DECENTRALISATION OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

A Case Study of Curriculum Reform in Shanghai and Victorian Schools (1985 - 1995)
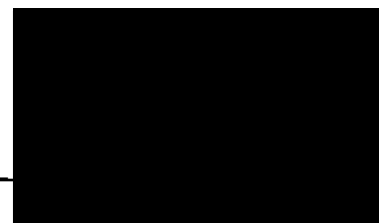
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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the project.

Signed: ▮

The research for this thesis received the approval of the Monash University Standing Committee for Ethical Research on Humans (Group Approval Reference: 96/468)

Note: In this thesis, Chinese names (except author of the thesis) have been presented using the formal Chinese system in which the family name precedes the given names.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development that occurred in Shanghai and Victorian schools from 1985 to 1995. It aims to ascertain the similarities and differences of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two systems.

In the thesis, a theoretical framework was developed from a range of studies to analyse the relationship between the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. An historical perspective was taken to analyse the political, social and economic factors that influenced the formulation of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools in the periods 1985 - 1995. Educational policies were reviewed based on their effectiveness in meeting the national goals of decentralisation of educational management and the desired objectives of curriculum development. Ethnographic methodology was utilised to collect first-hand data on particular schools' and teachers' perceptions and views about the changes in the policies of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victoria. A comparative study was employed to ascertain the similarities and differences of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two systems and in several Shanghai and Victorian schools.

The research showed that a centralisation of curriculum development took place simultaneously with a decentralisation of educational management in both systems. In China, a centralised system of education was formulated at the beginning of the 20th century and the New Chinese government in 1949 strengthened this trend for the purpose of Communist ideological control. Educational management and curriculum development were basically centralised prior to the 1980s excep‘ for the upheaval in the years during the Cultural Revolution. The adoption of a "reform and open" policy in 1979 and the promulgation of the *Decision of the Reform of the Educational Structure* in 1985 became milestone of Chinese education in its progression from

total centralisation to partial decentralisation. Under these circumstances, the central Chinese government tentatively devolved the decision-making of curriculum development to the City of Shanghai. In 1988, the Shanghai educational authority inaugurated curriculum and textbook reform. However, with the curriculum and textbook reform project, the Shanghai educational authority centralised curriculum development in Shanghai schools.

In Australia, education became a matter for each state at Federation. However, since the 1960s, the Commonwealth government's intervention in Australian education has increased. In particular, the Commonwealth government became more interested during the 1980s and 1990s in developing a national curriculum program and initiating debate on a national curriculum for Australian schools. In Victoria, the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993 devolved staffing and budgeting to schools. But, the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1995, to some extent, centralised curriculum development in Victorian schools. Victorian schools were faced with the onerous task of implementing the centralised curriculum programs within the prescribed guidelines. In short, this research concludes that curriculum development in both Shanghai and Victoria remains centralised rather than decentralised. Curriculum autonomy did not reach Shanghai and Victorian schools during the period under study.

This comparative study contributes to the emerging body of literature that has provided accounts of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. It presents a range of perspectives on decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools in the belief that comparing different knowledge and experiences will be helpful in reaching a better understanding of the different systems. The thesis provides basic data that could be useful for further study in the same field.

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[1] He who even teaches you a day should be respected as father in all your life.

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Abbreviation

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACSSO	Australian Council of State School Organisation
AEC	Australian Education Council
APEID	Asian Program for Educational Innovation and Development
ASCC	Asian Studies Co-ordinating Committee
ASEP	Australian Science Education Project
CC	Curriculum Corporation
CCTMRI	China Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CERI	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation
CSC	Commonwealth Schools Commission
CSF	Curriculum and Standards Framework
CTA	Commonwealth Teachers' Association
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
ECNU	East China Normal University
KLA	Key Learning Area
LOTE	Language other than English
NCET	National Curriculum on English Teaching
NCSST	National Committee for Social Science Teaching
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEP	People's Education Press
SOSE	Studies of Society and the Environment
VUSEB	Victorian Universities and Schools Examinations Board
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development that took place in the period from 1985 to 1995 in Shanghai schools in China and in Victorian schools in Australia, during which period both countries underwent a radical social, political and economic transformation. It is an exploration of the nature of the decentralisation of educational management that was implemented, and the ways in which it shaped and impacted on school education. The particular focus of the thesis is to investigate the decentralisation that related to the realisation of the goals of national curriculum development. By employing historical, comparative and ethnographic methodologies, data were collected, analysed and compared in order to analyse the current status of curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and in Victorian schools in Australia.

1.1 Decentralisation of Educational Management and Curriculum Development

Curriculum development at secondary school level, as a part of the decentralisation of responsibility for governance in education, has probably been the most significant feature of educational changes in both China and Australia since the 1980s. There have been many controversies about who should control education and the school curriculum (Caldwell & Spinks 1988; Caldwell 1993; Cohen 1982; Lauglo & McLean 1985; Martin et al 1994; Sturman 1989; Townsend 1996: 38; Whitty 1998; Wu 1994; Xie 1995). These debates concentrated on issues of decentralisation of educational administration and curriculum development.

The decentralisation process in education was described as educational restructuring, and involved theoretical and practical changes of long-standing stereotypes in the existing system. These educational changes have usually been radical, involving, from time to time, the issue of curriculum development in schools. In the patterns of

transformation, the transfer of authority regarding who should control education has moved from one extreme to the other or from the centre to the periphery like the perpetual motion of a pendulum. The most accurate representation of centralisation and decentralisation in education was described by Chapman (1991: 6) who contended that "some countries with a tradition of decentralised arrangements seem to have moved towards more centralised control over functions; in other countries where there has been the tradition of a more centralised approach the opposite seems to be the case."

Centralised systems of education in China and Australia have their social roots in long-entrenched centralist political systems. These systems are the products of bureaucratic politics which could be argued to be the opposite of educational democratisation. The centralist system of educational governance was based upon the assumption that centralised control was necessary for efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunity and uniformity of provision in education (Lyons 1985: 87).

The decentralisation of management in public sector governance, which arose from democratic movements against the bureaucratic red tape typical of centralised control, became fashionable in the late 1970s. The idea of devolution in educational management was widely accepted in the Australian community by then, while, in China, it was still under discussion with the limited intention of decentralisation from the central government down to the level of provincial or provincial-city bureaucracy, but it rarely reached schools.

Debates on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development have been widespread in many countries in past decades. Of those engaged in the discourse, dialogues, debates and controversies, bureaucrats have claimed that schools have recently enjoyed sufficient freedom in decision-making to deal with daily routines at the school site, while school principals and teachers continue to complain that, as the educational practitioners at the frontier of education, they are treated as little more than the executors of centralised programs.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, educational researchers (Brown 1990; Bullock & Thomas 1997; Lauglo 1995; Lauglo & McLean 1985; Lyons 1985; Rizvi 1994; Seddon 1994; Watt 1989; Weiler 1990; Zbar 1996) have expressed increasing interest in studies of the nature of decentralisation. These studies shared common interests in exploring what decentralisation was, how decentralisation processes in education were formulated, and in what areas the decentralisation affected schooling. Other scholars, like Sturman (1989), have concentrated on the decentralisation of curriculum decision-making in Australian schools. Studies of the nature of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development generally focus on issues associated with the social, economic, political and ideological changes that have been influenced by the exchange of information within the international community.

Chinese scholars have shown an appreciation for different educational systems and expressed criticism of their own systems, whether centralised or decentralised (Wang 1992; Wu 1994; Xie 1995; Zhao 1991). These studies have concentrated on the formulation of decentralisation of education in different systems and strategies of achieving the desirable goals. However, variations in perceptions and misunderstandings of status of the different systems in China and Australia are common in research on this matter.

The central focus of this thesis is the exploration of the similarities and differences in two distinctive systems of education regarding the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. It is in the hope of the author that the study will generate useful knowledge in the understanding of different systems and help explain the experiences and outcomes of different practices of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in two different educational systems. In addition, the thesis will also report innovative research that examines systematic changes that have taken place in curriculum development and how these changes affected the actual programs in schools.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Individual researchers and research groups have undertaken studies of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in China and Australia. Cohen (Cohen 1982) conducted a project on the curriculum decision-making in Australian schools. Marsh and Prideaux (1993) studied the curriculum responses to changes in the management of education in Australia since the 1970s and the 1980s. Lu (1994: 3) commented on the formulation of the curriculum statements and standards in Chinese schools and outlined principles of curriculum decision making in China. Cleverley (1981: 157) observed the educational changes in Chinese education in the 1970s and 1980s. Zhong (1996: 2) commented on the overall policy of curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai in the 1990s. Martin et al (1994) and a group of scholars studied the processes of decentralisation of educational management in each state in Australia. Sturman (1989) outlined the process of decentralisation of curriculum development in different states in Australia. Numerous research projects have also focused on the policies of decentralisation of education adopted by specific countries and international systems (Bierlein 1997; Bishop 1994; Caldwell 1996; Gamage 1992; Karlsen 2000; Walker 1973). However, these studies have concentrated on the developed nations like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and there have been few published accounts of research on the decentralisation of educational administration and curriculum development in China.

In my opinion, the lack of studies of developing countries like China has been mainly on account of the traditional view that there are ideological differences between China and the West. This study concentrates on the decentralisation of governance in education, particularly on the concomitant curriculum changes in secondary education, in Shanghai schools in China and in Victorian schools in Australia. This thesis aims to partially fill the void created by the scarcity of research in the Asia-Pacific region, in which both the Chinese and Australian governments are grappling with the issue of improving school efficiency by restructuring curriculum

development, and through policies of decentralisation or recentralisation of the responsibilities in educational administration.

This study would have been impossible as recently as fifteen years ago when China had a highly centralised educational system. In Australia, curriculum requirements have been set out as guidelines to allow schools to vary their preferred content and approach, while curriculum in the whole of China was centralised for the four decades following the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Ostensibly, there were no obvious bases for comparing the two systems as there was nothing similar between them. However, in China, a cautious attempt has taken place to decentralise responsibility for educational management in the provincial and regional systems since 1985. This initiative of decentralisation of education has resulted from the social, political and economic changes in the nation.

This thesis is committed to exploring the nature, process and current status of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in two systems: Shanghai in China and Victoria in Australia. Specifically, the research emphasis is on the decentralisation and centralisation of curriculum development that have taken place in the context of devolution of educational management for the purposes of achieving national goals of education.

Despite their different political, economic, cultural and ideological backgrounds, both China and Australia have undergone significant social changes in general, and in schooling and curriculum in particular, in the last few decades. With established national standards or goals, both China and Australia maintain and allow local autonomy and initiatives. There seems to be some convergence or similarity in their responses to national economic development. The two countries share similar concerns about the adaptation of their curriculum to economic development as well as about their roles in fostering social orders including social unity, social equity and social justice (Angus 1986). The curriculum reforms, however, have been taking different directions in the two countries: partial decentralisation in China; and growing centralisation, to some extent, in Australia. In China, there have obviously been moves away from the high degree of centralisation in decision-making towards

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curriculum autonomy, with increasing local responsibilities for financing, staff recruitment and school programs, to achieve the prescribed goals. In Australia, on the other hand, according to Karmel (1998:15):

> the management of teaching and the curricula has, to a degree, switched from professional to political guidance, whether political is written with a small p or a large P. The political heads of education ministries are now much more involved in determining the content and style of what goes on within the systems and institutions than they used to be.

The changes identified by Karmel might be attributable to the emphases or preferences of the Australian decision-makers and various interest groups' concerns, as there was a common concern about efficiency that related to economic growth, and similar concerns about civil rights and social equality.

This thesis also offers a comparative assessment of the similarities and differences in the policies of decentralisation of educational responsibility in both countries in order to identify the extent to which the changes of education policies are consistent with national realities. I also review the social, political and economic contexts in which the policies of decentralisation of educational management have taken place in two systems in order to provide a better understanding of the present implications and trends of curriculum development. The research is also expected to contribute useful data for the further study of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development by scholars as well as practitioners engaged in policy-making.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This thesis, as already stated, primarily explores the curriculum changes that have taken place as a result of the restructure of responsibility for decision-making in education, particularly changes in curriculum development in secondary schooling in the Chinese and Australian systems.

Secondary education is a bridging phase between primary and tertiary education and employment, providing preparation for future professional training in the university sector and potential employment in the labour market. It has been divided into public and private sectors in Chinese and Australian systems and plays a vital role in the

lives of most young Chinese and Australians in their societies. The research, on which the thesis is based, concentrates on changes in secondary schooling caused by the implementation of restructured curriculum programs.

There has been constant fluidity in the terminology describing secondary schooling ever since the beginning of the 20th century (Campbell et al 1999). This phase has been described as "higher" or "high", "continuation", "superior", "middle-class", "grammar", "advanced" and so on. Such terms have indicated that educational forms were in transition, and new institutions were being created. To avoid confusion of definition of this intermediate stage of education, I use "secondary schooling" and "secondary education" in the thesis to standardise the terminology.

This thesis is structured as follows: this introductory chapter is followed by chapters of literature review and methodological consideration, chapters on respective historical review of curriculum development at the national/Commonwealth, provincial city/state systems of the two nations, chapters of findings and discussion based on the research in Shanghai and Victorian schools, and a concluding chapter of research findings.

In this introductory chapter, I outline the overall framework of the thesis by addressing the foci of study, purpose, overall structure and sources of the thesis. This chapter also positions this research in the existing literature.

Chapter Two considers the literature review. This chapter is devoted to an examination of the previous studies that have been conducted by researchers on the concept of decentralisation, decentralisation of education and curriculum development. It maps out the appropriateness of this research in related fields of study. This chapter also presents existing theories, findings and conclusions that have been generated by various researchers prior to the current research.

Research methodology plays an essential role in academic research, and the successful use of research depends on the proper selection and employment of research methodology. So, Chapter Three describes the research process and discusses the multi-methodologies, particularly ethnographic research, which are employed in this thesis.

Historical-descriptive study can throw light on some controversial issues of research. In order to fully appreciate the significance of the data gathered, it is essential for the readers to have a good understanding of Chinese and Australian policies of education as well as knowledge of Shanghai and Victorian policies of education during the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. In Chapter Four, I examine the historical context as well as the evolution of the system of management of Chinese secondary schooling and analyse the social, political and economic factors that influenced the introduction of education policy of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in China.

Chapter Five focuses on the formulation and process of devolution in educational responsibility from central government to the metropolis of Shanghai. The forms that the changing patterns of curriculum development took and the current conditions of curriculum development in Shanghai under the restructuring of the distribution of authority are also explored.

Chapter Six examines the historical context and the evolution of Commonwealth government intervention in Australian educational governance and curriculum development in Australian schools. In this chapter, I outline the gradual centralisation of curriculum development in Australian schools by exploring social and political relationships arising from the changing policy of the Commonwealth government on school curriculum. The ways that growing federalism has affected the bureaucratic development of curriculum in Australian schools are also reviewed.

Chapter Seven focuses on the formulation and process of devolution of educational responsibilities and curriculum development in Victoria. The influence of the bureaucratic introduction of centralised curriculum policy in Victorian schools will be explored. The influence of the Commonwealth intervention in Victorian education will also be presented.

Chapters Eight and Nine report the empirical findings of the research in the selected Shanghai and Victorian schools. These chapters integrate findings of the analysis and interpretations of the interviews in the chosen schools to clarify the discussions in

respect of schools' and teachers' responses to changed and changing policies of curriculum development under decentralisation.

In the concluding chapter, I draw together the issues of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development and the findings of the empirical research to conclude the thesis. I discuss the issues of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development with supporting evidence from the findings of the research at the national, city-provincial/state and schools levels. The similarities and differences of the education policies and decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two different systems are compared.

1.5 Data of the Study

Throughout the research, data have been collected through structured interviews and non-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observation and analysis was conducted to support my investigation of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two different systems. Data were collected during fieldwork in three schools in China and three schools in Australia.

Like many other researchers, I have also used some well-established secondary sources and statistics, in particular, to support the arguments wherever required. These secondary resources for the present research are based upon library research, investigations of schools records, the minutes of school council meetings and school management records. Library research was conducted both in China and Australia, and the languages of the resources were English and Mandarin. The secondary resources reviewed in the research included politician's speeches, media reports, policy statements, books, journals, magazines, research reports and statistics. Government publications also formed an important source of data. Information was collected by means of personal contacts with various informants in China and Australia during the process of planning the thesis, doing the data analysis, and drafting the thesis and writing-up.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This thesis contributes to the emerging body of research that has focused on the policy of decentralisation of education and its relation to curriculum development. This study contributes to an understanding of two different systems of education and enables substantial insights into the differences and similarities between these two chosen systems. This understanding is particularly important as societies become more culturally diverse and multicultural education is becoming a more important aspect of appropriate education for students.

As this research is empirical in nature, one of the contributions of the research lies in the provision of empirical information about decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools. There is a serious lack of cross-cultural studies about curriculum development.

In many cases, curriculum development is usually the last sector of education remaining centralised, although various authorities are now developing policies to restructure curriculum to meet the objectives of educational reform. The inquiry into the nature of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development through the case studies in the selected schools in different systems may lead to a better understanding amongst educational policy-makers of the relationship among political changes, economic development and educational improvement. Both Shanghai and Victorian schools are currently faced with challenges and opportunities in terms of social and economic changes. The findings of the study can provide useful directions for the improvement of government policy-making and for re-framing long-term development strategies. It is therefore expected that this research will assist policy makers in both systems to learn from each other so as to improve education policy making.

In addition, this study also provides empirical evidence that contributes to a better understanding of the notions of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development.

1.7 Summary and Commentary

In this introductory chapter, I have discussed the central theme of the thesis, outlined the issues relating to the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development, described the purpose of the study, presented the scope of the study and positioned the research in the literature. In the following chapters, I firstly develop a theoretical framework to guide the research. Then I explore the social, economic and political factors that have affected the formulation of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in China and Australia. Thirdly, I discuss the changing education policies and the formulation of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the State of Victoria and the City of Shanghai. Fourthly, I investigate the current status of curriculum development in the chosen schools using the empirical information collected in the interviews conducted in these schools. Finally, I compare and make concluding comments about the differences and similarities of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two different systems.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter integrates and reviews the studies, theories, findings and conclusions that previous researchers have generated in the areas of decentralisation, devolution of educational management and decentralisation of curriculum development.

As stated in Chapter One, decentralisation of educational administration has become a fashionable topic worldwide since the 1980s. An extensive body of literature has addressed issues relating to the broader subject of the decentralisation of educational management. As this thesis focuses on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and in Victorian schools in Australia, this chapter reviews the literature concentrating on concepts, studies, theories and conclusions that earlier researchers have explored on the topic of decentralisation.

2.1 Decentralisation

As Smith (1979) defines it, decentralisation is terminologically close to concepts like devolution, deconcentration, deregulation, delegation, debureaucratisation and independence. Concepts such as decentralisation, deconcentration, devolution and localisation are interchangeably used in all kinds of accounts of research within the field. In this thesis, I will use the terms decentralisation and devolution in an interchangeable way to discuss and analyse the decentralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools.

Scholars like Gultung (1974) and Brown (1990) analysed decentralisation as a movement from the centre to the periphery. In their accounts, the concept of decentralisation is linked to the notion of power sharing between the centre and the periphery. In a study that was conducted by Mintzberg (1983), he considered the centre and periphery of decentralisation as ends of a continuum.

Researchers have attempted to define decentralisation in a variety of ways. For instance, Rondinelli and Cheema (1983: 18) considered decentralisation as:

> The transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organisations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatal organisations, local government or non-government organisations.

This definition is consistent with the focus of this study. In my research into the changes of education policy, decentralisation refers to the transfer of power from the central to the peripheries and centralisation indicates the transfer of the power for decision-making from the periphery to the centre.

Lauglo (1995) classifie i decentralisation into decentralisation as delegation and decentralisation as devolution. Delegation normally implies a transmission of tasks and administrative responsibilities related to specific functions and are usually defined by central authorities. In this sense, the decentralisation of tasks does not necessarily mean a shift of power because the local agents generally are only given the role of executing decisions made at the central level. Decentralisation as devolution implies the transmission of authority and real responsibility from central to local bodies. Lauglo's definition of decentralisation as delegation is helpful for the review of the education policies in this study. Chapters Four and Six will discuss the decentralisation or centralisation of education and curriculum development in China and Australia, which are explored with regard to the transfer of authority and power of decision-making rather than the role of implementing decisions made at the centre.

There have also been a number of studies that concentrated on the establishment of the paradigm of decentralisation in education. Walker (1973: 212 - 232), for example, differentiated decentralisation as comprising two dimensions: political and administrative decentralisation. The former involves the delegation or transfer of responsibility by a legislature to other elected boards/councils or officers, while the latter represents the delegation of responsibility by a legislature to its appointed officials. Another researcher, Brown (1990: 66-69), distinguished between organisational and political decentralisation. Organisational decentralisation indicates the delegation of authority by the centre to the periphery so that line management

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may make certain kinds of decisions at specific levels down the hierarchy of authority. Political decentralisation represents the transfer of authority from the centre to the periphery by some forms of semi-autonomous control through elected boards or officers. Walker's and Brown's accounts are quite influential in the analysis of the process of decentralisation and centralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai in China and in Victoria in Australia.

It is difficult to discuss the literature on decentralisation without discussing centralisation. Linguistically, the word "centralisation" is utilised as the antonym of decentralisation in the various documentations of education. In this thesis, centralisation and decentralisation (devolution) will be used as major concepts in the analysis and interpretation of relevant sources and data collected in interviews. I will therefore also briefly review the relevant accounts of centralisation.

Lyons (1985:87) studied the merits of centralisation and the arguments against centralisation in educational systems. In his account of the merits of centralisation, he stated that decision-making in and control of educational planning by the centre are flavoured by considerations of equity, national unity and management efficiency. Lyons (1985: 86) also explained centralisation as the choice of objectives, means to achieve them and decisions about them that lie in the hands of a body or bodies located in the capital of the country. Regarding the centralisation of educational management and the outcome of centralisation of school structures, another scholar, Bredeson (1994: 4242), claimed that centralisation has often resulted in hierarchical obstacles that negatively affect decision-making and organisational flexibility.

In this thesis, decentralisation will be used to describe the transfer of power between the centre and the periphery, while centralisation will be utilised to demonstrate the shift of power from the peripheries to the centre. The two concepts are applied to analysis the changing process of decentralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and Victorian schools in Australia.

2.2 Decentralisation of Educational Management

Decentralisation has been a main governmental strategy for different sectors of society, and also for education and many large-scale educational reforms (Karlsen

2000: 525). There have been debates about the decentralisation of education since the 1980s and these debates have intensified in the 1990s. These debates have focused on the rationale, classification, and scope of decentralisation as well as on decentralisation in particular sectors of education.

Lauglo and McLean (1985) described three rationales behind decentralisation: the administrative rationale, the political rationale and the ideological rationale. The administrative rationale makes the assumption that administration is unnecessary and ineffective in the centralised system. In this rationale, decentralisation is an effective way of avoiding these unnecessary and ineffective efforts. The political rationale refers to the maintenance or extension of political power. In this rationale, decentralisation is a way of reducing professional power and giving more power to parents and the local community to achieve the desirable goal (Karlsen 2000: 528). The ideological rationale argues that greater local autonomy is inseparable from the desirable aims in relation to particular views of the nature of the individual, society and knowledge. In Lauglo and McLean's three rationales, the administrative and political rationales are helpful in the analysis and review of education policy. What I found from the review of the national policy in China and the Commonwealth policy in Australia confirmed that both China and Australia utilised decentralisation as a strategy to achieve the goals of national educational development. Furthermore, I found, in the interviews, empirical evidence that more power was being given to parents and the local community by the state government in the 1990s to achieve educational goals, like transferring the staffing and budgeting decisions to the principals and school councils in Victorian schools. Lauglo and McLean's (1985) rationales thus influenced the research design of this project and the interpretation of the empirical findings in the chosen schools.

Weiler (1990) classified the decentralisation process in education into three categories. The first category is decentralisation as a redistribution of power from the central to local level. Normally this takes place through legislative action or allocation of resources. The second category is decentralisation as a strategy to obtain more efficiency in the educational sector. The assumption of this category is that decentralisation will mobilise local resources and will use the available resources

in a more efficient way. The third category focuses on the role of decentralisation in the curriculum and culture of learning in schools. Weiler's (1990) classification of the decentralisation process in education is quite useful for my analysis of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the national/Commonwealth, provincial/state and school levels. Weiler (1990) also found that there was tension between decentralising efforts and the need for central control. After studying several educational systems, Weiler concluded that decentralisation seldom actually occurs, but seems instead to be absorbed into the existing centralised or semi-centralised structure of educational governance. Weiler's conclusions were quite similar to the conclusions of Hill (1998: 2-3). When Hill described the status of decentralisation in Australian education, he stated that, for every move in the direction of devolution of responsibility there has been a countervailing centralisation of decision-making, particularly with respect to the curriculum, assessment, certification and, most significantly, accountability. I found that the accounts provided by Weiler and Hill were quite similar to the conclusions I drew from the analysis of the data.

Karlsen (2000: 525) studied decentralisation as a governance strategy in education and the dynamic interaction in the decentralisation process. Karlsen used interviews in this empirical research about the decentralisation process in Norway and in the province of British Colombia in Canada. He concluded that the dynamic interaction in the decentralisation process could be characterised as "decentralised centralism". Karlsen's accounts of "decentralised centralism" provided me with invaluable insights to understand the situation of decentralisation in Shanghai and Victoria. In my analysis of the data collected, I found that, in both the Shanghai and Victorian systems, the centralisation of education in some aspects took place simultaneously with a decentralisation process of education in other aspects. In Shanghai, after the national educational authority devolved the power of decision-making in education to the Shanghai educational authority, the Shanghai Education Commission centralised its own power of decision-making in education in general and curriculum development in particular. In Victoria, the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993 transferred decision-making relating to staffing and budgeting to the

school principals, but curriculum development became more firmly centralised by the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework. These phenomena were quite similar to what Karlsen (2000: 525) described as "decentralised centralism". In addition, there is other literature that contributes to the understanding of the rationales of devolution and centralisation of education. Regarding centralisation, Lyons (1985: 87) argued that decision-making and control of educational planning by the centre are favoured by considerations of equity, national unity and management efficiency. Under these circumstances, the centralisation of educational management in various systems occurred as a result of considerations of equity, national unity and management efficiency in keeping schools acting in conformity with national objectives. Regarding decentralisation, the studies that were conducted by Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998) draw together the consequences of devolution and choice for effectiveness, efficiency and equity in the school system. However, my interviews showed that decentralisation has occurred because of shared responsibility for financial accountability. The interviews I conducted in schools in Shanghai and Victoria confirmed that the purpose of decentralisation of educational administration was to diversify the financial input in education and to reduce the funds required from the governments. In most cases, the financial accountability released from the central authority took place ahead of decentralising responsibilities to schools. Watt (1989: 20) claims that the aim of decentralisation is not better but cheaper schools is clearly applicable to the schools in this study.

Caldwell (1996: 4-9) studied the principles and practices of resource allocation to schools under conditions of radical decentralisation, particularly in Victoria. His research outlined the proposed principles of resource allocation to schools as efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, transparency, subsidiarity and accountability, and he proposed that these were the principles of radical decentralisation in resource allocation that Victoria should follow. In my interviews in Victorian schools, the participants discussed principles such as efficiency and effectiveness that were described by Caldwell.

In 1992, Caldwell and Spinks (1992: 4-5) conducted an important study. These two scholars discussed the resources that were increasingly decentralised to schools and

outlined the scope of decentralisation in schools. In Caldwell and Spinks' analysis, the resources were defined in a broad way as follows:

> Knowledge (decentralisation of decisions related to curriculum, including decisions related to the goals or ends of schooling); technology (decentralisation of decisions related to the means of learning and teaching); power (decentralisation of authority to make decisions); material (decentralisation of decisions related to the use of facilities, supplies and equipment); people (decentralisation of decisions related to human resources, including professional development in matters related to learning and teaching, and the support of learning and teaching); time (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of time); and finance (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of money).

Caldwell and Spinks' definition of the scope of decentralisation in schools was very helpful in the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Particularly, Caldwell and Spinks' inclusion of knowledge, power and people related directly to the framework of the analysis of data in this thesis. In the chapters on the findings and discussion (Chapters Eight & Nine), I discuss devolution and centralisation in educational management, curriculum development, functions of school councils, consultation, teachers' participation and impact of examination. These sectors are quite closely related to Caldwell and Spinks' classification of knowledge, power and people. I found that the resources of knowledge, power and people are quite useful in the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered. Knowledge relates to decentralisation of decisions related to curriculum, including decisions pertinent to the goals of schooling. Power relates to decentralisation of authority to make decisions, and people relates to decentralisation of decision making about human resources, including teachers' professional development in matters of learning and teaching.

In the review, I found that there have been debates on the decentralisation of educational administration and the improvement of students' learning outcomes. Tickell (1995: 23) argued that, whatever its other merits, the final test of the decentralisation of school administration would be whether or not it leads to improvements in student learning. He claimed that there was no conclusive evidence that self-managing schools achieved higher levels of student outcomes in Victorian

schools. In my analysis of the discussion of the Victorian participants, I was unable to find any evidence that indicates the decentralisation of educational administration would improve the students' outcomes of learning.

Researchers like Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998) reviewed the relationship that exists between the devolution of decision making to schools and the promotion of institutional effectiveness. The research also examined evidence that indicated that self-managing schools might be better able to promote efficiency in resource use. These studies helped me to formulate some of the themes in my findings and discussion. This research also influenced, in the early stages, my decision regarding the framework of analysis of this thesis.

There is a huge body of records of documents about government policies on decentralisation of educational management in Australia and in Victoria. Such documents provided me with the background information to analyse and interpret the data collected. In particular, they offered helpful contextual knowledge of the social and political contexts of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. One document was of special importance, the Karmel Report that was issued in 1973. The Report affirmed the values of decentralisation of education in Australian society.

> The Committee favours less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of pupils they teach and, at a senior level, with students themselves (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 10).

The Karmel Report provided important background knowledge in reviewing the education policy of the Commonwealth in Australia. In addition, the memorial conference that was organised by the Australian Council for Educational Research in 1998 convinced me that decentralisation of educational management remains a popular research topic in Australian educational community.

The ACER conference was titled *Schools in Australia 1973 - 1998: the 25 Years since the Karmel Report*. This conference attracted quite a few notable Australian educators to examine the occurrences of decentralisation in Australian education

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since the issue of Karmel Report in 1973. The participants of the conference addressed issues of decentralisation in education in different areas. Of all the accounts presented at the conference, the following two studies provided me with helpful information in reviewing the social and political contexts of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development and the analysis of the data collected. Lingard (1998: 1) examined the influence of federalism in Australian schooling. His account provided me with information about the changes of education policy in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Another participant, Hill (1998: 2-3), discussed the devolution of responsibility, equity of opportunity, diversity, funding issues for private and public schooling and community involvement in Australi an schools. Hill (1998: 2) commented that there has been a general movement from central control to partial devolution through the largely unsuccessful strategy of regionalisation over the last 25 years. Hill's accounts are important comments about the status of Australian education.

Since the 1980s, there have been many debates about establishing self-managing schools in Victoria. Schools with school-based management programs are often called "self-managing schools" or "self-governing schools." In Caldwell and Spinks' (1992: 4-5) study, a self-managing school was defined as a school in a system of education where there has been significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. But according to Smyth (1993:1), "with this devolution and self-management stuff, it's 'all responsibility and no power.'" Karmel (1998:3) has also claimed that, in regard to school education, there are "tendencies to more central direction" and "an increasing involvement of politicians in setting educational agenda accompanied by a decreasing willingness to trust professionals."

In 1992, the Liberal-National Coalition government came into power in Victoria and put educational reform on its political agenda by cutting numerous teachers' positions and closing schools. In 1993, the Department of Education developed the *Schools of the Future* policy to carry out the political plan of decentralising responsibility in education. The introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993 attracted many researchers to study the changes that have substantially

reshaped Victorian and Australian education (Angus & Brown 1997; Caldwell 1998; Caldwell & Hayward 1998; Gaff 1998; Marginson 1994). Of all the studies, there are two that I believe are most important and relevant to this project.

The first one was the case study that was conducted Angus and Brown (1997). In this study, Angus and Brown utilised interviews and observations in a secondary college in Victoria to illustrate the ways in which government policy interventions were experienced and worked through in sites of educational practice in the implementation of the Schools of the Future policy. This study analysed and interpreted changes that occurred in the fieldwork school under the themes of entrepreneurialism, school council and parent power, devolution and centralisation and professionalism. Some of the themes are quite similar to the themes in my analysis and interpretation of the data I collected in the schools. Angus and Brown's study influenced me with the choice of methodology.

Another study was conducted by Gaff (1998) who examined government intervention in the reshaping of educational policy in Victoria in the 1990s. Gaff employed primarily semi-structured interviews with key policy actors who influenced education policy during the 1980s and 1990s, and focused on the cultural changes in Victorian education since the election of the Kennett Government in October 1992. This study concluded that there had been a distinct shift in the normative values and social ethics of public policy in education. As my thesis explores the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Victorian schools in 1985 - 1995, Gaff's research provided the contextual knowledge about the policy changes in the 1980s and the 1990s. As I also used semi-structured interviews, Gaff's study influenced my analysis of the data that were collected in the schools under study.

2.3 Decentralisation of Curriculum Development

There are many studies that have examined decentralisation of education in different political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts, and many field studies have generally investigated decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. However, there are not many studies that focus on decentralisation of

educational management and curriculum development in Chinese and Australian schools.

Sturman (1989) studied the effects of decentralisation of curriculum decision making in Australia. He identified four different types of decentralisation in Australian states: regionalisation, school-based curriculum decision making, teacher-based curriculum decision making, and participation of parents and the community in curriculum decision making.

In the early 1990s, the National Industry Educational Forum in Australia sponsored studies of the devolution of education administration in the educational community. The National Industry Educational Forum played an important role in the studies of decentralisation of educational administration in general, and devolution of curriculum development in particular. This forum attracted many studies of the decentralisation of school management in Australia (Ashenden 1994; Caldwell 1993; Seddon 1994; Tickell 1995; Townsend 1996; Whitty 1994; Zbar 1996). In these studies, many publications (e.g., Ashenden, 1994; Caldwell, 1993; Whitty, 1994) highlighted the issues of curriculum autonomy and teachers' participation which formed the climax of the debates and disputes. For example, Townsend (1996: 38) studied the relationship of decentralisation with educational policy decision-making, educational leadership, efficient use of resources, teacher quality, curriculum development and students outcomes. In his discussion of decentralisation of curriculum development, he claimed that much of the curriculum for schools was determined by people outside the schools. In particular, he commented that, in Victoria, the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) is almost mandatory as is the use of standardised testing through the Learning Assessment Project (LAP). What Townsend discussed about decentralisation of curriculum development would be helpful in understanding the principals' and teachers' comments to the Curriculum and Standards Framework in my interviews.

Another scholar, Sharpe (1995: 4 - 23) made important comments on the key characteristics of the Australian system of education. He identified the status of the state system of education in Australia, particularly the Victorian system. Sharpe

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concluded that firstly, the curriculum had tended to become more centralised in most systems. Secondly, the most devolved systems were then Victoria, NSW and the Northern Territory, while the least devolved was Queensland. Thirdly, he regarded the current lighthouse for devolution as the Victorian Schools of the Future project.

There is a growing number of studies that have been conducted by various researchers on the decentralisation of curriculum development in China. These studies have focused on the principles, policy, process and characteristics of the decentralisation of curriculum development. Lu (1994: 3) analysed the overall policy and the new curriculum structure in Chinese schools since 1985. He undertook document analysis of textbook development and concluded that the key to the diversification of textbook development was the removing of barriers of local protection of textbook production and distribution. The decentralisation of textbook development relied on the free trade of textbooks. Hawkins (2000: 442 – 454) examined the centralisation, decentralisation and recentralisation in Chinese educational reform. He concluded that while the current leadership appeared to be committed to decentralisation in education, the Chinese leaders remain conflicted over the need to maintain control while at the same time respond creatively to the needs of new market economy. In the end, control over the content of schooling was usually one of the last areas that central authorities were willing to decentralise. Both Lu's and Hawkins' accounts were helpful in my analysis of the data collected in Shanghai schools and seemed to be confirmed in my discussion with the participants. Zhong (1996: 2) commented on the process of curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai. He outlined the distinctive features of curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai as being their definition of the "basic ability of learning" and the emphasis on individual development. His research provided helpful information in reviewing the historical context of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai. These studies provided me with useful contextual knowledge in analysing the data that were collected in Shanghai schools.

The Eleventh Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978 was an historical event that brought forth sweeping changes in China by enacting national reform and open policy. One of the most remarkable changes was the transformation of China

from a planning economy to a marketing economy and made private enterprises an important sector of the national economy. The emergence and growth of privatisation of the economy broke down the previously state-controlled economy. Therefore, it was possible to introduce devolution in educational management in the late 1980s and through the early 1990s. Researchers such as Wu (1994) and Xie (1995) reviewed the international context of the changing patterns of educational governance and attempted to analyse possible future ways in which Chinese education might be organised. Chu (1997) also conducted a study of the systematic reform of the basic education under the market economy in China. He argued that the existing centralised system of education in China was too slow to reflect the transformation from the planning economy to market economy. These studies provided me with useful information for the analysis of the data that were collected in Shanghai schools.

In China, there are many government records that outlined the policy of decentralisation in education since 1985. These documents constituted important contextual information for my analysis of the data collected in Shanghai schools. The most important document was the *Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure* (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 3 - 4) that was published in 1985. Regarding the decentralisation of the educational administration, the Decision declared that the central government

> will adopt the principle of localising the responsibility and management to administer basic education by different levels in order to carry out nine-year compulsory education (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 3 - 4) .

The Decision also announced that

> the authority for administering basic education belongs to local government. Except for the major policy and centralised plans to be drawn up by the central government, the responsibilities and authority concerning the decision-making of concrete policy, regulations and planning, as well as leadership, administration and inspection of schools are handed over to local governments (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 4).

The Standing Committee of the People's National Congress enacted *The Education Law of the People's Republic of China* in 1986. Article 14 of the *Education Law* also announced that

> the State Council and local people's governments at all levels shall guide and administer education according to the principles of sharing the responsibilities of management. Education at the secondary level or lower shall be administered by the local people's governments under the leadership of the State Council (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 1999: 7).

With the policy of decentralisation of education that was introduced by the *Decision* and the *Education Law*, curriculum development and implementation were devolved to the local government in districts like Shanghai. The local educational authority, the Shanghai Educational Commission, was authorised to develop the curriculum for Shanghai schools, but the policy decision making in developing the syllabus and curriculum standards still lay in the hands of the central educational authority. In short, the responsibility of implementation of the curriculum had been devolved to the local educational authority, but the power of policy decision making had been centralised.

2.4 Comparative Studies of Decentralisation

The practice of decentralisation of education and curriculum development differs from system to system, and many researchers have studied various systems to understand these differences. Bierlein (1997) studied the formulation of charter schools and the features of the new organisational mode as a promising educational reform in the US. Bishop (1994) examined the increasing centralisation of education during the early period of the Thatcher Government and the decentralisation that occurred since the *Educational Reform Act 1988*. Bishop described the process of decentralisation in education in UK as New Decentralisation. Caldwell and Spinks (1988) studied the emerging "self-managing schools" in the 1980s and 1990s in Australia. Furthermore, Caldwell (1994) also examined the development of decentralisation in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand, USA and the UK. However, I found, in the literature review, that few studies have been conducted in order to understand the decentralisation of education and curriculum development in

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China. Lewin et al (1994) studied the educational changes that took place in China since 1985. As overseas observers, they observed the changes that took place in Chinese education since the Decision of the Reform of the Educational Structure was released in 1985. However, this study was an overall review of educational development since the decentralisation of educational administration in China since 1985. This study was based mainly upon secondary documentation.

Comparative studies conducted by scholars such as Gamage (1992) focused on the similarities and differences between the state systems in Australia. In his comparative study of school based management in Victoria and New South Wales, Gamage (1992) traced the historical development of the concept of School Based Management. He also analysed the different sequences of initiatives that were taken by the Victorian and New South Wales governments towards School Based Management with the establishment of school councils in the respective state school systems. Gamage concluded that the Australian state school systems have been comparatively slow to give in to external pressure in breaking-up their centralised bureaucracies. However, he also stated that as some state systems in Australia have been operating with school councils/boards in the form of statutory bodies since the mid 1970s, Australian school systems have been innovative and have been able to make progress in the direction of decentralisation. Gamage's study offered me useful information in formulating my accounts of the Victorian policy of decentralisation of education, but he did not study the curriculum changes that accompanied the changes of education policy in Victoria.

2.5 Summary and Commentary

In this chapter, I reviewed the studies, theories, findings and conclusions related to the areas of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. There is a tremendous body of literature on the studies of decentralisation of education and curriculum development, however, this review could only focus on the studies that are helpful in framing my study and which influenced the analysis of this research.

This literature review firstly clarified the definition of decentralisation and different forms of decentralisation. A parallel analysis was also conducted of the meaning of centralisation. I then analysed the studies of decentralisation of educational management as the decentralisation of educational management constituted a broad context of curriculum restructuring. This review covered the analysis of studies on the rationale of decentralisation in education, different forms of decentralisation in education, the scope of the decentralisation in education and the major issues that influenced my consideration of the study. Thirdly, the review focused on the different studies, findings and conclusions of decentralisation of curriculum development, particularly studies that were conducted by researchers in the Chinese and Australian contexts. Finally, as this thesis focuses on a comparison of the differences and similarities of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the selected Shanghai schools and Victorian schools, I also reviewed the research that comparatively studied the practices of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in different systems. These studies were helpful for framing my study in the early stages and for focusing on my analysis of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai schools and Victorian schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

As stated in the introductory chapter, this thesis focuses on the administrative decentralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and Victorian schools in Australia. In the second chapter, related literature was reviewed. In this methodological chapter, I will discuss the research design and relevant methodological issues.

The research was designed to investigate the nature and process of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development that was shaped and influenced by the different social, political, economic and ideological contexts in China and Australia between 1985 to 1995. There were three different stages in the inquiry: (a) reviewing the social and historical contexts of administrative devolution of education and curriculum development in the systems under investigation; (b) collecting first-hand data from the principals and teachers in the fieldwork schools about their views of the centralised programs in the chosen system and (c) comparing the similarities and differences of processes, procedures and impact of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the two chosen systems of education. To accomplish such research, a mixed methodology was employed to combine ethnographic research with auxiliary methodologies of historical review and comparative studies.

3.1 Methodology: Definition

Methodology refers to theoretically informed methods of data collection and procedures intended to accomplish chosen research purposes. It comprises research design and a theoretically informed approach to the production and interpretation of data. It includes the principles guiding an investigation and the ways in which theory informs the conduct of the research. Methodology contains both "method" and "technique" (Ellen 1984: 15 - 19): "method" is a general mode of processing data,

such as interviewing and observing; "technique" is a specific means of making particular methods effective, such as the use of questionnaire instruments and tape-recordings. In this research, the methodology included both "method" and "technique".

This research began with preliminary historical reviews of curriculum change and devolution of responsibilities in education in China and Australia. The preliminary study, combined with library research, provided the framework for the second stage of fieldwork and the comparison of policies of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and Victorian schools in Australia. Under this framework, the inquiry took three forms: Firstly, historical review was utilised to explore the chronology of events and sequences concerning the decentralisation of curriculum development in China and Australia. In this way, I tried to generalise and make comparisons in order to understand various events by understanding their contexts in particular places and times. Secondly, ethnographic research was employed to collect data in order to assess the pre-existing perceptions of the current status of the systems under investigation. The aim of the ethnographic strategy was to obtain data to illuminate the existing knowledge within the chosen areas and to integrate the discussions of the foci of the research. Thirdly, a comparative strategy was used to analyse and report the findings of the historical reviews and the interviews conducted in the three fieldwork schools in each country. The results were analysed, interpreted and integrated to illustrate the current status of curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools.

3.2 Historical Review

In this research, the study of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development was placed within an historical framework to provide a suitable context for the discussion of decentralisation and curriculum development and related policy-making. Therefore, historical perspectives of the processes of centralisation, decentralisation and curriculum development in the two countries were developed.

The historical perspective deals with the particular social, political, economic, cultural and ideological factors that shaped and influenced the nature, process and formulation of curriculum development in Shanghai and Victoria in 1985 to 1995. For example, as is discussed in Chapter Four, the historical review indicated that there were three stages of curriculum development in China from 1949 to 1995: Firstly, when the new Republic was founded in 1949, a centralised system of education was established which imitated the former USSR system. Secondly, decentralisation of educational administration was made possible by the emerging strong development of the local economy in the middle of 1980s. Thirdly, the Shanghai City authority centralised the devolved power of decision-making in education in the 1990s.

In undertaking the historical research at the national/city-provincial level in China and the federal/state level in Australia, historical accounts from various authors were compared and combined to enhance the reliability of the composite accounts of the social and political context in which decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development occurred.

Document review is indispensable in historical research. In the document review of this study, source materials (e.g. photos, records etc) were found, collected and analysed. As is usual in historical studies, secondary sources (including historical documents, books, journal and periodical articles, law and regulation collections, educational yearbooks, government statistics and other published accounts) were also utilised.

3.3 Comparative Approach

Comparative study can be utilised in any social science research and is commonly used and accepted by various researchers. As the current research comprises ethnographic study in two countries, comparison was important throughout the research, particularly with regard to the analysis and reporting of the research findings.

Noah (1985: 869) outlined several purposes served by a comparative methodology in educational research: (a) to describe educational systems, processes, or outcomes; (b)

to assist in the development of educational institutions and practices; (c) to throw light on the relationships between education and society; and (d) to establish generalised statements about education that are valid for more than one country. In line with the foci of research in this study, a comparative methodology was employed to identify the similarities and differences in the ways in which the provincial city and state utilise the forms of decentralisation of educational responsibilities for the attainment of their curriculum development goals. Comparisons between the two systems are made in the areas of the historical contexts of curriculum development, the processes of decentralisation, the goals of national development and effectiveness of schooling.

Scholars (Crossley & Broadfoot 1992; Holmes 1981; Lomotey 1995) have asserted the purposes of taking a comparative perspective in educational research, which helped me to consider the purpose of the thesis. Firstly, the study and understanding of different systems can provide people with greater insights into their own ways of working, and this can be particularly important as societies become more culturally diverse and struggle to provide worthwhile and appropriate education for students from different cultural backgrounds. As the thesis focuses on exploring the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools, I hope this thesis will provide knowledge and understanding of the educational systems in the diverse cultural backgrounds of China and Australia. The second purpose is to analyse differences and similarities between the assumptions, structures, processes and outcomes of educational systems. This point relates directly to the purpose of the thesis. Although I do not explore any assumptions in the thesis, I do focus on the analyses of the differences and similarities of the structures, processes and outcomes of the different systems in Shanghai and Victorian schools. Thirdly, a comparative approach can enhance understanding of the nature of relationships within education and between education and the wider society. Education is a socio-cultural phenomenon and should be understood in relation to the wider society. One purpose of historical review of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in China and Australia is to explore the link between education and its society.

3.4 Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic methodology has been defined as a process in which the observer's presence in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 343) explained that "the observer is in a face-to-face relationship with the observed, and by participating with them in their natural life setting, he gathers data". Clearly, ethnography is a methodology that is well suited to the study of socio-cultural phenomena in natural socio-cultural settings.

In social science research, ethnography is usually said to have the following features (LeCompte & Schensul 1999): it is conducted in a natural setting, not in a laboratory; it involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants; it presents an accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and behaviours; it uses inductive, interactive, and recursive data collection and analytic strategies to build local cultural theories; it uses multiple data sources, including both quantitative and qualitative data; it frames all human behaviour and beliefs within particular socio-political and historical contexts, and it uses the concept of culture as a lens through which to interpret results.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984: 63) identified four principles for ethnographic research. First, ethnographic strategies use elicited phenomenological data. Second, ethnographic strategies are empirical and naturalistic. Third, ethnographic research is holistic. Fourth, ethnography is multimodal or eclectic. Regarding the current research, of all the above four principles, the second and third principles are most important. The educational process is a part of the broader social-cultural process and reflects changed or changing phenomena in social, political and economic contexts. Education is provided in certain social contexts with unique cultural characteristics. In this sense, descriptive and interpretive ethnography would seem to be appropriate approaches for research in naturalistic settings.

As a way of studying human life, behaviour and cultural activity, ethnography has been widely used in educational research. Such research is often called "educational ethnography" or "ethnography of education" (Li 1990). The American educational anthropologist Spindler (1982) tried to construct theoretical frameworks for

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ethnographic studies in multiple disciplines and classified ethnography into anthro-ethnography; socio-ethnography and psycho-ethnography (Ma & Li 1993). Wolcott (1973) studied the role of the principalship in a school context. Ogbu (1974) researched minority schooling in Stockton, California. Angus (1988) conducted ethnographic studies of the continuity and changes in a catholic school in Australian society and cast light upon the relationship between schooling, social cultural production and reproduction with a critical ethnographic perspective and methodology. Macpherson (1983) undertook introductory research in ethnographic methodology to clarify his thinking and to assist others interested in researching the practice of educational administration in natural settings. These studies indicate that ethnographic methodology is widely practiced by educational researchers in a wide range of areas.

