, I love you all so much, thank you for giving me the space to dream.

My thanks also to the students in the study, who gave of their time and their voices; I hope I have reflected you clearly. Thank you for being a part of my journey. Also to the students in my Year 11 English class, 1999, whose endless discussions and bitter complaints of exclusion concerning the changes going on around them gave me the idea that here was something worthwhile investigating.

To the Teachers and Staff at the three schools who gave willingly of their time, who encouraged me and to those who cheered me on, to make a difference in all our lives, thank you.

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To my father, who unfailingly believed in me, encouraged me to always look beyond the obvious, mentored me, and set me on the teaching path. He would be so proud right now.

To my mother, thank you for all you unfailing support, love, help, encouragement in so many ways!

To my dear friends Roy and Lyn, Julia and Felicity, without whose encouragement, support with childcare and ongoing friendship this would not have been possible.

To Bev, whose word in season encouraged me to dream the impossible.

To family and friends, what can I say, but I am finished, let's do coffee!

Karin Oerlemans

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

ACSA	Australian Curriculum Studies Association.
ATP	Academic Talent Program
CSC	Commonwealth Schools Commission
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DET	Department of Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
EDWA	Education Department of Western Australia
LAEP	*Local Area Education Planning Framework* – policy title
LMS	Local Management of Schools
NPQTL	National Project for the Quality of Teaching and Learning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSTED	Office of Standards in Education
RD&D	Research, Design and Development
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SEA	Secondary Education Authority
SOM	School of Mines
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning
TAFE	College of Technical and Further Education
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examination
USA	United States of America
WA	Western Australia
WASM	Western Australian School of Mines

Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Students and Educational Change: An Introduction

Introduction

> We hardly know anything about what students think about educational change, because no one ever asks them (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 182).

The following is a study of students in educational change. The aim of the present study was to explore students' perceptions of educational change. As the Fullan (1991) quote above indicates students have seldom been asked what they think about educational change. The present study sought to explore that deficit. Specifically, it focused on educational change associated with a 'restructuring' policy, the *Local Area Education Planning Framework* (hereafter *LAEP framework*), involving school closures, amalgamations, the creation of new schools and the introduction of Middle Schooling in the State of Western Australia (WA) in schools under the authority of the Department of Education and Training[1]. Although the *LAEP Framework* Policy is specific to WA, it provides pertinent 'food for thought' in a broader context as well. The present chapter presents a brief overview of the thesis.

[1] Education is the legal responsibility of State governments in Australia. In the State of Western Australia (WA) government schools are under the authority of the Department of Education and Training (DET), which prior to 2003 was known as the Department of Education (DOE), the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) in the 1990s and the Ministry of Education in the 1980s.

Educational change is a complex phenomenon, which is continuous in schools (Levin & Riffel, 1997). In recent times the pace of educational change has increased as governments throughout the world have become involved in reforming education systems to engage with 'globalising new times'. Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997) have suggested that policy has replaced educational theory as the source of guidance for educational change, and that educational policy has become the bureaucratic instrument with which to administer the expectations that governments have of education. Globally, it has been assumed that a country's economic future depends on a modernised education system closely monitored by the state (Edwards, 2001) and that educational change must focus on the broader aim of lifelong learning and seek to improve students' abilities and motivations to becoming autonomous learners (Istance, 1999).

Much educational change is about redefining roles involving shifts in power and responsibilities between the different actors involved (Friedman, 1997). There are many actors involved in educational change, including school administrators, teachers, parents, the community and students, yet, arguably, it is those in the policy elite who exert the most influence, using their power, privilege and status in order to sustain and propagate particular versions of schooling (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998), leaving students submerged in what Freire (1970) has termed a 'culture of silence'. Fullan (2001) has argued that students are usually excluded from both the processes and decision-making associated with change and that instead of being empowered by the changes, students become the 'objects' of change and find themselves lost in the changing

environment. However, the power of the often silent majority can be used to subvert change (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992) and some studies indicate that students may be the most powerful, especially when it comes to protecting the *status quo* (Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Friedman, 1997; Thiessen & Hargreaves, 1993). The present study sought to explore students' actual and potential roles in educational change.

Context of the Study

Educational change, in WA as elsewhere, has taken the form of major school restructuring and school reculturing, framed in the rhetoric of social justice discourses, for improving the educational success of all students. In late 1997, the WA Government released its *Plan for Government School Education* (Education Department of Western Australia [EDWA], 1997c) to set the direction for the government education system over the ensuing three years and into the twenty-first century.

The *Plan* represented a policy ensemble (Ball, 1994), which included the *Local Area Education Planning Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 1998), and the *Making the Difference* policy (EDWA, 1998). The aim of the *LAEP Framework* was to modify or reorganise planning of the delivery of education within the Western Australian State[2] school system by changing the focus of planning from individual schools to groups of

[2] In WA public schools are referred to as State schools. In this thesis when referring to a public school the word State is capitalised and also when referring to specific States, for example Western Australia.

schools in order to better manage the delivery of curriculum and resources (EDWA, 1997a).

Staff, parents, secondary students and the wider community were to be consulted on plans for their area – the *LAEP Framework* was to be a "customer driven process" (EDWA, 1997a, notes overhead 5). Change options given for consideration, through consultation and by each district, included school amalgamations, school closures, and the creation of Senior Colleges and Middle Schools. The most controversial of these strategies, vociferously challenged by parents and local communities, but adopted by EDWA as part of the *LAEP Framework*, was to amalgamate a number of schools, which serviced adjacent areas. This brought about the closure of several schools, especially in suburban Perth.

The *LAEP Framework* uses the rhetoric of social justice whilst encouraging districts to be more accountable and to use 'flexible' resourcing structures, themes which have been in constant tension in Western Australian education. Although, historically secondary education has been the responsibility of the States in Australia, the Commonwealth Government, in response to global influences, has maintained that it has an important role in identifying national policy priorities in education to enhance Australia's position in the competitive global marketplace, especially the "strengthening of Australian's efforts in schooling [as a] central element of the restructuring of the Australian economy" (Lingard & Porter, 1997, p. 3). The *LAEP Framework* reveals both global and historical influences, such as the need to deal with

students at educational risk and thereby educate citizens for a global world (Delors, 1996), as well as concerns with economic demands for governments to demonstrate greater value for money in expenditure of funds (Levin, 1998). The present study explored how students responded to educational change in a number of State schools, which underwent considerable restructuring as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment.

Educational Change, Policy and Students

The term 'educational change' may be used to refer to any of the processes that alter the behaviours, attitudes, roles and responsibilities of those involved in education, or alter the structures, procedures or outputs of an educational organisation – such as a class, school, school district or an entire educational system (Fullan, 1998; Hargreaves, Leithwood, Gerin-Lajoie, Thiessen, & Cousins, 1993). Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994, p. 21) identified two main forms of educational change as *incremental change*, that is the "gradual, often subtle transition from one state to another", or *planned change*, which "seeks to interrupt the natural development of events, to break with previous practice to establish a new order". Further, they note that educational change may originate from *external* factors, 'what others would do to us, to our school', or *internal* factors which they describe in terms of 'natural' or 'organic' growth. In the present study, the emphasis is on *planned* educational change, originating from the *external* pressures of system level policy initiatives.

The study of educational change as a field of research emerged at the end of the Second World War (Lieberman, 1998). Researchers such as Matthew

Miles, Seymour Sarason, Michael Fullan, Fred Newmann and many others have done much to help educators understand more about educational change and how it works in schools. In the decades leading up to the 1980s their work and research provided major input and impetus for bringing change in schools, as the understanding grew of what worked and what did not work, and why not, in an effort to make schools better places for student learning. Yet, as they struggled with understanding how to bring about meaningful change and authentic achievement in students, a shift was occurring in the impetus for restructuring.

The growing interest by governments in the management of education and tighter policy steerage occurred during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Levin, 1998), although at slightly different times for different countries. Governments embarked on a process of changing the ideology and discourses of schooling (Apple, 2001; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Governments began to exercise their power and impose their policies "in part through the production of 'truth' and 'knowledge' about education" (Ball, 1990, p. 17). Discourses of education were reframed in part through fostering the belief that education systems were failing to provide well-educated citizens despite high levels of spending, and by foregrounding an increased emphasis on economic rationales for schools (Levin, 1998). The work of the 'school effectiveness' movement was critical in this as it conveyed the impression that the creation of an 'effective school' was simply a matter of working through lists of effectiveness measures, which did not require extra resourcing (Ball, 1998). The subsequent decades saw a growing emphasis on restructuring education systems, as education moved to centre stage in a 'knowledge economy' and governments became less willing to

leave it in the hands of the educational experts. Governments sought greater steerage over education in order to maintain control in a changing society and in the interest of the national economy (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995; Ranson, 1994), through marketisation of education and redefinition of the roles of educational stakeholders (Murphy, 1993).

The assumption in much of the change literature, as well as in policy initiatives, is that through careful planning and by educating teachers and administrators, successful change will ensue (Fielding, 1999). Although, there is a slowly growing awareness of students in the educational change literature, largely it continues to ignore the contributions they can make. Redefining the roles of teachers will not lead to substantial differences in student achievement, if such changes are not also accompanied by changes in how educators think about their students (Nieto, 1994). Miles (1998) in a moment of whimsy wrote his vision for the year 2020, over-viewing what should have been learned about educational changes over the ensuing decades. One of the points Miles makes is that there needs to be an "increasing use of students as researchers on classroom practice (to play) a very strong part in both the reconceptualisation of teaching and the diffusion of practice" (p. 63). Yet, students are rarely considered as part of the change process. In fact, students rarely have a voice in schools. Students are more often viewed as the objects of educational change rather than as its subject, marginalised and excluded as participants in the change process. The present study sought to explore that exclusion more closely.

The Conceptual Framework

To guide the study an hybrid conceptual framework was adopted, using "greater theoretical sophistication and creativity" (Peters & Humes, 2003, p. 109) to gain a better understanding of the *LAEP Framework* policy as it was enacted. Critical theory provided the 'big picture' understanding of the policy. Its use allowed for the exploration of the macro constraints and the power relationships between policy actors and their contexts with reference to challenging the existing social structures (Quantz, 1992). In particular, critical theory is a value-oriented approach, which is concerned with exploring social inequalities, with questioning knowledge, current ideology and current practice (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe, 1993; Taylor, 1993), and directing research towards positive social change (Carspecken, 1996).

However, as the present study is also about diverse micro-level practices that are integral to the way policies 'play out' in different types of schools, it was considered that a 'policy cycle' approach drawing on both postmodernism[3] and critical theory could offer valuable insights. A central concern of the present study was to give 'voice' to students, allowing those most often de-legitimised (McNeil, 2000), the students, to speak. The research sought to examine how students viewed their role in educational change, and to examine, at the micro-level, students' perceptions of changes to educational ideology and practice at their schools. Ball's (1994) policy cycle approach, drawing on both

[3] The terms postmodernism and post-structuralism are often treated as synonymous terms; they are two different movements, but that is not the focus of this thesis. Following Vidovich (forthcoming) this thesis uses the original term adopted by the writers referred to, at all other times the term postmodernism will be used as is consistent with the postmodern policy cycle approach.

postmodernism influences and critical sociology, was adopted to facilitate the policy analysis. The strength of Ball's approach is his conceptualisation of micro-level policy processes. Vidovich (2002) brings together bigger picture 'constraint' (using critical theory perspectives) and Ball's micro 'agency'. Her policy framework incorporates both macro-level factors such as globalisation and the policy intentions of the state, as well as micro-level policy practices, effects and consequences.

The state performs an important role in mandating policies for change, especially in Australia, as there remains a continuing emphasis on the influence of state structures within the policy cycle; these need to be taken into account in both political and theoretical terms (Dale, 1992). The importance of understanding the influences of globalisation is also essential in analysing the policy. The effects of globalisation have caused the state to reconstruct itself, to take on a more competitive and managerial structure (Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 2000). Arguably, the discourses surrounding the global economy have been complicit in the state's moves to restructure education systems to focus on the production of highly skilled human capital for increased national economic advantage. Postmodernism makes a contribution by disassembling the structures and the manipulations of the official discourses of the state (Peters & Humes, 2003). Policy forms part of this official discourse. Viewing policy as *discourse* imposes non-negotiable meanings (Ranson, 1996), a consequence of which is that macro-level policy producers place constraints on practitioners. The responses to, and possibilities of, policy become limited, and 'voices' are effectively redistributed so that it no longer matters only what people think or

say, the speaker also becomes important. This can lead to the exclusion of voices deemed to be non-legitimate (Ball, 1993), an exclusion that Ball (1994) found included teachers and Levin (2000) believed included students.

The present study sought to explore that exclusion, specifically the exclusion of students, and questioned how much students were 'included' in policy processes. It investigated what constraints were placed on their participation and what agency they enjoyed, especially at a secondary school level, within their school and within a school change process. Whilst the main theoretical framing for the thesis is critical theory, postmodernist policy cycle insights are also drawn on to enhance the analysis; the finer detail of this theoretical positioning is explored in Chapter Four.

Case Studies

Consistent with the in-depth understandings sought in the present research, a qualitative case study method was chosen. One of the values of qualitative case studies of educational change is that they give public voice to those who experience change and are most directly affected by it (Hargreaves et al., 1993). Case study method was chosen because it captures the complexity of the case (Stake, 1995), and allows for data gathering from many different sources, including interviews, field observations and documents, set within the context of the site. The contexts in each case study school formed an integral part of the present study in exploring understandings of how students viewed the implementation of the changes in their particular schools. Three State high

schools were chosen: Park Hills College, Lighthouse High School and Rural High School[4]. The schools in which the research took place experienced substantial educational and organisational changes, including school amalgamations and school closures, and the introduction of Middle Schooling. The localised contexts of each of the schools is described and explored in detail prior to the presentation of findings of each site, as contexts and data are intimately interrelated.

Focus group interviews with small groups of secondary students were the primary form of data collection in each of the schools. Only volunteer students were interviewed, in keeping with a critical theory framework and the wish to empower students to make their own decisions about participation. A perceived limitation in using volunteers is that not all relevant sections of the school's student population may be represented. However, it was important for the purposes of the present study that students felt that they could be as candid as possible during the interviews. Other forms of data collection included some individual interviews with students, as well as interviews with staff, document analysis and field notes. Approximately one hundred people were interviewed across the three schools. The intention of extending the data sources beyond student responses was to give the background and contexts of the case studies, to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and for triangulation of the data gathered during the focus group interviews. A cross-case analysis was carried out to deepen the understanding of, and explore further,

[4] These pseudonyms for each of the schools are used throughout the thesis.

the relationship between students and school change and to allow for ‘meta-level’ themes to emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Aims and Research Questions

To reiterate then, the present study aimed to explore students’ perceptions of educational change in their school brought about by a particular ensemble of a government policy, the *LAEP Framework*. It aimed to develop theory about the constraints placed on adolescents’ receptions of, and responses to, educational change and to explore the capacity they have to act. A central concern was to examine how these students perceived their role in educational change as expressed in their 'voices', to contribute to new ways of knowing (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994), new ways of seeing educational change. The study was not intended to test specific theories or hypotheses. Rather it was based on an exploration of students' perceptions of the extent to which they were affected by or influenced school change, to question what roles students could or should have. The outcomes of the in-depth exploration should give new insights into the implications of educational change and so contribute to a deeper understanding of change processes.

The specific research questions that guided the study were as follows:

- What were students' perceptions of educational change as it happened to them in each case study school?
- Did students believe that the changes made any difference to their school experiences and outcomes?

- Did students believe they influenced the process of educational change in the school?
- In whose interests did students perceive changes to the school were made?

Significance of the Study

The research represents a substantial and original contribution to knowledge in a number of ways. First, the present study explored students' perceptions of, and responses to, educational change as it happened to them as part of the substantial organisational and educational restructuring of their secondary schools. While the changes were set within a broader context of educational change at the State, national and global levels, the present study will contribute an in-depth analysis of student perceptions at the micro-level, the school sites.

Secondly, the study is pioneering in that it drew upon students' voices to express their perceptions of school change as the result of an ensemble of policies in WA. The research was carried out in response to two recent propositions in the educational change literature. First, there was recognition that the voices of students have been heard rarely in discussions about school change or in bringing about educational success for all (Fullan, 2001; Miles, 1998; Nieto, 1994; Rudduck, Day, & Wallace, 1997). Yet, students may suggest ways to bring about change that may be longer lasting and perhaps have a greater impact on the educational success of all students. Second, there was also the perception that students' actions may have a greater impact on the outcomes of

educational change than has previously been recognised (Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Freidman, 1997).

Limitations

It is important to note that there is no attempt to generalise the findings from the case study schools to other schools responding to the *LAEP Framework* in WA or other schools undergoing restructuring in other systems. As Rosenmund (2000) indicates, case studies are closely connected with their specific contexts, and therefore the findings should not be directly transferred to other contexts. However, as argued by Uhrmacher (1993), case studies can constitute heuristic devices or 'good tools for thinking with' and they can provide the reader with some insights into potential student responses to educational change elsewhere. There will be essential differences in other settings, which it would be important not to gloss over. However, the purpose of the present study was not to make generalisations but to explore the complexities of each case and to present them in enough "detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 1991, p. 41; see also Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Through the exploration of students' voices, it was also intended to contribute to new ways of knowing and new ways of seeing educational change (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Outline of Thesis

The thesis broadly follows the overview given in the present chapter. The next chapter explores in detail the context of the study, giving an outline of

both the present day context of State secondary schooling in WA and the historical location of the policy, the *LAEP Framework*, as well as investigating the possibly conflicting discourses that can be identified in the policy. The third chapter presents a critical analysis of the work of major researchers and writers in the field of educational change, its past, participants and purposes, and its intersection with government policy initiatives in a variety of countries across the globe to the present time. It also delves deeper into the roles of different participants in school change, with a specific focus on students. What are the roles students have, how are they assigned, by whom and to what effect?

The fourth chapter outlines in detail the conceptual framework used to guide the thesis. The adoption of an hybrid approach, using a critical theory perspective enhanced by postmodern 'policy cycle' understandings, allowed for more detailed explorations at the micro-level, particularly into the perceptions of students. Consistent with the in-depth understandings sought in the present research a qualitative case study method was chosen. This is discussed more fully in Chapter Five, which presents the methods used to conduct the study.

Chapters Six to Eight present the three case studies, including a detailed description of the contexts of each of the sites, on the understanding that data from a 'case' should not be separated from the localised context in which it was generated. Chapter Nine presents a cross-case analysis. It is here that the three case study schools are compared and similarities and differences are analysed. Themes identified in the literature review and explored in each of the case study schools are revisited and further examined using the conceptual framework

developed in Chapter Four. At the end of Chapter Nine a summary is given and an understanding is developed of the implementation of the *LAEP Framework* policy across the three schools. Key theoretical propositions suggested in response to the findings are then elaborated in the last chapter. Chapter Ten of the thesis revisits the research questions and asks 'where to from here?'. This final chapter gives a summary of the thesis, explores in greater depth the theoretical propositions made in Chapter Nine and draws some conclusions, before looking at the implications of the study for theory and for all the actors in the policy processes, from the policy initiators to the students.

CHAPTER TWO

The Study in Context

Introduction

Educational change, in WA as elsewhere, has taken the form of major school restructuring and school reculturing, often with an underlying rationale for improving the educational success of *all* students. Historically, many of the changes introduced in schools have been a result of top-down policy initiatives and have sought to address specific issues of academic failure, school dropouts, student alienation, and the need to equip students to be contributors in an increasingly complex 'global' society. To this end in late 1997, the Western Australian Government released its *Plan for Government School Education* (EDWA, 1997c) to set the direction for the government education system over the following three years and into the twenty-first century.

The *Plan* represented a policy ensemble (Ball, 1994), which included the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council, 1998), the *Making the Difference Policy* (EDWA, 1998), and the *Local Area Education Planning Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), aimed at restructuring and reculturing education framed in the rhetoric of improving outcomes for *all* students. The *Curriculum Framework* represents a major educational change towards outcomes-based education, the purpose of which is to improve the learning and achievement of *all* students (Curriculum Council, 1998). The *Making the Difference Policy* was released in

1998 and schools were encouraged to develop strategies that would address further issues pertaining to students at educational risk (EDWA, 1998). The aim of the *Local Area Education Planning Framework* (hereafter *LAEP Framework*) policy was to modify or reorganise central authority planning for the delivery of education. Instead of focussing planning on individual schools, planning would focus on groups of schools in order to better manage the delivery of curriculum and resources (EDWA, 1997a). It is the *LAEP Framework* policy and the educational changes that ensued its enactment, which are the focus of the present study, although it is important to note that the policy was not enacted in isolation.

Policies are never released in a vacuum. There are a number of contexts, which will impact upon how the policy is written, how it is received and how it is acted upon (Taylor et al., 1997). Understanding the contexts also exposes the intentions of the policy. When investigating the *LAEP Framework* it becomes apparent that two, potentially conflicting discourses can be identified. These will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. First, it is imperative to outline both the present context of the nature of State secondary schooling in WA and the historical location of the policy, consistent with Ranson's argument (1996) as being essential to any policy analysis.

Schools in Western Australia

Education has always been the legal responsibility of State governments in Australia. Secondary schooling in WA is offered by both the State government

(approximately 70% of students) and in the private[5] sector (approximately 30% of students). State government schools are under the authority of the Department of Education and Training (DET), which in 2003 changed its name from the Department of Education (DOE). Prior to this it was known as the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) in the 1990s, and the Ministry of Education in the 1980s. The DET, through enabling legislation, governs the State school system. The legislation, and its attendant regulations, covers for example areas such as curriculum, work organisations, the power of officials and disciplinary action (Angus, 1998). The State schools are predominantly financed by the State, (although Commonwealth funding to schools is increasing) and account for about a quarter of the State's budget (Department of Education [DOE], 2002).

The State school system is a highly centralised system and responsible to the Minister for Education. The DET is divided into 16 districts, with district offices that service and assist schools. There are four metropolitan districts, two outer metropolitan districts and because of the vastness of the State, ten rural and remote districts. All staff employed in State schools are employed by the DET, which currently employs approximately 6 500 secondary teachers (DOE, 2002). Most teachers are placed in schools by the DET; however, about 20% of schools are able to select all or most of their staff from the DET staffing pool based on a system of merit.

[5] The term private denotes non-systemic schools, partly funded by State and Federal governments but mostly by parents, hence the word 'private'. State system schools, or 'public' schools are fully government funded. Arguably, though, with an enhanced market ideology in education, the boundaries between 'private' and 'public' are blurring as governments support both types of schools and a 'user pays' approach is being forged even in public schools, albeit to a lesser extent.

About 70% of students throughout the State are currently enrolled in DET schools. There are about 200 State schools offering comprehensive secondary school education to approximately 85 000 students (DOE, 2002). The most common configuration for secondary education is Years 8-12, split into compulsory education (Years 8-10) and post compulsory education (Year 11 and 12) delivered on a single site. However, there are a number of other options for the delivery of secondary education within the State system, which include Senior Campuses (Year 11 and 12), Agricultural Colleges (Year 8-12, specialising in agricultural education), District High Schools (Year 8-10 attached to primary schools) and High Schools (Year 8-10). In more recent years, there has been the encouragement, through the *National Middle Years of Schooling Project* (Australian Curriculum Studies Association [ACSA], 1997), for schools to explore the introduction of Middle Schooling, which has seen a number of schools adopting a Middle School/Senior School split (Year 8-9/Year 10-12), most commonly on a single site.

State schools in the metropolitan and outer metropolitan area of Perth (the capital city of WA) are zoned, and students attend the school in their area of residence. In recent years there has been a relaxation in zones and students may apply to attend 'other' State schools outside their area. However this is only possible if the school has room and if it has not been declared as a 'local-intake school' by the DET – arguably a form of quasi markets in schooling. Notionally State schools are non-selective, accepting all students from within the zone boundaries and offering a wide range of subjects. However, it has been

impossible to resource all schools to offer all subjects and a system of specialist programs attached to some schools has evolved over time (Angus & Olney, 1998). This has included specialisation in arts, music, sports and academic extension. Nevertheless, strong administrative control from a central bureaucracy continues to be a feature in both curriculum and organisational contexts, as it has from the DETs inception back in the 1890s.

The Historical Location

There are a number of core ongoing tensions in WA education, which are reflected in the *LAEP Framework* policy under investigation. These have their origins in the history of the Department. The WA Education Department was established in 1893 to provide State primary and secondary education that was free, compulsory and secular (Angus & Olney, 1998). In common with the establishment of secondary education in other States (Hooper, 1999), its beginnings were problematic. There was a belief amongst some, most notably the existing private religious schools, that the State should limit its involvement in secondary education (Mossenson, 1972). Many people believed that it was not within the role of the State to be involved in secondary education at all, that the State's role finished with elementary education and that secondary education provision was best left to the private schools (Ewers, 1947; Ibbotson, 1965). Others considered that the State should be involved in the provision of secondary education. The chief concern of those who supported its introduction did so based on the notion that there should be access for *all* students, an underlying principle of the Board of Education back in the mid 1800's. It was a belief supported by the community of the time:

> We have no right to discriminate as to the parties to whom education should be imparted. We ought to have no class education, but all should receive the benefit of a liberal course of instruction (*Commercial News and Shipping Gazette*, 1855, quoted in Haynes, 1997).

Cyril Jackson, the Inspector General of Education from 1897-1903, also opposed the view that the educational responsibilities of the State ceased with the provision of elementary schooling (Mossenson, 1972). His successor, Cecil Andrews, the Inspector General from 1903, agreed and made it clear to the then Minister for Education in a special note that "the organisation and control of Secondary Education is one of the most important functions of the State" (cited in Ewers, 1947, p. 119).

When Andrews took over his role of Inspector General he inherited a system where some students were being educated at the secondary level in private schools, some on government bursaries, and some were being educated in ex-seventh[6] schools, such as Perth Boys' School (EDWA, 1963). Andrews believed not only that it was the role of the government to provide secondary education, but also that it should be available to *all*. His push for the introduction of comprehensive coeducation resulted in the opening of Perth Modern School in 1911 (Ibbotson, 1965). His primary concern was a quality classical education for *all* students, including those from poorer backgrounds. However, he also agreed with James Walton, an inspector of schools, who, in 1905, urged for the introduction of secondary schools, not only for classical education, but also to provide a vocational education to meet the needs of the growing economy of the young State, and particularly to service rural settings

[6] 'Ex-seventh' schools were the first State schools to offer a form of secondary education. These schools allowed students who had completed grade seven, the final primary year, to stay on and prepared them for the external examinations run by the University of Adelaide (EDWA, 1963).

specialising in mining and agriculture (Walton, 1905, appendix, in Ibbotson, 1965).

The result was a split system, as the Department tried to balance the economic needs for vocational education with social justice and equity interests. On the one hand was Perth Modern, a highly selective and elitist school with entry based on performance in the Government controlled scholarship or school entry examination and by recommendation from the primary 'headmaster' (principal). However, it was free and secular and anyone meeting the above criteria could attend. An elitist school had not been Andrews' intention when he had pressed for the establishment of secondary education. He had envisioned a system open to *all* students who wished to enter it; however, due to the limited number of places available and the failure to secure a second high school in the Perth area, Perth Modern became highly selective (Mossenson, 1972). For those who failed to gain entry, yet wished to continue their education, Central schools were established, designed to cater specifically for the vocational needs of early school leavers, who would leave at the age of 14 (EDWA, 1963). Alternatively, students could also attend one of the many fee-paying secondary schools.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Education Department continued to grapple with the tensions between the needs for differentiated academic and vocational education on the one hand, and the need to provide a quality education for *all* students on the other. The problem was heightened shortly after 1946, with the renaming of Central schools to three-year high schools. This had an impact on the education offered, as the aim of these schools was now to prepare

students for the Junior Leaving Certificate instead of catering to the vocational needs of the early school leavers (EDWA, 1963). It can be argued that the rapid expansion of a mass secondary education for a growing population across Australia, caused a temporary divergence from education as necessary for economic development, towards pressure to establish a rigorous academic system (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998).

By 1957, it was recognised that secondary schools in WA were not meeting the needs of the students (Education Department, 1958), a result of the change of emphasis from the vocational to the academic in high schools. A departmental review was called to “see if the products of our schools were meeting the needs of citizenship and employment" (Education Department, 1958, Foreword). The 1957 Committee, established by the Department, became primarily engaged with the question of "What Shall We Teach?" (Education Department, 1958, p. 1). Their *Interim Report* lists a number of basic principles the first of which reads:

> The basic aim of this programme is to provide the opportunity for girls and boys to develop as individuals and citizens whose attitudes and attainments enable them to live full lives, contribute to society and to obtain employment satisfactory to themselves and their employers (Education Department, 1958, p. 2).

The question of ‘what to teach’ continued to be problematic. The Department’s reports, Dettman (EDWA, 1969), Priest (EDWA, 1981), and Beazley (Beazley, 1984), to name just three, were littered with recommendations regarding students, learning, social justice and students whose educational and vocational needs were not being met by the Department’s educational provisions in its mainstream system. Yet, despite the many recommendations, the emphasis

continued to be on the academic, with vocational education playing only a minor role.

It was not until the early 1980s that education and economics once more converged, as it had under Andrews during the establishment of State secondary education. It could be argued, however, that the ideological shift of the 1980s was unprecedented in terms of framing economics as the driving force for education policy (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). A number of factors have been responsible for this trend, including the growing globalisation of the economy, a societal push for parental and community involvement in education, and the increasing cost of public education leading to concerns about efficiency in the delivery of educational services (Caldwell, 1993). In WA, the release of *Better Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1987) introduced the move to self-management of schools through the devolution of some financial responsibilities and decision-making about operational matters to the school level, and allowed for a more prominent role for parents in the governance of their local high school (Angus & Olney, 1998; Townsend, 2000). Schools have responded also to the increasing economic pressures by introducing new vocational education and training initiatives. The prominence of vocational education has increased dramatically. During 2001, 41.5% of Years 11-12 students at 135 State government schools in WA participated in vocational education and training, compared with less than 3% at 36 schools in 1997 (DOE, 2002). Yet schools continued to fail to meet the needs of all students as up to 3% of students, under the school leaving age of 15, miss at least one day a week, and a number of these students go on to leave school without completing Year 10 (Zubrick et al., 1997).

Issues of social justice for *all* and the need for education to serve the work force have been in tension in the State school system in WA, although waxing and waning at different times. They represent some of the historical contexts that have framed the *LAEP Framework*, released as a key State government policy in the late 1990s, which continues to rehearse the conflicting discourses of economic rationalism and social justice. Another important context that has framed the *LAEP Framework* has been the increasing involvement of the Commonwealth Government in school education.

Commonwealth Government and School Education

Political and social changes in education in Australia led to the intervention of the Commonwealth Government in school education. Before the 1970s the Commonwealth Government had little influence over State schools. Financial assistance to schools from the Commonwealth Government had been in the form of tied grants for building Commonwealth funded science blocks and libraries. The major thrust for the Commonwealth Government to become a more prominent player in the field of school education came from the Karmel Report (Karmel, 1973), which favoured decentralisation, devolution as much as possible to the school, and consultation about schooling with parents and students. Although the term devolution was used in the Karmel report, there has been a slippage over time in the discourses surrounding the movement (Karlsen, 2000). The Karmel Report argued for devolution for local level empowerment, strengthening democracy. Arguably, more recent rationales for devolution have shifted to focus on decentralisation as delegation, in this case in the ‘national

economic interest' (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). In this sense decentralisation implies "a transmission of tasks … usually defined by central authorities" (Karlsen, 2000, p. 526). There is not a shifting of power, as local agents are given the task of implementing tasks and decision made at the centre.

The outcome of the Karmel Report was the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC), established in 1974, which disbursed special purpose grants to schools based on submissions prepared by the school and their communities. Whilst the CSC was discontinued in the late 1980s, other Commonwealth initiatives have meant a growing influence (even control) by this Government. These initiatives have included the National Project for the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL) in the early 1990s, the Priority Schools Project, and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, all of which have served to increase the amount of funds flowing from Commonwealth coffers, directly to schools. They have also increased Commonwealth Government involvement in State education as all funds have been tied to schools implementing some of the Commonwealth initiatives such as literacy and numeracy testing. It could be argued that Commonwealth funds have become a policy lever. Initial efforts flowing from the Karmel Report in the 1970s were concerned with social justice issues and equity; however, youth unemployment at high levels has meant that the focus of Commonwealth initiatives moved to making "young Australians more employable" (Townsend, 2000, p. 238; see also Dudley & Vidovich, 1995).

The growing Commonwealth concern with the economy and employment placed greater pressure on State education systems to respond, to provide the skills needed by young Australians for the world of work. The lack of highly skilled employees was seen by the Government as a failure of schools and was considered a concern in the light of the growing globalisation of the economy (Haynes, 1997; Levin & Riffel, 1997). A more highly educated and more skilful work force was believed to lead to greater economic development and contribute to a more advanced and competitive society (Edwards, 1997). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) played a particularly influential role in Australia in establishing the credibility of education's subordination to the economy and its function as the vocational training agency in order to increase a nation's economic advancement (Chapman, Aspin, & Taylor, 1997; Dudley & Vidovich, 1995; Henry et al., 2001). In 1987, the Commonwealth Department of Education was incorporated into the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). The then Commonwealth Minister for Education, John Dawkins, made the following comment regarding the naming of the Department, signalling that economics would drive education policy:

> Employment has been placed first in the title because it represents our ultimate objective - to help people, particularly the young, get the best job possible. This is not only in their best interests as individuals; it is also an important national objective if we are to have a vibrant economy. This means the Department will play a central role in gearing Australia to meet the new economic challenges of the late twentieth century (quoted in Haynes, 1997, p. 45).

A further change in policy saw the Minister and DEET placing greater emphasis on school retention rates. Target participation rates of 95% in post-compulsory education by the year 2001 were proposed to guide school retention

strategies and reduce youth unemployment (Dwyer, 1996). The changing demands of the labour market meant that many students were already staying at school. In WA, the number of students continuing on to Year 12 grew from 17.8% in 1960 to 43.2% by 1985 (Secondary Education Authority [SEA], 1989). During the 1990s the Commonwealth Coalition government, by making an accompanying change to youth unemployment benefits, has been able to encourage many 15 and 16 year olds to stay on at school and at the same time keep them off the "politically embarrassing unemployment lists" (Haynes, 1997).

The issue of youth unemployment has become of major social and political concern over the past years. Thirty or more years ago it was sufficient that those who were not academically inclined or able would go out and get employment, usually without the benefit of a high school diploma or certificate. The labour market was able to absorb a great many unskilled workers. However, the labour market has changed significantly since the 1960s and there are now not enough unskilled jobs available to take up the number of adolescents who leave school early (Taylor et al., 1997). Today, to leave without having completed high school, or gained a certificate or diploma is to leave for certain unemployment (Dwyer, 1996).

Haynes (1997) argued that in a society where economic considerations were determined to be the most important, education was presented as a priority, to meet the vocational demands faced by adolescents. Education, particularly secondary education, is often seen as the crossroads of adolescents' lives, a 'gateway' to economic advantage (Delors, 1996). However, in Australia 25% of

the age cohort continue to fail to complete school (Dwyer, 1996). Many adolescents leave school without an adequate knowledge or skills base (OECD, 1996). Although, historically secondary education has been the responsibility of the States, the Commonwealth Government believed that it had an important role to play, in identifying national policy priorities in education, especially the "strengthening of Australian's efforts in schooling [as a] central element of the restructuring of the Australian economy" (Lingard & Porter, 1997, p. 3). It became therefore important for secondary education to teach the knowledge and skills required for the preparation of a work life. Initially there was quite a resistance by teachers to the mounting emphasis on vocational education (Caldwell & Hayward, 1998). Yet, the last decade has seen the growing acceptance by educational institutions of the relevance of work and employment skills to the curriculum: "over the past decade there has been an acceptance of structured links between education and work" (Caldwell & Keating, 2003, p.10).

The historical tensions and the growing influence of the Commonwealth Government are major contexts that have framed the *LAEP Framework* policy and its enactment in schools. The following section discusses the policy in detail.

The LAEP Framework

The *LAEP Framework* released by the EDWA in 1997, reveals global influences such as the need to deal with students at educational risk and thereby educate citizens for a global world, as well as concerns with economic demands for governments to demonstrate greater value for money in expenditure of funds.

The *LAEP Framework* uses the rhetoric of social justice and a quality education for *all* students whilst encouraging districts to be more accountable and use 'flexible' resourcing structures. According to the policy the aim for each district was to streamline the delivery of educational services, for the "improvement of student access to curriculum and quality facilities, with the intention of improving educational outcomes for all students across a cluster of schools" (EDWA, 1997a, p.2). Yet at the same time the most efficient use was to be made of resources, and those resources released by the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment are to be "reinvested into the government school system at both local and State levels" (EDWA, 1997a, p. 2).

The *LAEP Framework* policy file presents an ensemble consisting of a number of documents. In the first instance the policy document included the policy statement, a brief background statement, a set of guiding principles, and implementation procedures. The original policy document has undergone some changes over time to make adjustments and to clarify the process of implementation, although the content of the basic policy remains the same (DET, 2004). The original policy, as released to schools in September of 1997, was accompanied by a resource file, which included further documents to support schools undergoing the *LAEP Framework* enactment. The file contains a copy of the planning approval process diagram, a large number of blank forms to help schools with the information gathering process concerning their school and the surrounding community, a human resources management policy for schools undergoing restructuring, examples of draft plans, discussion papers on the on-going post-compulsory review, student alienation, Middle Schooling, and

‘critical mass arguments’ about the rationale for amalgamations. There were also documents relating to financial matters, such as school bank accounts, as well as a number of overhead masters and accompanying notes for use in public and school meetings. The overhead masters gave the full details of the policy, background, guiding principles, objectives and planning process as well as options to be considered during the enactment process.

The *LAEP Framework* policy and accompanying resource file, epitomises the tensions evident in the ideological underpinnings of education policy in WA over much of the previous century. According to the wording of the policy, local area education plans must address social justice concerns relating to “improving educational outcomes for *all* students” whilst attending to economic matters by taking “into account the best use of resources” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 2, emphasis added). The background statement requires schools to “best meet the needs of local students” but at the same time uses the rhetoric of marketisation requiring schools to be “competitive with the private sector” and “effectively avoid duplication and under utilisation” (EDWA, 1997a, overhead notes 2). The revised version of the policy background statement (DET, 2004) makes the claim that “improving education outcomes can be supported by recurrent savings generated by *LAEP Framework* clusters from the sale of assets and ongoing, recurrent savings made as a result of a more effective use of resources” (DET, 2004, p. 2).

Staff, parents, secondary students and the wider community were to be consulted on plans for their area – the *LAEP Framework* was to be a “customer

driven process" (EDWA, 1997a, notes overhead 5). Change options given for consideration, through consultation and by each district, included school amalgamations, school closures, and the creation of senior colleges and 'hub' schools. The most controversial of these strategies, and the one most vociferously challenged by parents and local communities was to amalgamate a number of schools, which serviced the same area. This brought about the closure of several schools, especially in suburban Perth.

The other change strategy which the Education Department encouraged schools to explore in response to its *Plan for Government School Education* was the creation of a 'hub' or 'Middle School', that is a school within a school. The *National Middle Years of Schooling Project* (ACSA, 1997), a section of which was reproduced as part of the accompanying resource file, explored the nature of student alienation in the middle years and recommended the transformation of the middle years to meet the learning needs of students during these years. Although the Education Department would not seek the implementation of uniform systemic change to introduce Middle Schools *per se*, it would support schools that wished to introduce this organisational change (EDWA, 1997c).

Conclusion

The *LAEP Framework*, released in 1997, continues to rehearse the Education Department's social justice discourses, concerning students at risk, as well as economising discourses, foregrounding the efficient and effective use of resources. The introduction of the policy has seen great systemic changes in the educational system in WA. Yet, reform agendas, influenced by the intervention

of the Commonwealth Government in State education issues, are but echoes of global trends. These international trends in educational change, as well as a critical analysis of the work of major researchers and writers in the field will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. An in-depth exploration of three case study schools in WA, created as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment will be presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of the thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Introduction

> We hardly know anything about what students think about educational change, because no one ever asks them (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 182).
>
> When adults do think of students, they think of them as the potential beneficiaries of change. They think of achievement results, skills, attitudes, and jobs. *They rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organisational life…* Innovations and their inherent conflicts often become ends in themselves and students get thoroughly lost in the shuffle (Fullan, 2001, p. 151).

This is a study of students in educational change. Educational change is a term that describes a complex phenomenon (Howard & Liner, 1990), which is multidimensional in character (Fullan, 1982) and is continuous in schools (Levin & Riffel, 1997). In recent times the pace of educational change has increased as governments throughout the world have become involved in reforming education systems "to enhance educational standards and thereby ensure that more young people reach ever higher levels of knowledge and skills in the fierce international competition for economic success" (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 45). Taylor et al. (1997) have suggested that policy has replaced educational theory as the source of guidance for educational change, and that educational policy has become the bureaucratic instrument with which to administer the expectations that governments have of education. Globally it has been assumed that a country's

economic future depends on a modernised education system closely monitored by the state (Edwards, 2001) and that such change must focus on the broader aim of lifelong learning, by seeking to improve students' abilities and motivations to becoming autonomous learners (Istance, 1999).

Educational change is about redefining roles involving shifts in power and responsibilities, between the different actors involved (Friedman, 1997; Hargreaves et al., 1993), including teachers, school administrators, parents, the community and students. Yet, it is those in leadership, exerting the most influence, who use their power, privilege and status in order to sustain, and propagate, particular versions of schooling (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Meanwhile, students continue to be the 'objects' of educational change (Fullan, 2001), "objects to be worked upon rather than actors to be taken seriously" (Levin, 2000, p. 164). They have become submerged in what Freire has termed a *culture of silence* (Freire, 1970), and excluded as participants (Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Shaull, 1970; Thiessen & Hargreaves, 1993) in both the processes and decision-making roles of change (Fullan, 2001). Students, instead of being empowered by the changes, often find themselves lost in the changing environment (Fullan, 2001). However, the power of the largely silent majority can be used to subvert change (Bowe et al., 1992) and some studies indicate that students may be among the most powerful participants, especially when it comes to protecting the *status quo* (Corbett & Wilson, 1995; Friedman, 1997; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000; Thiessen & Hargreaves, 1993).

The present chapter presents a critical analysis of the work of major researchers and writers in the field of educational change, its past, participants and purposes, and its intersection with policy to the present time. The chapter is organised into three parts intended to tease out the complexities of educational change. First, a greater understanding of the term 'educational change' is sought, by examining a range of definitions. Secondly, an attempt is made to encapsulate the development of the field of educational change, taking a look at educational change more closely, from its "roots to its contemporary questions" (Lieberman, 1998, p. 13). This second part of the chapter uses Fullan's 'four decades' (Fullan, 1998) as an organisational framework to explore the development of educational change over time and the growing influence of government policy. Two themes, raised in the literature, are highlighted throughout the second part. The first theme deals with governments, policy initiatives (Bowe et al., 1992) and the 'economising' of education (Ozga, 2000). The second theme discusses what Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) have termed the *moral purpose* of change, changing schools to meet the perceived needs of students. These two themes are explored in tandem, as to separate them would be artificial and decontextualise what has taken place. The growing influence of the school effectiveness movement is also discussed.

The last section of the chapter, delves deeper into the roles of different participants in school change, with a specific focus on students. What are the roles students have, how are they assigned, by whom and to what effect? At the end of the present chapter, the implications for viewing students as participants

in change are considered: what roles could and/or should students play in educational change?

Defining Educational Change

Educational change is a very complex phenomenon which is continuous in schools (Levin & Riffel, 1997), and which "emerged as a self conscious field of study in the period after World War II" (Lieberman, 1998, p. 13). The term educational change is a very generic term (Hargreaves, 1994), which implies that in any educational context, between time one and time two some noticeable alteration has taken place (Miles, 1964). The term refers to any of the processes that alter the behaviours, attitudes, roles and responsibilities of those who are involved in education. It is also used to describe the alteration of structures, procedures or outputs of an educational organisation – such as a class, school, school district or an entire educational system (Fullan, 1998; Hargreaves et al., 1993; Hopkins et al., 1994; Miles, 1964).

A study of the literature reveals that there are many ways of viewing and defining change. Educational change can be defined as the "dynamic and continuous process of development and growth that involves a reorganisation in response to 'felt needs' process of transformation, a flow from one state to another" (Morrison, 1998, p. 13). It can be both highly planned or less planned, be seen as pre-planned and predictable in nature or emergent, based on the assumption that change is continuous, open-ended, and unpredictable. Evans (1996) discusses the public ideal that sees educational change as being growth and renewal, progress and development. However, Fullan (1991) earlier made

the point that the notion of progress should not be included in the definition of educational change, insisting that *progress* and *change* are two terms that should not be confused with one another. *Change* is the result of introduced innovative programs, and may include any educational changes as the result of legislation, new and revised curricula, and any special project, "any practice new to the person attempting to cope with an educational problem" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; p. 4). Further, Fullan made the observation that "resisting certain changes may be more *progressive* than adopting them" (p. 4; emphasis mine). Smith, Dwyer, Prunty and Kleine (1988), on the other hand, see educational innovation as specific planned improvement and just "one class of phenomena in the larger category of educational change" (p. 18).

An Analytical Context of the Concept of 'Innovation'

1. Educational change – the general category
2. Change from an 'evaluation' or 'ideological' perspective
    - Innovation
    - Reform
    - Utopia
3. Change from a 'naturalistic' or 'organic' perspective
    - Genesis
    - Evolution
    - Growth
    - Decline
4. Change from a 'mechanistic' or 'technical' perspective
    - Addition
    - Subtraction
    - Restructuring: differentiation and reorganization
5. Change from a 'contextualist' or 'political' perspective
    - Interest
    - Choice
    - Conflict
    - Negotiation
    - Power
    - Compromise

Source: Smith et al., (1988), p.19

Figure 3.1: Conceptualisation of change.

They conceptualised educational change as the general category providing "an analytical context for the concept of educational innovation" (p.18, see Figure 3.1). Change, as they have conceptualised it, can be viewed from various perspectives – ideological, organic, technical or political – depending on the contexts of the innovation and the point of view of the actors involved.

Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994), also see educational change in this broader sense. Educational change for them has two features, the sources and style, which interact to produce a basic typology (see Figure 3.2). Hopkins et al. (1994) restrict themselves to two forms of educational change: *incremental change*, the "gradual, often subtle transition from one state to another" or *planned change*, "which seeks to interrupt the natural development of events, to break with previous practice to establish a new order" (p. 21). The two sources for educational change may be *external*, 'what others would do to us, to our school' or *internal*, 'natural' or 'organic' growth. Hopkins et al. and Fullan (1991) concur in identifying two drivers of school change: bottom up innovation (Fullan terms this voluntary; Hopkins et al. describe this as purposive) and top down pressures and initiatives (imposed – Fullan; response to external pressure – Hopkins et al.).

	Internal	External
Planned	Purposive	Innovation
Incremental	Personal development/growth	Environmental

Source: Hopkins et al. (1994), p. 22

Figure 3.2: A typology of change

Voluntary or purposive change is taken on by the staff of a school, and is change planned with a particular purpose in mind, and is usually characterised by a problem solving approach. The problem-solving model (Havelock, 1973) starts from an identified need, which is translated into a problem. Solutions are searched for, which may involve calling in an outside consultant. The innovation is tested on site and, if necessary, adapted to the situation (Havelock, 1973). Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found in their investigation of the effects of public policy on educational change in the United States of America (USA) that purposive innovations had a high fidelity of implementation and continuation.

One strategy for purposive school change is the use of school development planning (Hopkins et al., 1994). Whilst school development plans can and do include changes imposed from outside the school, the purpose of a development plan is to help the school prioritise and coordinate action for the needs identified by the school, either by some of all of the staff (Hopkins et al., 1994). School development plans include creating a vision for the school; investigating and solving problems, setting goals for greater mastery, and developing collaborative work cultures (Fullan, 1993). School development planning, as a way of enacting change is a long-term strategy and can take years to implement effectively (Fullan, 1993).

Top down change or imposed change is often in response to external pressures, such as government initiatives. It may also take the form of an externally developed innovation introduced into the school by senior

administration or an external change agent. Innovations such as these were often developed using the Research, Design and Development (RD&D) model (Havelock, 1973). The emphasis of the RD&D model was on the quality of the research, which would turn out a product that would be in high demand by the consumer. The planning was done on a massive scale over a long period, and, at the other end, there would be a passive and rational consumer to accept and adopt the innovation, given time. There was a high initial development cost before any dissemination, but this was offset, purportedly, by the efficiency and quality of the innovation (Havelock, 1973). Innovations developed following the RD&D model have included curriculum materials, technology innovations, and organisational innovations (Fullan, 1998). There have been a number of strategies for the implementation of external change initiatives; the best known of these are the *empirical-rational*, *normative-re-educative*, and *power-coercive* change strategies of Chin and Benne (1985). These are discussed in detail later in the chapter.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, defining educational change is a complex pursuit; educational change can be viewed from many different perspectives, depending on the involvement of the actors (Smith et al., 1988). For the purposes of the present study, the emphasis is on *planned* educational change, as defined by Hopkins et al. (1994), which includes both purposive changes and innovations introduced in response to external pressures. Educational change in the present study is also considered from a political angle, as the context of the changes studied included issues of choice, conflict, negotiation, power, and compromise (Smith et al., 1988).

Educational Change Up Close

Whilst educational change is not new, especially if one includes the notions of 'progress, growth and development' (Evans, 1996) as part of the definition, certainly the *study* of change, the "history of serious investigation" (Hopkins et al., 1994, p. 22) into the nature and process of change is relatively brief (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Writers who have documented change in the last four decades agree that the starting point for a closer examination of educational change was some time in the 1960's (Fullan, 1998; Hopkins et al., 1994; Lieberman, 1998; Miles, 1998). Lieberman, in her review of the growth of educational change as a field of study, has suggested that it was the USA's National Defence Education Act in 1958, the result of the Russians launching Sputnik, which saw private foundations, governments and educators begin to enquire more closely into the schools, classrooms, and curriculum (Lieberman, 1998).

