

INFANTILISING YOUTH: A STUDY OF DISABILITY POLICY IN VICTORIA

Genée Marks

Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Geelong Campus
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ABSTRACT

Despite the stated intention of various policies, young people with disabilities are frequently infantilised by the discourses, organisations and practices that operate in Victoria. This paper focuses specifically on the policy of integrating students with disabilities into regular schools, but in order to contextualise the discussion, the observations made are also related to the changing nature of enrolments in segregated settings. In particular, this paper presents an examination of the paradigmatic shifts that have occurred in the way students with disabilities are constructed by educational policy over the last decade in Victoria. Reference will be made to the various policy documents, from Integration in Victorian Education (1984), to the Cullen and Brown (1992) evaluation, Integration and Special Education in Victorian Schools: A Program Effectiveness Review, and recommendations for the future will be suggested

INTRODUCTION

It is widely and popularly recognised that problems do not simply vanish with the formulation of policy. Policies only have limited potential to bring about change. The production of a policy itself does not mean a resolution of the issues that give rise to it. A policy is simply a moment in a process, neither a beginning, nor an end (despite what policy developers may hope). But it is, in the Foucauldian sense, a 'monument' that as an archaeological artefact, can tell much about the processes that have preceded this 'moment'. This must surely be true of the Victorian policy of integrating students with disabilities into regular educational settings.

In order to understand the way integration policy in Victoria has operated to infantilise students rather than to avoid any labeling (as the policy developers proposed), this paper examines the last decade in Victoria, and explores the policy documents that have been developed and/or evolved during that era, and accordingly, stand as monuments of the processes of transformation that have taken place since 1982. The paper is informed by the work of Michel Foucault, who saw that "texts are always the sites of struggle, the places where various strategies of self-promoting knowledge compete, the texts and strategies of interpretation always compete for domination in a field where there can be no single validating method." (Threadgold, 1990a,

p.6)

McHoul (1988) warned that whatever way texts are read, they do not possess "single, monolithic, endogenous 'meanings' which, 'whatever happens', relay to certain automatic practical consequences". Policy documents possess a certain constancy that influences their reading and execution. "It is policy, thus it will be read this way-- as policy has always been read." (1988, p.189) To intervene is to disrupt this process, and to challenge the dominant reading of the policy document. It is to take the marginal rôle of contesting reader. McHoul argues however: "The web [of policy] is, in principle, self-repairing in this respect. But at the same time it is fraught with contradictions and fissures-- many of which are poorly sutured. The point of a critical intervention in policy studies is to discover those cracks and to prise them open." (1986, p.189) The search for other possible readings is the way these cracks may be

discovered. "Discourse being inseparably linked with power, interventions into power-effects are constituted by the search for discursive formations at such critically weak sites."

(McHoul, 1986, p.189)

This paper is an exploration of one alternative reading of the way students are to be constructed within the integration policy. For as Edelman (1977, p.20) has observed, the languages of the helping professions influence the beliefs of the public as to what forms of behaviour are acceptable. These professions, which are represented within integration by both mainstream and special teachers

are crucial influences upon beliefs and political actions... for they present themselves, and are widely accepted, as legitimate authorities on the causes of these problems and on how to treat their victims.... Their professions authoritatively define the deserving, the undeserving, the competent, and the pathological; and in doing so they define themselves.

Codd (1988, p.241) takes a similar view to that of Edelman, asserting that language is a "sphere of social practice", noting that words have far more than just a nominalising value.

Language is an instrument, as well as an object, of power. To analyse social policies produced by and for the state, it is necessary to have a "conception of how language produces ideological effects by suppressing the contradictions of people's experience in the interests of preserving the existing social formation". As Belsey (1980, in Codd, 1988, p.242) asserts, a "discourse involves certain shared assumptions which appear in the formulations that characterize it... [I]t is not a separate element which exists independently in some free-floating realm of 'ideas', and is subsequently embodied in words, but a way of thinking, speaking, experiencing." This is certainly true in the field of integration, where the discourse generally, and language

choices specifically, tell much about the forces of transformation and institutionalisation that have been generated by the reform of special education in Victoria.