As mentioned above, ethnographic research in this study is employed mainly to investigate the schools' and teachers' views about the current status of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in samples of Shanghai schools in China and Victorian schools in Australia. There is a three-fold rationale for the employment of ethnography as the principal methodology in this comparative study. Firstly, the school is a socio-cultural institution that lies at the heart of the educational process. What happens in schools provides the best evidence of changed and changing policies in the educational community, and observation in schools is an effective way of identifying authentic responses to changes in education policies. Secondly, as a mode of delivering policy, decentralisation of educational management has been a topic of worldwide debate in recent years. Different opinions have advanced different views of the nature, process, procedures and form of decentralisation in different systems. Analysis and investigations of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development rely on first-hand evidence gained from school-based fieldwork. Thirdly, in both Australia and China, there have been similar demands for changes in education. These have prompted the need for insight into the nature of decentralisation of educational management in different contexts and an understanding of its implications for curriculum development.

3.5 Ethnographic Strategies

Wolcott (1975: 121) argued that despite the sometimes fuzzy distinctions between techniques, the two mainstays of ethnographic fieldwork are "interviewing" and "participant observation". The application of ethnographic strategies in this research consists mainly of these two techniques and also some documentary analysis. The analysis of documents was conducted prior to interviewing and observing informants.

3.5.1 Documentary Review

Documentary review is an important procedure for shaping the research direction before getting started. In this research, the documentary reviews consisted of external and internal reviews of the schools under investigation. The external review of the chosen schools was a broad review and its purposes were mainly to clarify the external socio-cultural backgrounds of the schools chosen for study and to enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the socio-cultural institution before entering and starting the fieldwork. The review also discussed published and unpublished documents, including findings and reports of relevant research, formal and draft regulations. The review also re-examined the appropriateness and reliability of the existing documents, research reports, newspaper accounts and manuscripts in the field investigated. As part of the external review, government documents (such as educational laws, regulations, policies, prescribed guidelines, drafts, working papers and reports on curriculum change) were also reviewed.

The internal reviews were school-based records reviews. These included reviews of the school's histories, the minutes of school council meetings, school newsletters, annual reports, decisions of school administrative committees, minutes of curriculum committee meetings, school rules and regulations, school brochures, reports of curriculum development and photographs.

3.5.2 Participant Observation

In ethnographic research, participant observation is a unique blend of specific methods and techniques first developed within the context of structural-functional anthropology (Ellen 1984: 15 - 19). It requires the researcher to get close to the people under study and to ensure that they feel comfortable enough with the researcher's presence so that the researcher can observe and record information about their life in relation to the research purpose.

Participant observation is attributed to Malinowski's pioneering fieldwork among the Trobriand Islanders. He "created a theory of ethnography" (Leach 1957: 118) and was thus "seen both as the pioneer of modern anthropological fieldwork carried out through participant observation, and as one of the founding fathers of modern social anthropology" (Ellen 1984: 15 - 19). Since Malinowski, participant observation has been seen as one of the key data-yielding techniques in research in the social sciences.

The aim of participant observation, Malinowski (1922: 25) declared, is to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world. In today's ethnographic research, observation continues to function as a primary method to collect data in naturalistic settings. Observation requires research to be conducted in a naturalistic socio-cultural milieu. Obviously, a certain amount of participation in the activities of the people under study enables the researcher to observe the actual behaviour of the chosen subjects: to conduct informal, open and semi-structured interviews, to collect statistical data, and to take photographs.

The modes of observation utilised by ethnographers include participant observation and non-participant observation. In this research, both participant and non-participant observation were used to focus on events like school council meetings, curriculum days, school open day, curriculum committee meetings and school charter retreats. The researcher presented himself mostly as a non-participant observer to record what took place in the various forms of interaction. However, whenever the situation required, the researcher also participated in relevant activities and discussions and made comments on the activities or issues being raised and discussed. Once when I

was observing a school council meeting, for example, I was asked by the chair of the meeting to make comments about the pending policy regarding the intake of international students within the school. I put forward my views on both the possibility and feasibility of the implementation of the policy within the school. The question itself does not relate particularly to my thesis, but the important point is that, in this way, I had the opportunity to interact with the people under study and to observe the ways that the issues were raised, discussed and concluded.

3.5.3 Interviews

The interview is a "conversation with a purpose" (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 268). It is "a face-to-face verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or belief from another person or persons." (Denzin 1989: 109). Interviewing is a fundamental method of inquiry for qualitative researchers and was a major way of acquiring information from the different informants in this research.

Interviews have been categorised as structured interviews and unstructured interviews. In structured interviewing, the emphasis is on "a specified schedule, fixed order and form of questions, together with specified alternatives" (Burgess 1982: 107). The unstructured interview, on the other hand, provides the opportunity for a researcher to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants that are based on personal experience (Burgess 1982: 107). Both structured and unstructured interviews possess strengths. In the structured interview, the researcher can define the situation in advance and follow up the procedures to achieve the established goals. The unstructured interview lacks structure and is therefore flexible, but in fact, the unstructured interview also represents the interviewer's intention to fulfil the established objectives.

To make the most of interviews and to attain information from various informants, both structured and semi-structured/unstructured interviews were used in this research. The main emphasis was on structured interviews but unstructured interviews were also employed. The structured interviews comprised pre-established

questions, well-organised procedures, reasonable time allocation and were tape-recorded. The unstructured interviews took the form of phone conversations and open-ended talking with the informants whenever needed. Unstructured interviews were briefly noted.

Structured interviews were mainly conducted in three Shanghai schools and three Victorian schools. Most informants were insiders but some were outsiders. A wide range of insider informants was interviewed, including school council president and members, principals and assistant principals, teachers. The outsiders included director of education in local educational authorities, director of curriculum development committee, textbook publisher, textbook writer and academics.

In each of the structured interviews, all key research questions were addressed. Particular attention was paid to sub-questions concerning participants' attitudes and comments on the devolution and centralisation of curriculum development, curriculum and textbook development, the functions of the school council, the nature of professionalism and teachers' participation, consultations and the impact of examinations. Both principal and auxiliary questions were asked and answered in structured interviews in a free and natural atmosphere. Follow-up questions were also discussed on the spot to extend the structured interviews.

3.6 Sampling: Schools

Before undertaking ethnography, researchers need to decide what to research, how and where to conduct their research. In any social setting, it is impossible to observe everything or interview everybody. As a consequence, researchers rely on selection and sampling strategies (Goetz & LeCompte 1984: 63). Selection refers to a more general process of focusing and choosing what to study while "sampling is a more specialised and restricted form" (LeCompte & Preissle 1993: 57) than selection. The latter is a means by which a selection is made from the basic unit of study and is used for detailed analysis.

In ethnographic research, researchers usually use two forms of sampling: probabilistic sampling and criterion-based sampling. Denzin (1970) has identified a series of principles that have been involved in all forms of sampling. First, all

sampling should be theoretically directed. Second, researchers have to locate and enumerate elements of the sampling frame. Third, a sample should be representative of a population. Fourth, sampling should continue until a grounded theory is developed. Fifth, sampling of natural settings should occur, so that observations relevant to theory can be collected, and finally, all sampling procedures should be made public. These principles appear to be suitable for my sampling procedures and are important for me to consider the extent to which these principles are used in sampling methods in field research.

The principles of criterion-based selection were employed for this research in schools. Criterion-based selection requires that the researcher, prior to commencing fieldwork, establish in advance a set of criteria or a list of attributes that the project must possess. Ethnographers usually use criterion-based selection in choosing the group or site to be studied. In this study, at the first level, the Chinese national system and Australian federal system were selected to investigate the changed and changing policies of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. At the city-provincial/state level, the provincial City of Shanghai in China and the State of Victoria were selected on account of their positions as leaders in educational development as well as for their significant contributions to industry in the home economy. In particular, the process of decentralisation in education in Shanghai after 1988 offers similar or parallel experiences to those in the State of Victoria. At the third level, particular schools were chosen as basic units of research in which to collect data and evidence to investigate the current status of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the systems under study.

Schools were the main sites of the fieldwork and school sampling constituted one of the core procedures of the study. In China, schools are hierarchically classified into different categories by the government based upon the assessment of teaching

resources, academic reputations, social backgrounds and funds[1]. In Shanghai, schools are divided into four classes: The first class is the National Key Point Schools. These schools are directly funded by central finance from the central Ministry of Education (formerly the State Education Commission). There are a very limited number of such schools throughout China and, in Shanghai, only two schools are classified in this category: The Second Secondary School of East China Normal University and Shanghai Foreign Language University Secondary School. The second class of schools is the Municipal Key Point Schools. These schools are mainly funded by Shanghai Municipal finance, and there are three schools in Shanghai that are classified in this category: Fudan University Secondary School; Shanghai Jiaotong (Communications) University Secondary School and Shanghai Secondary School. The third class is District Key Point Schools. The District Councils and Local City Councils fund these schools. In each district[2], about one third of the local schools are District Key Point Schools. The fourth category comprises ordinary schools that are funded by combined funds from the District Councils and local communities.

In Australia, as elementary and secondary education remains the administrative responsibility of the State and Territory governments, there is no national standard of differentiation of schools. But in the Victorian system, by the use of a different funding arrangement, and special programs like the Navigator School Program, government schools are ranked by a *de facto* classification of schools according to each school's tradition, academic reputations, social backgrounds and geographical location.

Australian fieldwork took place from May to December 1997 and the study in China was conducted from March to May in the following year. The initial research plan was delayed for about eight months because of difficulties in obtaining access to Victorian schools. Ironically, in the so-called decentralised Victorian system, researchers still have to seek approval from state or regional educational authorities

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[1] In China, the central Ministry of Education introduced the key school policy in 1981. According to the policy, the qualified schools were categorised into national key schools; provincial key schools; district/county key schools. The key schools are important and exemplary schools in teaching.

to enter the target schools, while in the centralised Chinese system, the permission for access to schools was entirely the business of the school principal.

Three government schools were selected in the urban areas and suburbs of Shanghai. School A is located in a district of western Shanghai and is an institution affiliated with a famous university. The school is one of the national key schools in Shanghai and, as the school records show, has an excellent academic reputation, especially due to the excellent performance of representative students who have participated in the International Mathematics and Physics Competitions. School B is an academic school located in the central business district of Shanghai. It is about 95 years old and has been one of the leading schools in curriculum innovation. In particular, during the years of the highly centralised curriculum, the principal of this school used his personal reputation and contacts with the government to develop the school based curriculum of Chinese literature. The school became one of the leading schools in introducing a school council into its administrative system in 1995. School C is a District Key School located in the north western district of Shanghai. It is a school with a growing reputation in recent years for excellent teaching. All three schools were selected to be pilot schools by the Shanghai Education Commission during the period of "curriculum and textbook reform" in Shanghai, which commenced in 1991.

Three government schools were also selected for the research in Victoria. School X is a selective government school that is over 150 years old and provides comprehensive teaching programs for the community. It is located south of the city's central business district. School Y is located in a larger southeast suburb and provides a comprehensive education in a residential area that is culturally diverse. School Z is located in a rapidly developing outer suburban area southeast of the city. All these schools have undergone substantial changes in curriculum development since the introduction and implementation of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993 by the Victorian Kennett government.

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[2] The "district" in Shanghai is equivalent to a suburb in Melbourne.

3.7 Sampling: Participants

As the validity of interviews depends considerably on the proper specification of the informants, participants were carefully selected in terms of a number of variables in the research. These variables included age, sex, academic or administrative status, working background, working position, situational relation to the research and relationship to the investigator.

The participants are classified into four categories: First, academics from universities and research institutions who mainly provided background information of the historical contexts of the decentralisation of education and curriculum development. Second, government official and policy-maker who mainly provided background information about government regulations and policies. Third, school council members who provided information about the operations of school councils and the functions of school councils in the implementation of the centralised teaching programs. Fourth, school principals, assistant principals, and teachers who give their views on the implementation of the centralised teaching programs. The sampling sizes for interviews in Shanghai in China and in Victoria in Australia were 10 people respectively, including the academics and government officials where applicable.

The participants were also divided into internal and external participants. The internal interviews are those within the schools under study, including the school council members, principals, assistant principals, curriculum coordinators and teachers, etc. In Shanghai, the external participants were those from the university and academic institution, publishing house, government office (Local Educational Authorities) and government delegation. Open-ended phone interviews were conducted whenever it was necessary and possible. In Victoria, some informants were from national organisations and agencies like the Curriculum Corporation, while the other informants were from the Board of Studies and Directorate of School Education.

A pilot interview was conducted with the voluntary participants to determine the length, time and number of the questions to be asked. Each of the sample interviews took 30 - 45 minutes, except where time was extended to collect additional

information. Two or three insider informants were interviewed in each school and a small number of people were interviewed as outsider informants.

3.8 Credibility

The credibility of ethnographic research is related to the validity and reliability of the data. Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of data and findings in the research, while reliability refers to whether or not researchers would obtain the same answers to their questions by using the same instrument more than once (Bernard 1994: 38).

In any research, there is nothing more important than validity and reliability. In this study, a series of efforts was made to enhance the validity and reliability of the research. First, a detailed list of interview questions was discussed with my supervisors and carefully organised to guide the scheduled study. Sensitive questions were avoided as much as possible to maintain the discussion along the line of the research. Second, the participants were carefully selected through criterion-based sampling according to the different backgrounds of the informants. Third, a brief, clear and thorough explanation was always made to the participants to demonstrate the purpose for research and to explain the provision of anonymity of participants in the final report. Fourthly, each interview was conducted in a natural, comfortable and one-to-one based atmosphere that guaranteed the interviews were as natural as possible. Fifthly, the information collected was carefully analysed, classified and compared with regard to the informants' backgrounds including age, sex, academic position, and administrative status and life experiences.

3.9 Summary and Commentary

This chapter has described the framework of the research and the methodologies utilised. The formulation, process and interrelation of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development are complex issues for the researcher, and therefore a multi-methodological framework was used to include historical review, comparative research and ethnographic study.

The school curriculum reflects human culture. Any changes in school curriculum will involve cultural factors, and the ethnographic approach is regarded as being the best mechanism for providing insights into these cultural elements. Thus, in this chapter, a detailed, comprehensive description of the ethnographic methodology required to take into account those cultural factors has been provided.

The research objects of ethnographic studies are derived from samples from different areas or groups. To enhance the quality of the research, researchers have to learn to maintain a sound interrelationship not only with the people under study but also with the people that one must deal with in order to conduct the research. Examples of the difficulty in obtaining access to the Victorian schools and the informal access to approach participants with a political background or reputation in China demonstrated that this is a gray area that cannot be ignored by researchers.

CHAPTER FOUR

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA (1900 - 1995):

HISTORICAL REVIEW

In this chapter, I examine the evolution of the management of Chinese education and formulation of the policy of decentralisation of educational administration and curriculum development in China during the 1980s. I also review the social, political and economic backgrounds in which the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development was formulated. I will also outline the relevant education policies of decentralisation in education and describe the basic issues and characteristics of the Chinese educational system in different stages.

4.1 The Origin of the Educational Management System (1900 - 1948)

The nature of any educational system is rooted in the wider social and political system, and, to some extent, the political structure underlies the educational system in a centralised political system. The educational system in China, in a modern sense, started in the late 19th century when the Westernisation Movement took place during the late Qing government. However, there was no independent ministry or governing body in the central government which administered educational enterprises at the state level at that time (Fu & Chen 1995: 290), because the management of educational affairs was subordinated within the overall management of the central government. As a result, the educational system in China became highly centralised and politicised during the first half of the twentieth century due to its dependence on political administrative management.

4.1.1 Formation of Centralised System of Education (1900 - 1925)

The modern system of basic education[3] in China began in the late nineteenth century when a Qing government official, Sheng Xuanhui, presented an imperial proposal and established the first public school in China - the Nanyang Public School (Nanyang Gong Xue) in Shanghai in 1896 (Qu 1998: 3). Ever since then, modernisation and westernisation have shaped the Chinese educational system. In 1898,[4] an imperial officer, Wang Pengyun, suggested to the Qing emperor to establish the Peking Grand Academy[5]. The proposal was approved, and in the same year, the Peking Grand Academy was established as the highest academic institution in China. As there was no independent ministry or a separate division in the central government to administer education, the emperor endorsed an official document which stipulated that "schools in all the provinces shall be managed by the Grand Academy" (Fu & Chen 1995: 290). From then on, the Grand Academy functioned as a governmental division and became the supreme official organisation for managing educational affairs and academic research throughout the country. In 1901,[6] the Qing Government appointed Zhang Baixi[7] as the executive educational inspector in charge of national educational affairs for the country.

The advent of the centralised system of Education resulted in a national unified school system that controlled all aspects of schooling, including the school curriculum. In 1903[8], a *School Charter* was issued under imperial edict to officially ensure that school curricula be unified (Lu 1994: 350). The impact of this kind of

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[3] "Basic education" refers to primary and secondary education in China. It comprises nine years of compulsory education and three years of post-compulsory education.

[4] The Guangxu 24th year.

[5] It was known as Jing Shi Da Xue Tang (Beijing Grand Academy) which was the fledging form of Beijing University.

[6] The Guangxu 27th Year

[7] Zhang Baixi was an educator and reformer in the Westernisation Movement in the late Qing Dynasty.

[8] The Guangxu 29th Year

system on the school curriculum was that the Imperial Examination System[9] was abolished in 1905[10] and a Board of Studies (Xue Bu) was established in the same year. The Board of Studies was in charge of school direction, curriculum development, textbook provision and examinations. In the following year, the former Directorate of the Imperial Academy (Guo Zi Jian) merged with the Board of Studies, and the Board of Studies was thereafter restructured into a comprehensive ministry of the Qing government with an interior structure of one chief executive and a few assistants. A similar administrative structure was also adopted at the provincial and county levels to govern educational affairs.

In January 1912, the first year of the Republic of China after the Xin Hai Revolution[11], Cai Yuanpei[12] was appointed as the chief educational executive in Sun Zhongshan's (Sun Yet Sek) Interim Government. In September, a Ministry of Education was established as the central educational authority within Sun's Interim government. Thus, the Ministry of Education was the first governing body that independently administered educational affairs. The Ministry soon issued the *Provisional Regulations of the Ordinary Education* to regulate the national practice of schooling. Regarding school textbooks, the document stated that various texts must conform to the general aims of the democratic republic and that textbooks that had been published by the Board of Studies in the Qing government were to be banned (Guo et al 1989: 65). Six years later in 1918, a hierarchical structure of educational administration was established. Under the hierarchical structure, local educational authorities were structured as educational offices or departments at the

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[9] The Imperial Examination System was an examining system introduced in the Tang Dynasty to select the academics to be appointed as government officials. As the emperor was the examiner of the final written and oral examination, the examination was therefore called the Imperial Examination.

[10] The Guangxu 31st Year.

[11] The revolution was led by Dr Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yet Sek), who was a revolutionary democrat at that time. According to the Chinese lunar calender, it was the year of Xin Hai, and the political movement was known as the Xin Hai Revolution.

[12] Cai Yuanpei was a democratic educator in China and the first Vice-Chancellor of Beijing University.

provincial level, and educational bureaus were set up at the county level. Thus far, a centralised system of education was shaped in China.

After the Xin Hai Revolution, Dr Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yet Sek), then regarded as a revolutionary democrat in China, put forward the *Five-Power Constitution* which was based upon the western model of "three-power separation" of judicature, legislation and administration. The new Constitution attempted to totally deny traditional absolute monarchy, to abolish the centralised dictatorial system and to promote the diversification of state power. In November 1920, Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yet Sek) organised a military government of the Republic of China and attempted to put into effect his Five Power Constitution. In the same year, he made a famous speech to the Gongdong Educational Association, which was simply titled *Five-Power Constitution.* In his speech, he criticised the British and US models of the separation of powers as being not genuinely democratic models, but just "one-power politics" and "state dictatorship". He claimed that the true democratic model was the five-power model and the five powers of legislation, judicature, administration, impeachment and assessment should be independent (Li 1987: 81 - 83).

Sun's idea of political democracy might have been an important initiative and theoretical contribution to the evolution of the Chinese democratic politics. Unfortunately, these ideas did not survive after he died in 1925 and Jiang Jieshi (Jiang Jie Shek) came to power in the Nationalist government.

The introduction of western systems of education played an important role in the course of forming the modern educational system in China. In 1927 (the 16th Year of the Republic of China), the Nationalist government followed the French system and adopted "the Greater Academy System". In this system, the Greater Academy at the central level was the supreme educational authority. At the regional level, Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces were pilot provinces to introduce the system of "Greater School Districts". Although slight alterations were made to the system from then on, an educational administrative system of departments at the central level, offices at the provincial levels, and bureaus or branches at the county levels became the basic structure and formed a stable system (Mao 1993: 270).

4.1.2 Neo-Democratic System of Education (1925 - 1948)

During 1925 to 1948, the Nationalist Party politically and militarily occupied most of China, as well as controlling its school system. The Ministry of Education of the Nationalist government developed centralised programs for schools, but these programs were never well implemented because of the constant wars.

In the liberated areas held by the Chinese Communist Party, there was a fledging system of neo-democratic education based upon the Yan'an Areas. The Communist Party's liberated areas were mainly the rural and remote areas in north-west China, such as Jiangxi and Yan'an, which were long occupied as base areas by the Chinese Communist Party and the Red Army. During its long political and military struggle with the Nationalist Party, the Chinese Communist Party was convinced that ideological education was a necessary weapon to win conflict. In 1934, the Communists failed in their military conflict with the Nationalist troops. In the result, the Communists and the Red Army embarked on the Long March from Jiangxi Province, a central district, to the remote mountainous area known as Shanxi Province, in order to escape direct military conflict with the Nationalist Party's troops. The Long March started in 1934, and, in 1935, the Communists settled down in Shanxi Province and made Yan'an their revolutionary headquarters. Educational development inevitably became an item on the communist political agenda in order to maintain its revolutionary base. The Communist political campaign was called the neo-democratic revolution, and the educational system developed by the Communists in the Yan'an period from 1935 to 1946 was usually referred as the heritage of "old educational system" (Chen 1980). According to the Chinese Communist Party, the fundamental political principles that characterised Chinese education were neo-democratic. There were three distinctive features of curriculum development: (a) the curriculum should serve the needs of a mass society; (b) it should be saturated with political education committed to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought; and (c) it should emphasise the connection between education and productive work (Connell & Zhang 1991: 228). In other words, the school curriculum was generally developed for the masses. It was politically oriented to serve the wider political struggle, and it was inclusive in order to be the link between

theory and practice. In the fourteen years between the Party's arrival in Shanxi and the eventual success of the Chinese Communist Party revolution, these basic features of a massive and utilitarian educational system were reinforced. These principles were the foundation of Chinese education after 1949 when the whole country was liberated from the military control of the Nationalist Party.

4.2 Curriculum Orientation in "the New Era" (1949 -1956)

Prior to 1949 when the new China was founded, due to the disorder caused by civil wars and a shortage of government financial input for educational facilities, the annual average school attendance of school-aged children was about 20%. The result was that at least 80% of the population of China was illiterate (Guo et al 1989: 4). After 1949, a national educational system was developed and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party introduced socialist schooling. The government, in principle, considered socialist schooling as the means of promoting equity for all people as well as a powerful tool of the Communist dictatorship. These principles were highly promoted and developed by the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, and his successors.

4.2.1 Educational Reconstruction

After the founding of the new China, the Chinese government lodged a campaign of socialist construction from 1950 to 1952. During this period, the nationalisation of the existing private schools became a part of the socialist construction campaign (He 1993a: 32 - 35). According to the principle of equity in socialist schooling in China, the private educational enterprises were nationalised as part of state and public enterprises (Gao 1996: 12-13; Guo et al 1989: 4-5; He 1993a: 35). The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party started the nationalisation of the private primary and secondary schools from September 1952. The planned takeover was not completed by the due date of 1954, and the process of nationalisation of private schools was extended to 1956 (Gao 1996: 14; He 1993a: 35). Reconstruction was also under way in tertiary education in China, and 79 private universities became publicly owned and restructured in 1952. In the end, private schools were reconstructed into government schools. From then on, except for the Minban schools

(community schools) that were run by the community resources under the policy of "walking on two legs" that was introduced in 1958, the government school were the sole providers of secondary education in China.

After the completion of the three-year socialist construction of the state enterprises, China entered a period that is usually known as the New Era. The period of the New Era started from 1953 and ended in 1956. During this period, educational development was a major political priority and was based upon the principles of the neo-democratic revolution. In September 1949, *the General Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference* was released. This was a comprehensive legislative document, enacted by the government, in which national educational development was identified as the goal of general mass schooling and the nature, goal and policies of national education were stated. Regarding educational development, the *Program* (Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development 1991: 61) stated that "the cultural education of the People's Republic of China is the new democratic, national, scientific, and popular cultural education". Under such a definition of state education, a corresponding governing body named the Ministry of Education (jiao yu bu) was established within the structure of the Government Administrative Council (later changed into the State Council in 1955) to manage national education. The Ministry was initially structured as a general office, a department of higher education, a department of secondary schools, a department of primary schools, a department of social education and a department of educational inspection. The local educational authorities, mainly provincial and county levels (similar to the Shires in England), were structured as educational departments (jiao yu ting) at the provincial level and as educational bureaus (jiao yu ju) in administrative regions, cities and counties. The local educational authorities were vertically led and horizontally coordinated by the Ministry of Education and local governments (Guo et al 1989: 11). They supervised the implementation of educational policies and managed the schools at regional and local levels.

Reconstructing the existing school system, as well as framing the curriculum and establishing its own educational system, was one of the major tasks facing the new government. In December 1949, the First National Educational Conference was held

in Beijing to set the direction of Chinses educational development. The Conference asserted that the new education system should be based upon the educational experience and heritage of the old liberated area[13], and should draw as much as possible of what was useful from education in the liberated areas and from the USSR's educational experience, in order to construct a new democratic education. While general educational reform focused on changing the old school system gradually, and transforming private schools into public schools, curriculum innovation emphasised a change of teaching content and method, strengthening of political instruction, and simplification of the existing curriculum to reduce the students' work loads. On October 1, 1950, the State Council promulgated its *Decision on Reform of the School System*. According to this Decision (Liu 1993: 10), the schools wiped off the Nationalist-related courses and content, such as "Party discipline", "citizenship", "military training" and "children's army", in the curriculum and textbooks developed by the previous Nationalist government, and replaced them with components like "theory on new democracy" and "history of social development" (Editorial Committee of Encyclopedia 1985: 554).

According to the instructions of the Ministry of Education, all local educational authorities made changes to schooling previously provided by the Nationalist government to eliminate so-called negative influences from the educational system (Liu 1993: 10). However, these alterations were not consistent. The Ministry of Education developed the first influential teaching scheme in August 1950. The purposes of the teaching scheme were to implement a centralised standard for school teaching, to enhance efficiency in classroom teaching and to make it easier for the students to enter a high school, and to transfer to another school in a different area. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, this program outlined the subjects that the schools should teach, weekly teaching hours, annual teaching weeks and time allocations. Although this teaching program was labelled as "temporary" and "draft", the schools officially implemented it for many years.

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[13] The old liberated areas are referred to areas (e.g. Yan'an, Hua Bei) that were occupied by the Chinese Communist Party during 1935 to 1948.

Figure 4.1 Temporary Teaching Programs in Secondary School 1951 (Draft)

stage	Junior School					Senior School				
level	1st y	2nd y	3rd y	sum 3 years	% of subjects	1st y	2nd y	3rd y	sum 3 years	% of subjects
politics	2	2	2	240	6.67	2	2	2	240	6.67
Chinese Literature	7	7	7	840	23.33	6	5	5	640	17.78
mathematics	4	5	5	560	15.56	5	5	5	600	16.66
nature	4	1		200	5.56					
biology						4			160	4.44
chemistry		4		160	4.44		3	3	240	6.67
physics			4	160	4.44		3	3	240	6.67
history	3	3	3	360	10	3	3	3	360	10
geography	2	2	2	240	6.67	2	2	2	240	6.67
foreign language	3	3	3	360	10	4	4	4	480	13.33
physical education	2	2	2	240	6.67	2	2	2	240	6.67
music	1	1	1	120	3.33	1			40	1.11
fine arts	1	1	1	120	3.33	1			40	1.11
draw diagram							1	1	80	2.22
teaching hours per week	29	31	30			30	30	30		
class weeks per year	40	40	40			40	40	40		
teaching hours (sum)	1160	1240	1200	3600	100	1200	1200	1200	3600	100

Resource: *Book of Major Educational Events in China* (Liu, 1993:358).

In September 1954, *the Constitution of the People's Republic of China* was adopted at the First People's National Congress that was held in Beijing. This was the first constitutional document enacted by the Chinese Communist Party government. In the Chapter on "the Citizen's Basic Rights and Obligations", the Constitution provided that:

> the citizen of the People's Republic of China possesses the right to be educated. The state will set up and gradually extend the scale of various schools and other cultural educational institutions to ensure that citizens enjoy their rights. The state shows special loving care for the physical and intellectual development of youth (see Liu 1993: 1).

The impact of this authoritative statement on education was overwhelming. The document stipulated that education was a national priority from the very beginning of the establishment of the new republic.

4.2.2 Learning from the Socialist USSR

Before its political collapse in 1989, the USSR was the leader of the international communist movement and the socialist world. When the new China was founded in 1949, the then western opposition forces led by the US besieged China. Mao and his colleagues were deeply aware that the new government could seek support only from its socialist neighbour, the USSR. Ideological similarities made the USSR and China become political allies in international affairs and China developed an unprecedentedly powerful central government built on the Soviet model (Wang 1990: 242).

From the beginning of the Republic to the end of 1950s, a political campaign was initiated by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party for China to completely learn from the USSR. Educational development was included in the campaign, and the styles of curriculum development and school management imitated developments in the USSR. In June 1949, even before the foundation of the Republic, Mao Zedong remarked: "We have to learn to know what we do not know ... the Soviet Communist Party is our best master, we must learn from them" (see Liu 1993: 13). In the same year, in a speech at a celebration ceremony at the foundation of the China-Soviet Friendship Association, Liu Shaoqi, the Vice-President of China, said:

> the Soviet Union created many new areas in scientific knowledge which are not available in the rest of the world. We can only acquire knowledge from the Soviet Union, for instance, economy, banking, finance, commerce, pedagogy, etc ... (see Liu 1993: 13).

In highly politicised China, the political leader's speech significantly influenced the direction of Chinese schooling. Liu's speech affected the international cooperation undertaken by scientific and academic communities throughout the country. Thereafter, in order to learn and accept the USSR's model of educational development, the Ministry of Education introduced comprehensive policy and implementation procedures as follows (Gao 1996: 7; Liu 1993: 13):

1) The Ministry of Education engaged a large group of Soviet scientists and experts as advisers in 1951 to participate in major educational decision-making, as well as in the overall national management of education;

2) The USSR's philosophy of education and pedagogy were fully introduced into Chinese schools. The pedagogical textbooks of Soviet educators were translated and published in Chinese versions, and were distributed around the country as the required reading of school teachers and educators;

3) The Russian language was given priority in the teaching of foreign languages in secondary schools and higher educational institutions;

4) The primary school system was changed from six years to five years under the direction of USSR educational advisers;

5) A series of textbooks for the 12-year primary and secondary program of schooling was edited and compiled along the lines of the USSR's 10 Years school system and textbooks

6) At the national policy level, the unified system of USSR education was the leading reference point for Chinese policy-makers in education, and all new policies made reference to the USSR's standards.

4.2.3 Centralisation of Textbook Development

Textbook, as the principal medium of knowledge transmission, was considered as the most effective tools in educating the young generation in China. Therefore, it is not surprising that revising old and developing new textbooks was an important part of the government's attempt to control the educational system. With the establishment of a new educational system, the Chinese government was convinced that the publication of textbooks should be centralised in order to ideologically control and cultivate revolutionary ideas among students. This intention was evident in the comments of the bureaucrat Lu Dingyi, the Minister of the Central Propaganda Ministry. According to Lu (1993: 147) "textbooks must be developed by the state, the contents of the textbooks can be maintained identical with the national policy only in this way". Lu's comments influenced textbook development in China for a

long time. Since then, every curriculum reform in China has been based on the revision or redevelopment of textbooks.

To ensure that textbook development was in conformity with government policy, a very specialised publishing agent, the People's Education Press (PEP), was set up in December 1950. It was accredited as the sole agent for developing textbooks for schools, including compiling, editing and publishing school textbooks. As a specialist governmental publishing agent, PEP was co-led by the Ministry of Education and the State Publishing Bureau (Liu 1993: 142). The Ministry of Education intervened in editing policy, editing and publishing plans as well as daily administration, while the State Publishing Bureau supervised publishing procedures, including distribution. As a school textbook publishing agent, PEP was very different from its counterparts domestically and internationally. Its entire editorial staff was engaged in writing textbooks rather than being purely desktop editors. The employment of staff was highly selective. The staff was well qualified with strong academic backgrounds in specialised areas and had a deep awareness of national policies that would ensure that the textbook development was consistent with national policy.

PEP undertook editing, examining, developing, researching and publishing textbooks for the whole country, which ensured that the official school curriculum was identical everywhere. PEP's first achievement in textbook development was for the twelve-years of primary and secondary schooling. The texts covered the subjects of Chinese language, mathematics, physics, biology, politics, foreign language etc. These book appeared in 1951, based strongly on the USSR's school textbooks, and adopted the format and contents of the textbooks used in the liberated areas. In the following years, until the 1990s, PEP developed and published eight series of school textbooks that were widely used in Chinese schools. Under the centralised system of textbook provision, PEP produced over 30 billion copies of school publications in the past forty-five years, making it the top textbook publisher with the largest number of publications in the world (People's Education Press 1995: 3).

4.2.4 Impact of Higher Education

After 1949, the centralisation of the primary and secondary systems was paralleled by centralisation in the tertiary education system (Guo et al 1989: 190). After 1949, ideological changes and controls were reinforced in the area of state education and a separate Ministry of Higher Education was established for the specialised supervision of tertiary education in China. In 1950, the Government Administrative Council issued *The Decision on the Leadership of Tertiary Institutions.* This decision (Government Administrative Council 1950) stated that "the tertiary institutions in the country are in principle to be co-led by the Ministry of Education of the People's Central Government". The document authorised universities to have a limited power of self-management in on-site policy-making on student enrolments and curriculum development. Furthermore, the *Regulations of Decentralisation of Educational Administration* that was issued by the Government Administrative Council in 1958 also stated,

> the Ministry of Tertiary Education must cooperate closely with relevant specialised departments in the People's Central Government, and carry out step by step the unified and centralised leadership of the national tertiary educational institutions (see Liu 1993: 18).

Since 1950, the main impact of tertiary education on secondary education has been the national university matriculation examination. This examination was held annually since its introduction in 1950 and was external, academic and centralised. The examination significantly influenced the teaching contents in schools and the teaching in schools must be identical with what the examination examined. Furthermore, because schools' reputations were largely based upon the students' rates of passing the examination, preparation for the examination became the main objective of school teaching, particularly at secondary schools.

4.3 Curriculum Reorganisation and the "Great Leap Forward" (1957 - 1966)

4.3.1 Politicalisation of Education

The Great Leap Forward was a politically driven campaign that dramatically changed curriculum development in China. During the period of 1958 to 1963, there was a partial transfer of responsibility for educational administration from the central government to the local authorities. This move to decentralisation in education was a result of demands for economic reform. But this devolution of educational management was partial and prudent, and there was a countervailing centralisation of leadership in education. This was evident in Mao's (Zhong 1993) statement of the aim of educational reform to "... try to enlarge a little bit of local authority on the condition of strengthening the central leadership"

As part of the decentralisation of education, curriculum development was conducted under two guidelines. The first was drawn up as part of the political slogan of "achieving greater, faster, better and more economic results" and "education should be revolutionised and the school system should be shortened", which appeared on wall posters in China after 1956. Under this guideline, in 1962, PEP began to revise the ten-year experimental curriculum program that students previously had to complete in 12 years. The second guideline reflected a simplification of teaching materials that was conducted in 1965 - 66. However, this simplification of teaching materials was not effective due to the advent of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

From 20 September to 9 October 1957, the Third Plenary of the Eighth Session of the Chinese Communist Party proposed three draft resolutions to bring about the devolution of management in state enterprises, industrial, commercial, financial and educational systems. The resolutions were carried by the People's Congress and officially promulgated by the State Council. In 1958, the Communist Party lodged a campaign for reforming economic management under the principle of unified leadership and centralised management. Under this policy, the central government centralised power to deal with the major policies and local governments were put in charge of the detailed implementations (Zhong, 1993).

In August 1958, the Central Communist Party and the State Council released *The Regulations on the Decentralisation of the Management of Educational Enterprises.* According to the Regulations:

> In order to fully support the initiatives of all the provinces, municipalities and administrative autonomy to run educational undertakings ...the dominant rules and regulations of educational leadership must be broken down; the authority of local management over educational enterprises will be reinforced on the basis of the principled combination of centralisation and decentralisation. The Ministry of Education as well as all relevant departments responsible for the work should concentrate on researching and implementing the educational policies of the Central Committee; comprehensively balancing and planning the development of educational enterprises; assisting the local Party's Committee to put into effect political education under the leadership of the Central Committee; directing the teaching and scientific research; organising the compilation of the nationally used teaching materials and textbooks; drafting the essential educational rules and regulations applicable to the whole country (see Liu 1993: 18).

In September 1958, in the Central Committee of the People's Communist Party and State Council issued *The Instructions on Educational Work.* The link between national unification and decentralisation was also expounded,

> in order to make educational enterprises achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results, ...a principle of combining unification and diversity, popularity and improvement, overall planning and decentralisation must be taken; the educational aim, which is to foster educated labourers with socialist awareness, is a national unified one, ...under the unified aim, the models of schools should be diversified (see Liu 1993: 19).

4.3.2 Conflicts of Educational Chaos

Chinese education has been full of political interventions since 1949. Educational researchers cannot ignore the politically driven Great Leap Forward during these years of 1957 - 1966. The Great Leap Forward witnessed political intervention in the curriculum development and management. In the period of 1957 to 1966, the famous three political campaigns of the Great Leap forward, "educational revolution" and Movement of People's Communes, brought the whole educational system into a state of chaos. The innovations in educational development turned out to be in vain.

The Great Leap Forward came as a result of political fanaticism and an overestimation of comprehensive national capacity (Gao 1996: 78 − 79; He 1993a:

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68 - 69). The political frenzy of overestimating the social, economic and educational status contributed to an unrealistic goal for schooling: the political leaders claimed they could double, even treble, the speed of developing state education (Gao 1996: 78), which almost resulted in the total destruction of the public educational system. Though this political fanaticism cooled down and the political faults were partly redressed in 1965, this great loss of the educational system could have been avoided if appropriate policies had been formulated.

4.4 Curriculum Dislocation during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976)

The late 1960s were probably the only period in which China had no centrally developed curriculum, textbooks or teaching programs. This was due to the Cultural Revolution. The national matriculation examination that was introduced in 1950 was abolished in 1966. The nationalised development of textbooks, which also began in 1950, was terminated when PEP ceased to exist in 1968 (Ye 1997: 12). After the abolishment of the national matriculation examination and the closure of PEP, textbooks were developed at the provincial and local levels. It was during this period that the central authority lost control of curriculum and textbook development and the whole educational system. That was why the central government restructured education after the Cultural Revolution was over in 1976 and centralised all aspects of education, including curriculum development for schools.

The Cultural Revolution began in 1966 and the public system of secondary education, as the main educational system, was totally destroyed. During the Cultural Revolution, education, as a social practice and a political tool, was highly politicised, anti-elitist and was considered a strong mechanism for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The "Gang of Four" [14] considered schools to be the base of the struggle for political power. The students, who were encouraged to be involved in political

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[14] The "Gang of Four" was a political clique in the Chinese Communist Party which consisted of Jiang Qing (Mao's wife), Zhang Chunqiao (former Deputy Prime Minister), Yao Wenyuan (Minister of Propagada) and Wang Hongwen (Former Deputy President). They were arrested in 1976.

struggle, were grouped and shifted from city to city to establish a so-called "revolutionary partnership". There were no standards for regulating centrally issued syllabi, no national guidelines and no mandatory curricula in schools. All the existing syllabi, programs and textbooks were rejected (Guo et al 1989: 43 - 45). Each school could develop its own curriculum and textbooks and decide on its own teaching plans, as well as contents and methods. Students attended classes not to learn basic scientific knowledge, but to read and recite Mao's Quotations. Political posters such as "it is useless to study" and "to stress intellectual development is to restore capitalism" misled the students, and it was fashionable to work and study in farms and factories. The subjects emphasised in schools centred on learning from workers, peasants and the People's Liberation Army with the central purpose of criticising capitalism (Lewin et al 1994: 152). Science courses of physics, chemistry and biology became the "by-products of productive work in farms and factories"(He 1993a: 109 - 111), while the political posters replaced courses in arts. Cleverley observed many posters about education during the Cultural Revolution in China. Some of the examples were as follows: "reduce and simplify the courses"; "run the schools in an open door way "; "reduce the students' burden"; "set up a three-in-one system in which teaching, scientific research and productive labour are closely integrated" (Cleverley 1981: 157).

Intense political ideology in education was witnessed during the Cultural Revolution as political posters and creeds replaced the system of knowledge in all the school textbooks. The case was especially notable in Chinese Language textbooks. Textbooks that were published by the provincial publishers were highly politicised

with collections of the political slogans and posters (Lewin et al 1994: 152). Simple commonsense replaced scientific knowledge and principles. Textbooks were always formatted with Mao Zedong's quotations on the cover page and on the back cover. Figure 4.2 provides an illustrative example of a textbook during the Cultural Revolution. The Figure illustrates the contents of a Chinese language textbook that was developed by Zhejiang People's Press for the primary schools in Zhejiang Province. It is clear that the textbook was full of political slogans.

Figure 4.2 Sample Contents of Textbook Developed during the Cultural Revolution

<u>Chinese Language</u>, Volume 1

(Zhejiang People's Press, 1st ed. 1970; 2nd ed. 1971; 3rd ed. 1972)

(Used for the first term of the first grade in primary school in Zhejiang Province)

Lesson 1 Long live Chairman Mao!

Lesson 2 Long live Mao Zedong thought!

Lesson 3 Long live the Communist Party of China!

Lesson 4 Long live the People's Republic of China!

Lesson 5 Long live the People's Liberation Army!

Lesson 6 Chairman Mao is the red sun in our hearts.

Lesson 7 The communist party is the best and Chairman Mao is the dearest.

Lesson 8 Mao Zedong's thought, like the brightest lamp, directs us to advance forward.

Lesson 9 In the orient rises the sun, in China appears Mao Zedong; he works for the happiness of the people, he is the great liberator of the people.

Lesson 10 Study well and make progress every day (Mao).

Lesson 11 Study Chairman Mao's work to become his good children.

Lesson 12 Learn from Zhang Side (a) and serve the people heart and soul.

Lesson 13 Learn from Bai Qiuen (b) and sacrifice our own interests for the sake of others.

Lesson 14 Learn the spirit of the Foolish Old Man (c) and remove all difficulties to win the victory.

Lesson 15 Chairman Mao teaches us to learn from workers, peasants and PLA men.

Notes

(a) Zhang Side was a soldier in the Eighth Army who died in the collapse of a charcoal kiln after a life of selfless service. Mao called others to follow the example of dedication that he set in 1944.

(b) Bai Qiuen (Henry Norman Bethune, 1890 – 1939) was a Canadian physician and communist who led a medical team to China in 1939. He died of a bacterial infection while trying to save wounded soldiers.

(c) The Foolish Old Man is a character in an ancient Chinese fable. He resolved to remove two large mountains that blocked the road to his home. Though ridiculed he persisted until eventually the task was completed, showing that anything can be achieved with confidence in one's own ability.

Source: Lewin, et al., 1994: 153

As there were no fixed curricula, textbooks, courses or classrooms for schools, the teachings were combined with productive work in the factory and field. Many schools and research institutions became the working sites or farmlands (Guo et al   ,

1989: 44). In some places, the worst situations were where political programs replaced educational programs. In Shanghai, Liaoning and other places, science courses in physics, chemistry and biology were abolished and courses in *"Knowledge of Industrial Production"* and *"Knowledge of Agricultural Production"* were introduced instead (Ye 1997: 13). Furthermore, an educational document that was prepared by a local government even outlined Mao Zedong's thought, fundamentals in agriculture, revolutionary literature and arts, military training and labour as the compulsory courses that secondary schools should teach (Liu 1993: 376).

4.5 Curriculum Restructure during the Post Cultural Revolution (1976 - 1984)

4.5.1 Educational Restoration

The Cultural Revolution ended when the "Gang of Four" was arrested in 1976, and China started an era of national economic restoration (Guo et al 1989: 45 - 46). During the course of all-round social and economic restoration, State education was also reorganised.

The central government was very aware that schooling had been destroyed and embarked on a program to rescue the system and to promote state education (Gao 1996: 229 - 230). Regulation of the system began with re-nationalising the educational system and textbook development that had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. PEP was reopened in 1976 to continue its work of developing national textbooks for schools. The national matriculation examination was also restarted in 1977 to select the best qualified students for tertiary education. The government also funded national curriculum research, which included modernising textbooks for schools and establishing the Curriculum Research Institution, as well as reorganising the publishing agent, the People's Education Press.

Updating the contents of textbook with new knowledge was another initiative that the government undertook to resuscitate public education. In the teaching program that was finalised in 1981, Chinese language, mathematics and foreign languages

were designated as the "new three subjects". A reading of Figure 4.3 shows that these three subjects were allocated over half of the yearly teaching time in secondary schools.

Figure 4.3 Teaching Program of 6-year Full-time Key Schools 1981 (Draft)

	Junior School			Senior School			Sum 3 years
	I	II	III	I	II	III	
politics	2	2	2	2	2	2	384
Chinese Literature	6	6	6	5	4	4	1000
mathematics	5	6	6	5	5	5	1026
Foreign Language	5	5	5	5	5	4	932
physics		2	3	4	3	4	500
chemistry			3	3	3	3	372
history	3	2		3			266
geography	3	2			2		234
biology	2	2				2	192
physical hygiene			2			2	64
physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2	384
music	1	1	1				100
arts	1	1	1				100
No of compulsory courses per week	30	31	31	29	26	26	5554
selective courses					4	4	240
labor skill	2 weeks			4 weeks			576

Resource: *Book of Major Educational Events in China* (Liu, 1993:377).

4.5.2 Reform and Open Policy

On 18 December 1978, the Chinese Communist Party held the historic Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress in Beijing. This event became a milestone in Chinese history and officially marked the beginning of China's market-style and the open-door policy, which have since radically transformed China's economy and society

(Wang & Wong 1999: 1). The famous "reform and open" policy[15] that was adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party at the Plenum exerted far-reaching influence on the Chinese economic development. China has sustained a rapid rate of economic development since the inauguration of its economic reform in 1979, with only short-lived interruptions (Boisot & Child 1996: 600).

The national policy of "reform and open" was of epoch-making significance. The policy brought the country a new era of national economic development and changed the direction of national development from one of closure and isolation into openness to the world (Wang & Wong 1999: 1-2). According to the Chinese Central Committee's agenda, the "reform and open" policy was first implemented in national economy, but brought all round changes in social, political, economic and educational policies.

Shortly after the Congress, a political and theoretical debate on the democratisation of national economic management was conducted to consider how to change the former centralised planning economic system. Before 1978, although limited authority had been delegated to local government, the economic system maintained centralised and national planning with the central government controlling the financial and monetary system.

After the "reform and open" policy was introduced, the highly centralised budget planning process was modified to reflect a balance of three levels: centre, province and locality, in which the latter two began to enjoy more freedom in planning. Budget planning was managed at different levels to encourage more initiatives by local governments and enterprises. With the decentralisation of economic planning, the national finance and monetary systems were also decentralised (Jiang 1997: 251 - 258).

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[15] The "reform and open" policy was adopted as a long-standing policy of national development at the Third Plenary of the Chinese Communist Party in 1979. From this policy, the Chinese government lodged a comprehensive reform of economic, political, educational and cultural structures and decided to open the whole country to the world.

Before 1978, the central Chinese government was the main financial provider of the educational development. With the reform of the economic system, the central government intended reducing the financial input in educational development and increasing the provincial and local responsibilities for educational development. The Ministry of Education also encouraged the involvement of communities in running education, and educational funding was also organised into three levels: centre, province and locality.

The introduction of "reform and open" policy by the Chinese Communist Party in 1978 was regarded as the third turning point[16] in China's twentieth-century history (Goodman 1994: 90). In the early 1980s, the national economy started to boom and educational enterprises developed as a political priority. In 1985, *the Law of Compulsory Education of the People's Republic of China* was officially promulgated. Educational management was practised in a lawful manner and further promoted the development of schooling. Government statistics for 1989 (He 1996b: 157) show that 97.87% of primary school-aged children attended schools by the end of the 1980s, and that the graduation percentage was 96.77%. Furthermore, in 1991, statistics (He 1996b: 156) indicate that there were 85,851 secondary schools in China (including 70,608 junior secondary schools and 15,243 high schools), the number of junior secondary school students was about 39.6 million and there were 7.2 million high school students.