The era immediately post World War Two was a time of immense growth in schools and universities in westernised countries such as the USA, Australia and England, both in the number of schools opened and the number of students enrolled (Lieberman, 1998; Sarason, 1998) and the establishment of a mass universal secondary education system (Keeves, 1986). Yet, despite the emphasis on growth, Fullan describes this period as "relatively quiet" (Fullan, 1998, p. 214). It was a period where education "served as the guardian of tradition", changing only gradually in response to external happenings (Cros, 1999, p. 61). However, as Lieberman observed "underneath the seemingly placid surface, the

decade was incubating issues that would have immense repercussions on how and what the schools should teach and how and what students should learn" (Lieberman, 1998, p 14). Issues, such as what shape and form education should take, the growth in new technologies, and how to meet the growing demands from universities for students who could take advantage of the new technological and scientific discoveries (Lieberman, 1998; Miles, 1964; Sarason, 1998) confronted schools and put pressure on education systems to bring in reforms. Sputnik, the Cold War, mass immigrations and the growing Civil Rights movement put further pressure on schools, and brought in a decade that Miles (1998) described as "a transforming, exciting time for school change" (p. 42). There was an increase in direct government involvement in change, bringing about broad based educational reform through policy and legislation (Cros, 1999), particularly in areas such as the curriculum (Lieberman, 1998) and for the "poor and disadvantaged" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 23).

In an overview of educational change in North America and Europe, Fullan (1998) identified four decades, from 1960s until the turn of the last century, as the *Adoption Decade*, the *Implementation Decade*, the *Meaning Decade*, and the *Change Capacity Decade*. He described the 1960s, the *Adoption Decade*, as a period of the development and adoption of large-scale curriculum innovations, as well as of technical innovations such as television. The *Implementation Decade*, 1972-82, focused on the study of what was (or was not) changing in schools and the degree to which these changes were taking place. The *Meaning Decade*, 1982-92, Fullan described as a time of intensification and restructuring in educational change, with an increased focus

on allowing participants to find their own meaning concerning change. The *Change Capacity Decade*, 1992 up to the present, has emphasised the individual's capacity for change, without necessarily waiting for the system to change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Fullan, 1998).

Fullan's four decades will be used as an organisational framework to guide the following exploration of the development of educational change and its intersection with the external pressures which bring about change, such as educational policy. Fullan, in his pursuit of exploring the meaning of change, gives the function of government as one legitimate source of external change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). However, he separates the two roles of policy making and implementation, with "the policy maker on the one hand, and the local practitioner on the other" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 79). Yet, the last decade has seen a growing recognition that the separation between policy formulation and policy implementation is artificial (Vidovich, 2002). The present section of the chapter explores more closely the four decades of educational change elucidated by Fullan (1998) starting with the *Adoption Decade* and traces its growing intersection with policy. Whilst Fullan's framework is utilised to organise the chapter, a divergent range of literature from an array of perspectives is drawn on for each decade to give a more comprehensive picture of the development of change.

The Adoption Decade

The *Adoption Decade* was highlighted by economic growth in many OECD member countries, and has been described as the "glorious years of

economic development" (Cros, 1999, p. 61). The decade witnessed an increase of government spending in education, especially with an emphasis on social justice programs that would "attack inequalities of the class structure more directly" and would provide an "increased equality of opportunity (that) would support the disadvantaged and help to undermine the constraints of class domination" (Ranson, 1994, p. 24; see also Fullan, 2001). Ranson (1994), in his discussion of the 1960s in England, highlights that this era was significant for two other reasons. First, there was broad agreement between the different players over the goals of education, the "only argument was about how much money was going to be given" (Ranson, 1994, p. 25); and secondly because there was no conflict yet between the various education stakeholders, "the manoeuvring for power had not yet begun" (p. 25).

Primarily the focus of the period was on the adoption of curriculum materials (Hopkins et al., 1994). The aim was the diffusion into practice of innovations that were "technically better than the (ineffective, outmoded, entrenched…etc) present practice and would lead to better results" (Miles, 1998, p. 43) in schools, and there was an enormous range of innovations from which schools could choose. The goal was to move innovations out into the schools, "as if flooding the system with external ideas would bring about desired improvements" (Fullan, 1998, p. 215). Many of these were developed using the RD&D method described earlier in the present chapter.

A major study of the *Adoption Decade* was the Rand Study (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978) which looked at the fidelity, the extent to which the user's replication of an innovation's practice matched the developer's ideal (Loucks, 1983), of over 300 federally funded projects in the USA of this period. Innovations, created by 'experts' outside of the school system, were introduced to teachers using a variety of methods. Teachers were to use the innovations in their classrooms as they had been developed. Successful implementation occurred when teachers carried out the changes as directed, making no changes to the innovations at all (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992).

This, the Rand study found, proved an incorrect assumption (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978); few ideas made it behind the classroom doors, as they had been developed, if at all (Hopkins et al., 1994; Kimpston, 1985). Teachers often adapted innovations to suit their own needs and classroom environments (Loucks, 1983), taking those they thought were of use and integrating these into their teaching. The response was an attempt to create 'teacher proof' curriculum (Miles, 1998; Wood, 1990) in an effort to make sure that teachers did not change what or how the new curriculum knowledge was being conveyed (Klein, 1990). The adoption era and its attending enthusiasm for innovation ended abruptly, "almost overnight" (Fullan, 1998, p. 217), to give way to what Fullan (1998) called the *Implementation Decade*.

The Implementation Decade

The Implementation Decade runs roughly from 1972-1982. The term 'implementation' came into common use, referring to what was or was not

happening in practice. In his work, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Fullan labelled the first half of this decade the phase of *implementation failure* and the latter half of the decade the phase of *implementation success* (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 5). During the first half of the decade, researchers "were writing about" the failure of innovation implementation in schools (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 6). The beginning of the 1970s saw the publication in the USA of Sarason's work on culture and school change. His findings of research concerning schools in the USA highlighted the problems of making changes in schools: "the more things change, the more they remain the same" (Sarason, 1971, p. 2). Schools, Sarason maintained, were cultures and to change a culture was more difficult than simply to introduce innovations and assume they would be immediately adopted as they had been developed. To understand the culture of the school would give insight into how teachers and principals worked. Research published by Miles (1964) had already begun to hint that researchers would need to look more closely at the process of change; the focus in prior research had been on the innovation and not the user. It had been assumed that the teacher was a passive adopter of innovation (Fullan, 1998), but the research by Sarason (1971), the earlier research by Miles (1964), and ongoing research by others at that time (Dalin, 1974; Fullan, 1972; Goodlad, Klein, & Associates, 1970), showed that this was not the case. The Rand Study in the USA confirmed that, on the contrary, there was little fidelity in the 300 federally funded innovations that were studied (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). Berman and McLaughlin found that the outcome of the adoption of any educational change depended largely on the school district's needs, that different school districts implemented the same project differently, and that innovations were adapted to

their local setting (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), in what Smith and colleagues termed the contexts of the educational innovation (Smith et al., 1988).

The Rand Study suggested that USA federal education policy set aside the "largely ineffective R&D (research and development) approach" to education and to concentrate more on an "adaptive implementation" policy (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978, p 40). The mutual adaptation approach emerged in the late seventies in response to the findings of research done by Berman and McLaughlin. Researchers espousing the approach believed that the measure of a successful implementation should not be the degree to which the teacher was able to replicate the innovation as developed, but the ability of the school to use an externally developed innovation and at the same time create growth and improvement (Dalin, 1978). As the Rand study researchers observed, innovations accepted from the outside and simply adopted were very rare; most were adapted in some way to suit the school context.

Other models and strategies of change were also developed at this time, to help identify why some innovations failed, and to help build on the few smaller pockets of success (Dalin, 1978; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Raggatt, 1983). Perhaps the best known change strategies, descriptive paradigms of the change phenomena, were the groupings of strategies first described by Bennis, Chin and Benne. Introducing the language of planned change (Lieberman, 1998), they argued that there were three basic groups of change strategies: *empirical-rational, normative-re-educative,* and *power-coercive* (Chin & Benne,

1985). Chin and Benne's strategies were general approaches for effecting changes in a variety of human systems, including education systems. Others, Dalin (1974) and Sieber (1972), applied these more specifically to educational change.

Empirical-rational strategies have an underlying assumption that all humans are rational beings and will adopt a proposed change if it can be proven that they will gain by that change (Chin & Benne, 1985). In an educational setting, if a change agent can show the validity of a certain innovation, which in itself is considered neutral, in terms of the increased benefits to be gained from it, then the teacher will adopt that innovation (Dalin, 1974). Empirical-rational strategies assumed that the teacher was autonomous, or had some degree of agency, and emphasised the change of technologies rather than changing the teacher (Sieber, 1972). A new technology could be a new set of curricula, a new textbook, or a new instructional technology, such as a computer, or computer software.

Normative-re-educative strategies assumed that humans were creatures of habit. Change could only occur if they changed their normative orientation to old habits and developed new ones. This included changes in attitudes, values, skills and relationships, and not just changes in knowledge, informational or intellectual rationales (Chin & Benne, 1985). In educational change, the strategy was concerned with the social origins of the change. The forces to adopt an innovation would come from within the school system. Teachers seeing another

using an innovation, would became interested and implement the change. It was a collaborative change strategy, teachers and the change agent worked together in order to solve teachers' problems (Dalin, 1974; Sieber, 1972).

Power-coercive strategies were based on the application of power in some form, political or other. The process of change was top-down, one of compliance of the less powerful to the plans or directions from those with more power. Usually the power was in the form of a legitimate authority (Chin & Benne, 1985) such as a government authority, principal, or policy. In this type of strategy, the teacher becomes a powerless functionary (Sieber, 1972). Dalin (1974) renames it the political-administrative strategy. Educational change within the school is often of this form, and can be enforced with rewards and punishments. These may take the form of a selection to better positions, or being given better classes, the use of grants or resource allocations, or the use of sentiment, guilt or shame (Dalin, 1974).

During the *implementation decade,* the government focus, *a propos* the *power-coercive* strategy for change, began to rely heavily on changing the ideology and discourse of schooling (Apple, 2001; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Governments began to exercise their power and impose their policies "in part through the production of 'truth' and 'knowledge' about education" (Ball, 1990, p. 17). This was done through the reframing of the discourses of education and by reconstructing common sense, "altering the meanings of the most basic categories, the key words, we employ to understand the social and educational

world and our place in it" (Apple, 2001, p. 9). Phillips (2001) describes the full impact of discursive redistribution in England in his historical overview of the aftermath of a speech delivered by the Prime Minister, Callaghan, at Ruskin College, in 1976. According to Phillips, Callaghan used the speech to link the wider crisis of the seventies to a 'perceived crisis' in education. The link made by Callaghan became "profoundly important" in the ensuing decades, as will be discussed further in the present chapter, as it "established the discursive boundaries within which all subsequent curriculum debate and policy making at government level have been framed" (Phillips, 2001, p. 13).

The research of the *Implementation Decade*, into schools, school cultures, innovation implementation and strategies for change, built up a large body of knowledge about schools and what was happening in them and around them (Bollen, 1996). It was also during this time that some researchers became interested in looking more closely at how schools affected the quality of educational outcomes (Townsend, 1994), and a new movement, the school effectiveness movement, was introduced into the educational change arena (Lieberman, 1998).

The School Effectiveness Movement in the Implementation Decade.

The school effectiveness movement started during the 1970s with the publication of several studies in response to the 1966 Coleman Report in the USA (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979). The findings of the Coleman Report were "interpreted as concluding that schools have little or no effect on student achievement after the effects of family background variables

have been taken into consideration" (Reynolds et al., 1994, p. 29). These pessimistic findings were questioned by educators (Creemers, 1996), and "studies were published that tried to prove that some schools did in fact do much better … on student achievement" (p. 38), particularly students from the urban poor background (Teddlie, 1994). Initial studies tried to show that children from poor backgrounds should be able to attain the minimal skills that middle-class children were achieving (Teddlie, 1994). Perhaps one of the best known studies in the early school effectiveness movement is the English study, *Fifteen Thousand Hours*, conducted by Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979). This research explored the relationships between schools and the educational achievements of students (Townsend, 1994).

Whilst early school effectiveness research was motivated by equity issues, the focus moved very quickly to identifying the important characteristics of schools, which determined high or low levels of student achievement (Teddlie, 1994). This involved the study of 'outliers', that is schools scoring either better or worse than expected on student achievement tests, when related to the socio-economic status (SES) of the students in the school (Reynolds et al., 1994). School effectiveness research also had its beginnings in the quantitative research tradition (Scheerens & Creemers, 1989). Quite a number of correlational studies into the factors associated with school effectiveness were also carried out during this time (Creemers, 1996). From the research, lists of school-wide characteristics, found to be consistently related to pupil achievement were identified (Townsend, 1994). The five-factor model of school effectiveness characterises the main outcome of the early period of school effectiveness

research. The five school factors, most often repeated in the literature as "malleable correlates of educational achievement", were "strong educational leadership, high expectations of student achievement, emphasis on basic skills, a safe and orderly climate, (and) frequent evaluation of pupils' progress" (Scheerens & Creemers, 1989, p. 266).

The developing school effectiveness movement received some "scathing criticisms" (Reynolds et al., 1994, p. 30). Problems were perceived both with its methodology (Scheerens & Creemers, 1989) and with "its tendency to present narrow, often simplistic, recipes for school improvement derived from non-experimental data" (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 427). Fullan (1991), echoing this concern, labelled the school effectiveness movement problematic, "school effectiveness research takes a highly complex phenomenon and represents it in a simplified manner" (p. 22). He considered that the research focused on narrow educational goals and conveyed "almost nothing about how an effective school got that way and if it stayed effective" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 22).

One consequence of the widespread criticism of the school effectiveness movement was to "banish effective schools research" (Reynolds et al., 1994, p. 30) from mainstream research into schools until it re-emerged in the 1990's during the period of the marketisation of education (Bollen, 1996). Politically, however, effectiveness studies shifted the gaze of governments back to the school, as the cause for the variations in student achievement, and rendered silent the contexts of education (Ball, 1998). Ignoring the broader social contexts

(Ranson, 1994), school effectiveness research "provided a scientific basis for the possibilities of blaming the school" (Ball, 1998, p. 74). During the following decade, this would contribute to the creation of a 'discourse of derision' that would "target schools as the causes of general social and economic problems within society at large" (Ball, 1998, p. 74).

The Meaning Decade

The period Fullan identified as the *Meaning Decade* (1982-1992) began at the time of the publication of his seminal work *The Meaning of Educational Change* (1982). The book was a comprehensive overview of the work accomplished in the field of educational change up to that period. However, it differed significantly from previous works (for example, Sarason's 1971 book) in that Fullan included chapters on the problems of change from the perspective of the everyday participants in change, the administrators, teachers, parents and students, as well as a section on their roles in educational change at the regional and national level. Fullan made the argument that for change to be successful participants must 'make meaning' of the *what* and *how* of educational change (Fullan, 1982; p. ix). Whether change was imposed or sought by the participants, Fullan (1991) argued that most people would not understand the nature or ramification of the changes, and would experience ambivalence about its meaning, form and consequences, unless the participants were able to identify meaningfully with the changes.

In his later edition of the same book, Fullan (1991) referred to the *Meaning Decade*, which covered most of the 1980s, as the *intensification* vs.

restructuring phase. In the USA, the report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, raised serious questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the American education system. As a result a raft of different reforms were introduced, which intensified the focus by the increasing centralisation of authority (Firestone, Rosenblum, Bader, & Massell, 1991), especially in regards to the delivery of the curriculum and standardised tests aligned with that curriculum (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). In the USA, more than a thousand pieces of legislation were enacted concerning teacher licensure and remuneration (Firestone et al., 1991). Other areas of reform included the specification of teaching methods, mandated textbooks, increased course and graduation requirements, and teacher induction and evaluation programs, all of which served "to intensify as exactly as possible the what and how of teaching" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 7).

The difference with many of the reforms, which occurred during the latter half of the Meaning Decade, was that they sought to change the core of schooling (Firestone, 1989). Many of the reforms which had gone before had been little more than "tinkering with surface parts" (O'Neil, 1989, p. 5), what Cuban (1990) categorised as first-order changes. First-order, or ameliorative (Goodman, 1995), changes include those which improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is being done, without disturbing the basic organisational features, or substantially altering the way students and staff perform their roles. Second-order changes, or substantive changes (Goodman, 1995), those which seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organisations are put together, new cultures, roles and structures (Cuban, 1990), are what Fullan (1991) referred to as *restructuring*.

The term ‘restructuring’ became popular because of the Carnegie Forum’s report *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). This report called for the restructuring of schools “to provide a professional environment for teachers, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for their progress” (quoted in O'Neil, 1989, p. 6). However, the exact meaning of the term restructuring remains unclear and may take many forms, including such “familiar practices” as adding new courses and programs (Newmann, 1996, p. 4). Generally, restructuring suggests the need for a comprehensive redesign of schools; improving some parts of schools is not enough (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Restructuring emphasises a “systemic approach to rethinking curriculum and instruction, authority and decision making, staff roles, and accountability” (O'Neil, 1989, p. 6). A strong commitment from all participants is required during restructuring, for example when moving from junior high schools to the introduction of Middle Schools, a common restructuring redesign strategy (Felner et al., 1997). Fullan (1991) gives a comprehensive list of strategies used in restructuring, which included school based management, restructured timetables and the inclusion of new roles and other teacher leadership arrangements (see also Firestone et al., 1991; Newmann, 1996; O'Neil, 1989). Two major restructuring themes can be identified in the literature: the redefinition of the roles of educational stakeholders and the marketisation of education (Murphy, 1993), two themes explored concurrently in the remainder of the chapter.

There was a growing interest by governments during the *Meaning Decade*, in the management of education and the creation of education policy (Crump, 1993; Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). As education moved to centre stage in a 'knowledge economy', governments became less willing to leave it in the hands of the 'educational experts'. As a result, they sought greater steerage over education in order to maintain control in a changing society and in the interest of the national economy (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995; Ranson, 1994).

Many new policies, laws and regulations were put into place, as governments in developed nations believed that only through their direct intervention could the problems of 'failing' education systems be solved (Angus, 1998; Levin & Riffel, 1997). Visions for change often depend on viewing the past as a "series of failures that killed a golden age of schooling" using these as rationales for introducing new reforms (Cuban, 1990, p.3). The alleged failure of schools included falling standards of student achievement, teacher incompetence, worsening student behaviour and, at the higher education level, irrelevant educational research (Slee & Weiner, 1998). The deficit model of the 'failing' education system became the target of increased government interest and intervention (McDonald, 2000). Tactics for tightening control over curriculum and teaching had to be devised, which would 'restore education' making it more competitive, more disciplined (Apple, 2001), "ways of whipping schools and teachers into shape" (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 45). Governments responded by introducing the market into education, to "ensure that only the good (schools) survive" (Apple, 2001, p. 68). Concepts such as privatisation, local management, client focused, corporatisation, consumer oriented, choice,

accountability and best practice are presented as self evident truths, common sense and unproblematic (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Such market policies – those that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice, rewarding personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative – have the ability to "undermine the dead hand of the incompetent, bureaucratic and parasitic government, that can never do good even if well intended, which it rarely is" (McChesney, 1999, quoted in Apple, 2001, p. 18). Apple (2001) goes on to make the point that these policies have become the 'common sense' of an emerging international consensus, where there are "*no* alternatives worth considering. It may be imperfect, but it is the only system that is even feasible in a world governed by global markets and intense competition" (Apple, 2001, p. 18).

Education and the Market in the Meaning Decade

In the economic rationalist paradigm, education's function was to serve the economy (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). The economies of the country in question were to be regenerated by instituting reforms in education (Cuban, 1990). This has been an area well critiqued by writers such as Ball (1990, 1994), Chitty (1989), Ozga (2000), Ranson (1994) and others. The process of 'economising' education is common to all developed nations (Ozga, 2000). It is based on the belief that the marketisation of the education system is the best way in which to improve educational outcomes, and that a "country's economic future depends on a revolution in skills and knowledge to be driven forward by a suitably modernised education system closely monitored by the state" (Edwards, 2001, p. 239). The argument for the marketisation of education systems and increased government controls is often framed in the interest of increased

international competitiveness (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998) and the onset of globalisation (Phillips, 2001).

The OECD played a particularly influential role internationally in establishing the credibility of the notion of economic rationalism and education's function as the vocational training in order to increase a nation's economic advancement (Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). The OECD's education policy agenda is framed by its commitment to a market economy, as laid down by its formal charter (Henry et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 1997). Governments frequently quote OECD figures to support 'economising' national policies, and the concerns raised by OECD reports, are "picked up and acted upon by policy makers in education around the world" (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 68). The results are an intensification of the marketisation of education (Taylor et al., 1997) and a widespread similarity between policies adopted by different countries (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997).

In the USA, the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983) raised serious questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of the American education system. It highlighted the problem that there was a significant drop in the number of adolescents completing high school and college and that there were an increasing number of drop outs, especially amongst blacks and ethnic minorities, but also amongst the 'white' population. The conclusion was that American schools were not doing their job (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The alleged failure of schools was a concern in the light of the growing globalisation of the world economy.

America needed to have a better educated workforce in order to compete with other world economies. A more highly educated and skilful work force, it was claimed, would lead to greater economic development and contribute to a more advanced and competitive society (Edwards, 1997). The main aim of policy makers who adopted a neo-liberal paradigm was to remove the 'costs and responsibilities' from the state (Tikly, 2003), whilst at the same time increasing efficiency and accountability of education systems – effectively 'steerage' at a distance, treating education as a smorgasbord commodity from which parents may choose (Ozga, 2000). However, a five year long study of American schools by Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, and Lipton (2000), showed that most reforms seldom delivered increased test scores or higher standards, grinding out instead "reworked versions of the status quo that do little to address whatever initially motivated the reform" (Oakes et al., 2000, p. 185).

In England, the 1980s saw a complete turn around from social justice discourses to economic rationalist discourses, centred on the function of education as investment in human capital and vocational preparation (Ranson, 1994). Callaghan's 1976 speech, referred to earlier in the present chapter, strongly linked the education system with the needs of industry, placing the issues of school and work at the centre of the political agenda (Phillips, 2001). It has been claimed that England has gone further down the track of the marketisation of education than any other country, with the possible exception of New Zealand (Apple, 2001; Whitty, 2002). The Thatcher government's manufactured crisis in education (Phillips, 2001; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998) paved the way for the introduction of the marketisation of education. Initially

this was achieved through the introduction of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) and open enrolments, and secondly through the introduction of the National Curriculum, its associated testing regime and the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspections (Whitty, 2002). Devolution of some responsibilities through the introduction of LMS would, it was believed, increase local level accountability, whilst the state sought greater centralised control over schools through the introduction of the National Curriculum (Ranson, 1994).

The notion behind LMS was to devolve budget responsibility to schools, thus giving them greater flexibility and freedom to make decisions about day-to-day management (Ball, 1994). The number and ages of students determined the amount of school-based funding received. Open enrolment was reframed in the discourse of parental choice. Parents, in their newly defined role as consumers of education (Raey & Wiliam, 1999), were encouraged to choose the schools that performed well for their children to attend (Phillips, 2001). This would have, according to its proponents, the dual purpose of improving the quality of educational provision, whilst at the same time ensuring that 'failing' schools, or those not performing well, would close (Ball, 1994). Parents make market choices after studying the index of performance, the league tables (Raey & Wiliam, 1999). In this manner, devolution, through the introduction of LMS, can be seen as the "complete abdication of responsibility by the state" (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998, p. 45). The introduction of open enrolments shifted the responsibility for educational decision-making onto the families, and, according to Whitty et al. (1998) works as an effective strategy for "shifting the blame" (p.45). The failure of schools to perform well could now be attributed to bad

leadership and inadequate teaching, and low student achievement was a result of poor choices by families.

It has also been touted that introducing these policies would bring greater diversity in education (Apple, 2001). Yet, as Apple (2001) has pointed out, rather than leading to increased quality of education and greater diversity, the marketisation of schools has not created a great many differences in the types and styles of education, most schools opting for a traditional model. It has also not improved social justice concerns or "radically altered the relations of inequality that characterise schools" (Apple, 2001, p. 70). Social justice concerns have arguably increased, as it continues to be the more affluent parents who have the ability, power and money to choose the schools that most suit their children, whilst working class, poor and families of different backgrounds continue to be marginalised within the education system, often 'stuck with' attending less well performing schools. Devolution policies have shifted the emphasis from student needs to student performance and from "what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school" (Apple, 2001, p. 71). Such policies have also changed the way schools view students. In the market system, children become commodities, education is reconstructed as a consumption good where "children and their 'performances' are traded and exchanges as commodities" (Ball, 1994, p. 51; see also Fielding, 1999). This is an extension of viewing education as subordinate to the economy, where investment in education is equated as investment in human capital, which forms the basis for economic success (Edwards, 2001; Ranson, 1994).

The notion of education's subordination to the economy was also promoted in Australia (Chapman et al., 1997). In 1987, the Commonwealth Department of Education was incorporated into the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). The intent of the restructure was for the Hawke Government to take tighter control over the education policy agenda, and to conceive education policy terms “as part of the economic agenda” (Lingard, 1993, p. 31). The Federal Minister for Education indicated that the new department would play a central role in helping young people into employment, an important national objective geared to fulfilling the needs for a vibrant national economy (Dawkins, 1987, cited in Haynes, 1997, p. 45).

Henry and Taylor (1997) criticised the growing belief amongst governments that the discourses of social justice and economic rationalism are complementary. The assumption is that the introduction of economic rationalist policies, whilst leading to economic efficiency, would also lead to outcomes that are more equitable for all students (Taylor et al., 1997). In a society where economic considerations are determined as being the most important (Haynes, 1997), there is a growing credence given to the idea that education needs to meet the vocational demands faced by adolescents. Education, particularly secondary education, is often seen as the crossroads for adolescents’ lives, a 'gateway' to economic advantage (Delors, 1996). However, in Australia more than 25% of adolescents fail to complete school (Dwyer, 1996). Many adolescents leave school without an adequate knowledge or skills base (OECD, 1996). Although the knowledge and skills required for the preparation of a work life should be taught at school, schools are increasingly required to aim vocational education at

two specific yet divergent goals: the need to prepare for currently existing jobs, and the capacity for adolescents to adapt to jobs not yet imagined (Delors, 1996).

Taylor et al. (1997) also criticised the belief that if the basic vocational training and market reforms are put into place, then equity will necessarily follow. The result of this belief has been an increase in the market-oriented approaches to education. It has meant that those service departments not seen as revenue raisers, suffer many budget cuts, leading to the creation of super departments or departments downsizing, cutting staff, programs and services, especially those that are considered 'non-essential'. A user-pays mentality has replaced social welfare in the name of economic efficiency and fiscal responsibility. The result has been the marginalisation of many unable to pay and their dependency on the public sector for their education needs, such as the poor and people with disabilities (Rizvi & Lingard, 1996).

The marketisation of education and the redefinition of the roles of educational stakeholders present two major themes in the restructuring movement (Murphy, 1993). A third key theme in the restructuring movement of the 1980s has been about what O'Neil termed 'the bottom line' – evidence of authentic student achievement (O'Neil, 1989) – that the "quality and degree of pupils' learning, motivation and development are at stake in any major attempt to change instructional practice" (Huberman, 1992, p. 5). Reports, policies and innovative activities, studied by Newmann and his associates (1996) in their study of school restructuring, indicated that there was widespread agreement that

"schools should do a better job of helping all students to learn basic skills" (Newmann, 1996, p. 4). One common restructuring strategy to improve the quality of student learning in the middle years of schooling has been to introduce Middle Schools. Middle Schooling, or the creation of schools within schools, was first explored in the USA in the 1960's (Clark & Clark, 1994) to deal with the growing concern of student alienation. It has gained considerable popularity as a restructuring tool during the 90's in order to address the continuing issue of student alienation and those identified as educationally at risk (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). The use of Middle Schools, often a group of students clustered around a core of two to four teachers, can provide a more personalised school environment addressing many of the issues associated with student alienation. In Australia, the *Middle Years of Schooling Project* (ACSA, 1997) explored the nature of student alienation in the middle years and recommended the empowerment of teachers to transform the middle years and to meet the learning needs of students during these years. However, Felner and his colleagues (1997) in their evaluative study of 97 schools in the USA participating in the *Carnegie Council's Turning Points – Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century Project*, found, most schools failed to fully implement successful Middle Schooling structures and teaching practices. Furthermore, many reforms, whilst paying a great deal of attention to changes in school organisation, failed to make a difference to the quality of student learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

Fullan (1992), exploring the link between classroom and school improvement in the change process, developed a framework for analysis (see Figure 3.3) to further understand and influence both, by identifying and fostering

systematic links between the two. To achieve classroom improvement, Fullan found that teachers should be working on all four sub-cogs within the classroom, and to achieve 'serious' school improvement, the four sub-cogs on the far right of the diagram must be present. These Fullan describes as the basic features of school improvement. The link between the two is the teacher as a perpetual learner. What drives the framework, and what drives educational change, is the all pervasive preoccupation and commitment to improving student engagement and learning, and leadership and mobilisation (Fullan, 1992). What Fullan did not explore or include was the role that students played, other than ascribing them the role of learner.

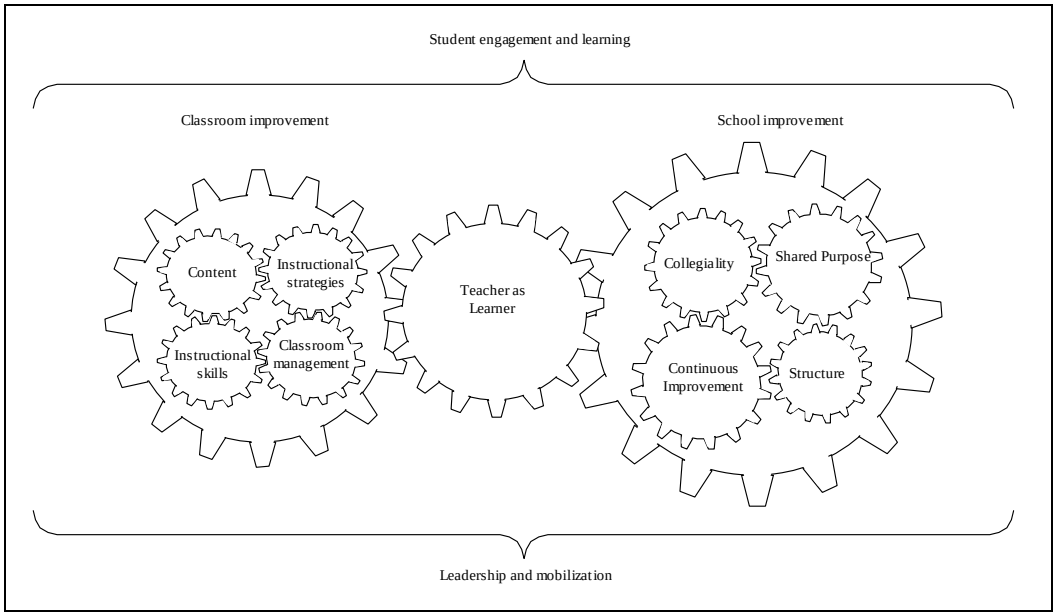

Figure 3.3: Fullan's (1992) framework for classroom and school improvement.

The 1980s produced knowledge with increasing detail about the process of change (Hopkins & Lagerweij, 1996), what was understood about the change process at different levels, and how these levels affected one another in the course of change (Huberman, 1992). The process is complex and 'dilemma

ridden' (Fullan, 1992). Towards the end of the decade, Fullan and Miles (1992) developed seven propositions for successful school change, derived from the growing body of research undertaken during the decade. These seven propositions were a recurring theme in Fullan's later work, which he developed during the course of the following decade.

The Change Capacity Decade

The *Change Capacity Decade* had its start in the early 1990s (Fullan, 1998). Developing his seven propositions further, Fullan began to realise that "moral purpose was a critical change theme" (Fullan, 1998, p. 222). The moral purpose of education is to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background. It is about "care and competence, equity and excellence, social and economic development" (Fullan, 1993, p. 12). The concept is not new; what changed for Fullan was the realisation that to make a difference, teachers needed to be in the business of making continuous improvements in an ever-changing world, to manage change on an ongoing basis. Fullan envisaged teachers as change agents (Fullan, 1993). Hopkins et al. (1994), called this decade the managing change phase, and believed it would prove to be the most difficult of all, as teachers struggled to relate change strategies and research knowledge to the realities of schools in practical ways. Yet, Fullan, in his later work (Fullan, 1998), argued that change could not be 'managed', that educators 'needed to be about change', it needed to be the moral purpose of educators to make improvements designed to make a difference in the lives of students. The moral purpose of education is itself a complex problem. It includes not only the academic achievement of students, but is also about social justice, motivating

alienated students and families, “at the macro-level, moral purpose is education’s contribution to societal development and democracy… to social, political and economic renewal in society” (Fullan, 1999, p. 1).

The discourse of social justice is one that continues to influence purposive school change in education. Reforms to schools reflect a number of different views of social justice, such as affirmative action, redistributive notions according what people deserve or what is fair, and redistribution according to needs (Taylor et al., 1997). There has been an ongoing and growing interest in improving student achievement (Hopkins et al., 1994), especially those students who have been labelled at ‘educational risk’. The phrase ‘students at educational risk’ describes students at risk of not fulfilling their educational potential for a variety of reasons, including academic failure, social issues, language barriers, disabilities and other (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Butorac, 1998; Dwyer, 1996; Murphy, 1991; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Governments around the world are concerned about the large number of students who fail at school and do not make a successful transition to working life. These students are under the threat of long-term unemployment, long-term welfare dependency and social marginalisation into adulthood (Delors, 1996; Dwyer, 1996). Historically, many of the educational changes introduced by schools have sought to address specific issues of academic failure, school dropouts, or adolescent alienation. However, locally, nationally and internationally as many as 20% of students continue to be alienated from their education, and their future life prospects suffer as a result (Brooks, Milne, Peterson, Johansson, & Hart, 1997; Delors, 1996; Dwyer, 1996; Zubrick et al., 1997).

Schools, according to Hargreaves and Fullan (1998), must broaden the approach they have to educational change and school improvement; they need to stop closing the doors to the outside world. Teachers, parents, schools, and communities need to work together and "go deeper, exploring the purposes, passions and hopes for education systems" (p. 26). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) call this becoming clear about the *moral purpose* of education:

> Teachers should have a moral purpose, going deeper means getting clear and coming clean about purposes. Schools should reach for higher educational purposes, which are truly morals in transforming children's lives and building a better world for the generations of the future. Among the many purposes of schooling, four stand out to us as having special moral value: to love and care, to serve, to empower and of course to learn (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 30).

Schools must be recultured, retimed as well as restructured (Fullan, 1998), transforming the habits, skills and practices of educators. Goodman (1995) termed this 'rewiring', addressing the value and democratic commitments of schools. Transforming schools should be about making substantive or second-order changes, addressing equity and power relationships and confronting the cultural and pedagogical traditions and beliefs of education practices, rather than ameliorative or first-order changes, those making ongoing practices more efficient and effective (Cuban, 1990; Goodman, 1995). Becoming critically preoccupied with issues of power and equity in the improvement process is a necessary step in achieving moral purpose in education (Fullan, 1999).

The school effectiveness movement during the 1980s and into the 1990s continued, on the other hand, to neglect "school processes defined in terms of attitudes, values, relationships and climate" (Reynolds & Stoll, 1996, p.103) and issues such as equity and social justice (Morley & Rassool, 1999). The emphasis of the school effectiveness movement during this period, continued to be on both instructional and school-wide organisational factors, and on taxonomies of effectiveness (Reynolds & Stoll, 1996), with a focus on how these affect student achievement (Townsend, 1994). Townsend (1994), in his review of the school effectiveness literature and research in various countries, identified the lack of engagement with equity issues as one of the major dilemmas of school effectiveness research. He highlighted the tension between the notions of quality and equality:

> If quality is paramount, then standards must be identified and it must be accepted that not everyone will reach those standards. If equality is paramount, there is a danger that, in the effort to ensure that everyone succeeds to a comparable level, that no one will reach the quality standards (p.28).

Townsend observed that school effectiveness should be more than just the maximisation of academic achievement. Quoting from the *School Effectiveness Project Report*, Townsend stated, "learning and the love of learning, personal development and self esteem, life skills…all rank highly or more highly as the outcomes of effective schooling than success in a narrow range of academic disciplines" (Townsend, 1994, p. 18). However, these have not been a priority with the school effectiveness movement, which more typically presents a 'snapshot' of an effective or ineffective school at a point of time. Taxonomies of school effectiveness characteristics have been produced, without indicating how

a school became effective, how it could be replicated, or in the case of an ineffective school, how it could be addressed (Reynolds & Stoll, 1996). Moreover, taxonomies in the school effectiveness movement are not neutral, "they represent the interests and priorities of powerful definers" (Morley & Rassool, 1999, p. 99) based on "assumptions about norms that privilege the middle classes" (p. 116). According to Morley and Rassool, effective schools are most often assumed to be those in the private sector (see also Rae & Weiner, 1998), those least likely to include children from working class backgrounds or those with special needs (Morley & Rassool, 1999; Rae & Weiner, 1998).

A further, and perhaps equally serious problem, in focusing primarily on the development of taxonomies of school effectiveness factors, is the almost complete failure to engage with the contextual factors in which schools operate (Morley & Rassool, 1999). The school effectiveness movement has failed to recognise that schools are sites of chaos (Morley & Rassool, 1999) and part of complex systems (Fullan, 1999). School effectiveness research has tended to ignore 'the bigger picture' (Slee & Weiner, 1998), the importance and potential impact of the macro on micro-levels of education systems and other institutions (Reynolds & Stoll, 1996). The school effectiveness movement has treated these layers as 'unproblematic'. Yet, work by Ball and colleagues (1992), Firestone et al. (1991), Slavin et al. (1993), Fullan (2001), Newmann (1996) and many others shows that conditions outside the level of the school can and do impact on how schools approach the school change puzzle.

Teddlie (1994) disagrees with this, stating that contexts in school effectiveness research were originally considered, but that the late 1980s saw a shift away from the study of specific contexts (and as a result equity issues) in school effectiveness research, as researchers began studying how to make schools efficient, producing better schools for all students (Teddlie, 1994). Teddlie (1994) argues that this may not have been an intentional shift in the school effectiveness movement, but simply a reflection of societal changes in the USA, brought about by various governments who were calling for a "more efficient expenditure of federal dollars for education" (Teddlie, 1994, p. 88). The consequence has been that school effectiveness research outcomes and taxonomies strongly suggest that schools can act independently of local or socio-economic contexts (Rae & Weiner, 1998). Such suggestions have made school effectiveness research very attractive to governments. The focus on efficiency, strong leadership, high expectations for students, clear goals, and frequent quantifiable monitoring (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Townsend, 1994), including standards which can be set and measured, has meant that blame for inadequacies in the school system have been passed on to the schools, the teachers, poor educational leaders and so on (Rae & Weiner, 1998). As such, school effectiveness has become increasingly "politically convenient" (Rae & Weiner, 1998, p. 22) to policy makers and many developed governments and developing governments (Morley & Rassool, 1999) have used the school effectiveness research as a rationale for the allocation, or more often non-allocation, of education funding (Rae & Weiner, 1998) and as an approach to implementing educational change (Slee & Weiner, 1998).

For Fullan (1993), in his ongoing review and study of educational change, the change capacity decade marked a new phase, “a quantum leap – a paradigm breakthrough” (Fullan, 1993, p. vii). Fullan, (1993), building on insights gained from chaos theory, argued for a new mind-set for contending with the real complexity of dynamic and continuous change: “It is not possible to solve *the change problem*, but we can learn to live with it more proactively and more productively” (Fullan, 1993, p. viii). The seven propositions he and Miles (1992) posited towards the end of the 1980s were changed and elaborated to eight, focusing on the complexity and non-linearity of change and the fragmented nature of education systems. To create meaningful change the focus needed to shift to the individual and the group in the learning organisation, and their capacity for inner and outer learning (Fullan, 1998). Every person is capable of learning and becoming a skilled change agent, an “expert in the dynamics of change” (Fullan, 1993, p. 4), but must be “plugged into the environment” (Fullan, 1998, p. 223) of the wider community, technology, governments and so on if educational reform is to be successful. Education systems, and the people in them, need to become learning organisations “expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life” (Fullan, 1993, p. 4). However, there has continued to be little discussion of the role of students, which is the focus of the next section of the chapter.

Students in Educational Change

The presumption in the change literature, as well as in policy initiatives, is that through careful planning, by educating teachers and administrators, successful change will ensue (Fielding, 1999). However, there is only a slowly

growing awareness of students in the educational change literature, which for the large part continues to ignore the contribution they can make. Redefining the roles of teachers will not lead to substantive differences in student achievement, if such changes are not also accompanied by changes in how educators think about their students (Nieto, 1994). Many of the changes and policy initiatives discussed in the present chapter and elsewhere are based on a form of "paternalistic authoritarianism … framed by an expectation that children should defer to their parents and teachers" (Elliott, 2000, p. 183). It is all too often teachers and parents who take it "upon themselves to speak with such alacrity and confidence on their behalf" (Fielding, 1999, p. 278). Miles (1998) in a moment of whimsy wrote his vision for the year 2020, over viewing what should have been learned about educational change over the ensuing decades. One of the points Miles makes is that there needs to be an "increasing use of students as researchers on classroom practice (to play) a very strong part in both the reconceptualisation of teaching and the diffusion of practice" (1998, p. 63). However, as Nieto (1994) has pointed out, research that includes the student as participant is relatively recent and rare. In the 1990s there have been only a small number of studies which have sought to include the students' voice on issues including teaching and learning, learning conditions, and school reform.

In England, Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) conducted a longitudinal study that tracked eighty students through their high school career, conducting three rounds of interviews with individual students in each academic year. The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of teaching and learning by students as they made their way through school. One of the side

agendas was trying to understand how students, in particular, coped with ongoing national policy practices in schools. The researchers noted the extreme academic nature of the school system in England. They also raised questions about the validity of the existing power structures and relationships in the school and classrooms and the need for change in order to "build a new approach to schooling and a new sense of partnership in learning" (Rudduck et al., p.170). Educational change in schools involves as much cognitive change and changes in behaviour for the student as it does for other participants in the change process (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) emphasised the inclusion of all students in their research, especially those who are "less effective learners, for it is they who are most likely to be able to explore aspects of the system that constrain commitment and progress; these are the voices least likely to be heard and yet most important to be heard" (p. 177). Yet, these are students who are most often excluded from many forms of education, not just excluded as participants in change (Apple, 2001).

In the USA, SooHoo (1993) conducted a research project inviting Middle School students to act as partners in researching their learning experiences and conditions. The group of twelve students conducted interviews with other students and then became change agents in the school as they brought the research findings to the attention of the principal and other staff, becoming active partners in reforming classroom and school conditions. In her report SooHoo commented, “Traditionally, students have been overlooked as valuable resources in the restructuring of schools. Few reform efforts have actively sought student participation to inform restructuring efforts” (SooHoo, 1993, p. 392).

In Australia, Ainley and Sheret (1992) conducted a longitudinal study over four years and interviewed 3000 students in order to gain an understanding of how they experienced their secondary schooling. The study found that students' attitudes to school were more favourable when they felt that they were actively involved in making choices about their education and that this had long term effects for their continued progress in school.

Whilst these few studies emphasise the importance of taking cognisance of the voice of students in gaining greater insight into how students feel and think about teaching and learning, there is little research written concerning the impact students themselves may have on school change. An Israeli study, conducted by Friedman (1997), looked at the use of team teaching in a high school. A comment made by one of the teachers quoted in the article was that teachers had expected students to welcome the new approach (team teaching), but instead teachers encountered "motivational and behavioural problems that were much worse" (p. 345). Teachers in the project were determined not to revert to old methods of control, but in the end decided to eject the major troublemakers. As Shor (1996) argued, students have their own methods of “exercising various kinds of agency in an unequal setting where they lack formal authority, …resisting/engaging/manipulating the teacher, the process and the institution through their informal power” (Shor, 1996, p. 7). Hargreaves et al. (1993), in their Ontario study of the Transition Years, found that students were often publicly silent, expediently complying, but resisters and powerful protectors of the past. Informal resistance, as Shor (1996) listed, can take the form of

disruptive behaviour in class, resistant non-participation, faking interest, breaking school rules and sometimes through protest actions such as walkouts, rallies, marches, or newspaper campaigns. As Hargreaves observed, “Change is a problem for students as much as it is for their teachers” (Hargreaves et al., 1993, p. 326).

Hargreaves (1994) examined how teachers experienced school change and noted that many teachers found change extremely stressful. Fullan (1991) found that people were more likely to accept change if they were part of the change process. Yet, students are rarely considered as part of the change process. In fact, students rarely have a voice in schools. There is a perception of students, even amongst teachers, that makes it difficult for students to be accepted as legitimate contributors in the educational change debate (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Students are not seen as having the experience to be able to participate (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000); it is considered that they do not have the language to be able to contribute (Fielding, 1999); they are often seen as simply a data source and abstract learners (Ball, Maguire, & MacGrae, 2000). Yet, out of school, many students carry heavy responsibilities, family cares and employment concerns, contrasting sharply with the lack of autonomy offered them in most school settings (Ball et al., 2000; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). The exclusion of students from the change process, founded as it is on an outdated view of childhood, “fails to acknowledge children’s capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives” (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 86).

Therefore, if educational change is to be successful in the promotion of learning for all students, it may be time to recognise that students also have a 'role' in schools (Corbett & Wilson, 1995). The role of the student to date has been that of passive learner, subordinate to the professional gaze of the teacher (Fielding, 1999; Shor, 1996). Nevertheless, if students are being asked to change then they need to become part of the process, "students will not or cannot change simply by being lectured to" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 189). Students are observant, "they have a rich but often untapped understanding of processes and events" (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 82). Ironically, as discussed above, students often use their insights to devise strategies for subverting the change process (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

The introduction, in the last few decades of the twentieth century, of market policies in education has had the further effect of dehumanising students, "de-legitimating of students as young human beings" (McNeil, 2000, p. 90). Considering students in education change simply in terms of outcomes reframes students as 'objects' (Fullan, 1992). Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, the education system keeps students 'submerged' in a situation in which their critical awareness and response are practically impossible (Shaull, 1970). They are kept in what Freire (1970) termed a 'culture of silence', in which education functions as an instrument used to facilitate the integration of students into society and bring about conformity. Fullan (1991) states that we need to start thinking of students in educational change as "people who are also being asked to become involved in new activities" (p. 189), who have an active role to play. Freire (1970) believed

that every person was capable of looking critically at his or her world, transforming the marginalised from mere objects, to active participants in the changes within their world. Perhaps now is the time to explore more fully the role students could have in educational change in order to understand the impact change has on them and in turn, make suggestions about the possible impacts students may have on planned school change. Imagine, says Shor (1996, p. 24) "if schools were run democratically; students would participate in policy making in the classroom, departmental, and institutional levels, thus becoming socialised as active, critical citizens who took the initiative in framing their own purposes".

Conclusion

The present chapter has presented an analysis of the literature pertinent to the development of the field of educational change and the growing importance of centrally mandated policy as the instigator of change. Educational change is a complex phenomenon ongoing in schools and can be either top down or bottom up, internally initiated or externally imposed. The present study focuses on an educational change that was externally imposed, through the administration of education policy. The chapter outlined the development of educational change through the last four decades of the last century, using Fullan's four decades as the organising framework. As the decades progressed so did the knowledge base of educational change. However, the chapter has also shown the growing importance governments have placed on education, especially in view of the perceived growing needs of education to fulfil the needs for vocational preparation. This has led to the increasing use of both education and economic policy to initiate change in schools. The discourses surrounding the economising

of the education systems are often in conflict with social justice discourses, and work to dehumanise and commodify the student. Students are more often viewed as the objects of educational change then its subject, marginalising them and excluding them as participants in the change process. The present study seeks to explore that exclusion more closely. The following chapter will deal with the theoretical frameworks that have guided the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Theoretical Framings

Introduction

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the literature pertinent to the development of the field of educational change and the growing importance of centrally mandated policy as the instigator of change ‘in the national interest’ in the global economic marketplace. It highlighted the complexity of the change movement, the difficulties of making change permanent and issues of power associated with change in schools. The chapter finished by briefly exploring the roles students have, and by raising the issue of the exclusion of students as participants in the change process.

The present chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the research. The study explored students’ perceptions of their participation in the processes of change in schools as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment in WA. A central concern of the study was to examine how the students in the case study schools viewed their roles in educational change as expressed through their 'voices'. The study began with a critical theory framework and an emphasis on power inequalities. However, as the study proceeded, micro-political processes within case study schools were examined and an adaptation of Stephen Ball’s (1994) ‘policy cycle’, which also makes use of postmodern perspectives, offered insights at this micro-level. Thus, an eclectic hybrid approach was adopted

offering “greater theoretical sophistication and creativity” (Peters & Humes, 2003, p. 109) than any one theory alone. It is argued here that the thesis draws strength from adopting a number of broadly complementary theoretical strands, including critical and postmodern frameworks for policy analysis. The present chapter explores the different frameworks, and an argument is presented for adopting the eclectic hybrid approach, which draws on the strengths and contributions of each.

The thesis also makes use of perceptions theory to gain a better understanding of students’ perceptions of change. Students’ supposed inability to deal with abstract concepts, and the immaturity attributed to them, frequently form the basis of explanations for their subordinate social roles: they “are still people who are *becoming* adults” (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000, p. 80). Yet, it was Freire’s (1970) contention that every person was capable of becoming conscious of his or her own perceptions of their reality and dealing critically with it. The present study sought to explore students' perceptions of whether or not they were affected by or believed they had affected school change. It was therefore important to elucidate how perceptions are formed, whether students have ‘quality’ perceptions and how students’ perceptions influenced their knowing and their understandings, and affected their subsequent actions. Perceptions theory is explored as a possible theoretical positioning in the growing student voice movement. A new construct, *perceptual mapping*, is developed within this chapter as a way of conceptualising students’ abilities to think about change and their subsequent participation in change. This discussion takes place at the end of the chapter.

Critical Theory

This section of the chapter examines the use of critical theory in educational change studies. The present study sought to develop theory about the roles secondary school students could have in educational change. It explored students' own assumptions about their roles in the *LAEP Framework* policy processes. Power and social class formed key concepts in understanding how students saw the policy working in practice. There is a culture of domination, an inherited social hierarchy observable in schools, where students form the lowest rung. It is important to understand students' subordinate social status (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) as it shapes their experiences of change (Crotty, 1998) and this was also explored. A critical theory framework was used in giving students space to reflect critically on the policy changes of which they were a part.