Over the period examined in this paper, including the prehistory of the policy, there were marked changes in the way students with disabilities were viewed. However, such changes in official rhetoric have not guaranteed changes in practice. Furthermore, some of these changes, particularly during the period in which ubiquitous memoranda heralded transformations to the policy, were not always consistent with previously stated policy, and may be viewed as a retreat in some instances. Despite official and unofficial policy positions however, a dialectic exists where individuals, such as teachers, parents, special educators, specialists and students negotiate their own subjectivities to an extent, irrespective of how the policy documents may construct such subjectivities. Furthermore, while the documents may offer images of the individuals, such constructions are not necessarily accepted.

The previous observations notwithstanding, despite the existence of rhetoric and a policy that give guidance as to how individuals are to be constructed in integration, such changes have not necessarily occurred. The existence of the policy has not guaranteed change. And in some ways, the changes that have occurred are not those that were expected by the collaborative policy development team. Changes in policy about the way the subjectivity of individuals is to be constructed do not come easily. In the case of integration, these changes were highly contested. The way documents construct individuals, and the way the individuals choose to construct themselves, frequently do not coincide. Different groups made the shifts of paradigm envisaged by the new policy to varying degrees. Furthermore, there was a tendency for the construction of individuals to revert to binarisms, despite rhetoric to the contrary. Oppositional discourses such as integration are not necessarily empowering,

but may merely make that approach seem more natural. There is no guarantee that the individuals addressed by such changes will be viewed any differently in practice, than within the previously dominant discourses.

THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBJECT

In describing the process by which an individual's subjectivity was formed within society, Althusser (re)defined the term 'interpellation', asserting that ideology interpellates individuals as subjects: "Ideology represents individual relationships to reality and exists in material apparatuses and their system of rituals and practices." (McLennan, Molina and Peters, 1978, p.96) It is through participating in the rituals and processes of everyday life that the individual recognises her/himself as subject, and hence acknowledges the imposed

ideological apparatuses. "In this sense, it appears that the subject acts insofar as he or she is acted upon by the material system of the ideology.... Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects in the name of the Subject." (McLennan, Molina and Peters, 1978, p.96)

Therborn says much about the way subjectivity is constructed within ideologies of varying sorts. He argues that every individual may act out innumerable competing and conflicting subjectivities, and frequently will have several subjectivities at any time, although usually, they will only act on them singly. These interpellations of our existence "are usually connected with different interpellations of what is right and what is possible for such a subject." (Therborn, 1980, p.78) Further, ideological struggles do not exist only between competing world views, but also between conflicting subjectivities. It is stressed that to argue that ideologies interpellate subjects is to suggest that ideologies are not read as external by a subject of a fixed and unified nature: "To the extent that a particular interpellation is received, the receiver changes and is (re)constituted." (Therborn, 1980, pp.78-9) Resistance and revolt, Therborn contends, is "a dramatic, special instance of this general phenomenon" (1980, p.79). What is especially important though, is that "the ideological (re)formation of subjectivities" (1980, p.79) is regarded as a social process in which ideologies "have no natural boundaries, no natural criteria distinguishing one ideology from another or one element of an ideology from its totality. Particularly in today's open and complex societies, different ideologies, however defined, not only coexist, compete, and clash, but also overlap, affect, and contaminate one another." (Therborn, 1980, p.79)

Negotiated contests between opposing discourses then, influence the discursive construction of subjectivity. Oppositional discourses are viewed as having the potential to push dominant discourses (which Threadgold [1986b, p.23] describes as "socially valorised text") in different ways, and hence lead to change. "The individual is positioned as a social subject within and by [the] negotiation of discourses. That is, each individual negotiates her/his own subjectivity within this complex of discourses and in relation to her/his own experience." (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.2) The assumption of an intertextuality between specific discursively constructed subjectivities, specific language and texts, specific social contexts, and specific informing ideologies however, cannot be overlooked. "This distinction relocates the struggle over ideology in language at the intersection between constituted subjects and specific discursive positions, at the level of the interplay between the subject and the discursive, an interplay which inevitably involves contradictory positions for the subject." (Threadgold, 1986a, p.24) The texts therefore, must not be considered in isolation "from the historical conditions of their production"

but "in a context of discourses in struggle and the production within them and through them of the systems of knowledge and

belief we call ideologies." (Threadgold, 1986a, p.24) The contexts and institutional sites in which texts are generated and contested contribute to contradictions and conflict in the subject positions taken.