4.5.3 Modernisation of School Textbooks

The previous simplification and devaluing of scientific knowledge in school textbooks swung back to more academic concerns after the Cultural Revolution. It had long been known that outmoded content plagued the existing curriculum and textbooks, as China had been isolated from the outside world. In 1977, Deng Xiaoping (1905 - 1997), the vice-premier of the Central government, was in charge of scientific research and educational development. He insisted that knowledge of

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[16] According to Goodman (Goodman 1994: 90), the first was the Xin Hai Revolution that was led by Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yet Sek) in 1911. The second was the Communist Revolution that was led by Mao Zedong in 1949.

modern science and technology should be updated into new textbooks, and textbooks from different countries should be used to develop the new curriculum and textbook in China (Ye 1997: 1). On 8 August 1977, at the Scientific and educational Forum, Deng said, "the key is the textbook, textbook should reflect an advanced level of modern science and culture and also meet the needs of the actual situation of our country" (Deng 1983: 52). He also stated that "teachers must teach the most advanced contents" (Deng 1980: 38) in schools.

Deng's speech on textbook development played an important role in the modernisation of Chinese textbooks and the reorganisation of textbook agent PEP. During 1977-79, the Ministry of Education employed 200 scientists, educators and experienced school teachers to work as writers and authors in the reorganised PEP to develop a new series of national primary and secondary textbooks. This series of textbooks, which was put into use in 1978, was a great help in formalising national educational development, and avoided unnecessary overlap in the system and the squandering of limited resources (Ye 1997: 15).

Learning lessons from international experience was one of Deng's priorities for textbook development. So, in 1981, not long after the reorganisation of the People's Education Press, an Overseas Textbooks and Resources Centre was set up in PEP and a special fund was authorised by the Ministry of Education to purchase mathematics, science and English textbooks from eth developed countries (Ye 1993: 2). This was the first opportunity for textbook authors to have access to textbooks from countries other than the USSR. In previous years, the government had always been on guard against the use of western textbooks as it wished to keep students free from the anti-socialist thoughts and ideas that such textbooks might carry.

It was a difficult task to redevelop the textbooks. Due to the political disaster of the Cultural Revolution, there were sharp disparities in educational quality from region to region, and the lack of academic development in textbooks had disadvantaged schools that did not have highly qualified teachers, school programs and facilities. To respond to these differences, the Ministry of Education issued a new teaching program in 1983. In the areas of Mathematics, physics and chemistry, two different   ,

curricula were developed to meet the new programs: one was an updated version of existing textbooks; the other was a brief version with some contents omitted. Under the guidelines of the new teaching program, the textbook supplier, PEP, started to develop A version and B version textbooks for schools. A version was high academic level textbooks for competitive academic schools, while B version was developed for vocational schools. Schools were authorised to make a choice between the two sets of textbooks, but, in practice, most schools continued to select A editions in an attempt to maintain their competitive position in the university entrance examinations (Liang 1984: 46).

4.5.4 Institutionalisation of Curriculum and Textbook Development

In the 1980s, curriculum and textbook development, which was regarded as the core of every educational reform in China (Ye 1997: 1), became the priority considerations in reorganising educational administration. The central government commissioned, delegated or authorised professional bodies to deliver and implement prescribed curriculum programs in Chines schools. In June 1983, the China Curriculum and Teaching Materials Research Institute (CCTMRI) was founded as a government research and consultative agency in PEP to provide research into the national curriculum. Thus, PEP became a government delegated textbook publisher and a research institution on curriculum and textbooks as well.

CCTMRI undertakes inquiries and consultations into the curriculum for primary, secondary and teacher training schools; research strategies of learning and curriculum theory and explores the system, and the structure of textbooks and subjects. It has, since its establishment, either undertaken, participated in or coordinated several national research projects like Studies on Reform of School Systems, Curriculum, Textbooks and Teaching Methods in Primary and Secondary Schools, and International Perspective on Curriculum and Textbooks. These projects were designed to investigate systematically the theory and practice of curriculum and textbook development in UK, France, Germany, Russia, Japan and USA. The purposes of these studies were to enlarge the view of curriculum development in developed countries to benefit curriculum development in China. In a nationally

funded project entitled Studies of Comprehensive Reform of Chinese Schooling, the Institute undertook research in curriculum structure, textbook systems and teaching content for nine-year compulsory education and high schools. All these studies were related to the policy-making of the national system of curriculum development.

Initiatives of international cooperation and exchange were also objectives that CCTMRI pursued, and the Institute established academic communications and relationships with international curriculum organisations in Japan, USA, UK, Russia and UNESCO, and were even funded by such organisations. CCTMRI produces a monthly academic publication, *Curriculum, Teaching Materials and Methods*. This is distributed domestically and internationally, and is aimed at school teachers as the primary readers.

It was hoped that the establishment of CCTMRI would greatly enhance the quality of curriculum and textbook development in China. Unfortunately, due to a shortage of funds, the institute did not conduct much quality research. In the end, although the establishment of the CCTMRI was dedicated to enhancing research on high quality school curriculum and textbooks, studies undertaken were often criticised as short-sighted and lacking in rigour rather than being systematic and theoretical.

4.5.5 Emergence of Private Schooling

Considered against the principle of equity in a socialist system, private education and schools were nationalised after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. But private education, or simply schools run by private sector organisations, had a long history in China. The private school founded by Confucius in the Spring and Autumn Era (about 11th century, B. C. - 256, B. C.) was a rudimentary form of private education in China and established a tradition of private schooling that existed until 1949.

Although *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China* encouraged independent corporations and organisations, democratic parties[17], people's organisations, collective economic organisations, social organisations to establish the Minban schools (community schools) according to government regulations, the government did not support to set up the private schools. At the end of 1970s, the tension between growing enrolments and the limited resources in public schools was increased, so private schools run by individual entrepreneur and companies emerged. Private schools were established in provinces and cities such as Sichuan, Nanjing, Shanghai and Beijing as an increasing part of community schools. He (1996b: 241) conducted a survey in Beijing, Tianjin and Henan Provinces and showed that 5 - 8% of these community schools provided higher education; 40 - 50% provided vocational training; 15 - 20% focused on adult literacy and 20 - 30% provided social life and leisure education. The research of He (1996b: 35) also showed that there were 1,467 private secondary schools and 8,925 private primary schools in China at the end of 1949, and in 1992 there were about 10 thousand schools run by the community resources[18].

The emergence of private education in the 1980s broke a long tradition by which government schools had monopolised Chinese education since 1949. The advent of private schools also reduced the stress of financial responsibility on the central government for some educational enterprises. The government's function in managing schools changed. The central government, local government and the community shared the accountability for the funding of schools at different levels. The private model of education was legislated for and promoted by Chinese political leaders. According to the Constitution (He 1996b: 242) that was enacted by the Fifth

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[17] Apart from the dominant party - the Chinese Communist Party - mainland China has nine minority parties, usually called democratic parties: Revolutionary Committee of the Kuomingtang; China Democratic League; China Democratic National Construction Association; China Association Promoting Democracy; China Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party; China Zhi Gong Dang; Jiu San Society; Taiwan Democratic Self-Government; National Industry and Commercial Association.

[18] All school sponsors other than the government in China are referred to as community resources.

Plenum of the National People's Congress in 1982, "the state encourage collective economic organisations, national industrial organisations and other community resources to establish a variety of educational undertakings according to the requirements of the law." The official document of State Education Commission (He 1996b: 243) also reiterated that "Schools run by the community resources are a component part of the educational undertaking of the country and the supplementary part of the government schools." *The Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure* also stated that it was the intention of the government to

> reform the school system and change to the situation that the government runs all the schools and gradually establish a system in which the government bears the main duties of schools while the community resources can also run schools as a supplementary form (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 2).

Political leaders' speeches also reinforced the government's intention to decentralise the responsibility for education. In the report of the Fourteenth Congress of the People's Communist Party, the General Secretary Jiang Zemin (He 1996b: 243) announced the central government's intention to "change the situation that the government runs all the schools, and encourage different ways of social resources to establish schools." Li Ping, the then Premier of China, also said (He 1996b: 243) that the government would "positively explore a new system in which the government and the community resources run schools together and a model of diversification of schools." Premier Zhu Rongji affirmed that as long as non-state run schools[19] operate in the context of relevant stae laws and regulations they should be encouraged (China News Newsagency 1999: 1). These comments helped the growth of private education and influenced the implementation of decentralisation of responsibilities in education in the late 1980s.

4.5.6 Censorship of Textbook Development

The late 1980s were important years in which the dominant national system of textbook development was broken down into localised and diversified development.

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[19] The non-state run schools refer to the Minban schools (community schools) and private schools.

In 1986, Li Tieying, the then Minister of Education, remarked at a meeting on Chinese schooling that, to further develop Chinese primary and secondary education, the Chinese system should break from one set of textbooks to multiple textbooks in Chinese schools. In 1986, the State Education Commission introduced a policy of encouraging diversification of textbook development throughout the country and provided centrally specified basic requirements to be complied with. Since that time, where conditions permitted, regional educational authorities, teaching and research institutions, publishers, individuals and experienced teachers were encouraged to develop textbooks for subjects taught in primary and secondary schools in compliance with the basic requirements set forth in the syllabuses. Under such a policy of diversification, there were eight series of textbooks developed and they were quickly provided to the schools in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Sichuan (Yu 1997: 12).

Diversification of textbook development enlivened China's textbook market, but there were problems of maintaining textbook quality. For example, one local publisher produced textbook that included depiction of violence and stories of prostitution. These contents aroused strong public anger. Under this circumstance, it was imperative for the government to control of the quality of textbook development. In 1987, the Ministry of Education formed the National Examining Committee of School Textbooks to supervise and control the quality of textbook development.

The aims of the committee were to be:

> an examining organisation, under the leadership of the State Education Commission, for the teaching guidelines and teaching materials for all subjects in the primary and secondary schools. The Committee examines all the teaching materials in the primary and secondary schools (Wu 1993: 151 - 152).

The work of the National Examining Committee of School Textbooks was significant in enhancing the quality of textbooks developed by different groups and publishers. The Committee examined all textbooks that were developed by different groups, universities, scientific research institutions and publishers and introduced a policy of textbook recommendation. The textbooks that were successfully examined would be catalogued and recommended by the Committee for use in schools.

4.6 Legislation for Decentralisation (1985 -)

4.6.1 Decentralisation of Educational Administration

As discussed above, the power of decision making of curriculum formulation and implementation has been long integrated in China. In curriculum implementation, terminology like "decentralisation" or "devolution" was not strange to Chinese educators. Shortly after the foundation of the New China, the government introduced the Principal Managerial System[20] in schools. In 1952, the central Ministry of Education promulgated the *Temporary Regulations of Primary Schools (Draft)*. According to the Regulations, school principals were to be responsible for the day-to-day management of the school. *The Regulation* stated: "schools take the policy of the Principal Managerial System. Appoint one principal in each school to handle all sorts of business within schools" (Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development 1991: 103). School principals were authorised to supervise school operations and curriculum implementation. But in terms of the development of the syllabus, curriculum and school textbooks, the interchangeably used terms "decentralisation" and "devolution" were definitely new concepts, because the Chinese government had exercised tough policies of maintaining a centralised syllabus, curriculum and textbooks prior to 1978.

However, taking an overview of the status of Chinese education, decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development started with the change of state management of the economic system. Before 1978, discussions on devolution or the decentralisation of state enterprises was forbidden by ideological control in the highly centralised system of state management. As stated above, the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, held in 1978, unfroze the long centralist entrenched system of the national economy. The Report that the Plenum issued stated

> the economic system of our country is excessively centralised and should be daringly decentralised in a planned way. The most imperative task at present is

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[20] In this system, the principal is a decision-maker within the schools

> to expand autonomy to the industrial enterprises and production brigades (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1978: 18).

In 1984, *The Decision of Reform of the Economic System* (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1984) issued by the Central Committee of the People's Communist Party could be seen as a substantial part of the reform and open policy. *The Decision* (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1984) declared that the ownership and management of the state enterprises would be separated. In doing so, the government would reduce rigid central control over the national economy, devolve control over state-owned enterprises to the provinces and encourage non-state-owned enterprises. Furthermore, the role of the government would be changed from managing the enterprises into making overall policy and serving the enterprises.

One year later (1985), the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party promulgated *the Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure*. The decision reviewed the perceived backward situation of Chinese education and asserted that the "inappropriate educational structure" was attributable to

> the government delegations highly controlled the management of schools and universities, which resulted in the lack of autonomy (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 2).

This document insisted that the responsibility for developing basic education should be handed over to local governments:

> The Central Committee holds that the situation must be changed thoroughly through systematic reform starting with the educational system. Reforming the administrative system, with the reinforcement of macro-management, simplifying administration and decentralisation must be firmly undertaken to increase the schools' authority to run themselves (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 3).

With regard to the responsibilities of managing basic education, the document stated:

> to follow the principle of localising the responsibilities of managing the basic education in different levels is an important step to develop the country's educational enterprises and reform the educational structure of the country (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 3).

The *Decision* also stated:

> the authority of administering basic education belongs to local governments Except for major policy and centralised plans to be developed by the central government, the responsibilities and authorities concerning the decision-making of detailed policy, systems and plans as well as leadership, administration and inspection of schools are handed over to local governments (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party 1985: 4).

In 1986, *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China 1999) was promulgated. *Compulsory Education Law* was another highly authoritative document announcing changes to the existing school curriculum, as well as insisting that the school system fitted in with new national economic priorities. Since then, there has been a national campaign to restructure the curriculum and textbooks in schools. The emphasis of the campaign has been on the popularisation of nine-year compulsory education and the devolution of the administration of basic education.

Decentralisation in education also included devolution of accountability for financial input in education. Since the early 1980s, successful economic developments have amplified local finances, and many local governments found it necessary to devolve finance and enlarge the responsibilities of educational management to lower levels of government or to the community.

By sharing the responsibility for educational finance, local governments have been authorised as the decision-making power in the management of local schools. With the devolution of responsibilities in education, schools and local governments were allowed to raise funds for local schooling (Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development 1991: 109). In the rural areas, the townships and villages were forced to bear the major financial responsibility for the construction of school buildings, and the purchase of equipment and furniture. In the cities, the councils of districts and communities have, since 1985, arranged the majority of the finance for school buildings, teaching equipment, resources and furniture (Wu 1991: 279 - 282). The government subsidises about one-third of expenditure in these circumstances. The state appropriation is paid through local revenue according to a centralised formula,

which has created a situation that is popularly referred to as "the central hosts the banquet, the local foots the bill".

In Chinese school finance, the teachers' salaries are the largest part of educational expenditure. Traditionally, primary and secondary teachers are classified as "public" teachers or "community" teachers according to the different authorities that pay their salaries. The sources of finance for "public" teachers' salaries are local revenues deducted from the state appropriation, while the "community" teachers are paid through local taxes. Decentralisation of educational finance also shifted the financial source of the teachers' salaries from central finance to local government and community. According to government statistics (State Education Commission 1993: 260, 266, 268), about 37 per cent of all primary school teachers and 47 per cent of all rural primary school teachers were community teachers in 1992. The community paid the salaries of these teachers with minimal government subsidy[21]. In addition, about 5.4 per cent of the total educational expenditure in 1992 came from school-created incomes (State Education Commission & Shanghai Institute of Human Resource Development 1993: 5). Devolution in education created limited school autonomy but made schools heavily reliant on local resources.

4.6.2 Decentralisation and Curriculum Development

Since 1978, there have been substantial disagreements the national curriculum and the textbooks in the course of restructuring the school system. Conservative commentators insisted that the central government could not stop exercising its control of the development of a national curriculum for schools. However, reformers maintained that national guidelines, curriculum and textbooks advantaged the schools in the economically developed areas, but disadvantaged schools in the economically undeveloped areas According to Li (1994: 69):

> We must cast off the long conventional, monopolised model of thousands of schools of having one style and one textbook. We must also cut off the uniform school model, uniform teaching plan, uniform syllabus and textbooks, uniform

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[21] The funds from community schools are mainly drawn from parents' compulsory contribution.

> teaching methods and examinations. We must create conditions for schools to be run in their own style. Teachers could create their own teaching style, and the students could develop their personalities individually.

Li (1994: 69) continued his comments:

> to create situations for schools to run in their own style, the authority of running education must be genuinely devolved ... to make the schools form their own style and select their own curriculum, teaching content, methods and examination.

With the implementation of the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* in 1995, the Chinese State Education Commission made efforts to make the curriculum in schools more student-based. The central educational authority followed up two basic strategies. Firstly, the State Education Commission upgraded the curriculum in schools and placed more emphasis on the intelligent development of school children in the rural areas. The upgraded curriculum largely reduced the learning loads of students and curriculum content. It emphasised the acquisition of basic skills and concepts in learning all subjects and diversified curriculum to allow more elective subjects and extracurricular activities. Secondly, the monopoly of the PEP in textbook development was broken down and it was replaced by a modified system of curriculum and textbook development. In 1993, the State Education Commission changed the textbook censorship system from a mandated system to an examining system. In the mandated system, the State Education Commission authorised delegations to develop textbooks for schools. However, with the introduction of the examining system, the qualified publishers enjoyed the equal opportunity to develop textbooks for schools and underwent the same standards of textbook censorship. The textbooks that passed the textbook censorship would be used in schools in different areas. These systematic changes substantially influenced textbook development, because the mandated system could only allow one national textbook, while under the examining system, the government encouraged as many qualified publishers as possible to develop textbooks for schools.

Following the decentralised guidelines by 1993, eight publishers had been accredited to produce different versions of textbooks to meet regional needs (Yu 1997: 12). While PEP still caters for the needs of the majority of regions and provinces,

Guangdong Education Press produced a "coastal version" to be used in schools among the provinces of the coastline, especially the southeastern coastal Guangdong and Fujian provinces. Shanghai Education Publishing House produced a "Shanghai version" to be used in the well-developed Shanghai district. Zhejiang province developed a "Zhejiang version" for the relatively developed countryside (Yu 1997: 12 - 13). Different publishers and local governments also developed further versions.

Devolution of textbook development to local educational authorities diversified the provision of textbooks. Figure 4.4 illustrates different textbooks that were developed by various publishers. However, it should be mentioned that, because of the lack of professional experience in developing textbooks, almost all the publishers followed the styles of the PEP textbooks in developing their own textbooks.

Figure 4.4 Textbooks Developed in China after 1988

Publisher/Supplier	Version	Level	Supplying Area
People's Education Press	five-four system[22] six-three system[23] post-compulsory education	all levels	Apply to the whole country
Beijing Normal University	five-four system	all levels	Beijing district
Shanghai Education Publishing House / East China Normal University	Shanghai version	all levels	Shanghai district
Sichuan Education Commission / Sichuan Education Publishing House	Sichuan version	all levels	old, minority and remote areas[24]
Guangdong Educational Commission / Guangdong Education Publishing House	nine-year compulsory education	all levels	coastline district
Zhejiang Educational Commission / Zhejiang Education Publishing House	rural version	all levels	rural area in Zhejiang Province
Eight Normal Universities	cooperative version	all levels	key high schools (did not complete)

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[22] It denotes that schools run five years in primary sector and four years in secondary sector.

[23] It denotes that schools run six years in primary sector and three years in secondary sector.

[24] The old areas refer to the old liberated areas like Yan'an. The minority areas indicate the areas where the minority people live, like Tibet and Yunnan. Remote areas are the areas that have boundaries with other countries like Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia which border Russia and Mongolia respectively.

4.7 Summary and Commentary

In this chapter, I reviewed curriculum development at different stages in the recent history of China. In particular, I outlined the historical background in which the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development occurred during the period under study: 1985 - 1995.

The review showed that Chinese education was full of political intervention that generally resulted in greater centralisation in education and curriculum development. There were different characteristics of centralisation and devolution of educational management and curriculum development at different stages.

Before 1949, decentralisation of education was only a political ideal but never became a reality. Education was not well developed due to social turbulence and military conflicts. From 1949 to 1978, apart from the period of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 - 76, education in China was mainly centralised by the Chinese Communist Party with centralised syllabus, guidelines, teaching programs, curriculum, textbooks and examinations. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the school system was centralised by the central government based upon ideological considerations and learning from the former USSR. During this period, the central government and its delegations centrally developed the syllabus, teaching program, curriculum and textbooks. Schools in China implemented exactly the same teaching program, curriculum and textbooks. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese education was almost destroyed by political conflicts. The Ministry of Education abolished the national matriculation examination in 1966 and closed the textbook agent PEP in 1968. Local curriculum and textbooks replaced the national curriculum and textbooks. This period witnessed turmoil in curriculum and textbook development. That was probably the main reason that the central Chinese government rapidly centralised education after the "Gang of Four" was arrested and the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976.

In terms of decentralisation of educational management, the period from 1978 to 1995 was important for the Chinese government as it began to restructure education with a strategy of decentralisation. During this period, Chinese education initially

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underwent a partial and gradual devolution in curriculum and textbook development. Some political events highlighted the efforts of decentralisation of responsibilities in education. First was the national policy of "reform and open" that was introduced by the Chinese Communist Party in 1978. The introduction and implementation of this epoch-making policy brought unprecedented economic reform and social change. Overwhelming reform in the Chinese economy prompted decentralisation of educational administration. Second was the *Decision of Reform of the Educational Structure* that was released by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in 1985 declaring the introduction of centralised leadership with decentralised management. The transformation of educational administration gave new life to Chinese education and broke down the tradition of monopoly curriculum development in China.

The *Decision of Reform of the Educational Structure* was the most significant document that influenced Chinese education in terms of the decentralisation of responsibility in education. With the release of the *Decision*, for the first time, the idea of decentralisation of educational administration was officially documented and endorsed by the central government. It was this document that changed Chinese education from a status of strong centralisation into partial and gradual devolution. And also for the first time, centralised textbook development was diversified from a one-syllabus-one-textbook model into a one-syllabus-multiple-textbook model. Under these circumstances, different textbook developers developed eight series of textbooks for schools in different areas. For the purpose of this thesis, it is significant that the devolution package contributed directly to systematic changes in educational development in the City of Shanghai.

CHAPTER FIVE

DECENTRALSIATION AND CURRICULUM

DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA: SHANGHAI MODEL (1985-1995)

In Chapter Four, I outlined the historical background of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in China. This chapter focuses on the process of decentralisation of educational administration and curriculum development from the central to the provincial level as it occurred in the provincial City of Shanghai.

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Four, decentralisation of educational management emerged in China in the middle of the 1980s when the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party initiated reform of the Chinese educational structure. In this reform, the central educational authority authorised the Shanghai Education Commission to conduct a pilot project to establish a tentative provincial system of autonomy in curriculum development. This authorisation enabled the Shanghai educational authority to develop its own curriculum and textbooks for Shanghai schools.

As stated in Chapter Four, the introduction of "reform and open" policy in 1978 economically boomed the country and brought a market style economy to China. Since 1978, trade barriers have been removed, the protection of domestic products was reduced and exchange rates were conditionally deregulated. These radical economic changes resulted in the ideological disintegration of the previously centrally controlled style of management. Decentralisation of decision-making in educational development became a national strategy to meet the goals of national economic development and, to a degree, broke down the traditional values in the state-owned educational industry.

The most remarkable innovation in the Chinese educational system was the devolution of educational administration in Shanghai, which was endorsed by the central educational authority in the 1980s. The school system in Shanghai was restructured and labelled as China's "special educational zone" for piloting the future direction of the Chinese educational structure and system. In this way, Shanghai became the focus of attention in the national educational community.

Given the move towards decentralised authority in economic and educational governance in the 1980s, the central government sought to establish a political compromise in the sharing of responsibilities for financial support in China's educational industry. Due to its political and economic position in China, the City of Shanghai was selected as a pilot zone to develop a new school system that would potentially be introduced to the whole country in the future. From this point of view, educational devolution was not the result of democratic progress, but of perceived political needs to share responsibilities for educational governance and to avoid power conflicts between the central and local authorities.

5.2 Shanghai: China's Economic and Industrial Centre

Shanghai is the largest city in China and the third largest in the world. It is the most commercialised city in inner China except for Hong Kong. It is the dragon head of the Yantzi Delta economic zone and is the most economically developed city due to its geographic location on the coastline of the Yantzi River, which makes Shanghai an excellent harbour. Shanghai has a land area of 6,340 square kilometres, which is about 0.06% of the entire Chinese landmass; Shanghai has a population of 13.01 million, which is about 1.1 % of the whole Chinese population. The density of the population is 2,057 per square kilometre and there are 4,672 people per square kilometre in the inner city (Liu 1996: 124).

Shanghai is one of the four directly administrated municipalities[25] in China (the other three cities are Beijing, Tianjian and Chongqing) and enjoys a status equal to that of an administrative province. The City of Shanghai itself is administratively divided

into central city districts, suburban districts and suburban counties[26]. In the central city area, there are ten suburban districts: Changning, Hongkou, Huangpu, Jing'an, Luwan, Nanshi, Putuo, Xuhui, Yangpu and Zhabei. In the middle zone between the central urban districts and suburban counties, there are four suburban districts: Baoshan, Jiading, Minhang and Pudong. The suburban counties are Chongming, Fengxian, Jinshan, Nanhui, Qingpu and Songjiang. The Statistics in Figure 5.1 show the land area, population and population density of districts and counties in Shanghai.

Figure 5.1: Statistics of Land Area, Population & Population Density in Shanghai

District	Area (sq. km.)	Populatio n (10,000)	Populatio n Density (p/sq.km)	District (County)	Area (sq.km)	Population (10,000)	Populatio n Density (p/sq.km)
Baoshan	424.63	72.28	1,702	Minhang	370.75	55.96	1.509
Changning	38.30	61.16	15,968	Nanhui*	687.66	70.04	1,018
Chongming*	1041.21	71.30	685	Nanshi	7.87	47.26	60,049
Fengxian*	687.39	51.88	755	Pudong	522.75	151.11	2,891
Hongkou	23.48	81.51	34,713	Putou	54.83	83.15	15,166
Huangpu	4.54	26.77	58,964	Qingpu*	675.54	45.69	676
Jiading	458.80	47.74	1,041	Songjiang*	605.64	49.42	816
Jing'an	7.62	38.92	51,082	Xuhui	54.76	82.29	15,028
Jinshan*	586.05	55.08	940	Yangpu	52.13	107.13	20,550
Luwan	8.05	38.50	47,823	Zhabei	28.50	67.24	23,593

Note: 1. The figure was developed with reference to the statistics in *Shanghai: Basic Facts*, China Intercontinental Press, 1997:5-9.

    2. * Indicates the "counties".

    3. The statistics for the population and population density were taken from the census at the end of 1996.

Shanghai is China's industrial center. In 1995, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Shanghai reached 247.277 billion yuan (*Renminbi*[27]). For four consecutive years from 1991 until 1995, the economic growth rate of Shanghai exceeded 14% per annum

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[25] These cities are provincial cities that are directly administrated by the central government.

[26] The "district" in the City of Shanghai is equivalent to a suburban "city" in Melbourne such as the City of Monash; the county is an administrative unit equivalent to the Shire in Britain and Australia.

[27] The Renminbi Yuan is the Chinese monetary unit.

(Liu 1996: 124). The proportion of the GDP generated by Shanghai in the national total increased to 40.1% in 1995 (Shanghai Social Science Academy 1995: 51).

As a world-renowned metropolis, Shanghai has enjoyed a worldwide reputation as China's economic and financial centre, and China's reform and open policy in 1978 vitalised the local economic development in this industrialised city. Firstly, Shanghai was listed as one of the opening cities[28] on the southeast coastline by the Chinese central government in 1994. Secondly, the Shanghai-based Yangtse River Delta became one of the three Economic Opening Zones (ESZ) in 1985.[29] Thirdly, Special Economic and Technological Zones were developed around the City of Shanghai to attract foreign finance and new high technology industries. Recent examples are the Minhang Economic Technological Zone and the New Hongqiao Economic and Technological Zone. Finance and investors flowed into these zones mainly from overseas, and the capitalist style of enterprise/company management in these areas exerted a subtle influence on the traditional values of the socialist style of management of the past.

The new policy of economic construction in China brought Shanghai new challenges as well as opportunities. Shanghai became a popular worldwide investment site for international investors in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In April 1990, when the central Chinese government made a firm decision to develop the New Pudong area with a policy of favourable taxation deduction, Shanghai became the focus of global

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[28] The policy of "opening cities" was one of the strategies of implementation of the national "reform and open" policy. The "open cities" means that these cities are authorised by the central government to trade directly and establish direct commercial relationship with overseas countries. In May 1994, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council approved 14 opening cities along China's coastline. These cities are Dalian (Liaoning Province), Qinhuang Island (Hebei Province), Tianjin, Yantai and Qingdao (Shandong Province), Lianyungang and Nantong (Jiangsu Province), Shanghai, Ningbo and Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province), Fuzhou (Fujian Province), Guangzhou (Guangdong Province), Zhanjiang (Hainan Province) and Beihai (Guangxi Province). Subsequently, the State Council granted two other Shandong cities -- Yingkou and Weihai equal treatment to that of the opening cities and some of the autonomies respectively in March 1995 and September 1997.

[29] The central and local governments established Special Economic Zones to attract international investment in trade and manufacture. There were usually free trade zones in these areas. The Chinese government did not take tax or deduct tax on the products that were produced in these areas for overseas market. The other two Special Economic Zones were the Pearl River Delta Zone in Guangdong Province and Minnan Delta Zone in Fujian Province.

investment in general and in the Pudong area in particular (Yeh 1996: 274). The policy of opening up China to foreign investment, which had become firmly established by the start of the 1990s, ensured that Shanghai would experience rapid economic and industrial growth.

The decision of the central Chinese government to develop the New Pudong area (eastern Shanghai slums area) was enacted with no financial support from central finance, but a policy of favourable taxation deductions gave much impetus to economic and industrial development in Shanghai. State-owned industrial structures were greatly changed with an increasing emphasis on the development of the flourishing tertiary sectors (*di san chan ye*)[30]. In 1995, the tertiary industries of Shanghai grew by 98.732 billion yuan (*Renminbi*) (Liu 1996: 124). The favourable development policy of taxation deduction also attracted tremendous financial flows from international investors into Shanghai. Evidence of this remarkable development is the fact that "after Pudong was established as a new open area in 1990, the amount of foreign investment in 1992 alone was equivalent to that of the entire preceding decades" (Yeung & Sung 1996: 11). During the 1980s, Shanghai attracted a total of US$3.3 billion in foreign investment (Yeung & Sung 1996: 11). By 1995, more than 100 top multinational corporations entered the Shanghai market to establish their projects, branches or representative offices. Statistics (Shanghai Social Science Academy 1995: 10) showed that by the end of 1995, there were a total of 15,552 foreign-funded projects in Shanghai with the agreed investment reaching 43.92 billion US dollars. In the same year, the turnover of Shanghai's imports and exports reached 19.056 billion US dollars.

The rapid social, economic and industrial changes in Shanghai were said by the local officials to require a dynamically structured educational industry to supply skilled workers for the new industries. The national educational system, which was expected to meet the general aims of schooling of the entire country, could not also meet the industrial and social needs in Shanghai. It seemed inevitable for Shanghai to

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[30] The tertiary industrial sector indicates the service industries in China like tourism, food manufactures.

establish an independent system of education to meet its own goals of economic development.

5.3 Education in Shanghai: An Overview

Shanghai has a large educational system and a long tradition of educational excellence. Due to its geographical position and economic advantage, Shanghai has been China's meeting point of eastern and western cultures since the 19th century and the cradle of the modern Chinese school system. Education was styled along western lines more in Shanghai than in other cities in China. One of the great features of the Shanghai educational system was that it had been forced to take new initiatives and adapt to social changes from time to time (Mak & Lo 1996: 378). For example, before 1949, under the Nationalist government, both government and private schools were established in Shanghai and modern westernised schools and traditional schools coexisted for a long period. The ideas and thoughts of Chinese and western educators, such as Cai Yuanpei, Tao Xingzhi and John Dewey and Paul Monroe influenced the philosophy of school changes. Local practice was also influenced by the ideas advocated by Huang Yanpei when he set up the first modern vocational school in Shanghai in the early 1920s. At this time, domestic educators and foreign visitors introduced Western strategies of teaching and learning, IQ testing and a coeducational system. Shanghai was also at the forefront of Chinese higher education. Even in 1949, Shanghai took the lead in higher education. Of 205 universities in China at that time, 41 of them were in Shanghai (20% of all the Chinese universities), yet its population was only 1.43% of the whole nation's population. Among the Shanghai universities, Fudan University, Tongji University, Shanghai Jiaotong (Communications) University and St John's University (later merged with East China Normal University) were regarded as the top universities in China (Mak & Lo 1996: 378) at that time.

Shanghai has an intensive system of secondary education and this system has been growing rapidly since the 1980s. Statistics compiled by the Shanghai Education Commission (Shanghai Education Commission 1998: 2) and reproduced in Figure 5.2 show the capability of schools and universities in Shanghai. According to the

statistics in Figure 5.2, there were 21,200 postgraduates, 165,100 tertiary students, 738,500 secondary students, 107,200 vocational school students and 961,400 primary school students in Shanghai in 1998. Figure 5.2 demonstrates that, although there are fewer secondary students than primary students, the number of secondary students is still about six times greater than the number of vocational students and about five times greater than the number of tertiary students.

Figure 5.2: Statistics of Schools and Universities in Shanghai (1998)

	No. of Schools	No. of Graduates	No. of Enrolments	students in schools	No. of Teachers (total)	F/T Teachers
Total	3,611	64.23	63.61	242.39	26.31	14.88
1. school of graduate studies	57	0.46	0.79	2.12		
a. higher institution	22	0.42	0.73	1.95		
b. research institution	35	0.04	0.06	0.17		
2. universities/college	40	3.62	4.88	16.51	6.21	2.01
a. official enrolment		3.07	4.88	15.96		
b. contract students		0.32		0.33		
c. full fee paying students				0.19		
d. teacher training (4&2 years)		0.23		0.04		
2. secondary institutions	1139	31.70	35.76	101.94	10.61	6.18
a. secondary school	87	2.73	4.29	12.38	1.36	0.54
technical secondary school	85	2.51	4.20	12.15	1.31	0.52
secondary teacher's school	2	0.22	0.09	0.23	0.05	0.02
b. polytechnic school	129	1.03	1.97	4.99	0.97	0.30
a. secondary school	846	25.05	25.67	73.85	7.58	4.93
senior school		4.61	7.98	20.72		1.24
junior school		20.44	17.69	53.13		3.69
d. vocational school	77	2.89	3.83	10.72	0.70	0.41
senior school		2.89	3.82	10.69		
junior school			0.01	0.03		
2. primary school	1,382	17.66	11.39	96.14	6.67	4.96
3. special school	36	0.07	0.07	0.52	0.16	0.10
4. working training school	13	0.09	0.09	0.25	0.06	0.03
7. kindergarten	944	10.63	10.63	24.91	2.60	1.60

Source: Collection of Shanghai Educational Statistics: 1998 – 1999. Unit: 10,000

Notes: 1. Higher institutions include figures from the Shanda College run by social resources.

2. *Enrolment figures for kindergarten indicate the number of 3 - 4 year-old children enrolled in the year.*

3. The figures for technical school were drawn from statistics referring to the end of 1997 and abstracted from *1998 Yearbook of Shanghai Statistics.*

Moreover, from Figure 5.3, we can see that among secondary schools, the number of schools in the metropolitan area is three times greater than that in the suburban counties. Accordingly, the number of classes in schools is over three times greater than that in the counties. In addition, the enrolments of students in public schools in Shanghai have dramatically increased since the end of 1970s. In this case, the traditional centrally funded system of school finance has encountered greater pressure than ever before. This pressure forced the national and municipal governments to undertake a heavier burden of financial support in schools. Also, public security was threatened by the increasing criminal activities of unemployed students who had failed the examination for entry to tertiary education in universities. The public believed that the more students enrolled in universities, the fewer crimes would be committed by teenagers. Under such circumstances, it was imperative for the Shanghai government to create opportunities to place more students in universities. However, the national regulations for enrolments in tertiary education restricted universities in Shanghai from enlarging the intake of secondary graduates.

Figure 5.3 Statistics of Secondary schools, classes and students in Shanghai (1998)

	Entire city	Metropolitan areas	Country	Education centres
Number of schools	**846**	**697**	**149**	**9**
Combined school	254	223	31	4
Senior school	74	64	10	
Junior school	518	410	108	5
Classes	**15,785**	**13,378**	**2,407**	**176**
Junior school	11,433	9,599	1,834	131
Senior school	4,352	3,779	573	45
Number of students	**682,193**	**574,553**	**107,640**	
Junior school	505,048	424,411	80,637	
Senior school	177,145	150,142	27,003	

Note: Developed from statistics in *Shanghai Education Statistics: 1998 – 1999, p.19*

Secondary education in Shanghai has been highly selective and the distribution of students varies at secondary schools from level to level. Figure 5.4 shows the number

of students who dropped from the lower level to the higher level. In 1998, the total number of students at junior schools in Shanghai was 531,313, but there were only 207,186 students at the senior level. The apparent decline of enrolments may be attributable to the highly selective examination at the end of junior school. There was a leaving examination at the end of junior school, and this examination became more and more selective after the 1980s. It constituted the biggest hurdle that students had to overcome in order to enter higher education. The reason for the decline in enrolment may also be attributable to a malady in the existing school system. For successful students, the passing of the national university entrance examination[31] is a symbol of their social recognition and the realisation of their self-fulfilment. Therefore, students are more and more stressed by preparation for the university entrance examination, when they are approaching the higher level of schooling. The boring and exam-driven life in school has resulted in a considerable number of students playing truant and dropping out (Wang 1990: 45).

Figure 5.4 Statistics of Primary and Secondary Students by Levels (1998)

	Entire city	Metropolitan areas	Counties	Education centres
Total	738,499	625,177	113,322	7,066
Junior school (sum)	531,313	447,128	84,185	5,314
Level 1	178,409	148,845	29,564	1,895
Level 2	166,595	140,571	26,024	1,629
Level 3	185,922	157,523	28,399	1,790
Level 4	387	189	198	
Senior school (sum)	207,186	178,049	29,137	1,752
Level 1	80,376	70,162	10,214	619
Level 2	72,693	62,396	10,297	702
Level 3	54,117	45,491	8,626	431

Source: Collection of Shanghai Educational Statistics: 1998 – 1999, p.19. Unit: Per person

Different typology of schools emerged in Shanghai since the introduction of "reform and open" policy in 1978. In the government system, there are basically two kinds of schools in Shanghai: one kind is run as a primary or secondary school; the other kind is the combined school, which has primary and secondary schools together. The

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[31] The examination is the university equivalent of the matriculation examination.

latter may occupy different campuses, but combined schools have the same school system and policy throughout the school. In addition, two kinds of non-government schools were established in 1993 with resources from social communities and overseas/private investors (Liu & Hu 2000: 4). The community schools are usually existing schools that local communities financially support the running cost of the schools with government subsidy. As the local communities support these schools, these schools are also known as Minban school (people run schools) or "schools-run-by-people". The government subsidises these schools with some funds to cover part of the running costs. In addition, commercial companies or private investors have established private schools, which are totally run by the commercial companies or private investors. These schools, community or private, offer more flexible courses and programs than government schools.

The popularity of secondary education has contributed significantly to the social development of Shanghai. As a cultural, economic and industrial centre, the population's general level of educational attainment is higher than the national average (On & Hook 1998: 131; White 1999). Most people have completed the secondary level of schooling. On average, an adult citizen of Shanghai will have had 7.4 years of education, whereas the national average is 4.5 years (Deng et al 1991: 165). 40 per cent of members of the labour force attended senior secondary education, whereas the national average is only 20 per cent (On & Hook 1998: 131).

Prior to the decentralisation of educational administration in the middle of the 1980s, an educational bureau in Shanghai administered secondary education according to the national centralised standards. The development of high-technology industries and the Pudong development in 1991 created demands for the substantial expansion of secondary education to adapt to the rapid social and economic changes. Under such circumstances, the central government and Shanghai government inaugurated a curriculum and textbook reform.

5.4 Curriculum Reform in Shanghai: 1988 - 1998

The Shanghai curriculum reform is usually called the Shanghai curriculum and textbook reform. The reform started in May 1988 when the Shanghai Education

Commission set up a statutory organisation known as the Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform in 1988. The reform was planned in two rounds: the first being the round of reform which started in 1988 and was completed in 1998; the second round began in 1998 and will continue until the completion of reform. Here, I discuss the social contexts, process, characteristics and diversification of textbooks in the reform.

5.4.1 Social Context of Curriculum Reform

Curriculum restructure or innovation, being a part of school restructuring, has been a key component in the campaign for school autonomy in China. Curriculum innovation was inaugurated by the central government in 1985 and assisted by research programs on school curriculum funded by the central government. These studies, which focused on the future development of school curriculum in Shanghai (Curriculum Reform Project of East China Normal University 1997) and reviewed individual practices in school based curriculum development (Datong School 1991: 22 - 25), have provided contextual knowledge in curriculum innovation.

5.4.1.1 National Debates: Curriculum for the 21st Century. Curricula at the turn of the 21st century are challenged by the impact of booming information technology. In China, there is a traditional doctrine that states "theory instructs practice", and it is believed, in curriculum and textbook reform, that theoretical research precedes the act of curriculum restructure.

The central government utilised scientific research funds to promote research projects to guide curriculum reform. In the awards of the China Social Science Foundation (equivalent to the Australian Research Council) in 1996 -1997, research projects on school curriculum for the 21st century were given a high priority for funding. These projects included general and specific research. The general projects were aimed at exploring the establishment of a new curriculum and new textbooks for schools in the 21st century throughout China. It was structured to include participation of a government body (the Division of Fundamental Education of the State Education Commission), a research institute (China National Institute for Educational Research) and a university (North East Normal University in Shanghai).

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This ongoing project was general and comprehensive. It had six sub-projects: the history and current affairs of the development of school curriculum and textbooks in China's basic education; theoretical exploration and the trends of curriculum in basic education; comparative research on the curriculum and textbooks of basic education in China and foreign countries; the design and experience of restructure of the curriculum and textbook system of basic education; topic research on the activity curriculum, combined curriculum and selective courses; the labour skills and vocational education.

Compared with the general projects, the specific projects were regional and research was conducted either by research teams or individuals. The most popular projects (Project Group of East China Normal University 1997: 53-61; Shang 1998) covered tentative theoretical assumptions about principles, philosophy, aims, schemes and assessments of school curriculum in schools in Shanghai and Beijing.

5.4.1.2 New Centralisation. While the Shanghai educational authorities were authorised to develop local curriculum and textbooks for their schools in 1988, there was a growing trend for the national educational authority to centralise curriculum development using newly prescribed guidelines at the national level. In 1996, the State Education Commission promulgated *Chinese Educational Development: the 2020 Long Term Educational Program.* In accordance with the Program, the State Education Commission drafted a restructured curriculum plan - the New Curriculum Scheme.

The New Curriculum Scheme consisted of three new aspects: a new curriculum plan, new teaching programs and new textbooks. This scheme was developed so that it would directly promote the implementation of nine-year compulsory education. Under the New Curriculum Scheme, the State Education Commission authorised the national textbook agent, the People's Education Press, to work out the new syllabus and to develop a new series of textbooks for schools in the whole nation. Figure 5.7 illustrates the agenda of the development of New Curriculum Scheme at the national level. According to the agenda of curriculum and textbook development, the State Education Commission initiated the New Curriculum Scheme in 1993. Then, in

1995, the new curriculum plan was made available for public consultation. In 1996, the people's Education Press developed new textbooks, and then the New Curriculum Scheme. New textbooks were tested in pilot schools in Shan'xi and Jiangxi provinces as well as Tianjin City in the autumn of 1997. The State Education Commission then declared that the New Curriculum Scheme would be implemented in schools throughout China in 2000. As promised by the central educational authority, schools in Shanghai would not be required to implement the centralised New Curriculum Scheme.

Figure 5.5 Agenda of the National Development of New Curriculum Scheme 2000

Year	Procedures
1989	• State Education Commission organised public consultation on the existing school curriculum
1990	• State Education Commission organised a Conference of Curriculum Reform in Common High Schools in Changzhou City, Jiangsu Province. The major task of the Conference was to explore the necessity and possibilities of restructuring the existing school curriculum. • State Education Commission made a major adjustment to the *"Teaching Program in 1981"*. [32]
1993	• State Education Commission initiated the development of the New Curriculum Scheme; • The New Scheme was subjected to research, debating, drafting and revising.
1994	• The State Council formulated a five-day Working Time System for the general population; • State Education Commission re-restructured teaching programs according to the implementation of the New Working Time System by deducting teaching time and reducing students' learning overloads; • Public consultation concerning the New Curriculum Scheme among curriculum researchers, scholars, principals and teachers.
1995	• Public consultation on the draft of the New Curriculum Plan; • Developers' presentation of the new curriculum scheme to undergo censorship from the central educational authority;
1996	• State Education Commission endorsed the authorisation to enact the New Curriculum Scheme by testing usage in pilot schools; • New Textbooks were under development by the People's Education Press.
1997	• New Curriculum Scheme was put into effect; • New textbooks were tested in pilot schools in the provinces of Shanxi, Jiangxi and City of Tianjin;
2000	• New Curriculum Scheme began to be fully implemented in all schools throughout the country except those in Shanghai; • Schools are fully committed to adopt and implement the new textbooks with government structured instructions.

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[32] *The Teaching Program in 1981* is the existing teaching program established with the endorsement of the Ministry of Education after the adoption of the national reform and open policy in 1979.

5.4.2 The Process of Decentralisation of Curriculum Development

In traditional centralised systems, the phenomenon of administrative intervention by means of replacement of legislation is common and unavoidable. A particular event might mark the change of a certain system. The transition of educational authority in Shanghai is an example of such a phenomenon.

The year of 1988 was remarkable for the Shanghai educational community, as it was in that year that the central government, through the State Education Commission, transferred the authority for educational management to the municipal level of Shanghai City. The Tai'an meeting[33] marked a dramatic change in the Chinese system of education.

With respect to the democratisation of education, the Tai'an meeting, as an administrative event, was a memorable milestone in the long trajectory of the Chinese pursuit of devolution in educational management. The purposes of the meeting, as *the Call for Papers* stated, were:

> to seek solutions on how to fulfil the teaching programs and syllabus of nine-year compulsory education; to develop a high quality primary and secondary textbook suitable to China's national conditions; to reinforce the micro management of the whole country's primary and secondary textbook construction (General Office of the State Education Commission 1988).

The meeting discussed the planning scheme for textbook development and how to implement the drafted *Working Constitutions of the National Censorship Committee of Primary and Secondary School Textbooks.*

The implications of the six-day meeting were profound and historic in terms of forming a new way of managing educational affairs in China. It was at the meeting that, subject to national micro planning, the Shanghai educational authority was authorised to restructure its own system of education, including assuming autonomy

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[33] The meeting was held on 6 - 11 May 1988. The organiser was the then China State Education Commission. At this meeting, the Chinese State Education Commission convened all the provincial/city educational authorities at Tai'an (a tourist city being famous for the location of Mt Tai in Shandong province) to discuss curriculum issues and textbook development for the nine-year compulsory education.

in setting university matriculation examinations, formulating school guidelines, and developing curriculum and textbooks.

This transition of curriculum development from being highly centralised to gradual devolution was historic and fundamental. Though the educational community in China had awaited this unprecedented event for about forty years, it took place simply as an official unwritten declaration at an administrative meeting. Furthermore, this government declaration was made without any legislative processing and confirmation.

The process of restructuring of curriculum and textbooks in Shanghai was rapidly organised. First, the Shanghai Education Commission formed a committee of curriculum and textbook reform (Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform 1988: 1-3). This committee was to be a statutory body to develop a curriculum scheme for consultation. Second, upon consultation with the academic and school community, the committee set up the aims of curriculum and textbook reform as well as curriculum standards. Third, textbooks were developed under the prescribed scheme and standards. Finally, the committee organised these new textbooks for testing or trial usage in pilot schools.

The committee established goals in order to direct the process of reform. On the one hand, the new curriculum was aimed at developing the students' creative abilities of learning to fulfil their individual development. On the other hand, the goals of the Shanghai curriculum and textbook reform were based on a sober consideration of the reality of Chinese education, and also introduced some ideas and goals of schooling from American and other western systems.

The prescribed objectives of curriculum reform in Shanghai were ambitious, aiming to construct a "first-class metropolis with a first class education" (Chen 1997: 20 - 23; Zhang 1997: 4 - 6) to lead the future of Chinese education and compete with international systems like that in the US. These objectives were also put in place to ensure the students' effective learning of cultural and scientific knowledge; to integrate learning and the practical application of knowledge; to introduce or increase the proportion of elective courses, extracurricular activities and vocational education;

and to make schooling a pleasant experience for students by reducing pressures on them and by making education more sensitive to individual differences (Hu 1990: 2-4).

Curriculum reform in Shanghai followed the bureaucratic models that were endorsed by the central educational authority in China in the late 1980s.[34] Soon after the Shanghai educational authority was authorised to develop a curriculum and textbooks for its own schools in Shanghai, the matters of curriculum and textbook reform were quickly put on the administrative agenda. The most significant event was the establishment of the Committee of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Reform in Shanghai, which was formed on 28 May 1988 - seventeen days after the Tai'an meeting (Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform 1988: 1-3). The committee, which was commissioned as a statuary delegation of the Shanghai Education Commission, acted as a policy-making organisation for the process of school restructure and was authorised officially by the Shanghai Education Commission to organise and monitor curriculum and textbook development in Shanghai. The primary aims of the committee were to develop an overall reform scheme for schools in Shanghai and cities in other economically and culturally developed areas. The committee also acted as the supplier of textbooks and teaching resources under the scheme. The committee had two sub-committees. One

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[34] The three bureaucratic models were National Model (developed by PEP), Coastline Model (developed by Shanghai and Guangdong province respectively) and Inner and Rural Model (developed by Zhejiang province for developed areas of the countryside and Sichuan province for rural development).