Critical theory refers to the theoretical tradition started by a group of writers based at the University of Frankfurt, Germany, at the Institute of Social Research. Max Horkheimer was the first to define the term 'critical theory' in an essay in 1937. Critical theory is a model of reflection, reflection that would lead to emancipation (Crotty, 1998). *Praxis* is an important concept in critical theory, and refers to the practical reflective activity, which would "change the world" (Harvey, 1990, p. 22). Horkheimer's essay reflected the Marxist idea that the individual was alienated from the society, that liberal thought obscured the individual's alienation, and that it was the task of critical theory to overcome it (Rasmussen, 1996). Critical theory today draws its inspiration not only from the

works of Marx and Horkheimer, but also from Kant, Hegel, Weber, Adorno, Habermas and many others (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Rasmussen, 1996). Critical theory explores the power relationships between people and their contexts with reference to challenging the existing social structures (Quantz, 1992). In particular, critical theory is a value-oriented approach, which seeks to leave behind the neutrality claimed by many other forms of research (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994) and is concerned with social inequalities and directing research towards positive social change (Carspecken, 1996). It is a theory of society as a system of "social and cultural reproduction that identifies contradictions that create possibilities for transformation" (Morrow & Torres, 2002, p. 14).

In education, Freire (1970), Giroux (1988), Carspecken and Apple (1992), Kincheloe (1993) and McLaren (1998) are just a few who have used critical theory to study schools and schooling. Their concern is that schools "as venues of hope, could become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts among teachers and students to work within a liberatory pedagogical framework" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 139), that schools could be used for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment (Giroux, 1988). From a critical theory perspective, education must become the practice of freedom, the means by which young men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Freire, 1970).

Critical theory is concerned with questioning knowledge, current ideology and current practice (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe, 1993; Taylor, 1993). Knowledge is not static like "a bucket into which grains of information are dropped in the hope that they somehow coalesce into some kind of explanation of the world" (Harvey, 1990, p. 3). Applied to education, Freire called this the 'banking' concept of education, where the student is regarded as the empty receptacle and the teacher deposits knowledge (Crotty, 1998). Instead, education should be about 'critical education', in which the learner becomes an active participant (Morrow & Torres, 2002). Knowledge should be about helping students move towards a greater understanding of self, their situation and their world (Harvey, 1990; Kincheloe, 1993). The aim of the critical theorist is to use knowledge to initiate action, "in the cause of social justice" (Crotty, 1998, p. 157) to re-make the world (Taylor, 1993), to be concerned with social inequalities and direct research towards positive social change (Carspecken, 1996). Freire (1970) operated on one basic assumption: a person's ontological vocation is to be a 'subject' who acts upon and transforms his or her world, and in so doing moves towards ever-new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively.

Critical theory has been criticised for its Eurocentric modernity, being utopian, having a presumption of clarity and lack of attention to questions of difference (Crotty, 1998; Morrow & Torres, 2002). Modernism developed out of the Enlightenment, an intellectual movement of the seventeenth century, which placed great faith in the ability of reason to discover absolute forms of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). It was seen as an essentially European phenomenon,

where Europe affirmed itself as the centre of the world surrounded by peripheral societies. Modernism was considered by some to be synonymous with progress and the only path to emancipation, "for it delivers us from the fetters in which we were once held fast" (Crotty, 1998, p.185). Postmodernists consider this utopian moment of modernism 'exhausted' with the apparent success of the welfare state (Morrow & Torres, 2002). However, Morrow and Torres disagree; they see the continuing domination of certain classes and groups within Western societies surrounding issues of class, gender and race, as well as the lack of emancipation in peripheral societies. They argue instead that the 'critical modernist' uses modernity as an 'unfinished project' which seeks to "transform the embattled self of modernity into a new self that can appreciate otherness without dissolving in it, that can respect heterogeneity without being overwhelmed by it" (p.165). They also hold, following Habermas that although theories of domination may be Eurocentric their import is universal. It is in this context that an alternative conception of utopian energies is formulated incorporating the concerns of peripheral societies. Freire (1970) linked the utopian enterprise to the practice of freedom, where through critical reflection change may be initiated and a process of dialogical action becomes possible. Freire believed that the process of transforming the world could lead to humanisation, "humanisation is their utopia" (p. 55), as he says, "it is necessary to be utopian" (p. 47).

The legitimising claim for many school changes is that they bring about transformative change for students. The vision of many changes heralds 'making the difference' for students (Corbett & Wilson, 1995). Secondary education, it has been claimed by some, should be regarded as the crossroads of adolescents'

lives, a gateway to economic advantage, the path to social advantage (Delors, 1996). However, critical theorists contest that view, arguing that schooling is closely connected to the patterns of unequal benefits and losses that organise societies, and schools are the major arena in which dominance is reproduced and contested. Social allocation has become a major function of schooling. Power structures and traditions reproduce the divisions existing in society, "a small elite destined for the top and a large mass destined for the middle and the bottom … (students) are introduced to the reality of management, holding dominant, unelected power" (Shor, 1992, p.19). To think seriously about education is to think seriously about power and about the mechanisms through which certain groups assert their beliefs and practices. Critical theory provides a tool to confront those beliefs and practices (Quantz, 1992), to challenge the basis of the organisation of power. Power and politics are inescapable realities of school life (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). Sarason said of school improvement, "any non-trivial effort at institutional change that is insensitive to the issue of power courts failure" (Sarason, 1982, p. 89). Critical theory is about understanding and questioning those power relations that exist in social institutions (Crotty, 1998) and about the empowerment of the individual (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

In the last twenty or more years, public discussion about education has been concerned either with increasing academic standards or meeting the vocational needs of business and the state (Kincheloe, 1993; Ozga, 2000). Today's schools, through a process of the 'economising of education' (Ozga, 2000), have become a sorting machine for business and labour in the interest of state formation as states seek to ensure that "the school knowledge transmitted by the educational

system advances their interests" (Apple, 2002, p. 612). Common policy themes used by the state for educational restructuring have included the recasting of education in economic terms as the key to improving a country's economic standing, often within a context of large scale criticisms of schools – that is, the "apocalyptic consequences" of schools failing to deliver what is required (Levin, 1998). The response to the creation of the 'discourses of derision' (Ball, 1998, see Chapter Three) by corporate leadership, and that fraction of the middle class positioned in the field of economic production (Apple, 2002), has been to increase their political efforts to reshape and reconstruct the social order and to influence government education policy directly (Livingston, 1987).

Social class has been identified as one dominant cultural and structural category, which positions students in schools differentially (Edwards, 2002). It could be argued that the function of schooling is designed and organised to reproduce particular patterns of social ordering and maintain social difference (Peim, 1993). Bernstein (amongst others) developed a way of exploring class that moved beyond the two-class model of ruling class/working class, identifying the increasingly large fractions of the middle class (Apple, 2002). The role that certain fractions of the middle class play in symbolic production has meant that the traditional academic route has retained its privileged position and power, a way of controlling who has access to higher education and upper management positions (Edwards, 2002). Using academic outcomes, groups of students in schools are disbarred from participating in the education system, which conducts its business in the interests of the elite and powerful groups (Ball, 2003a). Schooling is used to construct academic inequality, structuring failure for those

students who do not have the cultural capital necessary for academic success (Peim, 1993). It has been shown (see for example Tomlinson, 1994) that students from working class backgrounds, those with a low socio-economic status, fail to gain the same academic outcomes, regardless of ability. The use of academic outcomes in the production of social differentiation has important implications for the present study, which will be teased out in the final chapters.

Such a socially political perspective promotes the view that schools are no longer a "vehicle for intellectual and personal growth" (Kincheloe, 1993, p.10). Educational pragmatism embraces a technical view of education, that "urges us not to burden students with political thoughts and to leave them alone so that they can best focus on their technical training … social and critical preoccupations represent … a real obstacle in their process of skills banking" (Freire, 1994, p. xii). Yet, schools continue to bring in changes as education systems are redefined and reconstructed to meet the conflicting demands between economic policy and social justice. Many critical commentators have argued that it is time then to reflect critically on the role that schools play, particularly in students' lives and to ask the question 'in whose interests?' school change is being made. What are the social structures and processes that legitimate power relations in school (Harvey, 1990)? What are the traditions that hinder a society from asking students to help shape policies for change (Rudduck et al., 1997)? An assumption of critical theorists is that those who have no power, who are the oppressed, have somehow internalised and adopted the guidelines laid down by those with the power, the oppressors (Crotty, 1998; Freire, 1970). In schools and society, students have been taught for years that their place is both marginal and

subordinate (Shor, 1996). This is not an overt expression of power, through exclusions, although it can take this form, but rather a covert hegemonic oppressive power. Hegemonic oppression is most "forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their status as natural, necessary, or inevitable" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 140). Freire called it 'the culture of silence' (Freire, 1970; see also Crotty, 1998). The term describes those who are oppressed and who are given no voice, who are mute, who are excluded from participating in the transformation of their society, who may be even unaware that they have no voice, submerged in their oppressive situation (Crotty, 1998; Taylor, 1993). Critical theory challenges and exposes the relations of hegemonic domination, no longer allowing them to be "buttressed by common-sense assumptions that are themselves the product of the operation of political and economic power" (Ozga, 2000, p. 90).

The only valid way to move from oppression to freedom, liberation, according to Freire is to engage in dialogue (Freire, 1970). Dialogue cannot be forced, but should be as the result of committed involvement, otherwise it degenerates into pseudo dialogue, a farce and little more than "paternalistic manipulation" (Crotty, 1998, p. 155). Freire asserted that all education should be "programs of vital dialogue from start to finish" (Crotty, 1998, p. 155), learners and educators should be regarded as partners, engaged in critical thinking together. The present study, using critical theory as part of an hybrid conceptual framework, included dialogical data collection between the researched and the researcher (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). Students were asked to reflect critically

about their school and the changes that had been made. The case study chapters used the students' voices to present their reflections.

In Their Own Voices

In keeping with the critical theoretical approaches and the desire by the researcher to reflect the many 'voices' of the students, the study used semi-structured focus group interviews for data collection. These allowed students to talk for themselves in their own language; they became *conversational partners* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 11). In order to understand the educational roles of students it was necessary to ask them about what they saw happening in their school. Miles (1998, p. 63) argued for an "increasing use of students as researchers on classroom practice to play a very strong part in both the reconceptualisation of teaching and the diffusion of practice". One of the personality characteristics of secondary school students is their preoccupation with themselves and how they perceive reality (Kleine, 1994). Students have opinions about their teachers, how they are taught, what they are taught, how the school operates, and its policies and practices. Rudduck and her co-researchers (Rudduck et al., 1997) claim that students are often capable of analytic and constructive comments, pointing out that "the traditional exclusion of young people from the consultative processes, the bracketing out of their voice, is founded upon an outdated view of childhood that fails to acknowledge children's capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives" (p. 89). The construction of their silence and exclusion is both historical and social, reflecting the inequalities in the larger society (Shor, 1996). Students, however, should be given the

opportunity of having their voice heard as “students have voices that are worth listening to” (Shor, 1992, p. 20).

Nevertheless, “research that focuses on student voice is relatively recent and scarce” (Nieto, 1994, p. 396). In the 1990s only a small number of studies sought to include the students’ voices on issues involving education policy and school reform (Ainley & Sheret, 1992; Pollard, Triggs, Broadfoot, McNess, & Osborn, 2000; Rudduck et al., 1996; SooHoo, 1993). These few studies, discussed in Chapter Three, emphasise the importance of taking cognisance of the voices of students in gaining greater insight into how students feel and think about educational change.

The central concern of the present research has been to examine students’ perceptions of educational change using their voices, to bring about new ways of knowing (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994), new ways of seeing educational change. The intent was to explore new approaches that may have “different starting points and quite different dispositions and intentions” (Fielding, 2001, p. 124). However, as a critical research study an aim here was to go beyond a mere representation of their voices. It was to explore the role that students played in the changes, to question how schools empowered or disempowered students, and to develop a greater depth of understanding of the complex relationships between students and school change. By giving voices to the students it allowed, and perhaps encouraged, them to think critically beyond the “horizons of current experience” and to reflect on their responses and the roles they have played (LeCompte, 1995, p. 99). Moreover, by raising a greater understanding of the

issues, the present study sought to make suggestions for empowering students to become active participants in the school change process.

In taking account of students' voices, it is important that a variety of voices are heard (Fielding, 2001), including those who are at the margins, the 'non-hegemonic voices' (Ozga, 2000), which may be conflicting (Hargreaves, 1996). It is also important that their voices are not romanticised but reflect the students' views (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996). Moreover, there is a need to recognise that however "cynically, inarticulately, or maladroitly people's voices are expressed, they often contain more than grains of real insight and good sense within them" (Hargreaves, 1996; p. 16). It is recognised that the rendering of students' voices will be a representation of their voice, a "refraction" of their meanings "through the lens of (the researcher's) own interests and concerns" (Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996, p. 177) as well as the theoretical framings of the research. However, although there are difficulties in presenting the voices of others, not doing so may be "abandoning [the] responsibility to name and confront political oppression" (Fielding, 2004, p. 300).

Adding Postmodern Approaches to Policy Analysis

Both critical theory and a policy cycle approach were used to analyse the policy under investigation. Policy cycle studies draw on both critical sociology and postmodernism (Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2002), offering insights into the multiple voices of participants at the micro-level of policy processes. This section of the chapter starts with contemporary definitions of policy before moving onto a description of Ball's policy cycle, which draws on postmodern

perspectives. However, in this study emphasis was also placed on the role and influences of the state within the policy cycle and the need to take account of these in both political and theoretical terms (Lingard, 1993) as the state seeks to reconstruct itself in response to globalisation. Both critical theory and postmodern perspectives on policy analysis contribute to the eclectic hybrid theoretical approach in this study, which is explored further below.

Education is a political act (Macedo, 1994), and increasingly governments have become more assertive about setting the ideological agenda for education (Ranson, 1994). In an effort to shape education, policies have been developed that have sought to meet the changing needs of "post-Fordist industrial production" (Ball, 1994, p. 5). The intent of any policy is to bring about change and action, to express in public the intent of the policy makers. Policies are also about prescribing how that change is to take place, they "have a distinctive and formal purpose for organisations and governments in codifying and publicising the values that are to inform future practice and thus encapsulate prescriptions for reform" (Ranson, 1996, p. 7).

Ball (1990) stresses that policy making is very complex and analysis should not only include the production of the text and its intent, but also what people do with the policy. Ball (1994) describes policy making as a *messy reality*, which must involve both the policy intentions and the policy as it is used, where it is often difficult to control or predict how the policy will affect practice (see also Ranson, 1996). Ball (1994) drawing on both critical policy analysis and postmodernism, identifies two conceptualisations of policy, which he sees as

policy as *text*, able to be interpreted in different ways by different readers, and policy as *discourse*, a way of indicating the significance of power relations in framing the interpretations of policy texts. However, he makes the point that they are not one or the other, but that they are implicit in each other. Policies as *text* can be understood as representations of struggles and exclusions of particular viewpoints and sets of interest "culminating in temporary truces or uneasy settlements between contending groups" (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998), although this does not mean that policies can be open to an infinite number of interpretations or actions (Grundy, 1994). By viewing policy as *discourse* the loci of power are shifted (Bowe et al., 1992). There is a capacity to make people comply, not necessarily through coercion, but because the authority wielding the power is recognised as the legitimate authority (Ranson, 1994). Ball (1994) argued a need for greater understanding of the way in which policies:

> Exercise power through a *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge' as discourses. Discourses about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourse embodies the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded. (p. 21)

With policy as *text*, the power lies with practitioners, "who can create, through a repertoire of individual and collective contained and disruptive strategies, an empirically rich under life to policy intention" (Ball, 1994, p. 19). With policy as *discourse*, non-negotiable meanings are imposed (Ranson, 1996) and macro-level policy producers place constraints on practitioners. Words are changed to "sound just enough like common sense not to be recognised as a language meant to reinforce unequal power relations" (McNeil, 2000, p.91). The

responses and possibilities are limited, and 'voices' are effectively redistributed so that it no longer only matters what people think or say, the speaker also becomes important, as "only certain voices can be heard as meaningful or authoritative" (Ball, 1994, p. 23). If only certain voices can be heard then non-legitimate voices such as teachers (Ball, 1994) and students (Levin, 2000) can be excluded.

Ranson (1996) describes policy as a *temporal process*, which involves issues of the drafting of the policy before it is enacted, and who was involved in the process. Interpretation and implementation of policy may be very different from the original intention of the policy makers. This could be because of the manner of a policy's implementation, or because of different agendas held by the various groups of players (Ranson, 1996). However, only a finite number of interpretations can be made of a policy document, since the intention of most policies is, with the authority of the state, to prescribe a particular form of action (Grundy, 1994). Nevertheless, where the powers have been devolved by the state to other players, what Lipsky (1980, cited in Taylor et al., 1997) has termed the *street level bureaucrats*, or the school level practitioners, there may be a lack of fidelity and the policy may not be enacted as faithfully as intended.

It is important therefore to see policy within the location in which it was released. Policies are never released in a vacuum; they exist in context – not in isolation. There is prior history, a particular ideological and political climate, a social and an economic location (Taylor et al., 1997). These will influence how the policy is written, how it is received and how it is acted upon (Taylor et al.,

1997). Ball (1994) described five contexts of policy making to unmask inequalities and to criticise the working of institutions. These contexts were: the context of influence (interested parties struggle and compromise over the construction of policy); the context of policy text production (players come together and produce policy representations as texts); the context(s) of practice (policy text decoding via actors' interpretations and meanings); the context of outcomes (relationship between changes in structure or practice and the impact of these on patterns of social access and opportunity and social justice); and the context of political strategy, (identification of a set of political and social activities). There is no order or direction of flow of information from one context to another, and each context is struggled over and compromises are made (Ball, 1994). The final two contexts listed, the context of outcomes and the context of political strategy, return to the bigger picture issues of social justice, which are pertinent to the final discussion found in the last two chapters of the thesis. The strength of Ball's approach is his conceptualisation of the micro-level policy processes. However, Ball was criticised for being too postmodern under the influence of Foucault and because he did not go on to develop the role of the state further (Hatcher & Troyna, 1994; Lingard, 1993).

As suggested in Chapter Two, the 'state' has a significant role to play in the articulation of policy in Australia. The 'state' in this sense is not a unified body, but represents the interests of a number of levels of players, both Commonwealth and State. The state is also significant in the mediating role it plays "between the construction of policy problems" and the "eliciting of state policy solutions" (Lingard, 1993, p. 30). The 'problems' in education, which the

state seeks to address through policy production, are both internal to it and brought about in response to global pressures. There are sets of basic tensions faced by the state, which drive and inform policies. Ball (1994) lists three. These are "the problems of capital accumulation and economic efficiency; the problem of social order, social authority and stability; and the technical and managerial problems, including governance, control, costs and planning" (Ball, 1994, p. 5). These tensions not only provide a set of limits faced by the state, they also actively help shape "the political, the social, the cultural and the ideological" (Hatcher & Troyna, 1994, p.159). The effect is such that the state will give priority to capitalist interests over those of the working class. The resurgence of market ideology and practices as the mechanisms for steering by the state have replaced welfare issues, as the state moves to 'market' itself in the face of global economic pressure and competition (Lingard, 1993; Popkewitz & Lindblad, 2000). The effects of globalisation have caused the state to reconstruct itself, to take on a more competitive and managerial structure. The new defining political/economic paradigm for the present age is neo-liberalism, which is characterised by "free market policies that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice, reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative" (Apple, 2001, p. 18). Economic rationality, efficiency and effectiveness have become the overriding concerns as a market ideology predominates.

The effects of an emerging global consensus focussed on neo-liberal practices, have also pressured the state to restructure education systems to focus on the production of highly skilled human capital for increased national economic advantage (Apple, 2001). Other influences can also be discerned as

the state deals with issues associated with globalisation. However, these were discussed in Chapter Two and Three of the present thesis and therefore will not be rehearsed here. Yet, the global context is an important consideration when looking at education policy in Australia, and how this context is constructed within the policy texts as a rationale for change. This is especially so when considering that the production of education policies for the restructuring of education delivery has become very much a part of the competitive state and is "a response to the interconnected economic, cultural and political processes of globalisation" (Lingard, 1996, p. 79).

In the remainder of the present study policy is viewed as both *text* and *discourse*, as a continuous process incorporating both macro and micro influences and practices, recognising and exploring the struggles that are part of the process (Vidovich, 2002). Ball (1994) citing an earlier work by Ozga (1990) suggests that it is important to "bring together structural, macro-level analysis of education systems and education policies and micro-level investigation, especially that which takes account of people's perceptions and experiences" (p. 14). Lingard (1996) asks how the roles of parents and students might be included in the process of policy production. The present study, focussing on the micro-level policy practices, sought students' perceptions of change resulting from a state level policy. The state was highly visible and audible in the policy processes; however, the agenda in this study was to canvass the views of students, seeking to highlight their 'voices' and understand their roles. Vidovich (2002) developed Ball's policy cycle further to include the state, addressing this criticism, and adopted an hybrid position, on the cusp between modernism and

postmodernism. The use of an hybrid theoretical approach will be discussed in the following section of the thesis.

An Hybrid Conceptual Framework

The study used a postmodern policy cycle approach to explore the perceptions of students at the micro-level of policy, whilst critical theory provided the 'bigger picture' framework. This section of the chapter explores further the use of an eclectic hybrid approach incorporating both critical theory and a more postmodernist policy cycle framework. It was decided to adopt an hybrid conceptual framework to explore students' roles and voices in the policy process. Critical theory provided the framework for better understanding of issues associated with the restructuring agenda and as a basis for developing a "theory of action towards emancipation" (Hargreaves, Fernandes, & Dinanthompson, 2003, p. 182) for the students in the change process. A postmodernist policy cycle approach was used to enhance the analysis by exposing structures of domination and to "unhook and disassemble the structures, the 'moves' and manipulations of official discourse" (Peters & Humes, 2003, p. 112), as well as focus on the subjects at the micro-level of the policy processes, the students.

Postmodernism or post-structuralism (the terms are often used interchangeably, although some commentators also distinguish them (Vidovich,

forthcoming)[7] adopts an anti-realist position, especially when it comes to questions of meaning, knowledge and truth, and emphasises the idea that "language functions like a differential system" (Peters & Humes, 2003, p. 111). Postmodernism focuses on the complex, ad hoc, messy and often contradictory accounts from a multiplicity of voices. Hargreaves (1994) made the point that to raise authentic and legitimated voices is an essential part of the pluralistic stance of postmodernism. However, the problem is that despite the complexity, providing numerous perspectives, and raising insights into the problematic nature of what is knowledge and what is truth, postmodernism offers no suggestions for moving forward, for informing the political process (Humes & Bryce, 2003). Furthermore, the use of multiple voices, as applied in postmodernism is not inconsistent with a critical theory approach, as Apple states, it "increase(s) the number of 'voices' that need to be made public" (Apple, 2000, p. 39), thereby emphasising the local, but still recognising the context and role of the state. The value of the contribution postmodernism makes is in raising questions about the official discourse of policy, raising awareness of the multiple narratives at the micro-level, and it engages with the 'messiness' of change.

Ball (1994) relied heavily on postmodernism and a critical ethnographic approach in his development of the policy cycle. Postmodernism allowed him to question the discourses and practices and how these transmit and produce power and knowledge, whilst his critical analysis allowed him to explore the existing

[7] As mentioned in Chapter One, the terms postmodernism and post-structuralism are often treated as synonymous terms; however, they are also conceptualised as two different movements, but that is not the focus of the present thesis. This thesis uses the original term adopted by the writers referred to, at all other times the term postmodernism will be used as is consistent with the postmodern policy cycle approach.

patterns of social inequality. He drew on the methods of critical ethnography in order to gain "access to 'situated' discourses and 'specific tactics' and 'precise and tenuous' power relations operating in local settings" (Ball, 1994, p.2).

Vidovich (2002) used 'critical postmodernism' drawing on both a postmodern policy cycle approach and a modernist state-centred approach, based on the assumption that "the different approaches are capable of complementing each other and together offering greater insights" (p. 3). Vidovich (2002) in her policy framework gives recognition to the important role of the state in mandating policies for change, especially in Australia. She developed a policy framework, which conceptualised the policy cycle to take account of the complexity of the state and recognise the interactive and nonlinear character of policy production and enactment processes within the policy cycle (Lingard, 1993). Her policy framework incorporates both the macro-level policy intentions of the state and the micro-level policy practices, effects and consequences. At the macro-level, the global context is included, recognising the need to incorporate the increasing potential for global and international influences on the policy process. Whilst the framework is separated into three levels – macro, meso and micro-levels of the policy trajectory – fewer, or more, discernible levels may be present in any particular policy process. The contexts of the policy cycle operate at all levels, highlighting the struggles over influences, policy text production, practice, outcomes and political strategies. The framework is non-linear and emphasises the "interlinkages between the different levels and contexts of the policy process, by examining how these contexts continually relate to each other" (Vidovich, 2002, p. 10). The interlinkages in the framework

can be two way, yet in many policy examples those moving from the macro-levels to the micro-levels often dominate, representing "the power of the policy elite to control the policy process", as this is "greater than the power of the micro-level practitioners to construct and interpret their own version of the policy process" (p. 10). How the interlinkages work and the strength of these interlinkages may depend on the particular policy example.

The initial purpose of approaching the research from a critical theory perspective was to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the roles students play in educational change and to point towards avenues through which students might increase their voice towards emancipation. However, it was felt that a postmodern perspective would add complementary insights. Following Morrow and Torres (2002) it is argued that in important respects critical theory and postmodernism are complementary in the context of globalisation, providing important insights to educational issues in both peripheral societies and other contexts of domination and exclusion. As Morrow and Torres (2002) argue although there are differences these are mutually illuminating:

> Complementarity implies differences, but of a particular kind: those that are not in principle antagonistic, but are potentially reconcilable in theory and/or practice, or suggestive of new research agendas. Further, complementarity also suggests a process of mutual informing selective revision, and deepening of approaches, perhaps even their synthesis (p. 147).

Therefore, for this research an hybrid position was adopted by using a combination of critical theory and a more postmodernist policy cycle approach. Such an approach enhances and extends the insights of the critical theory tradition, as the postmodernist use of voices becomes an end in itself, whereas

the use of multiple voices in critical theory can become a means to an end, that of transforming society (Morrow, 2000). Drawing on insights from both traditions offers greater understanding of the complexities and messiness of policy practices at the micro-level and a better understanding of the relationship between students, the state and educational change.

Students' Perceptions

Within the conceptual frameworks explored above, the present research sought to explore students' perceptions of change. One of the oft-expressed beliefs is that students' perceptions are limited and their experiences are too narrow (Corbett & Wilson, 1995). Therefore, their voices are bracketed or even ignored and teachers and parents speak for them and for what they perceive to be in the student's best interest (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). It was Freire's conviction that every human being no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence' he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at his or her world in a dialogical encounter with others. Every person is capable of gradually perceiving his or her own personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it. Every person can become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality and deal critically with it (Freire, 1970). Freire's use of the term conscientization should not be synonymous with conscious raising, but must be linked to an ethical reflection within a context of domination and oppression, or exclusion (Morrow & Torres, 2002). The moment of conscientization must carry with it mutual recognition both by the oppressed and the oppressor. It is therefore important to explore whether students are in fact conscious of their perceptions of the contexts surrounding change, and use their perceptions to

think critically, reflect practically, and deal analytically with change agendas in the move towards transformation. This must be done by working together in mutual recognition and respect with others, not creating a new order of domination. It was not the aim of this study to bring to conscientization the students at the micro-level of the school, but to explore their perceptions.

Perceptions have been described in various ways. They can be defined as the "extraction and use of information about one's environment and one's own body" (Audi, 1999), and can be of either objects or an event (Honderich, 1995). A less technical definition defines perception as awareness of the existence of something, implying a kind of "implicit, intuitive insight" (Reber, 2003). Perceptual knowledge is knowledge of the world around, which is gathered based on the information gained through the senses, seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and so on. Raw information is taken in and responded to, "processed in various ways" (Dennett, 1996, p.160). Dennett explains that the micro-takings, "a sort of judgement or decision" (p. 171) have consequences for "guiding action and modulating further micro-judgements *in its light*" (p. 171). As the information is gathered, on an ongoing basis (Armstrong, 1988), through the senses, a new understanding of the world affecting a person's actions, beliefs and what they know is arrived at. This knowledge has a privileged position, "since it is by means of it that we are able to come to know other things" (Dancy, 1988, p. 1). Perceptions themselves are not the beliefs, but they help in the acquiring of beliefs (Armstrong, 1988), the most immediate effect of perception (Dennett, 1996).

Armstrong (1988) suggests that perception is almost a form of "continuous mapping" (p.128) of what is going on in a person's body or their environment, of the objects or events around them. Armstrong himself finds the analogy limiting, as a map is just a "physical object, which can be used to tell where things are. They (perceptions) are maps that essentially refer beyond themselves to the objects they claim to map" (Armstrong, 1988, p. 128). He prefers to view perceptions as the acquiring of beliefs (Armstrong, 1988). However, the analogy of 'continuous mapping' is useful, in that at any time, the 'map' may be faulty or incomplete. The information gathered from the senses, whilst 'mapping' the environment, is "rich and profuse" (Dretske, 1988, p. 160). Yet, it is this very richness that leads to one of the problems identified with perception, in that there is a possibility of deception (Hegel, 1949). Whilst a person may believe what is perceived is the truth, what is believed may actually be an inference of their perception and therefore faulty (Armstrong, 1988). Alternatively, what is perceived may be only one property of the event or object and not all its properties (Hegel, 1949), leading to a misperception. It is also the case that whilst a person's sensory experience is profuse, their "cognitive utilisation of it is not" (Dretske, 1988, p. 160). Only limited information is extracted from all that is perceived and therefore the *perceptual map* may be incomplete. The construct *perceptual map* is an extension of Armstrong's concept, and is suggested here as a way of thinking about students' perceptions of change. What is perceived and the quality of the student's *perceptual map* can be affected by other factors. These include the amount of attention a person is paying to the event or object, their motivational state, (such as hunger or

tiredness), their previous knowledge, and their attitude, (how they feel, their disposition for action, and their prior beliefs) (Reber, 2003).

In the present study, students' perceptions of change were formed both by the changes as well as by the context in which these changes took place, their environment, their previous knowledge and their attitudes. The study sought to explore their perceptions to understand how this may have affected their beliefs (O'Brien, 2001), behaviour and attitude to school as well as their understandings, their knowing and motivation for particular actions or reactions ('Perception', 2002). The purpose for exploring these more closely was two fold, in the first instance to understand the quality of students' *perceptual maps* and in the second place to gain a better understanding of the roles students played and might yet play in educational change. As Freire believed it is in the process of conscientization, that is, as people become conscious of their perceptions, that those who are marginalised become transformed. They are no longer willing to be mere objects, responding to changes occurring around them; they are more likely to decide to take upon themselves the struggle to change the structures of society which until now have served to oppress them (Freire, 1970).

Conclusion

The present chapter has dealt with the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. As policy is more frequently the force behind educational change in globalising new times (Taylor et al., 1997), as was the case with the *LAEP Framework*, it was important to define how policy was viewed in

the study. An hybrid conceptual framework drawing on critical theory and a more postmodern policy cycle approach were used to analyse the *LAEP Framework*, which recognises the importance of the role the state in Australia continues to play in policy production (Lingard, 1993), whilst at the same time focusing on the micro-level contexts and the students in the schools. Critical theory allows for the exploration of the 'bigger' picture issues, and highlights the power relationships between state, students and educational change. Postmodernism is used in policy cycle studies to present the multiple voices in a variety of local contexts, questioning the discourses and practices of the policy process and how these transmit and produce power and knowledge. However, the exploration of multiple voices, the students, should not be seen as inconsistent with the critical theory framework used for the study, as it is considered that it enhances and extends the insights of the critical theory tradition as has been argued in the present chapter. It was argued in this chapter that the two approaches are complementary offering valuable new insights.

Students need to be regarded as 'expert witnesses' in schools (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Allowing students to speak for themselves, exploring their perceptions, understandings and knowing, gives greater insight into the roles students play and/or could be playing in the transformation of their schools. Looking at the quality of their *perceptual mapping*, a term developed in this thesis, deriving from Armstrong's (1988) earlier explorations of the meanings of the term 'perception', it is anticipated will show students' growing consciousness of their world. In keeping with the in-depth understandings sought, it was decided to use a case study methodology, described in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework used to guide this study of students in educational change. To guide the study an hybrid approach was adopted, combining both a critical theory framework enhanced by a postmodern policy cycle perspective. The hybridisation of the two approaches allowed for a greater exploration of the detail of the micro-level contexts, delving particularly into the perceptions of students, but also takes account of the broader 'bigger picture' issues. Consistent with the in-depth understandings sought in the present research a qualitative case study method was chosen. Three case studies were conducted. One of the values of qualitative case studies of educational change is that they give public voice to those who experience change and are most directly affected by it (Hargreaves et al., 1993). It also allows for a flexible gathering of data from many sources, including interviews and document study (Anderson, 1986; Punch, 1998). Focus group interviews with small groups of secondary students were the primary form of data collection. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview schedule[8] was developed from the guiding research questions.

[8] A copy of the questions from the interview schedule, based on the research questions, can be found in Appendix B.

The rest of the present chapter outlines the various aspects of the methodology of the research in detail in four parts. First, the use of multiple case studies is explained. Secondly, the data gathering methods are described in detail, including the selection of students. Thirdly, the procedures used in analysing the data are outlined, together with a description of the processes used for the cross-case analysis, adopting Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to meta-level analysis. Finally, some ethical issues are considered. The localised contexts of each of the case study schools is not considered in the present chapter, but in keeping with the case study methodology employed here, an outline of the context of each school forms part of the case study findings, which are reported separately for each case in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

Research Questions

The present research is a study of students in educational change. It explored the changes made in schools brought about by a WA government policy, the *LAEP Framework*, and how students perceived these changes as it happened to them in their school. The aim of the research was to gain a greater understanding of the roles students should or could have in educational change, and to explore the relationship between students and educational change. The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

- What were students' perceptions of educational change as it happened to them in each case study school?
- Did students believe that the changes had made any difference to their school experiences and outcomes?

- Did students believe they had influenced the process of educational change in the school?
- In whose interests did students perceive changes to the school were made?

Multiple Case Studies

The research was a qualitative study, organised around multiple case studies, and was an in-depth exploration of students and educational change. It was the study of three State high schools. The three cases were chosen because the schools in which the research took place experienced substantial educational and organisational changes. The students had not only been asked to accept changes in teaching style but also changes in how the schools were structured, through the introduction of the Middle Schooling, school amalgamations and school closures. The rationale for selecting the schools is given later in the chapter.

The in-depth understandings sought and questions asked in the research called for a qualitative case study method (Lancy, 1993). The case study method was chosen because of its flexibility and its facility for capturing the complexity of the case (Anderson, 1986; Stake, 1995). An important aspect of the case study is that it allows data to be collected from many sources – "converging on the same set of issues" (Yin, 1993, p. 32; see also Punch, 1998; Stake, 1994). The case study method also allows for the description of the context that shapes the participants' responses (Stake, 1994). The context forms an important aspect of the case study research (Lancy, 1993; Yin, 1993) and formed an integral part of the present study in exploring understandings of how students perceived the

LAEP Framework policy enactment and the ensuing changes happening in their particular schools. The unique situation at each school has meant that the specific findings of the research may not be generalisable. However, the purpose of the study was not to make generalisations but to explore the complexities of each case and to present them in enough "detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects" (Seidman, 1991, p. 41; see also Vaughn et al., 1996).

Generalisability is not necessarily the intention in case study research. As Rosenmund (2000) indicates, case studies are closely connected with their specific contexts, and therefore the findings should not be directly transferred to other contexts. It is hoped that by giving full and detailed descriptions of the contexts, what is often termed 'thick description' (Eisner, 1991), that it will be possible that some of the implications to be drawn from this research will be relevant to other schools, which may be undergoing changes in at least one of the areas discussed. Thick description of the cases will include direct quotes of what was said, including as much primary data as is possible (Wolcott, 1990). The effect of this will be to give the reader a sense of being there (Sherman & Webb, 1988). Guba (1981) called this 'transferring'. It allows the reader of a study to make his or her own decisions about the applicability of the research (Walford, 2001). Restricting this research to a small number of case studies is consistent with the aspiration for depth of understanding, yet the cases were chosen with maximum variation in mind. It has also allowed for some limited comparability of themes arising out of a cross-case analysis in order to deepen the

understanding of, and explore further, the relationship between students and school change more generally (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Locating the Researcher

The researcher conducting a case study will already have some ideas when entering the field of study; the problem or issue may have already been identified (Lancy, 1993). In the present study the researcher had been a member of the teaching staff at the first of the three case study schools, Park Hills College, in either a full-time, part-time or relief position for a number of years. Indeed, it was the researcher's experience of involvement during the ongoing changes that led to a further exploration of the issues concerned. The researcher believed there was a large body of quality data available at the school to suggest the value of the proposed study. The ‘insider’ status also allowed the researcher to observe and note first hand some of the students’ responses to the changes taking place. This helped focus the initial stages of the data collection and helped organise the beginning stages of the study (Merriam, 1988). Insider status can have disadvantages, especially in terms of potential bias on localised issues, however, as the research progressed, the researcher moved from the role of participant observer to an observer in a non-participant role in the case study school (May, 2001). The researcher did not teach any of the students interviewed for the study, so there was no direct relationship to them. The researcher was only an observer and interviewer in the other two case study schools.

Selecting the Schools

Selecting the sites to be studied is one of the most difficult steps in any case study (Walford, 2001; Yin, 1993). The Department of Education and Training (DET) administers more than 770 primary and high schools in the State. The focus of the study was to explore how secondary students perceived educational change, so only high schools were considered. The initial contact by the researcher was with a school in a low socio-economic area of the metropolitan region of Perth (the capital of WA). Maximum variation sampling was the basis for selecting the other sites, to give the widest possibility of responses (Seidman, 1991). Thus, the second metropolitan school was selected from a high SES area, using the DETs' *Directory of schools* (www.eddept.wa.edu.au). One rural school was also selected, to compare and contrast with the metropolitan context.

It was further decided to focus on secondary schools that were undergoing substantial structural and educational change. Educational change in WA most often occurs because of policy initiatives by governments. The policy chosen as a focus for the present study, which has led to substantial changes in a number of schools and districts, was the *LAEP Framework*, released by EDWA in 1997 as outlined in more detail in Chapter Two. The aim of the *LAEP Framework* was to modify or reorganise planning of the delivery of education by changing the focus of planning from an individual school to a cluster of schools within a district in order to better manage the delivery of curriculum and resources (EDWA, 1997a). Options for restructuring, put forward by the local education cluster, were to be presented to the Minister for Education who would

make a decision based on information presented. Each of the three case studies involved amalgamations of schools. An example of the amalgamation process, for Park Hills College, is given in *Figure 5.1*.

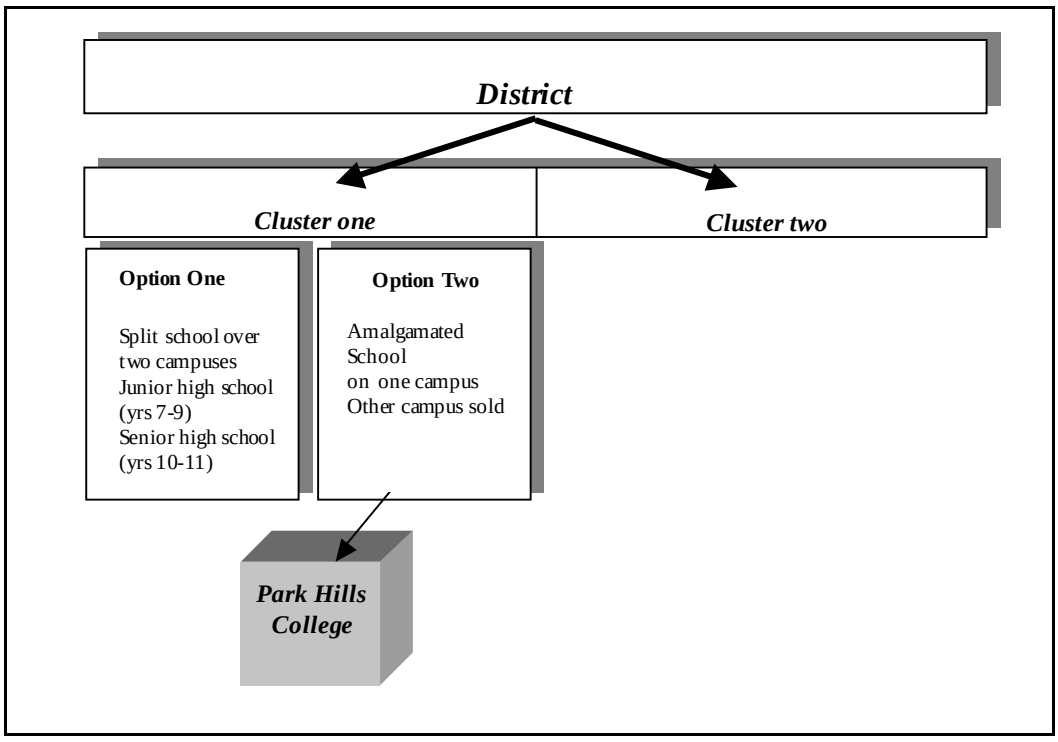

Figure 5.1: Example of amalgamation of two schools (Park and Hills to form Park Hills College) in one district in one cluster

The three case study schools (each the result of amalgamations), Park Hills College, Lighthouse High School and Rural High School, were chosen because of the substantial changes that each school underwent as a result of the *LAEP Framework*. They were also chosen because of the unique nature of the implementation of those changes in each school and because they were comparable in department classification. See Appendix C for a summary table showing a complete overview of the case study schools selected. Contextual variables are both numerous and richly represented in case study data (Yin, 1993) and form an integral part of the findings of the present study, and so the

localised contexts of each of the schools is further described and explored in detail in the chapters to follow.

Selection of Students

A mixture of purposive and self-selection (Merriam, 1988; Punch, 1998) sampling was used to choose the students. In the first phase of the selection process, purposive sampling was used to identify groups of students from each of the schools, based on the extent to which it was considered by the researcher that they could contribute to a better understanding of the issues involved. During the second phase of the selection process, students from the selected cohorts were approached and asked to volunteer for participation in the study; only volunteers from within the cohorts were interviewed. Using volunteers within a selected group, means allowing for self-selection, and so the data will not be generalisable (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1991).

Students at each of the three case study schools were selected and asked to participate in focus group interviews, which would explore issues of educational change at each site. Although there were commonalities for student selection across the three schools, there were also specific differences, one of which was the exact time that had lapsed after the changes, before interviews took place. However, all interviews took place within two years of the changes. Another difference was which age cohort of students was most affected by change at each of the three schools. At each of the schools it was found that there were one or two cohorts of students who, because of the nature of the changes in the school, had over time been asked to adopt more of the educational

and structural changes that took place than other cohorts (see the summary table in Appendix C). The researcher targeted these students as participants in the study. The specifics of the localised context of the schools and the student groups selected are described in detail in the chapters to follow. As well, in one of the schools, students who took part in some of the working parties organised by that school to implement the changes were asked to participate in the research.

A letter was send home to all students from the year cohorts selected. The letters were sent to each student's home address, asking him or her to participate in the study on a voluntary basis (see Appendix A for copies of the permission letters). There could be a perceived limitation in using volunteers in that not all sections of the school's student population in a particular cohort may be represented. However, it was important for the purposes of the present study that students felt comfortable in participating and felt that they could be as candid as possible during the interview (see also Levin & Riffel, 1997). Interview participants must always consent before participating, so an element of self-selection is already present (Seidman, 1991). Permission letters were signed both by parents and by students. Parents were required to sign the letters as students were under the legal age of consent. However, it was also considered by the researcher important to ask students to sign their own letters, as it was felt that only those students who wished to participate should do so, giving students an active role in the choice to participate.

Data Gathering Methods

Interviewing became the foremost form of data gathering. Interviews are a "powerful way to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experiences of the individuals whose lives constitute education" (Seidman, 1991, p. 7). Focus group interviews with students were the predominant form of data collection. Individual interviews were a secondary form of data collection. Triangulation of data from focus group and individual interviews was conducted with data gathered through both formal and informal interviews with school staff, including teachers, head of departments, principals, deputies and auxiliary staff in the schools. As well, further understandings were sought through analysis of school documents such as policy documents, amalgamation documents, student and school records where these were made available, and by attending some key events (for example school assemblies and teacher development and induction sessions) (Merriam, 1988; Morgan, 1997; Yin, 1993). In-depth field notes were taken during visits to each of the case study schools. The effect of these extra sources of information was to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and provide the basis for some degree of triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Interview Data

Interviews, both individual and group interviews were used during the course of the study. Individual interviews took place with staff and with some students. Opportunities for individual interviews were offered for those students who wished to contribute their views to the study but were reticent to do so in a focus group situation. This provided optimal opportunities for any student who wished to participate to express his or her views in the form that suited them.

Four individual interviews were conducted; two in the first round of interviews at two schools and two were follow-up interviews at one school. No individual interviews were conducted at Rural High School.

Teachers and administrators were interviewed at the beginning of entry into each case school site. These interviews took the form of unstructured conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and were used to illicit information about the case site, such as the history of the school and about the changes, which took place, to help generate the focus group discussion guide (Morgan, 1997), and as triangulation data for the focus group interviews. Interviews were taped with the participants' permission and transcribed by the researcher. Focus group interviews were the primary source of data collection with the students who volunteered for the study. This is discussed in greater depth in the following section.

Focus group interviews formed the primary source of data collection. The goal of focus group interviews was to create a relaxed atmosphere, which allowed students to talk for themselves in their own language telling their own stories (Schwandt, 1994; Vaughn et al., 1996). The use of focus group interviews allowed students to interact with others and explore their own perceptions in response to those who had a different point of view (Morgan, 1997). The interviews became 'conversations' between the researcher and the participants and amongst the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), addressing in-depth the selected topic (Vaughn et al., 1996). The aim was to elicit the students'

perceptions, feelings, attitudes and experiences about educational change. It was not to reach a consensus, however, rather to generate a variety of responses.

The use of focus groups could have presented a problem in that a strongly opinionated person may try to take control of the group (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston, 1979). This occurred in one group, in one school, which the researcher countered by referring the vociferous student's many comments back to the group for further exploration and using other participants' non-verbal cues to interrupt the dominant student's longer responses. Another concern with using focus groups is that the group itself may influence the nature of the data collected; there may be a tendency for 'polarisation', in which participants may express more extreme views about the issue under discussion, because of the group dynamic (Morgan, 1997). However, focus groups for the present study were preferred as it allowed more students to be interviewed, and in a less controlled atmosphere than in individual interviews (Morgan, 1997).

The number of participants in a focus group interview can vary greatly according to the nature of the study being conducted (Seidman, 1991). However, when interviewing children or adolescents, Vaughn et al., (1996) suggest using around five to six participants. In the present study there were between four and eight students in each of the focus groups. Numbers of students in each of the targeted year cohorts in each school varied greatly. However, as many focus groups were conducted as there were students willing to take part in the study, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of the changes happening in their school and to allow the 'voice' of all students who wished to

speak to be heard. The composition of the groups in each school was created differently according to the localised context of the site. Whilst it is suggested that the groups should be composed of strangers (Vaughn et al., 1996), within a school setting this is not always possible. However, as far as was possible students from the same form classes were not selected for the same focus group.

The researcher conducted the interview sessions. The sessions were between fifty and sixty minutes long (Vaughn et al., 1996). This was the duration of one period of class time, to have minimal impact on the students' learning. The location of the interviews was an important factor to consider, in making the students feel most comfortable with their surroundings (Vaughn et al., 1996). Although the school often suggested administration offices, these can be very formal places for students; therefore, the researcher decided interviews should take place in a comfortable smaller room away from the main office. At two sites, seminar rooms were used, at another site a music practice room served as the interview room. Students were seated around a table and some initial casual chat took place in order to set them at their ease and to establish rapport with the students. This usually involved comments about some of the recording equipment, which were brightly coloured and involved allowing students to choose the colour of the microphone into which they were to speak. Whilst drawing attention to the recording equipment might have been an inhibitor for students to speak freely, this proved not to be the case, as students quickly forgot the equipment was there.

Interview sessions were taped with parent and student permission (see Appendix A for copies of the permission letters). The interviews allowed students to express their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions on the topic. The interviews were semi-structured, and all groups were given the same set of general questions (see Appendix B for a copy of the initial questions used to guide the focus groups sessions). However, in keeping with the conversational style of the interviews, the questions were not always in the same order and there was much opportunity for clarification and elaboration, and the following up of unanticipated comments. The researcher transcribed the interviews with pseudonyms used for all proper names (Seidman, 1991). Whilst anonymity cannot be guaranteed between members of the focus groups, confidentiality and anonymity were protected by the researcher once the interview sessions had taken place, and neither the names of the participants nor the names of the schools have been used in any transcripts or publications based on the research data collected.

What was interesting about some of the exchanges during the focus group interviews is students often helped each other answer the questions. So for example, one student in the group remembered something regarding an issue; this helped others remember it also, and jogged the memory of another member of the group who knew something else about it, as in the following example when students were trying to remember the name of a student involved in the school changes:

> Q. DO YOU KNOW IF THERE WAS ANY STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AT ALL IN ANYTHING?
> M: Maybe one...I think there's maybe one...
> M: That one guy who's in Year Ten at the time ...Year Eleven.

M: Oh yeah him.
M: No, I'm serious. Remember that guy. He's in ...he's like a nerdy little guy. Oh I can't remember his name.
M: Mark's...
M: Mark's brother.
M: No.
Q: HOW WAS HE INVOLVED? WHAT DID HE DO?
M: He ...I don't know. He's just like a Student Councillor person. They're just letting ...just to let him attend I think meetings. I'm not really sure what he did here...there was one guy.
Q: THE REST OF YOU WEREN'T AWARE OF ANYBODY?
M: No I wasn't...

(Lighthouse High School)

Students also felt comfortable enough not to all agree with each other and to say so, as is demonstrated above. The final comment above was from a student who did not remember anyone specifically and felt at ease to say so.