Typically then, societies consist of contemporary ideological formations constructed through negotiation between the complex of dominant ideological and oppositional discourses, in the Foucauldian sense (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.2). Despite the existence of contemporary ideological formations such as patriarchy, racism and segregation of various sorts, oppositional discourses such as feminisms, antiracism and integration still function, and may in fact be forces for change, for they are in constant negotiation and renegotiation with the dominant discourses, in a context that is dynamic. There is thus a dialectic of opposing discourses arguing for space.

Within such contestation and negotiation, the individual, as a member of society, is defined and described by the dynamics of contemporary ideological formations, which, according to Cranny-Francis (1990, p.2) project a conservative subjectivity for the individual as part of the 'natural order'. Compliant subjects are socially rewarded; dominant ideological formations represent the compliant subject's values as 'right' and 'true', and authorise that subject to assert the authority of 'universal correctness' in the face of criticism (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.2). Individuals who resist or contest dominant ideological formations however, actively choose to construct their own subjectivity as other than compliant and conservative. In a sense, by choosing to operate within oppositional discourses, the resistant or contesting individual is denaturalising the dominant discourses, by viewing them from a different perspective.

Adopting such a position does not necessarily guarantee emancipation or empowerment however. Oppositional discourses, like any other, very easily take on the status of meta theories, which in their turn, naturalise other aspects of the subject. Within the feminist movement for example, it is considered 'natural' that women should take an ideological stance that is opposed to patriarchy; to a feminist, an anti-patriarchal stand may seem the most natural perspective.

Texts, which are, in the main, constructed within the dominant discourses in society, "re/construct those discourses as natural or obvious or inevitable; they elide or conceal the premises on which social practices are based" (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.3), and in a sense, serve to "mystify premises of social practice". Oppositional discourses however, work to denaturalise the dominant within texts, and demystify social practice.

"Oppositional discourses... operate within texts to denaturalise

other, and often dominant, discourses, to demystify their social and textual practice and show it to be a discursive construct." (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.3) Obviously then, the "textual practices which are the constructs of these discourses are inevitably very different." (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.3) Texts operate then, in very much the same way as society, in that the text projects a reading position as space for the subject. Like the societies in which they are generated, texts "are negotiations of dominant and oppositional discourses. That is, texts constitute and [are] constituted by a dialogue of different discourses." (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.4). If a reader sees no contradiction in a text, then s/he may compliantly accept the text's most apparently dominant reading position. Although there are certainly different ways of reading texts, and of discerning the discourses informing those texts, a dominant reading position is frequently evident. "The reader who occupies this position is rewarded textually by her/his complicity in/with the dominant textual practice or negotiation so that s/he feels secure in the 'knowledge' that her/his reading is 'correct'." (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p.4) No text is harmonious however. Just as societies

constantly negotiate contemporary formations, contradictory discourses are negotiated in text. If the text is not challenged, then the assumptions informing the text may function as mystifications.

Threadgold's (1990b, p.1) timely warning of the dangers of accepting dichotomies and arbitrarily splitting into binarisms what are actually parts of a continuum, should be taken into account however, when considering the discursive formation of subjectivity. The valorising of one of the members of the dichotomous pair at the expense the other by dominant ideological formations is common. Threadgold has noted however, considerable difficulty in avoiding a double bind in which it is argued that the two terms in a dichotomy are independent, or that attempts are made to neutralise the effects of such dichotomies. The implications of the existence of binarisms cannot be avoided. The "world is constructed in and through discourse, meaning and representation, and the people in that world are constructed in the same way." (Threadgold, 1990b, p.3) Subjectivities "are always inside and sometimes struggling to be also outside the signifying processes and practices of/in which they speak." (Threadgold, 1990b, p.3)