Figure 5.6 Curriculum Implementation in Schools in Shanghai 1988 - 1998

Ministry of Education (Formerly the State Education Commission)	• *Decentralise responsibility in education to Shanghai Education Commission)*
Shanghai Education Commission	• *Develop the school restructure scheme with instructions;* • *Establish a government educational body -- Shanghai Committee of Primary and Secondary Curriculum and Textbook Reform as a delegation to plan the reform.*
Shanghai Office for Teaching Research (affiliated to Shanghai Education Commission) *Shanghai Committee of Primary and Secondary Curriculum Reform* *Shanghai Examining Committee of Primary and Secondary Textbooks*	• *Set out Shanghai curriculum statements* • *Work out the nature, goals and aims of curriculum development* • *Initiate the research project on curriculum and textbooks under government funding and industry sponsorship;* • *Undertake research on curriculum and textbooks in Shanghai schools;* • *Develop the curriculum guidelines, based upon wide consultation;* • *Monitor the implementation of the curriculum guidelines and development of textbooks;* • *Organise the researchers, teachers and publishers to develop and publish textbooks for schools;* • *Examine textbooks developed and published by different textbook developers and publishers according to the national textbook censorship regulations;* • *Coordinate textbook trials in pilot schools before full implementation;* • *Collect responsive information concerning textbook implementation;* • *Initiate further research on the improvement of current curriculum and textbooks.*
Local Education Authority (District / County Bureau of Education)	• *Involvement in the development of curriculum and textbooks;* • *Select textbooks for the schools within the City and District;* • *Financially support teachers' professional development including teachers' in-service and pre-service training;* • *Instruct local curriculum development in schools;*
School Council / School Administrative Committee	• *Fully implement the compulsory curriculum set out by the government;* • *Supervise the implementation of government mandated textbooks;* • *Initiate and develop the school based curriculum in selective school courses;* • *Feed-back responsive information on the mandated curriculum and textbooks*

was the development committee,[35] which consisted of administrators, educators and researchers, whose role was to organise and coordinate the development of the curriculum and textbooks. The other was the examining committee[36] (Committee of Compilation and Examination of the Primary and Secondary Schools in Shanghai), the purpose of which was to examine and evaluate the textbooks developed by the developing committee and publishers. The former committee carried out the task of policy-making; the latter implemented relevant policies made by the former committee. Figure 5.8 outlines the detailed procedures of the devolution of curriculum and textbook development that took place in Shanghai.

5.4.3 Characteristics of the Curriculum Reform

Curriculum reform in Shanghai differed from the national and local innovations of previous years in China (Zhong 1996: 2). Firstly, the conception of "basic ability of learning" was academically defined. "Basic ability of learning" was a key concept frequently used in the reform. It was explained as referring to the fundamental ability of students to learn, which consisted of the students' ability of developmental learning and creative learning. This concept was raised to counter the traditional "teacher-centred" philosophy of teaching strategy that had previously dominated approaches in China. One researcher (Zhong 1996: 2) claimed that students' learning should not be a process of negative acquisition, but a positive process of exploring knowledge. Based on this philosophy, the Shanghai curriculum was structured into three categories: compulsory, elective and co-curricular activities, which were integrated to develop the students' ability for learning. Secondly, this reform set up "individual development" as the aim of curriculum development. This was a

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[35] The Committee of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum and Textbooks Reform in Shanghai consisted of one director, five deputy directors and fourteen advisers: Director: Wang Shenghong (Minister of Education); Deputy Director: Yuan Cai, Yuan Yunkai, Ling Tongguang, Wang Zuibang, jiang Ming; Advisers: Lu Xingwei, Liu Fonian, Yan Dongsheng, Su Buqing, Li Chuwen, Lu Shantao, Chen Xianchi, Luo Zhufeng, Zhao Xianchu, Duan Lipei, Shu Wen, Xie Xide, Tan Weihan, Yang Zhenning (American Chinese).

[36] The Examining Committee consisted of one examiner-in-chief and five deputies. The examiner-in-chief: Ling Tongguang; the five deputy examiners-in-chief were Lu Shantao, Cao Yuzhang, Tan Weihan, Sun Yuanqing and Sun Dawen.

challenging shift, because, since the success of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, individualism had been considered a product of capitalism that contradicted the socialist principle of collectivism. "Individual development" had long been confused with individualism in China. As a result, "individual development" had been banned in the wording and written descriptions of educational aims for years. However, individual development, as one of the important objectives of education, became an essential element in the aims of the innovative curriculum because of its connection with the "ability of learning". Thirdly, the new Shanghai curriculum represented a new curriculum structure for schools in Shanghai at the turn of the millennium.

Shanghai-based curriculum reflected the socioeconomic features of a metropolis with rapid economic development and advanced technology. This curriculum represented a number of features that were different from the national curriculum. According to Leung (1995: 229), these features include,

> (a) teaching foreign languages (English, French and Japanese) at primary three, instead of junior secondary, (b) reduction of the compulsory subjects and more space in the curriculum for elective subjects, (c) promotion of subject integration by introducing general science and social science as alternatives to the traditional subjects, (d) increasing pupils' knowledge of the outside world to match with Shanghai's export-oriented economic strategy, (e) reduction of the depth and difficulty of mathematics, (f) introduction of computer literacy and (g) introduction of basic life skills and career education.

The philosophy of curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai was new in its orientation towards social needs, students' personal intellectual development and their social development for the 21st century. The needs of social development, student development and discipline (subjects) development were integrated into the new curriculum to enhance the quality of graduates for the new century (Wang 1990: 48). However, the major problem was that these reforms were still politically motivated. Shanghai Education Commission and its delegation Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform fully controlled the development of curriculum and textbook development for Shanghai schools. The devolution of curriculum development from the central government to the local Shanghai authority formulated a new centralisation at the city level system by the Shanghai education authority. As

is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, the new Shanghai system was a new unification with unified guidelines, textbooks, teaching programs and even weekly or yearly time allocation for teaching. Schools had little decision-making power in dealing with the revised curriculum and textbook development, but were facing a new centralised system of curriculum development.

The formulation of the new centralisation of curriculum development in shanghai indicated that the impact of the national common planning of education had been profound and powerful. At the national level, the fully centralised system no longer existed, as the provincial/city authorities were authorised to develop their own textbooks for schools. But this sort of transformation did not lead to autonomy being transferred to the schools. People's Education Press textbooks no longer dominated the textbook market. Schools could select textbooks from the government recommended list, but they faced new restrictions within the new system. The only benefit that schools enjoyed was that the schools could now make a choice between two textbooks. This point will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight.

5.4.4 Diversification and Competition in Textbook Development

Autonomies of curriculum and textbook development at the provincial/city level was the most important aspect of decentralisation of educational management in Shanghai. The autonomy of printing and trading textbooks resulted in commercial competition among developers and publishers in Shanghai and attracted more and more interest groups to invest in the textbook industry throughout Shanghai and China.

Financial support for education in China, including for textbook development, had been seen as the business of central government since 1949. As stated in Chapter Four, the central authority relinquished financial accountability when it began the process of the devolution of educational administration in 1985. In 1988, when authority to run education locally in Shanghai was put on the political agenda by the Chinese central government, the Shanghai government was asked to bear the responsibility of financially supporting educational development. Thus, financial input into education was totally in the hands of the Shanghai local governments.

The devolution of financial accountability also changed the traditional financial system of textbook development into a system that was similar to an auction bidding system. Under the new system, the publisher prepared to pay the most money would get the opportunity to develop and publish the textbook. In principle, this system was explained by the Curriculum and Textbook Reform Committee as "he who invests, he benefits" and that the investors would "enjoy the benefits and share the risks". The publishers had first to invest in textbook development before getting access to the market of textbook sales. In this case, publishers played a sponsoring role in the whole package of development and promotion of curriculum plans, teaching plans, syllabuses, textbook evaluation and examination. Curriculum and textbooks became a commodity and were therefore commercialised.

The regulation of the supply of textbooks has served as a basic and essential means of providing effective control of the educational system in China, and it has become a core aspect of restructuring the new system in Shanghai. A marketing mechanism was introduced to the provision of textbooks. The competitive bidding system attracted the enthusiasm of textbook publishers and a variety of textbooks was developed to suit the needs of students. New textbooks were developed in subjects covering Chinese literature, mathematics, English, ideological politics, history, geography, social studies, natural commonsense, physics, chemistry, human body and hygiene, science, physical education and health care, music, fine arts, labour skills, vocation orientation and computing. Figure 5.9 illustrates the textbooks of Chinese language, physics and chemistry that were developed after 1988 in Shanghai. Of these subjects, there were two different versions of textbooks that were developed by different groups and published by different publishers. For example, in Chinese language, there were two versions: the H version and the S version. East China Normal University Press and Xuhui District Bureau of Education developed the H version of Chinese language textbook, and the East China Normal University Press was the publisher. Jinshan Petroleum & Chemical plant, Zhabei District Bureau of Education and Shanghai Normal University jointly developed the S version of the Chinese language textbook. The publisher of the S version textbook of the Chinese language was Shanghai Normal University Press. In chemistry, there were also

different versions of textbooks. The version that was published by Shanghai Education Publishing House was called Shanghai Education Version, while the other version that was published by Shanghai Science & Technological Publishing House was called the Shanghai Science & Technological Version. In addition, Figure 5.9 indicates that local educational authorities were heavily involved in the development of textbooks in Shanghai.

Figure 5.7 Textbooks in Chinese Language, Physics and Chemistry in Shanghai

Subject	Version	Textbook Developers	Publisher
Chinese Language	*H Version*	• *East China Normal University Press* • *Xuhui District Bureau of Education*	*East China Normal University Press*
	S Version	• *Jinshan Petroleum & Chemical Plant* • *Zhabei District Bureau of Education* • *Shanghai Normal University*	*Shanghai Normal University Press*
Physics	*Shanghai Education Version*	• *Shanghai Education Publishing House* • *1 July High School*	*Shanghai Education Publishing House*
	Shanghai S & T Version[37]	• *Zhabei District Bureau of Education* • *Shanghai Teachers' College*	*Shanghai Science & Technological Publishing House*
Chemistry	*Shanghai Education Version*	• *Huangpu District Bureau of Education* • *Shanghai Normal University*	*Shanghai Education Publishing House*
	Shanghai S & T Version	• *Changning District Bureau of Education*	*Shanghai Science & Technological Publishing House*

Systematic reform in any centralised society is a way of breaking down the established interests of different groups. The diversified development of textbooks in Shanghai represented an example of the change of attitude of different interest groups. Because textbook development in Shanghai was considered profitable, it became linked with the participation of different groups in the community: local educational authorities, universities, schools, companies and publishers.

The publication of textbooks in Shanghai broke down the traditional policy of professional differentiation within the Chinese publishing community[38]. According to

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[37] This stands for Shanghai Scientific and Technological version.

the former policy of professional publishing differentiation, Shanghai Education Publishing House was the sole agent in the business of publishing textbooks. But, after 1988, both comprehensive and specialist publishing houses like the Shanghai Literature Press, Shanghai Scientific and Technological Publishing House, East China University Press and Shanghai Foreign Language University Press all made an effort to capture an appropriate share of the textbook market. Figure 5.10 outlines the textbooks that were developed in Shanghai after 1988. Shanghai Education Publishing House published most of the textbooks, but publishers like Shanghai Literature Press and Shanghai Foreign Language University Press also were involved in publishing some of the textbooks.

Figure 5.8 School Textbooks Developed in Shanghai after 1988

Subject	Volume	Level	Subject	Volume	Level
Chinese language (two versions)	18 (each)		Chemistry (two versions)	1 (each)	Year 9
Mathematics	18		Biology	4	Year 6
English	14	Year 3	Science	3	Year 7
Politics	18		Physical Education / Health Safety	7	Year 3
History	6	Year 7	Music	18	
Geography	5	Year 6	Fine Arts	14	
Social Studies (primary)	6	Year 3	Labor Skill	36	
Social Studies (secondary)	6	Year 7	Career Orientation	2	Year 8
Nature ABC	10		Computer	1	Year 8
Physics (two versions)	4 (each)	Year 8			

5.5 Curriculum Restructure in Shanghai: 1998 -

The second round of curriculum reform in Shanghai started in 1998. As curriculum reform prior to 1998 was usually called the "first round reform" or "Curriculum

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[38] According to the regulations of the publishing industry in China, there was a strict professional differentiation in Chinese publishing by classification of the publishers. For example, educational publishing houses were the authorised publishers in the publications of educational literature.

Reform Project I", the second round of reform was therefore called "Curriculum Reform Project II". It was usually called "revised curriculum" as considerable revisions and modifications were made to the first round curriculum.

The philosophy of the second round reform differed from that of the first round. The second round of reform focused on the revision rather than the redevelopment of the textbooks that were developed in the first round of reforms. The Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform would first review the existing textbooks, and the Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform would appoint a special committee to undertake appropriate revision. Pilot subjects, such as mathematics, Chinese language and foreign languages, were first reviewed and revised. In mathematics, the *Action Programs of Primary and Secondary Mathematics Education Entering the 21st Century* was published for public consultation in *Shanghai Education* in 1998. The publication of this document officially inaugurated the beginning of the curriculum restructure of the Shanghai primary and secondary school curriculum (Project Group 1998).

The overall structure of the revised curriculum was open to discussion and public debate. Different models of curriculum structure were theoretically outline and publicly discussed.

The revised curriculum scheme consisted of three blocks (Office of Teaching & Research of Shanghai Education Commission 1998): the fundamental curriculum, developing curriculum and inquiry/research curriculum. The fundamental curriculum, developing curriculum and inquiry curriculum apply to the nine years of compulsory education, and the research curriculum applies to post-compulsory education. Figures 5.11 and 5.12 outlined the subjects, teaching times and teaching instructions in the tentative curriculum structure.

Scientific and technological publishing houses could only publish scientific books. Chinese literature press could only publish the publications of Chinese literature and foreign languages.

Figure 5.9 Curriculum Structure of the Nine-year Compulsory Education in Shanghai: Levels 1-5

Curriculum Typology	Subjects	Total Teaching Time (Hour)	Instructions
Fundamental Curriculum	Chinese literature, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Computer, Singing/Music, Social studies, Nature, Physical education and health, Fine arts.	4000	Compulsory to all students to meet the united requirements of knowledge, ability and methods of study
Developing Curriculum	Scientific and technological area Arts area Physical education area Social survey Class/Team Activities	1300	All students should be involved with a variety of styles. Schools have autonomy to select the contents of teaching. Teaching times are allocated in the afternoon daily.
Inquiry curriculum	Conditions permitting, schools are encouraged to select suitable contents for senior students and to some extent, organise some social activities in the form of projects to consciously provide a bridge for the students into the inquiry curriculum.		

Source: The Tentative Scheme of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Structure Facing 21st Century (Unpublished Discursion Draft), Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform, 2000, p. 4.

5.5.1 Fundamental Curriculum

The fundamental curriculum remains compulsory for all students and it is aimed at the formation of the students' basic ability for learning, their developing ability for learning and creative ability for learning (Shanghai Education Commission 2000: 1). The teaching of the fundamental curriculum emphasises basic concepts, principles and knowledge to meet the basic requirements of abilities and knowledge.

Fundamental curriculum is subject based and consists of the existing disciplines that are taught in schools. The subjects at the compulsory education level, as Figure 5.11

shows, include politics, Chinese Language, Mathematics, Foreign language, Social Studies, Nature, Computer, Sports and Recreation. At the senior secondary level, as Figure 5.12 shows, fundamental curriculum embodies subjects like career orientation and computer application. At the high school level, the fundamental curriculum includes political ideology, Chinese language, mathematics, English, social studies, information technology and relevant combined and individual disciplines.

Figure 5.10 Curriculum Structure of the Nine-year Compulsory Education in Shanghai: Level 6 – 9

Curriculum Typology	Subjects	Total Teaching Time (Hour)	Instructions
Fundamental Curriculum	Chinese literature, Mathematics, Science, Social science, Political ideology, Arts ABC, Computer application, Career orientation	2312	Most basic united requirements required
Developing Curriculum	Science: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology etc. Social science: history, geography etc. Technology: home economics, labour skill, modern science and technology, Competitive physical education etc. Arts: fine arts, sculpture, dance, vocal music, instrumental music, etc. Physical education and health: general health protection, activity program	1632 - 1836	United areas and united teaching time Students can freely select subjects in each area.
Inquiry curriculum	Social survey, social practice	320	Students select topics freely and independently and conduct group or individual social practice/survey under the teacher's supervision.

Source: The Tentative Scheme of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Structure Facing 21st Century (Unpublished Discursion Draft), Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform, 2000, p. 5.

5.5.2 Developing Curriculum

The developing curriculum starts in the primary school and differs from subject to subject. As Figures 5.11 and 5.12 display, the developing curriculum applies to all levels of schooling. At the primary school level, social and technical activity, arts and sports are organised. At the upper secondary level, a variety of combined or individual discipline is offered in the areas of science, arts, technical education and

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health protection. At post-compulsory level, extended teaching and learning are conducted in the areas of individual disciplines, technical education, physical education and health protection, arts and social practice (Shanghai Education Commission 2000: 2).

The developing curriculum consists of complementary courses from which the students may select. They are taught on the basis of the fundamental curriculum with an emphasis on the formation of the students' ability for life-long learning. The teaching does not rely on the amount of students' acquisition of knowledge, but emphasises their independent ability of self-study and study methods.

5.5.3 Inquiry/Research Curriculum

The inquiry and research curricula form the third level of the tentative curriculum structure; this is the ultimate level of the curriculum structure aiming at forming the creative ability of learning based upon the teaching of the fundamental and the developing curriculum (Shanghai Education Commission 2000: 2). As Figure 5.13 outlines, at this level, both the inquiry curriculum and the research curriculum offer elective courses for students in different areas and at different levels of knowledge. However, the teaching requirements are different: in the inquiry curriculum, the content of teaching consists of established knowledge, while the research curriculum contains tentative knowledge and unsolved issues and the teaching emphasis is more on the process of research than on the acquisition of knowledge. The inquiry curriculum is taught at the last stage of the nine-year compulsory education and contains projects on social surveys and social practice. The research curriculum is offered at post-compulsory level and includes case studies, seminars and project research.

Figure 5.11 Curriculum Structure of Post-Compulsory Level in Shanghai

Curriculum typology	Subjects	Total teaching time (Hours)	Instructions
Fundamental curriculum	Chinese literature, mathematics, English, Foundations of science (or physics, chemistry, biology)	1628 - 1688	Applies to all students. Most basic united requirements are applied. Students are required to

	Foundations of Social Sciences (history, geography) Political ideology Information technology		attend city-wide united examinations
Developing curriculum	Disciplines (individual discipline or interdisciplinary and combined subjects) Technology: (labour skill, practical techniques) Arts: (arts appreciation, music art) Physical education and health protection: (heath education, psychological education and therapy) Practice: (military training, social practice, school and class meeting etc.)	1348 - 1596	Students must complete the prescribed teaching package in each area; Teaching time of practical technology towards manufacturing is guaranteed.
Inquiry curriculum	Case survey Seminars Project research	192 - 384	Two weeks of practical activities in each semester Students freely select topic to be done beyond the total teaching time Can be conducted by individual or in-groups.

Source: The Tentative Scheme of Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Structure Facing 21st Century (Unpublished Discursion Draft), Shanghai Committee of Curriculum and Textbook Reform, 2000, p. 6.

5.6 Summary and Commentary

In this chapter, I have discussed the social context, process, and characteristics of the curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai. Curriculum reform in Shanghai in the 1980s and 1990s, characterised mainly by the decentralisation of curriculum and textbook development, was affected by both internal and external factors. The unprecedented social change and economic development in China resulted in the systematic transformation of management in the long-entrenched, centralised system of education, while economic globalisation encouraged the traditionally centralised system to become more innovative and democratic.

The influence of modern western philosophies of education, such as individualism, can be seen in the formation of goals to develop the students' ability of learning. Although it is too early to assess the impact of this philosophy on the formulation of the students' ability, there seems to be no indication that the impact will decline in the near future.

The path of development of new curriculum and textbooks in Shanghai represents the process of decentralisation of educational management in Shanghai and provides this research with historical contexts in which to locate the issues relating to decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. In Chapter Eight, I will discuss the issues of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development with the supporting information from interviews with informants in the selected schools.

CHAPTER SIX

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA (1900-1995): HISTORICAL REVIEW

Professor Peter Karmel (1998: 5), a leading Australian educator, once said, "I believe (with some passion) that we need to know the past to understand the present and we need to understand the present to be able to influence the future." To identify and evaluate the current status of curriculum development in Australian schooling, this chapter explores the historical context and evolution of decentralisation of educational management and the increasing involvement of the Commonwealth government in education with particular attention to curriculum development in Australian schools. The chapter focuses on the paths taken by Australian governments with regard to intervention in curriculum development and concentrates on curriculum development at the secondary school level in the Australian system.

6.1 Secondary Education in Australia: An Overview

While it is obvious that the system of education in China is highly centralised, it is difficult to identify a national structure for Australian primary and secondary schooling as the structures vary in the different States and Territories. The educational system is fragmented throughout Australia because there was no national responsibility for educational management until the late 1960s. Ever since, the Commonwealth has had limited capacity to influence education policy by means of funding but no direct control.

Australia formed well-established systems of public schooling in the states and territories ever before Federation in 1901. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, the scattered state-based system of schooling can be categorised into three basic patterns: *Pattern A* covers structures of schooling in South Australia and the Northern Territory where

the primary sector comprises one year of Pre-Year[39] followed by Years 1 – 7 and the secondary system covers Years 8 - 12. *Pattern B* covers the structures of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Australian Capital Territory. Here, primary schooling comprises one-year Pre-Year[40] followed by Years 1 to 6, while the secondary system comprises Years 7 to 12. *Pattern C* covers the structures of Queensland and Western Australia in which the primary sector of both states comprises Years 1 to 7, and the secondary sector extends from Years 8 to 12.

Figure 6.1 Structure of Primary and Secondary schooling in Australia (1987)

SA, NT			*NSW, Vic, Tas. ACT*			*Qld, WA*	
Secondary	Year 12		Secondary	Year 12		Secondary	Year 12
	Year 11			Year 11			Year 11
	Year 10			Year 10			Year 10
	Year 9			Year 9			Year 9
	Year 8			Year 8			Year 8
Primary	Year 7			Year 7		Primary	Year 7
	Year 6		Primary	Year 6			Year 6
	Year 5			Year 5			Year 5
	Year 4			Year 4			Year 4
	Year 3			Year 3			Year 3
	Year 2			Year 2			Year 2
	Year 1			Year 1			Year 1
	Pre-Year 1			Pre-Year 1			

Source: DEET, *Schooling in Australia: Statistical Profile No.1,* Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987, p. vii.

To some extent, secondary schooling constitutes an intermediate phase in education between primary and tertiary, although, until recent decades, only a minority of Australian school levels proceeded to tertiary education. In Australia, the secondary sector is often divided into two phases: compulsory/post-compulsory levels. There are four years in the junior secondary levels from Years 8 to 10, equivalent to the period from Year 1 in junior school to Year 1 in senior secondary schools in the

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[39] Pre-Year is called Reception in South Australia and Transition in Northern Territory.

[40] Pre-Year 1 is called Kindergarten in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory and Preparatory in Victoria and Tasmania.

Chinese system. There are two years in high or senior secondary level, years 11 to 12, which are equivalent to Years 2 and 3 in senior secondary schools in China.

Australian schooling comprises both public and private sectors. The government or public schools are administrated and mainly funded by the Departments of Education in each state and territory. About 70 per cent of all school students attend government or public schools. The remaining 30 percent of students attend non-government and independent schools. Religious groups founded most Independent or denominational schools in the late 19th and early 20th century. They receive part of the funds from the Commonwealth and state governments.

The school curriculum varies from state to state regarding subject provision and choice at the secondary level. At the secondary level, there are also some variations in overall composition and balance of the curriculum. The following curriculum components are common to most systems: English, mathematics, science, social studies/sciences (including history, geography, commerce, Asian studies, etc.), health/physical education, craft (including technical studies, metalwork, woodwork, etc.) arts (including visual, fine, performing and expressive arts and music) (Australian Education Council 1989: 11).

Australia is a vast land with the size of the state-based educational system being dependent on the size of the general population of the state. New South has the largest system of state-based education. Victoria, though in area one of the smallest states, has the second largest system of education. As Figure 6.3 illustrates, New South Wales had a total number of 3053 schools in 1996, which was 31.70 % of all the schools in Australia. In Victoria, there were 2,379 schools, which was 24.7 % of all Australian schools. The combined number of schools in the two states surpasses the total number of schools in the rest of Australia.

Figure 6.2 Number of Schools in the States of Australia in 1996[41]

	Government		Non-government		All Schools	
		Catholic	Independent	All	*Total*	*Per cent*
New South Wales						
Primary	1,648	421	104	525	2,173	22.6
Secondary	388	130	23	153	541	5.6
Combined Prim/sec	65	33	125	158	223	2.3
Special	85	6	25	31	116	1.2
Total	**2,186**	**590**	**277**	**867**	**3053**	**31.7**
Victoria						
Primary	1,297	384	60	444	1,741	18.1
Secondary	281	93	17	110	391	4.1
Combined Prim/sec	39	10	101	111	150	1.6
Special	83	6	8	14	97	1.0
Total	**1,700**	**493**	**186**	**679**	**2,379**	**24.7**
Queensland						
Primary	997	191	47	238	1,235	12.8
Secondary	189	64	17	81	270	2.8
Combined prim/sec	76	15	74	89	165	1.7
Special	52	0	2	2	54	0.6
Total	**1,314**	**270**	**140**	**410**	**1,724**	**17.9**
South Australia						
Primary	482	76	47	123	605	6.3
Secondary	82	14	11	25	107	1.1
Combined prim/sec	66	17	25	42	108	1.1
Special	21	2	2	4	25	0.3
Total	**651**	**109**	**85**	**194**	**845**	**8.8**
Western Australia						
Primary	510	107	42	149	659	6.8
Secondary	97	26	11	37	134	1.4
Combined Prim/sec	95	15	52	67	162	1.7
Special	62	1	1	2	64	0.7
Total	**764**	**149**	**106**	**255**	**1,019**	**10.6**
Tasmania						
Primary	150	26	10	36	186	1.9
Secondary	41	6	2	8	49	0.5
Combined prim/sec	27	6	19	25	52	0.5
Special	11	0	1	1	12	0.1
Total	**229**	**38**	**32**	**70**	**299**	**3.1**
Northern Territory						
Primary	88	7	8	15	103	1.1
Secondary	11	2	2	4	15	0.2
Combined prim/sec	39	6	2	8	47	0.5
Special	7	0	0	0	7	0.1
Total	**145**	**15**	**12**	**27**	**172**	**1.8**
Australian Capital Territory						
Primary	67	22	1	23	90	0.9
Secondary	26	5	1	6	32	0.3
Combined prim/sec	1	3	8	11	12	0.1
Special	5	0	0	0	5	0.1
Total	**99**	**30**	**10**	**40**	**139**	**1.4**
Australia						
Primary	5,239	1,234	319	1,553	6,792	70.5

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[41] The number of schools is classified by category (and non-government affiliation) and level of education in 1996.

Secondary	1,115	340	84	424	1,539	16.0
Combined prim/sec	408	105	406	511	919	9.5
Special	326	15	39	54	380	3.9
Total all schools 1996	7,088	1,694	848	2,542	9,630	100.0
1995	7,122	1,693	833	2,526	9,648	100.0
1994	7,159	1,699	821	2,520	9,679	100.0

Source: ABC Cat. No. 4221.0, *Schools, Australia*, 1996

6.2 Constitution at Federalisation

The Australian system of schooling dates back to the late 18th century when British convicts were transported to the southern continent. The first school was established to educate the children of the convicts and marines in New South Wales in late 1792. In this way, a fledgling system of formal education developed (Barcan 1980: 9). By the 1850s, the institutionalised framework of education had become well established in Australia and public schools came into being (Barcan 1980: 9). At that time, however, denominational schools sponsored by the Church of England, the Presbyterian, the Roman Catholic and the Wesleyan churches constituted the mainstream in Australian education.

During the Australian colonial period, each colonial government exercised responsibility for education. As a legislated part of their mission, the colonial governments in Australia prior to 1900 had already been involved in schooling by setting up departments of education.[42] Systematic, widespread provision and control of government schools followed the establishment of centralised Departments of Education in all colonies in the 1880s and 1890s (Haynes 1997: 151).

In 1901, the six colonies were federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia. As the colonies had independent legislatures to provide general powers for the government of each colony, a tripartite power framework was constituted between the federal and the state parliaments. According to the framework, three levels of powers were formed. At the upper federal level, the federal parliament was conferred specific exclusive powers. At the combined intermediate level, the so-called

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[42] For instance, Victoria established a Department of Education in 1872; Western Australia established a Department of Education in 1893).

"concurrent powers" were not exclusively the province of the Commonwealth but were shared with the states. In these areas, both the federal and state parliaments believed that they had the right to exercise legislative power. At the lower state level, the "residual powers" were not mentioned in the Federal Constitution and remained under the control of the states (Edwards 1997: 274).

At the time of Federation, the federal politicians were particularly concerned with the issues of tariff, national defence, the White Australia policy, trade, social welfare and political differences, but paid little attention to who should regulate the educational affairs and system. Under such circumstances, the constitutional power to make laws concerning education lay with the states. The states exercised their powers over the schools and raised the major part of the funds for the resourcing of public schools (Caldwell & Hayward 1998: 9). Under this division of power, universities were also established under state legislation.

As education remained the business of the states, the aim of state parliaments was to provide elementary education for all children, following which post-primary education developed (Edwards 1997: 276). However, at the time of Federation, the limited educational facilities available in each state had restricted the opportunities for young people to be educated beyond the elementary level. Fewer than 0.07 per cent of the population attended university in 1900 (DEET 1993: 1). At the outbreak of the Second World War, this figure had risen to 0.2 per cent (Barcan 1980: 289), while governments endeavoured to place the early years of secondary education within the reach of most children (DEET 1993: 1).

After Federation, three events influenced the extent of federal involvement in education: the development of the doctrine of "implied immunities" by the High Court, the dispute over education as an "industry" and the Commonwealth's provision of increased funds for education to each of the states.

Firstly, when Federation took place in 1901, the High Court developed the doctrine of "implied immunities". According to the doctrine of "implied immunities", the High Court, when interpreting the Constitution, had to remain cognisant of the fact that the federal structure involved a sharing of legislative powers between

Parliaments and that the balance of powers between them should remain undisturbed (Edwards 1997: 277). In this way, the federal and state parliaments shared certain legislative powers between them. This structure left a grey area for potential dispute as to which parliament (federal or state) was entitled to legislate in a particular area. The High Court interpreted the idea of "implied immunities" in the widest sense. According to its interpretation, any activity performed by a state government was subject to the doctrine of "implied immunities" (Edwards 1997: 277). As education remained the responsibility of the states, the federal parliament had to face the obstacle of the doctrine of implied immunities in regard to control over education.

But the doctrine of "implied immunities" did not last long and was soon overturned by the High Court. After the doctrine of implied immunities ceased to exist in 1923, there was no evidence of any immediate federal interference in legislating in the area of education. The High Court still spent many years determining the appropriate balance between State and Federal Parliaments (Edwards 1997: 278). However, with the overthrow of the principle of "implied immunities", the Federal Government at that time removed the obstacle to the subsequent federal involvement in education.

The second event was the dispute over whether education was or was not an "industry". Industry was defined as including all manual workers but not persons who provided personal services like doctors and lawyers (Edwards 1997: 279). The High Court later broadened its definition of "industry" to embrace the so-called ancillary activities like banking. But, educational activities, which mainly consist of teaching, were viewed neither as "industry" nor as ancillary to industry (Edwards 1997: 279). According to the interpretation of the High Court, teachers were not working in an industry because education "bears no resemblance whatever to an ordinary trade, business or industry" (Edwards 1997: 279).

According to the Constitution, any industrial dispute would be subject to the conciliation and arbitration of the High Court. As education was not regarded as an "industry", any dispute in education could not be settled by the Constitution as an "industrial dispute". In this way, the High Court's definition and interpretation of

"industry" prevented any further opportunity for the federal parliament to be involved in legislation of education.

The third event was the establishment of the Commonwealth Office of Education in 1945 and the increasing interest of the Commonwealth in funding education. With the establishment of the Commonwealth Office of Education, the pattern of Commonwealth participation in education occurred more directly through this Office.

The function of the Commonwealth Office of Education was to demonstrate the Commonwealth's interests to participate in a wide range of matters pertaining to education. According to Bowker (1972: 158-159), the functions of the Office could be summarised as follows: (a) to advise the Minister on matters relating to education; (b) to establish and maintain a liaison, on matters relating to education, with other countries and the States; (c) to arrange consultation between Commonwealth authorities concerned with matters relating to education; (d) to undertake research relating to education; (e) to provide statistics and information relating to education required by any Commonwealth authority; and (f) to advise the Minister concerning the granting of financial assistance to the States and to other authorities for educational purposes, and to include other functions in education as assigned to it by the Minister. These functions detailed the Commonwealth's interest in education. In 1945, World War II ended. After World War II, the federal parliament became aware of its commitment to education and involved itself in debates on educational issues. The Commonwealth funded practical programs, such as the Army Education Service and the Technical Training Scheme.

Commonwealth intervention in schooling started late and developed slowly. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Commonwealth's involvement in education was limited to financial aid to universities and the provision of scholarships for university students. It was the six states which had the predominant role in education (Barcan 1993: 75). The management of Australian education had been influenced by individual educational policy-making in each of the states and territories, through a broad conformity in teaching styles, and through an extensive reliance on examinations to

assess and monitor schools and the performance of students. Funding provision was the preferred means for the Commonwealth Government to intervene and control educational affairs nation-wide. Funding was usually directed to the establishment of educational facilities such as kindergartens in each state in the 1950s.

In the early 1960s, the politicisation of education was another manifestation of Commonwealth intervention in education. The politicians took advantage of education in the conflicts between the political parties for power in the 1960s and "federal funding for schools became something of an election issue" (Edwards 1997: 283). In the Federal election campaign in 1964, the newly elected Menzies government granted Commonwealth funds to provide scholarships and to develop science laboratories at state and private schools. Thus, educational initiatives appeared to be used to attract electoral support.

6.3 National Curriculum: Rudimentary Years (1969 - 1974)

6.3.1 Fledgling Pattern

Federal interest in education in the 1960s became a significant concern of educators in the Australian community. Connell (1993: 4-5) stated that

> Australian education had always been subject to the political influence of State politicians. From the time when the Federal Government, in the 1950s, began to take a substantial interest in tertiary education and, in the 1960s, in aspects of secondary education, the influence of Federal politicians was also substantially felt.

At the end of the 1960s, the Liberal-National government intended to establish centralised control of education by breaking down what the government regarded as "unnecessary differences" among the states. The Commonwealth Minister of Education, Malcolm Fraser, explicitly expressed this intention. Fraser (1969: 8) wrote that

> the Commonwealth has a special interest in reducing the unnecessary differences in what is taught in the various States and hence the very real difficulties faced by children who move from one State to another. While the Commonwealth believes much can be done to break down unnecessary barriers between States, it is not seeking to impose uniformity or centralised control of education.

Funding of projects became the usual way for the Commonwealth Government to intervene the education since the late 1960s and the early 1970s. In October 1969, a pioneer Commonwealth project, called the Australian Science Education Project (ASEP), was set up to produce curriculum materials for potential use in Grades 7-10 for the period 1969 to 1974 in Australian secondary schools. This project was the first program of curriculum materials development on an Australia-wide basis, and was supported in full by funds made available by the Australian Federal Government and all State Departments of Education (Skilbeck 1978). After several years' implementation of the Project, a follow-up survey was conducted by a research study funded by the Curriculum Development Centre regarding the impact of the Project in 1978. The findings of the survey showed (Owen 1978: 179) that the ASEP materials had been purchased by 70 per cent of secondary schools in Australia by February 1976. By the middle of 1976, schools had spent over A$1,400,000 on the ASEP materials and there was a continuing steady demand for the materials into 1977.

The role ASEP textbooks played in the 1970s and 1980s was important in the Commonwealth Government's intervention in curriculum development in Australian schools. By producing textbooks and making them available for all Australian schools, the Federal Government successfully influenced curriculum development in Australian schools. The high rate of take-up of the ASEP materials by schools indicated that the development of ASEP materials was successful and this success was significant to the Federal government. One important point was that without the success of the development of the ASEP materials, the Federal government could not have developed the core curricula for Australian schools in the 1970s and could not have established the Curriculum Development Centre in the 1980s.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Australian educational community also witnessed the establishment of national committees to develop curriculum for Australian schools through national seminars and publications. Three committees were formed and their work played an important role in national curriculum development during this period.

The first committee was formed to contribute to a curriculum that was balanced between mathematics, science and social science. In the 1960s, mathematics and science had been priorities in the Australian school curriculum, but little had been done to strengthen the position of the social sciences. In 1967, a national seminar was held at the Burwood Teachers' College in Melbourne, focusing on the teaching of the social sciences in secondary schools. The seminar lasted seven days and was of national significance. One of its important consequences was the establishment of a national organisation, the National Committee for Social Science Teaching (NCSST), by the Federal government in 1970.

In the mid-1960s, schools in Australia began to introduce programs in languages other than English (LOTE). By the end of the 1960s, some schools had introduced languages like Malay, Indonesian, Italian and Japanese. In 1969, a committee was set up by the Australian Federal Government to review the status of the studies of Asian languages and cultures in Australia. As a consequence of the review, a new committee, the Asian Studies Co-ordinating Committee (ASCC) was formed after the style of the NCSST.

In 1972, the UNESCO Australian Committee organised a national seminar at the University of Sydney, exploring the teaching of English in secondary schools. In response to a request from the Directors-General of Education, this event resulted in the formation of the second committee - the National Curriculum on English Teaching (NCET) in 1974.

The three national committees (NCSST, ASCC, NCET) ran side by side like three chariots in the interest of Australian curriculum development. They worked in similar ways in conducting workshops, producing publications and materials, conducting innovative experiments, research, and providing consultants for schools and conferences (Connell 1993: 546).

The establishment and work of the three committees was significant in the national approach to the curriculum in Australian schools. These three committees were the

forerunners of the National Curriculum Development Centre[43] and their efforts could be recognised as pioneer work in the development of a national approach to curriculum in Australian schools. The successful work of the three committees probably influenced the debates over the national curriculum during the 1990s. It may be that the work of the committees convinced the Commonwealth Government to show more interests in the establishment of a national curriculum for Australian schools. This led further along the educational path to the development of a core curriculum for Australian schools in the 1970s and the establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre in the 1980s.

6.3.2 The Karmel Report: *Schools in Australia*

There was an expansion of the role of the Commonwealth in education. In the 1970s and 1980s, Commonwealth involvement in education and curriculum development was characterised by the establishment of a number of school commissions to review schooling and curriculum development in Australian schools. The government directly appointed the members of these bodies and they operated as government agencies to investigate the implementation of school policy. One of the many commissions was the Australian Schools Commission that conducted influential work in the curriculum development of Australian schools.

When the Whitlam Labor Government took office in Canberra in 1972, Commonwealth government intervention in educational affairs was intensified. As Walton and Morgan (1981: ix) commented that the period of the Labor Government 1972 - 1975 was a period when the Commonwealth intervened in education more than ever before. It was this government which produced the Karmel Report which created the School Commission (Walton & Morgan 1981: ix). As promised in the election campaign, Whitlam appointed an Interim Committee for the Australian

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[43] The Curriculum Development Centre was a national statutory authority for developing curricula for Australian schools. It was established in Canberra in 1976.

Schools Commission[44] in December 1972, directly after the election. The purpose of the commission was

> to examine the position of government and non-government primary and secondary schools throughout Australia and to make recommendations on the immediate financial needs of those schools, the priorities within those needs and the measures appropriate to assist in meeting them (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 3).

After one year's work, the commission issued an Interim Report titled *Schools in Australia* in 1973. As Professor Peter Karmel chaired the Committee, the Report was also known as the "Karmel Report". The Report demonstrated that the Australian Schools Commission had placed "great value on the encouragement of grassroots development in education" (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 132) and that their work was based on the assumption that "local knowledge and initiative are more likely to produce effective educational experiences than fiats imposed from remote sources" (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 129). The Report recommended the allocation of funds for teachers' centres, which would produce materials for schools and develop the school based curriculum (Howe 1981: 113 - 117). The Report also introduced the first explicit statement of a philosophy of equal opportunity in education in Australian schools and consistently emphasised on "the attainment of minimum standards of competence for life in the modern democratic industrial society" (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 139). The Report declared,

> The Committee favours less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of pupils they teach and, at a senior level, with students themselves. Its belief in this grass-roots approach to the control of the schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making the decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit

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[44] Professor Peter Karmel was the chairman; Mrs Jean Blackburn was the deputy chairman. A. W. Jones, Director-General of Education in South Australia, was among the members. They all had experience in investigating the educational system in South Australia.

from their experience (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission 1973: 10).

The influence of the Karmel Report was profound. Due to the important role that the Report played in curriculum development in Australian schools, a conference titled "Schools in Australia: The 25 Years Since the Karmel Report" was convened by the Australian Council for Educational Research in Sydney in 1998. According to the Symposium (ACER 1998: 1), the contribution of the Report to the restructuring of Australian education in the seventies, eighties and even the nineties was highly applauded.

Participants in the conference commented on the contribution of the Report. Hill (1998: 1) claimed that it was a defining characteristic of great thinkers that they are ahead of their times and that it was often many years later that the pertinence and originality of their insights were appreciated. He (Hill 1998: 1) continued to state that "Peter Karmel has long been recognised by the educational community in Australia as its foremost thinker", his "genius has been not only to accurately point the way ahead in education, but also to judge to a nicety what at any given point in time is achievable politically". Lingard (1998: 3) commented that "the Whitlam government via the implementation of the recommendations of the Karmel Report systematised the Commonwealth's involvement in schooling, beyond the ad hocery which had preceded it." As a result, the schools commissions were devices to centralise in Canberra authority over the whole school system (Haynes 1997: 154).

6.4 National Curriculum: Institutionalised Years (1975 - 1984)

6.4.1 Curriculum Development Centre (1975 - 1981)

In 1973, the Federal government formed an Interim Council to prepare the way for setting up an organisation to coordinate curriculum development between the Commonwealth and the states. In 1975, after the proposed organisation had undergone two years' preparation, the Federal Parliament passed the *Curriculum Development Centre Act* in 1975. The Curriculum Development Centre was eventually established by the Act as a federal independent statutory authority to develop and maintain an approach to curriculum development involving all States,

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Catholic systems, independent schools and other educational agencies and institutions. The purpose of the Centre was to foster the development, implementation and evaluation of curricula in Australian schools.

The decision of the Federal government to establish a national curriculum centre reflected an official view, particularly from the Australian Education Council, that some projects and curriculum concerns were national and transcended state borders. These projects, including the Australian Science Education Project (ASEP) in 1969 and the Asian Studies Coordinating Committee in 1969, the National Committee on Social Science Teaching in 1970 and the National Committee on English Teaching in 1974, were considered influential in developing a national approach to curriculum in Australian schools. On the other hand, the Australian Education Council wished to make the most of the considerable resources available for curriculum development in the various states to ensure that better communication and liaison were achieved between the States and national bodies so that joint projects could be developed.

The existence of the Centre provided an opportunity for teachers, administrators, curriculum experts, academics and the general community to come together to address common, national and particular curriculum issues. The Centre also provided publications for all schools in Australia and these publications were very popular before the winding down of the Centre in 1981. The demand for Curriculum Development Centre publications remained high throughout 1981-82 and orders from schools and individuals across Australia exceeded those of the preceding year (Curriculum Development Centre 1982: 6). Moreover, the Centre demonstrated an outward orientation through involvement in certain UNESCO, APEID and OECD/CERI programs (Curriculum Development Centre 1982: 6).

The arrival on the sense of the national Curriculum Development Centre was of key importance, since it institutionalised the Commonwealth's entry into the curriculum area, and legislated the concept of national curriculum development (Piper 1997: 30). However, the Centre did not last long. In the early 1980s, the Fraser Government set up a Committee of Ministerial Review of Commonwealth Functions to devise ways of reducing government expenditure. As the States and Territories were not prepared

to meet 50% of the operating costs of the Centre, the independent statuary curriculum organisation became the victim of political funding cuts in education and faced the winding down of its programs. Following the Report of the Review of Commonwealth Functions Committee, the Curriculum Development Centre was abolished in April 1981 and was reorganised as a Curriculum Development Branch within the then Commonwealth Department of Education.

In 1983, after the Hawke Government came into power, the Curriculum Development Centre was reconstituted in accordance with Labor's pre-election educational promises. This time, the organisation was changed from an independent statutory authority to a coordinating body under the control of the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Academic observers noted this shift and interpreted it as signalling more direct Commonwealth government control over the activities of the Centre, and a reduced role for the states (Beare 1984).

The establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre was a major event regarding curriculum development in the 1970s and 1980s. Though it did not directly promote a national curriculum for Australian schools, the service, like the publications it provided, were of national significance to curriculum development in schools. It was through the Centre's provision of publications that the commonwealth government increased its influence over Australian schools. In particular, this influence would continue through the development of a core curriculum for Australian schools.

6.4.2 Core Curriculum for Australian Schools

The idea of a core curriculum for schools has been debated worldwide since the 1970s and entailed addressing the central influence on curriculum (Kirk 1986; OECD 1994). Australia became one of the pioneer countries in developing a national framework of core curriculum for schools in each state and territory in the middle and late 1970s. Educational authorities in the Northern Territory (1979), South Australia (1981), Tasmania (1978; 1980) and Victoria (1980) issued influential reports and policy statements at the state and territory levels to promote the development of a core curriculum for schools.

The development of a core curriculum in Australia represented a policy attempt to reconcile a national curriculum framework with a diversity of educational provisions and school based curriculum developments. The main themes of the national level debate about the core curriculum included students' future effective participation in the life and work of society, and a commitment to school-based curriculum development as well as the involvement of parents and the wider community in curriculum decision-making.

The development of a core curriculum in Australian schools was directly attributable to the work of a national curriculum agency, the Curriculum Development Centre. Ever since its establishment in 1975, the Centre had committed its major efforts to promoting curriculum packages. The Centre set up a national working group chaired by Sir Mark Oliphant and, in 1980, released its first discussion paper: *Core Curriculum for Australian Schools: What it is and Why it is Needed* (Curriculum Development Centre 1980).

"Core curriculum" was an essential concept in the national framework and from it were derived subsequent concepts like "basic learning" and "essential learning". According to the definition of the paper, the core is that part of the whole or total curriculum which all students are required to study (Curriculum Development Centre 1980: 2). The core curriculum means a set of:

> basic and essential learnings and experiences which can reasonably be expected of all students who pass through our schools. 'Basic' learnings are defined as those which provide a base or foundation necessary for other study and learning, and for continuing personal development. 'Essential' learnings and experiences are defined as those which are required by all for effective cultural, economic, political, group, family and interpersonal life in society (Curriculum Development Centre 1980: 4).

As a national document, the discussion paper "bases its development of a framework for core curriculum on a brave attempt to define a set of aims for Australian schools" (Piper 1997: 40). The discussion paper, as an exploratory statement, functioned as a national guideline to direct the federal introduction of core curriculum in all Australian schools. By carefully endorsing the principle of equal opportunity, the paper also demonstrated that schools had autonomy to decide on actual

implementation of core curriculum and encourage the participation of the students, parents, and community in the planning process for implementing the core curriculum. The paper clearly indicated that:

> the responsibility lies on the individual schools to determine the specific content of core programs within the broad framework provided and in the context of local needs, but emphases that students, parents and community should participate in appropriate ways in the planning process (Curriculum Development Centre 1980: 21).

In the discussion paper, "framework" was apparently one of the key words that impressed those who read about curriculum development in Australian schools. In fact, one of the most important contributions that core curriculum made was probably the curriculum Framework established for schools. Over the years, theorists of knowledge like Hurst (1974) and Phenix (1964) sought to produce a framework of knowledge by classifying knowledge into different groupings. In introducing the Core Curriculum in 1980, the Australian Curriculum Development Centre made efforts to develop a framework of curriculum that should be used by Australian students.

The core curriculum was based upon a core framework which consisted of seven core elements: learning and thinking techniques; ways of organising knowledge; dispositions and values; skills or abilities; forms of expression; practical performance; and interpersonal and group relationships. The framework also outlined nine areas of knowledge and experience[45] that served as guideline of curriculum development in schools.

The implementation of the core curriculum in Australian schools was associated with a series of debates over essential learning. Essential learning is a similar concept to the idea of a core curriculum, with the difference being that the former is a dynamic

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[45] These nine areas of knowledge and experience were classified into arts and crafts; environmental studies; mathematical skills and reasoning and their application; social, cultural and civic studies; health education; science and technological ways of knowing and their social application; communication; moral reasoning and action, value and belief systems; work, leisure and lifestyle (Curriculum Development Centre 1980: 18 -19).

process in which the core curriculum is learnt. Regarding the definition of essential learning, *In the National Interest: Education and Youth Policy in Australia* stated that

> the commission sees the development of frameworks for essential studies through the years 7 to 11 as a task of national importance in which collaborative action between education systems and authorities is essential (Commonwealth Schools Commission 1987: 99).