Another interesting point that came out of the focus group interviews was that not all students were aware of everything that went on in their 'new' school. Therefore, this became an opportunity for them to learn new things from one another. For example in the following excerpt from a focus group interview, when asked about how students might bring about change in the new school, the Student Council came up as a suggestion from one student, another student then asked:

F: Do we have them for Year Ten?
F: Yeah.
F: We just don't know of them very well.
F: Did we get to choose them or do they just choose themselves?
F: From what I heard they...
F: Because I didn't get to vote or anything...

(Lighthouse High School)

Documentary Data

During the course of the study, further understandings and triangulation of the interview data were sought through analysis of documents. At the macro-

level, policy and planning documents from the Education Department were analysed. At the micro-level, documents from the school were examined, such as policy documents, amalgamation documents, and student and school records where these were made available. At one site, the local newspaper proved a great source of documentary data; the school published its school newsletters in the local paper. Strauss and Corbin (1990) called this form of datum the non-technical literature and stress it can be used as both a primary source and to supplement interviews. As a primary source they can be used to place the research in an historical context (May, 2001), give realistic insights to the localised contexts and issues of the organisation (Harber, 1997), and they can teach the researcher much about the structure and functions of an organisation, such as a school (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Documentary data have certain advantages in that they are easy to collect, convenient to use and can supply information about activities, which took place prior to the commencement of the research (Harber, 1997).

However, some care must be taken with regard to using documentary data, in that documents are not neutral but instead are subjective in nature which do not simply "reflect, but also construct social reality and versions of events" (May, 2001, p.183). Many documents are social and political constructions that will reflect the interests and biases of the writer (Harber, 1997), or for whom they have been written (May, 2001). Many documents are also limited in that they may report or describe what is said, rather than what has been done and so should be checked out against other sources (Harber, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). What is left out in documents as well as what is included, is also important to

identify when using documentary data. Documents can be viewed as expressions of social power, "reflecting the marginalisation of particular groups of people and the social characterisation of others" (May, 2001 p. 183). Documents must therefore be regarded as information that is specific to the context and as data that must be contextualised with other forms (May, 2001).

Some documents were made freely available to the researcher on request in each school. However, the types of documents collected varied according to the localised context of the site. At Park Hills, the school where the researcher had been a teacher, full access to all documents was given. At Lighthouse School the access to school documents was more limited, and at Rural, it was more limited still. These context specific differences are discussed in detail in the chapters to follow.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing during the data collection period at each site separately. The case studies were analysed sequentially, yet each case was studied independently of the others, respecting the uniqueness of each case (Vaughan, 1992). The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and keyed them into a computer. Because of the nature of the interviews and the need for anonymity no attempt was made to identify the students individually, the only identification that was made was gender. This was because during some of the interview sessions it became apparent that there were times when the male students' perceptions differed from the female students' perceptions. For example, during interviews at Park Hills, it was apparent that male students had

different perceptions about the Middle School than the female students. This is discussed in detail in the case study chapters to follow. A preliminary reading of the interview data was carried out and common themes and categories were identified, and validated with the codes already developed. This was ongoing during the interview phase and helped direct the interviews and identify site-specific words and phrases.

In all, three 'sets' of codes were developed in order to analyse the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (see Appendix D). First, broad themes were identified from the literature, distinguishing common issues and concerns in educational change and policy practices. These included codes associated with the identification of the school restructuring, the quality of student learning and concerns about the introduction of a Middle School and other issues associated with educational change (Set 1, Appendix D). A second set of codes was generated from the research questions (Huberman and Miles, 1982). These codes focused, for instance, on students' perceptions of educational change, their responses to change, their changes of attitudes and their behaviours because of the changes (Set 2, Appendix D). A third set of codes arose primarily from the students' responses and included issues concerning the image of the school and the role of the principal (Set 3, Appendix D).

In the initial coding phase, after all the data at each school had been collected, students' responses from each interview were placed in a table format, and were then searched and coded using first the broad themes identified from the literature. This served as a form of data reduction, in helping select and

abstract data that would serve as a primary focus (Silverman, 2000). Care was taken during this phase to keep sections of conversation together and not treat single lines of the transcripts in isolation from the surrounding talk (Silverman, 2000). Every group's tape transcript was colour coded for continued identification. The tape transcripts were then reread and coded using the second set of codes. The second set of codes was generated from the research questions, becoming in some instances a subset of the first. Patterns and commonalities were searched "as well as contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 47). So in the broad theme 'restructuring', where students spoke about issues to do with the restructuring of their school, a sub theme was identified 'students' attitudes', which identified students' attitudes to the restructuring of the school. Finally a third column was used to memo the students' comments. The colour of the table is red, so these comments can be traced back to the red group from Park Hills College. For example:

Restructure	Attitude	Concern fighting	F: Hills people. You kind of thought there might be fights or something, but that never happened. And now you can ...I don't even think about it now.
		Didn't happen	

On completion of this phase, the interview transcripts were once again reread, this time identifying codes, which arose from the students' responses to both the focus group and individual interviews (Set 3, Appendix D). These were identified by using the open coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Common patterns of ideas emerged from the interview transcripts and frequently recurring issues were identified and used to build this third set of codes

(Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996). Codes developed included *descriptive codes*, those, which described what was going on in the interview transcript (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This incorporated codes such as 'students concerns – fighting'. This code described one of the recurring concerns students had at one site about changing from one school to another. Another type of code developed was an *in vivo* code, which uses the words from the participants. An example was the use of the phrase 'the merger', which was important at one site. Although, documentation across all schools used the word 'amalgamation', students at one site referred to it as 'the merger'. This turned out to be significant in the final analysis for that case.

Next, the tape transcripts from each site were combined and sections of conversations, focussing on each broad theme, were put together and re-read. Initially, the numbers of comments in each broad theme were counted, to give an idea of the consistency of specific themes and sub themes recurring (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Dissenting voices were also identified during this phase (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Next, moving from the single tape transcripts to the combined tapes for each school, and using a constant comparative method, common patterns across all the tapes emerged and these were noted (Silverman, 2000). Finally, similar comments were clustered together and summarised (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The clustered comments and summaries provided the basis for each of the findings. Not all the comments fitted neatly into one theme, sub theme or code, and often students would move from one topic to another within the same sentence, breath or conversation section. These comments were therefore coded into each broad theme identified.

The transcripts from the student interviews were triangulated first with the other transcripts from the same school, and then triangulated with other data, such as the teacher interview data, school newsletters and documentation, and local papers (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000). In almost all instances, where students reported an incident as having taken place this was confirmed by either other groups within the same school, by teachers, or by school documentation. In only one instance was an incident mentioned by one focus group in one school that was never confirmed by any other source. For reasons of validity, the researcher believed it was better to leave the incident out of the final analysis, although the incident may well have taken place.

The next stage of the analysis was for the researcher to reflect on the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Seidman, 1991). In reporting the findings of each case study, it was important to review all the themes, the codes and concepts. Using excerpts from the interview data and vignettes (Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the relationships and links between the concepts developed were further explored. It was at this stage that it was possible to "propose connections" (Seidman, 1991, p. 102) for "theory building" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 48), to gain a greater depth of understanding regarding the complex relationships between students and school change in each school.

Finally, a cross-case analysis was carried out to deepen the understanding of and explore further the relationship between students and school change and to

allow further themes to emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A replication strategy for analysis was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1993). The basic question was whether the relationship between students and school change would be similar or different across the three sites (Yin, 1993). This was particularly important as the outcomes of the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* was significantly different at each site, yet, each resulting in substantial structural educational changes for the students involved. To help identify common patterns and themes, and to note any contrasts across cases in this phase of the analysis, a case-ordered meta-matrix was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This contained data from all the cases, but was ordered using two variables: chronologically – to continue to give a sense of flow of the changes and according to the themes identified during the data coding. An excerpt of the summary table is included in Appendix E. From this, some broader constructs were identified. These were then verified by returning to each of the case studies in-depth. The constructs developed have helped to explain and increase knowledge of the relationship between students and educational change.

Ethical Issues

All the students in the selected year groups were invited to participate in a research project related to school change. Students were told in a letter the general purpose of the study. Students were also informed that the study was run in conjunction with the University of WA and that the research formed part of a doctoral thesis study (Vaughn et al., 1996). Students were assured both in the initial letter and during the interview process that their identity would be kept confidential and they were free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Consent letters went home both to the parents and to the students and *both* were asked to sign. This was to ensure that students also understood and were willing participants in the interview process.

Finally, the purpose of the present qualitative study was not to evaluate the particular schools and the people within them. It was to describe and analyse the challenges they faced, the issues they encountered at particular points of the policy enactment, in ways that might help other people learn from their experiences. The research traded heavily on the participants' trust, honesty and openness.

Conclusion

The present chapter has presented the methods used in carrying out the study. In keeping with the in-depth understandings sought, a case study method was used, and three case study sites were chosen. The three case study sites were Park Hills College, Lighthouse High School and Rural High School. The case study method was chosen because of its flexibility and because it allows information to be collected from many sources (Punch, 1998; Yin, 1993). Focus group interviews with students were the predominant form of data collection. Other data collection methods for the study included semi-structured individual interviews with a number of the staff involved in the *LAEP Framework* enactment, and the analysis of documents of the *LAEP Framework* and its enactment from both the system level and the individual case study schools. A mixture of purposive and self-selection sampling was used to choose the student respondents in each case study school.

Analysis of the findings was ongoing during the data collection period at each site separately. In all, three 'sets' of codes were developed in order to analyse the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and these are presented separately in the appendix at the end of this thesis. The case studies were analysed sequentially, yet each case was studied independently of the others, respecting the uniqueness of each case (Vaughan, 1992). The contexts of the three case study schools and the findings of student perceptions of educational change are presented in the next three chapters, Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Finally, a cross-case analysis of the three schools was conducted to help deepen the understanding of the relationship between students and educational change and is presented in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER SIX

Case Study 1: Park Hills College

Hills $38,000 Hills Scenic Heights Estate. Large established (over 165 sq. m) brick and tile, new extension just completed, below ground swimming pool. Lakeside situation close to school. Fully furnished, recently redecorated. URGENT SALE. Inspection welcome.

(A prophetic notice, part of a real estate advertisement for a school site placed by Hills students as an end of year prank in the local paper, 1977)

Introduction

Park Hills College (a pseudonym) was created as a new school through the amalgamation of two neighbouring schools, Park and Hills Senior High Schools (pseudonyms) as part of a *LAEP Framework* policy enactment. The amalgamation took place over two years starting in 1998 and the two schools were to be fully amalgamated by the beginning of 2000. This chapter is the first of three findings chapters and details the findings for this case study site. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first, in keeping with the case study methodology, detailing the context of the site and describing in some detail the students who took part in the study.

The second, and more substantial part of the chapter, gives the in-depth findings of the interviews with the students. The findings were organised thematically, moving from the most to the least frequent responses, but also chronologically. The themes were drawn from both the data and the research

questions and focus on issues dealing with the amalgamation, such as how students found out about the changes, the nature of the changes, and the students' role in the change process. In response to questions about the effect on teaching and learning, students discussed their attitude, the changes in teaching and learning, the introduction of the Middle School and the changing expectations. Students also discussed the focus on the image of the school, the change in culture, the new environment and their emotional responses to the changes in their new school. Because the changes had been initiated up to three years previously students were often reflective in their comments. Students time and again pointed to an awareness of hidden or covert agendas.

Context – A New School

In 1998 Park Senior High was a suburban school with about 650 students and 80 staff, including teaching, administration and a number of support personnel. Hills Senior High School, a neighbouring school, had a student enrolment of just over 400. At the beginning of 2000, the amalgamation between the two high schools was completed, creating a new school with a smaller than expected enrolment of just under 800.

The *LAEP Framework*, released in September 1997, was to be implemented on a district-by-district basis, with options to be presented to the Minister within 6 weeks of the initial implementation phase; full enactment of the policy was to have been achieved within four years. The District in which Park and Hills Senior High Schools were situated was given the further instruction at the time that there was no room for a 'soft option' (District

Secondary School Planning Draft Discussion Document: Draft without prejudice, 3rd November 1997); because there were a number of small secondary schools, some would have to close. It became a question of which schools, all schools having strong community links. The district was then further divided into smaller clusters of schools, to facilitate the *LAEP Framework* implementations and make decisions regarding school closure and possible amalgamations.

After several months of community consultation, two options, from the cluster in which Park and Hills Senior High Schools were situated, were presented to the Director General. The Director General was to make his recommendations, and submit this plan to the Minister for Education. The first and preferred option, presented by the school communities, was a split school over two campuses, one a junior high school, comprising Years 7 to 9, picking up Year 7 students from local primary schools, and on the other campus a senior high school including Years 10, 11 and 12. The Minister announced in June of 1998 that the second option had been selected and would be implemented; an amalgamated school on one campus and the other campus to be sold. Money from the sale of Hills Senior High School, approximately $4 million, would be used for capital works, and the recurrent savings from running Hills would be used to fund the work of the implementation committees. The new school, the Minister announced, would incorporate a Middle School, Years 8 and 9, and a Senior School, Years 10 to 12. Hills Senior High School was to continue until the end of 1999, whilst students were moved slowly over to Park Senior High School. Innovative programs such as the electro-technology course, currently run at Hills, would be moved to Park.

With the Ministerial directive in place, the communities of the two schools made the decision to officially 'close' both schools and establish a 'new' school on the site of Park Senior High School, with a new name, new uniform, new logo, and including some new buildings. To highlight that this was not the absorption of one small school into a larger school the term 'amalgamation' was highlighted throughout the enactment process, signifying that the 'new' school was to be a continuation of both old schools. The full implementation of the *LAEP Framework* in the cluster was to be completed by the beginning of the year 2000.

Park Senior High School readily accepted the proposed amalgamation, planning towards their new future with increased student numbers. The school had a long history of adopting innovative practices. In the five years prior to the release of the *LAEP Framework*, the staff had trialled a number of innovations, first as part of the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning (NPQTL), 1992, and later the Innovation and Best Practice Project, 1998. Using the NPQTL funding and 'expert' guidance the school introduced two major changes. One was a structural change, which saw a German model of team teaching called Systems Work Units (later changed to Teaching Teams) adopted. Under this system, the year groups were divided into two smaller groups, each run independently of the other, around a small group of core teachers, who would move up through the school with the students. This structure was to form the basis of the Middle School after the amalgamation took place. The other change was a change in pedagogy, the introduction of Student Centred Learning. This

was to be a priority of the school for the next seven years, and continued after the amalgamation, with all staff new to the school inducted into this practice and strongly encouraged to use it.

The school services a low socio-economic area with a high percentage of students from dysfunctional families with high levels of disadvantage. The innovations introduced during the 1990s were in recognition of the student clientele and to ameliorate some of the difficulties faced by the large number of students at educational risk. A large proportion of the students attending the school choose to follow a vocational rather than an academic career. The school ran many successful vocational education programs to cater for this demand. However, some on-going problems with implementation of innovations have been the high turn over of staff at the school, lack of structural flexibility, through timetabling limitations, and the increasing non-attendance of students as they move through the school, as well as problems with truanting and disruption, placing a number of students each year at educational risk.

Hills Senior High staff, students and parents did not accept readily the closure of their high school and from the time the possibility was first raised until after the Ministerial announcement, resisted and protested the proposed closure. Protests took the form of writing letters to the newspapers and the Minister for Education, signing petitions and rallying former students to support the fight against closure through a series of meetings. A 'Back to Hills High' day was held with a huge turnout of staff, students, ex students and the community, reflecting the affection the community had for the school. Students of the school

rallied in protest, moving onto a major road, and holding up peak hour traffic, in order to garner further community support. A number of Hills Senior High School student representatives, from Years 8 to 10, chosen by the staff, were able to present their concerns to the Director General of the Education Department in a special meeting. However, the protests were to no avail. Once it became clear that the Ministerial directive would not be reversed the communities of Park and Hills Senior High Schools made the decision to work together and to make the new school a great school.

The schools used the opportunity and funding brought in by the amalgamation and sale of assets to address further some of the issues associated with students at educational risk and provide a better education for all of the students. The school buildings were enlarged and updated and organisational changes were introduced, in line with the Ministerial decision, including the full introduction of a Middle School, as suggested under the *Plan for Government School Education* (EDWA, 1997). A number of committees comprising school and community representatives were established to manage the implementation. These committees were responsible for overseeing the extensive building works, and choosing a name, a uniform and the logo for the 'new' school. Student representatives were on all the committees. As well, the deputy principal of Park Senior High School commented that she ran a number of focus groups with students from throughout the school, asking for student opinions on various issues associated with the implementation and fed this information back into the committee process.

The new Park Hills College started operations at the beginning of 2000. The projected total for the school had been 1000 students, but the new school opened with just under 800 students. During the amalgamation process, and in order to placate the communities, the Minister for Education had opened up enrolments for students from Hills and Park at other schools across the city. This meant that students from Park and Hills, and two other schools undergoing change in the other cluster in the District, were able to attend any school of their choice, crossing the set school boundaries, and these schools would then be obliged to take the new enrolments. Across the District, some 300 students availed themselves of this opportunity, most of the Hills students opting to go to another school close by, but some choosing to travel quite long distances to what were considered more prestigious State schools.

The Department had stated that the school would be fully staffed from teachers coming from Park and Hills. Many temporary teachers, currently employed at either Park or Hills, were therefore told they would not be employed the following year. This led to protests, as some of these temporary staff had not only been at the school for a number of years, but were extremely popular with the students. Staff for the new school were to be selected from the existing permanent staff; however, because there would be considerably more staff available than was necessary, permanent staff were given the option of moving to the new school or were given first preference placement in schools of their choice, which had upcoming vacancies. A large number of staff, more than was essential, availed themselves of this opportunity to move, including a number of senior personnel and some who had been key players in the amalgamation

process. The result was that at the beginning of 2000, when the new school opened, Park Hills College was staffed by less then half the old staff, and a large number of new teachers, many of them on temporary contracts with the DET.

The new school buildings were not completed until after the Easter 2000 holidays and renovations and gardening went on until almost the end of the year. It took longer than originally planned, and teachers and students had to spend more then six months dodging around the piles of rubble and other physical discomforts associated with moving around a major building site. Classes were carried out wherever possible, including in communal areas, and often with a lack of suitable resources and a constant barrage of building noise. The research interviews, which are reported here, took place during second term of the year 2001, when all the building works were completed, including the renovations of the existing buildings, and the students and staff had had some time to settle into their new surrounds.

The Students in the Case Study

The initial contact at Park Hills College was in 2000, and consisted of an invitation to all Year 10 students to participate in the research (1998 cohort – that is, students who started Year 8 in 1998). This group was chosen because they had been at the forefront of the significant structural changes that had taken place. A number of students had come from Hills Senior High School. These students had made the move from one school campus to another, as well as facing the significant emotional loss associated with their old school closing down. Students in this cohort from Park Senior High School were officially

made a part of the Senior School during 2000, the first year of the amalgamation, as well as having experienced significant disruption to their classes because of the ongoing building program.

The first contact by the researcher occurred towards the end of the first year of the newly amalgamated school. Students were addressed during a Year 10 assembly and were introduced to the researcher. However, the initial response to requests for research respondents was poor, only a small number of students volunteering to be a part of the study. The lack of concern with anything to do with school was confirmed by their Year Coordinator who shortly after this assembly cancelled the end of year trip for the Year 10s due to lack of interest. A follow up contact was made in 2001. This time, a letter, sent to their home address, contacted students asking them to participate in a study of School Change on a voluntary basis.

Letters were sent to all the Year 10s, Year 11s and those Year 12s who had, as Year 10s, participated in the amalgamation committees. The Year 10s (1999 cohort) were included, as these students had been required to adopt a number of significant structural changes. This year group had moved from a Year 8 standard high school, in 1999, through the introduction of Middle Schooling in Year 9, 2000, and in 2001, as Year 10s, had been made a part of the Senior School. They were having to adapt to many of the new policies associated with this change, as well as having to cope with moving back to the formalised structure of a standard high school.

There were still limited responses in 2001, with only 26 students out of 217 students volunteering to be interviewed as part of the research. The respondent groups were split along gender lines, although this was not always intentional. Often students, who volunteered, failed to show up at the arranged interview time and were interviewed at an alternate time. However, there appeared few gender differences in the discussions. Where gender differences did occur these are highlighted. Year 10 students, who responded, were divided into focus groups, two all male groups and one female group. The Year 11s, who agreed to participate, were divided along gender lines. The all male group of Year 11s were all ex Hills Senior High School students. The all female group was a mixed group representing both former schools. The Year 12 ex committee members were interviewed as a group; they were all females as the only who male had been involved in the work of the amalgamation committees declined to be interviewed. There were therefore six focus groups ranging in size from 4 to 6 students and interviews were conducted in May of 2001, the second year of operation of the new school. Groups were colour coded for ease of reference.

Yellow	Females, Year 10 (1999 cohort)
Blue	Males, Year 10 (1999 cohort)
Green	Males, Year 10 (1999 cohort)
Pink	Females, Year 11 Park and Hills (1998 cohort)
Black	Males, Year 11, ex Hills only (1998 cohort)
Red	Year 12s who attended committee meetings (1997 cohort)

Extensive quotes are used throughout and respondents are identified by group to provide an ‘audit trail’, first by the colour of the group (as above) and then by gender (M or F). Where a series of quotes is given, the gender identification follows in parentheses directly after the speaker and the group is

identified at the end of the series. In keeping with the desire to foreground students' voices, students' language and grammar is given verbatim; no corrections are made.

Restructuring Education at Park Hills College – The Amalgamation

The implementation process at Park Hills was given the term 'the amalgamation', to highlight that it was to be both a 'new' school and yet a continuation of both old schools, even though it was located on the Park Senior High campus. Students therefore used this term throughout their discussions of the changes. They had given the amalgamation and subsequent restructuring of the school considerable thought and intense scrutiny. There had been considerable disruption to their school experience and much vocal discussion, with parents, peers and staff. Most comments during the focus group interviews concerned the restructuring of the educational provision in the district. Students talked about when they heard about the proposed changes, from whom, the process of the amalgamation, their involvement in that process, the new structure of Middle School and Senior School at Park Hills College, why they believed the amalgamation took place, and their new place in the school.

The Beginning

Most students were made aware of the restructuring process very early on. Of the Year 10s some heard about the amalgamation at end of Year 6 (1997) and some in Year 7 (1998). Yet, others did not become aware until they were in high school (1999) and the move for the amalgamation was well on the way. Students from Hills or those who would normally have gone to Hills became

aware earlier of the changes in store for them, than those who were going to Park. Students found out from a variety of sources. Some heard it from friends, some from family, but most found out through official announcements.

Students from Park remembered being officially notified that the school would be amalgamating with Hills at an assembly during 1998. Some students also remembered their parents receiving letters; one of the Year 12 students interviewed, remembered attending some of the early meetings held for parents and students to discuss the amalgamation. At Hills, the Minister for Education visited in person to make the announcement to staff and students. In 1999, the year prior to the amalgamation, all the Year 8s and Year 11s, from both Park and Hills, were required to enroll at Park. Some Year 10s (who wished to accept a $630 changeover offer made to Hills students by the Minister for Education to cover the cost of transport and new uniforms) also moved at this time. The rest of the students from Hills joined them at Park Hills in 2000. One male, from Hills, expressed anger at the "bribery" which "he" (signifying the then Minister for Education) had used to try to get students to move schools ahead of the closure timetable.

A number of students, both ex Hills and ex Park, made the observation that quite a number of their friends took the opportunity to choose a school elsewhere and either not go to Park Hills at all, or else leave Park for other schools, under the Minister's offer of 'boundary free' transfer. One of the students in the focus groups also wanted to go with his friends to another local area school, but his mother decided he would attend Park Hills. It was the

overall perception of students in the focus groups that not many Hills students ended up at Park Hills.

Quite a number of students remembered discussing the amalgamation and subsequent changes with their parents. They reported that their parents had been concerned about the proposed amalgamation because problem students from Park often had attended Hills as an alternative and now they were amalgamating this might lead to further problems. Others reported that their parents were not happy about the proposed amalgamation because they themselves had attended Hills. One student remembers discussing the issue with a neighbour and reported that:

> Supposedly they've had this idea for a really long time to actually amalgamate the two schools, because of ...the guy that lives across the road he said that when he went to school there that they had the idea of closing Hills down and stuff like that too. It's been on the books for like a really long time. (Pink group/F)

A Brand New School

Much had been made of the fact that Park Hills was to be a new school. However, the consensus amongst students was that Park Hills was not a new school, just a new name. Some of the students laughed at the suggestion, saying that whilst there had been some changes, these were superficial – the name, uniform, some of the buildings – but the area had stayed the same and the school they attended was still where it was. Only two people viewed it as a new school, as one of them explained:

> I think it's changed. New teachers, new structure, and new buildings ...it's definitely changed. You can't really say it's just stayed exactly the same. You've got new people here too. (Green group/M)

Although not a big change, ex Park students generally were not happy with the school's name change, preferring to keep the old name. One student felt sad about the name change. Another said he had preferred the old name because his brother and sister had both gone here. One student believed the name should not have been changed because it was after all a reflection of their suburb, in a similar way that Hills had taken its name from its suburb. The name change suggestions had been sent out in a newsletter and parents and students had been asked for a response. One student commented he would have liked to have an opportunity to think up a more suitable name, but all that was asked for was a choice between preselected options. Another student believed they should have considered some more original alternatives such as 'Pills' and 'Harks'; however, he was quite happy with the name the school ended up with believing the inclusion of the word 'college' would be good for the school's image.

Changes at Park Hills

Students from Park identified many changes in the school, most of them to do with the physical environment. These included a new bus shed being built, a new senior block, social services block, a new roof for the gym, an elevator, an elevated walkway between two second story buildings, the rebuilding of the central administration building and of other teaching blocks, new Middle School block and air conditioning in some of the new buildings. Students also identified the new name, uniform, increased resources and new staff and students from Hills. A few students did not initially perceive that there had been any educational changes:

> It's been improved, yeah. But I don't think actual education, teaching-wise has changed a lot. (Red group/F)

Some of the students liked the changes. Some liked the new buildings. Others said they felt ambivalent, liking some things but not others. One group believed they should have been asked about the changes:

> I reckon they should have asked us. (M)
> I reckon we should get a choice in some of the things. (M)
> (Green group)

One student commented that much of what had taken place over the last two years was a bit pointless, especially as not many Hills students chose, in the end, to come to Park:

> I thought it was, kind of like, we're changing all this stuff for all these people, we didn't get that many people go. Kind of weird. (Pink group/F)

The changes to the uniform caused a lot of dissension amongst the students and parents. Because this was purported to be a completely new school, it was considered appropriate by the Implementation Committee that there would also be a new uniform. There was some lively discussion concerning this in the focus group interviews, much of it concerning the $630 given to ex Hills students for transport and uniform costs, money which was not available to ex Park students. These students only received $75 and that only after a long and hard fought campaign by some of the parents. In the end however, many students decided to continue to wear the old uniform, “teachers don't have no problems with it.” One student queried the need to change at all:

> And I remember that we ...having to change our school uniforms and stuff seemed pretty pointless because by the time everyone had moved to [other schools] and put themselves into private schools, there was only fifty, sixty kids came here. (Pink group/F)

When asked about further changes they would suggest students identified a number of physical and resource issues. Some of the rooms had not been revamped, as students felt they should be. Others wanted to see air-conditioning throughout the school. Others wished to see more computers in the school, and other resources updated. One group discussed a complete revamp of the gym, whilst two groups mentioned the toilets, which they believed were shocking. One student respondent made the observation that things were continually changing and that the school should stop and just leave everything the same.

One group discussed a wish for more heterogenous classes. At this time some of their classes were in levels, yet these students believed that this hampered their future life choices. This was particularly problematic, they believed, when students had not yet made up their minds whether to go to a college of Technical And Further Education (TAFE) or university and by making the wrong choice of subject level they would then not be able to get into course preferences later. The end result would be, as one student put it, “You'll end up spending your whole life in crappy jobs that you don't enjoy” (Yellow group/F).

Students in the Change Process

Most of the students did not remember having their opinions sought during the amalgamation process. It was their perception that only their parents’ opinions had been sought at some juncture. Students recalled that there had been a number of meetings for parents to attend. One ex Hills student recalled what had happened when her mother had attended one of these meetings:

> My mom went to a meeting where there wasn't asking your opinion, it was more of a presenting a point of view of the closing the other school would be better. (Pink group/F)

A Year 12 student also remembered attending a number of meetings where parents had been present, as well as the Minister for Education. It was her perception that at these meetings "they were sort of playing us off against each other" (Red group/F). At one meeting a group of students from Park, of which she was one, had been asked to present to the meeting why they should not close Park and why Hills students should go there, and at a later meeting a group of Hills students made a similar presentation. In this student's opinion, "I think Hills was always going to be closed".

Most students could not remember having their opinions sought. Their perceptions were that opinions were only sought on what they considered superficial matters, such as the name and the uniform:

> They didn't worry about opinions and that. They just went ahead and done all the construction and changes to the school. (Yellow group/F)
>
> All they wanted was about the name. (Red group/F)

Some students thought that more students should have had an input, not only, as they believed, those of the upper Years. When opinions were expressed, their perception was that they were ignored and that staff did not always listen to them:

> But I think .... if we'd said no I don't think it would have matter. (F)
> More like running it by us, telling us. (F)
>
> (Red group)

Students gave a number of examples. For example, ex Hills students had expressed opposition to the school's closure, and had suggested alternatives, but they believed they were ignored. Another example, given by ex Park students,

was the uniform. Students were asked their opinions about the choice of colours, and the majority of students had chosen black, but according to students, teachers had over ruled this choice:

> The majority voted black, but they didn't…the teachers didn't want black because in summer it would be really hot and things like that. (Red group/F)

Most student respondents were not aware of any involvement by students in the amalgamation process. One ex Hills student supposed that the Student Council at Hills had been involved (they had organised the student protests) but this student was not aware if there had been any other involvement. The group of Year 12s, who had taken part in the amalgamation meetings, described the level of their involvement as minimal, "Oh yeah just the little minor details I think" (Red group/F). They had become involved in a number of ways. One student became involved because her parent had been involved. One student had been 'roped in' by a friend and a teacher had nominated two of the students. One student said she had not felt very comfortable in the meetings. Some said they had difficulty in interrupting the flow of discussion. They had not been a party to the meetings that had made the decision to amalgamate or which school to close. Their input, said these students, had been kept to conducting surveys regarding the name and uniform. They were glad they had been a part of it though, even as Year 10s, as one student said, "it was good to at least have an input" (Red group/F).

Having a Say at Park Hills

The following comments were in response to questions asking students how they would make changes at Park Hills. Students did not believe they had much opportunity to make changes, other than through the Student Council. Other students thought they might approach their Year Coordinator to make changes, or raise problems, but they did not see that she had much opportunity to make changes, “she doesn't seem to have that much power really” (Pink group/F). Their perception was that she had enough difficulty keeping on top of the job. Others thought they might ask some of their teachers, if they wanted to make changes. Some students said they had no idea where to go if they wanted to bring in changes to school.

The Student Council, which met once a week for about 40 minutes, was seen as one way in which the students could have a say at school. Most of the students were aware of the existence of the Student Council and the role it played in the school. It was seen as responsible for organising events and fundraising. Only one student, ex Hills, was not aware of the existence of the Student Council and what it did in the school. Some students’ perceptions were that unless you were on the Student Council, or were liked by the Student Councillors, you did not have much opportunity for making any changes in the school:

> People who aren't representatives or councillors don't have much say in what goes on in the school. (Yellow group/F)
>
> If you're an enemy of someone on the Student Council then your opinion won't be voiced. (Pink group/F)

There were actually two councils, as one student explained. One, the *Student* Council, was representative of the whole body of students in the school. Two students from each Year group were chosen to be a part of it; students did not believe that this group was able to make any real changes. The other was the *School* Council, made up of staff (including the principal), parents and community members, on which there were two student representatives, one of whom took part in one of the focus group interviews. This body was seen to have greater power. Students had raised issues here with the principal. One change, which had been initiated by the students, involved the early closing that had always taken place on a Thursday. The school had opted to change this, but many students complained as they had jobs to go to, siblings to collect at the nearby primary school, or other activities organised on that day. So, after raising the issue with the Student Council, and from there to the School Council, the decision was made by the principal to revert to early closing on Thursday.

Another way that change could be initiated, according to students, was to protest or complain. Students at both schools had protested at some time during the amalgamation process and after, but for different reasons. Hills students had led a strike and protest rally to try to persuade the Minister for Education to change his mind about closing their school. The protest rally started in the school grounds and moved quickly to one of the major roads through the area, where students held up traffic. Police were been called in to clear the road and move the students back onto school grounds. A group of students was then invited to go and talk with a representative from the Education Department:

> On the protest day there were these students like four students or five students who got chosen to go and talk to some one this lady, I've

> forgotten her name, about moving to Park so they got to talk to her about it on behalf of our school. (Black group/M)

However, the march and the meeting were to no avail. Students at Park also used protesting to try to initiate change at their school. Their protest was in response to a teacher being moved at the time of the amalgamation:

> I know there has been one petition. We had one really good teacher and he was going to get sent away. (F)
> Nobody wanted him to go. (F)
> He didn't want to go, but like the Education Department was sending him to another school. So we had like big A3 sheets of paper going around to each contact in each classroom and whoever didn't want him to go signed it. So he's back at the school now. (F)
>
> (Yellow group)

In this case, the students were successful. A cause for complaint from the students since the amalgamation, particularly the Year 10s, had been the issue of lockers. Middle School students were provided with lockers in their classrooms, where they were able to keep their own belongings, place their bags and lock with their own lock. Students in Year 11 and 12 were also given access to lockers; however, in their case, it was supplied with a combination lock, for which they had to pay $10. The Year 10s had no lockers, nor were they given access to the Senior School lockers; in fact, as one student said, “they weren't even going to consider it until we complained” (Yellow group/F). It was only after they raised the issue with staff that the Year 10s were finally given an opportunity to rent a locker – though not all were happy about the rental charge, having had access to free lockers the previous year.

Year 10s in the Middle – We're the 'Jan's'

Students were asked to describe the introduction of Middle Schooling and the changes as they moved from Year 8, to Year 9 (when Middle School was introduced), to Year 10, and give their reactions to these changes. It was in their responses during this discussion that a gender difference became apparent. The introduction of Learning Communities (the term used to describe the Middle School at Park Hills) after the amalgamation, for all Year 8s and 9s was seen as a positive change by all student respondents. A 'home room' and lockers in their rooms were provided as part of its implementation. Students from Park had been in 'Teaching Teams' in Year 8, where they were in the same class for some subjects, but moved from room to room, remaining in one room only for English and Social Studies. This changed to three Learning Communities when they moved to Year 9. In the Learning Communities, students had their own homeroom, where they stayed all the time, and teachers came to them. This changed again, when they moved to Year 10, where they moved to a more traditional high school structure, as part of their inclusion in the Senior School. The males in the focus group interviews said they preferred the current year, Year 10, moving from class to class. Staying in the same classroom all day made them feel restless and confined:

> Oh it's just like you just ...if you get tired just sitting all day, you get tired sitting in a classroom because you can't get up and walk around. (Blue group/M)

The girls, in contrast, had enjoyed staying in the same room, getting to know the people in their classes. The advantage was, said one student, that "you had more learning time to finish off work because you weren't changing classes" (Yellow group/F). Some students said they enjoyed their time in the Learning

Communities more than their experiences in Year 8, as one student said “I had so much more fun in Year Nine” (Yellow group/F).

One of the major restructuring changes was the construction of a new senior block at one end of the school. According to students, this block was purpose built to house the Year 11 and 12s and the intention was to keep the younger students out, so older students would not be interrupted by “the younger classes who yell a lot” (Pink group/F). Students liked the idea of a senior block, which they viewed as their own, a place to eat, meet and where they have their lockers. However, students were disappointed by some of the rules imposed on them, such as not being allowed in the centre corridor of the block to enter classrooms. This was particularly inconvenient as the outside doors were always kept locked, and this meant students could not then enter their rooms. This was, however, settling down, as teachers became more relaxed in their attitude concerning strict exclusion.

The other complaint Year 11 and 12s made was the timetabling of Middle School classes in the Senior Block, due to lack of space, or when Middle School students were sent into the Senior Block because of behaviour problems. This was a discipline policy adopted from Hills, where junior school teachers had a buddy teacher in the upper school, so that when a younger student misbehaved they would be send for in-school detention into an upper school class. However, it was the opinion of the Senior School students that this did not work very well. Occasionally there had been a number of younger students in their senior classes, up to five, which meant they would then continue their disruptive and distracting

behaviour in the senior class. The Year 12s also did not really regard the Year 10s as being part of the senior school. With this the Year 10 students agreed:

> Because we are the middle kids in this school. We're not 8s or 9s and we're not 11s and 12s, so we're the middle. It feels like a middle brother or something. We're the ...what is it ...you know how you're got Marcia and Cindy is the little girl, and ... oh yeh, Jan's, we're Jan's (laughter). (Green group/M)

This comment (referring to the television character, a troubled middle daughter, Jan, in a still popular 70s sitcom) reflects very much the perceptions the Year 10s have of their position in the school, technically part of the Senior School, but not given the responsibility, and often treated as Middle School students. Year 10 students commented on their lack of status in the school, no respect, no responsibility, and often their classes were not in the Senior Block; students wanted to have more of a sense of belonging. Students reported an increased pressure on them to do well, and prepare for Year 11. Yet, there were fewer social activities organised for them. One of the Year 11s, when commenting on her time in Year 10, as the first group through, remembered not being greatly involved in anything in Year 10 and that there were not many activities for Year 10s.

Why?

When student respondents were asked why they believed the changes had been made, they came up with two main reasons. Some said it was because of money – the increasing costs of running two small schools or the need for the Department to make money by selling the land for housing. The other reason was because the numbers of students in both schools were very low and didn't

look set to increase in the foreseeable future and therefore the schools had to amalgamate:

> There was two schools in the same zone, there wasn't enough kids to keep them both open. (Pink group/F)
>
> I heard that Hills was to be closed down, because it would be better off as a housing area, I think it'd be just money-wise maybe. (Red group/F)

Whilst most students remembered discussing this with their parents, not even those in the Year 12 group could recall being told why the amalgamation took place. As one girl commented, "They said we're doing this. But didn't tell us why" (Red group/F).

Teaching and Learning

Comments about the teaching, teachers and learning came in response to questions about how students perceived the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment had affected their learning, what changes had taken place, and their opinions about these changes. Although a few did not initially perceive there had been any changes in the teaching at Park Hills, most students were vocal about the changes to the teaching and learning at the new school and their own responses to these changes. Students commented about the impact changes had on their attitudes, behaviours, and learning. Students talked about the changing expectations of them, the new staff in the school, and the Year 10s spoke of the difference in teaching.

Teacher Changes

There were many new teachers at the school. Students commented about the large turnover of teachers from every subject area, the number of new

teachers, and relief teachers, which they had to put up with, particularly during the first year post-amalgamation. According to students, a number of the teachers left because they could not handle the students. Although the current teachers were described by the various focus groups as being good, cool and friendly, most students believed the best teachers had left. It was the opinion of the students that these 'better' teachers should have been re-employed, but they had had to make way for teachers supposedly coming from Hills High, something that did not eventuate. Students had not been happy about the loss of favourite teachers and the use of relief teachers to fill the spaces, believing that it negatively impacted their learning. They explained that at times all they were given was worksheets, one day after the other, because there had been no full time teacher to look after their class. Students questioned why this had happened, and one group believed that in this instance, students should have been asked which teachers they had wanted:

> Not many students feel that strongly about their teachers that they don't want them to go. I think that if the students really like the teacher, that they could learn a lot, then the teacher should be allowed to stay at that school teaching those students. (Yellow group/F)

In fact, students' perceptions were they learned more from a teacher they liked, who was friendly, but strict, yet who knew how to explain things. This had a greater impact on their learning than other changes in the school.

Teaching Changes

The teaching itself had also changed. Ex Hills students found it different from their previous experience, the learning was more independent. Teachers seldom checked on whether students had completed their work, setting work and then leaving it up to the students to decide whether they were going to complete

it or not. However, for most students the biggest change had come when they moved to Year 10. The style of teaching had changed; though this was not attributed to the amalgamation, but to the move from Middle school to Senior School and to the change in teachers, who had different teaching styles. Year 10 female students found the current style rushed and boring, preferring the exploratory and project style practised in Year 9. Students also explained there had been a change in the way their work was now marked and reported, moving from letter grades to the new levels (as part of State-wide outcomes based curriculum policy changes), and they and their parents had found this confusing. They observed that no information had gone home about the new marking scheme other than what may have appeared on their actual reports. They felt themselves unable to explain the new method to their parents.

One positive effect noted by some of the students was their perception that there was an increase in the choice of subjects on offer, especially in vocational education and training, which was seen as a direct result of the amalgamation. It was students' perceptions that particularly for ex Hills students there were more alternatives. One ex Hills student said he enjoyed the access he now had to music, a subject not on offer at Hills. He was doing well in it, and was glad for the amalgamation and the opportunity he now had. One group believed that there was no change in subjects on offer. Ex Hills students in this group observed there were some differences compared with what had been at Hills. However, as one of the ex Park students commented:

> All the stuff that they promised right like more classes and all that sort of stuff and ...it just hasn't come out that way. Like me and my sister wanted to do Chinese and Japanese this year, but because there wasn't enough people they closed down the class. (Pink group/F)

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Most students believed that the changes at the school had affected them in some way. Male students believed their work had improved; they were working harder and trying more. They attributed this to a number of factors, teachers, moving to year 10 (or Senior School) with higher expectations and more freedom to move around, their own growing maturity, the good environment at the school and the changed timetable. There were now 5 x 60 minute lessons in the day, rather than 8 x 40 minutes, and the males said they found the increased time helped them to get more work done in class, so they had to do less at home. This also meant lessons occurred less often during the week and made the days go quicker for some students. Yet, others preferred the previous set up, which they felt made the day go quicker. Students were evenly divided over the issue.

Most students did not believe that the changes at the school had given them a better attitude to school. Most reported that there had been no change in the way they viewed school since the changes. Some believed things were better now at Park Hills, more comfortable and they had more friends; a few believed that Hills should have been kept, although it was older it had been better, they believed Park Hills was 'crappier'.

Students did not believe the changes had made much difference in their behaviour. Those who had 'mucked around' before still did so now. The changes in behaviour students did identify were due more to the fact they believed they were maturing, 'growing older' and they now knew how to 'chill

out and sit back a bit'. Here, too, a gender difference was identified, as one group of boys commented that the increased workload had changed their attendance patterns; they were now not taking as many days off as previously. However, a focus group of girls reported the opposite, saying the increased workload meant they often took a day off in order to complete homework.

One ex Hills student commented that in the final year of that school, 1999, the behaviour had actually become worse, and the teachers had less control than previously. He had expected it to improve, because the classes were much smaller and the teachers should have had more control, but this turned out not to be the case. This student believed being at the Park Hills had improved his attitude and behaviour at school; he had spent most of the final year at Hills 'mucking around' with his friends, but because no one misbehaved in his classes at Park Hills, he was now trying harder and concentrating more. One student commented that the current problem with bullying was having a negative effect on her learning. A small number of students did not believe that the changes had made any impact on them at all; this was particularly true of the Year 11 and 12s, who believed it was the move to Year 11 and 12 that had had the greatest impact on them.

Another gender difference was identified when discussing teaching and learning outcomes in the move from Year 8, a normal high school format, to Year 9 in a Middle School and back to the normal high school format in Year 10. The Year 10 males in the focus group interviews said they had preferred the teaching and learning experiences in Year 8 and Year 10 to Year 9, preferring the

way the teachers dealt with them and the work they were given. The female students on the other hand said they believed they were doing worse during Year 10 then previously. These students believed their marks were going down; they were doing less work now. They believed the work in Year 10 was rushed and felt they never had enough time to complete work properly. They believed they had done better in Year 9, the teachers had been better, the assignment work was different and they had greater opportunities for learning than they did now in Year 10. Partly this was because in Year 9 they did not have to move, all their subjects had been in one class. They also enjoyed getting close to the people in their classes.

Both Year 10 males and females believed the work had 'gotten harder' for them. They said that the expectations of them had increased since joining the Senior School. They were expected to behave with more maturity; their perception was that the teachers were much stricter with them. They were expected to work harder in preparation for the following year, when they would either go on to Year 11 or to a technical college. They were given harder work, more of it, and most students complained about the increased homework load. They found this particularly difficult as quite a number of them had jobs, which took up time after school, and the increasing homework demands, and general work load, meant they felt they had little time for anything else. The Year 10s were aware this would get more difficult for them the following year when they made the move to Year 11, as one group of year 10s quipped:

> Yeah, sorry, I'm going to have no friends next year and in Year Twelve, I'm dumping you. I'm just going to study. (F)
> Study in the library during the lunchtimes. (F)
> Be a little squint. (F)
>
> (Yellow Group)

In discussing the teaching and learning in the Senior School, the Year 12 group did not believe much had changed for them. They enjoyed being in the new building and the new environment, but they were bemused about the inclusion of the Year 10s in the Senior School. In fact, many of them perceived the change to be superficial, in name only, and in discussing the matters with their Year 11 friends, many of them did not believe there was a great deal of difference; the greatest impact was still in the transition from Year 10 to Year 11. They also reported that many of their friends had dropped out of Year 11; they had found the workload too difficult. The Year 11 groups also did not perceive there to be a great deal of difference, especially as in the year of the interviews many Year 8 and Year 9 classes had been scheduled into their Senior Block because of lack of space in the Middle School block.

The Year 12s discussed at length the low aspirations the staff had for them. Their perception was that teachers did not encourage them to aim for university entrance; they were being ‘pushed’ to go to a college of Technical and Further Education (TAFE). They believed that teachers were streaming them to go to a TAFE college and not apply for university. They reported teachers’ telling them university was too difficult and they needed to be smarter and not to bother with university entrance but to go for a TAFE college entry instead. College of TAFE information and applications were ‘shoved in their face’,

whereas university information they had to seek out themselves. Some were told they could go to university, but a TAFE college application was just there as a 'backup' and maybe they should go to a TAFE college first and then to university. Students found this very disappointing, believing teachers should be encouraging them to do better, not achieve lower. They believed that because of these low aspirations a number of students actually took it easy during Year 12, not trying and just going for a TAFE college entry, even though some of these students, in their opinion, had the ability to go to university. They wondered whether this was just the case at this school, or whether this occurred at other schools as well. One student, in discussing this with a friend who was at a TAFE college, reported that her friend had told her that TAFE colleges were just as difficult and a lot of people dropped out of TAFE colleges because the work was so hard and competitive.

Culture

Students spoke at length about the culture of the their old schools. They discussed both the positive and negative aspects, highlighting issues to do with bullying and fighting. Fighting had been a primary concern for all students moving to the new high school. Students also talked about the image and the work being done on the image of the school as part of the changes, and how some of the environmental issues affected the image. Finally students discussed what it had been like to go to school whilst the building works had been in progress and the impact on learning on a construction site.

Comments about the culture at Park were generally positive, both before and after the amalgamation when it became Park Hills. Students who had attended Park had considered it a good school; some were second-generation students, the school had long been established in the area and had been substantially rebuilt on two occasions. It was considered an easy school to make friends at, with an easygoing atmosphere and accepting of new students. Students commented that Park had a good atmosphere, which had been added to by the rebuilding, making Park Hills School lighter and brighter. Students commented they liked the school, and many would be happy to graduate from the school. Students said the teachers were great, and it had a good Principal, who was perceived as being interested in the students, and interested in the activities of the school. Students listed a great number of extra curricular activities at the school – band, drama, school productions, a large number of sporting groups, after school homework classes. There were community groups such as Rotary Club, which came into the school, as well as youth groups. The school had done very well in a number of local and State competitions in music and drama, and students were proud of their achievements, as one girl said, “I'd be proud to say I went to Park” (Red group/F).

There were fewer comments about Hills, although those who had attended there said it had been a great school, with a proud history. Ex Hills students spoke of their school with great affection; they had loved it. All students agreed that it had been a good school and it was a bad decision to have closed the school. Students described it as friendly with great surroundings, close to parks and lakes. Although the school numbers had been low the Hills

property was extensive. It was an older building than Park, and students assumed this was why Hills was closed, not Park. (Park had been rebuilt some 15 to 20 years previously, according to one ex-Hills student, because of a fire on the site.) However, during the final year of Hills, things were very different; numbers were even smaller and there were no Year 8s and Year 11s. Many other students had also left, having accepted the Minister's financial assistance offer. Some chose to stay on till the final day, classes were small, and often ran combined with other year groups and even then, numbers for each class were low. The choice to stay was made by many of the students themselves. But, according to the ex Hills students, the students who stayed behind behaved differently, they 'mucked around' and teachers were unable to control them.

Fighting and Bullying

A major concern for students during the amalgamation was the history of fighting between the two schools. There had always existed a culture of strong rivalry, both on and off the sporting field. Students explained there had been 'bad blood' between the two schools:

> I heard that Hills and Park High do not mix. They had a lot of fights between them and stuff and that's all I heard. (F)
> But there was like always been like bad blood between Hills and Park. (F)
>
> (Pink group)

This was historical, stemming back to Hills' inception, in 1965. Each focus group expressed having been concerned about the possibility of fighting breaking out between the two groups, as they were forced to mix in the new school. Quite a number of students, according to one student, therefore opted not to attend Park Hills, but go to another school in the area. Interestingly, none of the

students could remember seeing a fight or participating in a fight between students of the two former schools. Students said they had only heard of it, they knew their parents were concerned about it, and they were aware it had happened in the past. It came as a surprise therefore that, when the schools finally did amalgamate, there was in fact no problem. As one Year 12 student commented, "I thought that as soon as they came here they'd be fights that wouldn't have normally occurred and anything like that. But when they came, it was nothing. Everyone was really civilised like." And indeed, less than 2 years after the amalgamation, students said the two schools were no longer identified as separate groups. Whilst this did happen initially, and many of the ex Hills students grouped together when they first moved to Park Hills, many of them had now formed friendships with ex Park students.

Even as the schools had a history of fighting, so also did both schools have a culture of bullying, and this continued even after the amalgamation. One of the positives identified by one of the students, was that as a result of the division between Middle and Senior School, there was not as much opportunity for bullying by the senior students of the junior students. The school was trying to deal with the problem and had recently instituted a new anti bullying policy. Students in the focus groups explained if you were caught bullying you were given a bullying slip, and after three slips a suspension. The introduction of the new system was not seen as very effective by the students, who believed a suspension was akin to being given a day off school. In-class suspension for a Middle School student into a Senior School class was also seen as a waste of time and an interruption of the senior class students' work. Students, on the

whole, were fairly scathing of the current rules and discipline system operating in the school, believing they were not effective in dealing with the real problems. The consensus in the various focus groups was that the re-introduction of the contract room, as had previously operated at Park High might be a better deterrent.

