

**AN ANALYSIS OF CURRICULUM POLICY
FOR UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA FROM 1983 TO 2000.**

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DECLARATION

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

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study in this thesis was to conduct a longitudinal analysis of curriculum policy for upper secondary school History in Western Australia (WA) from 1983 to 2000. During this period three significant changes were made to the History curriculum for students in Years 11 and 12, in 1982-3, from 1985 to 1990 and in 1996-97. These changes evolved from a number of influences. Also, they impacted on, and were reflected in, relevant History curriculum documents, and had a considerable impact on the teaching and learning of the subject.

For the purpose of the research, policy was conceptualised as a trajectory, with each phase having three principal contexts: the context of influence, the context of policy text production, and the context of practice (Ball, 1993, 1994a; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992). Analysis of the context of influence focuses on the antecedents and pressures leading to the gestation of policy. These include: the various social, economic, political and educational factors driving the policy; the influences of pressure groups and broader social movements; and the historical background to the policy, including previous developments and initiatives. The context of policy text production is concerned with the generation of the policy texts and includes an analysis of the policy documents themselves. Analysis of the context of practice involves investigating the interpretation and enactment of the policy by those responsible for carrying it out, and by those for whom it is intended.

Qualitative methods have been used for data collection and analysis. The primary sources of data collection were a range of relevant documents, supported by semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Analysis was based on the methods of data reduction, data displays and drawing conclusions.

The findings of the study reveal the complexities of the policy process. In particular, they reveal the struggles by different interest groups to bring their understandings and views of the nature of History teaching to bear on upper school curricula. Within each of the three phases of change different interest groups were able to dominate the contest to impose their versions of the nature of History, and how it should be taught and assessed. The changing nature of History in the post-compulsory years of schooling in WA in the last two decades of the twentieth century is explained by the changing influence of a range of forces, which emerged from

different levels and impacted on the subject, in the context of a constantly shifting policy environment.

The findings are brought together in a meta-analysis which identifies four major trends in the History curriculum policy process in WA. These trends are 'curriculum as worthwhile knowledge', 'curriculum policy as a form of control, and its impact upon teacher professionalism', 'the role of the state in the policy process', and 'public policy perspectives on the curriculum'. The meta-analysis concludes with an assessment of Looney's (2002) argument that Ball's model of policy analysis as adapted for use in this study provides a satisfactory unitary theory of curriculum in a 'post-Tyler' age.

The findings of the research provide implications for future education policy processes, particularly in the light of proposed curricular changes to upper school subjects in WA, to be mandated in 2007. There are also potential implications for curriculum and for policy, in theory and in practice in contexts beyond the Australian state of WA.

Style

The style and format adopted in the production of this thesis is that employed by the American Psychological Association as recommended in their *Publication Manual* (APA, 2001).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEC	Australian Education Council
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools in WA
ALP	Australian Labor Party (Federal branch and State branch)
ASAT	Australian Scholastic Aptitude Test
BSE	Board of Secondary Education
CCWA	Curriculum Council of Western Australia (replaced SEA after 1997)
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
EDWA	Education Department of WA
HAWA	History Association of WA (later became the HTAWA)
HJSC	History Joint Syllabus Committee (1975 – 1992)
HSC	History Syllabus Committee (after 1992)
HTAWA	History Teachers Association of WA
JSC	Joint Syllabus Committee (one for each TAE / TEE subject)
MOVEET	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Training
NSW	New South Wales
OBE	Outcomes-based education
PEB	Public Examinations Board (based in UWA 1913 – 1974)
SC	Syllabus Committees of the SEA (Replaced JSCs after 1992)
SEA	Secondary Education Authority of Western Australia
TAE	Tertiary Admissions Examinations (1974 – 1985)
TAEC	Tertiary Admissions Examination Committee
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examinations (After 1986)
TISC	Tertiary Institutions Service Centre
USA	United States of America
UWA	The University of Western Australia
WA	Western Australia

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