Four components were suggested to be the essential contents of learning, they are:

> Concepts; intellectual and performance skills; Australian Studies; Integrated Studies (Commonwealth Schools Commission 1987: 99).

The notion of essential learning led to an argument about the development of an essential curriculum, in which the focus should be on the identification of the key concepts drawn from the main areas of knowledge rather than the key subjects to be studied.

The core curriculum profoundly foreshadowed the establishment of centralised curriculum programs in Australian schools. In Victoria, the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) that were introduced in 1985 and the Curriculum and Standard Framework that was developed in 1995 by the Victorian government, could well demonstrate the impact of a core curriculum. This will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

6.5 National Curriculum: Years of Politicalisation (1989 - 1995)

6.5.1 The Dawkins Years

Accepting that schooling plays a critical and central role in Australian society, in May 1988, the then Minister of Employment, Education and Training, Mr Dawkins announced a national government statement entitled *Strengthening Australia's Schools* (Dawkins 1988). This indicated that schools were undergoing a shift back to politicalisation of curriculum development in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Barcan 1993: 330). The statement stated that "Australia can no longer afford fragmentation of effort and approaches must be developed and implemented in ways which result in real improvement in schooling across the nation" (Dawkins 1988: 7). The statement argued further that "we need to ensure that every young Australian gets a general

education of quality which provides both personal and intellectual development as well as broadly based and adaptable skills (Dawkins 1988: 2).

Dawkins' paper, *Strengthening Australia's Schools*, was one of the most influential discussion documents in the educational debates in the late 1980s. Certainly, no researchers in Australia can ignore it when they review the effects of the Commonwealth policies on schooling. The seven-page statement might be the thinnest document addressing the main issues of Australian schooling in the last four decades. However, the document delivered a resounding message that the Commonwealth government would pursue a national collaborative approach to the Australian school curriculum, which Lingard (1991) claimed to be a good example of the impact of federalism on policy-making for Australian schools.

The document covered statements about the management of education, responsibility and accountability, concepts related to a common curriculum and school assessment as well as to teachers' professional training. The document emphasised the state's responsibility of managing the schools and stated (Dawkins 1988: 2) that the Australian States have had, and will continue to have, primary responsibility for the education of our young people. This was an unequivocal message that the Commonwealth had no intention of centralising the responsibility for Australian schooling. However, Dawkins' statement also stated that the States should unite and cooperate to develop and implement a national effort to strengthen the capacity of Australian schools to meet the challenges they faced. This document signalled that Australian schools needed a common curriculum framework, and emphasised the need for higher general levels of literacy, numeracy and analytical skills across the nation and that the common curriculum framework should be complemented by a common national approach to assessment (Dawkins 1988: 15).

The central theme of *Strengthening Australia's Schools* was crystallised in its final sentence (Piper 1997: 42). The document concluded with a clear statement that a centralised school system and national goals for schooling were needed in all Australian schools. It stated that "we must address the practical business of schooling in the context of agreed national objectives and priorities. Australian could no longer

afford fragmentation of effect and approaches must be developed and implemented in ways which result in real improvements in schools across the nation (Dawkins 1988: 7).

6.5.2 Hobart Declaration on Schooling (1989): National Curriculum Statement

In 1989, the Australian Education Council (AEC), the meeting of Commonwealth and state Ministers of Education, gathered in Hobart to discuss collaborative approaches to improving the quality of schooling. This meeting was primarily aimed at developing "a national perspective" and "a shared commitment to agreed national goals" with an overall focus on cooperation, consultation and negotiation on the federal structure of Australian schooling. The meeting finally reached agreement on a set of national goals for schooling, one proposal for the creation of a national curriculum organisation, the initiation of a process of national collaborative development of curriculum and the introduction of an annual national report on Australian schooling.

Of all the above-mentioned agreements, the most significant one was the endorsement of *The Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*, which was also known as *the Hobart Declaration on Schooling*. As Figure 6.4 illustrates, the word "common" indicates that this declaration applied to all Australian schools and implied a commitment to common implementation (Piper 1997: 42). The word "agreed" means that this declaration had attracted at least bureaucratic acceptance throughout the Commonwealth, states and territories. The first five goals of the statement are quite general and seek to direct the broad education of young people. The sixth goal specifically outlines the competencies that educated young people should acquire. Some of the competencies (e.g. abilities of literacy and numeracy) are the traditional requirements for students, and some are not new, but at least less traditional competencies such as the skills of problem solving and information processing and computing. The seventh goal serves as a minimal goal for students to achieve and the eighth to the tenth goals are classified into specific areas such as the understanding of Aboriginal culture, physical development and personal health, as well as career education.

The common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia were of significant importance to the development of national collaborative to curriculum. The general goals have minimal implications for a national curriculum, but the specific goals have clear implications for the content of a nationally agreed curriculum. Four essential skills were identified as the core skills of basic learning. The skills include:

> English literacy, including the skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing; numeracy, and the other mathematical skills; analysis and problem-solving; information processing and computing (Australian Education Council 1989: 11).

Figure 6.4 Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia

Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia

1. To provide an excellent education for all young people, being one which develops their talents and capacities to full potential, and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation.

2. To enable all students to achieve high standards of learning and to develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, respect for others, and achievement of personal excellence.

3. To promote equality of education opportunities, and to provide for groups with special learning requirements.

4. To respond to the current and emerging economic and social needs of the nation, and to provide those skills which will allow students maximum flexibility and adaptability in their future employment and other aspects of life.

5. To provide a foundation for future education and training, in terms of knowledge and skills, respect for learning and positive attitudes for life-long education.

6. To develop in students:

a. the skills of English literacy, including skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing;

b. skill of numeracy, and other mathematical skills;

c. skills of analysis and problem solving;

d. skills of information processing and computing;

e. an understanding of the role of science and technology in society, together with scientific and technological skills;

f. a knowledge and appreciation of Australia's historical and geographic context;

g. a knowledge of languages other than English;

h. an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts;

i. an understanding of, and concern for, balanced development and the global environment; and

j. a capacity to exercise judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice.

7. To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context.

8. To provide students with an understanding and respect for our cultural heritage including the particular cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups.

9. To provide for the physical development and personal health and fitness of students, and for the creative use of leisure time.

10. To provide appropriate career education and knowledge of the world of work, including an understanding of the nature and place of work in our society.

The national goals were a politically agreed national statement of the aims of Australian schools, yet this statement did not result in a substantial national goal for Australian schools. The declaration provided a starting point for public discussion and debates on what should be taught and what Australian students should learn in schools.

The statement did not serve specifically to outline the development of a national curriculum in Australian schools, but it represented a movement towards national collaborative approaches to the school curriculum. Although many commentators (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2-3) felt that the development of a national curriculum would be appropriate for Australian schools, the statement was couched cautiously even with regard to its name. It called for national collaborative curriculum development rather than national curriculum development. The expression "national collaborative curriculum development" indicates that the approach to curriculum development was via maximum cooperation between representatives of the involved parties before delivery, while the name "national curriculum" could mean a curriculum developed by a small interest group and bureaucratically delivered from the centre to the periphery.

6.5.3 Creation of the Curriculum Corporation

Since the 1980s, there were two national agencies on curriculum that were established in Australia. One was the above-mentioned national Curriculum Development Centre, which ended its mission in 1981 because of changes in funding under the Fraser government. The other was the Australian Curriculum Corporation, which continues to this day.

The establishment of the Curriculum Corporation was a significant outcome of the Hobart gathering of the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education

in 1989. The Curriculum Corporation[46] is registered as a commercial company and the ownership is shared equally among the Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers of Education. However, this organisation was not fully a national body at its establishment as the government of New South Wales boycotted and refused to join. Nevertheless, in 1993, New South Wales joined the Curriculum Corporation. Also, New Zealand became a full member of the organisation in 1992.

Not being directly affiliated with the Commonwealth government, the company was managed by a board constituted by the Ministers initially with a core grant, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the states. The growth and survival of the Corporation depended on its continuing commitments to national collaboration, so its crucial role was to facilitate continuing collaborative activity and related publishing for schools. The company was intended eventually to become financially self-reliant from the sales of its own products and services.

The Corporation also served as a participant observer of the work of many committees and working parties on educational matters. At the point of its establishment, the board of the Corporation stated the company's functions as follows (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2-3):

> 1) Facilitating collaboration among government and non-government schools and school systems and education authorities in curriculum development. 2) Reducing unnecessary differences in curriculum between the states and territories. 3) Encouraging more effective use of resources by eliminating unnecessary duplication of effort in curriculum development and the provision of information services. 4) Providing advice to the AEC on national curriculum issues referred to it by the AEC.

Curriculum Corporation was established according to the agreement of the 1989 Hobart meeting against a background of achievement of nationally agreed and common goals of schooling. Therefore, there was a concern among schools and the academic community that the Curriculum Corporation might be potentially

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[46] The Corporation was organised after the winding-up of the Australian Schools Catalogue Information Service Company and the transfer of publishing stock and projects from the former Curriculum Development Centre. As for staff members, none were brought into the new organization from the former curriculum statutory body.

committed to developing a national curriculum for Australian schools, despite the fact that the "mission statement" of the Board of the Curriculum Corporation declared that this would not be the case. Clarification was required. David Francis, the chief executive of the Curriculum Corporation, stated that the Corporation was an educational service body rather than a policy-making body. It did not intend to promote a national curriculum, but rather to support the provision of optimal educational experiences for all Australian students:

> It is neither monolithic and bureaucratic, nor is it threatening to the sovereignty of the state and territories in the field of curriculum. Certainly we are not an educational policy-making body and we do not define curriculum. We act in support of it. And we are not a phoenix arising to set and mandate a national curriculum (Francis 1991: 2).

Francis also insisted that the statements and profiles were not a national curriculum and that products related to the collaborative efforts in curriculum were far from a full curriculum. He argued that,

> one thing we know for sure about the idea of a national curriculum is that it releases megawatts of paranoia. The recently developed statements and profiles in eight areas of learning are not a national curriculum. Although they are products of the most ambitious collaborative effort in curriculum ever made by Australia's school system, they are a long way still from a full curriculum. One of the most interesting things to watch over the next few years will be the way profiles are related to State syllabuses, course advice, school courses and teachers' work programs. In general, profiles can be seen as providing a set of landmarks for course development (Francis 1993: 1).

Though Francis explained and insisted that the products of the collaborative work did not constitute a national curriculum, this assurance did not remove the community's concern about the perceived potential threat of a national curriculum for Australian schools. The schools and academics reacted cautiously and warned that if the Curriculum Corporation ignored the tradition of school's participation in curriculum decision-making, it would undoubtedly meet resistance (Kemmis 1990: 21).

Although the Curriculum Corporation had not labelled itself as promoting a national curriculum for Australian schools, the advent of the Corporation was, in fact, a product of the Commonwealth's efforts towards a national curriculum. The Corporation itself was a national organisation and its work was aimed at approaching

the nation-wide standardisation of school curriculum. One example was the curriculum statements and profiles that the Corporation developed for Australian schools during 1991 to 1993 (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2-3). The statements and profiles were not a national curriculum, but they were a national curriculum framework that was developed for the purpose of national collaboration and cooperation in curriculum development (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2). Furthermore, the publication of the statements and profiles of eight learning areas was well scheduled. As illustrated in Figure 6.5, the mathematics statement had already been published in 1991. The profile of mathematics as well as the statements and profiles of English, and Science and Technology would be published by the end of 1992. All the statements and profiles of the Studies of Society and Environment, Health, LOTE and Arts would be published by the end of 1993. Figure 6.5 below indicates the agenda of the Curriculum Corporation towards creating a national curriculum framework.

Figure 6.5 Schedule for Publication of National Curriculum Briefs, Statements and Profiles.

Learning Area	Brief	Statement	Profile
Mathematics	x	published in 1991	Mid 1992
English	x	Mid 1992	Mid 1992
Science	x	Mid 1992	Early 1992
Technology	x	Mid 1992	End 1992
Studies of Society and Environment	Mid 1992	Early 1993	Mid 1993
Health	Mid 1992	Mid 1993	Mid 1993
LOTE	Mid 1992	Mid 1993	Mid 1993
The Arts	Mid 1992	Mid 1993	Mid 1993

Source: Hannan & Wilson (1992) The Development of a National Curriculum Framework. *Curriculum Perspective,* June, pp. 2-3.

6.6 Debate on a National Curriculum

Curriculum development in Australia in the early 1990s was characterised by an increasing number of debates and reflections that had arisen from the Hobart Declaration on Schooling in 1989. Ever since the agreed goals for schools had come into being, a wide-ranging public discussion had occurred on the potential

development of a national curriculum in Australian schools (Beazley 1992; Foggo 1992; Francis 1991; Hannan 1992; Kennedy 1992; McTaggart 1992; Morris 1992; Piper 1992; Watkins 1992). Periodicals and publications, such as *Unicorn* and *Curriculum Perspectives*, became academic forums in the Australian educational community in which to air different views on the national collaborative approaches to the school curriculum. Australian educators have identified the Dawkins' Statement in 1988 as a turning point for collaborative action in curriculum development. Arguably, however, as formerly stated, without the basis of collaborative effort that occurred in the 1960s, 1970s and even in the 1980s, it would have been very difficult to proceed along such a path.

In 1988, the Australian Educational Council held its 57th meeting in Darwin. It was at this meeting that Directors of Curriculum from all states, territories and the Commonwealth agreed to execute curriculum mapping in order to undertake an assessment of the similarities and differences that existed in regard to the school curriculum (Australian Education Council 1989: 11; Ellerton & Clements 1994: 49 - 52; Eltis 1989: 48 - 52). The assessment was intended to clarify the degree of similarity in the existing curriculum systems that could form the basis of possible national cooperation on a curriculum framework (Ellerton & Clements 1994: 49 - 52). It was also meant to identify the differences between the curriculum systems that could impede potential cooperation in national curriculum development.

Although national collaboration in curriculum development, in practical terms, occurred between the 1960s and the 1980s, the concept of a national curriculum was theoretically new for the Australian educational community even in the 1990s (Kennedy 1992: 1). The question "What is a National Curriculum?" was one of the points under discussion (Piper 1991: 2). In public debates on whether Australian schools needed a national curriculum or not, there seemed to be no official document that had endeavoured to precisely define an Australian national curriculum. However, it could be concluded that any national curriculum in Australia would take the form of a national curriculum framework, rather than a mandated national curriculum as was the case in the UK. The major national curriculum initiatives were included in the curriculum statements and profiles developed and published by the

Curriculum Corporation, and they embodied the development of key competencies. The statements and profiles consisted of eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs): Mathematics, English, Studies of Society and Environment, Science, Technology, Health, the Arts and LOTE (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2-3).

Some of the AEC members were concerned about the allocation of resources for curriculum development and insisted that the barriers between systems should be removed (Beazley 1992: 25). The opponents of the fragmented state systems insisted that unnecessary differences in curriculum and assessment between states disadvantaged mobile students[47] and the collaborative development of a curriculum would be economical and would save resources used for separate developments in each of the states. So, the government argued "through productive collaboration and sharing of resources Australia will be able to deliver a high quality curriculum, at low cost, to the three million students in schools across the country without any need to compromise the role of States and Territories as education providers" (Beazley 1992: 25 - 27). Australian schooling as a whole was seen to deserve a national curriculum that was forward-looking (Hannan & Wilson 1992: 2-3). Those opposing this view insisted that "what is happening at the national level is nothing to do with curriculum, it merely concerns monitoring what is happening for resource allocation purposes" (McTaggart 1992: 14).

Parents' associations generally were suspicious of the potential establishment of a national curriculum for Australian schools. Members of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) (Morris 1992: 43) declared that they rejected the imposition onto schools of detailed, prescribed common curriculum content, or rigidly implemented programs. The members of ACSSO also commented on the principle of equal opportunity. Morris (1992: 43) contended that centrally determined syllabuses may have been developed with good intentions regarding the promotion of equal opportunity but that, in practice, they worked against the improvement of educational outcomes for such groups as the poor, recent immigrants, isolated rural

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[47] Mobile students refers to students who are required to move interstate and are disadvantaged by the varied standards of teaching and curricula taught in the different states and territories.

students and Koori children. In the end, the members of ACSSO (Morris 1992: 43) suggested that "national statements must allow the degree of curriculum flexibility which enables schools to recognise, and build on, the experiences and strengths which their students bring to the classroom."

Some commentators also advocated a compromise between the Commonwealth and each state and school system. Hannan (1992: 28) wrote that

> To achieve the level of collaboration necessary, the national curriculum must be very much a framework, sufficient to define agreed common ground and flexible enough to contain diverse, if not divergent, content, methods of learning and means of assessment. A lot of room has to be left for each state to make a national framework its own; and within states adaptations have to fit particular traditions of school autonomy and arrangements for upper secondary certification.

Debates on whether Australian schools needed a national curriculum or not constituted a landmark of curriculum development in the early 1990s. These debates started with the bureaucratic initiatives of the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* in 1989 and involved various education groups, such as the educators, parents and officials. Throughout the debates, the shape of a national curriculum and whether Australian schools really needed a nationally agreed curriculum remained unclear, but the debates indicated that the Australian communities were becoming more and more aware of the Commonwealth involvement in curriculum development. The public debates might be unable to prevent a political agenda from becoming a reality, but they delivered a strong message that any potential development of a national curriculum for Australian schools must be a cautious process. In the late 1990s, both moves in favour of, and resistance to the development of a national curriculum for Australian schools coexisted, and whether a national curriculum might be developed and implemented in the future remains unclear at the time of writing.

6.7 Summary and Commentary

In this chapter, I have outlined the social and political background to the Commonwealth's involvement in curriculum development for Australian schools. According to the Constitution at Federation, education remained the province of the

State parliaments. In the 1960s, the Commonwealth government involved itself in education by providing targeted funds for schools and initiating centralised projects in curriculum development. Some subject committees were also formed to develop a coherent and internally consistent curriculum package for schools. In the 1970s, the Commonwealth government formed the Australian Schools Commission to investigate the position of Australian schools and to establish the Curriculum Development Centre to develop and maintain a centralised approach to curriculum development. The establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre marked the institutionalisation of the Commonwealth's entry into the curriculum area. In particular, the Centre developed core curriculum for Australian schools.

In the 1980s, the involvement of the Commonwealth government in education was intensified by the Dawkins' statement *Strengthening Australia's Schools*. The statement indicated the explicit intention of the Commonwealth government to become more involved in Australian education and curriculum development. This statement prompted the release of the *Common and Agreed National Goals of Schooling*, the formation of a national agency, the Curriculum Corporation, and sparked intensive debates over the establishment of a national curriculum.

It was obvious that the Commonwealth government gradually became more involved in education from the 1960s and has exerted a significant influence over curriculum development for Australian schools since then, by initiating projects, forming committees and establishing organisations. How the Commonwealth's involvement in education influenced curriculum development in the State system and the perceptions from the schools and teachers will be discussed in Chapters Seven and Nine.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DECENTRALISAITION AND CURRICULUM

DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA: THE VICTORIAN MODEL

(1985 - 1995)

In Chapter Six, I outlined the social and political context of the Commonwealth's involvement in Australian education and discussed the Commonwealth's policy on the collaborative development of curriculum for Australian schools. In this chapter, I focus on policies of decentralisation of responsibility in education in the Victorian system. In particular, I will review the relationship between curriculum development and the changing patterns of educational governance, including centralised programs in curriculum development and decentralised management responsibility and accountability. As the social, historical and political contexts underpin the formulation and changes of education policy, I will first examine the social, historical and political background of Victorian society.

7.1 Victoria: Social and Historical Background

Of the six Australian states, Victoria is the smallest state on the Australian mainland. It has an area of 227,600 square kilometres and represents about 3% of the continental landmass of Australia. It is geographically located along the south-eastern coastline.

There are a number of social, historical and political factors that influenced the formation of the education system in Victoria. First, the population determines the size of the school system. Victoria is a small state in landmass but a large state in population compared with the other Australian states and territories. The population in Victoria in June 1999 was 4,712,200 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000: 43), which comprised 24.8% of the Australian population of 18,966,805. The rate of population increase in Victoria was about 1.2%, while that of Australia overall was about 1.3% in the same period (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000: 43). The small

land area, together with a large population, has made Victoria the most densely populated state. There are about 20.7 persons per square kilometre in Victoria, while the Australian population averages 2.4 per square kilometre (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000: 43). Therefore, the high density of population greatly influenced the Victorian school system and has made it the second largest educational system in Australia.

The urbanisation of the population has been another important feature of Victorian society. In 1998, an estimated 3,367,000 persons lived in the capital city of Melbourne, representing 72.3% of the Victorian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000: 43). The changing size and distribution of the Victorian population has also had important implications for aspects of educational provision such as resource allocation, student enrolments, curriculum development, teachers' professional training, and even the opening and closing of schools.

Second, immigration played an important role in the formation of a diversified system of education in Victoria. The first permanent white settlement in Victoria was established in 1835 when a small town was established on the Yarra River. By 1840, there were over 10,000 people settled in the area around Melbourne, and most of the population were immigrants from overseas. A tradition of immigration formed the historical background of a diversified society in Victoria.

The gold rush was another factor that influenced the formation of a diversified society in Victoria. In 1851, gold was found in the areas of Warrandyte, Ballarat and Bendigo and attracted a huge influx of immigrants of Irish, English, European, American and Chinese origin to Victoria. With the discovery of gold, and a population that trebled in the 1880s, Victoria marched into marvellous times with land sales booming and rapid financial expansion. The gold rush produced sufficient wealth for Victoria to establish its earliest system of finance (e.g. the establishment of the Bendigo Bank) and to transform itself from a fledgling colony into a prosperous and independent state.

Third, the independence of the parliamentary system introduced at the middle of the 19th century helped the formation of an independent state system of schooling.

Victoria became a self-governed colony in 1851 and the first Victorian parliament sat in 1856. At the inauguration of the new century on 1 January 1901, Victoria ceased to be an independent colony and became one of the federated states of the new Commonwealth of Australia.

Currently, under the Victorian Constitution, the parliament of Victoria consists of the Crown (Governor of Victoria), Legislative Council (Upper House) and Legislative Assembly (Lower House). The Victorian Government comprises the Premier and ministers who are drawn from both houses of parliament. The Premier of Victoria is the government leader in Parliament and ministers assume a range of ministerial and portfolio responsibilities relating to administration and the provision of services to the people of Victoria. The Victorian government manages the State's finances, provides a range of services including health, education and public transport, and administers law and order, agricultural development, state-based public utilities, and urban and regional development. The primary revenue for funding services is derived from Commonwealth government grants and a range of state government taxes and charges.

7.3 The Educational System in Victoria

Within the administrative structure of the Victorian government, the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) directly manages education. DEET manages the affairs of state schools, training and further education, strategic planning and administrative services, higher education and reviews.

Victoria is currently divided into eight regions for educational purposes and DEET manages government schools through the regional offices of education. There are three metropolitan regions which cover the Central Metropolitan, Eastern Metropolitan, Northern Metropolitan, South Eastern Metropolitan and Western Metropolitan areas, while another five country regions cover the country areas.

As in other states in Australia, Victorian schools consist of government and non-government schools. In terms of student enrolments, the government schools form the principal part of the system, and non-government schools represent an important complementary part of the diversified system of Victorian education. Government

schools are directly administered through the Department of Education, Employment and Training (the former Department of Education) and non-government schools are registered with the Registered Schools Board.

According to DEET statistics (DEET 1999), in February 1999, there were 1,635 government schools and 684 non-government schools. The statistics in Figure 7.1 show that there are about 799,684 school students in Victoria, of which there are 529,072 students attending the government schools. There are 179,837 students attending the Catholic schools and 90,775 students attending Independent schools. These statistics show that about 2/3 of students attend government schools and about one third attend non-government schools.

Figure 7.1 Number of Students in Victorian Schools*

	Government No.	Catholic No.	Independent No.	Total No.
Primary	306 216	102 004	34 781	443 001
Secondary	216 370	77 671	55 695	349 736
Special	5 413	162	299	5 874
Language	1 073	-	-	1 073
Total	529 072	179 837	90 775	799 684
Proportion of total	%	%	%	%
school students	66.2	22.5	11.4	100.0

* *Full-time equivalents*

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: Summary Statistics, Victorian Schools, 1999.

School education in Victoria comprises primary schooling and secondary schooling. Primary schooling covers Preparatory Year to Year 6, and secondary schooling covers Years 7 to Year 12 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000: 2). The compulsory period of schooling ranges from the ages of 6 to 15, which equates with the preparatory year in primary schools to about Year 10 at the secondary level. To progress beyond Year 10, it is compulsory for students to undertake the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Year 11 and 12. These years are known as the VCE years and are viewed as the first years of post-compulsory education.

Multiculturalism is an important feature of schooling in Victoria and the patterns of school enrolments reflect this feature of school education. About one in four students

attending government schools have a language background other than English (DEET 1998). Multiculturalism has been the basis for a diverse system of education in Victoria. Figure 7.2 shows that about 25.2% students in the government schools speak a language other than English at home.

Figure 7.2 Schools students by Selected Characteristics

	Government %	Non-government %
Female	48.8	50.2
Aboriginal	0.9	0.1
Non-metropolitan	34.0	24.4
Speaks language other than English	25.2	n.a.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: August 1998 School Census: National School, Statistics Collection; Schools, Australia (Cat. No. 4221.0).

The following types of schools in Victoria also indicate the diversity of Victorian education. Figure 7.3 shows that, in February 1999, there were 1,243 government primary schools and 267 government secondary schools. In addition, there were 42 combined government schools that cover both primary and secondary school levels. 80 special schools provided education for students with disabilities. There were 3 language schools that provided language assistance programs for newly arrived students with language backgrounds other than English.

Figure 7.3 Number of Schools in Victoria 1999

	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Primary	1 243	383	59	1 685
Secondary	267	91	12	370
Primary-Secondary	42	10	115	167
Special	80	6	8	94
Language	3	-	-	3
Total	**1 635**	**490**	**194**	**2 319**

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: Summary Statistics, Victorian Schools, 1999.

Schools in Victoria have responsibility for developing and implementing the curriculum for their students (DEET 2000: 6). In government schools, the curricula are arranged according to the agreed set of eight Key Learning Areas and are supported by the centrally developed Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) (DEET 2000: 6). The eight Key Learning Areas are Arts, English, Health and

Physical Education, Languages other than English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and Environment, and Technology. It is compulsory for students to study subjects in these eight areas, but in Years 11 - 12 students must choose their subjects to prepare for access to tertiary education through the VCE. Figure 7.4 illustrates that English, Mathematics, Science, and Society and Environment were the most popular subject areas for Year 12 students in 1999. English is compulsory, while the others are electives.

Figure 7.4 Year 12 Enrolments 1999

Key Learning Area	No.
The Arts	24 559
English	54 838
Health and physical education	18 459
Language other than English	8 642
Mathematics	41 967
Science	41 516
Society and environment	46 353
Technology	28 787

Source: Victorian Board of Studies

7.2 The Emergence of Secondary Education and Curriculum Development prior to the 1960s

Legislation was passed in Victoria in 1872 making Victoria the first of the colonies to introduce free, compulsory and secular education (Barcan 1980: 131). The proclamation of the *1872 Education Act* significantly influenced the formation of Victorian primary education and its curricula. According to the Act, an Education Department was established under the control of a Minister of Public Instruction to administer the system of education in colonial Victoria (Musgrave 1988: 21). The department employed a small group of inspectors who were in charge of inspecting the schools and teachers, and devising and supervising the school curriculum. The introduction of free, compulsory and secular education in 1872 and its implementation in the following year put Victoria in the forefront of the movement towards educational democracy in Australia. The influence of the 1872 Act on government schools was clear. The offering of free education and the requirement of

compulsory attendance significantly increased the enrolments in government schools (Hooper 1999: 34).

After thirty years' development from 1872 to 1900, the number of state schools had increased to 2,233 government schools, with 253,469 students and 4,862 teachers in Victoria in 1901 (Barcan 1980: 131). These figures show that an extensive system of schooling was established by the time of Federation.

The first Victorian secondary school was established in Melbourne in 1905 under the guise of a training school for teachers (Bessant 1972: 126). It was a remodeled academic institution based upon forms of private secondary schooling. In 1910, the Victorian government promulgated a new Education Act, in which official sanction was given to the state's entry into the field of secondary education. Under the *1910 Education Act*, government secondary schools and technical colleges were opened. In the same year, six agricultural schools were set up in rural area (Bessant 1972: 125-126).

The government secondary schools were mostly located in country areas and the expansion of government secondary schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area was neglected for many years (Blake 1973). In 1921, among the existing thirty-one government secondary schools, there were twenty-six schools that were located in the country, with only five high schools in the metropolitan area (Hooper 1999: 29 - 37). The government was aware of the severe imbalance. The then Minister Peacock recognised that the lack of government high schools in the metropolitan areas was "the most urgent problem" in the Victorian secondary education system.

At the foundation of the government school system in the late nineteen century, the secondary education system was mainly vocational in character (Hooper 1999: 29 - 37) and supplied a steady stream of pupils for the technical schools and for industrial and commercial life generally (Victorian Government 1913: 99). But these technical schools also provided dual courses: academic and technical. Academic courses enabled students to study at university, while the technical courses, like industrial, commercial, domestic and agricultural courses, were intended to prepare the majority of students as technically proficient labourers (Bessant 1972: 125-126).

The demands that resulted from the advent of the university had a profound impact on the development of the secondary school curriculum and examination system. In 1853, the first university the University of Melbourne was established in Victoria. Three years after its opening, the University of Melbourne established the Matriculation examination in 1856 (Musgrave 1988: 27). In 1870, the Victorian government accepted the matriculation examination for entry to its civil service (Clements 1979: 350 - 351). As student numbers rose, the administrative task became onerous, and in 1881 the University of Melbourne appointed Boards of Examiners. This system did not change until 1905.

In 1912, the University of Melbourne established the Schools Board to control public examinations. The Schools Board contained representatives of the university, Education Department, the registered schools and the community. Under the management of the Schools Board, the number of subjects was increased, the syllabus was revised and examination methods were improved (Musgrave 1988: 29). As a result, the University of Melbourne dominated curriculum formulation at the upper levels of secondary schooling. Furthermore, the results of examinations were not only used for matriculation entry to the University, but also as a reference for employers to use in employing school graduates.

The dominance of the University of Melbourne over the Matriculation examination caused public criticism (Bessant 1972: 126). From 1912, due to the strong pressure from the Education Department and increasing protests from the private schools, the Education Department established an independent Schools Board to administer the leaving and matriculation examinations. Although the University remained in control of the examination, its dominant influence was reduced. Nevertheless, the University exerted a powerful influence on curriculum development. Meanwhile, during the period from 1910 to 1920, the academic staff, who devised the examinations and assessed the papers, also developed the curriculum for schools. In this way, the University of Melbourne was able to influence the curricula of secondary schools and indirectly the curricula of primary schools (Bessant 1989: 36).

7.4 Curriculum Reform in the 1960s

According to Barcan (1993: 75), states had come to play a very prominent part in education by 1960. State systems were centralised rather than decentralised, and the provision of government schools, increasing size and complexity of the educational bureaucracy, legislation, the provision of bursaries and scholarships could evidence the strength of state influence in education (Barcan 1993: 75 - 77).

Victorian secondary schools were centrally directed and were quite uniform in their curriculum for a long time after World War II. The constitutional position was that education was the responsibility of the states. The great majority of the responsibilities were exercised by state Education Departments that had formed the centralised administration of the state system. With regard to the school curriculum, its administration remained with the Department and its inspectorate until the late 1960s, and teachers seldom had freedom to innovate the school curriculum or opportunity to be involved in curriculum development. Butts (1955: 14) identified two basic assumptions that he said underlay the administration of the state system: (1) a uniform policy for all schools in a state is a good thing and (2) a uniform policy can be achieved only when the basic decisions are made by relatively few people. However, increasing criticism over the narrow, academic courses that were imposed on schools by the universities and Education Department was emerging (Bessant 1989: 42). After a long incubation period, the controls developed by Melbourne University and the Victorian Education Department changed as a result of the curriculum reform movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the curriculum in Victorian schools started to become more diverse with greater teacher participation. The late 1960s witnessed the increased development of curriculum reform in Victoria when Victorian educational authorities initiated a series of curriculum changes. During this transformation, the traditional cultural assumptions carried forward from colonial days were being questioned, as Australia became a more genuine multi-cultural society (Bessant 1989: 36).

7.4.1 Abolition of Intermediate Examination

As discussed in Paragraph 7.2, examinations were adopted in Victorian schools at the beginning of the century. The dominance of external examinations featured most noticeably in the testing programs used in Victorian secondary education in the 1950s and 1960s (Connell 1961: 68 - 69). The Junior examination was taken at the end of the 3rd year (Year 9) and the intermediate examination at the end of the 4th year (Year 10) of secondary schooling, and Leaving and Matriculation examinations were taken at the end of the 5th and 6th years (Year 11 and Year 12) respectively of secondary schooling (Connell 1961: 68 - 69). The Intermediate examination and matriculation examination served as external assessments of the students' achievements. There were always external examination papers to guide teachers, and the form and even the actual questions of these papers were widely used in other assessment in schools. Under these circumstances, in the late 1960s, when the idea of "secondary education for all" became popular (Spear 1983: 78), the examination system, which was recognised by critics as an obstacle to the principle of equal opportunity, became harder to defend (Reed 1975: 214). Observers (Reed 1975: 217) insisted that the pressure of external examinations must be relieved and that there must be an earnest search for the true purpose of secondary education, as a form of preparation in its own right and not merely as a preparation stage for tertiary education.

In 1965, a proposal was submitted to the Board of Secondary Education that attacked the examination system. The Victorian Education Department initially opposed the proposed abolition of the intermediate examination on the grounds that a significant percentage of students left school at this stage, and that the lack of a formal qualification to mark their attainment would place them in a disadvantaged situation (Reed 1975: 217). However, the increasing number of students proceeding to the 5th and 6th years of secondary education (Year 11 and Year 12) soon dispelled the unnecessary worries of the Education Department. Finally, in 1966, the Education Department supported the proposal to abolish the Intermediate Certificate.

In 1967, the external Intermediate Certificate in Victorian secondary schools was abolished. As an external examination was considered to be an obstacle to the diversity of the school curriculum, the abolition of the intermediate examination in 1967 removed the barrier to teachers' participation in curriculum development in the early secondary years and intensified the possibility of curriculum autonomy in Victorian schools. In December of the following year, the Director-General of Education empowered schools to determine their own educational programs for the first four years of secondary schooling, and teachers were given freedom over curriculum development.

The abolishment of the intermediate examination exerted significant influence on curriculum development in the Victorian schools. With the abolition of this external assessment in Year 10, the tradition of grouping subjects in an area of knowledge, rather than as coherently structured subjects, was developed on the initiative of the Victorian Director-General of Education. Areas of knowledge like Arts, Social Sciences, Mathematics and Physical Education were selected as necessary for all students in state secondary schools though they were not necessarily offered as separate "disciplines" (Hannan 1972: 133). This tradition may have underpinned the formulation of the groupings of knowledge in the Key Learning Areas in Victorian schools in the 1990s.

7.4.2 Establishment of the Curriculum Advisory Board

Prior to the 1960s, the curriculum and research branches of the education departments in each state developed almost all of the school curricula. In the late 1960s, the establishment of the Curriculum Advisory Board was another event that significantly influenced changes in the Victorian school curriculum (Hannan 1972: 132). The Curriculum Advisory Board was established in 1966 at the suggestion of Mr R. A. Reed, who was the then Director of Secondary Education. The purpose of the establishment of the Curriculum Advisory Board was to examine the first four years of secondary education and to define the principles on which organisation, curriculum, procedures and assessment should be based (Reed 1975: 218).

The Curriculum Advisory Board was primarily a consultancy and decision-making body in Victorian secondary education. As the name implies, the Curriculum Advisory Board mainly provided advisory services to all secondary schools in Victoria. As centralised curriculum development was slowly replaced by school based curriculum development at least up to Year 10 level, the Curriculum Advisory Board supported this trend by providing guidelines for curriculum development in schools; by publishing journals and newsletters to share information among the schools; by providing consultancy, research and evaluation through long-term and in-depth school contact; by encouraging school curriculum committees to conduct on-going examination and school based curriculum development; by participating, on request, in activities in school curriculum development, and by establishing liaison between teachers of different schools through personal contact (Education Department 1976: 484).

The Curriculum Advisory Board was a product of the replacement of centralised curriculum development by school based curricula in Victorian schools. The major task of the Curriculum Advisory Board was to initiate the principles for school based curriculum development and it was concerned basically with the long-term development of education. The Board was independent of the Victorian Department of Education with its wide representation being taken from multiple organisational bases. The representatives were from the Education Department (including the Board of Secondary Inspectors in Secondary Schools, the Psychology and Guidance Branch and the Curriculum and Research Branch), the Victorian Council of State School Organisations, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association, the Victorian Teachers' Union, the Catholic Office of Education, the Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, the Victorian High Schools Principals Association, the Headmasters and Headmistresses' Association, the Technical Teachers' Association, the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education at Monash University (and later the Faculty of Education at La Trobe University) along with an observer from the Australian Council for Educational Research (Reed 1975: 218-219).

Following its establishment, the Curriculum Advisory Board was active in developing its working targets and a timetable for its work was also outlined. The first step, initiated at the initial meeting of the Board, was to establish the aims and purposes of the first four years of secondary education. In doing so, a steering committee was set up to monitor curriculum matters and to report on the progress of the steering committee (Hannan 1972: 133).

The formation of the Board successfully illustrated the principles of democracy and equal opportunity, because the Board itself had a wide representation from the educational communities. However, these principles of democracy and equal opportunity caused problems in achieving the established objectives. The committee was never able to produce a unanimous statement of the Board's aims nor to specify the purposes of secondary education, on account of the wide representation of groups from different backgrounds, outlooks on education and religious convictions (Reed 1975: 219). Those who represented different organisations could not compromise on the matters of philosophy or on matters of principle.

Because of the difficulty in achieving a general statement of the aims and purposes of secondary education, the Curriculum Advisory Board decided to circulate a number of general principles in order to concentrate on more definite tasks. Following this change of direction, some trial schools were established to test out these principles. Moreland High School and Ferntree Gully High School were the first "trial schools" to practise the pilot programs. Within the guidelines of the Board, the trial schools initiated educational programs themselves, while the Board provided advice and help to these schools as they considered the introduction of new courses. The Board also provided encouragement and passed on to other schools information about the progress and results of the pilot programs.

After about two years, the board circulated a set of broad, inclusive and general principles regarding secondary education (Reed 1975: 221-228). I would summarise these principles as follows:

1. The principle of equal opportunity was to be practiced. In principle, the first four years of secondary education should be recognised as general rather than

specialised education; they should be open to everyone regardless of sex, colour, religion or wealth.

2. A closer teacher-student and student-student relationship was encouraged. The committee and schools should try to make sure that a closer teacher-student and student-student contact was established and that classes were flexible enough to permit various groupings.

3. The school curriculum should be inclusive and be seen to embody the arts, social sciences, physical and biological sciences, mathematics, and physical education.

4. Competitive assessment was not encouraged in the first four years of the secondary schools. Where there was an assessment, it should be done as a function of the essential communication between school and child or between school and parents.

5. Teaching methods should encourage intellectual independence in students.

7.4.3 Burwood Seminar

In 1968, a series of academic activities including meetings and conferences were organised on the curriculum development project by the Directorate of Secondary Education to discuss the ways of diversifying the school curriculum. Of all these academic activities, a seminar held in 1968 in Burwood was the most significant in terms of the devolution of curriculum development in Victorian schools.

The Burwood seminar was organised on the basis of discussions held in 1968 in individual schools, and in district, area and regional conferences around Victoria. The seminar gathered together a group of enthusiastic school teachers who met at the Burwood Teachers College, Melbourne, to discuss the increasing demands of teacher participation in curriculum development in Victorian schools (Hannan 1972: 133).

The results of the Burwood seminar were far-reaching. The seminar presented eight recommendations to the Victorian Director-General of Education (Hannan 1972: 137). Among the recommendations, two were important in formulating school

curriculum autonomy. The first principle stated that there should be no external examinations from the Victorian Universities and Schools Examinations Board (VUSEB) or Education Department. The second principle stated that there should be no externally prescribed course of study in Years 7 to 10 and teachers should be fully responsible for a school's curricula.

In contrast, a subsequent principle held that the central administration of the Education Department had a vital role to play in completing its task of curriculum development. It must determine priorities, allocate responsibility, resist narrow political pressures and publicise its activities. School autonomy, involving a flexible, decentralised form of administration, was encouraged. The implication was that educational decisions should be made by educators - not clerks, members of parliament, or bureaucrats (Hannan 1972: 137). Though the recommendations were not fully adopted by the bureaucracy, and in no sense completely changed the bureaucratic tradition of decision-making, the voices that were heard at the Burwood seminar forced the government to recognise the increasing amount of teachers' participation which was occurring in curriculum development.

The curriculum changes of the late 1960s were significant in the history of Victorian education. Based upon the abolition of the Intermediate Examination, the work of the Curriculum Advisory Board and the recommendations from the Burwood seminar, a statement of nine educational principles (Reed 1975: 221-228) was circulated. Schools were invited by the Director-General of Education to accept these principles as the basis for working out their own educational programs. Information, advice and consultation were available to schools through a number of agencies. However, the request for such services had to come from the schools themselves.

Enthusiastic trial schools and participating schools conducted pilot programs with the curriculum changes in the late 1960s. At the end of 1968, three schools had already changed their curricula and methods of teaching. These three schools were Moreland High School, Ferntree Gully High School and Maryvale High School. These schools introduced general studies and thousands of teachers were attracted to visit the schools to see this innovative program.

The influences of curriculum change in the pilot schools were evident. At the beginning of 1969, there were at least thirty schools which had made major changes in their school curricula and, by 1970, courses of "general studies" were widely accepted by schools and could be described as a significant movement in curriculum change (Hannan 1972: 138). Particularly, in 1977, the Director of Secondary Education established a Basic Curriculum Task Force, headed by the principal of Maroondah High School, to review the conditions of the curriculum. The aim of the Task Force was to discover the units of learning to which all Victorian secondary school students should have been exposed and hopefully would have acquired by the time they left school (Victorian Department of Education 1978: 3).

7.5 Devolution and Curriculum Development in the 1970s and 1980s

Victorian schools experienced considerable changes in the 1970s and 1980s in their management and curriculum development. Decentralisation of curriculum decision making was escalated as a result of improvements in administration, teacher education, and support service (e.g. consultants, inservice programs) (Cohen 1991: 226). These changes came from the introduction of school councils, the review of education policy and from amendments to the Education Act 1958.

7.5.1 Advent of School Councils

The restructure of curriculum development in Victorian schools in the 1970s and 1980s took place in the context of increasing public criticism of the state school system. The criticism, according to a Ministerial Paper (Minister of Education 1983: 16), was that students who attended Victorian state schools, too often experienced failure as they received a specialised education that lacked relevance to their every day lives. Spear (983: 78) claimed that Victoria's school curriculum remained narrowly selective and still oriented towards university courses. In these cases, there was a need for improvement in the school curriculum and programs so as to provide students with broad experience and ensure they successfully reached the highest standards of excellence. Expectations for realising such an improvement to school

curricula and programs were placed on the strategies for devolution of responsibility for devising curricula for schools.

Victoria did not pioneer the decentralised educational system with community and parents' participation in schools. As early as 1967, the ACT School Commission released the *Report on An Independent Education Authority*, which was considered a milestone along the path to community participation in school management in Australia (Gamage 1992: 84). But in Victoria, a broad and ambitious package for the devolution of educational administration to schools in the 1970s made it the leading state in devolving responsibility in education.

By 1975, a wide range of committees and a system of school councils, functioning as advisory bodies, were established in Victorian schools. There were community representatives and parents on school councils, but whether the teachers and students could be represented on school council was under debate (Gamage 1992: 85). The Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA) and the Technical Teachers' Association of Victoria (TTAV) advocated the election of equal numbers of parents, teachers and students to school councils. But the Victorian Teachers Union (VTU) advocated a management type of council with no teacher representation (Gamage 1992: 85). Some principals and existing school committees viewed the representation of teachers and students as a direct threat to their own established authority (Gamage 1992: 85). This debate led the Victorian educational authority to agree to allow the schools to decide the formulation of their school councils, and this decision was promulgated in the *Education (School Council) Act 1975*. As a result, school councils were formed differently from school to school and the roles and legal responsibilities of school councils differed considerably. According to the different forms of the role and the consequent legal responsibilities, Duncan and Duncan (1997: 261) identified three types of school councils: decision-making councils; assistant councils and management councils. The decision-making councils did not interfere in any way with the management of the school but controlled the direction and policy-making of schools. The assistant councils acted as advisory bodies only and did not possess direct decision-making power. In their assistant capacity, the councils' responsibilities were to provide advice on policy decision-making and

ensure that the advice given was not neglected. The management councils undertook responsibility for the management of schools.

The promulgation of the *Education (School Council) Act 1975* officially introduced the system of school councils into Victorian schools. The Act formalised the composition and functions of school councils, which were given express statutory authority to advise the school principal on the development of the school's education policy (Gaff 1998: 24). Principals, although ultimately responsible for the education policy for their schools, were officially advised to consult parents and staff when formulating policy (Gronn 1979: 40).

Since the introduction of school councils in 1975, Victoria has been at the forefront of devolving responsibility to schools. Every move in the devolution of responsibility to schools after 1975 was delivered through the school councils (Gamage 1992: 84). The *Education (Amendment) Act* in 1984 required school councils to be involved in most areas of operation of schools. The school council's involvement in school operations extended from the selection of principals to assuming the responsibility for school direction, curriculum development and implementation and resource administration, budgeting and financial management and staffing.

7.5.2 Review of Educational Policy

In 1979, the Liberal Government announced a review of education policies in order to identify the aims and objectives of education in Victoria and to determine the strategies, structures, policies and administrative changes that would best assist in achieving those aims (Chapman 1987: 65).

The review resulted in the issue of a *Green Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victoria* (Ministry of Education 1980a) and then a *White Paper on the Strategies and Structures for Education in Victoria* (Ministry of Education 1980b). There were six key themes that underpinned the recommendations in the reports, and all of which were adopted by the government (Gaff 1998: 24). Harman (1985: 181) summarised these six themes as follows:

> 1) Devolution and decentralisation of power and responsibility, where appropriate, to local and regional units; 2) Increased participation by parents, community members, teachers and principals in educational governance at all levels; 3) improved consultation; 4) economy and efficiency in management; 5) effective coordination of functions and policies and 6) appropriate mechanisms for internal and external reviews of schools.

The Liberal Government outlined the ideal plan for the implementation of the decentralisation of education in Victorian schools. However, the implementation of the decentralisation package was halted by the Labor Government when the Labor Party was elected to Government in 1982 (Gaff 1998: 24). Although the Liberal Government's policy for the decentralisation of education had not been fully implemented in Victorian schools, the introduction of this policy influenced the formulation of the Labor government's education policy in the 1980s.

From 1982 to 1984, the new Victorian government inaugurated a Ministerial Review of Victorian education. The review involved all parties that were affected and/or had an interest in the improvement of education (Gamage 1992: 87), and the results of the Ministerial Review were published in a series of ministerial papers known as the six Ministerial Papers[48]. As Mr R. Fordham was the then Minister of Education in Victoria, the papers became known as the Fordham Papers. The six ministerial papers described the government's commitment to a process of collaborative decision-making involving the total school community, and outlined government policy in relation to decision-making, the school improvement plan, the state board of education, school councils and curriculum planning.

After the Ministerial Review, the six Ministerial Papers announced an overall plan of devolving power and authority to schools through widely represented school councils. In summary, the Ministerial Papers outlined the principles of devolution of authority as follows:

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[48] The six Ministerial (Fordham) Papers were: Decision Making in Victorian Schools (the Ministerial Paper No. 1:1983); The School Improvement Plan (the Ministerial Paper No. 2:1983); The State Board of Education (the Ministerial Paper No.3:1984); School Council (the Ministerial Paper No. 4:1983); Regional Board of Education (the Ministerial Paper No.5:1984) and Curriculum Development and Planning in Victorian Schools (the Ministerial Paper No. 6: 1984)

1) genuine devolution of authority and responsibility to the school community; 2) collaborative decision-making process; 3) a responsive bureaucracy with main function of serving and assisting schools; 4) effectiveness of education outcomes; 5) the active redress of disadvantage and discrimination (Minister of Education 1983: 4).

After a decade following the curriculum reform of the 1960s, Victorian schools were once again given increased responsibility to plan their own curricula. Efforts were made in Victorian schools to organise their own courses in diverse ways. Some schools organised their courses as subjects; others integrated some or all their courses into broad areas such as humanities, technology or general studies, or around themes or experience and interest-based activities (Minister of Education 1983: 16).

7.5.2 Amendment of Education Act 1958

Victorian society underwent rapid social, economic and technological change in the 1980s. These changes affected school education in several ways. Schools were called on to modify their curricula in response to the changes and to adjust their curricula to ensure that they were relevant to new circumstances, in order to prepare young people to enter fully into the life of their society.

Devolution of curriculum development since the 1960s had been extended to the school level within clear guidelines specified by the government. In 1983, an important amendment was made to the *Education Act 1958* to increase the school councils' role in curriculum development. The amendment made councils responsible for school education policies and authorised school councils to determine general educational policy within the Ministerial guidelines, emphasising the importance of local responsibility and shared decision making in educational policy (Gamage 1992: 87).