Image

Comments about the image of Park Hills were not in response to any specific questions but emerged from students' discussions about the school. They concerned either Park Senior High School, or the image of Park Hills after the amalgamation. Students from Park believed the image of the new school had changed, even though it inhabited the same buildings. Students described the old image of the school as one where fighting took place, a drug capital. Park had been a school with a bad reputation in the community, but students believed this was changing. They attributed the changes to a number of things. The new name was seen as helping the image of the school, although one student commented that it was "kind of hypocritical, it makes us like ...in saying that we're a big city college, when really we're just a senior high school, but it's the same really. It's just that we have different buildings" (Green group/M). The new uniform, although the manner of its introduction caused a lot of protest, was also seen as making the school look better. Students believed that it made them look like a private school. Students believed the winning performance of the school in various local and State competitions, some of which had been reported in the press, was also a contributing factor to the improving reputation of the school:

> Yeah, they try to be more important and now we do more things involving the community and all that. (F)
> But it's getting better because like with the music and that we're getting out in the community and it's actually pretty good, improving the school. (F)
>
> (Blue group)

The new buildings were also seen as improving the image of the school, as one student said, “I think it's better for the school's image. When you go out you're more likely to be proud of your school. You know I come from Park like you know we’ve got a new music program now and new building” (Red group/F). Students believed it was primarily because of their teachers that the effort was being made to change the image, especially the uniform.

One thing that adversely affected the image of the school, these students believed, was the behaviour of some of the students as they went into the community. Students were concerned about those who vandalised property, stole from the local shopping centre, damaged local parks or tagged (take name badges off) cars. Giving students suspensions was not seen as an effective form of discipline as these students were then free to have, as one student phrased it, “A couple of days off school. Yippee, let's go have some fun. I mean that's not doing anything for the school really. It's just still giving the school a bad name” (Yellow group/F).

The other factor identified by students, which had a negative effect on the image of the school, was the newly erected perimeter fence. The fence, black steel and almost 2 metres high, with sharp finials on it, had been built around the school to protect the new buildings from vandalism and theft; similar fences were

becoming a common sight around many secondary schools in the city. However, none of the students made this connection, preferring to see the fence as a negative reflection on their school community:

> So, you see the new building and then you see the big new sign. But along the lines of the same thing they see the big gates right across it. So in one way you're saying look at us we're really a brand new school, and then you say look you're all confined the whole place. (Green group/M)

Students believed the perimeter fence and access gates, which were kept locked during the day, made the school look like a jail, a penitentiary. This image was strengthened by the number of students who chose to either cut through some of the old remaining wire mesh fence, or dig under or climb over the new fence, in order to 'escape'. Students explained this was often for legitimate activities, such as attending the local swimming pool across the road for physical education classes; it was quicker to go over or under the fence than go all the way around the school by way of the front gate. Students believed the fence should not have been built.

Environment

Quite a number of comments concerning the environment emerged from students' discussions about the building and construction works, which went on during the amalgamation period. Students talked about both Park and Hills and about the building works and how they saw this as affecting the school's culture, image and learning environment. Those who had been in attendance at Park during this period described the disruption this had caused.

The students were mostly positive about Park Hills; the school had a good environment and was according to one student a "better environment in terms of

study" (Blue group/M). Students said it had cleaned up so they could 'respect it'. Most students found it a comfortable place to work in; they liked the light and the air-conditioning. The negative comments were made by ex Hills students who in comparison with Hills found Park Hills lacked comfort, unlike Hills, which had been old and worn and 'comfy'. Park Hills also had no shade; there were very few trees.

The comments students made about the Hills environment were all positive. Students who had come from Hills commented it had been a better school, well situated, close to parks and lakes. There had been large trees, which provided natural shade. One ex Hills student, whilst he liked Hills, and missed the trees, now said he preferred the new school. He liked the light of the new environment, making the comment that Park Hills had the better working environment.

There were a number of comments regarding the building works, which had overrun time schedules and had only just been completed. The school had not been closed whilst the buildings were renovated and new buildings erected. Therefore, students had to learn to work with the ongoing noise and disruption. Their comments reflect this. They talked of the noise, the vibrations of the floors, the workmen, the building vans and trucks, the building sand – which caused problems because it was traipsed into the classrooms, causing teachers to make new rules, creating no-go areas. Senior School students were chiefly affected by these rules, and were not happy about it. They believed the embargo should have been lifted once the building projects were completed. Students

were derisive of the lack of access to the library and computer resources whilst the renovations were in progress and cynical about the disruptions it caused to their learning:

> Towards the end of Year 8 they had all the building construction and everything else going on and they added new classrooms. If you wanted to go into the library and use the computer lab you couldn't because they were sort of building onto it the extra room and there was no computers in the library for you to use. So you had to go find a classroom where they weren't using it, so you could use the computers. So it was all really messed up towards the end of Year 8 and beginning of Year 9. (F)
>
> Yeah, it was loud. It was really loud. (F)
>
> Yeah, it was hard learning and you're trying to listen to the teacher and you've got all the noise going in the background. (F)
>
> Well it would have been good if they'd actually done the building and the construction and that over the holidays where we weren't so ...when we weren't getting distracted from learning. Because they're always going on about how school should be like a learning environment, but you couldn't really learn with all the noise and distractions. (F)
>
> (Yellow Group)

However, all students were happy with the result, describing the finished school as nice, new, and clean. They commented that the new environment helped them to work better and improved the image of the school, making it a better place to be.

Emotions

There were fewer comments here; most of the emotions expressed were in the manner of speaking. Some students were very angry about the amalgamation; this was especially true of one ex Hills student. There were a number of negative comments and some neutral expressions. Students from Hills discussed the protests and quite a number of students remembered having serious concerns about fighting.

The negative comments came primarily from ex Hills students, who had protested and had not wanted to amalgamate. There had been the march, the meeting with the senior member from the department, none of which had been any use. Students were angry; they described the whole amalgamation process as 'crap'. All ex Hills students expressed their unhappiness with the decision, not one remembered feeling happy, they had liked Hills – although this changed for most of them as they settled into their new school. One student commented she now felt she belonged to the school; she had adjusted. However, another student continued to feel alienated, hated Park Hills and wished to leave.

Generally, ex Park students were neutral about the changes, as one student expressed it "a school is a school is a school" (Pink group/F). These students were content at school and had no real opinions other than a generally expressed concern that there might be fights because of the Hills students coming to their school and an ongoing irritation and frustration with the building works. One focus group said they had felt sorry for the Hills students. Another student from a different group laughingly said he remembered thinking, "It felt pretty good knowing that a school was closing down" (Blue group/M).

Concluding Comments - Park Hills College

Park Hills College at the time of the interviews in 2001 had been opened for just under two years. Although this was some time after the changes were initiated, the building works had only just been completed and the events of the preceding two years were fresh in students' minds and students had little trouble

remembering. Whilst students said their initial responses were more negative, at the time of the interviews, not quite two years on from the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment, students said they thought more positively about the changes. However, they attributed the change in attitude not to the changes, which they only saw as partly having been made in their interests, but to their continuing presence in the school and their own growing maturity. Students felt that their influence on the policy enactment at their school was limited and superficial, and they felt they had been unable to impact decisions made at higher levels.

The introduction of Middle Schooling, as part of the *LAEP Framework* implementation at this school, was aimed at helping students enjoy a greater sense of belonging. This has indeed been the case, although perhaps more successfully for girls than for boys. However, a concern raised in these findings, is the problems of 'middling' or 'creating Jan's' with the Year 10s. It may be necessary to reassess the role of the Year 10s in schools where Middle Schooling is implemented, if the problem of student alienation is not simply to be moved from one year to the next.

Finally, schools are community spaces and closure is going to be difficult and evoke strong emotional responses. To implement the *LAEP Framework* was going to be a messy process. The findings of the first case study showed students' awareness of the overt and covert discourses surrounding the enactment of the policy, and of the tensions between the economic rationale for the policy implementation and the educational justifications.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Case study 2: Lighthouse High School

Introduction

Lighthouse High School (a pseudonym) was created as a new school through the amalgamation and closure of two large secondary schools, Valley and Seaside High Schools (pseudonyms), and the downgrading of a third, Cliff High School (a pseudonym), to a junior high school. Education Department and District Office staff initiated the implementation of the mandated *LAEP Framework* policy shortly after its release. New buildings were constructed on a separate site from the three old schools and Lighthouse High School opened in 2001. This is the second case study chapter and details the in-depth findings for this case study site. The chapter is divided into three sections; the first gives the specific context of the site and describes in detail the students who volunteered to take part in the study.

The second part of the chapter gives the in-depth findings of the first round of interviews with the students. The findings were organised according to themes drawn from the research questions and those emerging from the data, moving from the most to the least frequent, but still allowing the story to be told chronologically. There were four main themes which emerged: the restructuring, at this site called 'the merger'; issues dealing with teaching and learning; the re-culturing of the school; and emotional reactions.

The final section of the chapter is based on interviews carried on at the school a year after the merger, during 2002. Three of the four broad themes, which emerged from Park Hills (Chapter Six) also dominated the findings at Lighthouse and therefore form the framework for this chapter. It is important to note, however that there were important context specific differences between the cases and these are revealed in the sub themes.

Context – A New School

A Drafting Committee to begin the implementation process, in the district where the three schools were situated, was established in late 1997 and included representatives from the District Office, staff from all high schools in the district, the Parents and Citizens Associations in the district, and the Western Australian State School Teachers' Union. Staff interviewed could not remember whether students were involved in the process at this stage. A member of the Education Department central office conducted the meetings, where it was announced that the status quo would not remain – restructuring was a *fait accompli*.

In line with the *LAEP Framework*, the district had to propose alternatives and a Draft Plan for the education of students in the district, which would include school closures and amalgamations and the possibility of Middle Schools. As the process continued, the debate over what shape the restructuring would take became increasingly heated. The school district in which the three schools were situated covered a number of wealthy suburbs, where many families have double professional incomes. There were also a number of large private schools in the

area, competing for students and market share. All three schools had established strong community ties and many ran special programs to bring in students from outside of their catchment area, in line with earlier devolution policy initiatives.

Towards the end of 1997 it became apparent that despite local area planning the Education Department had already taken the decision to close both of the larger schools (Valley and Seaside High), downgrade the third school (Cliff High) and build a new school (Lighthouse High) on land previously purchased by the Education Department. The site for the new school was in an area where property values were much less expensive than for any of the three schools involved in the closures. The 'merger' of the schools, as it became to be called, and the decision to build a new school on a different site, was made public in the first half of 1998. The reason for using the term 'the merger' was because Valley High School was significantly larger than Seaside, yet teachers wanted to convey that this was not the absorption or 'take over' of the smaller school by the larger school, but the coming together of the two schools on an equal footing. Students used this term throughout their interviews.

In July of that year, a second committee, the Consultation Committee was established, to 'manage' the creation of the new school. Six student representatives were chosen to be part of the implementation process at this point. There were a number of surveys sent out to students and parents, as well as to the broader community, seeking input on issues such as the name of the new school, the logo, the uniform and the new corporate colours. A transport

survey was conducted, to ascertain the transport requirements for students attending the new school.

Much was made in the local and State media of the cost of the new school; $23 million was considered a significant sum for a government school. The new school began to be referred to as a 'Super School', referring to both its larger size and its image, which would showcase 'educational excellence' in the government sector, in competition with the high concentration of private schools in the area. In 1999, teachers for the new school were appointed on a formal merit-based selection process from across the State. In many ways, Lighthouse High School was to be the 'elite' of the government sector.

In 1999, the Science/Mathematics Academic Talent Program was moved to Valley High School from Seaside. In 2000, amidst much emotion, Valley and Seaside High Schools closed their doors. Lighthouse High School, which would "strive to be a centre for excellence in all learning areas … of education at the beginning of the new millennium" (quote taken from the Principal's message on the new college website), opened in 2001 with a Middle School for Years 8 and 9 on the same campus but separate from a Senior School for Years 10 to 12. The total student population was about 1200 and staff numbered approximately 120. This study took place during the first two years of operation of the new school when students' perceptions of the changes they were experiencing were sought. Extensive quotes are used in the presentation of the data to give students direct and unadulterated 'voice'.

The Students in the Case Study

At Lighthouse High School, all students in Year 10, in 2001, were asked to participate in the research. This year group was chosen because students from Cliff High School could not attend Lighthouse High School until Year 10, joining those from Valley and Seaside High Schools. Thus this year group was experiencing maximum change, as they were also the first Year 10 group to be part of the Senior School. Twenty-seven students volunteered. These students were then randomly assigned to groups. Five focus group interviews, which ranged in size from four to eight students, were conducted in September of 2001, the first year of operation of the new school. Two groups were female, two groups male, and one group was a mixed gender group. Groups have been coded by colour for ease of reference.

Black	Female group
Green	Female group
Blue	Male group
Red	Male group
Pink	Mixed group

Extensive quotes are used throughout and the manner of referencing is to identify the group first, and next the gender of the speaker. Where a series of quotes is given, the gender identification follows in parentheses directly after the speaker and the group at the end of the series. In keeping with the desire to allow the students to speak, students' language and grammar is given verbatim; no corrections are made.

Follow-up interviews were conducted in 2002 and these will be discussed in a separate section at the end of this chapter. Those students, who had been involved in the Consultation Committee meetings, were also invited to be a part

of the interview process; however, they declined. These students had already been part of a school study, conducted with the Year 12s only, into some of the settling problems at the new school and commented that they had nothing further to add at this point, besides being very busy preparing for their final exams.

Restructuring Education at Lighthouse High School - The Merger

Responses from the focus group interviews revealed that students were very involved with the changes in their school; their responses were thoughtful and insightful. The restructuring of the schools elicited most comment. Restructuring questions included those which sought students' perceptions about the structural changes in the school, what these were, when they found out about them, and whether they had been involved with these at all, or knew of anyone who had been involved. Students commented that they had on occasion discussed issues with parents, older siblings and friends. The question of 'why' was also raised; were students aware of why the changes were made?

The Beginning

One of the first questions asked of each group was when students first heard about the changes planned as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment in their school. About half the students in each focus group remembered hearing about the proposed changes in Year 7. The rest of the students found out in Year 8. However, one student, who had moved to one of the schools from a private school, had not become aware of the intended changes until he was in Year 9. Those who found out in Year 7 were told because they were enrolled in the Academic Talent Program. The year that these students

were moving to Year 8, the Academic Talent Program was being consolidated in one school, where previously it had been divided over two schools. This meant that those who were going into the Academic Talent Program were all going to Valley High School. Other students, not enrolled in the Academic Talent Program, found out through friends, older family members at the school and some remember receiving newsletters from the school. One student, who attended Cliff High, remembers being told by the Principal of that school:

> Oh, the principal came down and told us all about the new school. And yeah ...he just told us about the canteen and that...how they're going to have a cafeteria, but we didn't really get to chose what we wanted. He just told us what we're getting. (Red group/M)

One focus group, some of whom had been told about changes in Year 7 said they had given the changes little thought until they were in Year 9, when things began to finish and the buildings were being run down:

> Yeah. We were kind of told going to high school... (F)
>
> That we would have two years left or something. (M)
>
> But then you really didn't pay attention to that, not till Year 9. (F)
>
> We're leaving ...finally, because our old school was sort of... (F)
>
> Run down. (M)
>
> Yeah run down. (M)
>
> (Pink group)

One reason for parents and students choosing Valley or Seaside High of the original triad, over others in the area, or even outside of their area, was the Academic Talented Program (ATP). Valley High School originally ran the Society and Environment/English ATP, whilst Seaside High School ran the Science/Maths ATP. Participation in these programs was considered highly

desirable for students. Two years before the closure of Valley and Seaside High both programs were moved to Valley High School, so parents and students chose Valley High in preference to others. These students were then guaranteed a place at Lighthouse High when the school opened its doors in 2001. Other students, not involved in the ATP, came to Lighthouse High, because this was their local government high school. One student chose to go to Lighthouse High, moving from the school she was attending outside of her area. She was hoping that she would now be able to make friends:

> I just came here because I knew a few people that came here. And also because it's sort of a new school. Friendships maybe wouldn't have like cemented as well, so I might be accepted more. (Green group/F)

One student came because his parent had decided that this was going to be a bigger, new school with lots of opportunities for new friends and all the best facilities. One student swapped from the Cliff High School earlier, to avoid missing a place. All those not at Valley or Seaside High Schools in 2000 were not guaranteed a place and had to apply.

The area is well supplied with high fee paying private schools and a number of students were reported to have swapped from these private schools to the new school. As one student, who had made the change, commented:

> The school's not that much different to private schools. A lot of people from my old school come here, four or five or six of them come here. Most of them say it's, because it was too expensive, yeah it is too expensive at a private school. There's not that much difference, so it's sort of throwing away your money for a little bit of difference. (Red group/M)

Students believed that this was one of the reasons for the building of the new school, that it had been modelled on the private schools in the area, even the new name and the intention to make uniforms compulsory in the coming years

reflected this. But as another student pointed out, no matter how many changes were made, the real difference between the two systems was that in the end private schools could choose who they wanted, whereas this school had to take the students, whether they wanted to or not.

A Brand New School

Although Lighthouse High was created as the result of the merger of two previously existing schools, Valley and Seaside High Schools, Lighthouse High was being presented to students as a new school and a new beginning. However, Valley High had been the larger of the two schools, in terms of student numbers, and most of these students had enrolled at Lighthouse High School. Yet, when asked whether students believed this was indeed a 'new' school most students answered that they believed it was:

> I think just 'cause the surroundings are different. (Red group/M)
>
> Yeah because it's like a totally different set up. All the different lunch-times and the different classrooms. (Blue group/M)
>
> Well there's a lot of new teachers. New people obviously and the new environment. Yeah I think it is new. (Green group/M)
>
> Brand new school. It's like the day you went to a school. Like say you moved schools, but a few people you knew went with you, or you knew a few people there. That's exactly what it's like. The Valley High experience is not there anymore. (Black group/F)

Students identified four main aspects of 'newness', across the five focus groups: new environment, new teachers, new students, and new culture. However, six students answered 'no' outright and explained why they did not think it was a new school, including the use of textbooks with the names of the

old school in them. Three students were ambivalent, and did not know whether they would call this a new school or not, as illustrated by the following:

> Apart from the facilities, people are the same; the teachers are almost the same. I just feel it's just the same apart from the facilities and that's about all. (Green Group/F)

Changes at Lighthouse

Students identified many differences between their old and new schools, both negative and positive. Many of the negative and positive observations about the changes at Lighthouse were given when students contrasted Lighthouse with their old school. For example, students compared the changes in the bell times at Lighthouse High from their previous school, commenting on the changing length of the class periods, some preferring the new arrangement, some preferring the old arrangement. However, most comparisons were negative and concerned a wide range of topics including changes made to the canteen, the administration, the performing arts centre, the lack of dance, and negative emotions (which will be dealt with separately later in this chapter). Other negative comments concerned the unfriendliness and stressful environment of the new school, its teachers and its principal and the larger size of the school. However, as one perceptive student remarked, attitudes were negative because everything was new and things were not going smoothly:

> The thing is that at the moment we've all got a negative attitude because it's just starting out and of course there's going to be bum, bad things at the start, like hiccups, but we've got to learn from our mistakes. So maybe, maybe it will get better as we go along. (Pink group/M)

Students remarked more positively about the changes to the art room, sport at the school, the facilities, and being part of the Senior School. A couple

of students felt they were attending a better school. Students from Cliff High were those who more often made favourable comments when comparing their old school and the new school. The most common positive response was about new friendships. Students believed it was easier to make new friends at the new school, as friendship groups had not been established, as not all students had transferred from the three schools. This meant that all students had the opportunity for making new friends and getting to know new people. At the beginning of the first year of Lighthouse, students had grouped according to their previous schools. However, less than one year later, this was no longer felt to be the case. Students no longer identified with their old school to the same extent. As the year had progressed, a number of students had left, new friendships had been formed and new group identities created based on whether you were in the ATP, a smoker, or one of the remainder.

The new organisation of the canteen/cafeteria was of great concern to all the students in the focus groups and was identified as one of the areas that students wanted to change further, or revert to what they experienced at their previous schools. The canteen had been taken over by a business from outside the school, and the students were very negative about this, both in terms of its organisation and the negative aspect of no longer having parents involved in the school – something they missed:

> Valley High was designed like forty-five years ago and the Canteen was like four different lines and they have volunteers working there, you know, and that was really friendly, like you knew your parents, grandparents. (Black group/F)

> The people working in the cafeteria at Valley High they were volunteers and they were all sort of cheery and stuff. But here they're pretty mean. (Red group/M)

Students believed that the canteen was ‘given’ to a business for money purposes:

> It's not a canteen, it's a business. (F)
>
> It was cheaper. (F)
>
> For the school I think. (F)
>
> No, it's the fact that the school isn't losing money through it. Before they just had to give their costs. But now if they give it to a business the school doesn't have to worry about it. (F)
>
> (Green group)

They compared it to their previous experiences, and disliked the new organisation. Long queues, inefficient service and theft were identified as problems of the new organisation. Students described how easy it had been to steal, and how the cafeteria and school staff had dealt with this problem. The only positive comments about the new arrangement were regarding the quality of the hot food. Other negatives identified included the raising of prices in line with the new business ethos and the changing of the food from less healthy to more healthy!

Students were also generally negative about the administration, again often in comparison with their previous experiences. There were remarks from three focus groups regarding the administration – changes in timetable, class times, absentee routines, and one comment regarding the bus changes. Students found the changes in the timetable, the inclusion of a period zero – introduced to make up a shortfall in the timetabling, the problems with the absentee recording, and the constantly changing rules frustrating:

> Of course they have to change things, because they have to trial the thing out. But, like even the times of school changed and, just, like little things like that. Like, first they said you can't sit on the oval; you can only sit on it during ball games. No, you can only do this and then you can only do

> that. They keep changing it like over and over again and it's just really annoying. (Black group/F)

Nevertheless, students were aware that these frustrations were temporary and were part of starting up a new school. There was also a comment that some of the students deliberately tested the administration to see how they would react:

> There were some discipline problems with students. Because no one knew where they stood. Students were trying to test out how far they can go ...is Lighthouse High School going to be really easy, can we, you know, wag and stuff? And then I think the administration just went 'oh my God'. Like they just went completely off their face, you know. They were just 'oh my God, what are we going to do?' And then they've now enforced really strict rules. (Pink group/F)

There was a perception amongst the students that the school was now very big when compared with any of the previous schools attended. This was true for all students, even those who came from the largest of the three schools. There were one or two who knew the exact size of the school, others guessed accurately the number of students at the school, and others guessed wildly exaggerated numbers up to 1500. As one student said, “It's two different schools amalgamated together. So it is a huge school.” (Green group/F)

However, all believed that the school was too large; one supposed that that was why it had been split into a Senior and Middle School, as there were too many numbers for the space available. One student reported that teachers also believed classes were too big and that there were too many students in the school to teach them effectively:

> Even the class teachers, … they're over, ‘Oh yeah it's too big’. Too big, like even the teachers I had last year, were like ‘It’s too huge. It's too hard

> to keep track of everyone. You can't focus as well and we don't have as much money. We can't buy as much for it'. (Black group/F)

Students believed that having the larger school made it less friendly and less easy to get to know everyone, even though some chose to come to the new school precisely because it was going to be bigger. Students understood that the school was always going to be bigger because this was to be a merger of the three schools, and because it was called a 'super school' – although this did not just refer to its size. An interesting remark about the inclusion of Valley High in the merger was because students believed this would help make up the numbers for the new school:

> Valley High was sort of the main one in terms of numbers. I think they just wanted to get all the Valley High people over here as, to the sort of, to have something to build on. (Red group/M)

Students in the Change Process

Most of the students could not remember having their opinions sought about the changes as a result of the *LAEP Framework*, except concerning the uniform, school name alternatives and logo colours. Students perceived these changes as small and insignificant, as reflected in: "Maybe like the colours of the logo, something small like that. Insignificant" (Red group/M). Regarding the closure of the schools, the new school, or any significant changes, most students could not remember being asked or having any input. In fact, students' perceptions were that teachers did not care for their opinions:

> All they got asked to do was see if we wanted the uniforms. (M)

> And then they didn't really pay much attention anyway. (M)
> They didn't really care what... (M)

> They didn't really give a...they said oh we all gave them a fair chance to put in their word, but they never even asked. Really asked what we the students wanted to do. They asked the community and the parents, but not the students. (M)
>
> (Pink group)

In one focus group, one student did remember that there had been some talk from the Student Council. Another focus group, quoted above, remembered a year councillor attending the meetings, but they were not sure what impact this student had. One student, in another group, supposed that probably the Year 12s might have been asked. One student, from Cliff High School, said that not only could he not remember being asked his opinion, all he could remember was the principal coming in and telling them about the move to the new Lighthouse High School and how good it was going to be for them.

Not many of the students remembered discussing these issues with their parents, although in each of the groups there were students who remembered their parents' opinions being sought by the Consultation Committee, regarding issues such as the uniform, the name and other matters concerned with the merger. One student remembered her parents' response when the changes were first mooted and her mother's negative reaction:

> I remember like even in Year 8 like they mentioned it and I remember like ...we were in the kitchen. It was on the newsletter or something and Mom was like 'oh God I really hope they don't do that', you know. At least it's really close to my house still. And Mom's like 'I really don't want that to happen'. (Black group/F)

This family, like so many others at the school, had a long history with Valley High school, and did not view the imminent closure of their community school with approbation.

Students also made a number of comments about the perceived changed role of the principal – this was not in response to any direct question but emerged from the discussion of changes. The principal of Lighthouse High was not perceived as being friendly or interested in the students, but instead was seen as always busy with administration or in promoting the reputation of the school. This was done by taking tours of official people and by putting pressure on students to perform better. The only time students said they saw the principal was during assemblies or when she was guiding official tours:

> I haven't seen her since the beginning of the school year. (F)
>
> Yeah. The only time when I see her is like when she does assemblies. (M)
>
> And when she's giving tours to like official people or something. (M)
>
> (Pink group)

Having a Say at Lighthouse

Students were asked how they could make changes at Lighthouse High and what changes they would make. The general and initial perception amongst the focus groups was that the students were not able to change things in their school; they perceived their role as students predominantly to be one of learner, not to initiate change:

> To learn. (M)
>
> That's it. (M)
>
> To learn, yeah. (M)
>
> (Red group)

They saw this as repetitive, they would come to school, do work, go home, do more work. However, they also saw their role as a representative of their school,

a role which they believed was strongly tied to the ever present need to improve the image:

> To represent the school. (Red group/M)

> I think the school, like the headmaster's actually expects too much of the school. Like I think they just, like reputation because they build a brand new school and because it's such, you know a good area and they've spent too much money on it. I think they expect the students to sort of work really hard. (Black group/M)

Other than this increased expectation to work harder to improve the image of the school, students believed the role had changed little. One student believed that the school was no longer there for the students; the students were there for the school:

> I think we're just like sort of filling a space. Like schooling, these schools are supposed to be for the students so we can have like good jobs when you're older and like be successful and stuff. But basically it's more, it's like, I don't know it's sort of like a picture. It's all image and stuff like that and it's all the people that have nothing to do with the school. (Pink group/F)

Students believed they had a lack of input to initiate or participate in change at Lighthouse compared to their old schools, a situation they also believed to be true for teachers. However, when prompted further, some students suggested the Student Council as an avenue for bringing about change. Although one student qualified that by suggesting that even they, the Student Councillors, did not have any actual power to bring about ‘real’ change:

> Well we've got the Student Councilors but they can't decide. They don't really do anything. (M)

> The Student Councils they, all they do is like organise events for us. They don't have any input and like, any changes to be made in school. Just like organise like events. (M)
>
> (Red group)

This led to a discussion by other participants in this focus group, echoed in other focus groups, about the role of the Student Councillors. The general consensus, amongst all groups, was that the role of the Student Council was primarily to organise social and charity functions in the school, not to make changes. As it was, not all students were aware of the existence of the Student Council:

> Do we have them for Year Ten? (F)
>
> Yeah. (F)
>
> We just don't know of them very well. (F)
>
> Did we get to choose them or do they just choose themselves? (F)
>
> From what I heard they... (F)
>
> Because I didn't get to vote or anything... (F)
>
> (Green group)

As is illustrated above, some students were also not aware how Student Councillors were selected and were informed of this by others in the group. Students did go on to suggest they could get some things changed by complaining, as one student observed, “Well we sort of got lockers with us complaining about them” (Green group/F). Complaints had succeeded in getting lockers, yet other than a suggestion by a student that perhaps the Parent and Citizens group might help, there did not appear to be any other avenues for bringing about student initiated change. One student commented about the hopelessness of the situation to try to change things:

> No, it's already set. You can't really change the stuff that are already set. You can change little stuff like the socials and stuff. You can organise those, but you can't really organise the main thing. (Green group/F)

Some students were under the impression that the higher you were in the school, the greater were the opportunities for you to have some input into the decision

making process. So, the Year 12s were seen to have greater power than the Year 10s.

In response to the question what changes students would make at Lighthouse High, one focus group discussed an alternative implementation strategy, showing that students were willing to grapple with these issues:

> We would have preferred to stay at Valley High for that and even if you had to send the Year 8s, the new Year 8s to this school, the Middle School and we just stayed at Valley High. You know and even have the Middle School here and the Senior School up there just until it finishes. That would have been a good idea. That would have just been the best idea. (Pink group/F)

Other suggestions for change included digging up the statues, situated at the entrance of the Middle School, changing the canteen, changing the overall design of the school and changing the 'split' in the school.

Year 10s in the Middle – We're the 'Babies'

Students made a great number of observations about the split between Senior School and Middle School. Most of these comments arose in discussion about other issues. For example, in one group it followed on from the discussion concerning the size of the school. In another group, it arose because of a discussion about the expectations of the staff on the students. When other groups were asked what they would change, this was one issue, they identified, especially those who had younger brothers and sisters in the Middle School. They missed the close contact with them, and helping them in the transition from primary to high school.

Most students did not like the school division. They saw that it split the school, with different bell times – including different finishing times, different principals, different staff rooms and different phone numbers. Assemblies were also held separately, although this was not considered a bad thing by some of the students, as the perception was that they were already crowded for space. Although they did occasionally see the Year 8s and 9s, especially in the performing arts centre for music, it was not often. When the Middle School students came up to the Senior School, they looked lost and sometimes afraid. Senior School students were also curious about the Middle School, but the Middle School area of the school was out of bounds to the Senior School students – one group of students described the lengths they went to in order to satisfy their curiosity!

> The only way, like I've gotten in trouble for going down, I wanted to see the Middle School right. The only way, the only way I got in was me and my friends we knew where the toilets were so we just ran back and forth, got in there and I'm like checking out the whole school at the start of the year. (Red group/M)

Some students did not mind the separation as it made more space in the school, which they saw as having smaller grounds than their previous school, even though the number of students attending it had increased. Therefore, having the split meant there was more space and less crowding, especially at recess and lunch times:

> And there's about twelve hundred here I think, so they had to split them up. (M)
>
> Not enough room. (M)
> (Blue group)
>
> Oh it would be a bit crowded if that was lunch-time and recess. (Pink group/M)

Some also believed that it was great not to have the Middle School students around when playing certain sports. Nevertheless, most had enjoyed the contact with the students in the lower school and missed the ongoing friendships – they had been Year 8s and 9s together themselves the previous year and had a lot of contact with them, so friends were missed. Some believed that although it was okay to be separate some times, it was also good to mix sometimes so they would get to know them and so that the Middle School students would be able to feel comfortable in the Senior School area. They were concerned also that the Middle School students would have difficulties the following year when making the transition to the Senior School. The Senior School students had the perception that the Middle School was run more as a primary school and that this would make the transition very difficult for students. This was based on their fleeting observations and from talking with Middle School students.

Students also were not happy with their own position in the Senior School, believing that they didn't fit, they were expected to behave like Senior School students without being given the responsibilities and respect they believed the position deserved. Students alleged they were being treated as babies; it was Senior School in name only:

> Yeah, but the teachers consider you as junior school. Senior School is just a name. (Green group/F)
>
> We're just sort of babies. (Pink group/F)

Why?

These comments came in response to the question, 'Why did they make the change, were you ever told why?' The answer was that not one student could remember being told why the changes were made. This did not stop students from surmising about why the changes had been made. These include (most comments) the need for money, (some) the need for land for housing, and (a few) the need to rebuild Valley High, as it was getting old.

The perception of the students was that a lot of money had been spent on building the new school. Students believed the money had been spent on the new school because the land from their old schools would be sold, if indeed, it had not been already, and lots of money would be made from the sale of the various school properties. Each group discussed this as a probable reason for the changes. Students were aware that the Education Department was making the money and some of their comments showed that they were quite cynical about it:

> It was because of the Education Department. All they want is like, bigger, better schools. (Green group/F)
>
> They've still got all this really good land now and ocean stuff. So they'll make heaps of money on that. (M)
>
> Oh we would have got like a note from like the, from the premier or something saying how good it will be and we'll have a really good school because everything will be new and everything, but I'm like ....yeah it just took money, like commercialising I would say, money, money. (M)
> (Blue group)

However, students questioned where it was spent, believing the school could have been built larger, the space utilised better, the school resourced differently. As a result of the amount of money spent, students believed that the pressures on staff and themselves increased:

> I think the school, like the headmaster's actually expects too much of the school. Like I think they just, like reputation, because they build a brand new school and because it's such, you know a good area and they've spent too much money on it. I think they expect the students to sort of work really hard. (Black group/F)

In further discussions about money spend at the new school students were particularly scathing about the lack of lockers, and the cost to individual students of hiring them, once some had been installed. Students were also scathing about the canteen, questioning why it had to go to private enterprise at all and complaining about the costs to students associated with running it as a private concern. And one focus group commented about the waste of money spent on art, believing it could have been better spent elsewhere:

> I'd get rid of those nude statues in the lower school because it's just a waste of money. (Red group/M)

When answering questions about why students believed changes were made, students often used the word ‘they’. The word was used to refer variously to the administration of the school, the Education Department and infrequently the teachers. Occasionally it was not clear whom ‘they’ refers to, other than someone in a position to make decisions, indicating the students’ awareness of their own, teachers’, and parents’, lack of power, as well as their understanding of the role the Education Department and the senior hierarchy of the school played in instituting the changes:

> I think 'cause the land is very valuable and they were getting only a handful of students and it really wasn't working out for them, so they just wanted to close the school. And I thought that maybe the Education Department thought well we may as well just close some other schools and bring them together. (Red group/M)
>
> It was because of the Education Department. (F)

> And I think also it's like the whole State run thing. (F)
> (Green group)

Students were also under the impression that, in the run up to the new school being built, the running down of their old schools was a deliberate decision made by ‘them’, referring to someone in a position to make these decisions, though students did not specify who. They questioned why the merger had happened and why the changes were rushed through:

> Oh it wasn't like physically falling, but you could see it was getting really old. Ripped carpets and stuff like that, so ...but they didn't bother to service it because they were running it down anyway. (Blue Group/M)
>
> They didn't have to rush with this one. (Pink group/M)

Teaching and Learning

There were numerous comments about the teaching and learning at the new school, although not as many as for the previous section on the restructuring. These comments were elicited in response to questions about students’ changed learning conditions because of the *LAEP Framework* enactment at the school. Were the students aware that the changes had made any difference to the way they learned, their opportunities, or their learning behaviours, either at school or at home? Student comments in this theme included general comments about their teachers and remarks about the change in teachers; the changes in teaching and the organisation of schooling; and quite a number of comments about the learning outcomes because of the changes.

Teacher Changes

Generally, students were not that happy with the teaching staff at the new school. A number of students commented they believed many bad teachers had come to the school, that the teachers generally had a bad attitude and were unfriendly, and they did not care for the students or tried to get to know the students. One student commented that teachers were, not unlike the students, still trying to settle in. Another student in a different focus group opined that teachers were 'fed up' with all the changes themselves, and the large class sizes; as this student remarked:

> Some of them you get a feeling that they're [teachers] just fed up with all sorts of kids, teaching lots of kids. So they're just trying to get through. (Green group/F)

One student, from Cliff High, believed that the teaching at Lighthouse High was better, and one other student disagreed with those in his group and commented that he believed that 'some' of the teaching at the new school was good.

There were a number of new teaching staff in the school; not all the teachers from the old schools came across after the merger. Teachers for the new school were selected on 'merit' and teachers from both Valley and Seaside had to apply for a teaching position at the new school in competition with other teachers from throughout the State. As a result, some were employed and others missed out – and, according to the students in the focus groups, not always the better teachers either:

> That's what I noticed as well. A lot of the bad teachers came here and the good one didn't. (F)
>
> Yeah. And it's just, how the hell did you get here? (F)
>
> (Pink group)

In addition, according to one student, the positions were opened to any other teacher in the State, and so it was quite competitive. Students were aware of the tension this caused, especially in the second half of the previous year, when teachers were appointed and some of the teachers missed out:

> There was a huge kafuffle. There was a lot of tension among the staff because they were, you know, are we going to go to Lighthouse High, are we not and a lot of the heads of departments and the principals and stuff, they knew they were going and so they were set. And the school's divided. They'd have the staff meetings, people who were going to Lighthouse High and people who weren't and that made the people who weren't upset and angry and stuff. (Pink group/F)

This was the cause of some protest by the students, when one particularly favourite teacher did not gain employment at the new school. This tension was continued in the first year of the new school as teachers, as well as the students, had to settle in:

> The teachers are really bad because they're settling in just like us. It's still going to take a while to get better, but it will. Like once everyone's settled in, it will. (Black group/F)

Students believed that some of the changes had not been for the better, that although the teachers might be more qualified, they were not always as friendly as those teachers from Valley High who had not been appointed to Lighthouse High School. It was an overwhelming perception from all groups that teachers were no longer as friendly or as caring for students. Students remarked that they had had difficulty getting used to new rules and to new ways of learning and that some of the teachers were inflexible about this, the view was that these new teachers were here only to teach the students:

> Well, they are actually better teachers, but they're not good teachers that you like. But better teachers. (Blue group/M)

> The teachers at Valley High, they were your friends, like you actually knew them. You thought you knew them and could speak to them without

> any sort of like hesitation. Here it's, I don't know, it's just, they're only here to teach you. That seems like all they're here to do. (Red group/M)

Students also complained about the rapid turnover of teaching staff since the opening of Lighthouse. Each group had stories of how many teachers had taught them for various subjects since the beginning of the year, some had three different teachers, some had four and others five different teachers. This was seen as very disruptive to their learning:

> I had one teacher last year and like you know with one teacher you adapt to their teaching and you know what to act around them. So, I, very from the start of the year and I got along with him. All year I had one science teacher and I got a good grade for that. And then science this year I've had three science teachers. (Black group/F)

When asked why they believed there were so many problems with teachers at Lighthouse High, students said they thought that some teachers didn't fit the school, as one student commented:

> Some didn't fit in very well and they just kind of fizzled out (Pink group/F).

Teaching Changes

Many students observed that there had been a big change in the way they were being taught. Students stated that the teaching was more academic, as exemplified by more worksheets, more homework and more tests:

> Now it's just worksheets and doing science, stuff like that. (M)

> You have to figure it all out yourself. I've got a few good teachers now, but a lot of them as well are pretty bad in, they're not really bad. They just, well we get a lot of silence. We don't really get taught much. Just got a lot of assignments and that. (M)

> You got a lot more, you don't do much class work, you just get assignment tests. (M)

> But they should make it like as well as an academic school, like a sports school as well. (M)
>
> (Blue group)

There was less freedom to move around the school, the rules were stricter, and some of the students expressed difficulty in adjusting to the new regime. The expectations of students had also increased, students believed they were expected to perform better and do more because they were now part of the Senior School. One of the students, from Cliff High, enjoyed the new school and found his work had improved because the teachers were better and the expectations higher. One of the students from a private school believed the new school was more relaxed and the work easier, less demanding.

Students noted, besides a change in the type of teaching, a marked increase in the homework required of them. One focus group discussed, at some length, the perception that although there was a big increase in the demand for homework this year – one teacher giving very short notice for completion of the set homework – this demand would increase even more the following year.

It was the perception of the students that the focus of teaching staff was very much on the ATP students in the school, there were two groups, those in the ATP and then the rest. The ATP classes were given the better teachers, the better resources and the greater access to the computers:

> Once you realise that there was the ATP and then the rest, the rest of the people, but they mixed, but what the ATP did in their class time was much different to what everyone else did. They like were on the computers like constantly. (M)
>
> Well because, because I'm in ATP, so give us better teachers. They know more and so, more's been concentrated on me. So, I've got bigger

> workloads and I'm used to that. But I'd say I've learnt quite a lot more than other people which I think's pretty unfair. (M)
>
> How are the people who aren't in ATP going to improve if they don't have the facilities that the ATP has? (M)
>
> (Pink group)

Students also believed ATP students were being groomed to go into Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subjects, but others were not. They saw this as inconsistent and believed it was not fair; this was the perception of both the ATP students in the focus groups and the non-ATP students. The ATP students understood they had an increased workload because they were members of this group, but this did not seem to concern them; they believed this was part of what it meant to be in the ATP group.

One of the reasons for merging the three schools was to improve subject choice and delivery of educational services; however, in the opinion of the students this did not happen:

> Because it's a bigger school and you know, I thought they'd more, because there are lots of other schools I thought those other schools may have different ones and then just branch out (but) no, just the same. The same subjects. (Black group/F)

Students believed there was less choice of subjects now than previously, classes were larger, and the quality of instruction in certain subjects had gone down:

> I think we had more of a choice in our subjects last year. (Green group/F)
>
> I just pick a (subject), which I enjoyed at Valley High. Like, for example, I picked dance which I loved, we had the best teacher and then in the best place and here, I have like the worst teacher and the class is really big, and I was just like 'oh God I wish I'd never picked this one here'. (Black group/F)

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

These were comments made in response to the questions about the effect *LAEP Framework* changes had on students' learning. Most learning outcomes were identified as negative. Students indicated they believed they were not learning, and many remarked they had in fact gone down in their grades. This included comments about the effects of larger classes, and the ways this caused students to slacken off. It also included comments about how some of the students no longer felt inclined to try. This was a common issue raised in each of the groups; students felt disinclined to care about their work, their grades were falling, which they knew, but they no longer cared:

> We just slack off because, you know, you've got too many teachers. They all do different things and you just slack off. You don't care after a while. (M)
>
> I've come and gone the opposite. Like okay I got straight 'A's last year and now this year I'm like 'C'. Straight 'C's. And that's a big change and especially for my mom. She's like 'what the...?' And, but they put too much pressure on you to be independent that you kind of think [ ] I'll do it if I want to do it. I don't know. That's just how I feel. That it's too much on you and you just like I don't care and you kind of just like throw it back at them. (F)
>
> (Pink group)

There were a small number of students who believed the changes had not influenced their learning. They believed the changes were not making them work harder or better, but just the same as before; as this student observed, "It hasn't changed like the way I'm going to go to school and do my stuff" (Red group/M).

Four students in different groups believed they were doing better. One student commented that this, however, was in only one subject and was because of the teacher. Two said they had improved across the board; one of these was

an ATP student, and one a student from Cliff High. In addition, one student said he liked to hope so, but that he did not really know.

Many of the expectations on students were associated with their new position in the Senior School. Students said it was more serious, they were expected to be more independent and yet on another level it was just more of the same. Two groups discussed that whilst there were many increased expectations, they were given none of the responsibilities and privileges associated with the new position, and in fact, they were treated as babies. One student observed that the expectations came from the principal – in order to build the reputation of the new school.

Some students believed the aspirations at Lighthouse High were very low for certain groups of students. Students believed this was especially true for those students who were not encouraged to complete TEE subjects, instead they were encouraged to apply for Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college entry or do Structured Workplace Learning (SWL). Students found this lowered aspiration discouraging; they believed they should have been encouraged to go to university:

> It's really weird because there's these talks on careers and some, lots of the emphasis is on TAFE, whereas I think maybe because it's a government institution or something and university isn't, but lots of people go to university and ... (M)
>
> Yeah and especially this area a lot of people would go to university here. (F)
>
> They've been talking about is like apprenticeships and TAFE and like hardly anything about getting into TEE and ... (M)
>
> And SWL like. (F)

> At the end of the year telling you what you can do now when you want to leave school now. Shouldn't they be encouraging you to finish Year 12? (F)
>
> (Pink group)

Reculturing Education

The students' attention during the focus group interviews frequently lingered on the cultures of their old schools, Valley, Seaside and Cliff High, and compared these with the different culture of their new school, Lighthouse High. They described the differences often in terms of the physical characteristics that affected them, the concrete evidence of what they understood to be the bigger change, than just the restructuring of their schools. They discussed the different ethos of the schools. They spoke of the focus by the administration of Lighthouse High on the image of the school. They highlighted the changing role of the uniform in this process of reculturing. These changes affected them deeply and they were vociferous in the expression of their own emotions.

Students from Valley High School talked about their perception of the culture of Valley High. Most of their comments concerned the friendliness of the school, the freedom of learning, and the relaxed atmosphere. They were aware there had been problems with the school; there had been frequent fighting and a perceived problem with drugs. However, students' comments about Valley High were generally positive. They described their school as having a lot of warmth, worn down but friendly. They spoke of the school with great affection, even though it had been, in the students' perceptions, in a sadly and deliberately run down condition:

> I really, really liked Valley High. Like, I think because it was just at the top of my street and my brother and sister both went there, and like, my parents got a lot, you know, how you know the whole way it works, and I don't know. I really enjoyed it. (Black group/F)

There were fewer comments about Seaside High, although they came from students from both Seaside and Valley High. These comments identified the culture at the school to be more of a surfer culture. However, most of the comments about Seaside High concerned the community feeling of the school:

> It was a pretty small, like a community. Like a small community, that's basically what it was like. It was pretty, it was so tiny. Everyone knew everyone like. It was very close and friendly. Relaxed kind of thing. It was really hard, going from kind of relaxed to very new and everyone was on edge about the new school. (Pink group/F)

The students made remarks about the number and extent of the community events run by Seaside High. Students also expressed their perceptions about the final year when their school had slowly been ‘dying’. They described in some detail the closing ceremonies held at the two schools. Valley High, which numbered amongst its alumni some politicians, gained considerable publicity influence by having these attend the closing ceremony. Students spoke of the ceremony with affection, it reflected what they understood the culture of the school to be, as is demonstrated in the following remark:

> On the last day we had a ceremony thing and everybody was, the whole school was practicing. And you sort of felt like you knew everyone, even the Year 12s, 11s, sort of felt like a huge family kind of thing. I think I really liked that. (Green group/F)

At the time of the first round of focus group interviews, there had not yet been an opening ceremony for Lighthouse High. Comments about the new Lighthouse High were generally negative. There was a perceived lack of community feeling in the new school, although there were no fights. Students

also believed that certain groups of students were not welcome at the new school, such as those who smoked, and that these groups were being encouraged to leave. Students spoke about the lack of character, the sterility and the generally stressful and edgy atmosphere of the new school:

> My school in Canberra was a shithole. But it was a nice shithole, you know. It was, there was just something about it that, that you'd miss it, you know. I don't know, but here anything is so sterile I think. It's almost like a hospital. (Green group/F)

Environmental

Students remarked frequently about the physical characteristics of their new school and how this was an example the changing culture and ethos:

> Like you look around and you expect it to find it somewhere in Los Angeles. And there's all these arty things. I think they're trying to shove class down people's throats. They don't want, that's what it seems like. Everything's so classy and, I don't know. (Green group/F)

Others in this group and in other groups agreed with this assessment, one student commenting that it was good to have new nice things; however, almost all students continued to prefer Valley or Seaside High.

Students made a number of comments about the computers, a few were positive about the increased number available, but most remarks were about the lack of access, and the ongoing theft of certain removable parts of the computers. Other negative concerns included the leaking roofs, the rain, the use of bright colours (“More like a playschool” one student observed), the lack of seating, lack of space, the thin walls, and the lack of a music department was identified by one focus group as a problem. Lockers and the use of time switch lighting, which turned lights off in the middle of class, were also commented on. One interesting

negative raised by all the students was the lack of trees. Trees had surrounded one of the old schools and the students particularly missed this aspect of their old school. It was yet another way that students tried to put into words how they felt about Lighthouse High:

> I don't like the, I'd like to have some more trees around and shade and everything. It just feels all dull sort of. (Green group/F)

This same group showed a great deal of humour about the lack of seating at the school, as well as their perceived lowest status in the Senior School.

> Because we don't even, we didn't even have benches like in the first term. (F)
>
> (Singing) We, like little mikes... (F)
>
> (Singing) Sit on the little walls… (F)
>
> You can't sit on them, because you get all stuff all over your back. (F)
>
> And actually you got told off for sitting on them. (F)
>
> (Green group)

Positives were expressed about the new art room and the sport facilities, other than the lack of a pool. Generally, students appreciated the new sport facilities including the change rooms, which were compared favourably with the old ones at the old school.

Image

Students again made the connection here between the image of the school and the changing emphasis in the school's culture. As one student remarked about the perceived change of image at Lighthouse High:

> I think it's the new staff, because Valley High was always known as the school that drug addicts and stuff, everyone sells drugs. That's why

> they're kicking out the smokers and stuff, because they want a really good name for themselves. (Blue group/M)

Students believed that certain members of their cohort were no longer welcome in the school, those not involved in academic pursuits, those who were seen as not fitting the private school image, smokers, non academic students and so on. The image was seen as being academic and the role of the student in this school was to be a learner and to perform well. Students made the observation they believed that the school was not built with them in mind, but for show. Interestingly students themselves did not appear interested in the image of the school, believing this to be a waste of time, all for show, intimidating and taking away from the emphasis on teaching and learning.