Threadgold has also cautioned against blithely accepting representation as truth. The process of "making something appear, to stand for something else, which exists" (Threadgold, 1990b, p.2), is essentially a lie. That which is signified does not have to exist, and nor does it have to exist in the way in which it is represented. The process of construction, and of making meaning, does not ensure the existence of that which is

constructed. Representations are not necessarily realities. Subjectivities as they are constructed may in fact be lies. However, the "paradox of the 'lie' is that once structured it may be read as, and thus become, a new 'reality'. The construction of the world and the making of meaning go hand in hand." (Threadgold, 1990c, p.2)

The metaphor of corporeal inscription is one that has particular significance when discussing the development of subjectivity amongst individuals with disabilities, for they are a group commonly inscribed in significant and obvious ways. Grosz's observation that "[i]nscriptions of the corporeal differences between bodies can be seen to produce body-subjects as living significations, social texts capable of being read or interpreted" (1990, pp.62-63) is seen as having particular relevance to the discussion of disability. Bodies may be inscribed by educational and social policies, as well as physically by wheelchairs, or metaphorically by the imposition of labels. Gotfrit suggested in fact, that the body is "the critical site of contestation" (1988, p.130), which becomes more significant as the commodification of images becomes less like the reality experienced by most people. The body holds the potential of critical consciousness; resistance to regulation and control becomes possible through the body now, as well as through the mind.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the inscription of the body as text is an expression of power, of that material force through which disciplinary practices operate irrespective of any notions of ideology. The distortion of body image experienced by both people with disabilities and women is closely paralleled by a "shared experience of helplessness" (Brown and Smith, 1989, p.107): "services have real physical power over peoples' lives which is masked by a focus on individual pathology in the same way that responsibility for violence against women, and the threat of it, is shifted onto individual women." The body inscribed in this manner is the site of power/knowledge, on which power as "a substrate of forces" (Grosz, 1990, p.64), acts. But in that power plays on the body as text, the body becomes a site of resistance "for it exerts a recalcitrance, and always entails

the possibility of a counterstrategic reinscription, for it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways." (Grosz, 1990, p.64) Grosz (1990, p.66) has observed: "The body becomes a 'text' and is fictionalised and positioned within those myths that form a culture's social narratives and self-representations.... Social narratives create their 'characters' and 'plots' through the tracing of the body's biological contours and organic outlines by writing tools."

THE CHANGING NATURE OF DISABILITY POLICY

The Beginnings of the Integration Policy-- Prior to 1984

Victoria does not have a long history of integration. Like most places world wide, the Ministry of Education in Victoria has traditionally placed children who were labelled as different into segregated settings. Many of these settings were on different sites, well away from regular schools (and frequently well away from 'normal' society), but at various times in Victoria's educational history, some of these children were segregated into separate classrooms or buildings on the same site as the regular school. Special schools and classes "became a safety valve for the regular schools, which continued to emphasise efficiency and progress" (Lewis, 1987, p.6), and were accompanied by considerable growth in the use of tests to determine intelligence and academic placement, and to legitimise segregation.

In 1973, Schools in Australia, known as the Karmel Report, provided a historical precedent, not only for the concept of integration, but also for the notions of collaborative decision making, and the devolution of responsibility to members of the school community (White, 1987, p.23). Favouring equality of outcomes for groups and individuals over equality of means, and arguing for a uniformity of material provisions, the Karmel Committee recognised the arbitrary nature of special education, and asserted that regular schools and classrooms had the potential to cater for individual difference (Fulcher, 1986, p.22). However, it foresaw a continuing need for segregation of "children who require special provision" (1973, p.109, quoted in Fulcher, 1986, p.23).