After amendment, Section 14 of the *Education Act 1958* stated that a council shall ... determine the general educational policy of the school within the guidelines issued by the Minister (Victoria 1979: 11). The guideline did not specify the sole method of school organisation in curriculum planning, but school councils were called on to ensure that all young people would experience a comprehensive range of studies and activities. The range of subjects included language and mathematics; the world and

its people; participation in Australian society; literature and arts; personal fulfilment; technical competence; science, technology and the environment. From the late 1960s, these areas of study had expanded the traditional grouping of knowledge and developed into a fledgling form of the Key Learning Areas that were introduced in the 1990s.

It is worthwhile to mention here that, while there were efforts at decentralising responsibility in education in Victorian schools, the 1970s and 1980s also witnessed the Commonwealth's increasing interest in schooling. In 1975, when the Curriculum Development Centre became a statutory authority, the Centre established an office in Victoria. The purpose of the office was to promote the core curriculum in Victorian schools as core curriculum constitutes those concepts and areas of study which ensure that the fundamental issues of importance to our society are passed on to the children in our schools (Barcan 1982: 60). The Victorian Office exercised a general role in supporting the implementation of national projects such as the Social Science Education Project and the Australian Science Education Project in Victorian schools. The office also supported, through its funded projects, the programs initiated by individual teachers and groups such as the Department Inspectors of Education, the Commonwealth Teachers' Association (CTA) and the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board. However, these initiatives met with opposition from some teachers. The Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association, for example, opposed the package as it claimed that the initiatives interfered with the tradition of school based curriculum (Gamage 1992: 85).

7.6 Curriculum Reforms in the 1990s

In 1986, the Labor Minister of Education, Ian Cathie, appointed a Ministry Structures Project Team to work on a proposal outlining the broad framework which was being developed for the devolution of powers and functions to schools (Bessant 1989: 42). This proposal was detailed in the Team's Paper *Taking Schools into the 1990s*, in which the Minister promised that schools would achieve substantially greater power over resources (e.g. school finance) and the autonomous utility of resources (e.g. the

appointment, promotion and transfer of teachers). The document *Taking Schools into the 1990s* stated,

> Although school councils carry the responsibility for deciding on school curriculum, they have not yet been given the degree of control over resources necessary to facilitate and enhance their performance of this overriding function. The Team proposes to recommend to the Minister that, within the framework of broad State guidelines, schools be given substantially increased responsibility for operational decisions and control of available resources (Ministry Structures Project Team 1986: 5).

As to school curriculum, the document stated that

> self-governing state schools will operate within a framework of state-wide guidelines and policies on curriculum, to provide the context and support for school-based curriculum development (Ministry Structures Project Team 1986: 10).

The discussion paper *Taking Schools into the 1990s* was an important document that was produced by the Labor government in proposing greater devolution of responsibility and authority to the school level during the late 1980s. It led to dramatic changes in Victorian education by the early 1990s. From then on, power over resources has been central to almost every initiative in school management and curriculum development. These changes can be seen in Spaull's (1992: 77) comments about the features of education during the Labor years as follows:

> Despite problems at the top, state schooling blossomed in the ten years of Labor. Schools became more vital sites for learning and social relationships and there was a strong sense of democratic involvement, curriculum innovation and program diversity within and between schools.

7.6.1 The Schools of Future Policy

In October 1992, the Liberal-National Coalition Government won the State election and formed a new Victorian government. In 1993, this government launched the Schools of the Future policy. Schools of the Future outlined the government's plan to introduce self-managing schools and to enhance the quality of Victorian education by providing increased school decision-making, flexibility in curriculum development, accountability and teachers' professional training, and strengthening the leadership of principals.

Many scholars (Hannan 1996: 53 - 76; Marginson 1997: 188 - 196; McGuire 1994: 91 -100; Spaull 1999: 214 - 224) have summarised the major initiatives that the Schools of the Future policy introduced. They included the following:

1) responsibility for defined areas of school operations was moved in the hands of principals and school councils;

2) central and regional support services were reduced;

3) responsibility for school global budgets was transferred to the local school level;

4) selection and appointment of teachers was conducted at the school level;

5) new performance requirements for teachers and schools were established;

6) school charters were introduced; and

7) competition was fostered between state schools for resources and students

Furthermore, according to the policy,

> parents will be directly able to participate in decisions that affect their children's education; teachers will be recognised as true professionals able to directly determine their own careers and future and with the freedom to exercise their professional skills and adjustment in classroom; principals will become true leaders in their school with the ability to build and lead their teaching teams; communities, through the school charter, will be able to determine the future destiny of the school, its character and ethos; within guidelines, schools will be able to develop their own curriculum programs and meet the individual needs of the students; and schools will be accountable to the community for the progress of the school and the achievements of its students (Directorate of School Education 1993: 3).

Schools of the Future was a concept of self-managing schools that the government set to encourage Victorian schools to meet the challenge of the new century. Self-management was interpreted as the "empowerment" of the school community (Marginson 1994: 136). School councils were empowered to choose the styles and ways of managing their own resources that they preferred. It was believed that decision making at the school level would enhance the conditions of teaching and learning by better using resources (people, money and facilities) in the school. It was claimed that parent participation in the management of schools would result in greater diversity in Victorian education and strengthen the links between schools and

the community. In the school curriculum, self-management meant the freedom and flexibility to address the individual learning needs of pupils (Cohen 1995: 18).

The Schools of the Future policy established an ambitious agenda to reconstruct the three basic relationships that constitute a system of schooling: the relationship between the school and its community, the relationship between the school and the government, and the relationship between the school and other schools (Marginson 1994: 136). The roles of parents, school and community changed dramatically under the newly reconstructed framework: parents were turned into the "customers" of the schools; school councils were suddenly placed under tremendous pressure to raise resources; and schools found themselves in competition with other schools (Marginson 1994: 136). The Schools of the Future policy devolved to the schools managerial responsibilities and some of the responsibilities for funding and staffing, but control of education policy and curriculum development became more firmly centralised by the Victorian government.

Following the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy, all schools that were involved in the policy had to develop school charters. By following the guidelines released by the government, the school council, principal and teachers jointly developed the school charter as a guiding document in school management. The school charter acted as a managerial contract between the school council and government to guide school-based management. According to the government guidelines, the school charter should state the school's history and ethos, its curricula, development plan, decision-making strategies, code of conduct and personal practices (Directorate of School Education 1993: 3). In formulating their school charters, schools were permitted to adopt, to a certain degree, from strictly following the charter guidelines. The charter developed by one school, for example, included a statement of guiding principles, school history, facilities and a future plan,[49] while another school basically followed the guidelines to cover the schools'

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[49] See (1994) School Charter (1995 - 1997) of School X.

goals, the priorities of school activities, curriculum profile and policy, and the code of practices.[50]

The introduction of Schools of the Future policy also changed the ways that Victorian schools were assessed and reviewed. According to the agreement between the schools and the government, Victorian schools had to report their achievements against the charter annually and had to submit an annual report to the Department of Education at the end of each financial year. All government schools in Victoria also underwent a triennial school review (Directorate of School Education 1996). This review comprised two phases: an internal school self-assessment and an external independent verification. In the first phase, schools conducted a self-assessment themselves, and in the second phase, accredited reviewers[51] who were contracted to conduct school reviews in government schools undertook the independent verification. The school's triennial review usually resulted in the formation of a new charter. The review also enabled agreement to be reached by the Directorate of School Education and the school council on a series of recommendations regarding school goals and plans for improvement that were subsequently embodied in the new charter.

The school review process proved to be an effective means for the government to understand the operation of the school system, and for schools to identify for themselves new goals and expectations. The reviews helped schools to shift the emphasis from provision-oriented goals towards goals directed at improved outcomes; highlighted the willingness on the part of schools to set higher expectations and specific targets; recognised the importance of regular monitoring and assessment to provide a detailed profile of the progress of all students; shifted the emphasis from multiple priorities to fewer more clearly defined outcome-based priorities, particularly literacy, numeracy and information technology; recognised that improvement requires a whole school approach, with attention to developing

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[50] See (1994) School Charter (1995 – 1997) of School Z.

[51] The accredited reviewers might be former school leaders, educational administrators, consultants and academics.

common beliefs and understandings about student learning, classroom teaching programs, professional development for teachers, intervention strategies, home-school links and strong leadership and effective management (Directorate of School Education 1996).

The implementation of the Schools of the Future policy together with a wider academic debate about self-managing schools constituted a new movement in the decentralisation of education in Victorian schools. The advocates (Caldwell & Spinks 1988; Caldwell & Spinks 1992; Chapman 1987: 65) of the program claimed that this type of devolution could lead to school improvement and quality education. Caldwell and Spinks (1992: 4-5) also insisted that the program of devolution of education would better meet the individual needs of the students, lead to more effective usage of school resources and more closely reflect and meet the needs of the local community.

Schools of the Future also paved the way for the longer term transition to market based schooling in the state sector (Marginson 1994: 136). However, many aspects of the package included things that schools were already doing within state guidelines. The elected school councils had already been responsible for decision-making in relation to their school's budget, educational and curriculum policies. The school charter, together with the annual report and triennial review, constituted a new accountability framework for government schools in Victoria.

7.6.2 Curriculum and Standards Framework

Ever since the abolition of the Intermediate examination in 1967, school assessment remained a sensitive area in Victorian education. The emergence of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 1984 created a new assessment system in post-secondary education. However, for a long time, there was no official assessment at the lower level of Victorian secondary education and primary education. In 1994, the Victorian government drafted an important curriculum program, the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks, for public consultation. The Victorian Board of Studies, the statutory body with responsibility for establishing the curriculum, developed guidelines for the development of courses for Prep to Year 10 in Victorian schools.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework included eight Key Learning Areas which set out guidelines for school teachers concerning what students from Preparatory to Year 10 should learn from the eight key areas and the standards. Accordingly, Victorian schools were expected to draw on the Curriculum and Standards Framework as a resource for curriculum planning and reporting on student achievement.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework was officially implemented in 1995 in all Victorian schools. Five years after the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, a growing emphasis on mathematics, science and literacy, and a rising awareness of the importance of learning new technologies, prompted a review of the Framework. This revised version of the Curriculum and Standards Framework is called the Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II) and was implemented in early 2000. The purpose of the review was to align existing curriculum materials with the new framework.

7.7 Summary and Commentary

In this chapter, I have examined the evolution of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development that took place in Victorian schools. Based upon this examination, it is contended that the changing economy and criticisms over public education were the key underpinning factors in formulating changes in education policy in Victorian schools prior to the 1960s. Curriculum reform in the 1960s and the advent of school councils in the 1970s contributed to school based curriculum development and encouraged the participation of the school community in the management of schools. In the late 1970s and 1980s, both the Liberal Government and Labor Government initiated devolution of educational management and curriculum development. However, in the 1990s, the Liberal-National Coalition government changed the tradition of decentralisation of education, with the introduction and implementation of the Schools of the Future policy that further decentralised school budgets but, to some extent, centralised curriculum development in Victorian schools.

The introduction of the Schools of the Future policy into Victorian schools featured significantly in recent curriculum development. If the Schools of the Future policy developed a political agenda to devolve administration and financial responsibilities to schools, then the Curriculum and Standards Framework centralised curriculum development back to the centre. By introducing the Curriculum and Standards Framework, activities in curriculum development in Victorian schools were set out in the prescribed Eight Key Learning Areas. In the eyes of some critics, much of the curriculum for schools is determined by people outside the school (Townsend 1996: 38). According to this view, schools have lost whatever curriculum autonomy they believed they had (Cohen 1995: 18), with schools restricted by the centralised curriculum framework and faced with the pressure of increased statewide testing. Thus, the Curriculum and Standards Framework and the Key Learning Areas have jointly constrained curriculum autonomy and the possibilities of truly school based curriculum development. What the responses from the schools are and how teachers view these curriculum changes in Victorian schools will be discussed in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND DISCUSION: SHANGHAI SCHOOLS

In this chapter, the empirical findings of field research in Shanghai schools are discussed. During the field research, interviews were conducted to investigate the schools' and teachers' understanding of the nature of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai schools.

Interviews in Shanghai were designed to seek answers to the following questions: What changes have occurred in the educational system in Shanghai society in relation to the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development from 1985 - 1995? What strategies have been taken to achieve the aims of the changes and how effective have the changes been? How do the teachers view these changes and what are the responses to the changes from the schools?

8.1 Fieldwork Schools in Shanghai: An Overview

To investigate these questions in Shanghai, three schools were chosen as case study sites in which interviews were conducted. The schools were selected according to the criteria for sampling set out in Chapter Three. The three schools were given the names of Schools A, B and C.

As stated in Chapter Three, since 1985, China has been operating a system of three levels of finance in education: central, city/provincial and district. Under this financial system, different schools enjoy different kinds of financial support. As described in Chapter Three, two schools in Shanghai were listed as national key schools in 1978 and they enjoyed direct allocation of funds from the central government; three schools in Shanghai received funds from city revenue, and other schools were financially supported by District finance. The schools in which the interviews were conducted were chosen from across these three levels of the financial system.

8.1.1 School A

School A was founded in 1958 and is located in the district of western Shanghai - a district of university and industry. It is a secondary school attached to a famous university and functions as a site for educational trials and as a demonstration school[52] for the university. The school is a key school in Shanghai and in 1978 was listed as a national key school under the direct authority of the then State Education Commission (now the Ministry of Education). The central educational authority directly funds the school. The school became one of the pilot schools for curriculum and textbook reforms in 1991, and was used to test the "three-piece" curriculum[53]: a reform that promoted a curriculum incorporating compulsory, elective and activity-focused subjects. The school provides a comprehensive education to promote the moral, intellectual and physical development of its students.

There are strict requirements for students' admission to School A and the school curricula are highly academic. The school has an excellent reputation for teaching that is evidenced by the awards that students have gained in all sorts of competitions. In particular, in 1991 and 1992, four students won gold medals in the International Olympic Physics and Chemistry Competitions for Secondary School Students.

School A currently has 27 junior and senior teaching classes with about 1200 students. According to the school document, the teachers in School A have excellent qualifications and are all very experienced. Of the 181 staff, there are 104 teachers, of

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[52] The school is used extensively for the placement of new graduates of the university who are training to be teachers.

[53] In Chinese schools, there used to be only the compulsory curriculum prior to the 1980s. The "three-piece curriculum" was an innovation that introduced an elective and activity-focused curriculum.

whom 40 are senior teachers, 35 are first class teachers, and four are special class teachers[54].

Both the central and local governments have closely inspected the teaching and management of School A since 1978. A delegation from the Central Ministry of Education and one from the Shanghai Education Commission inspect the school each year to assess its policy, administration, teaching and curriculum.

8.1.2 School B

School B was founded in 1901. It is located in the central business district in Shanghai. The school has about 2,950 students and is also one of the city's key schools. The enrolments are very selective and the students have to pass a rigorous academic examination before entering the school. The school has a total staff of 283, among whom there are 192 teachers, including 3 special class teachers and 78 senior teachers. According to the school's records, the teachers have excellent qualifications and are very experienced in teaching.

School B has a long tradition of teaching and curriculum reform. For instance, in the 1950s, it introduced a teaching reform to reduce the students' homework. In the 1960s, the school reformed the teacher-centred teaching methods into student-centred teaching methods. In particular, it was the cradle of school based curriculum development in Chinese schools in the 1960s. It was then that the principal and the teachers restructured the centralised Chinese literature textbook and course into small units of study in the school, and developed their own teaching strategy. This teaching strategy was to combine reading, discussing, practicing and relating with encouragement of the students' active involvement. This strategy was highly applauded

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[54] In China, there is a title system for secondary teachers based upon the assessment of their qualifications, experience, achievements and academic backgrounds. According to this system, the teachers are ranked into teacher, senior teacher and special class teacher.

as a successful teaching method of Chinese literature and became popular in many Chinese schools. The school became famous for its school based curriculum development. In the 1980s, the school comprehensively reformed learning strategies by emphasising the students' active involvement in teaching and learning.

In 1991, the school was listed as one of the pilot schools for the Shanghai Curriculum and Textbook Reform that was intended to restructure the existing curriculum and textbooks. With the authorisation of the Shanghai Municipal government, the school was designated as a trial school[55] to introduce an innovative educational program in 1998. According to the program, the school would implement a comprehensive curriculum consisting of a subject curriculum, an activity curriculum and a practice curriculum[56] and would adopt a new school management system with a board of directors.

8.1.3 School C

School C is located in the north western district, which is a commercial and industrial area. The school is also one of the municipal key schools in Shanghai. It has a staff of 172, of whom 45 are special and senior class teachers. The school has been awarded many titles in teaching and curriculum reform and, like School B, was listed as one of the pilot schools of the Shanghai Curriculum and Textbook Reform in 1991.

The policy of School C is to ensure that the education that it provides is relevant and adaptable to the local community. In the curriculum, the school provides a broad, full range of subjects that combines humanities and sciences into a comprehensive

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[55] Trial schools in Shanghai functioned similarly to the Navigator schools in Victoria. School B is a model school both in Shanghai and the whole of China. It is a devolved school endorsed by the government to lead to a new direction in school management.

[56] The centralised curricula were based on subjects, such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. The new curriculum scheme would be composed not only of the subject curriculum, but also an activity-focused curriculum (e.g. sports, social survey etc.) and a practice curriculum (e.g. work in farm and factory).

curriculum and which emphasises the students' individual development. The school actively creates a harmonious, comfortable and interactive environment for teachers and students. The aims of teaching are to have the students master both arts and sciences.

School C maintains a close relationship with the Shanghai Municipal Government and the educational authorities. Since 1988, the chief officials from the municipal government and Education Commission have inspected the school every year. This kind of relationship was intensified after the Tian An Men Square Incident in 1989 when the Chinese government called for schools to reinforce ideological education[57] of the young.

Many of the documents I examined from the period between 1988 and 1997 in School C confirmed this relationship. One document showed that, in 1989, the then Shanghai Mayor Jiang Zemin (now the Chinese President) accompanied by his colleagues, inspected the school after the Tian An Men Square Incident and gave a talk to the teachers and the principal. Other documents showed that officials from the government and educational commission visited the school. Furthermore, the school name, which is the symbolic sign of the school, was in the calligraphy of the then Mayor of Shanghai Jiang Zemin. It is said that this is the only school whose name was written by Jiang Zemin. This demonstrated the school's political glory and raised the status of the school.

School C is highly committed to ideological education which has formed an important aspect of the culture of the school. In 1994, the school was recognised as a model school in ideological education and has since then been used as an experimental site for ideological education in the district and in the City of Shanghai.

The three schools have a number of common characteristics. Firstly, they are all government schools. They have strong commitments to implementing government

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[57] Ideological education in Chinese schools mainly trains the students' political thinking, ideological awareness and patriotism. In this course, the students are also taught basic knowledge of capitalism, socialism and even communism.

policies and aim to develop appropriate citizens for a Chinese socialist society. Secondly, they are all highly academic schools with excellent reputations for teaching and they offer a broad curriculum and employ comprehensive strategies of teaching. In 1991, they were listed among the pilot schools for curriculum and textbook reform initiated by the Shanghai Education Commission. The three schools are committed to implementing the new curriculum scheme. Thirdly, the schools are highly selective schools with strict entrance examinations. They focus on the preparation of students for the university entrance examination and have high rates of university acceptance.

8.2 Interviews in Shanghai Schools

Interviews were conducted in these three schools. As described in Chapter Three, the interviews included structured and semi/non-structured interviews in different contexts. Participant observations of school events were conducted (e.g. government inspection day, opening day, etc.). School records (e.g. photos, minutes of meetings, annual reports) that relate to the implementation of government regulations and policies in the fieldwork schools were utilised. From the fieldwork data, findings are presented and relationships are identified. Interpretive discussions and interpretations of findings are also presented in the concluding chapter.

An analysis of the various responses from the participants led to the identification of six major themes related to the participants' understanding of the current status of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai. These themes are outlined as follows: devolution and centralisation of educational management; curriculum development; school based curriculum development; school council; teachers' participation and the impact of examinations.

As stated in Chapter Three, the participants interviewed included government officers, principals, teachers and school council members. The time of interviews was arranged

by negotiation with the participants. Most of the interviews were conducted on campus but some were conducted at venues that were convenient for the participants. All interviews except one were tape-recorded. One participant was unwilling to have the interview tape-recorded because of his perception that the conversation could become politically sensitive. In this case I took notes.

Each interview commenced with an expression of thanks to the participant and an explanation that the interview was conducted only for academic purposes and that the reporting of the findings would maintain the participants' anonymity. Warm-up questions were designed both to find out the participants' background and to serve as a means of helping the participants to feel comfortable. The questions varied according to the sex, career/school position and background of the participants. I also took the opportunity to conduct open-ended interviews, wherever possible, with government officials. These participants provided information that gave me helpful details as background. These interviews were not recorded, because the participants occupied sensitive positions, so I have not quoted directly from the notes of these interviews. However, the notes helped me to understand the broad situation of education in China and to frame questions related to topical issues.

Analysis of the interview data is theme-based. The analysis involved careful listening to the recorded interviews before the dialogue was transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. The thematic analysis entailed repeated reading of the transcribed data and the coding of individual items before the codes were refined and grouped into different categories on each theme. Data was managed by using "cut and paste" procedures and word-processing functions for sorting and retrieval.

8.3 Devolution and Centralisation of Educational Management

The theme of devolution and centralisation of educational management was an important theme in the interviews. The interviews focused firstly on the participants' understandings of devolution and centralisation of educational management. In

Shanghai, the responses indicated that, although the central authority had tentatively transferred decision-making power to the city-provincial level, curriculum development was recentralised at the city-provincial levels.

As described in Chapters Four and Five, after responsibility for educational management was devolved from the central authority to the Shanghai authority in 1985, the municipal and the local authorities were given decision-making powers to deal with educational policies, financial accountability, syllabus, curriculum guidelines and curriculum and textbook development. In the curriculum areas, the Shanghai Education Commission was fully authorised to work out the syllabus, develop the curriculum guidelines, initiate programs for teachers' professional development and set up examinations for the schools. In the educational policies, district authorities were empowered to plan the implementation of the program for nine-year compulsory education and to decide school enrolments within the region.

The interviews first concentrated on the changes to overall educational policies. Participant 2, a school principal of School A, confirmed that the trend of limited decentralisation in educational management started with the establishment of new types of schools.

> *Participant 2: Yes, theoretically, the devolution of education in Shanghai took place in 1985 when the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party announced the decision of reforming the educational structure. Then in Shanghai, a retired director from the Educational Bureau of a western district set up a private school in 1993. It was the real start of true decentralisation of schooling and curriculum development.*

During the time that the interviews were conducted in these schools in 1998, the "2000 Curriculum Scheme" was under debate throughout the educational community in China. The discussion was undoubtedly related to the introduction of the "2000 Curriculum Scheme". As stated in Chapter Five, the central Ministry of Education was developing a new centralised curriculum program - the "2000 Curriculum Scheme". This program was scheduled to be implemented in 2000 in schools all over the country with the

exception of Shanghai. The interviews confirmed that the implementation of the program of the "2000 Curriculum Scheme" would not affect the schools in Shanghai. In this case, Shanghai would develop textbooks for schools themselves. Participant 1 commented as follows:

> *Participant 1: The central Ministry of Education is developing the "2000 Curriculum Scheme". It is compulsory for schools to implement it. But, as a relatively developed area with a higher level of secondary education, schools in Shanghai will still utilise the curriculum and textbooks developed in Shanghai. ...There is no need for the schools in Shanghai to use the national textbooks, unless there is a red letterhead instruction and the schools are pushed by the political agenda.*

In this participant's response, he used the term "red letterhead instruction". In China, the government letterheads are usually printed in red colour. The letterheads are often used to deliver an official document or instruction and these documents are usually directive rather than instructive. These documents or instructions are usually called "red letterhead documents", which means they are the government's directive documents.

> *Participant 1: The "2000 Curriculum Scheme" that is under development will not apply to Shanghai schools. In Shanghai, after reviewing the first round curriculum and textbook reform, the Shanghai educational authority is organising the second round curriculum and textbook reform. Subject guidelines for Chinese literature and mathematics have been published to direct the development of new textbooks.*

However, the interview with Participant 7 revealed that this principal believed that real autonomy never actually reached the schools. According to this principal, the schools have too much follow up from the outside: centralised policy, curriculum, textbooks and programs. The participant's response indicated that the educational authority actually re-centralised educational management at the city-provincial level:

> *Participant 7: The central reform pushed the reform of the management system a little bit forward, but in essence there was no substantial reform. In some areas, e.g. curriculum, it seems more centralised Compared with the overall trends of the national management reform, the trend of curriculum reform, in my personal view, is just the opposite. The curriculum is more centralised. The national authority has been devolved to Shanghai City and the local authorities. Now we*

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> *do not have to use the People's Education Press textbooks. The Shanghai educational authority can develop a curriculum for their schools. But the Shanghai educational authority has highly centralised all the decision-making powers in their own hands.*

The statement of Participant 7 that "we do not have to use the People's Education Press textbooks" shows that the Shanghai Education Authority could decide to use local textbooks. This decision-making power regarding the choice of textbooks lay in the hands of the city level authority rather than the schools themselves. The follow-up discussion showed that, with the new concentration of authority at the provincial-city level, the Shanghai Education Commission had become the centre of new centralisation.

"Decision-making power" was a key concept in the centralisation and decentralisation of curriculum development. Decision-making power had apparently become a key concern of Participant 7:

> *Participant 7: Decentralisation did happen to primary and secondary education, but the decision-making power, at least within the years when I have been the principal, didn't provide much empowerment. The principals' management system was introduced into the secondary schools. And in the universities, there is a vice-chancellor management system under the leadership of the Party Committee - under the "hat" of the leadership of the Party's Committee. It seemed that the school principals had more nominal authority than the vice-chancellors did in the Universities. But actually the school principals had no decision-making power, simply because the primary and secondary schools were controlled by the district government. But universities themselves, as the higher education, have their own decision-making power. Now the District governments and the Municipal Education Authority control the primary and secondary schools. So we just joke that the principal management system is just something you must be responsible for when something goes wrong. No authorisation! No decision-making power was issued on teachers' recruitment. Authority for teachers' recruitment was in the hands of the Human Resource Division of the Department of Education. There was no decision-making power for finance. The authority for finance lay with the Education Commission: the central finance.*

The recruitment of teachers was another concern regarding school autonomy raised by the participant in the discussion. The response showed that recruitment was still

restricted by either the government or its delegates. Participant 3, the Principal of School C, gave the following comments:

> *Participant 3: We can employ. For instance, we went to some teacher recruitment fairs recently, including the Beijing Fair. But we must strictly process the procedures through the Human Resource Department of the District Government. For example, now the residential registration restricts the candidates' flow of postgraduates into Shanghai from the outer regions. Teachers with a bachelor's degree are not qualified to work as teachers in Shanghai schools according to the regulations of residential registration. Outside candidates have to get a quota form[58] jointly developed by the City Education Commission and the Municipal Bureau of Human Resource. The application forms are distributed strictly by quotas. A district may get about thirty forms, but each school can be allocated only a couple of quota forms. If I have ten very satisfactory candidates, but I was just allocated two forms, I would be able to employ only two of them. However, it's a little more flexible now. For example, a teacher can resign, to change his/her job by reporting to me or just leaving without saying goodbye to me. He has the right to make such a decision, but it is very difficult for me to sack a teacher. I have no authority to do that.*

To the schools and the principals, the authority to employ qualified teachers would guarantee the successful implementation of the school curriculum. With the understanding that staffing autonomy was an important aspect in the decentralisation of educational management, Participant 7 also commented on the employment of teachers in Shanghai.

> *Participant 7: Employment of teachers is on a contract system. For instance, there is an annual review, an employment contract and appointment certificate for each teacher, but these are just lip service. Why? Because there was an enrolment peak in these years. Now the enrolment peak is at senior secondary schools, and it was in junior secondary schools a couple of years ago. In these years, since 1998, we have a situation of being short of teachers. There are not enough teachers, and not enough teachers for lecturing in courses. Even if the*

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[58] In the period the socialist planning economy in China, the government allocated jobs. When there was a job vacancy, the candidate filled in a registration form first. The form was strictly limited and usually matched the job position. The person who got the form would most likely get the job. This registration form was no doubt equal to a job opportunity, and the job seeker must have this form before getting a job. This system still applied to schools in Shanghai when the schools tried to employ teachers from outside Shanghai.

teacher is not qualified, I have to extend his/her contract if I still need a teacher for this year's course and I am not confident of being able to employ a better teacher. It [the teachers' employment system] can only work if there are more than enough teachers. We can see that there needs to be a change of the human resource policy and I am afraid that it does take time. It has not reached the stage in which principals can employ teachers directly.

Discussion with this participant progressed to considering the general state of school autonomy in Shanghai. He commented that there used to be a centralised national model, but now, with decentralisation from the central level, the new centralisation is now formed at the city level.

Participant 7: Because there was a tradition of one-model (national) based centralisation, there are no choices for the schools in Shanghai. The local government was empowered by the central government, but it is just the new centralisation instead of the State Education Commission.

This remark was important. It indicated that one of the outcomes of the reform was a new form of centralisation at the city level in Shanghai. In response to the interview questions, the participant also stated that the politicalisation of decision making in education was always associated with the government's decisions regarding the devolution of education. This comment introduced an important and recurrent notion in the interview discussion.

Participant 7: The philosophy of curriculum reform is a new approach towards the needs and social development of the forthcoming 21st century, but the problem is that reform is a highly politicised reform, and new centralisation was emphasised: united textbooks, unified curriculum and even unified teaching time. Schools are not allowed to make decisions themselves in order to guarantee the successful implementation of the educational reform initiated by the government. ...The reform shifts back to the centralised city system. There is no school autonomy.

The range and flexibility of the school principals' decision-making would guarantee the successful execution of educational policies. During the interviews, the principal's administrative and decision-making capacities became another topic of discussion.

Participant 3 was adamant that the flexibility for Shanghai schools to implement a centralised curriculum is very limited.

> *Participant 3: The authority of the principal is very limited, and is restricted to just the interior affairs within schools. For instance, developing a time schedule, what classes the teachers can teach, or if any teachers are not qualified for their positions, I can terminate their engagement. That's all. Regarding curriculum development, theoretically I can design a course. So, if you ask the Minister of Education, he will reply, "why didn't you develop the curriculum yourselves? Authorisation has been devolved to you". Theoretically, the principal can develop courses themselves. But, there are too many restrictions. For example, I develop a course, and think it's very helpful for the students. But the course is not examined as a part of the matriculation examination, and therefore there is no allocation of teaching time.*

This participant mentioned the relationship between the examination and the elective courses. In China, compulsory courses are examined and the results of the examination determine the students' future and the reputation of the school. Therefore schools will arrange sufficient time for teaching of compulsory courses. As the elective courses are not examined, some schools will not allocate reasonable teaching time for elective courses.

From the interviews, it seems that schools have never had genuine autonomy and principals haven't been sufficiently authorised to make decisions regarding the flexible implementation of the prescribed programs. In the end, schools have to implement the same policy that was centrally stipulated by the Shanghai educational authority. Schools in Shanghai still have common curricula, particularly in the compulsory curriculum. Shanghai textbooks replaced the national textbooks but schools can only use the prescribed Shanghai textbooks and not school prepared textbooks. In other words, the national devolutionary effort in curriculum development constituted a new centralisation at the level of the Shanghai educational authority.

8.4 Curriculum Development

The analysis of interviews on curriculum development reflected the participants' views on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development at the

national and state/provincial levels and factors that influenced the implementation of the school curriculum. Almost all the participants argued that the Shanghai government maintains strong control of curriculum development in schools.

> *Participant 1: Regarding the curriculum, the Shanghai government has a clearer vision about it than the levels of schools. You can consult the City Education Commission. They control the curriculum. Curricula are all the same in all the schools. Few schools have their own individual curriculum.*

Studies of the school documents suggested that, compared to the national curriculum, curriculum development in Shanghai schools has greatly changed since 1985, and these changes could be seen in the changed structure of the school curriculum. In the school curriculum, the proportion of the mandatory curriculum was reduced and that of the elective and "activity-focused" curriculum[59] was increased. The new philosophy of curriculum development encouraged the multiple development of the students and highlighted individual characteristics of the new curriculum. But one participant had a different perspective on the curriculum development.

> *Participant 7: This reform is another provision, from which schools basically do not have the autonomy to design their own curriculum. So if you ask what are the distinctive characteristics of schools in Shanghai, the answer is there are no such characteristics for schools. Schools are quite similar.*

While discussing the critical comments with Participant 7 on curriculum development in Shanghai schools, "school autonomy" and "individual characteristics" became the foci of the discussion. This revealed the participant's identification of the needs of devolution with the need for more school autonomy.

> *Participant 7: The issue of the curriculum is not only a concern in China, but also an international focus of educational reform. But in our country, the impact of the planning economy has permeated all aspects of social life, and so control of the school curriculum has so far not been released. On the contrary, it's more centralised.*

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[59] The activity-focused curricula include sports, social surveys, etc.

This participant once visited schools in Adelaide to investigate the Australian style of school based curriculum development and management. As school principals had considerable autonomy to manage their own schools, the principals and teachers in the Adelaide schools felt sympathetic towards Shanghai schools which had to implement a centralised school curriculum. This participant considered that individual characteristics of schools are the product of school autonomy. If there were no school autonomy, there would be no individual characteristics for schools. In this way, he argued centralisation obstructed the realisation of school autonomy in Shanghai schools.

> *Participant 7: If the problem of the highly centralised curriculum cannot be fixed, there won't be schools with individual characteristics, and also no secondary schools with excellent qualities. It's just that, in the course of teaching from unified textbooks, the quality of teaching in one school may be a bit better, and other schools may be a bit poorer. That's it, there is no big difference.*

Currently, schools in Shanghai have autonomy to conduct school based curriculum development in elective and activity courses, but have no right to make any changes to the mandatory curriculum. Participant 2, the assistant principal of School A made the following comments.

> *Participant 2: From now on, schools will adopt the new textbooks under the new curriculum scheme. But it should be noted that schools have to follow the prescribed curriculum standards developed by the Shanghai Education Commission to develop courses with the recommended textbooks. You can develop your own elective and activity courses, even your own teaching materials, but you cannot do anything about the mandatory curriculum. Just follow and implement it.*

In the discussion, Shanghai participants also forwarded their view of the devolution of financial accountability to the school levels in Shanghai. The central government used to take revenue from all cities and provinces, then allocate the revenue centrally to support schools. But now things have changed.

> *Participant 2: A slight change in 1992 was that the central revenue took more tax from the local revenue. The central funding system was a product of the planning economy and was centrally allocated by the State Council's budget annually. For example, teachers had been paid 120 RMB nationally in the past, but now the*

> *Shanghai Municipal Council introduced a local subsidy from their revenue. The district governments also increased their subsidy. At the district level, the Educational Bureaus can create income. We have a policy to separate the schools from their enterprises. The District governments centralised the school-owned enterprises[60], and then the District governments allocate the cost of running the schools, including the teachers' salaries and bonuses. This is called local government funding. But the local funding is still appropriated from central funding. The so-called surcharges should be used locally, but are banned by the central government. Now some schools have a little more autonomy to enrol some fee-paying students and charge some extra tuition fees. That is self-raising funds created by the schools. And it's just that. Our school is highly controlled by the District Government and we are not permitted to create income.*

As stated in Chapter Four, the development and provision of textbooks in China has long been the focus of debates about curriculum development. The debates concentrated on whether there should be centralised textbooks or localised textbooks. In the interviews, the participants strongly expressed their impressions and perceptions of the issues regarding textbook development. Although the situation in Shanghai schools has changed so that schools do not have to use the national textbooks, the schools have to follow the recommended textbook lists issued by the Shanghai Education Commission. Participant 3 (the principal of School C) confirmed this situation.

> *Participant 3: We, the schools, have to use the prescribed syllabus and textbooks recommended by the Shanghai Education Commission. We do not have to use the People's Education Press textbooks, but we have to use the Shanghai textbooks.*

Participant 9, a science teacher of School A, confirmed the above comment:

> *Participant 9: If you do not use the prescribed textbooks, then the students will have trouble with the joint examination[61] and the matriculation examination. These examinations are based on the contents of the prescribed textbooks.*

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[60] In China, schools are allowed to establish factories and register companies to make money to financially support the schools themselves, which was called "income creation" for schools.

[61] The joint examination is leaving examination at the end of secondary school in Shanghai. It is an external examination that is similar to the former intermediate examination in Victoria and the High School Certificate examination in New South Wales.

The participant responded that though the central educational authority promoted a policy for schools of "one syllabus, multiple textbooks"[62] in order to diversify the textbook market, the People's Education Press actually controlled the greatest proportion of the textbook market. However, the textbooks of the People's Education Press had no influence over the choice of textbooks in Shanghai schools. They will make a choice of local textbooks.

> *Participant 9: Regarding textbook development, decentralisation made two versions of local textbooks possible for schools. There are two versions of textbooks in chemistry, Chinese literature and physics. The schools are allowed to select textbooks. But the flexibility in selecting textbooks is really limited. There are so many schools and there are only two textbooks to choose from.*

In China, the publishing industry undergoes rigorous censorship by the authorities and publishers must be licensed to publish textbooks. In this case, textbook censorship significantly featured ideological and political control. Both the central and the local authorities exercise strict censorship. The censorship covered the political, religious, and erotic contents of textbooks. Participant 1 confirmed this situation.

> *Participant 1: At the national level, a special team was organised to examine the textbooks developed centrally by the People's Education Press and textbooks locally developed other than in Shanghai. This team consisted of governmental officials, scholars, textbook developers and publishers. In Shanghai, there is a standing committee for examining textbooks for schools. Educational officials, scholars, publishers and textbook writers also comprise this committee.*

These comments suggested that there were hardly any changes with regard to strict textbook censorship. On the contrary, the restrictions of censorship in textbook development constituted an increasing feature of curriculum reform.

In Shanghai, textbook censorship is independent of the national censorship system. It has different working goals, with strict requirements for the contents and formats. The

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[62] According to this policy, the State Education Commission (now the Ministry of Education) stipulates one nationalised syllabus, and under the syllabus, there can be unlimited textbooks developed by those who are qualified.

People's Education Press textbooks and other textbooks[63] must undergo censorship by the China National Examining Committee of Primary and Secondary School Textbooks, but textbooks developed by Shanghai publishers are censored by the Shanghai Examining Committee of Primary and Secondary School Textbooks.

As there is more than one textbook in China now, there is increasing competition among textbook providers. The issue of equal opportunity in developing textbooks became another concern raised by the participants. The responses revealed that local textbook developers complained that the central educational authority provided greater support for the textbooks developed by the People's Education Press, as the People's Education Press textbooks were directly developed under the Ministry's involvement, direction and supervision. Participant 8, a senior teacher of school B who participated in the development of local textbooks, made the following comments:

> *Participant 8: The State Education Commission gave more support to the textbooks developed by the People's Education Press, simply because the Education Commission was involved in the textbook development. The representation on the censorship committee is unequal; about half of the members of the censorship committee are from the People's Education Press. In this case, it is internal rather than external censorship.*

In fact, from the national perspective, it was the view of some of the participants that the principle of equal opportunity was practised among the textbook developers. The adoption of the policy of "one syllabus, multiple textbooks" showed that no publishers have priority over the development of textbooks. However, participants acknowledged that staff of the People's Education Press are more professional and experienced in textbook development. For instance, Participant 5, a teacher of School B, gave the following comments:

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[63] Apart from the textbooks developed by the People's Education Press, there are some other textbooks developed by local publishers such as Guangdong Educational Publishing House, Beijing Normal University Press, Zhejiang Educational Publishing House, etc. These textbooks are used in the local schools in relevant cities and provinces.

Participant 5: People's Education Press has monopolised textbook development for many years following the foundation of the Republic. The People's Education Press could organise a group of national experts. We must acknowledge that their textbooks are of high quality with a well-organised structure. They are the products of many years' experience as a professional publisher. However, the problem is that the textbook has not been upgraded to flexibly reflect new knowledge. In Shanghai, textbooks reflect new knowledge of the world and the new century. These aspects are affirmed by the reforming committee, otherwise the curriculum and textbook reforms cannot take effect and are meaningless. The purpose of the reform is concentrated on cultivating students to develop active and creative thinking and on enabling students to develop the ability to learn. However, the problem is that the academic reputations of the Shanghai textbook producers are not as strong as the People's Education Press. Although a group of subject experts was formed, it was not easy for such a group of experts to develop a good, well-organised series of textbooks within a couple of days or a couple of years. The textbooks are not good enough regarding the academic aspect. The textbooks are only tentatively used in schools.

The comments here indicate that participants acknowledge the high quality of textbooks developed by the People's Education Press, but they still want to have a change of textbooks as they have been using the national textbooks for many years and some materials of the national textbooks were old. The PEP textbooks were still relevant, however they were unable to address the different situations that applied in different regions of China such as the coastal areas, inland areas and major cities. Such comment responses implied that participants were becoming more aware of the participation of local teachers and schools in the development of textbooks. Participant 7 stated,

Participant 7: The autonomy of curriculum development given to the Shanghai Municipal Council was one of the outcomes of the change in the state's management system. In terms of school-based curriculum development, there was no reform in essence. On the contrary, it seems more centralised at the municipal level, especially when you compare the reform to the overall management reform. The national government had devolved the authority to develop the school curriculum to the municipal level, and schools now are using the People's Education Press textbooks. But they have to follow the local guidelines to select the textbooks as prescribed by the Shanghai educational authority. In this sense, schools lost autonomy again in the new centralised system. There was no decentralisation at all. On the contrary, it seems more centralised.

This participant also discussed textbook selection. The participant considered that there were not enough choices for the schools.

> *Principal 7: Recently, there was another decentralisation from the national level to the provincial level. For instance, in Tianjin, in Shanxi province, they can develop curriculum and textbooks themselves, and have arranged pilot trials themselves. It is not a complete national system now. But there is no decentralisation at the province and provincial city level; no authority was devolved to the school principals to develop the curriculum themselves. The textbooks must be chosen from the recommended list. For instance, there used to be a PEP version of textbooks, and now you have at most two versions to choose from. That's how it is.*

Although this participant complained that there were not sufficient choices to make in the selection of textbooks, he commented that schools in Shanghai did have more choices about textbooks than schools in other cities or provinces.

> *Participant 7: It's different from subjects in Shanghai now. For example, there are two versions in Chinese literature: one is developed by the East China Normal University, called Version H; another one is developed by the Shanghai Normal University, called Version S. The case is the same with the textbooks for physics and chemistry. They were mainly jointly developed by several districts. Now subjects such as Chinese Literature, physics and chemistry have two versions to choose from, but the other subjects are still unified and controlled by the Shanghai Education Commission.*

The participants also discussed the relevance of textbooks to schools and students. The participants compared the national and local textbooks and commented on the advantages and disadvantages of different versions of textbooks. The general consensus was that the locally produced textbooks upgraded the contents with new knowledge and changed enormously in format and style.

> *Participant 1: Each of the textbooks has its advantages. The Shanghai textbooks for Chinese, physics and chemistry changed a lot in content and format. This reduced the work load and placed emphasis on the development of the various abilities of the students and reinforcing the connections among the students, community and new technology. The national textbook is a product of many years' experience and research, it has a high academic level and the new version changed a lot too. But the changes simply cut off some of the contents to reduce the students' work load.*

Participant 1 continued his comments on the strengths and weakness of the textbooks developed by the People's Education Press and those developed locally by the Shanghai providers:

> *Participant 1: I would say that the national version and the locally produced version of textbooks have their own strengths. The locally produced textbook has a new structure. The local textbook was developed upon the philosophy of formulation of various abilities of the students and focuses on the students' interaction with the community and technology. The textbook greatly reduced the difficulty of the traditional textbook. The People's Education Press textbooks were a product of a long professional job. These textbooks have a high academic level and are a bit difficult for students to learn. However, the producer was aware of the weak points of their textbooks and also tried to reduce the difficulty, but just cut out some of the contents.*

Participant 7 made a similar comment to Participant 1 on the quality of textbooks.

> *Participant 7: Take the example of the 1991 textbooks. I am teaching Chinese literature. I am talking about the two versions of the textbook on Chinese literature. I would say that each has its strong points and weak points. There are still some problems to be solved regarding the structural compactness, the choices of the texts, and the development of testing questions. Therefore, a second round reform of the curriculum and textbooks is being conducted.*

The Communist government in China highly controlled textbook development from 1949. Ever since then, a centralised system of textbook development, provision and selection has been developed and implemented in schools. As China is a large country with a big population, many differences and imbalances co-existed among the schools in cities, countryside, coastlines and inland regions[64]. Under these circumstances, it is impossible for one textbook to meet the various needs of different schools in all the different regions.

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[64] Coastlines refer to the cities and provinces that are located along the Eastern Sea and Southeast Seas like Shandong province, Jiangsu Province, the City of Shanghai, Zhejiang Province, Fujian Province and Guangdong Province. The inland regions denote the provinces and cities that are not bounded by the sea, like Gansu Province and Qinghai Province. Generally speaking, the coastline provinces and cities have a higher level of economic development than that in the inland. Therefore, the schools in the coastline areas are better equipped than those inlands. The people's level of educational attainment is higher than those in the inland areas too.

As stated in Chapter Four, schools and teachers have been longing for a diversified development, diverse provision and free selection of textbooks (Li 1994: 69). The devolution of education in 1985 brought with it a limited diversification of textbooks in Shanghai.

The model of textbook development had become one of the important criteria to assess whether the Shanghai system was centralised or decentralised. During the interviews, the issues regarding school autonomy in curriculum development, financial accountability, textbook development, provision and selection of textbook, relevance and competition in textbook development, constituted major concerns in the discussions. These discussions showed that, at the national level, the monopolised model of textbook development and provision had been broken down by the central policy of "one syllabus, multiple textbooks". At the city-provincial level, the Shanghai Education Commission was authorised by the central educational authority to plan, develop, publish and assess textbooks for their schools. At the school level, individual schools were not compelled to use the national textbooks, but schools were limited to making a choice only among the prescribed city-level textbooks. In this sense, a new centralisation of textbook development was constituted at the Shanghai City level. The schools were not entrusted with very much freedom to develop the curriculum and textbooks in their own right. On the other hand, as the production of textbooks is profitable, competition in the textbook market increased the level of commercialisation. The commercialisation of textbook development generated local protection of the textbook market obstructing the free trade of textbooks. Different interest groups controlled the textbook market and it became harder for teachers to select textbooks freely.

8.5 School Based Curriculum Development

The discussions of school based curriculum development reflected the participants' view of curriculum development within schools. In the interviews, the Chinese

participants strongly expressed their views on the need for school based curriculum development.

School based curriculum development implies that decisions related to planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum take place within the school and its community, rather than being imposed from the outside (Skilbeck 1985). For years, the term "school based curriculum development" has been synonymous with the decentralisation of curriculum development.

School based curriculum development has existed in Chinese schools since the socialist system of schooling was established after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. At that time, the Ministry of Education encouraged local educational authorities and schools to develop so-called "local textbooks". The "local textbooks" aimed mainly at teaching students to better understand the environment of the local community and school, including the fundamentals of industrial and agricultural knowledge. The knowledge that the students attained from the local textbooks was supplementary to the studies of the main subjects in schools, and there were usually no tests based upon the local textbooks.

As stated in Chapter Four, the politicisation of education during the Cultural Revolution (1966 - 1976) centralised the diverse local curricula into two courses: Knowledge of Industrial Production and Knowledge of Agricultural Production[65]. The schools in metropolitan cities taught the Foundation of Industrial Studies course while the schools in rural areas taught the Foundation of Agricultural Studies course. In this case, the elective courses became mandatory ones and every school followed the same curriculum.

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[65] During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong encouraged the students to learn from the workers and peasants. Then the Ministry of Education developed two courses called Knowledge of Industrial Production and Knowledge of Agricultural Production for the students to learn in the schools. As China was an agricultural and a then growing industrial country, it was necessary for the students to learn something about agriculture and industry in China. But the problem was that these courses were centralised as compulsory courses although the courses should have been elective ones.

In China "school based curriculum development" changed in the late 1980s when the ideas and theories of the western style of school based curriculum development were introduced to Chinese schools. Although the nature, operation and suitability of school based curriculum development in China was under theoretical debate, responses from the interviews indicated that the schools in Shanghai were increasingly aware that school curriculum development was an indispensable part of school autonomy.

The interviews showed that the opportunities for school based curriculum development in China were quite seriously affected by internal factors (e.g. the school's academic reputation and social ranking, also the principal's experience, reputation, social and even his/her political background). Among the schools involved in this study, one school was famous for its restructuring of the mandatory curriculum. In the centralised system, it was the principal's reputation and social background that made school based curriculum development possible. Participant 8 gave a background information about the school based curriculum development in school B.