Other comments about the image of the school concerned the role the principal played in constructing the image of the school. One of her primary roles, in the students' view, was to guide visitors around, which students remarked interrupted their work. Students also commented about the constant media hype surrounding the 'super school' image of the school. Finally, students made a number of remarks about the amount of money that had been spent on constructing the new image, believing that it was cheap and that it was not worth it. As one group explained:

> It looks cheap. My dad was looking through it and he was going 'it looks a really cheap school'. And I'm going 'yeah'. (F)
>
> Costume jewellery. (F)
>
> I think they spent too much money on trying to make it look good instead of making the school good. (F)
>
> (Green group)

Uniform

This was an important issue and one of the readily identified differences between Lighthouse High and the previous schools. Again, this has been included under the section 'Reculturing' because it formed, in the students' minds an outward example of how the administration was trying to change the culture of the school. As one student (previously from a high fee paying private school) observed:

> Well, at [name of private school], they wanted everyone to be pretty much the same. I think they had this model that they wanted. They wanted someone who, really academic and a short haircut exactly how they wanted it, because you weren't allowed to have below shoulder height and no free dress at all. The uniform, the tie, blazer and stuff, that sort of thing. Yeah, it's pretty obvious they want pretty much the same thing as [name of private school]. (Red group/M)

Students at Seaside High had been subject to a dress code, and at Valley High there had been no uniform or dress policy, students had been allowed to wear what they wished. Yet, at Lighthouse High a full uniform had been introduced. However, one of the concessions, which students from Valley High had won at the beginning of the year, was the option of not wearing the new uniform. This was an option for those students from Year 9-12 only. Year 8s were required to be in full uniform, as were those new to the school – although this was not enforced, or enforceable. The reason for the students being anti the new uniform policy was that it was identified with the change in culture at this school – uniform represented the structured, new rules, new focus of this school, which was so different from their old school, and not necessarily appreciated by the student body. Students also considered this again was a decision made by others, not themselves, but believed this would cease to be an issue as they left and as the new group came through.

Emotional Issues

Although, in comparison with other themes identified so far, there were not as many vocal expressions of emotions, often the focus group discussions themselves became emotional. Students felt very strongly about the changes, and most of them when discussing these, were negative. There were only two students who said they had been excited about the possibilities that the new school was going to offer them, and one student said that he was glad to be coming to the new school and was enjoying it. The negative emotions expressed included anger and hate, one student described herself as feeling on edge, others said they were unhappy and unsettled. Students commented about their emotional withdrawal from school. Other comments made concerned aspects of their schooling, such as the wearing of the uniform, the lack of interest in their schoolwork and their physical withdrawal from school:

> But there's, there's no thing to make you want to improve. (Pink group/F)
>
> You feel like you're not really in the flow of things. You're just at the outside just watching sort of. That's how I feel. (Green group/F)

As one student tried to explain it:

> They've noticed that a lot of the students aren't like happy here basically and a lot of people don't want to be here. It's just too disruptive like, you've been shifted here so quickly and everything's changed and we haven't had time to settle in or settle into new life. New rules and stuff like that and people just don't want to be there. (Pink group/F)

In the Future

This last theme emerged from students' discussions. It reflects their perceptions that although things were not going so well now, Lighthouse High School would be better at some time in the future. Three of the focus groups in

their discussion commented on their expectations that the school would improve once the school was a few years older. They believed that once all the mistakes had been sorted, the trees had grown, the Year 8s were in Year 12, then the school would be okay to attend and they might even consider sending their children to the school, if it got better. One student observed:

> They're just waiting for Valley High to die out. I reckon they're just like waiting, like as soon as the Year 8s get to the Year 12 then it'll be fine. Everything will be happy, happy, joy, joy. But for now it's just like we still have like, you know, Valley High inner. (Pink group/F)

All this would be at some point in the future, variously between three to 15 years in the future, starting when the Year 8s had gone through. They would have been used to how everything worked. Furthermore, as other students remarked, by then the school would be scrappier. In fact, according to one student: "The more the students vandalise it the more it'll feel like home" (Green group/F). Students believed that once the school had a history, and students had stories to tell, once all the hype had died down, and another super school had been built elsewhere, then this school would be better, some time in the future.

Lighthouse High School – One Year On

This section presents the findings of the analysis of the comments from the follow up interviews conducted with two students one year later. About a quarter of the previous group of student-volunteers had left the school and others were not interested in participating any further with the research study. One male and one female student, both now in Year 11, were interviewed individually, as requested by the students. Therefore, this section will be brief

and will present a broad analysis only, yet still keeping to the themes identified during the first round of interviews.

Restructuring Education

One year on and these two students say they have not changed their opinions of Lighthouse High. These two students spoke of the events leading up to the merger and the building of Lighthouse High. One of the students was very positive about the merger, the other student continued to be very negative. Their memories and retelling of the circumstances surrounding the merger were still fresh, although they appeared to recall more detailed information than previously. In responding to the question "Why do you believe the changes happened?" one of the students was able to name the Government Minister, then in charge of the Education Department, who, this student believed, was responsible for making the decision to implement the changes, and a decision students and parents had no choice about:

> They'd say it was for us, but no, it's like all revenue. It's the government and just, yeah to get money. They're so greedy, they don't care… I know a lot of people didn't want Valley High to close. It wasn't their decision. I don't know. Probably the government. That guy, the one who's the Education Minister, [Name]. (F)

Both students continue to think that Lighthouse is a much bigger school both in size and in numbers then Valley High had been, although one of the students believes the class sizes are smaller than the previous year. The other student blamed the continued growth in the school on the number of 'expelled' private school students who were attending Lighthouse. The first student also commented on these 'expelled' students from the private schools, but it was this

student's opinion that they made the choice to come to Lighthouse High, because as this student remarked:

> They're finding it better here. More comfortable. And they're showing you a different path. Like yeah they were finding it hard at [name of private school], not as good grades. Now they're getting good grades here. (M)

Both students were more comfortable with the split Senior and Middle School, one commenting that it helped make the school seem smaller. Both continued to be concerned with the transition that students would face moving from Year 9 to Year 10. As one student reported, "But I heard from Year 9 to, going from the Middle School to the Upper School's the hard one" (M). Whilst these two students had found the move from Year 10 to Year 11 difficult, they had found the difficulty lay in the amount of work they had to cover and in continuing to get the same grades as previously.

Both students commented about the continuing issue of separate student groups from Valley and Seaside schools. Whilst the identification with the previous school attended was getting less and students were becoming friendlier with one another, both still believed that there were two separate groups. It was now part of the Student Council's role to try to bring the groups together and make them more united. According to these two students, the role of the students had not changed; if anything, that role had become more pronounced. There was very little room to be anything other than a very serious and good student at Lighthouse High.

Teaching and Learning

This area reflected the different attitudes from both students. The student who felt positive about the school believed that he had great teachers and that the changes were probably having a positive effect on his learning. The other student believed that only the worst teachers had come across from Valley High and that her marks were continuing to go down. Subject selection and the facilities to house subjects appropriately continued to be a difficulty at Lighthouse. Both students spoke of the continually high expectations by teachers of the students. A particular priority identified by one of the two students was the ATP group. However, they both reported that the aim of the school was to become known as an academic high school and this meant that teachers spent more time with those who were academic and ignored those who were not:

> They really do focus on the smart kids. If you're not smart they won't, some, I find some teachers don't even bother … I think that's because they try and so when people go on to uni with the smart people they, that's how they're going to get their name for themselves. That's what they want to be known as. (F)

Reculturing Education

Here again the comments were quite polarised between the two students as they equated their physical surroundings with the culture of the new school. One student commented that everything at Valley High had been great, the atmosphere, the teachers, the freedom; it was in the words of this student “a fun place to learn”. Lighthouse High on the other hand was serious; there was no space, no trees, it looked nice from the outside, but inside was another story. The other student commented that everything at Lighthouse High was great, that Valley High had been dark and dingy, that it had been allowed to run down, that

the environment at Lighthouse was cleaner, brighter. Valley High had been a ‘jail’; Lighthouse was, in the opinion of this student, to be the best public school in WA.

Both students commented about the continuing priority placed on the image of the school by the administration. The persistence of the administration to demand uniform be worn whenever the school was in the media, even the school flags and logo had to show in all press photographs. Lighthouse High had in the words of one of the students, a “Very public image” (M). The opening ceremony had been held and one student described it as very boring, serious, grand, contrasting sharply with the closing ceremony of Valley High two years previously. Both students had the perception that Lighthouse was a very different school from Valley High. One thought that was a good thing; the other student did not see it so positively, it was still too new:

> And just this school, like you have, if you respect something it's going to have history. This school has no history at all. (F)

The main value of these follow-ups was to highlight the dynamic nature of change. No attempt was made to make rigid comparisons from one year to the next, especially given that the follow-ups involved such a small percentage of the original respondent group.

Concluding Comments - Lighthouse High School

The present chapter presented the findings for the second case study. Both first and second round interviews with students were conducted within the first 2 years Lighthouse High School had been in operation. Yet, it was apparent

from the interviews of students, that there were some settling problems. Not only did the educational services in this district undergo some major restructuring, but the focus at Lighthouse High was also on changing the approach to teaching and learning, on reculturing, making a break with past traditions; this was to be a new school.

As part of the restructuring of the school a Middle and Senior School model was implemented. This, students believed, could present some problems with future transition issues. Students were also less than impressed with having been excluded from the 'real' decision making process; they placed little value on the fact that their opinions had only been sought on aspects of image. They believed that their roles were diminished and the true power to make decisions lay beyond their sphere, in the hands of the school administration and the Education Department.

Perhaps one of the strongest indictments against the process of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment in this school has been the impact on teaching and learning. Students were very negative about the changing approach to teaching and the strong focus on academics. Students did not consider that the school had improved the subject availability, had improved facilities, or that they were better able to learn; most students believed that their grades were dropping. Finally, the reculturing process at Lighthouse High, with its utilisation of business language, (for example 'the merger'), the introduction of a privately run canteen, and the importance placed on image in competition with the private sector, was

perceived by them to be a distraction from the real ‘business’ of school – the students.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Case study 3: Rural High School

Introduction

The *LAEP Framework* policy released in 1997 was a major force for change in the district where Rural and Mining High Schools (pseudonyms) were located. The restructuring of the delivery of education in the district took place over four years. It included the closure of Mining High School and its amalgamation with a local primary school and subsequent reclassification to District High School. It also involved the split into two campuses for Rural High School, a Middle School on the original site and the building of a purpose built Senior School on The University campus. However, because the school is identified with the town in which it is situated it was decided by the community not to change the name or to introduce separate names for the two campuses. The decision for co-locating the Senior School was controversial. The first section of this chapter, the third case study, describes the context of the site in depth and how the decision was made. It is derived from interviews primarily with students, with teachers, and the study of various documents. This first part of the chapter also outlines the sampling of the students who took part in the study.

The second part of the chapter gives the in-depth findings of the interviews with the students, the Year 11s, who were interviewed during 2002.

The findings are again organised thematically, using the same four broad themes as for the previous chapters, moving from the most to the least frequent responses whilst also allowing the data to speak in a chronological fashion. However, there were also differences emerging from the data on the 'co-location' (the site specific term used by these students), the teaching and learning, the culture and the image, reflecting the difference in context and location of this school and these are presented as sub themes. Students showed they were very aware of some of the underlying concerns surrounding the co-location.

Context – The Decision

Rural High School, as an institution, had existed in the district for a long time, since its establishment in the early twentieth century. It commenced in 1914, one of the original State high schools established in WA. It was a large school and by 1997 the student numbers were up around the 1500. In 1974, it had been relocated to new premises, having outgrown its original buildings. However, an increasing population meant that its buildings were no longer adequate and by 1997 the existing facilities were desperately in need of a major upgrade. The school also suffered from an often-transient population, and, as is frequently the case with rural schools, low retention rates to upper school and low graduation rates for its Year 12s.

The school serves a large pastoral, mining and Indigenous population spread over two closely related towns and an extensive region. The city where the school is situated forms the regional centre, and is well equipped with many modern shopping and community facilities. The school was the only State

government high school for both towns; the closest alternative State secondary school was Mining High School some 60 kilometres away. Mining High School was by comparison extremely small; in the previous two years it had enrolled only 13 students in its upper school program. The town in which Mining High School is placed is a much smaller town, servicing primarily a mining community, which in the last decade of the century had suffered a significant loss of population due to the closure of a number of the larger mines in the area.

In line with the *LAEP framework* policy, committees were established in both areas and widespread community consultations were held in order to develop a number of options for the delivery of education in the district. Six options were developed for Mining High School and six for Rural High School. The proposals for Rural High were influential in the outcome at Mining High School. The Education Department's preferred option for Mining High was the amalgamation of Mining High with West Mining Primary School to form Mining District High School, catering for students from Primary to the end of Year 10. Students going onto Year 11 and Year 12 would bus to Rural High School. This option was agreed on and Mining High School closed its doors at the end of 1999. According to some community members, the consultation and decision-making process had been 'too narrow'. As one columnist in a local paper commented, "a high school is integral to the future of [Mining Town] and maybe it is time a bit of lateral thinking was applied to see if it can be developed as the alternative to the big school in town" (Ker, 1999, p. 2).

The community decided on two preferred options for Rural High School. These were to either build a Middle School and Senior School on the existing site, expanding and upgrading existing facilities, or to build a second school in a different area of the two towns to cater for the growing population. This second option was not as popular, as the current site for the school was in the middle between the two towns. The community of Rural High School spent almost two years coming up with its preferred options. During interviews teachers reflected that they had initially been unenthusiastic with the idea of developing a Middle School, however, after extensive professional development, provided by visiting experts from a Perth university, it was decided that the restructuring of the school would prove a perfect opportunity to implement a Middle School at Rural High School.

The options for change were submitted to the Minister for approval. On April 30, the Minister for Education travelled to the town of Rural to unveil the plans for the school. The plans were for a split campus on the existing school site, comprising a Middle School for the Year 8s and Year 9s and a Senior School for the Year 10s, Year 11s and 12s. The existing buildings would be modernised and refurbished, a new administration block built at the front of the school, a two storey senior block, a performing arts centre, and the upgrading of the gym were included in the plan. A budget of $12 million was committed by the government to the upgrade, to be completed by the beginning of the 2001 school year. In July 1999, tenders were called, to be submitted by September, for construction to start in December. A project control group was appointed which included the architects, various governmental department staff, including

Education Department representatives, staff from Rural High School and parents. A school reference group was also established, made up of staff and students, who would be involved in consultations with the architects and the engineers from the project control group.

The town of Rural had also been the home of the Western Australian School of Mines (WASM) and the Rural School of Mines (SOM). The SOM had been run independently by the mining industry. The WASM had been run by the Department of Mines until 1969 when it became a branch of a major Perth University. In 1996, WASM amalgamated with the SOM, both coming under the control of The University. The future of WASM became inextricably linked to the future of Rural High School. In May 1999, The University announced a review of WASM, which had very low enrolments, to be completed by June 30. In mid June, a leaked copy of the report revealed that The University was considering moving the first two years of its mining engineering course, currently run out of WASM, to its Perth campus. This caused an outcry in the community, which believed that the full course should stay in the town of Rural, that it would be detrimental to the community if the course was moved, and that moving the first two years of the course, would eventually lead to the entire course being moved and the WASM being closed.

In November of 1999, two months after the close of tenders, the Minister for Education announced a review of the Rural High School plan, as there had been a budget blow out of about $2 million. Four days later it was announced that the construction would be delayed until the end of January the following

year. That same day the Deputy Director General of the Education Department and the District Office Acting Director held talks with the Director of The University. At the meeting they discussed a range of issues, "certainly having a closer relationship with the High School came up and it is something that is highly desirable and important" (Banks, 1999). A few days later the Minister for Education announced that discussions were underway for the construction and possible co-location of the Senior College on site at The University Campus in Rural town, after The University approached the Minister with the proposal, which it considered, would be in the interest of both the University and Rural High.

The community, parents, local members of parliament, and teachers at the school were not in favour of the decision, believing that it was contrary to the wishes of the stakeholders who had spent the previous two years deciding what shape education should take in Rural town. The Education Department held a number of meetings with parents and community members, to explain the benefits of the co-location option. These included closer connections with The University, better options for the senior students, an adult education atmosphere to enhance their learning, better resources, both for Senior students and the Years 8 to 10, who would subsequently have more space on the old site. It would also mean that the entire restructure could be completed within the budget committed, although the Minister was forced to agree to pay the further amount of the original option, should the community decide that it wished to proceed. The final decision was announced in March 2000. The decision was to refurbish and modernise the old school for the implementation of a Middle School for Years 8

to 10 and to co-locate the Years 11 and 12 on site at The University Campus, where they would share all facilities with The University, other than a new Senior Campus Administration Block to be purpose built on site. The school would use the one name for both campuses and the changes were to be implemented by the beginning of the 2001 school year.

Although the final announcement in favour of the co-location was not made until 2000, teachers at the school (discussed during interviews with them) and certain community members believed that the decision had been made in December of the previous year. As reported in the local media:

> The haste of the process and presumptuous arrogance of the negotiations leads me to believe that the co-location deal has already been stitched up. It took three years to decide an upgrade was the best option, yet only three months to do a back flip (Ker, 2000).

Teachers were also of the opinion that the decision to co-locate the schools was made in an effort to save The University and the WASM. This was confirmed by Professor Twomey (Vice Chancellor of The University), who made the public comment that it was to their "mutual advantage" (Nazzari, 2000) and that the co-location was in the best interest of the WASM and the SOM.

There was also a widespread perception amongst the community, teachers and students of Rural High School that the decision was strongly influenced by economic concerns. The review of the Rural High School proposal had been put in place because of a budget overrun. From the start, the government had committed $12 million to the project, and although they did reluctantly agree to pay the extra, teachers at the school were of the opinion that the Education Department spent most of the summer 'selling the project' to the public, in order

to foster acceptance of the co-location. One of the local Members of Parliament commented that he was 'cynical' about the co-location, believing the "proposal to be a money saving exercise" (Banks, 2000). In a letter to a local newspaper, in late 1999, a Year 11 student from the high school wrote:

> I am furious that we will not get what we were promised. The co-location creates many inconveniences. It seems to me that the emphasis has been placed on the cost of the project rather then the importance to education in the Rural area. I am appalled at the decision made this week (Williamson, 1999).

Community feeling ran high, yet a study of the local newspaper over the subsequent three months leading up to the date of the decision announcement, shows community opinion slowly changing in favour of the co-location.

Building started at Rural High School shortly after the announcement in March. In May, it was decided that the Senior School students needed to move to The University Campus ahead of schedule, as there was no longer any room for them due to the extensive building works. Students were asked when they considered the best time would be to move. Teachers continued to voice their concerns about the co-location, including duty of care issues and staffing issues. Some teachers, unhappy with the co-location move, sought to invoke Employee Initiated Placements, in an effort to change schools and seek other teaching positions. However, because the school was not strictly the subject of a closure or an amalgamation they were informed they were not eligible.

In May, a final whole school (Years 8-12) assembly was held in the school gym. The following week inductions were held at The University Campus, and classes for the Senior Campus of Rural High school officially

began in June 2000, six months ahead of time, and without the new Senior Campus Administration building having been built.

The Students in the Case Study

For the purposes of this case study of educational change the Year 11s were approached as participants. The Year 11s had either attended Rural or Mining High Schools. Due to the restructuring at Mining High School, a small number of students were from there. Most of the Year 11s were from Rural High School and had attended there since the beginning of Year 8. This group of Year 11s, from Rural High School, had been in Year 9, when half way through the year, the senior students in the school moved onto the new campus. They were the first students who experienced fully all phases of the school's restructuring. They had been introduced to a Middle School concept half way through Year 9, back to a normal High School in Year 10 and were now in their first year in the Senior Campus. They had also experienced all the building and refurbishing works, which had been undertaken at the old Rural High School site.

Rural High School is quite a distance from Perth; for this reason it was decided to approach the students through a liaison person at the school. The Year 11 co-ordinator was chosen by the Principal of the school to be the liaison person. Twenty-three students volunteered. The liaison teacher divided the students into four groups, based on previous school attended, type of course enrolled and gender. The researcher interviewed these students in November of 2002. The groups were colour coded as follows for ease of reference:

Red	Female group
Blue	Mixed group – non-‘academic’, including ex-Mining students
Black	Mixed group – ‘academic’ students
Green	Male group – sports

Extensive quotes are used throughout and the manner of referencing, to provide an ‘audit trail’, is to identify the group by colour first (as above), and next the gender of the speaker. Where a series of quotes is given, the gender identification follows in parentheses directly after the speaker and the group at the end of the series. In keeping with the desire to allow the students to speak, students’ language and grammar is given verbatim; no corrections are made. Thus the format for reporting the findings is consistent with that of the other two case studies.

Restructuring Education at Rural Senior High School – The Co-location

The responses from the students in the focus groups were perceptive and astute. Students said they had followed the issues in the local media, which had covered the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment process in some detail. Most had discussed issues with parents, siblings and peers; their understandings of the issues are reflected in the comments reported. The co-location process elicited the most responses from students in the focus groups. They had been aware of the issues for a number of years, though not necessarily paying them a great deal of attention most of the time. Students discussed the way the decision was made and whom they believed was responsible for the co-location decision. They also discussed their attitudes and behaviour towards the changes as a result of the decision. They spoke at length about sharing The University campus and the split away from the Middle School. When discussing the co-location, they

described their own role as students. Finally, they considered why the co-location happened.

The Beginning

Most students became fully conscious of plans for the co-location during Year 9, when the then Year 11s and Year 12s moved on to The University campus to make way for the building works at Rural High. Most of them said they paid very little attention to it all. Some said this was because they were only in Year 9 and it didn't have much impact on them, one group said they paid scant attention to it as they didn't believe that it would ever happen, that it was 'all talk'. Students said they had heard about the co-location from a number of sources. Some had read the headlines and had seen the drawing of the original proposal of the school restructure in the newspaper. Some had heard of it from parents or older siblings. One student said that in fact it was general knowledge around town. One student heard of the co-location moves from her mother, who was on the School Council.

Students from Mining High could not remember being told anything at all, until it was time to come to Rural High. One student, from Mining High, remembered the Year 11 and Year 12 students had talked about the changes on the bus, but had not really understood what had been going on. Most of them did not remember being told specifically by school staff about the co-location, although most believed that the Year 11s and 12s were probably made more aware of the issues. One student, however, recollected a meeting called for

parents and students to discuss the issue, and that parents opted at this meeting for a combined school on the existing site.

The Decision

The students talked about who they thought had made the decision to co-locate the Senior Campus onto The University grounds. Some believed the decision was made locally, either by the local council or by the principal of the school. Others thought it was a government decision. Some believed that the staff might have been involved in the decision somehow. Some thought that the parents also had an input. One student specifically remembers that parents were sent a survey at some point to ask them for their opinion. One student believed that The University would have approached the government and "got more money" (Green group/M) if the school went onto The University Campus.

It is interesting to note that students viewed the original announcement with cynicism. They did not believe that the redevelopment would happen, that it "looked too good for Rural High" (Green Group/M). Students also did not believe the move would be immediate, that the changes would happen at some point in the future. When the move finally did take place, students did not believe that it was a permanent move, that the move onto The University Campus was only temporary whilst the redevelopment of the school happened, as one student said, "Yeah I just thought they were moving everyone over here while they were fixing up the other school" (Black Group/F). They were consequently surprised when they realised the move was permanent.

Changes at Rural High

The most significant change was the shared facilities with The University. The students had one building that was their own nicknamed the 'Hub'. This was their administrative centre and was where their computers were located. Here also the teachers had their offices, and students congregated at lunch times. There was also one other building that was used almost exclusively by the high school, for classes such as English and Maths. All other facilities, classrooms, science labs, workshops, and the library were shared with The University. Students commented that they often had to work around The University students when they wanted to use the facilities. Students commented that this was occasionally 'awkward', as they did not necessarily get priority for use, even if the facility had previously been booked. They gave as an example the Theatre; when productions came from Perth they would lose the use of the theatre for that period.

There were also problems with sharing the library. Students said that they were often frowned on when in the library, especially by the staff, but that often The University students were rowdier than they were. Students said that they had very little interaction otherwise with The University and that the school kept very much to itself. University students were never seen around the Hub. Indeed most students commented that they seldom saw University students at all, only a few occasionally crossing a car park, in the early mornings or in the library. Students also said it did not really increase their awareness of The University as such. They did not believe that it prepared them in any way for going to university, they didn't interact with The University after all, it was more

just like high school; university is what you did in Perth, unless you were planning to be a miner with intentions of attending the School of Mines:

> This is not really that like university life. It would be good to have somewhere in Perth, for instance, like if you want to go to university because most people go to Perth to go to uni and this thing is nothing like that. (Green Group/M)

Students said they were a bit dubious about the changes at first. One student commented that they felt very negative about the new campus; another was scared when she realised she was coming to the new campus. Students commented that they found the experience daunting, especially during the two-week transition visit. They did consider that the experience changed their attitude to and behaviour at school. They were more aware of the adult learning environment. As one student commented, “It’s a lot more professional now” (Blue Group/F). This mostly influenced their behaviour; students were aware that these were the non-compulsory years. They also understood that if they ‘mucked around’ they could be asked to leave, as one student said, “If you muck around there's no point being here” (Green Group/M). One student also made the comment that although dubious about coming here initially, she found that had changed:

> When I got here I really want to be here, because you don't have to put up with the rubbish that you get over there (Middle School). (Blue Group/F)

Students were not happy with the split in the school. They did not believe that the schools were one school any longer. They were very seldom together as one school. They met twice a year for an assembly and that even then students said they still felt the separation, they did not feel like one school

anymore. Students remarked they were disappointed about not having the younger students around; one student had his younger brother at the Middle School and felt he would have liked to be there to help him. Others had enjoyed playing sport with the younger students, helping them, coaching them; students said it was inconvenient for parents, having to take students to two different school sites. They missed some of the friends that they had made in the year below them. They also did not know any of the students who were in the year above them, such that when the Year 12s had their leaving assembly the week previous, few students really knew who was who.

Students commented that the teachers seldom met together, perhaps only once a term. One student, whose mother was a teacher at the Middle School, reported that at the time of deciding whether to keep it known as one school or as two different schools, teachers had decided to keep it as one school, but that now they had trouble promoting the school. The separate campuses ran two administrations, two sets of Student Councils, though only one school captain and vice captain who were at the Senior Campus, although they did have school leaders at the Middle School:

> The only thing that's not stopping us from being two different schools is the same uniform. Do you know what I mean? Different schools have different rules, different things, you know what I mean. So it's the only thing that's stopping us from being two different schools. (Green Group/M)

The strongest negative about the new Senior Campus was the total lack of sporting facilities. Those studying upper school sports most keenly felt this deficiency. There were no facilities at the Senior Campus, and in order to do the

course, they had to travel considerable distances either to rented facilities around the town or back to the Middle School. One student had a solution and reported, "They should buy the [university's] lawn for us according to the developer" (Green Group/M) to develop this as a sports ground for their use.

Students coming from Mining High said they found the experience of coming to the new Senior Campus overwhelming at first. They described themselves as being scared and nervous of coming to the new school, they were not initially aware of the changes, which had taken place, and thought the new school was very big, especially when compared with their old school. However, they found the place very friendly, as one student remarked: "Everyone helps out, and you learn" (Blue Group/M).

Students in the Change Process

Some of the students in the focus groups remembered that there had been a number of parent meetings, where the plans for the new school had been shown. The parents had not been happy with the idea of the split campus; students said parents did not like the idea that the school was being separated.

Most students did not remember having their opinions sought about the changes. One student thought there had been a survey, but they believed this had not counted for anything. One student, whose sister was in Year 11, during the year the changes were implemented, did not remember her sister being asked, "It sort of just happened" (Red Group/F). One student remembered discussing it with peers, but not with "someone higher ranking, we talked about it ourselves,

but no high, important people" (Green Group/M). There had been a huge uproar about the decision, the students reported, in the end it was the Education Department and the principal who had 'got what they wanted'. Some said it was a great idea, as there were now fewer people around, the old school had been so 'cramped', "It was horrible at the other school" (Blue Group/F). There were also more resources at the new school. Others strongly disagreed, they were completely against it, and it was their opinion that there had been plenty of room to build extensions at the other school:

> It's still pretty awful. They still could have added it on to the other school and kept it all together. (Green Group/M)

When asked in whose interests students believed the changes had been initiated, students said they thought the co-location had occurred in the interest of the Year 11s and Year 12s. However, as one student pointed out, "They didn't ask the students. They said it was in the students' interests" (Green Group/M).

Having a say at Rural High

Students described their role as student as that of learner, being willing to learn, otherwise they were encouraged to leave as this was not a compulsory campus. They said that there were higher expectations of them; they were expected to be more mature. They were expected to work hard, and students said that teachers would often try to scare them with statistics about what grade they needed to be getting. They were expected not to muck up or play up, but to be good, to get their work done. Teachers expected one hundred per cent graduation, which was both good and bad, good for those who did well, but bad for those who could not make it and had to leave. "You've got to have high expectations of yourself", added one student (Green Group/M) when quoting

teachers. In return, students felt they were able to have high expectations of their teachers, and had gained their teachers' respect.

There was a Student Council at the Senior Campus; however, the students were of the impression that the council had very little impact on 'major things', that they were only able to be involved in fundraising and organising school social events such as the school ball and the assemblies. They also saw their role, according to one Student Council member, as helping other students, problem solving and on one or two occasions their opinion had been sought, such as when the problem with the lockers was first identified. What little ability students had to make any decisions was vested in the Student Council. However, as one student said, they "Don't really make any decisions" (Blue Group/M), they were there primarily to "just help out and make sure that everyone on the student body knows what's going on" (Blue Group/F). Students believed that the rest of the students "wouldn't really have that much say" (Black Group/F). Students said there had been some surveys, but these were not about anything involving 'the money side of stuff', but only to do with setting guidelines, what students wanted done at the school or sold at the canteen. As one student said, "They'll just tell you it's not a democracy. It comes down to them" (Black Group/M).

Year 10s in the Middle – Guinea Pigs

Students talked about their time in the Middle School as the first Year 10s. This group had been the first group to experience the Middle School, which was introduced when they were in Year 9. This had changed again, when they moved onto Year 10. The Year 10s had been treated as a separate group from

the Year 8s and Year 9s. As one student commented, “they’ve kept changing it” (Red Group/F). Some students commented that they had enjoyed their time in the new structure, which had included a homeroom where three of their four classes took place. However, others had not enjoyed the lack of movement, having preferred the structure these students had experienced in Years 8 and 9 when they moved around for classes. This was particularly true of the males in the focus groups. Some of the students were disappointed to have left when they did, as one student said, “It's starting to get good then we had to leave” (Green group/M). Others agreed with this student, they had especially been enjoying the canteen and having been able to sit where they wanted.

Students did not really believe that they had been well prepared for the move from the Middle School to the Senior Campus. Although there had been a transition time when they had visited the new campus, they did not believe this had prepared them adequately, neither had their time in Year 10 been good preparation for what they were now facing in Year 11. Students commented that they had not worked very hard whilst they were in Year 10. The hard work and serious culture at the Senior Campus had therefore come as a huge shock to many of the students in the focus groups. Most students believed that they had not been challenged enough in Year 10:

> We were sort of lot loose and did nothing for the whole year.
> They didn't force much stuff on us.
> Yeah they didn't encourage us to learn or anything. (Blue Group/F)
>
> We did nothing in Year Ten. (Green Group/M)
>
> It really concerned us when it was like the third term, Year Ten, when they said ‘oh you're going to this campus next year, so you better get moving’. (Black Group/M)

Students were on the whole ambivalent about the move to the Senior Campus. Some enjoyed the fact that there were no Year 8s or siblings, and that there were no interruptions. They enjoyed the more mature approach to study. Others found the approach too impersonal and felt that they got lost:

> It just feels different. If you go to primary school like you… and then you go to high school. You feel like you're on the bottom again and then you go to Year Ten and find I've got to go to the bottom again here. (Red Group/F)

They found it took a while to settle, and some students commented that this would probably also be experienced by the next cohort of Year 10s. They believed they were the "guinea pigs" (Blue Group/F), always having to try the new thing first and they were not impressed. They reported that things had substantially changed for the current cohort of Year 10s, they had exams, they were taught English grammar, and they were being made to do work and work hard.

Why?

Most students did not know why the school had been restructured and could not remember being told why by anyone. However, students were willing to reflect on why the changes may have been made. Some thought the changes were to give the students greater opportunity for learning; one student thought it was to prepare students for the world outside of school. Some students thought it was because other schools around Australia were doing the same thing, and the co-location was merely following this trend. Some thought it might have been because their school had been too small and that it was falling apart, and therefore council regulations required them to move to larger premises. One

student thought it had to do with money, that they could not afford to build on the other site. One student decided it was because the image of the school was so bad they had to fix it. Another student believed it was because the teachers were unhappy with the Tertiary Entrance Exam (TEE) scores and not enough students were going on to university. One group decided that it was the role of Minister for Education or the Education Department, to make the decision to try something new, to "see if it works" (Black Group/M). This group decided that it was almost a success, they "just got to fix the details"; although, after some further consideration they thought that probably would not happen.

Teaching and Learning

In this theme, students discussed the changes that had taken place, the changes that had occurred to them in the way they were taught, and the changes in their learning. They described the affect of the co-location on their attitudes to learning and to their schoolwork. They spoke about the higher expectations and how this affected them. They spoke about the subjects and how some had been affected by the co-location, about what it meant to be a student at the Senior Campus and finally they gave their views about how prepared they felt for the future.

Teacher Changes

The students commented that the teachers were much better at the Senior Campus than at the Middle School; it was their opinion that the *best* teachers were at the Senior Campus. They were better at teaching, they were better at helping them, students said, and they were always available. Students observed

that most teachers would stay around the Hub, so that they could help students. Students reported that teachers often stayed on after school, giving up their own time to help students, they would run extra classes and tutoring. Teachers also organised extra help from University lecturers. However, not everyone agreed with these remarks. One student said they did not find the teachers helpful, and another student observed that it depended largely on the teacher; some were more helpful and friendly, but others treated you the same as when they were in Middle School. One group of students observed that the teachers were in fact very serious and not relaxed, and this was reflected in teachers' high expectations of the students. This group believed the teachers needed to relax more and allow the students to have some fun.

Students said what they particularly enjoyed was the greater respect they were now getting from their teachers; they were being treated, students commented, "pretty much like adults" (Black Group/F). Students believed they were being taught more like university students, describing this as being given more freedom, treated with respect and the expectation that they would be more mature. Students also believed that the teachers at the Senior Campus had higher qualifications and were able to speak English. This last comment was in reference to a number of foreign teachers employed at the Middle School, some of who had great difficulty making themself understood in English. Rural High had a great deal of difficulty keeping its teaching staff from year to year because of the distance of the school from the capital city. Generally, most of the students said, the teachers were friendlier at the Senior Campus and more helpful:

> I've noticed that the teachers go out of their way to help you. Like a lot of them with the tutoring after school and assignments. They're very happy to have extensions and things like that and are a lot more happy to make sure that you graduate and then they go out there for you. (Black Group/F)

Teaching Changes

Students reported that there had been a big change in the style of teaching at the Senior Campus. They believed that because teachers were no longer teaching in the Middle School, they were able to focus better on helping the students:

> Because most of the teachers only teach Upper School now they're like more focused and like have more time for you kind of thing. (Red Group/F)

Classes for Year 11 subjects were streamed, a process that began in Year 10, when students were placed into different streams, academic and non-academic. Students believed that teachers did this in order to 'weed out' the students who would not do well in Year 11 and 12. Subject selection happened about half way through Year 10, when students sat down with parents and teachers to choose academic, general or vocational subjects. Classes in Year 10 had also been ranked by ability, which had worked well in some classes, but for other classes this had been a problem. This was especially problematic, said students, if you had been ranked in your Maths class, but then had to be with these same students for English or Science and, as one student commented, you might be the same level in one class but not another, and so students didn't do any work in that other class.

Students reported that the class sizes were much smaller than what they had experienced at the Middle School or even at the beginning of the year. Some said they had classes as small as 16 students, others reported class sizes of seven or eight. Students explained that at the start of the year their classes had been quite crowded and in some classes there had not been enough desks; however, during the course of the year this had changed as students had left or changed course, and this was now no longer a problem.

Students believed that there were greater opportunities and more subjects at the Senior Campus then there had been before and that the subjects were much better resourced, especially subjects such as science, food, and mechanical workshop. Students opined that this was 'great'. One significant negative identified by the students was the lack of sporting facilities at the new campus. They really missed this. When they were doing physical education studies they had to use a local park, which was about four or five blocks away and which could take up to ten minutes to reach. Other times they had to travel out of school either to leased facilities or back to the Middle School. As a result, the sport classes were very limited, and only once a week would they do practical activities, the rest of the time was devoted to theory. At the Middle School, the students had an oval, tennis courts, basketball courts, and they really missed having access to these, and not only for during sport time:

> Instead of sitting on your arse all the time, you can go out and you go play whatever sport. You've got access to sport. (Green Group/M)

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Students described some of the changes in teaching and learning, which had taken place for students, since the co-location. Most students had a better attitude, but there was more work, and more pressure for students to do work. There were no bells, to which the students had to respond. Students were asked to be more mature. There were very few discipline problems, students understood that Year 11 and 12 were post-compulsory; students did not have to stay if they did not wish to work. Therefore, explained the students, if you wished to graduate then you worked:

> If the kids over there muck about they can't exactly expel them from school, because they've got no where else to go. But here ...being here if you muck around you're out.
>
> (Green Group/M)

Most students said they were learning more now then ever before. One student observed that he had learned more in this year then in the previous three years. This student made the comparison that in Years 8, 9 and 10 all they did was “just regurgitate the same information” (Green Group/M). At the Senior Campus the teachers put more pressure on the students to do more work, to complete more work; they checked up on them to make sure they had completed the set work. Most believed they were doing better in their schoolwork, although some said they did not know. One student observed that it was not as hard as she had been led to believe.

Students commented that their attitude to teaching and learning had changed. Most said it had changed for the better; they did their homework, they worked better, they ‘knuckled down’, and they wanted to come to school.

Previously it had been the experience of these students that if you worked at lunchtime you were ‘a square’, but now people went to the library, they came early and as one student commented, “You see people that stay here after school to like five thirty” (Red Group/F). Students enjoyed having teachers available after and before school, it motivated them to do their work and do well. Students were here to learn, it was hard, but they found they could get a great deal of help, so that they did not wish to ‘muck around’, but learn. There were a number of after school tutoring classes, which had been organised to help students, who had difficulty with their work. There were fewer fights than there had been at the Middle School Campus and students said they enjoyed being at school with those who wished to be there:

> It's harder to get distracted here too because you don't have all the kids that don't want to be here. (Black Group/F)

However, not everyone agreed with this; there were a few students who reported that their attitude had worsened. They gave several reasons; one was because the work was so much harder. They also liked it less, as not only had the work become more difficult but also it was more serious. There was less to enjoy, these students said, you could not relax, and people were working all the time. The other reason was that students believed it had become too university focused:

> Yeah, you don't see any pictures go up on the walls. It's all ...you don't see the paintings and subjects...it's just too boring. It's too uni-oriented. It's so uni like yet we're still in high school. (Green Group/M)

Some students remembered having been apprehensive about coming to the Senior Campus, and that the move across had been a big shock to them,

especially in the level of work that was required of them. Work was a lot harder at Senior Campus then ever before and the expectations had really increased. Students found themselves often doing extra work after school or on the weekend, so that they felt they had less social time. They were expected to work right through to the last day. Students reported being surrounded by others who were doing their work, especially during free time. They felt that all the 'issues' to do with the Year 12s, exams and leaving, were more prominent here then they had been when they had been in the Middle School. Some student said they believed it helped them to focus and that it helped them with their work. Students said they also enjoyed only having to do the subjects they had chosen, and because it was part of The University campus, some subjects were very well resourced, such as the science and food labs.

Students said there was a big emphasis on preparing them for their exams and for them to think about further study. Students said that the expectation was that all students would do well in their TEE and graduate. Some students found the pressure too high and dropped out; others said they thrived on it, never getting bored with the work, as one student said, "we know what we're doing it for" (Black Group/F). Some students commented that they found the high expectations of teachers too stressful, and wanted to remind teachers that they were here not just to work hard but they were here "for the good time as well" (Green group/M). This student went on to make the observation, "They try and make us mutilate into adults too early".

One group discussed the differences between the TEE group and the students enrolled in the general course, and commented that there was a big gap between the two groups. The TEE students and classes were much more serious and stressful and these students had a great deal of pressure put on them. Students in the group commented that some of the students from the TEE had found the going too difficult and had had to drop 'down' to doing the general course instead. The students in the general subjects did not take the work as seriously and did not have to work as hard. One student observed that because of the lesser stress of the course, he still was able to go out and enjoy his weekends and play sport:

> Yeah, I'm doing General because I got told ...worked it out with my coordinator that I was going to do TEE so I can get a higher education. But that was just going to be a lot more work and a lot more stress that I don't need, because I can get into the same career without doing General if I just get nice grades. I don't have to go through all that stress of exams and stuff. (Black Group/M)

When students were asked whether they felt prepared for their entry into university because of being in The University surroundings, some believed they were, whilst others disagreed. Student who agreed explained that they felt prepared because of the adult learning environment:

> You're more like independent and everything.
> Plus you've sort of had a ...you've sort of seen the environment. You've sort of been in it for a while. (Red Group/F)

There were also a number of opportunities for involvement in The University as an organisation, though not its students. Some students were already involved in some university courses run for the Year 12s, lecturers helped with some of the courses and each year a number of touring days for subjects directly associated with the School of Mines, such as engineering, were offered to the students.

There were “lots of things on a weekend that are available for us to do, like courses and things like that, but there’s no one on your back but yourself” (Black Group/F).

Those who disagreed believed that teachers and the school needed to do more to help bridge the inevitable gap between what they were experiencing now and what was likely to happen when they went to university. As one student observed:

> You're going to get a shock if you go to the uni and see ...you're going to be in a big lecture room and the teacher down there. You're sitting in a big seat, you've got to take notes and if you don't ...if you're not good at taking notes ...we don't do that too much. (Black Group/M)

Dropping Out

Some students believed that the increased expectations as they had entered the Senior Campus had had a negative effect. They had understood that because it was post-compulsory they would be sitting exams and working towards higher education entry. And although some said that this had helped them with their work others said that these increased expectations made them want to leave, it was too serious. One student commented that many students had dropped out from the previous year as a result, but another student said that many had left to get jobs.

Most students believed that the number of students to leave the school during the course of the year had been quite big. Some students believed that as many as 125 students had left. Students reported that most of these others had left because they had ‘hated’ school, because they had found the work too hard,

or because they had been encouraged to leave. Some of this pressure to leave had happened during orientation, the two weeks at the end of Year 10 when they had come for familiarisation with the Senior Campus. Students reported that they had been told:

> There was too many people for what they catered for everything kind of thing. Like there's not enough classrooms and things like that. So they're like 'it's really harder this year, don't bother coming back'. (Red Group/F)

There was a problem for students who dropped out of Rural High; there were not many choices for the dropout in Rural town. The only options for schooling were the Catholic College or a boarding school in Perth. Both options were considered by the students as too expensive, so that, as one student pithily phrased it, you were “Pretty much stuffed if you get kicked out of here” (Green Group/M).

Reculturing Education

Students spoke about being the first Year 10s and compared the culture of the Middle School with the Senior Campus. Students described how the culture had changed to a more adult learning environment. They talked about the facilities they now enjoyed as part of this new environment, yet also the clashes with The University. Finally students talked about the changing image of the school.

From Kings to Adults – A New Learning Culture

Students commented about their experience as the first Year 10s in the new system. “Last year was really good actually because all us Year 10s felt like

we were king of the school" (Blue Group/M). Students believed the Year 10s had become more important as they were now the oldest year at the Middle School Campus. Students enjoyed being the oldest, although it did bring with it increased expectations to behave and set an example for the Year 8s and Year 9s. Yet, they were not mature enough, some of the students in the focus groups believed, the juniors missed the Year 11s and 12s; they had no one really to look up to.

Some students commented they did not like the way the culture of the Middle School was changing. Even the previous year, students reported, there had been a lot of fighting and there was still a lot of fighting. They commented that when they went over for assemblies or to visit the school they no longer felt it was a safe environment. There had been a small number of comings and goings between the two schools; this was particularly true for assemblies. There had been the official opening of the Middle School, which everyone had attended, and infrequent assemblies were organised, when senior students would travel to the Middle School Campus. But, a new barbed wire fence had been erected around the school, and students believed it make the school look and feel like a jail. Discipline had become harsher, but was seen as ineffective. However, students did not believe there was much that could be done about changing this, these were the compulsory years of schooling, and you had students attending the school who did not want to be there. It was not like at the Senior Campus, where only those students who wanted to be there and do well attended.

Many students reported they found the jump from Year 10 to Year 11 enormous. This was not just because the work had become more difficult, but also because so much else changed. The entire culture of the Senior School was different, students likened it to being in Grade One again, a time where you knew no one and didn't know how things worked. Students believed the current cohort of Year 10s would also experience a shock; the two schools were very different from each other. Having said this, some of the students said they did enjoy not having the Year 8, 9 and 10 students around. They liked the atmosphere on the Senior Campus; it was not as childish, more mature:

> It's nice and quiet to walk through the campus. Like you don't see Year 8s having fights and things. It's like there's no litter everywhere and it's just really nice and there's always people just sitting there and have lunch or whatever. (Black Group/F)

One group of students did not like the adult atmosphere; they were of the opinion they would be adults and at university soon enough. As one student commented, "Be young while you can. They're taking that away from us" (Green Group/M). However, most of the students enjoyed the adult learning environment at the new Senior Campus:

> You like kind of become friends with the teachers kind of thing and because of that it kind of motivates you to do well, because you don't want to let them down kind of thing. Because they like devoted so much time and stuff to you and that helps you to like have motivation to do well. (Red Group/F)

Students said they liked the friendships that they built with the teachers. They also enjoyed the freedom of going into the township for lunch and not being questioned about their movements. When students had free periods they could either use these to work on assignments, computers or leave the school. The Senior Campus was friendly and comfortable, and students said they felt ownership, especially the Hub, which was their building:

> I think that we think more of it as our own. I mean we know it like a university and like other people go yeah but we do think of it as our own as well. (Blue Group/F)

Students described the culture of the Senior Campus as being success focused, which was strongly reflected in the priorities set for its students. Students reported that the priority of the school was to achieve one hundred per cent graduation:

> Yeah, that's their big thing. Everyone is going to pass and if you don't we're going to make sure you pass, otherwise we're going to kick you out early enough so it doesn't affect their statistics of passing. (F)
>
> And they pretty much suss out who's going to pass and who doesn't and either pulls them aside and says 'look pick your grades up, otherwise we're going to have ask you to leave'. (F)
>
> (Black group)

The priority of the school was to get everyone to succeed. Students found this priority either motivated them to work hard, or scared those not interested to leave. Students reported a large drop out rate, especially in their TEE classes. Others spoke of the success the school's priority had in finding employment for its students in the community. The advantage was that at least, students said, there were no conflicting goals for them; they knew what they were here to accomplish:

> You're in a mature environment where everyone's got the same goal. You don't have everyone ...it's like 'oh we don't really need to pass', but once you're like here you need to pass. (Black Group/F)

When asked what students especially enjoyed about being at the new school, some said there was very little they enjoyed; the bad outweighed the good for these students. This was especially true for the one group of respondents, who were very sport focused, and who believed the sporting

facilities at the new campus were not up to scratch. However, most students said they did like the flexibility, the adult learning environment, being able to study when they wanted to and being able to take responsibility for their own learning. They also enjoyed the locality, the closeness of the new campus to the Rural town centre, as one student smilingly pointed out “it’s easier to wag” (Green Group/M).

The one area of change the all students wanted to see changed at the Senior Campus was to have the uniform removed. As one student commented, students wanted “A more mature attitude to our uniform” (Blue Group/F). Students were particularly scathing of the need to wear closed toed shoes at all times. They could understand the need for it in certain subjects, and were prepared (some said they already did so) to swap as needed, but they did not see why they had to be worn all the time. They also suggested that if the school wanted the uniform for identification purposes (one of the reasons suggested by the students for the uniform was to differentiate them from The University students) to at least limit it to a school top and allow students to wear whatever pants or bottoms they wanted:

> Like they say that this is an adult learning environment, but still they ...they still try and control what we wear. Doesn't really matter what we wear I don't think. Probably doesn't affect how we learn. (Blue Group/F)

Environment

Students found that the environment at the Senior Campus was very different from anything they had previously experienced. They spoke of their new building, which they liked, but some were disappointed at no longer being

on the Middle School Campus and were disappointed to have moved to the Senior Campus just when the Middle School Campus was finished after having been completely revamped:

> They didn't have to move us from the Middle School. It looks like way better now. All the carpet's and furniture and stuff they're all new. (Blue Group/M)

Some students believed the facilities were much better there, especially for sports and for the library. Although not all the facilities had been refurbished, most of them had and the environment there was now much nicer.

The University had not been ready for the students when they arrived; the Senior Campus central administration building still had to be constructed. Called the Hub, it was completed and opened during the year. The Hub also contained the computers for the students' use, some classrooms, a large meeting/lunch room – shared by students and teachers, and the teachers' offices. Whilst it was being built, students and teachers shared The University facilities. Both The University and the High school students had to get used to each other, as one student commented, "They weren't used to having all these kids everywhere" (Red Group/F). Not that the students saw many University people, as they said, they saw them occasionally in the library or walking around, but not very often and then not very many. One group quipped:

> I've seen one or two Uni students a day at the most.
> Maybe they're somewhere else or something. Hiding. (Said in a spooky manner) (Green Group/M)

Students commented that the facilities, which they shared with The University and their own Hub once it had been finished, were great. They

enjoyed using them, especially in the hospitality and manual arts areas. However, there were some difficulties, especially with the shared library facility. The students said they did not like the library. Some of the problems they identified with it were to do with the lack of fiction books, many of the textbooks were often too difficult for them, and students had difficulty with knowing which areas were out of bounds. As one student summed it:

> Here, yeah, there's no fiction book. It's all non-fiction and probably for university-age people. So, it was a lot more technical than what we'd be getting into, and we're not allowed to do a lot of stuff in there. (Blue Group/F)

Students said they felt intimidated when in the library. “You feel like really intimidated as well when you're there, because all the uni students just stare at you”, explained one student (Blue Group/F).

What students liked about being at the Senior Campus was the access to the new school and the closeness of the township. What they did not like was the spread out nature of the school. Every student had a comment to make about this and not one was positive. The buildings the students occupied were spread over three city blocks and students often had to walk from one end to the other to attend different classes. This made them late for class, although, according to one student, “the teachers don't mind if you're late to class” (Red Group/F). Students were also concerned about having to cross a number of busy roads to attend classes, “for a lot of your classes you have to cross the roads which is a bit dangerous” (Black Group/F).