In Victoria, the recommendations of the Karmel Report were taken seriously, and provided the basis for the Ministerial Papers (1983-1985) which addressed the issues of the devolution of authority, responsive bureaucracy, collaborative decision making, the redress of disadvantage and discrimination, school determined curriculum, and the school council responsibility for educational policy (Fulcher, 1986, p.44). In particular, Ministerial Paper No. 1 (1983), Decision Making in Victorian Education, directly addressed collaborative decision making and the devolution of authority, and was to have considerable influence on the notions of participation outlined in Victoria's integration policy. The following year (1984), Ministerial Paper No. 6, Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria, was also released. This paper is pertinent to special education and the development of integration, for its authors acknowledged curriculum as 'an expression of values', both explicit and covert, and observed that schools needed to be able to modify curricula in response to change. Atkinson, in a supporting document, proposed that: "A central aim of schooling is to ensure that each individual succeeds in learning to his or her fullest potential. Individuals differ in their potential for various kinds of learning, and what constitutes success may differ for each individual" (1986, p.8).

A committee to review the educational services provided by

Victoria for children with disabilities was established in 1982, in part as a result of lobbying from the parents' movement. Integration already existed in some regions in Victoria, frequently without official support. An integration project had been underway in Geelong, for example, since the late 1970s, but this project was unusual in having official sanction. There is

little evidence to suggest that any impetus for reform in the field of special education came from either the Education Department bureaucracy or the teaching service. Lewis (1989a), a socio-historian who has closely researched special education in Victoria, feels that it was really the parents of children with disabilities, supported by the various parents' organisations, who instigated a grass roots social movement for integration. The parent movement had ensured, for example, that the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) included a policy on integration in its platform for the 1982 State election, and the Government was committed to the idea once it was elected. The Ministerial Review Committee, which was led by the Deputy Director-General of Education, Kevin Collins, established working parties to address four main areas of investigation: the rights of children and their parents, and the processes that may need to be legislated for in order to ensure the observance of these rights; structures and decision-making, at all of local, regional and State levels; normalisation, and the processes of assessment and placement, as well as the necessary support services to facilitate this process; and finally, parent, teacher, and community education (Fisher 1989).

The Collins Report-- The Development of the Main Policy Document--
- 1984

The establishment in 1982 of the committee to review integration for children with disabilities in Victoria was, however, only a moment in the process of the development of the integration policy in Victoria. This process did not end with the release, in 1984, of *Integration in Victorian Education*, also known as the Collins' Report or the Ministerial Review. There have been many modifications to this written monument of the integration policy since, as well as several evaluations. Additionally, it cannot be overlooked that policy is more than just what is written down. The Collins' Report however, did contain the first written Ministerial guidelines for integration in Victoria, and must be considered to be the most significant document to address disability education in the last decade in Victoria.

The perspective of the Victorian Review was that segregation of educational resources either emphasised or generated differences which belied the similarities and denied the rights of students with disabilities. The policy stated that all students, irrespective of type or degree of disability, had the right to be educated in their local school. The Ministerial Review committee

defined integration as:

- (i) a process of increasing participation of children with impairments and disabilities in the educational programs and social life of regular schools in which their peers without disabilities participate;
- ii) a process of maintaining the participation of all children in the educational programs and social life of regular schools (1984, p.6)

This perspective was informed by the approach taken by educators in Britain. Booth, Potts and Swann (1983, p.5) for example, noted that "...we have defined integration in education as the process of increasing the participation of all children in mainstream schools -- not just children who are at present in special schools or are designated as having special needs". The Collins' Report included five guiding principles which informed the bureaucratic constructs and processes established by the Review.

- Every child is seen as having the right to be educated in a regular school.

(As a corollary, every child has the right not to attend a regular school, for segregated special education will not be denied to parents who wish to utilise this system.)

- 'Non-categorisation' in both legislation and service delivery. Legislation "should be framed without reference to particular

categories of impairment and disability", and "service delivery should be organised, administratively and conceptually, on a non-categorization basis". (Collins, 1984, p.13).

- The use of school based resources and services.
- Collaborative decision making processes: "equal participation of all those concerned with decisions about a child's educational progress" (Collins, 1984, p.14).
- All children can learn and be taught.