> *Participant 8: The school based curriculum development was called school based curriculum reform. It has taken place ever since the 1970s. It has covered a revision of the internal examination, teaching methods and curriculum development. The former principal was a highly experienced Chinese teacher and educator. He changed the national standard teaching units to major and minor classes. He put aside the national textbooks and revised them accordingly and selected the Chinese Classics, such as Dreams of Red Mansion (Hong Lou Meng), Water Margin (Shui Hu), Travels to the West (Xi You Ji) and The Romance of Three Kingdoms (San Guo Yan Yi)[66]as the school-based textbooks for Chinese literature.*

In the interviews, Participant 7 compared the school's current situation with his previous experience of school based curriculum development. He confirmed that personal

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[66] During the years between 220 – 265, China was separated into three kingdoms: Wei Kingdom (220-265), Shu Han Kingdom (221-263) and Wu Kingdom (222-280). Finally, the three kingdoms were militarily united into Western Jin in 265 (Wu Kingdom still existed until 280).

factors[67] still played an important role in school based curriculum development in schools in Shanghai. His school restructured its management system and formed a school council (board of directors) in 1998[68]. He would be retired from the principal of School B and the school council would appoint a new principal who had a government working background. The school and the teachers placed great expectations on the new principal and assumed that he would use his personal reputation and various contacts with the government to direct the school in the further development of its school based curriculum. Participant 7 commented as follows:

Participant 7: From September 1998, our school would be run as a boarding school. The Mayor of the District would be retired as mayor and has been appointed as the school's principal. With his government official background, it is hoped that there would be a bigger step in school based curriculum development. It has already been stated in the school charter that the school should be run with the aim of student development. So the new principal decided that the mandatory curriculum would be allocated to five mornings of the working days, with a total amount of about 20 classes, leaving all the other time to be allocated to the elective courses and school based curricula.

In the discussion, Participant 7 mentioned the arrangements for teaching time in the school. During the years of the centralised system, even the allocation of teaching time was centralised by the central government; every school had the same course at the same time. Participant 7 indicated that the school could now make some changes to the teaching timetable and the emphasis on mandatory courses. Most notably, the school had cut the mandatory weekly courses off to 20 classes, which are 14 classes less that the standards of the Shanghai curriculum scheme.

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[67] The personal factors here indicated the academic reputation, social contacts and political backgrounds (e.g. government working backgrounds).

[68] See School A (1998): The Guiding Scheme of Running School A, p. 1.

During the interviews, Participant 7 stated that the further implementation of school based curriculum development would occur with the new management of the school. Although administrative intervention still had an important influence over the execution of school based curriculum development, the participant was proud of his school's future plan for school based curriculum development:

> *Participant 7: Yes, all the afternoons are allocated for an elective and activity focused curriculum. Self-study programs will be run during the night[69]. Thus we definitely need autonomy in curriculum development to meet such a school-based program. According to the Regulation of Shanghai Education Commission, there are 34 classes in the mandatory curriculum, but we have reduced this to 20 classes. There must be an associated modification of the curriculum and textbooks, as there are many classes on the elective and activity-focused curriculum in the afternoons. Therefore relevant curriculum arrangements and textbooks are needed. Core subjects like foreign languages will be enhanced. We will keep the English classes, and we will develop courses in French, German and Japanese. These courses are under development. The reason that we are able to do so is that it has already been permitted by the Deputy Mayor that the students enrolling in the coming Autumn will be able to make a choice for themselves as to whether to sit the Joint examination[70] or not. They do not have to take part in the joint assessment. This forthcoming change indicates that even the government is aware that the joint examination in Shanghai schools has fulfilled its historical mission. It will be an obstacle to the further diversification of secondary education. The Municipal Education Authority also plans to abolish the joint examination in the future.*

In 1988, the central educational authority authorised Shanghai educational authority to develop a university matriculation examination for graduates of Shanghai schools. As the united matriculation examination in Shanghai still exists, schools could only plan, design and implement their own curriculum for the elective courses, which are not examined externally.

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[69] This school moved into the country and became a boarding school. As a boarding school, the students have evening study classes. The classes run normally from 7:00pm - 9:00pm in the evening.

[70] Joint Examination is a leaving examination at the end of the secondary level in Shanghai schools. It was introduced and implemented by Shanghai Education Commission since the 1980s.

> *Participant 7: The elective courses did not play the role they should have played, neither did the elective courses in Australian schools in the real meaning, nor the elective courses in the other western countries; they are different, and it's now just the nominal elective courses.*

In many cases, school based curriculum development was regarded by researchers like Skilbeck (1985) as one of the important criteria in identifying a decentralised system of curriculum development. Chinese schools had a long history of school based curriculum development, but their ways of planning, designing, implementing and evaluating the school based curriculum are different from those in Australian schools.

As stated in Chapter Five, the Shanghai curriculum scheme, which was developed in 1991, has significantly changed the curriculum structure in Shanghai schools. According to the Scheme, the school curricula have now been restructured into three dimensions: compulsory, elective and activity subjects, which are usually called the "three-piece" curricula in Chinese documents. Within the framework of the "three-piece" curricula, the compulsory curriculum still consists of the traditional subjects made mandatory by local authorities, in which schools have no authority to make changes. Changes can only be made to the elective subjects and subjects in the activity-focused curriculum.

The participants considered that school based curriculum development improved the quality of the students' individual development. The students even attained better results in the national matriculation examinations when there were such school based changes to this curriculum, which surprised the public and convinced parents to support school based curriculum development.

8.6 The Function of School Council

The advent of school councils was the product of devolution of education in several western countries. Interviews with Shanghai participants raised question about school councils. School councils were only recently introduced to Shanghai schools, and only a limited number of trial schools had adopted them.

Among the schools in this study, one pilot school was involved in the formation of a school council. This school moved out from a central business district to the country with the establishment of a new campus. The new campus was called the New School. The New School formed a school council with a new Committee of Management. The principal was appointed as the chief executive and conducted the day-to-day management of the school under the leadership of the school council. The school council consisted of a local government officer, representatives from the university, industry and the educational community to govern the school's direction and policy-making.

> *Participant 7: A school council or board was just introduced in the management of schools. It is the product of a changing system for schools. Generally speaking, government schools have no board of directors or school council, but all the private schools have a board of directors. The board of directors appoints the principal to manage the school.*

Another participant stated that even some government schools in Shanghai would soon have school councils or boards of directors.

> *Participant 2: We will change the system of school management this year (1998). We are still a government school, but we will introduce the system of a board of directors. We will continue to get funds from the government, but we will also raise funds ourselves from industry.*

This participant continued to talk about the formation of his school council:

> *Participant 2: Our school council will consist of the principal, government officials, entrepreneurs, university vice-chancellors and scholars. The principal will execute the board's decisions and will be in charge of the day-to-day management. The governmental officials will help the board to better understand government policies. The entrepreneurs will provide financial support for the needs of the school. The vice-chancellor will help to link the school to the university and prepare the students for higher education. The scholars will help the school with educational research.*

The introduction of school councils in Shanghai schools was seen as the product of community participation in school management and this was regarded as the first step in the realisation of self-managing schools (Chen 1998: 44). School councils would

develop in Shanghai and become fully involved in the making of school policy. Currently, their main function is raising funds for schools (Chen 1998: 44). The range of representation will also be expanded, as at present there is no representation from the parents and students.

8.7 Teachers' Participation

The analysis of teachers' participation reflected participants' understanding of the teachers' involvement in curriculum development in schools. Some participants were satisfied with the current levels of teachers' participation in curriculum development in Shanghai schools, but some were not.

> *Participant 1: I would say that teachers have the opportunity to participate in writing textbooks. Whenever curriculum development takes place in schools, teachers do have an opportunity to participate in writing the textbooks, though not all of the teachers can have this opportunity.*

From many successful examples, researcher saw teachers' participation as an important factor that ensured the success of curriculum reform (Yuan 1990: 63). In the interviews, the importance of teachers' participation was recognised by the participants. For example, Participant 8 was convinced that reforms elsewhere had failed because of a lack of teacher involvement and support.

> *Participant 8: The failure of curriculum reform in the USA in the 1960s was attributed to the lack of the teachers' participation and the fact that teachers did not support the reform.*

During the discussions, most participants expressed the view that teacher participation in curriculum and textbook development constituted an important indicator of school autonomy. Previously, in China's textbook development, there was a model in which "scientists write the textbook, teachers teach the textbook". However, the interviews showed that the extent of teachers' participation in textbook development has increased. There were seen to be increasing opportunities for teachers, educators and scientists to join together to co-write textbooks. According to one participant:

> *Participant 8: Now curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai has changed the traditional model of textbook development. Now we have officials, scholars and teachers who work together to develop textbooks. Schools are now linking with publishers to develop textbooks.*

Involvement in writing textbooks has been regarded by teachers as honourable work in China in past years. Traditionally, only experienced teachers have had the opportunity to participate in the writing of textbooks. Historically, teachers were involved in textbook development, including during the post-Cultural Revolution period and the period of going into the mountains and down to the countryside (Shang Shan Xia Xiang)[71] in the 1970s. Participant 7 confirmed as follows:

> *Participant 7: The former principal of our school was employed to join the Shanghai textbooks development group after he was freed from the Cowshed (Labor Camp)[72]. This indicated that the central government never relinquished responsibility for the development of textbooks for primary and secondary schools even when it was in the course of the Cultural Revolution, except for the period when no textbooks were developed during the days of unrest in 1966 - 76. Textbooks were redeveloped thereafter when the revolution of going back to schools happened. The People's Education Press organised a group of experts from a certain province to develop a certain textbook on a certain subject. The Shanghai Education Authority also organised a group of teachers with a majority of secondary school teachers and some teachers from universities to form a development group. For example, two experienced Chinese teachers each developed a version of Chinese literature textbooks. The development of city level textbooks was organised by the Municipal Education Commission. Local textbooks were also developed in different districts and counties, coordinated by the local educational bureaucracy. As to the schools, some were also developing textbooks themselves, but the textbooks were used as supplementary materials and as testing exercises and the schools were unable to break through the mandatory*

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[71] During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong called the youth to learn from the peasants. So hundreds of thousands of the youth in the cities were sent to work in the country to undertake the so-called reeducation by the peasants. This campaign was called the movement of "going to the mountains and down to the countryside".

[72] During the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals like scientists and educators were exiled to work in rural areas to undertake so-called "ideological reconstruction". They lived and worked in cowsheds as their labour camp. The cowshed became synonymous with the political persecution of the intellectuals.

curriculum. Schools can develop textbooks themselves for elective courses. Textbook development is absolutely not the province of particular schools.

Teachers' participation was seen by most participants as an important aspect of the decentralisation of curriculum development. Historical and international cases showed that, for every innovative curriculum reform program, successful teacher participation contributed to the success of its implementation (Yuan 1990: 63). In this case, the lack of teacher's participation was one of the important factors that undermined the successful implementation of innovative programs. Shanghai schools were experiencing greater changes in the curriculum and textbook development and schools were facing more changes of curriculum development to adapt the imposed changes from the outside. As every modification of the prescribed programs would lead to considerable changes in the school programs, teachers' involvement in curriculum development became more important than ever. At interviews, most participants were aware of the importance of the teacher's involvement, but felt that more opportunities should be created for the teacher's participation in the course of these reforms.

8.8 Impact of Examinations

The discussion regarding the impact of examinations reflected the participants' understanding of the impact of the matriculation examination on the decentralisation of curriculum development. The participants in China strongly argued the necessity of abolishing the joint examination at the end of secondary education. They contended that the reform of the national matriculation examination constitute the prerequisite condition for decentralisation in curriculum development.

The teaching in schools in Shanghai was restricted by the national matriculation curriculum - an authoritative tool to select students for tertiary education. This

examination was restarted in 1977[73], and has controlled the teaching content in schools, the style and direction of school curriculum as well as textbook development. One participant discussed the relationship between the centralised syllabus and the national matriculation examination.

> *Participant 3: For example, the syllabus, it's the government's obligation to develop a general syllabus. It should be along national unified guidelines. In the Chinese situation, it won't work well if everything is decentralised to the regional or state levels like the USA. But it would be good to have a variety of textbooks. There is a long way to go for China to solve this problem. It depends on what textbooks the national matriculation examination is based upon. The reason that Shanghai can develop its own textbooks is that it (the Shanghai Education Commission) is authorised to develop the university entrance examination for its own region. If the State Education Commission had not delivered the authorisation, then there would have been no way for Shanghai to reform textbook development, and no choice but to use the People's Education Press textbooks and follow up the national matriculation examinations.*

The current united matriculation examination in the nation underpinned the existence of the unified curriculum and textbook. In 1988, when the Chinese central educational authority devolved the decision-making power of curriculum development to Shanghai educational authority, the power of developing a local university matriculation examination for Shanghai schools were also transferred to Shanghai educational authority. This authorisation of decision-making power at the city-provincial level regarding the matriculation examination represents an essential indication of the partial devolution of curriculum development in Shanghai.

As described in Chapter Five, the Shanghai Education Commission was authorised to develop the matriculation examination itself in 1985. This has been part of the whole package of devolution in education. The matriculation in Shanghai is different from the national matriculation. The national matriculation model is "3+2": 3 means Chinese,

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[73] During the Cultural Revolution, most universities were shut down. The national matriculation examination was terminated from then and until the then Acting Premier Deng Xiaoping (1902 - 1997) restarted it when he came to power in 1977.

mathematics and a foreign language and 2 means any two subjects of the students' choice from elective courses. The matriculation in Shanghai is "3+1": which means the same three compulsory subjects as the national matriculation plus the "1" elective subject from the physics, chemistry, geography and biology courses in science, or history for arts students.

The interviews showed that the schools, teachers and students were stressed by their preparation for the matriculation examination. The centralised examination has been an obstacle to diversifying textbook development. For example, Participant 1 gave the following comments:

> *Participant 1: There was no explicit instruction from the educational authority that schools in Shanghai have to use the textbooks developed locally. However, the matriculation examinations are based upon prescribed textbooks. The restriction is that you have to use the prescribed textbooks. The school and teachers are stressed to prepare the students for the matriculation examination.*

From the 1980s, Shanghai educational authority introduced a Joint Examination for the secondary graduates in Shanghai schools. The Joint examination was a leaving examination at the end of the secondary level in Shanghai schools. During my interviews in the selected Shanghai schools, there was a debate whether the Joint examination should continue or should be abolished. In the interviews, this Joint examination of secondary education was discussed, and there was a strong message from the participants that this examination should be abolished.

> *Participant 3: The joint examination is a leaving school examination for senior students. The Municipal Council intends to abolish the examination, but still needs time. The abolition of the joint examination might be subject to the autonomy of the university's enrolment. If, later, the capacity of university enrolment is enlarged, the universities will have autonomy to set examinations and select students themselves, then the joint examination will cease.*

Some participants discussed the relationship between the university matriculation and the curriculum development in Shanghai schools. The discussion showed that the university matriculation examination obviously controlled the direction of the schools' curriculum development and academic preparation of the students. The results of the examination directly influence the school's reputation. For this reason, the preparation of the students for examination became the top priority for the schools in arranging the teaching, curriculum and textbooks. Participant 7 stated as follows.

> *Participant 7: Elective curricula are the problem. The philosophy is good. From the mandatory curriculum to elective curriculum and activity-focus curriculum is an improvement. But, again it is subject to how many students enter the universities. The direction of the matriculation remains unchanged in essence. For example, you pass the exams and enter the key city high school. The student, the parents, the community, the teacher and also the Mayor of the District, are concerned about how many students will enter the universities. So I must complete the teaching of the mandatory curriculum and guarantee teaching time for the mandatory curriculum. All students must pass the examinations, and there are high standards in matriculation. Under such a situation, the implementation of an elective curriculum would be meaningless.*

Participants understood that any reform should be comprehensive. It should cover curriculum development and textbook development as well as the development of examinations. Participant 1 also commented on the relationship between the curriculum and textbook development and examination.

> *Participant 1: We think that it doesn't work if Shanghai can just be devolved to develop examination papers. In fact, the power of setting the examination, which the school should enjoy, was not fully devolved. The authority of setting independent examinations is not enough, further action should be exercised and the philosophy of a market economy should be introduced. In the meantime, we should develop the textbooks in our own right. The university accepts independent enrolments, and schools can develop the curriculum themselves. A comprehensive reform must be exercised, otherwise it is in vain. In the final result, the difference is only that we do not have to use the People's Education Press textbooks, but can accept the Shanghai Education Commission textbooks.*

In many cases, examinations influenced school programs, curriculum development and textbook selection. The reason that the schools in Shanghai have to use the locally

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produced textbooks is simply because the university entrance examination was based upon the textbooks developed in Shanghai. Schools in other cities and provinces do not use the textbooks developed in Shanghai as the national matriculation examinations in these areas was based upon the textbooks developed by the People's Education Press.

8.9 Summary and Commentary

The interviews in Shanghai yielded data on the participants' understandings of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development and have resulted in a rich range of findings. The structured and open-ended interviews, participant observations and document analysis revealed participants' perceptions of the effectiveness and also of the problems associated with the decentralisation of curriculum development.

The understanding of devolution and centralisation reflected the participants' attitudes towards the devolution of responsibilities in educational management and curriculum development. The interviews indicated that decentralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai occurred in accordance with a political agenda. Schools were authorised limited autonomy but were accountable for the implementation of more centralised curriculum programs. Participants' responses showed that there was a new centralisation at the Shanghai City level although the decision-making power was prudently devolved from the central authority to the authority at the Shanghai City level.

Comments on curriculum and textbook development reflected the participants' awareness of the sensitivity of centralised curriculum development, and their perception that it was more centralised than ever before. In China, centralised textbook development had a long history and it still prevailed. It was also evident that the participants recognised that inadequate practices in the implementation of prescribed programs could only make curriculum development more centralised and difficult for teachers to implement.

School based curriculum development constitutes an important aspect of the decentralisation of curriculum development. The participants clearly recognised the necessity for such development in schools.

The teachers' participation played an important role in the development of school programs and in textbook development. The responses of the participants indicated that they recognised the role of the teachers' participation in school based curriculum development, but the level of teachers' participation did not reach their expectations.

Decentralisation of curriculum development in school is an inclusive topic that covers the school boards' setting of direction, principals' capacity, teachers' participation, financial accountability and examinations. The responses from the participants showed that, though decentralisation of curriculum development took place from the national level to the City of Shanghai, the city level authorities, educational or municipal, re-centralised curriculum development. As a result, schools in Shanghai still implement a centralised school policy, programs, curriculum development, textbook pr ivision and examinations.

CHAPTER NINE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

In this chapter, the empirical findings of the field research in Victorian schools are reported. During the field research in Victorian schools, the principal questions were investigated, and particular attention was given to the sub-questions concerning the nature of the participants' understanding of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Victorian schools.

In the interviews conducted in Victorian schools, I sought responses to the following principal questions: What has happened to the educational systems in Victorian society in relation to the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development from 1985 to 1995? What strategies have been taken to achieve the aims of the changes and how efficient have the changes been? How do the principals and teachers view these changes and what are the responses from the schools to these changes? These questions were aimed at eliciting an understanding of the current situation of curriculum development in Victorian schools and how the process of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development has affected schools.

9.1 Fieldwork Schools in Victoria: An Overview

To investigate the above questions, three schools were chosen as case study sites in which interviews were conducted. The schools were selected according to the criteria of sampling stated in the third chapter. They are sequentially coded as Schools X, Y and Z.

9.1.1 School X

School X is a government school in Victoria with a history of over 150 years. It was founded in 1854 in the "Eastern Hill" region of Melbourne as a National Model and Training School. The school was changed into a Continuation School in 1905 and

then changed to its current name in 1912. It was originally a co-educational school and became a boy's school in 1927 when the boys of the school moved to new premises in South Yarra.

The new premises in South Yarra were completed in 1927 on the historic Forest Hill overlooking the Yarra River. Ever since 1927, the main building of School X has been a prominent landmark in this area.

The school had an imposing main structure that is referred to as the "Castle on the Hill". The Castle has remained largely unchanged though the school has grown around it. The Castle building now houses administrative offices, the Memorial Hall, specialist and conventional classrooms, dining hall, canteen, Students Welfare Office, Careers Room and School Nurse's Room.

School X is now a selective entry state school for boys from Years 9 to 12. Entry is via an examination that is available to all year 8 boys in Victoria, and casual entry into Years 10-12 is dependent on application and interview.

School X has over 1,360 boys currently enrolled and has high academic expectations, outstanding VCE results and tertiary placements. In 1998, half of the VCE entrants' scores were over 94.2 (meaning they were over the 94 % average rate in the state) and 13% of the students scored 99 or more[74]. The school has a total of 137 staff and the school claims that staffs aim for the students develop quality academic approaches, relevant computer skills, determined self-direction, keen personal ambition and a desire to make a significant contribution to society[75].

According to the School Charter of School X, curriculum development in School X is based upon the expectation that selected students should have the desire and the ability to be academically challenged and extended through a broad, stimulating and competitive environment[76]. Therefore, School X is seeking to provide what it regarded as the finest education for students from Years 9 - 12 through a

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[74] See School X (1997): Respecting the Past – Creating the Future, p.2.

[75] See ibid, p. 6.

[76] See School X (1997): School Charter, p.2.

comprehensive curriculum of academic excellence, personal development and leadership. The students have high expectations to progress to tertiary education and are encouraged to strive for leadership in their chosen areas of endeavour. The school also provides comprehensive curricula not only for the acquisition of knowledge but also for the development of essential skills in information retrieval and analysis necessary for the 21st century.

Curriculum implementation in School X is arranged through Key Learning Areas, in which students study a range of core and elective subjects, all of which are academically challenging. The school offers 26 VCE studies and the provision of broad academic choices is hoped to enable the students to undertake a course of study that is rewarding, challenging and tailored to their needs.

The school offers an extensive co-curricular program, sports program and involvement program. The cc-curricular program includes Air Training Corp, Army Cadets, bushwalking, canoeing, caving, horse riding and outdoor education. The sports program includes athletics, basketball, cricket, fencing, football, golf, karate, rowing, sailing, swimming and water polo. The involvement program consists of massed singing, a vast ensemble program, instrumental music, school opera, plays and concerts.

School X has a strong background in promoting physical education and sports. In 1993, the school opened a new building housing a swimming pool, gymnasium/games hall, weight room, Music Centre, library and both specialist and general classrooms. The school administration believes that, with these facilities, together with other sporting facilities such as the synthetic hockey, netball, tennis and cricket complex as well as a football and athletics area, the students have inspiring and exciting environments in which they can develop into well-rounded young men.

School X has planned intensively for its future curriculum development and facilities improvement. Through its curriculum development, the school aims to continue to develop students into leaders and individuals who will return to their community the productiveness and humanity learned through the liberal, balanced, competitive and

comprehensive curriculum that the school offers[77]. In addition, the school will also investigate and introduce differential teaching in LOTE and mathematics[78]. Regarding facilities improvement, School X plans to use local and government funds to fully renovate the 1927 building to improve the learning environment for students and also to construct a multi-purpose outdoor sports complex in order to provide convenient, high quality sporting facilities for students and the community[79]. The development of a Language Laboratory is also envisaged.

9.1.2 School Y

School Y was established in 1966. It is located in a large southeast suburb of Melbourne. This school is a co-educational school from Years 7 to 12 and services a residential area that is culturally diverse. More than half of the students come from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are at least 32 different language groups represented within the school.

According to its School Charter, School Y aims to ensure high standards of learning and the pursuit of personal excellence in a safe, secure and caring environment[80]. According to its profile, the school provides its students a broad, challenging curriculum in the eight Key Learning Areas that cover a wide range of learning abilities[81]. The students in School Y are encouraged to reach their full potential in all areas of endeavour. The individuality and strengths of each student are appreciated and recognised[82].

School Y provides a comprehensive curriculum that seeks to successfully prepare the students for tertiary education or employment. In recent years, the majority of its Year 12 students have continued their education either at a university or TAFE

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[77] See School X (1997): Respecting the Past - Creating the future, p.2.

[78] See School X (1997): School Charter, p. 3.

[79] See ibid, p. 3

[80] See ibid, p. 1.

[81] See ibid, p. 3.

[82] See ibid, p. 1.

college. Moreover, co-curricular activities, such as the Police Youth Corps, Student Action Teams, interschool debating and sports, are developed to promote students' leadership, enhancement of abilities and development of personality.

In School Y, like in almost all secondary schools in Victoria, curriculum offerings are arranged in two phases: In the first phase, the Curriculum and Standards Framework guides studies for students in Years 7 - 10 and the studies are assessed internally. In the second phase, the students in Years 11 and 12 are enrolled in the Victorian Certificate of Education and are assessed according to the guidelines of the Board of Studies. At Year 9, all students are required to undertake eight core subjects over the whole year and two elective subjects each semester. The core subjects are drawn from the areas of arts, English (or ESL), Mathematics, Health Education, Physical Education, Sports, Science, Social Education. The elective subjects include Crafts, Drama, Graphic Communication, Media, Music, Debating and Public Speaking, French, Vietnamese, Commerce, Information Technology, Metal and Wood Technology.

School Y maintained an average pass rate of 97% of VCE students from 1995 to 1997[83]. In recent years, about 90% of the students have gained places at universities and TAFE colleges. Business, Commerce, Computing, Engineering and Technology are the tertiary studies of most interest to students. A number of students have undertaken double degrees in Science and Engineering, Science and Arts, Engineering and Computer Science[84].

According to the college records, School Y has a clear plan for curriculum development for the future. This plan includes the continued improvement of curriculum links with neighbouring primary schools, the extension of programs to improve student career pathways and the ongoing development of technology resources as well as other facilities[85].

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[83] See School Y (1997): College Profile, p. 5.

[84] See ibid, p. 5.

[85] See ibid, p.1

9.1.3 School Z

School Z was established in 1976. It is a co-educational secondary school located in an outer suburb about 50 kilometres south east of Melbourne. As this suburb is one of the most rapidly developing areas in Victoria, the school population has increased considerably in the last five years. The school has 1,110 students. School Z became classified officially as a Science and Technology school when the Liberal-National Coalition government introduced the policy of Schools of the Future in 1993.

The School Charter states that School Z sets high standards in all aspects of student endeavour, behaviour and dress and has maintained a high standing in the surrounding community[86]. The school provides sequential, comprehensive program in the eight Key Learning Areas for all students in Years 7 to 12. School Z claims to encourage, recognise and celebrate outstanding performance of students in the areas of leadership, academic achievement, sport, performing arts, culture and artistic achievement.

In the school curriculum, School Z provides all students with a diverse curriculum. Opportunities for students for future careers and the further studies are examined. Curriculum programs are organised around the eight Key Learning Areas that cover Arts, English, Mathematics, Science, Language other than English (LOTE), Technology, Health and Physical Education, as well as the Study of Society and the Environment (SOSE).

Curriculum offerings in School Z are similar to those of School Y, and they are similarly organised into two phases. In the lower phase, students in Years 7 to 10 undertake common studies drawn from all learning areas. In the upper phase, students have a wide choice of programs to meet their individual needs and aspirations. Accelerated learning opportunities are developed for Year 10 students wishing to undertake VCE units of study.

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[86] See School Z (1997): School Charter, p.2.

School Z also provided a wide range of co-curricular activities including inter-school and intra-school sports, camps and excursions, drama and instrumental music. Also, special assistance programs, including a well-developed Integration Program for students with disabilities and Reading Enhancement Program involving the active participation of parents, are also provided. The school operates an intensive Work Education program and a Work Experience program at Year 10 to provide guidance for the students' future employment.

In its School Charter, School Z clearly plans the future development of the school and seeks to broaden the range of units offered in the post-compulsory years of education by forging links with industry, TAFE and Universities[87]. The school plans to introduce a consultative school management model so that a sequenced cyclic process of goal setting, policy planning, program budgeting, implementation and evaluation occurs annually.

The above-mentioned three schools in Victoria are all government schools. Schools X, Y and Z all have strong commitments to implementing government programs like the Curriculum and Standards Framework and Victorian Certificate of Education. The teaching at the three schools is all focused on academic achievements and strongly committed to preparing the students either for access to tertiary education or for going into employment. These three schools all provide a broad and comprehensive curriculum to meet the students' needs.

9.2 Interviews in Victorian Schools

Interviews were conducted in the three schools. The arrangement of the interviews started with a written application to the South East Region Office of the Victorian Department of Education to request access to the chosen schools. After the South East Region Office approved access, I wrote a formal letter to the principals of the three schools to seek their consent to conduct interviews in the schools. After the principals consented, they facilitated the interviews with the participants.

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[87] See School Z (1997): School Charter, p. 2.

As described in Chapter Three, the field work in the Victorian schools included structured and semi-structured/non-structured interviews. Participant observations were conducted at school events (e.g. school council meetings, meeting of curriculum committee, school open day, curriculum open day, school charter retreat, etc.). School records on the selected schools' implementation of government regulations and policies were investigated. Findings derived from interviews, observations and examinations of school records are presented and discussed. Some interpretations of the findings are presented and comprehensive interpretations of findings from the combined interviews, observations and examination of schools records are also included.

The analysis of the various responses from the participants identified five major themes about their understandings of the status of decentralisation of education and curriculum development in Victorian schools. These themes are devolution and centralisation of educational management, curriculum development, functions of the school council, consultation and professional development.

As stated in Chapter Three, the participants interviewed included the principals, samples of teachers and samples of school council members. The participants that I interviewed sometimes had dual positions in the schools. For example, a member of the School Council of School Z whom I interviewed was a parent as well.

The times for interviews were arranged and finalised by negotiation with each participant. Most of the interviews were conducted on campus and some of the interviews were undertaken at a convenient venue for the participants. All the interviews were tape-recorded and brief field-notes were made.

Each interview commenced with an expression of thanks to the participant and an explanation that the interview would be used for my own academic research and that the reporting of the findings would maintain the participants' anonymity. The participants were also informed that their participation in the interview was entirely voluntary and that the participant might quit the interview discussion at any time or decline to respond to any question during the interviews. The participants were particularly informed about the details on how to forward any complaints concerning

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the manner in which the research was conducted. Warm-up questions varied according to the backgrounds, sex and career/school position of the participants.

Analyses of the interview data are theme-based. The analyses involved careful listening to the recorded interviews before the dialogue was transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. The thematic analysis entailed repeatedly reading the transcribed data and the coding of individual items before the codes were refined and grouped into different categories in each theme. Some participants responded with keen insights to the interview questions and these have formed the "backbone" of the discussion, while some of the participants provided useful background information which is not directly quoted in the discussion. The quoted data was managed by using "cut and paste" procedures and word-processing functions for sorting and retrieval.

9.3 Devolution and Centralisation of Educational management

The discussion of devolution and centralisation of educational management reflected the Victorian participants' understanding of devolution and centralisation in school management and general policy decision-making as influenced by government intervention. In Victoria, schools had been enjoying a partially decentralised system ever since the middle of the 1970s. In the 1980s, the Labor government further developed the previous Liberal Government's policy of devolution of authority. However, in the early 1990s, the tradition of decentralisation in education was changed by government policy intervention in Victorian education. In 1993, shortly after the Liberal-National Coalition won office and Jeff Kennet became the Premier of Victoria, the government introduced an innovative policy titled the Schools of the Future. This policy proves to be a major intervention in public education (Angus & Brown 1997: 1) and since then there has been an evident trend of increasing centralisation in the Victoria State system. From the implementation of the Schools of the Future policy, Victoria started substantial reshaping of the educational system.

In each school, interviews covered the influence of Commonwealth and state policies on the school curricula, the school's strategy of implementing government policies, the function of the School Charter, school autonomy and staffing flexibility.

Participant 1 has been a principal of School X for more than seven years. He stated that he witnessed the changes that have occurred as a result of government intervention in education during that time. During the interview, he provided helpful background information about the school's implementation of government policies from 1985 and 1995 and made a number of comments about the influences that the government imposed on the school.

In order to have a clear picture of the experiences of Participant 1 in the implementation of current and recent policy, the discussion started from a warm-up question on his duties as a principal in the day-to-day management of the school. In particular, I was interested in his experience with the implementation of government policy on curriculum development. He described his role as principal as ensuring that the directions of the school were developed, clearly stated and clearly followed through in the various individual sub-committees that operated the school. He stated that it was very important to understand what the school needed, what the administrators thought the school needed, and what was in the best interests of the students.

In discussing his main role as a principal of School X, Participant 1 was very aware of his mission of managing the school as a principal. In a later discussion, he emphasised that he would first consider the interests and benefits to the students when the school planned to implement a program proposed by the government. This is probably also the reason why he gave critical comments on government policy, particularly on the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

I started the interview with a discussion about the influence of Commonwealth government intervention in education. This was because Commonwealth government's intervention in education was likely to have contributed to the changing patterns of curriculum development in Victorian schools. As stated in Chapter Six, in the 1980s, John Dawkins, the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training, issued *Strengthening Australia's Schools* in an attempt to strengthen the international competitiveness of Australian education. This paper indicated that the Commonwealth government was increasingly interested in

intervening in Australian education. Since the release of the paper, there had been agreement about national common and agreed goals, national statements and profiles, and even serious discussion of the idea of a national curriculum for Australian schools. Participant 1 commented that these programs were not the result of educational needs, but part of a political agenda.

> *Participant 1: I think the whole of John Dawkin's push was a mixture of what the world needed, or what Australia needed, combined with a decline in resource allocation. I think it's proved not possible because there are too many different personalities and I think the whole thing is too politicised.*

In his comments on the influence of John Dawkins' statement on curriculum development, Participant 1 indicated that educators should be the decision-makers rather than the ministers for education who have vested political interests. He also commented that when there was a change of government, there would also be a change of political interests.

> *Participant 1: I think it's the great shame of education that we don't have educators who make the decisions, that we have ministers for education who have vested political interests. And they can change with the winner, I mean they change whether it is a Labor government or a Liberal government.*

The school's attitude to implementing government policy and the relationship between the school and the Victorian government were also discussed in the interview with Participant 1. He took the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) at Year 11 and 12 as an example to explain that there was a "clear cut relationship" between the school and the State government.

> *Participant 1: Well, obviously, the VCE is pretty clearly understood, so the relationship between school and government is a very clear cut one of the VCE, particularly in Year 12 where they really do establish the requirements of the internal and external assessment, and of course the guidelines for study. So that's a very clear cut relationship and one we respond to very carefully.*

As stated in Chapter Seven, the Liberal-National Coalition government introduced a centralised program of curriculum and assessment - the Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1993. The introduction and implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework substantially influenced Victorian school management and curriculum development. Therefore, the discussion about the Curriculum and

Standards Framework became a focus in the interview. Participant 1 took the Curriculum and Standards Framework as an example to demonstrate the relationship between the school and government. He considered that, under the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the school had a "much more loose" relationship with the government. His view was that the course development guidelines and assessment procedures developed by the government did not offer much help to schools.

> *Participant 1: At the lower levels, the government has established the Curriculum and Standards Framework. The relationship is much more loose and certainly one that I don't particularly feel a terrific obligation to my relationship to the junior levels, that's Years 9 and 10. I think the government has established the guidelines for a course development, and I think the government has established guidelines for assessment procedures based upon the CSFs. But in both cases, I think they are pretty unrealistic, not very helpful. So my job there is to ensure that the good work of the school is not disrupted by the poor level of advice from the Victorian Board of Studies. I don't think they are particularly useful at the general level at all, and I think we probably would be better left largely alone at the junior level.*

In order to seek further responses about the relationship between the school and government, particularly the autonomy that the school enjoyed in the implementation of government policies, I raised an additional question to investigate this participant's view of whether his school has more autonomy than other schools in the implementation of government policy. The participant responded that it was not the "power" of the school but the "attitude" of considering the best interests of the students and teachers that made the difference in the ways that the school implemented government policy. He stated that, on the one hand, the school should absolutely follow government policy where it has to. On the other hand, where the government policy was loose, the school would use this looseness to devise its own procedures that the school believed to be far more effective.

> *Interviewer: In many ways, your school has demonstrated itself to be an excellent government school. So, does your school have more autonomy than other schools to implement government policy?*
>
> *Participant 1: I think it's not so much a matter of power, it's a matter of attitude. Our attitude is that we will do what is in the best interests of the kids and the teachers. Where we absolutely have to follow government policy, we will; but where government policy is loose, then we use the looseness to devise*

our own procedures that are far more effective. That's what we do with the Victorian Board of Studies. I mean, basically, provided you implement certain things, then the other parts of their recommendations are merely recommendations. So we do what we absolutely have to do, but don't implement much that they have suggested unless it's in the best interests of the kids. So we haven't followed totally their advice on the CSF; on the Key Learning Areas; or on the assessment procedures because basically I think there is, I mean, they are no more experts than we are, are they? They've got people who are working with them who perhaps have less understanding of the schools than we do. So why should we feel obliged to stick to what they say? So, that's the relationship between the Victorian Board of Studies and our school.

At interview, Participant 5, who was a member of the school council of School Z, she gave as her understanding of the relationship between the government and the school by taking the examples of the Curriculum and Standards Framework and the VCE. She stated that School Z has autonomy to choose the syllabus that comes from the government. She considered that there would be some regulations and guidelines that schools had to follow, but schools could have some movements within the regulations and guidelines.

Participant 5: Well, the Curriculum and Standards Framework comes from the government and so does the VCE syllabus. But as far as I know our school can determine which particular syllabus they want to choose within the guidelines that come from the government statutory authority. So that there will be some regulations, some guidelines that you have to be within, but then you have some movement within them. I mean you can choose this or that sort of syllabus within your maths methods. You can choose to go this particular way or that way or whatever, as far as I know.

Staffing flexibility, which was a result of devolution to schools as part of Schools of the Future policy, was another issue that was raised by the participants. Participant 1 did not make much about the implementation of staffing flexibility in School X. However, Participant 5 said that most schools did implement the Full Staffing Flexibility program. She understood that School Z had more autonomy than before, because the principal could employ and dismiss staff as a result of the introduction of Full Staffing Flexibility.

Participant 5: There's more flexibility now. There's what they've called Full Staffing Flexibility. I think our school got it at the beginning of 1996. They got what they call Full Staffing Flexibility which means that the administrator, who

> *is the principal, can employ new members of staff and dismiss others, not just for any reason but if there's a good reason, he can dismiss current members of staff. Previously, he did not have that power. That's quite a new power, and they call it Staffing Flexibility.*

The interview also tried to investigate the participants' understanding of the possible compromise between centralisation and decentralisation in the Victorian school system. When I discussed with Participant 1 the possibility of compromise, he responded firmly that there was no compromise between the centralisation and decentralisation of the school system. In his views, it is impossible to have both together.

> *Participant 5: I think you have got a choice, right, in education. You either centralise it entirely or you decentralise it entirely. I don't think it works when you try and do a bit of both. I mean you've got to accept some sort of broad philosophical reason for wanting a state system.*

This participant also stated his views on what he regarded as the two possible reasons for wanting a state system: one was the general consideration of "equality of opportunity" and the other was "to keep high standards" of education. Participant 1 believed that it was easier to achieve high standards in a decentralised system but harder to achieve equality among the schools.

> *Participant 1: Now the only philosophical reason for wanting a state system, in my view, is to ensure that there is an equality of opportunity. And there's probably a second reason for wanting some sort of centralisation, and that's to ensure that standards are kept high. But I think the latter of those two can be done by other controls. The one major issue is the question, can you have equality in a decentralised system? And I think it's very much more difficult to have equality in a decentralised system. If you do have a decentralised system, you've got to have some incredible safeguards to make sure there is equality of opportunity. But from every other point of view, I think you can have enough safeguards without having a centralised system. You can have occasional reviews, you can have standards of entry of teachers, you can have good teacher training, you can have good funding, and all those sorts of things. That means you don't need a centralised system.*

Participant 1 also stated that "safeguards" of resources were essential to schools in a decentralised system. He confessed that, without safeguards, a decentralised system could be very harmful to disadvantaged schools.

> *Participant 1: One issue is, can you have equality of opportunity without having a centralised system? And I think it's possible but I think you've got to be very, very careful that you have safeguards, and I think at the moment we haven't got enough safeguards. It doesn't harm a school like our school, because our school has already got good funding, good buildings and so on. But I think it could be very harmful to a school that is poor or deprived. That's the major problem.*

The response from Participant 4, the principal of School Y, confirmed what Participant 1 asserted about the "safeguards" of resources. As School Y is not located in a wealthy area, he was concerned about the equality of resource allocation.

> *Participant 4: There are some factors beyond the control of schools. If all the schools are resourced equally, that will be okay. But we are not resourced well, we do not charge as much, we do not ask parents for as much money as schools in more affluent par's of Melbourne.*

In the discussion, the interviewer raised the question of the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation of the school system. In responding to this question, Participant 1 said he preferred a totally decentralised system. According to his comments, there should be very clear guidelines about funding, staffing and basic requirements of the curriculum, but on the other hand, schools should have autonomy in organising the teachers' professional development, teaching resources and assistance to teachers.

> *Participant 1: I would probably like to see a totally decentralised system with some very clear controls over funding, over the quality of staffing and over the basic requirements of curriculum. But other than that I think... I see no reason for any form of centralisation whatsoever. I certainly don't think we need centralisation of professional development. I think that could be done through universities, and through proper staffing and salary schemes. I think professional development is one of the most inefficient, ineffective aspects of our system. I don't think we need centralisation of resources, which can be done through adequate budgets being given to schools. I don't think we need centralisation for assistance to teachers, I think that can be done through professional associations. So I really don't think, apart from the need for equality, that you need any centralisation at all.*

I confirmed with Participant 5, a member of School Council of School Y, the comments about the possible compromise between centralisation and decentralisation of curriculum development. She stated that she preferred a totally decentralised system of curriculum development.

> *Participant 5: I agree with a totally decentralised system. Yes, totally. And the government controls can be through staffing, funding, professional associations, universities, but not through a department.*

The topics discussed in this section were highly influential on the formulation of education policy and curriculum development in Victorian schools in the 1990s. All the informants expressed strongly their understanding about the centralisation of educational policy decision-making and curriculum development. From the discussion, although it was too early to talk about a centralised curriculum for the Victorian schools, the teachers apparently rejected the idea of a centralised curriculum.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework evidently centralised the formulation of education policy, curriculum development, teaching and assessment in schools. Prior to 1995, Victorian schools had implemented frameworks of curriculum development. The informants indicated that the teachers could still decide what they teach and how they teach within frameworks before 1995. The Curriculum and Standards Framework was more prescriptive in the process of implementation.

As part of the Schools of the Future policy, the Victorian government transferred Staffing Flexibility to school principals. The informant from the school council, Participant 5, confirmed this transfer, but surprisingly the principals, Participant 1 and 4, did not discuss much about Staffing Flexibility.

It seemed that there were good reasons to believe that policy decision-making in education in Victoria has been centralised by the state government's introduction of the prescribed programs, although staffing and budgeting have been decentralised to the level of schools. As a result, schools have less and less autonomy and flexibility in achieving the goals that the schools thought to be beneficial for their students. In other words, school autonomy has been limited, but the responsibilities have been extended.

9.4 Curriculum Development

Since the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993, particularly with the implementation of the centralised Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1995,

curriculum development in Victorian schools became more complex than that in the 1980s. This section reflects the participants' views on the influence of the Commonwealth and state policy over curriculum development in schools. The participants responded that an increasing trend of government control of curriculum development in schools which occurred after the issue of the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in 1989 and the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993.

During the interviews, questions were asked about the debates about national curriculum, the introduction and implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the eight Key Learning Areas, curriculum autonomy and the choice of textbooks.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, the *Education (School Councils) Act 1975* introduced a School Council system for Victorian schools. But the responses of the participants showed that the relatively devolved system after 1975 had been compromised in recent years through the introduction of more prescriptive programs. In 1984, the Victorian Department of Education introduced the program of the Victorian Certificate of Education for the upper level of secondary students to replace the former very prescriptive Higher School Certificate. Although the VCE is less prescriptive than the former Higher School Certificate, it is still a centralised program. As a post-compulsory program, this program provides a choice for students who have completed Year 10. Those who are going on to tertiary education have to pass the VCE and gain sufficient marks to meet the entry requirements of universities. But those who are going on to employment after Year 10 do not have to undertake the VCE. In 1995, with the introduction and implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework for the lower level students, the Victorian Department of Education gradually centralised curriculum development in Victorian schools. Participant 6, who is a teacher and Assistant Principal of school Y, stated that curriculum development in schools has been centralised although the authority of employing staff and budgeting has been decentralised.

> *Participant 6: Decentralisation of curriculum decisions making, oh, we actually go the other way. We have very much gone to a centralised*

curriculum. But what's happening in this is a fairly common trend with decentralisation. With the decentralisation of the authority, to do with the employment of staff and budgeting constraints, that has been decentralised to the school, what's happening is that the government is keeping a much tighter control centrally on curriculum. So policy development, that's gone very much back to the centre.

Participant 6 also commented on the national curriculum profiles that were released by the Commonwealth government in 1992 and the Curriculum and Standards Framework that was issued by the Victorian government in 1995. She considered that these two centralised programs had gradually influenced curriculum development in School Y. She felt that these curriculum initiatives were difficult to modify to suit the individual needs of the students.

Participant 6: Now you are obviously familiar with the Curriculum and Standards Framework in Victoria and the national curriculum - the national profiles across Australia. So there has been a big move across Australia to a centralised curriculum. What's happening now is, of course, we are trying to implement what the government has written. I suppose that's where the decentralisation comes in and that it's up to the individual school to work out how to implement this very structured curriculum, but we have to teach it right through from Prep to Year 10. And so how schools are interpreting textbooks they are using, the assessment system they use, is not being moderated at all.

As stated in Chapter Six, after the Australian Education Council released the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* in 1989, there was a debate over the national curriculum in the early 1990s in which the Commonwealth government was heavily involved. During the debates about the national curriculum, although the developers of the national curriculum profiles asserted that the national curriculum profiles were not a national curriculum (Francis 1991),[88] Participant 6 considered that the profiles were a fledgling form of a national curriculum.

The idea of a national curriculum was an important topic in the discussion with the Victorian participants. Participant 6 viewed the national curriculum profile as the basis for a national curriculum. Also, Participant 1 maintained that the idea of

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[88] Francis also insisted that products related to the collaborative efforts in curriculum were far from a full curriculum.

development of a national curriculum for Australian schools was a political consideration rather than part of an educational agenda.

> *Participant 1: I've never been convinced by the national curriculum. I think it is a political statement that probably, in the light of the wording used, aims to rationalise the use of resources. I was never convinced that there was a clear cut need for a national curriculum.*

Participant 5 (school council member of School Z) acknowledged that there was a lot of validity in the national curriculum. She commented that there was a trend towards centralising curriculum development although there was a downsizing of centralised management.

> *Participant 5: But, I could see quite a lot of validity in the national curriculum. I do think there is a centrality in a national curriculum. I think it was well written. There is a lot more in a national curriculum that is not there in the Curriculum and Standards Framework that we would benefit from. But, once again, this is a whole political issue that comes through. So, the problem is that this whole Curriculum and Standards Framework has occurred at the same time as the downsizing of the centralised administration.*

Participant 5 also used historical review to support her comments about the current status of school curriculum development. She used cases from the sixties as examples to demonstrate the changes of the State government policy to the teaching of science. As to the national curriculum, she disagreed with a national curriculum for schools. She was concerned about the "effectiveness" of the national curriculum.

> *Participant 1: If you go back to the sixties, the government encouraged the teachers of science in building the science curriculum blocks. I think it was an effective way to encourage the teaching of science. I think the less effective way is to suggest there should be a broad national curriculum. The government should put additional resources where they put their emphasis.*

As the principal of School X, Participant 1 seemed more aware than the other respondents of the potentially negative influence of a national curriculum. He spoke a lot about the national curriculum and his view of the key to successful education. In his discussion of a national curriculum, he saw it as "pointless" to propose a non-prescriptive or "vague" curriculum.

> *Participant 1: In one sense, I think a national curriculum is pointless. In another sense, if it's not prescriptive enough, then what's the point of it? If it's*

as vague as it's been, then what's the point of it? I think the key to education lies in the strength of your staff, the expectations that you place on students and the quality of the resources that are made available to schools. That's where I'd put my emphasis.

Participant 5 suggested that the government should control the school curriculum by guidelines and by results.

Participant 5: Curriculum could be controlled by guidelines and by results. I mean, if your results are not good, maybe then have some controls imposed. I think a decentralised system is highly acceptable provided that equality is assured through incredible safeguards. And I don't think that's happening at the moment.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework was the major topic in the interviews with the Victorian informants. From the response of Participant 6, the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework showed that the government was taking more control over curriculum development. Victorian schools had implemented the curriculum program that was called Frameworks before 1995. Compared to the former Frameworks, the Curriculum and Standards Framework was more centralised, more structured and even more difficult for the teachers to implement in schools.

Participant 6: It's taking more control. With the former Frameworks, we could just decide what we want to do. My memory has died. Frameworks were a long time ago. But I know a lot of schools didn't take them up in a very big way which was a shame because there were some great things in Frameworks. It's really that we have been mandated that we have to use the Curriculum and Standards Framework. For example, we have to report to the Ministry at the end of the year on the Curriculum and Standards Framework that comes to the students at Year 9 and 10 in Mathematics, English and one other area. So they are actually insisting that we report to them so that they have that information. Whether that information is accurate or not is going to be another question in some schools, and some schools only do just the minimum, so that they can make the report to the Ministry. But now certainly it has become more centrally controlled in terms of curriculum development.

With the introduction of the VCE program in 1984, Victorian schools experienced less government control over teaching than during the prescriptive Higher School Certificate. Participant 6 compared the two assessment programs and contrasted the changes that the Higher School Certificate and VCE made in schools in the seventies and eighties with what was happening in schools in the nineties.