Each group also raised the issue of lockers. According to the students, The University “don’t want us to have lockers” (Red Group/F); as a result, the

locker rooms were going to be taken away. Some students believed that the lockers were being removed altogether; others believed that they were simply being moved. Students gave various reasons why they thought The University wanted the lockers to be moved. One reason was for security, another because, so students said, The University had complained about the noise made by the lockers and the students at the lockers. Others believed that The University needed the space currently being used by the lockers. Students wanted the issue resolved, they wished to keep the lockers and in fact have more of them, as there were not enough lockers for the entire student population. One student commented that the Student Council was sorting this problem out.

Students from Mining High said they had had a great shock when first coming to Rural High. They had two difficulties; the first was the tremendous size of the new school, as one student said “Our entire year was about the size of one classroom for a full year” (Black Group/F). This same student felt that when she had first come to Rural High she had believed she was going to fail, for not only did the size of the school intimidate her, but she spend two and a half hours each day on the bus, an hour in the morning and an hour and a half in the afternoon. Nevertheless, they said it was easier to come to the new campus than if they had been at the old campus:

> I think because it's new for everyone, so everyone's trying to make new friends and get used to it and you don't feel like such an outsider. (Black Group/F)

One of the changes to the environment commented on by students was a piece of artwork. The school, as part of the *LAEP Framework* process, had been

required by the Education Department to spend some of its funds on public art. Students commented negatively about the artwork purchased by the school. Students reported that the school had spend $40 000 on the artwork, which graced one of the entrance walls of the Hub. Students quoted teachers as saying it was the 'stupidest waste of money'. Students could not see the point of the artwork, or understand what it was meant to be. Students thought that the teachers must have decided the choice of artwork; none of the students could remember having been asked, in fact they could not understand that any students would have been involved with the decision. Whoever had chosen it, laughingly suggested one student, "Must have been pretty drunk" (Black Group/M).

Image

Students believed that the image of the school was changing, which they thought was good. Students had no doubt that they were under much more public scrutiny than ever before. They saw more of their school on television and in the newspapers. Often this took the form, a student explained, of just little advertisements that showed what good things were happening at the school. Yet, happenings at the school were not always consistently reported, occasionally a good photo would accompany a negative story. Students believed that the focus on the uniform was also part of the image of the school. The administration had said it helped distinguish them from The University students. However, as one student remarked, when photos were taken for the newspapers, only those in uniform were in the picture. The Student Councillors were also expected to wear uniform when they were doing things, including school blazers.

Students described the prior reputation of the school as being a bad one, though one student observed that the school had not previously had a significant public presence. Students said the school had a reputation for fighting, racism and bad grades. Students who left the school often did not do well for themselves, many failing to get work; they were in the words of one student, “Bad grades, bad students, everything” (Green Group/M). Nevertheless, students were convinced that the school’s reputation was changing and that it was improving. Students believed that it was the older people of the township who most needed to change their perception; this was happening, but very slowly, as one student said, “It’s started to mellow” (Green Group/M), and another:

> I think ever since we've moved here we've actually had a positive ...like from the public we've had a positive attitude towards the school. Because we did have problems when we were there. (Blue Group/F)

The more positive image had the effect of changing the attitude of the students, giving them greater pleasure in being at school. The Senior Campus was seen by some students as having the better reputation than the Middle School. For this reason more officials were seen visiting here than in the Middle School. Students believed this was partly because the Middle School was still compulsory and there was not a great deal teachers could do about moving students on. One group believed that the reason for the better reputation of the Senior Campus was that the school had got rid of the bad students, those that did not wish to work and those who had been identified as troublemakers.

Students believed that the school’s priority, to achieve 100 per cent graduation, was also part of the new image the school wished to establish for

itself. As one student observed, “Really want us all to graduate makes the school look very good” (Black Group/F). Students said it would make the school look good to the rest of WA, indeed the rest of Australia. Students commented that the school’s administration were out to impress people, hence the emphasis on the need for success.

They believed it was the principal who was most concerned with the image of the school. “Yeah he's all care about image, and he does bad” (Green Group/M). Although the Principal did have an office at the Senior Campus, students seldom saw him and were convinced that he would not know them if he did see them. They did not believe that he would know personally the names of many of the students, as they did not think he was around or involved enough. The Deputy Principals of the school were often seen around the school, students said, they were seen as being very involved with the school and the students. Students did not think the teachers were as concerned, and they also believed most of the students were not at all concerned about image, for them as one student commented, “It's all about ...it's all about learning” (Green Group/M).

Emotional Responses

There were a few emotional comments. The students were divided over whether or not they enjoyed the changes that had been made. At first students reported feeling uncomfortable at the new campus. Especially because they did not know where to go:

> Back then I felt really stupid coming over here, but now you're actually here it's like better to be over here than being over there. (Red Group/F)

Some said they really enjoyed the new Senior Campus and were glad the changes had been made. They enjoyed the adult learning environment, and the freedom it gave them, they also said that they really enjoyed not playing mind games with the teachers, they felt that the changes had been significant and that they no longer felt like they were in jail, as one student said, “You’re not treated like a little kid” (Red Group/F). Students reported that whilst previously other students had hated coming to school, many were now enjoying it, wanting to come, wanting to do well. Students also reported that their parents were more positive now than they had been. One student recalled her parents being very dubious about the changes but that they were feeling better about it now.

Nevertheless, there were others who disliked the changes. They wanted the schools to be changed back. They disliked the split schools, disliked the distance from the Middle School, and disliked the ‘serious’ culture at the school. As one student said, “Change the schools back, we don't like it here” (Green Group/M). Nevertheless, the students also understood that the changes were permanent, a lot of money had been spent on it, there would be no going back.

Concerning sharing The University Campus, a number of students said they found it difficult and intimidating. They said they found the way they were treated by The University people difficult; it made them feel stupid and disrespected, as though “It's sort of like we're invading their space” (Red Group/F). Students said they felt as thought they were not wanted; they had the feeling that The University students believed themselves to be superior to them.

Concluding Comments - Rural High School

This chapter presented the findings of the third case study. Rural High School, at the time of the interviews, had been operating as a split Campus for some two years, although officially the new school had been open for just over a year and a half. Whilst the school had been open for only a short time, the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment process had gone on for some time and surrounded by such controversy, that students were under the impression that the changes would either never happen or not in the way published in the local newspaper. Students did not believe they had any input into making or affecting the changes, and they were ambivalent about whether they liked the changes. What students enjoyed most were the obvious advantages of access to The University facilities, especially for subjects such as hospitality, science and workshops. Yet, there were problems here, as students did not always get first priority access to these same facilities. There were also issues that needed to be resolved about the shared library facilities and the lack of sporting equipment.

The school had been active in establishing a new learning culture at the Senior Campus. The majority of students enjoyed the adult learning environment, which gave students' greater freedom and more responsibility for their own learning. However, teachers and students often translated this as a pressure to perform, to be serious and to do well. This was not enjoyed by some of the students, who believed that there was enough time for this later, they were at High School and were here not only to learn but also to have fun, they were only young once and they did not like being 'mutated into adults'. Students reported that there had been a large attrition rate as a result.

Finally, students identified Year 10 as a problem. They had enjoyed their time in Year 10 but believed that they had lacked the preparation they needed to do well at the Senior Campus. They had enjoyed being the 'Kings' but the shock of moving to the Senior Campus and the hard work that they were expected to do were real problems for quite a number of students. They had not enjoyed being the 'guinea pigs' in that same year, and wanted the school administration and teachers to be more thoughtful about what happened to them.

CHAPTER NINE

Cross Case Analysis: Emerging Themes

Introduction

The previous three chapters analysed in detail students' perceptions of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment in three case study schools in the State education sector of WA as well as locating each school within its localised context. Students spoke in depth about the changes, speaking with emotional fervour and showing passionate commitment to their schools. The present chapter presents a cross case analysis and explores the common themes that emerged from the three cases whilst also highlighting some of the significant differences. Although the primary focus in the case studies was the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* policy, it was inevitable that different policies and practices intersected at the localised level and so student perceptions of change may not always have arisen directly from the *LAEP Framework* but as an integrated effect of changes occurring in their schools.

The chapter starts by making comparisons and highlighting contrasts in the contexts of the three schools, before moving on to an analysis of the similarities and differences in students' perceptions of change. Students discussed the restructuring that took place in their schools, the changes to teaching and learning, and the changes to the cultures of their schools. These themes form the subheadings for the present chapter, which follows the sequence of the case study chapters. Each of the emerging themes was examined using the

conceptual framework developed for the thesis. The final section of the present chapter gives a summary of the cross case findings, the purpose of which is to gain a better understanding of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment and students' perceptions of educational restructuring in the three schools, and to develop a series of theoretical propositions that emerged from the empirical findings. These propositions will then be elaborated in greater depth in the final chapter and some implications for theory, for policy and practice, and for further research will be drawn.

The purpose of the cross case analysis is to move into 'bigger picture' themes, highlighting predominant trends, which underscore the complexities and messiness of the individual sites. The goal of the case study chapters has been to represent faithfully the 'voices' of the students. The goal of the present chapter is to go to a higher level of analysis, to understand and to explain the significance of the students' perceptions that the case studies revealed. In presenting the cross-case analysis, one challenge has been not to homogenise students' voices and lose their uniqueness or gloss over their differences. Therefore, although considerable commonalities existed between the three schools and the students' responses, where differences were apparent these are highlighted.

Case Study Contexts – Comparisons and Contrasts

The following section of the present chapter compares and contrasts the contexts of the three case study schools. It is important to note that there is no attempt to generalise the findings from the three case studies to other schools responding to the *LAEP Framework* policy or to other schools undergoing

restructuring in other systems. As Rosenmund (2000) indicates, case studies are closely connected with their specific contexts, and therefore the findings should not be directly transferred to other contexts. As is demonstrated in these three cases there are some important differences across different settings, which should not be glossed over or lost in the meta-level discussion. The differences highlight the 'messiness' of the policy processes and emphasise the importance of adding postmodern theory for investigation at the micro-level. In fact, it is important to stress that an understanding of the different contexts in which students found themselves was significant in influencing the way they participated in educational change. However, it was also hoped that the cross case analysis of the three case studies would generate some insights into the relationships between students and educational change, which could be used to illuminate approaches to change in the future.

The three schools in the study shared some common contextual factors. All three schools were secondary schools within the State education system subject to the *LAEP Framework* policy. All three schools were the subject of substantial subsequent restructuring including school amalgamations and the introduction of Middle Schooling at the behest of the Minister for Education. In all three schools the cohort starting Year Eight in 1999 bore the brunt of most of the changes, moving from standard high schools, to Middle School and then to experience induction to Senior School within the space of three years.

A number of significant variations in the contexts of the three schools caused different policy processes and effects. Park Hills College and Rural High

School had three years to enact the policy; Lighthouse High School had four years to bring about change. At Lighthouse a larger number of schools, three rather than two, were involved in the policy process. Both Park Hills and Lighthouse were city schools although located in two very different socio-economic contexts; Park Hills was located in a low socio-economic status (SES) area and Lighthouse a school in a high SES area. Rural was, as the name suggests, in a rural location some distance from the capital city.

Another difference was the number of students involved. In the amalgamation of Park and Hills, the total number of students involved in the policy enactment was just over 1000, although the final number attending the amalgamated Park Hills campus was less than 800. At Lighthouse, the final number was around 1200 students, whereas at Rural the numbers were around the 1400. The total number of students involved in each case study site was one of the reasons for a difference in the focus of the implementation. The primary focus at both Park Hills and Lighthouse was the amalgamation and subsequent closure of two smaller schools within the same education district. At Rural, the focus of the restructuring was the introduction of Middle Schooling and the construction of the Senior Campus administration and student services Hub on The University Campus.

There was a substantial difference in the amount of resources, both financial and human, spent in the three schools to achieve the policy enactment. $6 million was budgeted for Park Hills, including the rebuilding, the student uniform allowance and the art works purchased by the school. At Rural, a sum

of $12 million was budgeted for refurbishment of the Middle School campus and construction of the Hub. At Lighthouse, $23 million dollars was budgeted for building the new school. Lighthouse was also the only school of the three given the option of staff merit selection. Teachers for the new school were appointed on a formal merit-based selection process from across WA. As will become clear in the present chapter, in many ways Lighthouse was to be the 'elite' school of the government sector.

It is perhaps a significant difference that Lighthouse was in a Government electorate, whilst both Rural and Park Hills were in Opposition electorates during the period of the policy enactment. At both Rural and Park Hills, the difference in political affiliation of the electorates was frequently referred to during the initial enactment phase and may have influenced students' perceptions of the policy processes. However, although students were certainly aware of the differences, it was not a significant influence in students' attitudes to the changes, as the rest of the present chapter will demonstrate.

There were significant differences between the discourses the key participants drew upon during the policy enactment in the three schools. The different discourses were particularly important in terms of the outcomes sought by the schools for their students. Both Rural and Lighthouse sought to re-culture their schools, whilst at Park Hills it was the school's intention to make sure that students coming from Hills did not perceive they were excluded from the school. This difference will be revisited in greater depth when discussing the culture of the three schools later in this chapter. The differences and similarities in the

contexts impacted on the ways the policy was enacted in the various schools and on the students' perceptions of change and are highlighted throughout the following discussions of the emerging themes. It must also be emphasised that the data for the case studies was captured at a particular point in time, but change is dynamic and themes and issues raised may well be different at different times.

Restructuring

Following the format of the case study chapters, the focus of the present chapter falls first on the restructuring of the schools. The *LAEP Framework* incorporates the discourses of social justice and of economic rationalism in its aim to restructure educational provision in the State of WA, as discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The discourses are evident in the policy documents, which explore restructuring in the interests of economic efficiencies and "competitiveness with the private sector" (EDWA, 1997a, notes overhead 2) concurrently with issues of adolescent alienation and students at educational risk. The study revealed that both discourses were also evident at the micro-level of each of the schools, as students and staff struggled with the conflicting messages of the policy as it was enacted.

All three schools underwent substantial restructuring during the policy enactment, which included building construction works and, as the result of the direct intervention of the Minister for Education (not of DET, see Chapter Two), the implementation of Middle Schooling. The stated purpose of the *LAEP Framework* policy was to restructure the delivery of education in the three school districts. Following the release of the policy in late 1997, all three school

districts became involved in the enactment process. All three schools sought community involvement as was prescribed in the *Framework*. Yet, though it was to be a community and school driven process, there was little room to manoeuvre; the Minister made it clear that there were no 'soft options', that closures of small schools would happen, and that competitiveness with the private sector was to be a goal. Furthermore, though the policy featured the rhetoric of localised implementation decisions – the devolution of decision making to local areas to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of educational delivery – the processes were clearly top-down, an example of Chin and Benne's (1985) *power-coercive* strategy (as described in Chapter Three), with limited empowerment to the local level in relation to the policy goals. The whole process was orchestrated and monitored closely by the state in an example, *par excellence* of 'steering at a distance'.

One of the stated purposes of the policy and dominant in the discourses surrounding its implementation in the three schools was to provide a better education for all students. However, an alternative reading of the policy, and one strongly recognised by students, suggests that the policy enactment was very much about economic efficiency and the rationalisation of resources. The resulting conflict of purposes had led to a series of "negotiated, tangled compromises" (Townsend, 2004, p. 99) in the enactment of the policy. The *LAEP Framework* represents one particular example of 'economising' education (Ozga, 2000) as manifest in different forms in other Australian States and other countries. It incorporates the discourses of much of the recent educational reform movement: accountability, performance, budgeting and standards

(Grundy, 2002). Arguably, the three case studies evidenced 'engineered consent' (Apple & Beane, 1999) for a decision made beforehand by a policy elite well removed from the local context. Students, parents and teachers observed cynically that the community consultation process was for show only, 'mere tokenism' (staff interviews, Lighthouse High, 2001). The 'contrived consultation' was quite transparent to the disempowered school communities. The three school districts targeted in the policy enactment became responsible only for the speedy and efficient implementation of the centrally established goals. Any 'crisis' in the minutiae of the implementation was 'exported' from the central authorities to the local school (after the notion that devolution policies 'export the crisis' as explicated by Whitty et al., 1998).

It is relevant, at this point, to take a 'bigger picture' view of the relationship between changes in the case study schools and shifting ideologies. The processes and discourses of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment present an excellent example of how the now globally dominant neo-liberal paradigm (Henry et al., 2000) at the macro level influences the reconstruction of the nation state. Apple (2001) identified neo-liberalism as the defining political/economic paradigm for this age: "Neo-liberal initiatives are characterised as free market policies that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice, reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative" (Apple, 2001, p.18). Tikly (2003), in his discussion of neo-liberalism, formulates a modified conception of 'social risk', where the burden of responsibility for educational performance is shifted to the community, to parents and to students. This new approach to managing social risk is demonstrated by new 'technologies of agency', "the proliferation of

contracts for goods and services and by new modes of consumer and community involvement and voice" (Tikly, 2003, p. 164). In the case of the *LAEP Framework* policy, giving the communities a 'voice' in the enactment also places the risk for its success or failure firmly with them. However, instead of the greatly reduced role for the state that should have followed (Robertson & Dale, 2002), the state was unwilling to withdraw. In each case study site the submissions put forward by the communities were not acceptable, causing the Minister and the Education Department to intervene more strongly. These global ideological influences frame the interactions between the State and the local school communities in the policy processes and are echoed in the students' perceptions at the micro-level.

The rest of the section on the restructuring of education at the three case study schools deals with the major themes that emerged in discussions with the students. The first subsection title, 'Expert Witnesses', is taken from a journal article by Rudduck and Flutter (2000), and exposes the students' awareness of and perceptiveness of both the processes and reasons for change. The next subsection, 'Students at the Micro-Level of Policy Processes' explores the students' perceived lack of involvement and the marginalisation of students from active participation in the policy process, compared to other policy actors such as parents, school administrators, bureaucrats and the Minister. Finally, a discussion follows of the 'Alienation of the Year 10s' who were exposed to the greatest changes across all three schools. It includes a closer look at the introduction of Middle Schools in each of the three case study schools.

Expert Witnesses

There is an often expressed belief amongst adults that students have little awareness of anything outside their immediate sphere of interest and that issues of educational restructuring are beyond their limited understandings (Corbett & Wilson, 1995). Students are regarded as lacking the experience, knowledge or skills to make useful contributions to the educational change process (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). It is more common for teachers, parents, or other adults to speak *for* students (Fielding, 2001). One of the realities of student involvement in educational restructuring is that their voices are often bracketed, when they are allowed to speak at all; they are more often viewed as silent, passive objects of change (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Yet, as the title of this subsection, taken from the work by Rudduck and Flutter (2000, p. 82) suggests, students are in fact "*expert witnesses*" in the processes of educational change, as they are observant and have a rich but often untapped understanding of processes and events.

This study found that students were very perceptive in their discussion of the policy enactment, were aware of the restructuring process and underlying discourses and had formed opinions. Consistent with the theory that perceptual knowledge is gathered through micro takings of information from their senses (Armstrong, 1988; Dennett, 1996), students in general build their *perceptual maps*, using sources such as peers, parents, siblings, neighbours, school newsletters, newspapers and their own experiences gained during the ongoing educational restructuring processes. The perceptual knowledge that student respondents in this study had acquired influenced their understandings, behaviours, attitudes to school and their learning. The quality of their

understandings, based on their *perceptual maps* of what was happening, was demonstrated in discussions of the reasons that they believed the changes took place. In none of the schools could students remember being expressly told *why* the restructuring policy was to be enacted, yet each student had a good understanding of why, based on information gathered. Students at each of the case study schools understood that economic concerns, both the saving and spending of money, were a prime motivation for the restructuring.

At Park Hills, students were aware that the cost of running two small schools would be considerable, and so the savings by maintaining only one school, added to money to be made by the sale of land, would be significant for the Education Department. Similarly, at Lighthouse, students were aware of the economic discourses that guided the decision to close their old schools and to build a new one. They also surmised that this school was to be both a 'lighthouse' institution (Hargreaves et al., 1993) and a State education system competitor against the private sector. At Rural, students reported their understanding that the new system was to facilitate learning (whilst also being an economic decision in the first instance) by helping to prepare them for the world of work and secondly, that their co-location on The University campus meant the university's survival in the town of Rural. Students at Rural also gave it as their understanding that the co-location was part of a wider restructuring trend of moving the two education sectors, secondary and tertiary, closer together (Chapman, Sackney, & Aspin, 1999).

As the rest of the present chapter will show, students, certainly at the secondary level have interests and understandings beyond the limitations placed on them by adults, and that even without explicit information, they are able to form an accurate account of what takes place and more importantly, why. They were observant, insightful, and thoughtful, and wanted to be more involved in the educational restructuring that took place in their schools. They were able to take information from around them and form their own representation of what was happening, including some of the underlying economic and social justice discourses. They were in fact *expert witnesses* as suggested by Rudduck and Flutter (2000). Acknowledging that students are capable of making quality *perceptual maps*, and are therefore worth listening to, offers some hope about future possibilities for including students as change agents and active participants in educational restructuring.

Student Participation at the Micro-Level of Policy Processes

It was the expressed intention of the writers of the original *LAEP Framework* policy documents (EDWA, 1997a) that secondary students be included in the process of policy enactment, and their early awareness of the policy intentions shows that they could have been active participants in the policy process. However, during discussions with students, it became clear that students did not believe that they had really participated in the process of change at their school. They believed they were silent and passive witnesses, observing from a distance. Nor did they believe they had had any significant or meaningful influence then or in the ongoing situation at their schools. One student, from Cliff High, involved in the amalgamation with Valley High to form Lighthouse

High, explained that as far as he was aware no student from Cliff had been involved in any way; they had simply been informed of what to expect when the changes took place. Vidovich in exploring the context of policy practices/effects at the micro level as part of her policy framework asks the question: "Who can access the policy and who does access it?" (Vidovich, 2002, p. 13). Perhaps the question here should be rephrased to ask 'who could have had access and who is *given* or *granted* access by the 'gatekeepers'?' Further, 'are they active agents in the policy process?'

The ability of students to influence and to make changes differed across the different contexts of the case study schools. Expressed as a continuum, students' opportunities to make or influence change ranges from total empowerment and access to policy processes (see examples of student as researchers projects in the special edition of *Forum*, 2, 2001) to total constraint, where students are constructed as 'objects of change' (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). In these three case study schools, students at Park Hills, as will be demonstrated, had the most agency, whilst students at Cliff High, before they became part of Lighthouse, had least, in that they were positioned as objects of change. This continuum is illustrated in Figure 9.1. Cliff High (represented here with a dashed line) is the only 'prior' school represented as it stands out as a stark example of how students can be positioned as objects of change. It is also the only school participating in the *LAEP framework* policy enactment that still operates, although in a reduced role (see Appendix F).

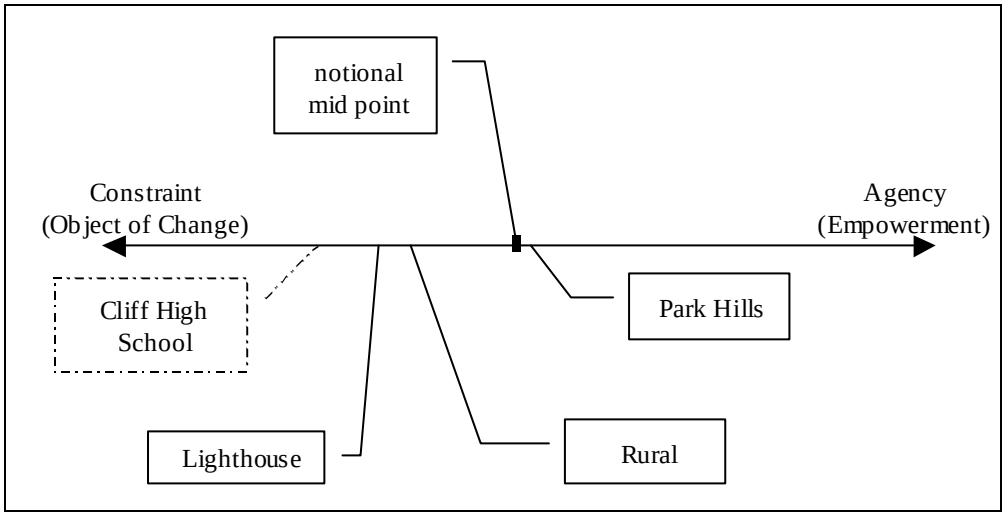

Figure 9.1: Student perceptions of their degree of constraint and agency in the LAEP Framework *policy.*

There are a number of possible explanations for the differential positioning of the schools. The differential positioning could be the result of the context of the schools, the leadership styles of the principals or the culture of the three schools. It appears that those with a higher SES intake (Cliff and Lighthouse), arguably those schools who place greater import on market position, set greater constraints on student action. By contrast the school in the lower SES area (Park Hills) students were given greater opportunity for active participation. It could also be postulated that the different leadership styles of the principals may also have been a contributing factor. The principal of Lighthouse was seen as distant and remote; student respondents did not believe they had access to her. Students at Park Hills were able to talk to the principal and two students sat with him on a committee that was seen to be able to make some changes. However, perhaps the greatest determining factor was the culture of the three schools. The culture of both Rural and Lighthouse was centred on strict academic values; students were encouraged to focus on individual performance, in order to advance the school's image and market position. At Park Hills, the

culture was centred on vocational education and on students from both schools working together to build a 'new' school. Students from Park Hills spoke of the friendliness of the teachers and believed they had an active role in promoting the image of the school. An in-depth exploration of the role of culture in the three case study schools is located later in the chapter in the section on 'Reculturing'.

The discussions with students revealed that although some of their opinions were sought, they had little *real* involvement in the process. Fielding (2001, p.101) suggested that much of what students are allowed to talk about is confined to matters that they consider trivial, such as "lunch breaks, discos and school trips". This proved to be the case at the three schools, as students were granted only the options to discuss their uniform, the name of a school or what the canteen would serve on a particular day. Students believed that they were marginalised in the discussions relating to the enactment process; they viewed these discussions as insignificant, negligible, and not about real decisions. The students wanted to be involved further and believed that they were capable of more.

During discussions, students at the three schools asked why the changes could not have been implemented differently, and gave a number of potentially constructive suggestions. At Lighthouse, students said they would have preferred slower change and they gave a detailed plan for an alternative implementation strategy. At Park Hills, students made suggestions for a different configuration of the final school and for the use of Hills as a temporary school, whilst Park was being refurbished. At Rural, students had suggestions about

fixing the lack of sporting facilities, and about how they could reverse the co-location. They made suggestions for maintaining the two schools on the one site, which would allow for a continuation from Middle School to Senior School, provide an older cohort as role models, and allow senior students to play sport and enjoy the new and upgraded facilities of the old campus. Students in the three case study schools undoubtedly saw themselves as stakeholders in their learning, as some of their comments showed, and were more than capable of participating and having a voice in restructuring dialogues.

A number of students at both Park Hills and at Lighthouse had served on the implementation committees, which were established some time after the policy process had been initiated. At Park Hills there were six students who had served on different implementation committees; at Lighthouse students could remember one student. Those from Park Hills who had served on the various committees did not feel that they had any real influence on the process. For example, the two students who had been on the committee for choosing the name, said they had been happy reporting the findings of surveys of students they had conducted, but they did not feel comfortable interrupting the adults to put forward their own opinions. Levin (2000) observed that giving one student a voice on a committee, whilst typical, was too limited a response. He concluded that students found themselves in a difficult position amongst so many adults as they perceived they had very little power or political knowledge to affect real change. Moreover, as the students from Park Hills observed, they had little input into the selection of names for the survey and the final choice had been made by the Education Department. Student respondents across the three schools had the

perception that the Year 12s had perhaps the greatest opportunities to have some influence in the outcomes of the changes, suggesting that there is a perceived age-related hierarchy of power, and students interviewed saw themselves as being towards the bottom of the "status list" in their school (Levin, 2000).

Overall, students at the micro-level of the *LAEP Framework* policy process did not feel empowered. As is evident in the policy framework of Vidovich (2002) the interlinkages between the micro, meso and macro-levels of the policy process are two-way, that micro-level practices and effects could potentially influence the macro and/or meso texts of the policy. There was little evidence of feedback from students at the micro-level to the meso or macro-level in this policy example. At best it could be described as a shadow; the students believed that their influence in the process was virtually non-existent, and that even where a choice was made, such as the colour of the uniforms at Park, it was ignored and/or changed by the teachers.

Whilst *LAEP Framework* was in essence a top-down policy initiative, students did not always passively accept what was happening to them. Although students believed they were powerless to have any real influence on the changes, that their opinions were either not sought or were ignored, they did offer various forms of resistance during the process. Fullan (1991, p. 4) makes the point that "resisting certain changes may be more progressive than adopting them". On several different occasions, students were more active in their resistance. In one instance, at Lighthouse School, students organised a petition in the hope of retaining a teacher whom they identified as 'the best' from their old school but

who did not gain a position in the competitive merit selection process for teachers at the new school. Students have very clear ideas about those teachers who best influence their learning (Rudduck et al., 1996). This may have been a good time for senior personnel making the staffing decisions to listen to the voice of the students, a proposition for change, which will be highlighted in the final chapter.

At Hills, students resisted by organising a public rally outside of the school grounds against the proposed closure of their school, and although Fielding (2001) makes the observation that students have very little real chance of speaking to those who wield the actual power, in this one school a group of representative students were given the opportunity of talking to a senior official from the Education Department. This case may be a good example of students exerting power to influence a process that they believed marginalised them; students took it upon themselves to act, taking the initiative to resist. However, neither the rally nor the meeting with the Education Department official had the results desired by the students, parents and teachers; the school was closed and students were required to move to the Park Hills campus.

Whilst these are instances of active and overt resistance, at all three schools students also offered covert and passive forms of resistance. These forms of resistance can take the shape of non-participation in school, in their learning and in social activities organised by the school (Finn, 1989; Shor, 1996). Many students from Hills offered a form of covert resistance by refusing to attend the new Park Hills College, preferring instead to take up the option of

crossing school zone boundaries to attend a State high school outside their area of residence, doing so without giving notice to the staff at Park Hills. Year 10 students at Park Hills demonstrated passive resistance in their refusal to participate in school-based activities. At both Lighthouse and Rural, some of the students demonstrated passive resistance by withdrawing from their learning, eventually leading to a withdrawal from school. The concept of withdrawal is explored further in the next subsection 'Alienation of The Year 10s' and in the section 'Changing Teaching and Learning'.

It was not that students were unaware that there were possible avenues for attempting to influence change. Some of the students identified the Student Council as a way of bringing about change, yet, in common with students elsewhere (MacBeath, Myers, & Demetriou, 2001), most of the students did not regard it as a viable means for effecting real change. The students believed that the Student Council was there to fulfil the role of social organiser and perhaps to help other students. It also held the role of channelling students' complaints, a role which Rudduck and Flutter (2000) describe as "an exercise in damage limitation rather than an opportunity for constructive consultation" (p. 83). Perhaps the most significant difference between the three schools was that at Park Hills two student representatives sat on the *School* Council, a different body from the *Student* Council. Whilst the *Student* Council in this school was not seen as having any real power, those students on the *School* Council were aware of the power this Council had in making changes in the school. The difference was attributed to the presence of the principal on this body; when they made a presentation to him and were able to convince him of an issue, they knew that

changes would be made. However, not every student in the school was aware of this body or who the student representatives were.

Students believed their lack of participatory power and status in the school was related to what they perceived their role to be. They knew their role to be that of learner. They did not believe it was their role to make changes or to have input into the changes; that role was reserved for others (see also Corbett & Wilson, 1995). These others included people such as their parents, the broader community, the teachers, the school administration, the Education Department and the Minister for Education. Although, it could be argued that the micro-level of policy may include teachers and parents, students respondents did not see these as equals, often referring to these groups as a collective 'they' or 'them', to indicate a group or person in a position of power to make decisions about their lives and education, placing them in a subordinate position, pushing them to the margins. It was 'they' who defined the students' role as learner, 'they' who were shown the plans of the new school, it was 'they' who made 'real' decisions, and it was 'they' who had the final say in how the policy was enacted. Although the policy featured rhetoric of localised implementation decisions, the processes were undeniably top-down, with limited democratic empowerment to the local level about the policy goals (Karlsen, 2000). As the students were told by teachers at Rural, "it's not a democracy" (student interviews, Rural, 2002).

Alienation of The Year 10s

The following subsection discusses the institution of Middle Schooling as part of the restructuring policy process in each of the three schools, the Year 10s,

and their ongoing alienation from schooling. Part of the restructuring of the three case study schools was the introduction of Middle Schools, mandated in two of the three schools by the Minister for Education. The concept of Middle Schooling was not an official policy of the Department (EDWA, 1997c), nor did it form part of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), although the option to adopt a split junior high/senior high school over two campuses was mooted in one of the examples of a draft plan for restructuring given in the resource file developed as a supplement to the *LAEP Framework* policy. Yet, in two out of three cases the Minister intervened to insist that Middle Schooling be implemented as part of the school restructuring to improve educational outcomes. Arguably, the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* policy, in many instances can be seen as a particular illustration of a neo-liberal emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services (Apple, 2001). For example school closures leading to lower overall operating costs, and streamlining educational delivery over a district removing a possible duplication of services. However, it also provides an excellent example of the ministerialisation of education policy as described by Knight and Lingard (1997). In effect the minister has taken a much more proactive role in setting the policy direction, resulting in tighter political control over a narrower agenda, for although the policy documents listed a number of options for schools to pursue in the enactment processes, in effect the Minister's directive narrows the option to the application of Middle Schooling.

However, the effect on the students had not been entirely felicitous. One of the purposes for encouraging schools to "modify current organisational

structures" as part of the *LAEP Framework* enactment (EDWA, 1997b, p. 22) has been the ongoing issue with adolescent alienation, especially during the transition years when students move from primary to high school (EDWA, 1997a; Hargreaves et al., 1993). Middle Schooling is one strategy used across many parts of the globe to overcome this problem and to increase students' sense of belonging and identity with their schooling, two of the constructs of alienation (Finn, 1989; Seeman, 1975). Yet, across the three schools, students were not happy with the constant changes and the introduction of Middle Schooling, and a majority of the respondents reported a degree of alienation. It must be noted that it was on the issue of Middle Schooling that a gender difference was observed. Whilst the female respondents said they enjoyed the experience of Middle Schooling for the stability and close friendships that ensued, male respondents across the three schools said that the constancy and lack of change made them irritable; they wanted greater opportunity to move about. Other studies in the USA (see for example Clark & Clark, 1994) support the findings that there are gender differences in response to Middle Schooling.

In common with the findings of Hargreaves and his colleagues, students in this study wanted to be treated as high school students, not, as they perceived, as primary school students (Hargreaves et al., 1993). Yet, all student respondents commented about not enjoying having the schools split up. They disliked the discontinuity, the lack of contact with lower school students once they made it to the Senior School and the sense of being lost, in the middle, or as the students at Park Hills commented "Jan's" (after the difficult middle child in the popular television series, *The Brady Bunch*, from the 1970s).

Students at Park Hills and Lighthouse, where the Year 10s were part of the Senior School, made very similar observations in this regard: they were Senior School students in name only. They thought there were increased expectations on them to perform well and behave responsibly, but did not believe they were given the privileges or responsibilities appropriate to being in the Senior School. This led in both schools to an emotional withdrawal of some of the students from the school, a theme picked up again when some students talked about their withdrawal from their learning. Finn (1989) noted that the lack of identification with school in the form of shared values or sense of belonging could clearly cause a student's withdrawal. He discussed this in terms of their participation, or non-participation, in both their coursework and in the school environment outside of their classrooms. Roeser (1998) argued for a view of the school environment that includes the 'undefined spaces' where students move at recess and lunchtimes. He observed that the nature of the context of the school, such as when students feel they do not belong, could adversely affect a student's mental health and influence both their academic and emotional outcomes. This phenomenon becomes more of an issue for students during transitional periods, such as Year 10s moving between Middle and Senior School. It may also be relevant in the issue of the lack of availability of lockers, which students referred to each of the three case study schools. The lack of their own 'space' in the school may have added to the students' lack of identification with the school, lack of belonging and ongoing emotional and educational withdrawal.

The alienation of some students was an unanticipated policy effect. The *LAEP Framework* and its implementation were framed in the discourses of increasing the quality of student learning for *all*. Yet, as Newmann and his fellow researchers (1996) found in their studies of school restructuring, educational institutions, whilst paying a great deal of attention to changes in school organisation, often failed to make a difference to the quality of student learning (see also Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). It is not unknown that students are most under stress during times of transition and that is when they are most likely to have difficulties (Finn, 1989; Roeser, 1998). An observation that teachers made during staff interviews (Lighthouse, 2001) was that reform takes time and that students would have graduated or left by the time the reforms were fully enacted; students were only at a particular school for a short five years and some for less. However, although for these students school is clearly a short phase of their life, for society adolescence is an enduring structural form that does not cease to exist, even though its constituents change constantly (Pollard et al., 2000). Therefore, it may be necessary to reassess the position of the Year 10s in schools where Middle Schooling is implemented, if the problem of student alienation is not simply to be moved from one year to the next. Moreover, the problem of student alienation in schools undergoing restructuring should be addressed; their withdrawal from school, both emotional and academic may have adverse effects on their future life prospects (Delors, 1996). It is to a more in-depth discussion of the students' learning outcomes that the chapter turns next.

Changing Teaching and Learning

One of the outcomes sought by the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment, was improved teaching and better learning outcomes for the students and a greater diversity of education by "having increased access to curriculum and quality facilities" (EDWA, 1997a, overhead 5). It is often touted by policy elites that introducing the 'twins' of devolution and marketisation policies will bring greater diversity and improved quality in education, as for example in the *LAEP Framework* policy, hence the moves for school restructuring as outlined in the previous section. However, as Apple (2001) has pointed out, these policies often have not created a great many variations in the types and styles of education being offered, with most schools choosing a more 'traditional' academic model of education, opting to emulate the most 'successful' schools – those at the top of league tables. It seems that the marketisation of schools has produced greater pressure towards homogeneity. It could also be argued that markets exacerbate social vertical differentiation and hierarchy so that there is differential access to improved student learning outcomes. This section of the present chapter seeks to analyse this suggestion further in the light of the findings from the three case study schools.

Teachers are at the centre of students' learning (Townsend, 2004). This next subsection 'Teachers and Teaching' discusses the common experiences students shared across the three case study schools including areas such as high teacher turnover and increased teacher expectations. At the same time, there were a number of differences between the three schools, as students sought to influence teacher employment and reflected on the lack of educational diversity

that followed the changes. Finally, this section turns to a discussion of the 'Teaching and Learning Outcomes' and how students perceived that the restructuring had affected their learning. Again, there were some similarities and some differences between the three schools; most noticeable was the lack of perceptible difference the overall restructuring had made on students from the original Parks High School.

Teachers and Teaching

Common across all three schools was the high teacher turnover reported by the students during the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment. Students gave examples of how many teachers they had experienced per subject over the course of one year and how schools had to fill in the spaces with relief teachers creating significant discontinuities in the teaching-learning program. At Rural, this was limited to the Middle School; teaching at the Senior School was seen as desirable and so teachers, once appointed there, often opted to stay. Many of the teachers appointed to the Senior Campus were those who were well established in the school prior to the policy enactment; teachers new to the district were appointed to the Middle School. Hargreaves (1994) in *Changing Teachers, Changing Times* explores more fully issues to do with teachers' work and culture such as stress, intensification, and increasing expectations on teachers' improved performances during times of change. Students in this study made a number of comments about what they perceived as the stress teachers suffered, at the three case study schools, as a result of the rapid enactment of the policy. They discussed teachers' complaints about the increased workload, and how much difficulty teachers had coping with the new environment and the behaviour of

various groups of students, who made life tougher for teachers at a time when life in school was already difficult. These comments were often an echo of students' own feelings and the turmoil they were going through, as they dealt with the messiness and complexities of the policy enactment.

Students across the three schools spent a considerable amount of time talking about which teachers they liked the best. At the centre of students' learning are their teachers (Townsend, 2004). In two of the schools, Lighthouse and Park Hills, students tried to have a say, through organised petitions, about which teachers were to be employed at the newly amalgamated schools. At Park Hills students successfully intervened to have a favourite teacher re-instated, but students at Lighthouse were not so successful. At Rural, students were very positive about their teachers and believed that the best teachers had stayed, although only at the Senior Campus. Most of those interviewed believed that the Middle School was blighted with inferior teachers and poor quality teaching. Whilst students at Rural were generally positive about the teachers at the Senior Campus, students at Park Hills and Lighthouse were scathing about the teachers in their schools. They believed that the best teachers had left during the amalgamation and closure process and had been replaced with teachers who were inferior to those they had experienced previously. It was the students' belief that some newly appointed teachers lacked the attributes to teach effectively, and further, they were unfriendly and unhelpful. These students believed they should have had a say about which teachers they would have liked to see retained on staff after the amalgamation. Rudduck and Flutter (2000) make a similar point, that in an age of school improvement it is important to listen to students, what

they say about teaching and teachers and what helps them to learn. They go on to make the point that in an era of marketisation, it is “strange that pupils in school have not been seen as consumers worth consulting” (p. 75). Allowing students to have an input into staffing policies and employment could have long-term positive effects on students’ learning. Certainly in the present situation where the teaching staff were for the most part a known quantity, students would have had a valuable contribution to make.

One of the interesting commonalities across the three schools was the students’ reports of the low aspirations teachers had for some groups of students. Students believed that teachers were more interested in those who showed academic ability, (or in the case of Park Hills, motivation to learn), and that those who were considered academically inferior by their teachers were encouraged to take an alternative pathway of vocational and technical training in another institution or leave school. At Lighthouse, students perceived that peers in the academic extension course and those willing to sign up for a large number of university entrance subjects, were given all the resources, the best teachers, and the greatest encouragement. At Rural, the process of streaming students into academic and non-academic groups began in Year 10. Once students entered the Senior Campus the educational differentiation was continued, as students were initially encouraged to work towards university entrance, but those who failed to keep up the work were encouraged by their teachers to ‘drop’ into alternative subjects or leave.

The effect of this strategy was that rather than promoting diversity, alternatives became devalued, and emphasis placed on 'academic' achievement reinforced traditional constructions of upper secondary schooling. Whilst the encouragement to move to vocational and technical education by their teachers does not conflict with an economic discourse for educational outcomes, it did sometimes conflict with the Lighthouse students' own desires as many had expectations of going to university. At Park Hills, students believed they were all being encouraged to enter vocational education alternatives by their teachers, a number of students wanted to proceed to university, an option they believed was not being made sufficiently available to them. Across the three schools students said they wanted to learn, but some believed that the restructuring as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy process had made a detrimental impact on their education and future life prospects.

Extending Bernstein's theoretical insights on the increasing number of fractions of the middle class (Edwards, 2002) to include the working classes can offer an understanding of how teachers' aspirations for and expectations of students in these schools can have the effect of predetermining students' futures to fulfilling various social and employment hierarchies. Traditional academic schooling still retains its privileging access to higher levels of employment, whilst various vocational streams offered across the three schools provide the main mechanism for constraining those destined for intermediate and lower levels of employment, including trades, service industries and unskilled positions. Moreover, whilst teachers asserted vocational streams as being 'different but equal' it was obvious from students' responses that non-academic

alternatives were devalued and students felt diminished in these courses. The words students used when excluded from the option of entering university by teachers' low aspirations for them, were of 'discouragement' and 'failure'. Bernstein (in Edwards, 2002) spoke of the dehumanising of education as students are 'sorted' in the interests of economic competitiveness and market demand. It might be argued that students, through an increased emphasis on limited vertically differentiated curricula, were variously positioned through their schooling experiences to reproduce the social divisions in society, not to change it or to bring liberation (Apple, 2002).

It was not the intention of the policy that each individual school would necessarily offer greater curricular diversity; diversity might only happen across an education district, or over the system as a whole. The purpose of the *LAEP Framework* was to streamline the delivery of educational services in the interests of economic efficiency and effectiveness *across* an education area. Particularly, there was to be no duplication of subjects where this meant small classes, effectively narrowing the curricular choices in individual schools. Yet the prevailing system in WA of closed enrolment schools and zone boundaries, as well as frequently large distances between schools, is not an encouragement for students to move around within a district to explore alternative curricular options.

At Lighthouse, streamlining subject delivery translated into a stronger though narrower focus on academic subjects. Students said there had not been an increase of subject diversity within the school and they were unaware of what was on offer across the district. Instead, there were fewer options post-

restructuring than previously and students who did not fit the new academic orientation of the school were encouraged to leave. Some of the students at Park Hills believed that there had been increases in the number of vocational subjects offered by the school after the restructuring. However, the greatest benefit of the amalgamation, said most students, had accrued to ex Hills students who, moving from a smaller to a larger school, experienced increased choices. Rural was in the unique situation of being one of only two secondary schools in the town. Students believed there had been an increase in the number of subjects offered by the school, and that these were better resourced. The co-location of the Senior School with The University meant the school was able to focus strongly on the academic curriculum for those who were considered high academic achievers, although there were also a number specialised vocational and educational training courses offered. Students said that those not fitting the two choices of university entrance or the vocational and educational training courses the school offered, were encouraged to leave. Some of these students moved into service and unskilled positions; others were unemployed because other options for education in Rural were limited; the one other secondary school, students said, was too expensive for them to attend, as it was private and fee-paying.

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Perhaps the biggest difference between the three case study schools came in the area of the students' perceptions of their learning outcomes as a result of the restructuring. Students across the three schools spoke of how the educational restructuring as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy had disrupted their learning, but it differed at each site. Students also spoke of the increased

expectations placed on them. Traditionally at high schools in WA, students moving from Year 10 to Year 11 experience an increase in pressure to perform. This was true for students attending Park Hills, who believed the greatest change came still with the traditional move from Year 10 to Year 11, when they believed teachers expected them to work harder and complete more work. These students also believed that, other than the initial disruption that occurred during the building construction, there was little change for them. Most did not believe they were learning better; they did not believe that the restructuring had changed their attitudes or changed how they viewed school. This was in sharp contrast to those students in academic streams attending Rural and Lighthouse.

At Rural, students believed that the push to work more and be able to work more independently came as a result of the increased academic focus of the new Senior Campus since restructuring. Although quite a number of students believed they were doing better, students also reported that a number of their peers had already left, or had as a result of mounting pressures 'dropped' to alternative courses. The strongest disruption for students at Rural was during the inaugural Year 10 when they felt themselves to be the 'guinea pigs' of the new system. There were different expectations of them as senior students of the new Middle School, a trialling of new rules, and a lack of academic excellence as all the better teachers, in their estimation, had disappeared to the new Senior Campus. There was further disruption in the consequent move to Year 11 at the new Senior Campus, which was also associated with increased stress and a new emphasis on academic success.

However, the strongest sense of disruption came from the students at Lighthouse. The pressure for improved academic performance started for these students in Year 10, the first year they were part of the Senior School. At Lighthouse, some students spoke about not learning, their grades dropping and their withdrawal from their coursework. They talked about dropping out of school, and student respondents reported high attrition rates amongst their cohort. Students reported no longer wishing to take part in school. However, how students see themselves, their participation, their values, cease to be important in the new configuration of schools and their organisational structure (Ball, 2003b). As Ball (2003b) explains, in a neo-liberal paradigm it is outcomes and results that are important, "we choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organisational performance" (Ball, 2003b, p.223). It is up to the individual to moderate his or her own risk and to take responsibility for his or her educational performance (Tikly, 2003). This appeared to be the case at Lighthouse, where students believed that the school was no longer there for them, they were there for the school: it was their improved performances that counted in creating the image of the school.

Conversely for students it is their participation, feelings of identification with school and sense of belonging, of being valued as people, which most influence their educational outcomes (Finn, 1989; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986), yet these values are in sharp contradiction to the discourses of neo-liberalism. By focusing on outputs, such as students' test scores and school league tables, students are reduced to a commodity, and "violence is done to the concreteness of that individual's humanness and particularity" (De Lissovoy & McLaren,

2003, p. 133). Students and their learning environment present a complex set of human relations, yet they are reduced to the technology of performativity (Ball, 2003b). In the new discourses, individual students must take responsibility for their own learning, moderating their own risk. They are no longer supported in their education, and become subject to a "mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change" (Ball, 2003b, p. 216). The new technology of education reinforces students as 'objects', a view perceived by the students at Park Hills, more so amongst the students at Rural, but most strongly perceived by the students at Lighthouse.

To begin to understand why the educational outcomes are so sharply differentiated between the three schools it is necessary to understand the culture of the three schools and the reculturing which occurred, especially at Rural and Lighthouse, as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy. It is to educational reculturing that the discussion turns next.

Reculturing

To create sustainable educational change, reformers talk of the need for deeper, second-order changes in the structures and cultures of schools, rather than superficial first-order changes (Cuban, 1990; Fullan & Miles, 1992). Changes to educational restructuring have been discussed earlier in this chapter. The following section focuses on the disruption of schooling cultures, which occurred at both Rural and Lighthouse, in response to the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment. One of the ways the schools sought to disrupt the cultures was

to bring closure to the existing structures and build new histories, new ceremonies, new ways of 'doing things' (Finnan & Levin, 2000). Another important feature in changing cultures was to establish a "shared language" of change (Finnan & Levin, 2000, p. 93). Embedded in the reculturing idioms chosen were the discourses the schools employed in their reculturing process, which foreshadowed the way the *LAEP Framework* policy played out in the local context.

At Park Hills, the idiom was 'the amalgamation'. Both Hills and Parks would close and a 'new' amalgamated school was to eventuate, although on the Parks site. New buildings were constructed and existing buildings substantially refurbished. The result was, however, that most students did not believe that Park Hills was a 'new' school, particularly because a large number of the staff from Parks stayed on and the anticipated large influx of teachers and students from Hills did not eventuate. The only element that changed, according to the majority of the student respondents, was the name. The school did not attempt a reculturing, but sought to fit the new students into the existing culture, even though the discourse was one of amalgamation, a coming together of two schools to form one 'new' whole. There was, for the students at Park Hills (especially those from Park) a sense of continuance. If anything, they believed the school had been improved through the rebuilding program, which they saw to their advantage, and so they were happy to be there. There was, for them, no sense of disruption to their history, and no loss of identity. For students from Hills, there was a significant difference as they lost their school, and it was a school they had been proud to attend. However, they did not believe that Park Hills had changed

substantially from when it had been Parks. Students spoke of a shared history between Park High and Hills High, even though it was one of fighting. The ex Hills students interviewed, who moved across to Park Hills, said they enjoyed the improved atmosphere and buildings. Most of the anger these ex Hills students expressed was concerning the loss of their school and the nature of its closure.

It was very different for students at Lighthouse and Rural. Students at Lighthouse had to undergo the loss of their original schools, the loss of their identity within those schools, and their sense of history. The original schools that formed Lighthouse and then closed (Valley and Seaside Highs) had strong histories and identities within the community. Sarason (1982) in *The culture of the school and the problem of change* (2nd edition) makes the observation that:

> Students lose through increased breaks in their education, loss of contact with local teachers, spending time on commuting, and getting fewer opportunities to participate in the control of their schools. The community loses through being denied the facilities of an active school, which could serve as an educational and cultural centre (Sarason, 1982, p. 129).

The anger over the loss of their schools was strong for respondents in this study; however, it was compounded by the nature of the second order changes, the changes to the culture.

The idiom of change for Valley, Seaside and Cliff Schools was 'the merger'; it was the discourse of business, and the new culture of the new Lighthouse School, which emerged from these three separate schools, strongly represented the prevailing market ideology for schools. The three pre-existing schools had had strong cultures. Students spoke of the community feeling of their old school; the freedom, as signified by the lack of uniform; and the relaxed

warm atmosphere they had experienced. This contrasts sharply with Lighthouse, which students perceived as sterile, tense, lacking in character, with no sense of community feeling or welcome. For students 'the merger' and all that they disliked about it was epitomised by the canteen. At their previous schools, parents and other members of the community had run the canteen. It had been, according to students, friendly and welcoming. The new canteen had been sold to a business and was run in accordance with business principles. It was seen as both inefficient and expensive, there only to make profits, which students believed would go to the school.

However, the biggest change had come because new teachers were pushing a new academic agenda on the students. Apple has argued that marketisation policies have shifted the emphasis from student needs to student performance and from "what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school" (Apple, 2001, p. 71). Similarly, Ball has claimed that when education is reconstructed as a consumption good in the market system "children and their 'performances' are traded and exchanged as commodities" (Ball, 1994, p. 51). Lighthouse School was intended as a 'super school'; in essence, a lighthouse educational institution (Hargreaves et al., 1993) reaching "new and dizzy heights of excellence" (McWilliam, Hatcher, & Meadmore, 1999, p. 9) in competition with the wealthy established private schools' market in the area. It was to become an 'excellent school' where students took on difficult academic subjects, mastered their content, scored well on tests and entered university (Townsend, 2004).

At Lighthouse, the competitive market played a further serious role in the reculturing processes, seeking student homogeneity. Students perceived that they were no longer given the freedom to be individuals, but instead were required to wear uniform and to conform to strict rules of behaviour, such as those found in a private school. Further more, students said that teachers adopted a didactic style of teaching, emphasised by worksheets, homework and tests. In the competitive market climate there has been a redefinition of the role of students, who no longer attended simply to 'get an education' or to become good citizens. Their role now included projecting an academic image, for show. Students believed that they were to add to the image of the school by performing well, to enhance the school's performance in published league tables and further the reputation of the school. Those perceived as not fitting the school's new image were encouraged to leave, a form of academic 'cleansing' (Slee, 1997). Hence, by creating a new image and culture as an academic school equal to the private academic schools in the area, the traditional forms of education were reinforced as the new market concept was introduced (Whitty et al., 1998).

Similarly at Rural, there was a complete break with the traditional culture of the school. The idiom of the change was 'the co-location', signifying both its location on The University campus and subsequent change to the culture. The discourses surrounding the change flagged a required change in attitude for students, no longer to consider themselves as just school students but as young adults attending a university campus. The purpose was to bring continuity for students moving to higher education. It was an encouragement to consider ongoing education – high school was just one step in a lifetime of education.

The increasing emphasis on the globalisation of the economy has strengthened the argument that a lifelong approach to learning should be adopted to increase the mobility and flexibility of workers (Chapman et al., 1999). The lifelong learning lobby has called for a new philosophy of education and training which "promotes a multiple and coherent set of links, pathways and articulations between schooling, work, further education and other agencies offering opportunities for learning across the lifespan" (Chapman et al., 1999, p.9). It was the philosophy adopted at Rural as it co-located onto The University campus and began to promote both adult learning and academic excellence.

Some students said they enjoyed the new adult learning atmosphere and felt ownership especially of their Hub, built as a centre for their learning and identity. However, others believed that the emphasis on adulthood was too early; they preferred some distance between high school and university, and did not enjoy the close connections between the two. There were also problems between the school and The University in how the co-location worked out in practice. Some of the students found it intimidating, but they did believe it would be worked out as the university and the high school 'got used to each other'. Finally, students described the large attrition rates of their peers, sometimes estimated by those remaining as almost half of their cohort, those who failed to be as committed, who either left to get jobs, or who just left. Those who remained regarded 'the dropouts' as casualties of the reculturing process.

It would at first appear that the re-culturing of Rural was successful, as it focussed on increasing students' sense of belonging and identity, two of the

constructs necessary to increase students' participation, ownership and increased academic success (Finn, 1989). However, the high attrition rate suggests that the reculturing was only partly successful. Edwards' suggestion (Edwards, 2002, following Bernstein) that lack of cultural capital is a contributing factor in student failure may be applicable to this phenomenon at Rural. Rural, situated some 600 kilometres from the State capital, and almost 400 kilometres from the next State high school, draws its students from a broad spectrum of social classes. There was at the time of the study only one other secondary school, a Catholic school, in the town although another private school was opened in 2003, the year after the study was conducted at Rural. The outcome was that most students in the town attended Rural. Whilst client demand indicated a need to provide a broad based education catering for social diversity, the new culture at Rural promoted graduation success, and focussed on going to university. The reculturing further privileged students who already had the cultural capital to succeed: the ability to work independently, be self-motivated, and with a preference to continue on to further education. Others, not fitting the new image, were encouraged to leave (some prior to attending the Senior Campus), to take on apprenticeships, service or unskilled positions, leave town, or according to the student respondents, go on unemployment benefits. Streaming of students for academic ability started at the beginning of Year 10, the year prior to students' attendance at the Senior Campus. Student respondents negatively viewed the emphasis on graduation success; while possibly supporting a wider range of students to achieve more highly it simply excluded those who could not achieve.

Image

Image was one of the dominant concerns as part of the reculturing at both Lighthouse and Rural, but to a lesser extent at Park Hills. In the new education market, impressions are important, as they are what sell a school (McWilliam et al., 1999). The strongest focus on image was at Lighthouse, where as part of the re-culturing of the school, a great emphasis was placed on how the media portrayed the school. There was considerable publicity in local and State media about the cost of the new school – $23 million was considered to be a significant sum for a government school. The new school began to be referred to as a 'Super School' (referring to both its larger size and its image), which would showcase 'educational excellence' in the government sector. The best teachers from across the State were appointed on a formal merit-based selection process. Lighthouse School was to be the 'elite' of the government sector in competition with the high concentration of private schools[9] in the area.

Evidence from students interviewed at Lighthouse suggested that the school had been successful in portraying a 'private school' image and a view that it was economically wasteful to attend a private school when there was an 'excellent' public sector alternative. From the students' perspectives, the buildings, the artwork, even the types of students that they understood to be acceptable in the school, all appeared to conform to a private school image. The building materials were limestone, giving Lighthouse School at the same time a new and 'ancient' appearance. The students were encouraged to wear uniform

[9] As mentioned in Chapter Two, the term private denotes non-system schools, partly funded by State and Federal governments but mostly by parents as well as other groups such as the church, hence the word 'private'. State system schools, or 'public' schools are fully government funded.

and their academic successes were highlighted in the media through school-generated articles. Image was at all times foregrounded.

At Rural and Park Hills, because the schools continued their histories, the focus was not on creating a new image, but on changing existing images previously associated with the schools. At Rural, it also took the form of highlighting academic excellence through school-generated media releases to the newspaper, a powerful projector of image in the town. Students believed that the constant emphasis on academic success and one hundred per cent graduation for students of the school was part of the promotion of the image of the school, which had previously been known more for its failures than for its successes. At Park Hills, although there was less emphasis on image than at either of the two other schools, students still were aware of an increased media coverage especially when the school had been successful in State-wide competitions for band and drama performances. Students believed that the change of name to include the word 'college', the change to stricter uniform guidelines, the new buildings and the winning performances, all helped to promote a new image of the school.

One interesting difference between the three schools is that at Park Hills students believed it was part of their *active* role to promote the image of the school. They believed that as *they* moved out and about in the community, participating in community events, their behaviour in the community reflected on the image of the school. They took pleasure in the fact that the school was doing better and took pride in the achievements. As a result, they disliked anything that

they saw as damaging the image of the school, such as lack of discipline, bad behaviour of students in the community and erection of the perimeter fence. Students had a vested interest in the school and wanted to have increased participation.

In contrast at both Rural and Lighthouse, it was seen by respondents as the active role of the principal to promote the image of the school. As Apple and Beane (1999) noted, in a marketised education culture it was usually the principal's role to be the agent 'selling' the school to an external audience, in a role redefined from educational administrator to one of chief executive officer in charge of promoting the 'company'. At both Rural and Lighthouse, respondents noted that the principal led guided tours to promote the school, he or she was responsible for dealing with the media, and the students seldom saw him or her. The students had a very different role; their job was to perform well academically. Student respondents at both Lighthouse and Rural believed that the focus on image was unnecessary and excessive. They found the media hype intimidating, said it was 'not worth it' and did not believe it concerned them. They also believed that the focus on image was a further disruption to their work and that in the end learning was more important.

A Cross Case Summary: Students and the LAEP

The educational changes explored in the research were enacted as the result of the *LAEP Framework*, a policy of the Western Australian government introduced into the State schooling system late in 1997. This chapter has presented a cross case analysis of students' perceptions across the three case

study sites and related findings to the literature. The chapter started by comparing and contrasting the contexts of the three schools. There were considerable commonalities across the three schools, yet also significant differences. It should not be underestimated how much the differences in financial resources affected and determined the educational outcomes and restructured product, a point also made by Edwards (2002). The contexts were important for framing the perceptions and responses of the students in this study. Therefore, there should be no attempt to generalise the findings from the three case studies to other schools responding to the *LAEP Framework* policy or other schools undergoing restructuring in other systems. However, the case studies constituted heuristic devices or 'good tools for thinking with' (Uhrmacher, 1993) and they generated some insights into potential student responses to educational change elsewhere.

The *LAEP Framework* policy featured the globally dominant rhetoric of devolution, of community consultation and localised implementation decisions. Yet, it is important to realise the role the Minister for Education played in the policy processes. Although not part of the formal policy document, it was at the insistence of the Minister that Middle Schooling was introduced in two of the three schools. At all three schools the Minister made it clear that there were no 'soft options' and in each situation, the final decision for the restructured school option lay with the Minister. The *LAEP Framework* policy enactment presents an excellent example of Knight and Lingard's (1997) description of the continuing ministerialisation of education policy. The outcome of ministerialisation has been the assertion of ministerial prerogatives, as seen in the

inclusion of Middle Schooling as part of the *LAEP Framework* enactment. The strategy used by the Minister for the policy enactment was what Chin and Benne (1985) described as *power-coercive*, from the powerful, though legitimate authority, to the compliance of those less powerful. The change was instigated centrally, not locally, as the *LAEP Framework* led people to believe. The policy enactment represents devolution for economic rationality (see Karlsen, 2000) rather than genuine localised empowerment. Vidovich's (2002) policy cycle suggests that the interlinkages between the micro, meso and macro-levels of the policy can potentially go two ways. However, in this policy example the movement through the cycle was predominantly from top to bottom, as the Minister asserted his power to see the policy enacted according to his agenda.

The *LAEP Framework* policy featured the conflicting discourses evident in much of the Education Departments' policies (see Chapter Two), of social justice and economic rationalism. Policy as *discourse* (Bowe et al., 1992) played a powerful role in the enactment of the *LAEP Framework*. The discussions and media releases surrounding the enactment of the policy featured predominantly social justice discourses. The purpose of the policy was to provide an "enhanced access" and "improve curriculum choice", to "meet changing needs" and "respond to student needs" (EDWA, 1997b, p. 22). The policy was to be implemented with community consultation, "using local knowledge to best meet the needs of local students" (EDWA, 1997a, Notes Overhead 2). However, the policy also showed global influences of marketisation, the restructuring of education in the interests of economic efficiency and effectiveness, and competition with the private sector (EDWA, 1997a). Students were very cynical

about the conflicting values between the overt language of social justice and a better education for *all*, and the economic agenda, which they perceived to be the more powerful driving force.

During the process of interviews in this study students showed that they had the ability to deal with abstract concepts related to the change agendas, even when not explicitly discussed or verbalised. In discussions about giving students voice, an assumption is made frequently by parents, teachers and others, that students are incapable of dealing with abstract topics and that they lack the understanding and experience to participate in decision making. However, this study has shown that students, certainly at the secondary level, are capable of creating quality *perceptual maps* and could be included in a more active manner in policy enactment. This will be elaborated in detail in the next chapter.

What students, particularly those interviewed from Rural and Lighthouse, did not like in the restructuring that took place was the emphasis on reculturing and image. Students believed schooling and school change should be all about learning; they believed that all the other agendas were a waste of their time and energy. Students across the three schools shared a disruption to the culture of their schools, and the greatest sense of cultural and historical discontinuity was at Lighthouse. Student respondents believed the reculturing negatively affected their learning outcomes. They were particularly scathing of the need for schools to sell their image and the role the principal played in that. Students had very different ideas about the role of the principal in a school. Students also knew what they wanted from their teachers. They showed an awareness of some of the

underlying agendas, the balance between academic and vocational education and how it influenced their options. They knew, echoing the findings by Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996), what made a good teacher and wanted to have an input into choosing who would be employed. Therefore, when considering school restructuring and positive educational outcomes, historical and cultural continuity should be fostered, and it should be possible to include students in staffing decisions.

Educational restructuring, such as occurred as a result of the *LAEP Framework* policy, is often about redefining the roles of the various actors involved in the changes. Role redefinition included administrators, teachers, parents, the community and students. However, the students in this study believed they did not have a significant role to play in the changes. The level of agency students enjoyed depended on which school they attended and the outcomes sought by that school. Fullan (1992) believed that what should drive educational change is the commitment to student learning at the 'grass roots'. However, policy has become a powerful top-down interjectory of educational change. Moreover, whilst policy could be about a commitment to student learning, as the cross case analysis has shown, the neo-liberal discourses that frame contemporary policies are powerful definers of the shape the educational changes are taking in recent times. Fullan's framework (see Figure 3.3, Chapter Three) focussed on the teacher and assigned students to the role of learner. Whilst Fullan envisages students as engaged in their learning, he does not consider them as active participants in the spaces beyond the classroom. Fullan appears to place them literally outside both classroom and school improvement.

Students at the three case study schools believed they were equally excluded. Yet, Freire (1970) believed that education should be programs of vital dialogue from start to finish, learners and educators working together as partners. To ignore the possibilities of including students in decision-making about change and including them as partners in the change process is to constrain students, relegating them to a powerless position as 'objects' of change (Fullan, 1992). It must be possible to empower students as *partners* in educational restructuring and therefore challenge existing theory about educational change.

The *LAEP Framework* for educational restructuring in WA schools reflects 'global' policy trends of devolution and marketisation, although there are important context-specific differences in the ways that such policies play out in particular localised settings. Despite systemic policy discourses of empowerment to local educational sites, students were rarely heard in the ensuing processes of educational change. However, this research has demonstrated that, in their own ways, students were deeply impacted by the change process. The final chapter that follows will revisit the research questions that guided the study, before moving on to an elaboration of the theoretical propositions drawn from the empirical findings in the present chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

Concluding Comments: Where To From Here?

The previous chapter presented a cross-case analysis of students' perceptions of educational change as it occurred in three case study schools, following the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* policy. The analysis highlighted that the policy reflected globally popular policy trends, such as devolution, marketisation and ministerialisation. A more critical reading of the *LAEP Framework* enactment has also drawn attention to the neo-liberal influences in the discourses and rhetoric surrounding the policy. The chapter concluded by suggesting that a number of propositions might be developed from the findings. The present chapter seeks to elaborate these propositions. However, first the research questions are revisited and reconsidered in the light of the findings presented in the thesis. At the end of this final chapter of the thesis some implications will be discussed, for theory, for educational change and policy practice, and for future research.

The Research Questions

The aim of this research was to explore students' perceptions of educational change. The research started with a number of questions to guide the search for understanding what students thought about educational change. The following discussion seeks to summarise the thesis by way of answering these questions. The questions were:

- What were students' perceptions of educational change as it happened to them in each case study school?
- Did students believe that the changes made any difference to their school experiences and outcomes?
- Did students believe that they influenced the process of educational change in the school?
- In whose interests did students perceive changes were made to the school?

A succinct summary form of answers to these questions is presented in the ensuing pages.

RQ 1: What were students' perceptions of educational change as it is happened to them in each case study school?

Student respondents in all three case study schools were very forthcoming about the restructuring processes in their schools, from initial conceptualisation through the ongoing enactment of the *LAEP Framework* policy. Specifically they focussed on the messiness, complexity and ad hoc nature of school change; they were aware of the stressful and time consuming nature of change; and, that change involved a transition period before reaching a more settled state. Students were in fact 'expert witnesses' (Rudduck and Flutter, 2000) aware of both overt and covert agendas of change as it happened to them in their schools. The responses and understandings shared by students during the study have led to the development of a proposition (from Research Question 1) that students have the abilities to make quality *perceptual maps* and are capable of informed and active contributions to policy enactment and restructuring processes, a proposition which will be elaborated later in the present chapter.

RQ 2: Did students believe that the changes made any difference to their school experiences and outcomes?

The responses from the three case study schools differed according to their contexts for this research question. Student respondents at Park Hills did not believe that either their learning or their behaviour was affected other than during the initial rebuilding phase. Changes that affected them most were those associated with the introduction of Middle Schooling, where a gender difference was noted. Females enjoyed the Middle School structure more and found it beneficial to their learning. However, males said they enjoyed the freedom, and learned more, in a traditional high school structure, especially as they matured. Students at Rural believed that the changes had made a difference for some of them. Rural students who enjoyed the new adult learning culture were of the opinion they were working better, but many were aware of the costs to a large group of students who had left the school. Student respondents at Lighthouse believed that the changes had adversely affected the learning, behaviour and attitude to school for some of the cohort. Student respondent spoke of their lack of engagement, a lack of belonging and their withdrawal both from their schoolwork and the school environment.

When comparing the outcomes across the three schools, students at Park Hills had the least change in outcomes, either positive or negative. They had the greatest sense of historical continuity with their school, which positively affected their sense of identification with school. Students at Rural also shared a sense of continuity (not as strongly as at Park Hills), even though they had a disruption to

their culture. Students were either positively and negatively affected, depending on how well they identified with the new agenda set for the school. Students who were positively affected were those who were seen by the teachers as high academic achievers. It could be argued that the success of some of the students at Rural and not others may be a reflection of the cultural capital (Edwards, 2002) already possessed by those students affected positively, and how much they depended on that for their successful integration into the new system. Students at Lighthouse, who had the greatest perception of cultural disruption and historical discontinuity, were the most alienated, had a more limited sense of identification with their new school and had the most negative outcomes.

The analysis presented here and in the previous chapter suggests that for a positive outcome to be effected, schools that restructure must work on their students' sense of identity and belonging with the school. A further proposition is suggested from Research Question 2, that when embarking on educational restructuring, students' educational outcomes are positively affected by fostering historical continuity and incorporating into the new structure aspects of the school's culture with which students identify most strongly, a proposition explored further in the present chapter.

RQ 3: Did students believe that they influenced the process of educational change in the school?

Student respondents in all three case study schools wanted to have a voice and to participate actively in the changes and were particularly scathing of what they perceived to be a lack of significant influence in the *LAEP Framework*

policy enactment. The policy documentation listed them along with their parents and the community as the 'customers' of the *LAEP Framework* enactment process, to be involved and consulted. Students saw themselves as primary stakeholders in their education. However, restructuring in the case study schools was seldom about changes of power. The themes emerging from the research at the three case study schools point to the importance of empowering students in educational change, yet the market ideologies evident had the effect of dehumanising students, delegitimising students as young members of society (McNeil, 2000), which is not in the interests of any students. As students become reconstructed as both customers and a commodity to be traded between schools, arguably they are disempowered as active democratic participants (Apple & Beane, 1999). The approaches to educational change, especially at Lighthouse, and to a lesser degree at Rural and Park Hills, reflect a form of 'paternalistic authoritarianism' (Elliott, 2000) where students are expected to defer to adults.

If educational change is to be successful in promoting learning for *all* students, then students must be allowed, and encouraged, to take an active part in the process, instead of being relegated to a powerless position as 'objects' of change. It may be time to recognise that students also have a role in schools, not to remain as a silent majority, given no voice, mute, and excluded from participating in the transformation of their own education. The only valid way to move from silence to participation, and liberation, is to engage in dialogue (Freire, 1970). Dialogue cannot be forced, but should be as the result of committed involvement, learners and educators working together as partners. Otherwise it degenerates into pseudo dialogue, a farce and little more than

‘paternalistic manipulation’ (Crotty, 1998). Students in the three case study schools showed a desire to influence significantly the restructuring processes. A proposition to arise from Research Question 3 is that students be empowered as *partners* in educational restructuring, thereby challenging existing theory about educational change.

RQ 4: In whose interests did students perceive changes were made to the school?

Student respondents at each of the three case study schools were aware of the social justice and economic rationalism discourses of the *LAEP Framework* policy, but gave it as their understanding that the primary motivations for the restructuring of their schools were economic concerns. The social justice discourses surrounding the policy touted the restructuring of education in the interest of students, to facilitate the learning of *all* students, a problematic assumption that should be carefully analysed to expose *what* it is that students learn. As the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* in the three case study schools clearly showed, *what* was learned was divided according to a predetermined notion of a social hierarchy of students, where ‘abler’ students were encouraged to work towards university entrance and ‘higher’ occupational destinations and where conversely, students identified as ‘less able’ were encouraged to consider service, unskilled or trade occupations. Although the language of the various educational streams was about being ‘equal but different’, the perception of students was that this was not the case – they recognised that they were all competing on the same ‘ladder’ for social positioning.

It appeared, particularly when comparing Lighthouse with Park Hills, that for these two schools academic achievement was paralleled with class structure as different forms of 'knowledge' were distributed to diverse social groups. It seemed that students were channelled into differentiated programs, which seemed to correlate with different social positionings. Lighthouse, a school in a high socio-economic suburb was created to be an academic institution, whilst Park Hills, situated in a low socio-economic area, was constructed as a vocational education institute. The perceptible differences in the resourcing of the two schools could be interpreted as exacerbating this differentiation, having far reaching consequences for determining what educational options and resulting career paths were open to students. The greatest resources went to Lighthouse to foster an example of excellence in the State education system, in competition with the elite private sector where a large proportion of school graduates enter university. The least resources were allocated to Park Hills for more 'vocational' programs.

Rural, in a unique contextual situation, catered for both academic and vocational students. In a rural area it catered for a mix of social classes and had generally suffered from lower university entrance rates than schools situated in the State capital. Some of the student respondents at Rural were aware that part of the underlying push for improved image and increased graduation were in part to improve university entrance rates, in competition with the private school in the town and with other schools, both State and private, in the State capital. The findings from Research Question 4 raise a number of questions that are discussed further in the present chapter.

Theoretical Propositions

The analysis presented in the chapters of this thesis of the perceptions of students about educational change has raised a number of theoretical propositions. These were:

1. Students at secondary school level are capable of informed, active contributions to policy enactment in restructuring processes;
2. Policy enactment and implementation theory is not inconsistent with the development of partnerships with all stakeholders, including students;
3. In school restructuring historical and cultural continuity effects positive educational outcomes; and finally,
4. During school restructuring, students are capable of participating, in an informed and responsible way, in staffing decisions.

These propositions are suggested as a way to disrupt existing practices and challenge existing theory about policy and educational change. They are elaborated below.

Proposition One:

The first proposition states that students at secondary school level are capable of informed, active contributions to policy enactment in restructuring processes. The present study has shown that students at the secondary level were capable of creating quality *perceptual maps*, leading to informed understandings of the policy processes and discourses. The concept of *perceptual mapping* was suggested in the thesis, as a way of thinking about students' abilities to think

about change and their subsequent capabilities for participating in change. Armstrong (1988), in his exploration of perceptions, suggested the concept of a 'map'. However, he found the term limited, as he understood a map to be a physical object, for giving directions. Yet, the analogy is a useful one when 'map' is conceptualised not as a physical object, but as a virtual reality artefact, such as a virtual reality map taken from computer games, or from science fantasy. A virtual reality map, such as can be found in computer games can include three dimensional objects, invisible obstacles, take elaborate paths, jump levels, and make seemingly unconnected leaps from one 'place' to another. In science fantasy, the virtual map also includes emotional triggers, and allows the viewer to smell, taste, and feel. At no time is the 'map' static, but may evolve as a result of the interaction between player and game.

Students' *perceptual maps* are drawn from information, rich and profuse, collected from their senses, their contexts, and their experiences and affect their understanding, behaviours and attitudes. Freire (1970) believed that as people became conscious of their perceptions that they were able to participate in the transformation of their circumstances. The present study showed that students at the secondary level were conscious of, and had developed, quality *perceptual maps*. One of the stated explanations for excluding students' voices from educational change is the presumption that students lack the ability and the experience to deal with abstract concepts and participate in responsible decision-making. Therefore, conceivably where it can be shown that students are capable of developing quality *perceptual maps*, such as was the case in the present study, it could be anticipated that they are capable of informed, active contributions to

policy enactment in restructuring processes. To exclude them could be to ignore vital insights for lasting change. *How* students could be included as partners in change is explored next.

Proposition Two:

The second proposition states that policy enactment and implementation theory is consistent with the development of partnerships with all stakeholders, including students. It is a proposition that arises out of the first proposition and challenges existing practices of exclusion. Current schooling practices frame students as objects, a commodity which can be traded in the educational marketplace. The *LAEP Framework* policy and its enactment, although framed in the discourses of devolution, continued the practice of regarding students as human capital and excluding them as partners in restructuring processes. Yet as the present study has shown, students were willing to and capable of participating in dialogues of change. Moreover, as suggested by proposition one, students have vital insights to offer. The policy trajectory suggests that the interlinkages between the macro, meso and micro-levels can be potentially two-way. Yet, in the present study, the interlinkages moving downward from the macro-level dominated. The micro-level feedback to the macro-level in the present policy example could at best be described as a shadow.

Yet, there is tremendous potential using the policy cycle theory for students to interrupt centralised policy-generated change and for student involvement as stakeholders. The application of the theory, in contrast to the practice, suggests that it would be possible for students themselves at the micro-

level to initiate change. One possibility is to include students on committees. However, as the present study has shown, including a single student on a committee does not necessarily mean that that person will be emboldened to speak. Therefore, one option is to include more than one student or even a group of students, for as proposition one has stated, they are capable of making informed contributions. A more dynamic possibility is empowering Student Councils to have real influence. Empowering students councils will mean changing school practices to include democratic principles. Schools, teachers, administrators and others must see students as stakeholders in their education and partner with them in educational restructuring.

Proposition Three:

When considering school restructuring, historical and cultural continuity should be fostered to effect positive educational outcomes. While recognising that not all aspects of an existing history or culture may be positive, retaining and maintaining those aspects that are, or those aspects highly valued by the school community, could be integrated with democratic decision making to produce a common purpose for change. Fullan's (1992) framework for school improvement places students at the outside rather than including them in the change process. However, taking into account the findings of the present study and other work on student educational engagement and belonging, the framework (see Chapter Three) might be adapted to look more as follows:

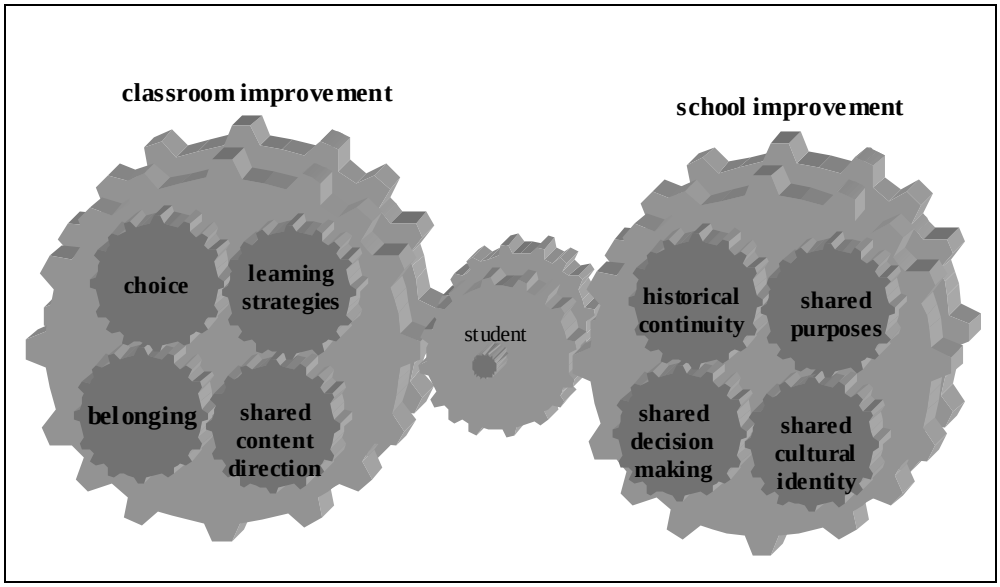

Figure 10.1: Adaptation of Fullan's (1992) framework showing student and teacher partnerships in school improvement.

Students become partners in the school, working together with teachers for students' improved educational outcomes. Therefore, in the diagram another series of cogs is added. In the centre, an additional cog equal to that of the teacher represents the students as co-workers, moving in tandem with the teacher, connected through a central axis. Then, on one side of the 'student as co-worker' cog, are four sub-cogs titled learning strategies, belonging, shared content directions, and choice. These four cogs work together alongside the teacher's four cogs, and lead to improved classroom practice. On the other side, there are four more sub-cogs titled shared decision-making, shared purposes, shared cultural identity, and historical continuity. These four areas are most often missing from school improvement dialogues. Yet it is these four cogs, working together with the teacher's four cogs that will contribute to an organic form of school improvement. The emphasis in the framework is on the collaboration of teacher and students in *both* classroom and school improvement, as the two are inextricably linked. Students and teachers must share common

goals and work as partners both inside and outside the classroom to achieve better educational outcomes for students. Improved educational outcomes are one driving force for change; the other is as Fullan described, leadership and mobilisation, which can come from a variety of sources, including governments and other stakeholders.

Proposition Four:

The fourth proposition states that during school restructuring, students are capable of participating in an informed and responsible way in staffing decisions. The fourth proposition arises from both the previous propositions and from the student responses during the case studies. In the first instance, in proposition one, students have been established as informed and responsible stakeholders. The present study showed that students have the capacity to make informed judgements and believe they can make these about teachers and teaching. Other studies have established that the quality of educational outcomes is linked to quality teaching (Flutter, Kershner, & Rudduck, 1998; MacBeath et al., 2001; Newmann & Associates, 1996). If one of the driving forces for educational change is improving students' educational outcomes, and students have been established as being able to make informed judgements, then it follows that, during school restructuring, students have the capacity to make informed judgments about quality teaching and teachers. The proposition, that students are capable of participating in an informed and responsible way in staffing decisions, is a difficult proposition and will require a significant disruption in how teachers and administrators view students. It will, in many instances, require making changes to industrial contracts. It is a proposition that will need further research.

However, the aim is that in the end students will be truly empowered as stakeholders in their education.

Implications of the Study

There are a number of implications that can be drawn from the present research for policy, practice and theory, and for further research. The policy cycle is one approach that can be utilised for conceptualising student inclusion in policy enactment. In-built into the framework as conceptualised by Vidovich (2002) is the possibility that students play a more active role. The implication for practice is that the inclusion of students as partners and stakeholders must move beyond mere rhetoric, to become actuality. At the macro-level of policy there must be a development of a more realistic conception of student inclusion in policy development and enactment. The voices of students must not be bracketed; their inclusion can be negotiated in a number of arenas, including staffing, school change, curriculum development and others. At the micro-level, there are possibilities for students to initiate and disrupt policy development and enactment.

A new construct, *perceptual mapping*, was proposed as a way of conceptualising students' abilities to think about change and their subsequent capabilities for participating in change. The *perceptual maps*, a concept developed from Armstrong's work (1988), were likened to a virtual reality map, such as found in computer games and science fantasy. This proved a useful of way of exploring students' perceptions of change, and drawing a dynamic picture of change as students perceived it happened to them at their schools. The

advantage of using *perceptual mapping* as a concept is the capacity to include emotions and feelings, two powerful driving forces in understanding students' mental health, their sense of belonging and their subsequent attitudes and behaviours.

The present study adopted an hybrid theoretical framework, combining critical theory with a postmodern policy cycle approach. Whilst further development and exploration of hybridity may be needed, for the present study it was found that the two theoretical approaches gave different insights into the exploration of students and educational change to be highlighted. Critical theory gave 'bigger picture' understandings of the policy enactment, including issues of class and power, and helped to explain the relationship between students, educational change and the state, whilst a postmodern policy cycle approach gave insights into the messiness and complexity of policy enactment at the micro-level. A disadvantage of using an hybrid approach could be that the two approaches may possibly be theoretically contradictory; however, the present study found that the two approaches were complementary adding valuable depth to the analysis of the *LAEP Framework* policy enactment and greater understandings of students in educational change. The study also found that the pluralistic stance of postmodernism, in raising the multiple voices of the students at the micro-level, was consistent with a critical theory aspiration to make public an increasing number of voices.

A number of questions raised during the present study require further research. In the first instance, a critical reading of the *LAEP Framework* policy

and its enactment highlighted the possibility that students appeared to be differentially educated according to a presumption of social class. To examine this further more detailed analysis of the dynamics of social class and associated cultural capital would need to be undertaken within and between particular schools, but that is beyond the scope of this study. However, this may bear further exploration in the light of the findings of the present study as there are serious implications for empowering students to make genuine educational and career choices. The state, in addressing educational needs, must provide equality of educational opportunity for all students. At present there is a major disjunction between policy and rhetoric of inclusion and the realities of exclusion for many students.

Finally, the present study also highlighted a problem with the implementation of Middle Schooling and the Year 10s. The introduction of Middle Schooling as part of the *LAEP Framework* implementation at the three case study schools was aimed at helping students enjoy a greater sense of belonging. Some of the findings of the present study seem to suggest that this has indeed been the case, although perhaps more successfully in Park Hills, than in either Rural or Lighthouse, and more effectively for girls than for boys. However, a concern raised in these findings, is the problem of 'middling' or 'creating Jans' with the Year Tens. It may be necessary to reassess the positioning of the Year 10s in schools where Middle Schooling is implemented, if the problem of student alienation is not simply to be moved from one year to the next. It may also be worthy of further investigation, as governments work to

increase the school leaving age of students (for example in WA the strong ministerial push to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 17).

Locating the Research in the Education System

When studying policy enactment, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the basic tensions faced by the state, which drive and inform policies (see Ball, 1994). The present study is located in the bigger picture of systems level government funded education, the Western Australian State education system. Centrally funded and managed systems face a number of conflicting responsibilities and contradictions in the provision of education, tensions and dilemmas, which have historically been part of Education Department policies, tensions:

> Between utility and culture, between control and autonomy, between homogeneity and plurality, between efficiency and equality, between education as a moral and cultural expressive endeavour and education as an instrumental and technological endeavour, between economic demands and preparation for democratic traditions, and between education as investment and education as a civilizing and a cultural activity (Aasen, 2003, p. 125).

These need to be taken into account when considering the findings of the present research. In the first place the state has both an economic responsibility for the provision of and access to the best quality education for all students, whilst also promoting their effective participation in the community. There is an apparent desire by the state to promote devolution of responsibility as close to the site of the delivery and consumption of education as possible, governance processes that ought to include all stakeholders, business, the community, parents, and so on. The state also has a responsibility to ensure that the education system does produce productive future citizens that will contribute

economically, have a capacity to adapt to change, and have the ability and willingness to contribute to future governance. Finally, the state has a responsibility as an employer to provide employment within a changing educational environment for teachers. Governments are accountable to its citizens for these responsibilities, and must manage them in an economically efficient manner, whilst maintaining social order, authority and stability (Ball, 1994). However, as Hatcher and Troyna (1994), argued economic concerns not only present a set of contexts, they also shape the political, the social, the cultural and the ideological. It would appear, from the present study, that the state has used the *LAEP Framework* policy to reinforce the post welfare state hegemonic settlement, yet, one where capitalist interests continue to be prioritised over those of working people. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study suggest that the interests of *all* can be met in a new settlement, moving further towards the completion of the 'unfinished project' of modernity (Morrow & Torres, 2002), based on a dialogical encounter and mutual recognition.

The propositions put forward in the present thesis should not be considered problematic or conflicting, but instead can contribute to a dialogical encounter, meeting more comprehensively the interests of the state, capital and education in the interests of *all* students. Students must be recognised as stakeholders in their education. They must be seen as being capable, contributing citizens, willing and able to participate in decision making, leading to better educational outcomes. The matter is one of access and choice, the students' choice. It is when students are disempowered, or refused a voice, not given a choice that they fail to participate fully in society. If governments can

provide equitable access to a quality education for *all* students, allowing them the democratic choice of education as well as a democratic voice in their education, then as this study has shown, students are willing to become contributing citizens, with a learned capacity and willingness to have a say in future governance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission Letters

The following pages show a copy of the consent letters sent out to parents and students. (School names have been deleted to protect anonymity)

1. Parent consent letter
2. Parent consent form
3. Student consent letter
4. Student consent form

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Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to request permission for your child to participate in a study being undertaken at (*name of school)* by myself, a doctoral student from the Graduate School of Education, The University of Western Australia and in conjunction with (*name of school)*.

As you know (*name of school)* was established as the result of some major structural, organizational and educational changes in the local education district. The proposed study seeks to develop further understandings of how all students view change in schools, what they perceive to be the effects of change, to gain an insight into how students attitudes and behaviours affect change, and to explore what contributions students might make to educational changes happening in their schools.

The study will involve your child, as part of a group of six, in one or two, forty-five minute interview sessions, spread over the remainder of this year, in which questions will be asked regarding the changes which are currently going on at the school, how your child sees these changes, and whether they think these changes have been of benefit to them or not. The interviews sessions will be taped, with your and your child's permission, and only the researcher will have access to the tapes. I would like to let you know that your child will be given the option of being involved in the study, that there is no question of right or wrong answers, it is their opinions which are sought, and that this does not form any part of your child's assessment at the school. No information relating to any individuals will be supplied to any authorities, to the school, or to anyone else. No names will be used in any reports written about the study.

If you are willing to allow your son/daughter to take part, please complete the forms attached and have your child fill out the student consent form and return it in the envelope provided to the school. If you would rather your son/daughter did not take part, you are free to decline, and your child will not be included. Should your child decide to withdraw from the study, they may do so at any time without prejudice.

The Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Western Australia requires that all participants are informed that, if they have any complaint regarding the manner, in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively to the Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Registrar's Office, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6907 (telephone number 9380-3703). All study participants will be provided with a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for their personal records.

If you have any questions that you would like to raise with me about the study, I will be pleased to answer them. You can contact me on my mobile on 0404 078912 or at the email address given below. Or you can ring Dr. Lesley Vidovich, or Dr. Marnie O'Neill, my supervisors for this research, on 9380 2397. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Karin Buma	Dr. Lesley Vidovich	Dr. Marnie O'Neill
Doctoral Student	Lecturer	Acting Dean
hankarin@student.ecel.uwa.edu.au	GSE	GSE

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PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I give permission for my child.....to participate in the research project conducted by Karin Buma.

I have read the letter explaining the purpose of the project and I understand that my child's participation will involve a number of forty-five minute interview sessions, and in a group of six, and that the interview sessions will be taped.

I understand that I am free to decline, and that my child him/herself is free to decline to participate. Furthermore, my child may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

I understand that I can call Karin Buma on 0404 078912, Dr. Lesley Vidovich or Dr. Marnie O'Neill, on 9380 2397 and request additional information about the study.

I understand that no names will be used at anytime, in any result or publications arising from the study and that all information collected will be treated in strict confidence.

I give permission for Karin Buma to use and publish the information and conclusion generated from this study if she feels the field of education would benefit from the results.

Signed.....

Date.....

Contact phone number.....

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Dear Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a study of school change, which I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at the Graduate School of Education, at the University of Western Australia. As you know (*name of school)*was established as the result of quite a number of organizational changes in the local education area in the last year, and I am interested to find out what you are thinking about the changes, and if you think they have changed your attitude to school, or that you have benefited from the changes in any way. I want to try to understand how students feel and think about school change and use the information you give me to see if there is some way that students could help contribute to school change, or if changes to school could be made more effectively. Schools are changing a lot and we want to make sure that they change for the best. Your answers could provide a clue as to how we can make schools better for all students.

I am asking for your permission to conduct one or two interview sessions with you, in a group of six of your peers, over the remainder of this year, which will be taped and transcribed so that I can get as much information from it as possible. You can be confident that your contribution will be entirely confidential and you will not be identified by name on the tape or in any reports or publications that are written as a result of this study. You will be able to withdraw from this study at any time.

If you wish to take part in the study, you will need to sign the attached Consent Form and return it in the envelope together with your parents consent form to your mentor teacher to pass on to me, or you can leave it at the senior school administration office. Then I will contact you and arrange an interview session with you and five others of about 45 minutes, which will take place during one of your class times. If you want to ask any other questions you can ring me on my mobile on 0404 078912 or email me at the email address below. Or you can ring Dr. Lesley Vidovich or Dr. Marnie O'Neill, my supervisors for this research, on 9380 2397.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms Buma	Dr. L. Vidovich	Dr. M. O'Neill
hankarin@student.ecel.uwa.edu.au	GSE	GSE

Please complete and return the slip over the page to indicate your willingness to participate.

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CONSENT FORM
STUDY: SCHOOL CHANGE

I, ... have read the description of the research study and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to be involved in the study, realizing that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by Ms Buma unless required to so by law.

I understand that I can call Ms Buma on 0404 078912, Dr. L. Vidovich or Dr. M. O'Neill, on 9380 2397 and request additional information about the study.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not used.

_____

Signed

_____

Name

_____

Date

_____

Mentor group

The Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Western Australia requires that all participants are informed that, if they have any complaint regarding the manner, in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or, alternatively to the Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Registrar's Office, University of Western Australia, Nedlands, WA 6907 (telephone number 9380-3703). All study participants will be provided with a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for their personal records.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Background:

- Primary School? Which school were you intended to go to? What did you think about that - if you can remember? What were your expectations of going to that school?

Amalgamation:

- When did you first become aware that there were discussions under way to consider an amalgamation and closure of the schools? What were your views at this time?
- Were you ever asked your opinion about the school? What about the changes - were you ever asked about the changes which you've seen happening? Do you think any students were involved in making the decisions about changing the school? How were students involved?
- Did things change for you as a student? What are some of the differences that you have noticed since the amalgamation? Can you describe them?
- Why do **you** think the amalgamation happened? Did anyone from the school ever tell you **why** the schools were to be amalgamated? Who told you and what reasons where you given?
- Has the amalgamation affected your attitude to school? Do you feel comfortable with the changes that have been made? Are there changes that you particularly like or dislike? Do you think that the school's changes have made a difference about what you like and dislike? Why?
- Has the amalgamation changed your expectations of what school is? How?
- Has the amalgamation affected the way you do your school work? In class? At home? Has it helped you become a better/worse student? How? Do you think you are doing better in school this year? Why? Why not?
- What else would you like to see change at school? Why?
- What is the role of the student in this school?
- Has this changed since the beginning of this year? How? Why do you think this has changed?
- What do you see as the priorities of this school?

Appendix C: Table Presenting Overview of the Case Study Schools

The following page gives a table presenting overview of the case study schools, showing schools selected, amalgamations, senior/middle school divisions, year of change and year cohort selected for interview participation.

Case Study Site	Type of school	Nature of the changes	Change year	Year Cohorts targeted for interview participation	Others interviewed	Other evidence
• Park Hills College	• Inner city suburb • Lower SES • CLP funding • SHS Class 6	• Amalgamation ~ Park SHS ~ Hills SHS • Middle School/Senior School ~ 8,9/10,11,12 • Substantial rebuilding of school on one site	• 2000	• 1997 Cohort ~ Students on Working Parties only • 1998 Cohort • 1999 Cohort	• Teachers • Administrators • Pastoral staff	• Documents of the amalgamation • School historical documents • Absentee/suspension and exclusion data
• Lighthouse SHS	• Suburban • High SES • SHS Class 6	• Amalgamation ~ Valley SHS ~ Seaside SHS ~ Cliff SHS 10-12s • Middle School/Senior School ~ 8,9/10,11,12 • New campus on new site	• 2001	• 1999 Cohort	• Teachers • Administrators • Pastoral staff	• Documents relating to the amalgamation • School survey data
• Rural SHS	• Rural • SHS Class 6	• Amalgamation ~ Rural SHS ~ Mining 11-12s • Split Sites • Middle School/Senior School ~ 8,9,10/11,12 • Co-location with University for 11-12s • Substantial rebuilding of school	• 2001	• 1999 Cohort	• Teachers • Administration • Year Co-ordinator	• School Documents such as newsletters and annual school report • Newspapers

Appendix D: Sets of Codes

The following pages give the three sets of codes used to analyse the data:

1. Set 1 – codes identified from the literature
2. Set 2 – codes generated from the research questions
3. Set 3 – codes arising from the students' responses

Set 1 – Codes Identified From the Literature

Culture	School
Culture	MS
Emotions	Positive
Emotions	Negative
Emotions	St protest
Environment	Changes
Environment	School
Environment	MS
Environment	Physical attributes
Environment	SS
Restructure	Changes
Restructure	Decision
Restructure	Discussions
Restructure	School
Restructure	MS
Restructure	Parent opinion
Restructure	SS
Restructure	St decisions
Restructure	St involvement
Restructure	St opinion
Restructure	St role
Restructure	Why
Teaching and learning	Changes
Teaching and learning	Discipline
Teaching and learning	Priorities
Teaching and learning	School work
Teaching and learning	MS
Teaching and learning	SS
Teaching and learning	Teachers
Teaching and learning	Teaching

<u>Set 2</u> – Codes Generated From the Research Questions

Culture	Priority of school
Emotions	Changes over time
Emotions	Initial
Restructure	Attitude
Restructure	Attitude changes
Restructure	Behaviour
Restructure	Behaviour Changes
Restructure	Closing
Restructure	Date
Restructure	Further changes
Restructure	Likes
Restructure	Opening
Restructure	School choice
Restructure	St change
Restructure	St choice
Restructure	St Expectation
Restructure	View school
Restructure	Whose interest
Restructure	Worked?
Teaching and learning	Attitude
Teaching and learning	Attitude changes
Teaching and learning	Behaviour
Teaching and learning	Classes
Teaching and learning	Effect of changes
Teaching and learning	Expectations
Teaching and learning	Homework
Teaching and learning	Neg Effect
Teaching and learning	Pos Effect
Teaching and learning	Subject choice
Teaching and learning	Tch expect

<u>Set 3</u> – Codes Arising From the Students' Responses

Culture	Art
Culture	Bullying/Fighting
Culture	Comparing schools
Culture	Future
Culture	Lockers
Culture	Other activities
Culture	St council
Culture	St Groups
Culture	Uniform
Culture	Year 10
Emotional	Neutral
Emotional	St concerns - fighting
Environment	Building
Environment	Future
Environment	Library
Environment	Uni
Image	Academic/sport
Image	Behaviour
Image	Changed
Image	Community
Image	Expt. St
Image	Important
Image	Money
Image	Ms
Image	Neg
Image	New school
Image	Prior
Image	Priority
Image	Private school
Image	Role Dep.
Image	Role Pr
Image	SS
Image	Students
Image	Uniform
Image	Visitors
Image	Whose interest
Restructure	Admin
Restructure	Canteen
Restructure	Co-location
Restructure	Future
Restructure	Lockers
Restructure	Meeting – parents
Restructure	Meetings – student
Restructure	Money
Restructure	Name
Restructure	New school

Restructure	Prepared
Restructure	Role pr
Restructure	Senior block
Restructure	Size
Restructure	Split school
Restructure	St council
Restructure	The Merger
Restructure	Uni
Restructure	Year 10 changes
Teaching and Learning	Change of Teachers
Teaching and learning	Class size
Teaching and learning	Drop out
Teaching and learning	Sport
Teaching and learning	Streaming
Teaching and learning	TEE/general
Teaching and learning	Uni
Teaching and learning	Year 10
Teaching and learning	Year 10/11
They	Dept
They	School
They	State

Appendix E: Case Ordered Meta Matrix

The following page portrays an excerpt of the case ordered meta matrix used to carry out the cross-case analysis. The table is organised using two variables: chronological order of events and major themes identified during the data coding.

Case Ordered Meta Matrix (excerpt): Summary of Restructuring Changes at Three Case Study Schools.

Park Hills		**Lighthouse**		**Rural**	
The Beginning		**The beginning**		**The beginning**	
Students aware early	98/99	Students aware early	Half in year seven (98)	Students aware early	1999
Slow change	Half 1999		Half in year eight (99)		Parents
	Half 2000		Newsletters		Siblings
Not many from Hills			Principal		General knowledge around the town
Discussed with parents			Parents/friends/siblings	Mining students	Not told specifically
		Private schools	Competition with private sector		Older students
		Choose schools	ATP (Valley)	Meeting	For parents
			New friends		
New School		**New school**		**The decision**	
Not 'new' school, changes only in:	Name	New school	New environment	Made locally	Principal
	Uniform		New teachers		Local council
	New Buildings		New culture		Staff
Not happy with name			New students		Parents
				Government	
				The University	Money
				Cynicism	Too good
					In the future
					Temporary move
Changes		**Changes**		**Changes**	
Physical changes	Rebuilding	Admin changes	Constantly changing rules	Shared facility with University	Most significant change
New name			Timetable changes		Building of the Hub
Uniform		Canteen	Private enterprise	Adult learning environment	More professional
Increased resources		Bigger school			Daunting

Appendix F: Chart Showing Amalgamations of the Three Schools

Diagram showing how the three schools were amalgamated and their original schools.