> *Participant 6: We used very much to teach what we wanted really in the seventies and eighties, there was a broad range of things, but choice of textbooks, choice of actual courses taught at the junior level were very much the decision of the school. Obviously the senior level with what used to be the HSC, Higher School Certificate which is now VCE, that was controlled from outside. When we went to VCE, that control from the outside went down a little bit to Year 11 as well as Year 12. But, with the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, what we move back to now is this almost total control from the centre of the general areas of teaching.*

Victorian informants also commented on the merits and demerits of the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

> *Participant 1: Probably one good thing about the CSF is that it is based upon a developmental process, sort of a hierarchical development of learning. And that's the way probably you were taught and I was taught. It is very much based upon Bloom's taxonomy where learning goes from the concrete to the abstract in a very logical and sequential fashion. So I think that's the good thing about CSF, that it's reminded us again of the development of learning from concrete to abstract in a fairly sequential fashion. And I think it's very good to be reminded of that.*

The Curriculum and Standards Framework has provided guidelines for the writing of courses and teachers' training in Victorian schools. Participant 1 was commented the usefulness of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in guiding teachers' writing of the courses and teachers' training. However, he worried that the teachers might have to change their roles in the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

> *Participant 1: I think the CSF has been useful in terms of writing courses of study and reminding teachers of their training, that aspect I think is good, the 'course writing' aspect. The assessment aspect I think has been... is laborious and tedious and heavy, right. I think to try and assess pieces of work on the basis of very complex outcomes is taking the teachers away from their main role of teaching into their role of assessment. The teaching role must have an assessment aspect to it, but the assessment aspect has gone wild, right. And to do... to carry out the CSF guidelines appropriately one would have to be spending nearly all one's life on assessment and recording. I think that is just a waste of teachers' skills. Their skill comes in preparation of materials, sequential teaching, differential teaching, and in inspirational teaching. And the inspirational side is ignored almost fully through the CSF.*

Participant 6 also commented on the usefulness of the structured Curriculum and Standards Framework, especially for newly qualified teachers. She also compared

the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework and the former Frameworks.

> *Participant 6: There are lots more structures. I think for a beginning teacher that can be useful. I think it can also be useful to us to make sure the students across the state are covering a reasonable amount of curriculum, and we know they are gaining a comparable education from our school to a country high school. But that's only for when the Curriculum and Standards Framework is implemented properly and I have my doubts whether this has happened or not. You see, prior to this, we had something called Frameworks, but that was never really implemented correctly either, and it wasn't mandated. The government said we had to do that. Once again, a lot of schools really didn't do very much with it, they picked a bit of it, but they didn't really follow through with it.*

Participant 6 also commented on the implementation of the government mandatory programs in School Y. She stated that, although her school had begun to make some moves on with the regulations and guidelines, the implementation of the prescribed program of the Curriculum and Standards Framework seemed mandatory and non-negotiable. The participant explained what they did in the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in School Y.

> *Participant 6: Our school is specific. We decided to follow the government policy and use the Board of Studies' Curriculum and Standards Framework. We decided to try to implement it as well as we can in the school. I know others perhaps aren't doing it as thoroughly as we are, that's just the talk that you get around. So what we've done is that we have taken the outlines from the folders and teachers have gone away and written courses that encompass those sorts of outcomes and guidelines.*

Participant 7, who was an experienced teacher of science in School Z, linked his teaching experience of science to the comments in the Curriculum and Standards Framework. With the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, he faced more difficulty in assessing his teaching and the outcomes of students' learning.

> *Participant 7: We find that it is just very difficult to do it. It's really constraining a lot of what we previously taught, that's making it quite narrow in a way and it's very difficult to assess whether the students have reached their outcomes because there is a lot of repetition in that assessment process. You need to assess over a number of different tasks and a number of different ways and a number of different times. So, there are a lot of repetitions of the*

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> *same sort of work which is, well, we are in our first year, so we don't know whether it's really working out or not.*

In the discussion on the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, school autonomy was an important topic that has mentioned by all participants. In this discussion, Participant 1 acknowledged that his school would welcome a broad policy from the government as a set of guidelines although he made it clear that, in his views, the school could still decide what it wanted to do. In this way, it was important for the school to have "an independent mind" in order to redefine the government policy to suit the school. In his comments, he also expressed his dubiousness about the value of the government policy.

> *Participant 1: Well, some of the government goals are so broad that you can accept them totally and then still do what you want. We can all agree to broad policies, nobody can disagree with broad policies, but they are meaningless in terms of application. So, a school that has an independent mind can redefine those things to suit itself. That's basically what we do. We redefine, we emphasise what we think is significant in the policy, we bring some things up and some things we just pay lip service to, whereas we actually implement bits that we think are important. So we just basically use what we want to. The only benefit of these broad policies is that they cause us to question our own school and what it's trying to do, which is good. It causes us to re-examine what we are doing to just make sure we are not too far away from broad government directions. But specifically they are of little value.*

Participant 4, who was the principal of School Y, commented on the Curriculum and Standards Framework in an objective way. He discussed both positive and negative aspects of the Curriculum and Standards Framework and stated,

> *Participant 4: The Curriculum and Standards Framework hasn't prescribed the actual content of how you decide the curriculum. That's the flexibility that the schools got. The strands come from the above-mentioned Curriculum and Standards Framework, but they[89] said we could work out how we are going to implement them. But there are very clear guidelines and requirements that you have to do certain things.*

As stated in Chapter Seven, after the bureaucratic introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in Victorian schools in 1995, eight Key Learning Ares were

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[89] Indicates "the governments and delegations."

developed to enable schools to implement the centralised curriculum programs. Since then, curricula were implemented through the Key Learning Areas in most Victorian schools. Of the three schools under investigation, School X had not fully adopted the Key Learning Areas. The curriculum in School X was based on the traditional subjects. School Y and Z had both fully adopted the Key Learning Areas. Although School X did not adopt the Key Learning Areas, Participant 1 gave his understanding about the implementation of the Key Learning Areas.

> *Participant 1: As for the Eight Key Learning Areas, I mean the suggestions through the national curriculum is that, you know, these are the Key Learning Areas and you have to have a reasonable balance between the Key Learning Areas. Well, Key Learning Areas are a construct of people, educationalists and politicians, they are a construct and you can construct any Key Learning Areas. You know, I've never been convinced that Key Learning Areas are very meaningful.*

Participant 1 regarded the Key Learning Areas as a part of a national curriculum. As School X did not fully adopt the Key learning Areas, the principal maintained that the quality teaching of the Key Learning Areas through resources was very important.

> *Participant 5: Unless those Key Learning Areas are taught properly, you know, what's the effect going to be? So I think we still keep returning to resources, resources through teaching, and quality teaching, and resources through facilities. I think that's where the answer to good education lies and not so much in a broad, vague national curriculum developed by politicians.*

In discussing whether schools have autonomy in implementing the prescribed Key Learning Areas, Participant 1 stated that his school did have a choice in implementing the Key Learning Areas because School X chose not to adopt them. The curriculum in School X was organised on the traditional subjects.

> *Participant 1: We have not adopted the Eight Key Learning Areas, but we bear them in mind. But we are much more of the belief that within some of the Key Learning Areas, there are much more significant things that must be maintained, such as history and geography and the disciplines of those subjects.*

In the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the main study areas have been divided into many strands. This interview also discussed whether these strands were helpful

or not in developing a diverse curriculum within the school. Participant 1 responded that the Curriculum and Standards Framework was helpful in understanding giftedness, differential teaching and remediation.

> *Participant 1: I think in many ways, as I said to you before, the Curriculum and Standards Framework has helped in the writing of courses and helped in the area of differential teaching, of catering for individual needs more, because by putting in strands and sub-strands and outcomes and so on. We've begun to realise that kids are not all the same, if we didn't know that already. And we've tried to cater more distinctly for boys, for students at different levels. So I think the CSF has been good in that way, and has actually aided us in understanding giftedness, differential teaching, remediation and so on. Because we can now see people more clearly, where they sit on the spectrum.*

Participant 1 did not agree that the strands would make the development of a diverse curriculum easier, but stated that it would be more possible to structure a diverse curriculum with these strands.

> *Participant 1: I think that it would be a bit unfair to say that it hasn't made it easier. I think the word "easier" is the wrong word. It hasn't made it easier, but it's made it more possible to deliver a diverse curriculum, and more logical. But it certainly hasn't made it easier because it's caused us to have to re-examine everything we do. But I don't think that's a bad thing, I think that's a good thing. It shouldn't be easier, but I think you mean... but on the other hand, it has been unhelpful in the area of assessment and recording, and it has been unhelpful in terms of other diversities that schools have. For example, if you spend all your life on the CSFs, then you don't spend enough time on sport, development, co-curricular activity development, singing, music, all those things which don't... that aren't measurable, right? So in one sense it's made it easier, sorry, in one sense it's made it more possible to improve teaching, but for our school as a whole, it's made it more difficult to maintain our diverse curriculum because the CSF is basically talking about a classroom-based curriculum.*

In the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, the teachers have to assess the outcomes of learning and achievements of the students and report to parents. This reporting system resulted in monitoring the teachers' teaching, particularly what the students achieved. The response from Participant 4, principal of School Y, indicated that he and his school would welcome this change and considered that the assessment helped to monitor the quality of teaching.

> *Participant 4: I'd think is, the thing is so fair. There is no other system to replace it to make sure to monitor the standards of teaching. You know, in a school, you can have a very good teacher who teaches very well, and another teacher who is slack, and the students go through the year and do not do the same work and achieve the same as someone else. There was no system to really monitor that, but now we've got the CSF.*

Participant 4 further commented on the monitoring of the students' achievements in the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in the following way:

> *Participant 4: I think that's good that things changed, because the very good students they do not have problems because they could go through the system easily. But for weak students, I do not think they are really monitored effectively on what they achieve and what they could do through the program. At least, now this system is making sure the school is monitoring more effectively how the students achieve. But I think one of the issues that people to complain about more is the teacher's work load and each school has to work out the way it operates. In a lot of secondary schools, teachers will write reports for the students. Some of the teachers have to try hard and spend more time at home in order to do this well. That's the control from the top - the centre. Probably it is a bad thing.*

The school's autonomy in developing a detailed curriculum was also discussed in the interviews with the participants. The discussion covered how the schools organised the curriculum as well as the subjects to be taught and the extent to which the schools could decide what they would teach and what they would not teach. As previously stated, School X did not fully adopt the Curriculum and Standards Framework. The teaching and learning in School X were organised around the disciplines.

> *Participant 1: How you were taught and how I was taught was on the basis of disciplines. And our natural tendency is to accept the teaching through the disciplines - history, geography, physics, chemistry, mathematics - so even though it's self-management, we have all accepted that we are working according to old disciplines, which are useful. It's a logical thing to maintain a fairly disciplined approach to teaching and learning, and that's what we have done. This school has kept to the disciplines more rigidly than other schools, because it thinks it's a good framework within which teaching can occur.*

Participant 1 had his own understanding of the question regarding the extent to which schools decide what they teach and don't teach. He insisted that he had his own understandings of what to do with the curriculum and students in his school. He

emphasised the establishment of academic programs, with a strong co-curricular program that was of benefit to the students.

> *Participant 1: I think curriculum development is based upon an understanding of what is most useful in society. An understanding of what group of students you are dealing with, and their ambitions and on that basis we've decided to keep a very academic program, for example, plus a very strong co-curricular program. And that's based upon what we believe from our training and what we believe from these clients, the students, are going to be most appropriate for them in the world of tertiary education and the world of work. So I think we appeal to a broad philosophical understanding of the world, and our own clear understanding of the clients that we are dealing with. Then we try and blend the two, and develop a program that matches those two. That's the way I do it. I think to myself why would we introduce theatre studies? Ah, because theatre studies encourages students to express themselves, it encourages students to think of a career in the theatre, because it encourages good communication, and because there is a tertiary training course that can match that. And it's something that will bring them happiness and satisfaction. So you always appeal to this broad philosophical understanding of the world.*

Textbook development and the choice of textbooks were also discussed in the interviews. Participants generally indicated that the publishing industry enjoyed relatively flexible market strategies in Australia. The commercial publishers develop the textbooks and market their textbooks into the schools. The prescribed eight Key Learning Areas provided guidelines for textbook developers, but there were no stringent regulations or censorship applied to the development of textbooks. However, the Victorian government issued a broad list of recommended textbooks for schools at Year 11 and 12. The response from Participant 1 implied that teachers could decide what textbooks they would like to use.

> *Participant 1: We are pretty autonomous with textbooks except that some of the Year 12 textbooks I think are pretty much set. But, at the other levels, the choice of textbooks is our own.*

The procedures for selecting textbooks in schools were also discussed.

> *Participant 1: The faculty coordinators are responsible for making an informed choice of textbooks. Teachers can recommend to the subject coordinator what textbooks they want and the subject coordinator makes the decision about the textbooks.*

This section reflects the participants' impressions and perceptions of issues of curriculum development. In the interviews, the discussions concentrated on the idea of a national curriculum, the impact of the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework on curriculum development, the relationship between the eight Key Learning Areas and the organisation of teaching, curriculum autonomy and choice of textbooks. The participants from schools strongly rejected the idea of a national curriculum. The informants all stated that the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework seemed to centralise curriculum development in Victorian schools. The discussions also confirmed that, with the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy, on the one hand, responsibilities for school budgeting and staffing were decentralised to the administrators of Victorian schools, but on the other hand, curriculum development was centralised by the Curriculum and Standards Framework programs. As an educational tool, textbooks are probably the most important resources that teachers and students have as they do their work of teaching and learning. The discussions implied that schools and teachers could mostly decide what textbooks they would like to use in their teaching.

9.5 Functions of the School Council

The discussion about the School Council reflected the participants' understanding of the roles and functions of the Council in the implementation of prescribed programs. The participants commented on the formation, representation and function of the School Council.

As stated in Chapter Seven, School Councils were promulgated in the *Education (School Council) Act 1976* in Victoria. The *Education (School Council) Act* formalised the composition and functions of school councils, which were given express statutory authority to advise the principal on the development of the school's education policy (Gaff 1998: 24). Since 1976, school councils have played key roles in Victorian schools. The *Education Act (Amendment) 1993* further regulated the formation, the maximum size and the election of School Councils. According to the *Education Act 1993 (Amendment)*, there were two major changes to the regulations for School Councils. The first was that School Councils could have no more than 15

members. The second was that the majority of the members should be elected parent representatives. The composition of the School Council has since 1993, comprised eight elected parent members, four elected members who are employed by the Directorate of School Education, two co-opted members and the Executive Officer (the Principal). In each year since and including 1993, one of the co-opted members has been a current student at School X. The other co-opted member has been a former elected parent member[90]. Participant 8, who was a parent member of School X, described the composition of and representation on the School Council as follows.

> *Participant 8: We are only allowed a maximum of 15 people: that's a government stipulation and they are all elected except for the co-opted members and the executive officer who is the principal, he's automatically on it. And so of the other 14 members, no more than a third can be employed by the Ministry of Education, which out of 15 means only five. So a maximum of five, including the principal, can be employees of the Department of Education.*

According to government regulations, the majority of members of School Council are elected parents. As community members, parents actually control the school councils.

> *Participant 5: It's up to the Council to nominate how they want their community members... You have to have a certain number of parents, I think it's eight. You have to have eight parents who are elected from the current parent body, but they are elected by the parents and the teachers, not just by the parents. That leaves two positions available for what we call co-opted members and they can be anyone, except employees of the Department of Education. They can be students, they can be past parents, they can be current parents, they can be old boys, they can be absolutely anyone that we think is beneficial to the Council.*

The introduction of school councils in Victorian schools was the product of the devolution of school management. It was an important way for the community to participate in planning a school's development. Ever since the introduction of this system of School Council in 1976, the role of School Councils has been mainly to set out the direction of schools and guide schools in the implementation of the government's policies.

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[90] See School Council of School X (1996): Size and Composition: Time for Change?

Since the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1993, School Councils have been obligated to develop a school charter in order to direct the school. A school charter is an understanding between the school council and the director of schools (Directorate of School Education 1996). It describes how a school combines local and systems requirements to deliver quality education to the local community. It is a school's key accountability documentation and provides a basis for internal and external reviews of the education that the school provides. The members of the school council, the principal and the staff cooperate in developing the school charter in consultation with the school community (Directorate of School Education 1996).

The school charter is developed within the framework of government policy, Department of Education priorities and guidelines, and community expectations (Directorate of School Education 1996). School charters have a common format with the contents covering the school profile, goals, school priorities, curriculum, budget and accountability plan, codes of practice, and code of conduct for students (Directorate of School Education 1996). The charter assists the school council to articulate a clear direction for their school and establish clear, measurable goals.

The participants implied that, at the beginning of the introduction of school charters in 1994, school principals were dubious about the role of the school charter. However, principals later recognised that a school charter was helpful in the actual management of the school and the implementation of the prescribed programs. The following discussion confirmed this change of opinion from the interview with Participant 1.

Participant 1 expressed concern about the role that the school charter played in curriculum development. He recognised the importance of the writing of the charter for School X and the guiding role of the school charter in the implementation of the programs developed.

> *Participant 1: School management has been made a lot easier through the development of the charter, you know the school charter which I was very dubious about at first. But I think the charter's writing process is an important process, because it causes you to put together your ideas in a syndicated form. Now once you have got your ideas together, you then have to make sure that those things actually happen. They happen first of all because of all good*

understanding that you developed in the first place. But they also happen by a series of procedures, further discussions, cajoling, requiring, demanding, and working through with people what those policies mean in action. So the next requirement after the policies are developed, is the enacting of those things.

The responses giving by members of the School Councils were form different perspectives that that of the principals and teachers. In order to gain more information about the relationship between the school council and the school, the interview with Participant 5, who was a council member of School Z, focused on the operation of the school council. Regarding setting the direction of the school, Participant 5 took the example of the introduction of LOTE subjects to illustrate the procedures that the council worked through with the management of the school.

Participant 5: The only input we would have is if there's a change in direction like when we were deciding, the school was deciding, whether to introduce another LOTE, Language Other Than English. First of all, it came to Council to see whether we wanted a fourth language. When Council determined that they did, it then came to Council to see what the fourth language would be, whether it would be Cantonese or Indonesian or whatever. So that was a Council decision. But then the curriculum within that subject becomes a teaching decision that has nothing to do with Council.

Participant 5 further discussed the council's procedure of curriculum development in school.

Participant 5: As you know, we're a very academic school, which means we focus on maths and science and things like that, which will get the students into a tertiary course. But it would be up to council if we wanted to change direction and focus on things like dance and theatre studies and technological, hands on sorts of things. So that would be a council decision not a school decision and not a government decision. We have the right to change the focus that the school runs on. But having set that direction which, at the present time, and has been for years and years and years, is an academic focus, having set that direction we have very little to do with the actual curriculum within those subjects. So the only time that we would have any input or any say, as a council, would be if we wanted to change the direction of those studies, if we wanted to introduce enhanced studies, or accelerated, or streaming...Those sorts of decisions would be a council decision. Which includes some teachers, of course, there are teachers on the council as well as parents.

The school council and school have specific roles in policy-making and implementation. After the School Council makes a curriculum decision, then it is the responsibility of the principal and the teachers to implement that decision. The

School Council would not intervene or involve itself in the implementation of the council's decision.

> *Participant 5: The School Council just does the overall policy making for the school. That's right. We don't have any say, nor should we, I believe, in how they go about implementing that policy. It's up to the principal and teachers because they are the educators. We are not, we are merely setting the direction, but then they will implement it, within the Government guidelines for those subject areas.*

This participant took the example of the government policy, the Schools of the Future, to explain how a council decision was made. She responded that, when the Schools of the Future policy was introduced four or five years ago, the policy came to the School Council to decide whether the school would join the policy.

> *Participant 5: When the government was bringing in what they call Schools of the Future in 1993, they were offering it to schools, State schools, who would like to be in the first intake of the Schools of the Future policy. And that was a school council decision, as to whether to accept and be part of that or whether to stay back and wait till it was compulsory for everybody. So that was a council decision.*

According to government regulations, the principal is automatically on the school council. As a mandatory member of the School Council and the executive administrator of the school, the principal played an important mediating role between the school and the school council.

> *Participant 5: It is his job or her job if it's a female, to implement the School Council's decisions. He is the administrator and it is his job to ensure that Council policy is adhered to, that Council decisions are followed. And to report back and to be accountable and he must present a Principal's report, which he does at every meeting, as to what's happening or if there's any change. Or if he feels the need for a change in direction then he has to bring it to Council.*

In the school council, the principal acts as one of the policy-makers. In the Committee of Management, the principal acts as a policy implementer.

> *Participant 5: If the Council agrees that we want to change direction or... say we wanted to change from the science emphasis to more art, artistic emphasis or more media, the media focus, you know this new media technology and all that stuff, that would need to be a Council decision. Then the principal would*

implement it. But how he does it, whether he gets one teacher or three teachers that's up to him as an administrator. That's not our decision.

In the course of implementation of the prescribed programs, the school council functions as an important source of communication between the school and the government. When the government introduces a certain program or policy, the school council must follow up the policy. If the policy is compulsory, the school council cannot reject the policy. So when I asked Participant 5 whether the school council had the right to reject the implementation of any prescribed program, she responded that the council and school had to accept the government imposed policy because a government school received funds from the government.

Participant 5: We have no right to do that. We cannot refuse to accept regulations that are imposed by the government, because we are a state school and we receive funding from the State Government. So, like when they implemented the VCE, we had no right to say, no we don't want to do that. We don't have that right at all.

School councils operate widely in Victorian schools under the Education Act and the Directorate of School Education regulations. School councils are mainly responsible for setting the direction for schools within the government guidelines and ensuring proper and effective financial management. In school curriculum areas, school councils develop and maintain good and appropriate resources to support school curriculum development. In addition, school councils maintain effective communication between the school and the wider community in promoting a positive image of the schools. The participants indicated that school councils maintain a good relationship with the schools and the principals in the implementation of government policy and work well together with having the common goal of providing the best for the students.

9.6 Consultation

There were many perceptions about the government's consultation on framing the Curriculum and Standards Framework policy given during the interviews. Whenever I discussed the "consultation", I found participants had similar opinions about the related process of policy making.

Consultation was an important strategy of decision-making particularly during the Labor government period of 1982 - 1992 (Gaff 1998: 353). Labor party policies on the eve of the 1982 election emphasised collaborative decision-making in education, devolution of responsibility to schools and regions (Spaull 1992: 73). During the Labor term of office in Victoria between 1982 and 1992, one of the major principles underlying decision-making was that all groups that would be affected by a decision had the right to participate in the decision-making process (Kirner 1985: 60).

However, the Liberal-National Coalition government changed the tradition of consultation with related groups in decision making soon after it came to power in Victoria in October 1992. In November 1992, the government announced that some 450 teacher positions would be cut and 55 schools would be closed (Kronemann 1994). In January 1993, the Minister of Education released a preliminary paper on Schools of the Future and began organising the pilot school programs. The government promised to provide additional resources for the schools that agreed to enter the pilot program (Kronemann 1994). According to Gaff (Gaff 1998: 93), who conducted extensive research on this program, it was clear to Victorians that the Government was not intending to debate these matters publicly. Letters complaining about the lack of consultation appeared in the newspapers in increasing numbers (Gaff 1998: 93). Among the field work schools in Victoria, the principal of School X and the president of the School Council co-wrote a letter to *The Age* newspaper to complain about the lack of consultation with schools. In the letter, they wrote,

> *The Department of School Education (DSE) plans to introduce a pilot scheme, with volunteer schools assisting in fleshing out what is to become the Schools of the Future Program. Policy announcements to date have been made without prior consultation with school administrations and parent organisations.*[91]

When the Liberal-National Coalition Government introduced the Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1995, the government continued the lack of consultation that occurred with the Schools of the Future policy in 1993. The interviewees discussed the consultations, or lack of them, in the process of developing,

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[91] See Letter of School X to *The Age*, 14th April 1993.

introducing and implementing the centralised Curriculum and Standards Framework. As an experienced English teacher and assistant principal, Participant 6 seemed aware of the importance of the government's consultation with teachers before introducing a centralised program.

> *Participant 6: Oh, very poor. They rushed the whole thing through very quickly. They called a few teachers to ask their opinions about it. They worked people very hard who volunteered to help, but they were only very small numbers of people. Then for each of the Curriculum and Standards Framework, they provided support materials for teachers to help to implement it. But the people that were employed to write the support materials are not practising teachers, the supporting material hasn't been a lot of help in some instances as well. So the whole thing was rushed through with a very minimal consultation.*

Participant 6 was apparently dissatisfied with the consultation that was conducted by the government. In the interview, the way Participant 6 described the situation of consultation was confirmed by the response from Participant 1, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the level of government consultation.

> *Participant 1: I think their consultation was poor. The consultation sessions I went to, consisted of, 'Well, this is roughly what's going to happen, so be ready for it'. You know it was not really a significant intellectual consultation, it was very much a pre-determined consultation.*

A number of respondents agreed that as there was not sufficient consultation with the teachers by the government representation, the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework program became a rushed job. Participant 1 complained that the consultation regarding the introduction the Curriculum and Standards Framework was "impractical".

> *Participant 1: I also think that the consultation was not based upon practical understanding of curriculum delivery. Intellectually and academically it may appear to be logical, but the delivery was not examined closely enough, and I think that's where they should have been more critical in terms of the delivery. The framework is quite clever, but the delivery of the material and the assessment recording is just impractical. So I think they should have spent much more time on the delivery of it.*

Before the Victorian government introduced the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks in 1995, the centralised VCE program had been implemented in

Victorian schools for many years. In order to successfully introduce a centralised program, Participant 1 suggested that the government should have learned something from the success or failure of VCE before they introduced the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

> *Participant 1: They should have learned because the VCE was an area that they'd already had experience with, and they'd known from experience with the VCE that, in its initial delivery, it was also cumbersome. They've had to modify that significantly. They'd tried frameworks before in the primary schools and they had largely failed.*

Due to insufficient consultation with teachers, the teachers did not quite understand the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks after the policy was officially implemented in Victorian schools. Participant 6 commented that the complexity and impracticality of the Curriculum and Standards Framework caused the teachers a lot of extra work in implementing the program. The teachers were really not in favour of such as complex and impractical program.

> *Participant 6: Once again it doesn't have teachers' support from that point of view. The teachers don't understand that very complex program, but the language of their outcomes is jingoistic, it's very difficult to understand, and you have to rewrite it. When we report to parents in terms of our outcomes, we have to rewrite the outcomes for the parents to understand them because even a lot of teachers would not understand them. But some of the outcomes we still couldn't provide because it's very difficult.*

This response showed that it was necessary for the teachers to understand the centralised program before introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework. Having experienced no prior consultation, it was very difficult for the teachers to thoroughly understand the Curriculum and Standards Framework in a short time. The response from Participant 6 indicated that there was some tension between the teachers and government in terms of the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework due to insufficient consultation.

> *Participant 6: We certainly find it is difficult to report to the parents. I think any of these initiatives centralising the curriculum is a government initiative. It will only succeed if teachers at work can see the benefit of it. If teachers don't actually see benefits to students and to themselves in the different ideas of policy curriculum changes, they won't implement them.*

From the discussion, it would sum that participants generally believed that the consultation that was conducted by the government simply meant informing the related groups of the decisions that the government had made. As there was no substantial consultation before the Curriculum and Standards Framework was introduced, the centralised program was apparently had difficult to actually implement. Firstly, the centralised program that was presented under these circumstances made it difficult for schools and teachers to understand. The documentation was not clear to enable the proper process of implementation. Secondly, the teaching load has been increased. School teachers had to rewrite what the Curriculum and Standards Framework suggested teaching, in order to meet the individual needs of the students. In the end, the Curriculum and Standards Framework became an unrealistic, ineffective program in terms of real curriculum development and teaching.

9.7 Professional Development

As discussed in Chapter Seven, the successful professional development of teachers underpinned the successful implementation of an innovative program. The theme of professional development reflected the participants' understanding of the importance of teachers' professionalism in curriculum reform.

When the Schools of the Future policy was introduced in 1993, the Directorate of School Education decentralised the responsibilities for teachers' training and professional development to school principals. But, when the government cut school budgets and numbers of teachers, principals "have to find resources to pay for it from the school's global budget" (Angus & Brown 1997: 70). The Schools of the Future policy increased the principals' responsibilities, but limited teachers' opportunities for professional development as a result of the budget constraints.

Participant 6 was particularly concerned about teachers' training in the development, introduction and implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

> *Participant 6: So once we have a centralised idea, there is no follow through training to make sure that everybody is doing it in the same sort of manner. Our outcome is based upon the fact that there are different models, but there is nobody monitoring a student that, we say, is at Level 6 in our school is at the*

> *same level as the other schools in Victoria. So there is no comparative assessment made of the whole system. What we do is financially and politically driven by a lot of decisions from outside.*

Participant 6 acknowledged that the idea of the Curriculum and Standards Framework was good and sound, but maintained that it wasn't followed through well enough due to the lack of training for teachers. The Curriculum and Standards Framework, he said, was therefore not properly instituted in the schools for the benefit of the students.

> *Participant 6: The idea of the Curriculum and Standards Framework is very good and very sound, but it wasn't followed through as well as it should. I don't know how we are offering the Curriculum and Standards Framework and what it is. The idea is that it continues the learning for students is that they should be able to develop different skills. But in some areas, they haven't become skilled at all.*

Participant 1 also expressed his concerns about the appropriateness of the teachers' professional development.

> *Participant 1: If you trust your teachers and if they are well trained and well paid, you don't have to impose demands upon them, except in a very general sense. And similarly any imposition upon teachers will fail if they are not well trained and if they are not well paid.*

Professionals should develop the professional development for teachers. In discussing teachers' professional development, Participant 1 frequently used the word "professional" to demonstrate his views of school autonomy in policy implementation. He seemed most concerned about the relationship between professional rights and professional obligations in the teacher's professional development.

> *Participant 1: I think teachers are professionals and I think they, have a professional right and professional obligation to look the government's requirements, and that professional right or professional obligation does not mean a total imposition from outside. I think a professional is where people are well trained and then have the right and obligation to implement their training in a way that shows these requirements. I think the government always bears in mind that they are dealing with professionals with very high standards of integrity. That's what I will rely on. If you trained people well, then you shouldn't have to impose things on them.*

Participant 1 supported the idea of devolution of professional development in the implementation of government policy. He explained,

> *Participant 1: I certainly don't think we need centralisation of professional development. I think that could be done through universities, and through proper staffing and salary schemes. I think professional development is one of the most inefficient, ineffective aspects of our system.*

9.8 Summary and Commentary

The field research into the Victorian informants' understandings regarding the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development generated overwhelming evidence that curriculum development in Victorian schools has been centralised since 1995 even though the responsibilities of staffing and budgeting have been devolved to schools.

The participants indicated that devolution of educational governance was part of a political agenda associated with granting limited administrative autonomy to schools but ensuring more centralised policy decision-making.

Responses on the theme of curriculum development reflected the informants' perceptions and awareness of issues associated with the national curriculum debate, the Curriculum and Standards Framework, Key Learning Areas and school autonomy in curriculum development. The participants indicated that the long tradition of decentralised curriculum development and teaching that had been formulated by the Labor government in the 1980s had been changed by the Liberal-National Coalition government with the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1995. The implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework centralised and, to some extent, normalised educational practice in schools across the state. Schools restructured their curricula and subjects according to the standards that the Curriculum and Standards Framework outlined. In teaching, teachers had to redevelop their courses of learning, and reorganise their teaching and reports to the government and parents about students' achievements. It was clear that the previously decentralised style of education policy and curriculum development in schools had changed to one of greater control from the centre.

As a result of community involvement in schools, School Councils maintained a special relationship with schools in setting out the educational direction of the schools, developing the School Charter, being responsible for financial accountability in schools and following up the school's implementation of the government policies.

Schools had, and still have, a high degree of decision making autonomy about what textbooks that the school and teacher would like to use. Staffing flexibility that was contained in Schools of the Future policy introduced in 1993 authorised principals with the power to employ and dismiss staff when there were good reasons. However, as the interviews were conducted in 1997, it was too early to report on any effects that this effort to restructure school management may have had on school-level education policy. Budgeting has been devolved to schools, and school councils have more responsibilities for school resources. The devolved budgeting system enhanced financial decision-making and financial accountability at the school level, but a consequence of this change is that principals have had to find the resources to pay for teachers' professional development from the school's global budget. There were fewer problems for well-resourced schools to support teachers' professional development, but the less well-resourced schools were very likely to be disadvantaged.

From the evidence provided by the participants, it can be concluded that the Liberal-National Coalition government minimised consultation with schools and teachers. This occurred at the time of the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework program. This style of minimal consultation that was adopted by government was largely to inform people about what the government had already decided and how related groups should follow up the decisions. The changed style of consultation of the Liberal-National Coalition government, compared with that the previous Labor government, maximised teachers' possible misunderstandings of the prescribed programs and the difficulties of implementing it.

CHAPTER TEN
CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I provide an overview and commentary on the findings of my research which investigated the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai schools in China and Victorian schools in Australia from 1985 to 1995. This research focused on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in schools and the perceptions of stakeholders in a number of schools to the schools' responses to these changes. Throughout the research, three different approaches were used to examine the impact of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools in the chosen systems.

The first approach was an historical review with contextualised document analysis to investigate the political, economic and social contexts that have constituted devolution and centralisation of curriculum development in the chosen systems. The reviews contain an historical perspective and policy analysis at two levels and in two systems. The policy analysis at the first level, which appears in this thesis as Chapter Four and Chapter Six, related to policies of decentralisation of education and curriculum development at the national level in China and at the Commonwealth level in Australia. The reviews of second level and systems, which appear in this thesis as Chapter Five and Chapter Seven, focus on the impact of the changed and changing national and Federal policies for curriculum development of the systems at the level of the City of Shanghai and the State of Victoria. The purpose of these reviews was to obtain an understanding of the previous status of curriculum development in both systems in order to understand better the present situation of curriculum development in schools. The historical perspective and analysis highlighted a number of significant events, documents and programs that influenced curriculum development at different stages in both systems, and investigated the

dynamic relationships between the devolution of curriculum development and the social, cultural and economic background of each society.

Secondly, case studies were conducted in three schools in Shanghai and three schools in Victoria. These were reported in Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine. The purpose of the case studies was to enable the researcher to interview participants and collect first hand data about the perceptions of teachers and other school participants of the impact of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. The interviews also investigated the strategies of schools in the implementation of centralised programs. In addition, the effectiveness of implementing centralised programs was also investigated.

The third approach, which is detailed in this chapter, was the comparative approach employed to ascertain the similarities and differences in the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development between the national-federal system, city-state system and school-school system. The histories of the utilisation of decentralisation policies in meeting the desired objectives of curriculum development are compared. In addition, the limitations of the research work, and some suggestions for future study on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development are also presented.

10.1 Decentralisation of Educational Management and Curriculum Development: National Systems

These concluding comments relate to the historical review of the social and political contexts of the decentralisation of curriculum development at the national level in China and Australia as well as the empirical findings of the research in the chosen schools.

The historical review showed that, in spite of the different political, economic, cultural and ideological backgrounds, both China and Australia have experienced substantial changes in their systems of schooling in general and in curriculum development in particular in the last two decades. The two countries have similar concerns about the reform and adaptation of their curricula in order to promote

economic development. The decentralisation of curriculum development has been identified in both countries as a strategy for achieving the goals of national educational development. Although notable differences can be perceived in specific areas, each nation has pursued similar goals of curriculum development in order to adapt the school curriculum to economic development through different paths and various strategies.

The information collected in the study has shown that, although there are significant similarities in the decentralisation of different responsibilities in education in both countries, the curriculum reforms took different directions in the two countries: partial decentralisation of curriculum development with centralised policy-making in China and gradual re-centralisation of curriculum development in Australia.

The historical review showed that, in China, education was nationalised as a state enterprise according to the Constitution at the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Since then, education has been highly centralised in every aspect including policy decision-making, overall management, curriculum development, textbook development and provision, as well as assessment. This form of highly centralised system in education remained until 1978 when the Central Chinese Communist Party adopted a national policy of "reform and open" to introduce a market economy and "open the door" to the western countries. The transformation from a planning economy to a market economy profoundly influenced social changes, including educational changes. Under such circumstances, it was imperative for the Chinese government to restructure the educational system in order to adapt to the social changes, which resulted in the official release of *the Decision of the Reform of the Educational Structure* in 1985. The *Decision* served as a milestone document in the inauguration of devolution of educational administration and curriculum development in China.

The review of the status of curriculum development in Chinese education in Chapter Four showed that education in China retains a centralised national syllabus and examination system with partial decentralisation of curriculum and textbook development. As a national strategy, the implementation of limited decentralisation

in education took place in two ways. The first was the diversification of the nationalised curriculum and textbook development from "one-syllabus-one-textbook" into "one-syllabus-multiple-textbooks". Under the general policy of "one-syllabus-multiple-textbooks", the central government continued to develop the national syllabus as a set of general guidelines for school teaching and learning, but authorised eight qualified publishers to develop different textbooks to equip the schools in different regions and areas all over the country. In this way, the policy of one textbook was replaced by the policy of multiple textbooks. The second form of decentralisation of educational management was the tentative development of the self-managing provincial educational system in the City of Shanghai. With the authorisation of the central government, the Shanghai government developed an independent educational system, including guidelines, curriculum, textbooks and assessment.

The reform in Shanghai opened up the curriculum to include local knowledge and local culture, but the introduction of Curriculum 2000 changed this endeavour. The recent development of the Curriculum 2000 initiative by the Ministry of Education emphasised the importance of the national standard curriculum and stressed academic education. The process of decentralisation of curriculum development is currently in an ambiguous state in the other provinces because of the central government's increasing trend towards strengthening centralised controls on curriculum development at the national level. This conclusion sounds similar to Hawkins' (2000: 449) claim that control over the content of schooling was usually one of he last areas that central austerities were will to decentralise (See Chapter Two). Furthermore, the central educational authority still controls the academic examination[92] and there are no signs that this examination will cease to be held in the near future.

In Australia, education was originally the province of each state government according to the Constitution at Federation in 1901. However, the Commonwealth

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[92] That is, the national matriculation. This examination is academically based and conducted nationwide on 7, 8, 9 July each year.

government gradually became involved in educational affairs from the 1960s and exerted significant influence over curriculum development for Australian schools by funding schools, initiating projects, forming committees, establishing organisations and promoting debates on the matter of a national curriculum. The historical review conducted in Chapter Six showed that in the 1960s, the Commonwealth government initiated centralised projects in curriculum development, including forming subject committees to develop a coherent and internally consistent curriculum package for schools. In the 1970s, the Commonwealth government set up the Australian Schools Commission to investigate the position of Australian schools, and to establish the Curriculum Development Centre in 1973. The task of the Centre was to develop and maintain a collaborative approach to curriculum development. The establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre inaugurated the institutionalisation of the Commonwealth's role in the curriculum area. The core curriculum that was developed and implemented in 1980 by the Curriculum Development Centre was widely adopted in Australian schools.

In the 1980s, the involvement of the Commonwealth government in education was intensified, as illustrated by the Dawkins statement on *Strengthening Australia's Schools* in 1988 and the release of the *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* in 1989. In the 1990s, the Commonwealth government formed a national agency, the Curriculum Corporation, and became involved intensively in debates over the possible development of a national curriculum for Australian schools. The evidence collected from the fieldwork schools showed that the participants were never convinced about the value of introducing a national curriculum in Australian schools and considered that the development of a national curriculum was the result of a political agenda rather than for educational purposes. The review also showed that the decentralisation of curriculum development in Australian schools was not matched by any decentralisation or restructuring of the existing curriculum support services.

10.2 Decentralisation of Educational Management and Curriculum Development: Provincial and State Systems

These concluding comments relate to the review of the historical background of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the City of Shanghai and in the State of Victoria, and the empirical findings of the research in the chosen schools.

As stated in Chapter Five, prior to 1988, curriculum development in the City of Shanghai had been centralised for about forty years. The Shanghai educational authority, as delegated by the central Ministry of Education, organised Shanghai schools to implement the national syllabus, curriculum, textbook and assessment programs that were developed by the central government. With the introduction of the reform and open policy in 1978, Shanghai quickly developed into a leading economic region in China. There was a growing demand for higher levels of education to enable people to adapt to the rapid economic development in Shanghai. Under these circumstances, in 1988, Shanghai was authorised to develop its own school system and to restructure the existing curriculum and textbooks.

The review showed that, in the Chinese educational system, centralised curriculum and textbook development featured very prominently. The development of a decentralised system in Shanghai started with curriculum and textbook reform at the city level for schools. The Shanghai Curriculum and Textbook Reform that took place in the 1980s and 1990s was important for the following two reasons. Firstly, the reform was most profound at the city-provincial level in developing curriculum and textbooks. Secondly, the curriculum reform showed that curriculum and textbook development was the most essential aspect of educational reform. Indeed, curriculum and textbook development had been highly centralised in Chinese schools ever since the founding of the Republic in 1949. The research showed that the centralised development of the curriculum and textbooks obstructed the realisation of school autonomy.

In Victoria, the abolition of the Intermediate examination in 1967 removed an obstacle to the participation and involvement of the teachers and community in

curriculum development. Academic and administrative demand for teachers' participation and community involvement in curriculum development was first heard in the late 1960s. An amendment to the *Education Act (1958)* in 1982 authorised school councils to exercise certain duties, functions and powers that were associated with increased school autonomy. The Victorian government school system remained partially decentralised from the early 1980s.

The review of the social and political context of Victorian education policy in Chapter seven showed that, after the Liberal-National Coalition took office in 1992, the Victorian government as well as its delegated bodies such as the Directorate of School Education and the Board of Studies worked together to develop some centralised programs for Victorian schools despite the government's rhetoric of decentralisation of education. The introduction of the Schools of the Future policy by the Kennett Government in 1993 appropriately illustrates the trend towards government involvement in educational management. The Schools of the Future policy decentralised staffing flexibility and school budgeting, but, to a considerable extent, centralised curriculum development. The Liberal-National Coalition government changed the tradition of decentralisation of curriculum development that had been gradually established since the 1960s. Particularly with the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Frameworks in 1995, Victorian schools were then facing greater obligations to implement centralised curriculum guidelines through the prescribed eight Key Learning Areas. So it seems that, from the early 1990s, every move in the direction of the devolution of responsibility in education was associated with a countervailing trend of centralisation of decision-making, particularly with respect to curriculum development. The finding of the research confirmed what Hill (1998: 2-3) argued about the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Australian schools (see Chapter Two).

The findings of the case studies showed that decentralisation of educational management resulted in an atmosphere of suspicion and frustration in schools and from teachers as a result of the implementation of the centralised curriculum development. With the introduction of the Schools of the Future policy in 1995, schools were faced with unclear directions and school councils were suddenly

responsible for the control and management of school resources. Schools were facing more and more centralised control of teaching and had to report annually on their school's performance to the government.

Compared to the Victorian system of education, the decentralisation of educational administration in Shanghai occurred later and was much slower in implementation. However, the research showed that the Shanghai government is now enjoying more and more freedom in decision-making in education. The evidence collected in the interviews showed that the recent development of the Curriculum 2000 initiative by the central Ministry of Education did not apply to Shanghai schools. The Shanghai educational authority still continues to develop the curriculum and textbooks for its own schools. The Shanghai government runs an independent school system, including its curriculum, textbooks, and even the assessment of its own schools.

The review and research findings also show that, although the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai was ultimately aimed at establishing a decentralised system for schools, genuine school autonomy and freedom of curriculum development has not yet reached the schools. Findings of the research indicated that there was only limited autonomy for schools in the implementation of the mandatory curriculum.

10.3 Decentralisation of Educational Management and Curriculum Development: School Levels

These concluding comments relate to the empirical findings of research on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in the selected schools in Shanghai and in Victoria.

The study showed that schools in Shanghai had been undergoing substantial changes during the period 1985 - 1995. In 1988, the central government and the Shanghai educational authority initiated curriculum and textbook reforms. In these reforms, a number of schools, including the three fieldwork schools, were listed as pilot schools to implement local guidelines for curriculum, textbooks and assessment. The research showed that the curriculum and textbook reform in Shanghai gave

considerable autonomy to the City government in the management of education, but did not bring autonomy to Shanghai schools.

Schools in Shanghai have been free from implementing the national curriculum programs previously mandated by the central government, but the schools now have to directly implement the programs developed by the Shanghai educational authority. The schools themselves have no greater autonomy. The Shanghai educational authorities have subordinated their schools into a hierarchical system, imposing their own government preferences on the schools regarding the rules, regulations and structures of bureaucracy.

From the perspective of the schools, curriculum development and textbook selection in Shanghai schools are still centralised rather than decentralised. The data collected from the schools under study showed that the Shanghai educational authority has centralised curriculum and textbook development at the city level and is now able to more directly control curriculum development in schools. This conclusion is quite similar to what Karlsen (2000: 525) described as "decentralised centralism", in which the central authority transferred the power of decision-making in curriculum development, but the local authority centralised the curriculum development at the local level (see Chapter Two). In addition, school curricula are still based upon the traditional subjects as was the case with the national curriculum. Regarding textbooks, schools do not have to use the national textbooks that are developed by the People's Education Press, but have to select from the limited choice of textbooks provided by the local authorised developers.

School based curriculum development constituted an important aspect of the interviews conducted on the decentralisation of curriculum development in Shanghai schools. The data showed that school based curriculum development in Shanghai schools is restricted within the areas of the elective courses. Furthermore, the level of teachers' participation in school based curriculum development has not reached the teachers' expectations.

As a local system, the Shanghai system of education has long been affected by the highly examination-based national system in China. During the Curriculum and

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Textbook Reform in Shanghai in 1988, local matriculation examinations replaced the national matriculation examination. The evidence from the field research is that the local system was also examination-oriented, and the teachers and students were still stressed in the preparation for the local examinations.

In Victoria, the research showed that, with the introduction and implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework in 1995, the Victorian Department of Education exerted increasing influence on centralised policy-making and curriculum development in Victorian schools. These controls have given rise to more uniformity and less innovation at the school level in the implementation of the prescribed programs. Schools now have to cope with many changes, most of which are externally imposed and are the result of political agendas.

The analysis of the case studies in Victorian schools generated different results. On the one hand, the research showed that Victorian schools enjoy autonomy in staffing flexibility, school budgeting and textbook selection. With such autonomy in staff flexibility, the principals are authorised to directly employ teachers and to dismiss teachers whenever there are good reasons. School councils are responsible for their financial accountability and resources, and the teachers are fully autonomous in selecting textbooks.

On the other hand, evidence collected in the research indicated that, since 1993, there has been an increasing trend towards government control of curriculum development. The devolution towards self-governance in schools has included self-management of schools in day-to-day decision making with extensive delegation to school councils, but often within a centralised framework of supervision.

The interviews in Victorian schools also showed that the relationship between schools and government was changing. Within the current policy structure, Victorian schools have increasingly become policy executors of centralised policies. The Curriculum and Standards Framework directly centralised curriculum development in Victorian schools in many ways. Firstly, the centralised Curriculum and Standards Framework brought together teachers and others from across the state to join the move towards implementation of the centralised program in the curriculum

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development in schools. The case studies of the three schools showed that curriculum development in these schools was changed by the implementation of the Curriculum and Standards Framework. The reporting system of the students' results has also been adjusted according to centralised guidelines. Secondly, the Curriculum Standards and Framework has affected the teaching of the Key Learning Areas in the schools. The teachers have to organise their teaching according to the Curriculum and Standards Framework and are facing more complex and difficult programs in their teaching. The case studies showed that teachers must be more and more careful with the preparation of their teaching in order to succeed due to the complexity and difficulty of the Curriculum and Standards Framework. Third, the reporting system has been centralised. The schools have to report intensively to the government about the implementation of the centralised programs.

Schools in Victoria have been enjoyed partial autonomy during from the early 1980s to the 1990s, but now find that they are facing more obligations in the implementation of prescribed programs and having to take more responsibility for school failures. In this way, the government has, in effect, decentralised responsibilities but retained centralised power.

10.4 Limitations of the Study

As a qualitative research project, the major limitation of the study is the lack of an appropriate and adequate measurement of the "effectiveness" of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian systems. Within the research design, no quantitative criteria were used for measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development.

This research was based mainly on the responses provided by participants from the chosen schools in Shanghai and Victoria. Only small numbers of the selected schools were investigated and limited numbers of the participants were interviewed. In addition, the inability to obtain access to intensively interview government officials in both the Shanghai and Victorian educational authorities also disadvantaged the

research as the perspective of these officials on the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in both systems is missing.

Further research in this field can be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. Future research could utilise quantitative methods to investigate the different views of policy-makers and policy-implementers of decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development. Data from such work could be useful in developing an understanding of the major issues and concerns in policy-making and curriculum development. Critical evaluation of current policies of the devolution of curriculum development should also be undertaken.

10.5 Conclusion

The central concern of this thesis has been with the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools. The research covered the period from 1985 to 1995, during which both China and Australia utilised strategies of decentralisation of curriculum development to meet the goals of national educational development.

This study of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development in Shanghai and Victorian schools was conducted through historical review and comparative studies in the chosen systems and schools. The thesis demonstrated that decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development remained an important topic for the educators, researchers and policy decision-makers in the educational communities. The research has shown that the teachers' understanding and support in every move towards curriculum reform are important factors in introducing and implementing the prescriptive programs. It is in the hope of the researcher that this study will be useful in enabling policy decision-makers to improve their processes of introduction and implementation of centralised curriculum programs. A lesson from this study is that if centralised curriculum programs are to be implemented in schools that see themselves as self-managing, the teachers and principals of these schools need to be involved to some extent in the development of the programs. If teachers and schools are not involved in processes

of the decentralisation of educational management and curriculum development, then curriculum reform will be uneven at best and meaningless at worst.

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