The Collins' Report laid the ground work for the establishment of Enrolment Support Groups, which have been modified in several Ministerial memoranda since 1984 (Exec. Memos. Nos. 34 and 144, 1986 and 1987), and are now called Integration Support Groups. These groups, established for each student, and designed to work collaboratively, are expected to meet regularly in order to make decisions about each integrated student's educational program. These groups have clearly prescribed membership: the student's parent(s) or guardian(s); a parent advocate if a parent wants that support; the student's class teacher (primary level), or a teacher nominated as having responsibility for the student (post primary); the principal/ head teacher (primary) or principal/ nominee (post primary); and the student (where appropriate). As well, the group may co-opt two people to any particular meeting, but not on a regular basis. Included in this latter group are integration teachers and aides, and consultants from the

supporting services (Exec. Memo. No. 34, 1986, pp.5-6). If additional people are at the meetings, or members are co-opted without group consensus, then all decisions may be challenged on the grounds that due process has not been observed (Exec. Memo. No.34, 1986, pp.5-6).

The Collins Report suggested a number of structures to facilitate collaborative decision making, and amendments to the Education Act 1958 were recommended. The School Council Sub-Committee on Integration was to have a representative membership of interested groups (parents of students with disabilities, teachers, students, School Council, principal, and others as co-opted), and was charged with developing the school integration policy within the guidelines of the Review. It was also expected to overview the enactment of policy, describe and allocate necessary resources, facilitate the work of integration within the school, and increase awareness of integration within the school community (Stone, 1987, p.5).

Victoria's integration policy is considered to be highly innovative. Many countries, as well as other Australian states, have looked to Victoria for direction in this area. When the Collins Report was released, it "was widely regarded in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia, as democratic and controversial, if not radical..." (Fulcher, 1989, p.2) It was later described in a national policy paper as "a significant document and... likely to occupy a bench-mark position in Australian debate about special education" (May 1985, p.25, reported in Fulcher, 1986, p.32). Part of the radical nature of the Collins Report derives from its stated definitions, for the Review not only addresses the problem of increasing the participation of students who have previously been segregated out of regular education, but also maintaining the participation of students already in the regular setting (in old terminology, the 'at risk' students) (Collins,1984, p.6). The more common integration policies consider only students who have been officially labelled, although as Tomlinson (1982) and Lewis (1987) have observed, there exists a tendency to create new labels when obvious groups of students are not fitting into the system. Within Victorian schools, there now exists the category of 'integration child', which gives teachers and administrators the option of labelling students who had always struggled at school, but for whom the psychologists had not found a suitable label. Similarly, a recently developed course for integration aides describes a category of students requiring integration as

'culturally disabled'.

The Collins Report is also of significance in that it is informed, at least at the most obvious level, by a discourse of rights, whereas most policies that address integration and special education are informed by medical and/or deficit models. That this discourse appears to become lost in its transference

from emancipatory intent, through stated policy, to implementation in schools, is worthy of comment in itself. It raises important questions about the nature of the rights model as an example of social justice discourse. Is government policy legitimating a discourse as dominant that would usually be seen as oppositional, or is the government siding with an oppositional discourse, and hence challenging the dominant ideological perspective on integration? In the past, special education has worked to mystify premises of social practice, and the rhetoric of integration is to demystify and denaturalise these. In many ways however, the forces of integration may have taken over the rôle of special education in mystifying the ways people with disabilities are viewed.

The Memoranda Period-- 1984-1987

The period following the release of the Collins Report in 1984 was one in which the integration policy was transformed by memoranda. Contestation was to be the hallmark of this period, in which the Education Department, which was later named the Ministry of Education, was faced with the task of implementing the Ministerial Review Integration in Victorian Education.. While the Review had provided myriad guidelines and recommendations, few directions were given as to how such recommendations should be made operational. It was to be an era in which aspects of the original stated policy would be reviewed, elaborated, altered, reiterated, and challenged. This period of policy transformation and development generally continued till about 1987, when various evaluations of the policy began appearing. There is however, some overlap of the periods (up until about 1989). In the main however, those memoranda and Ministerial position papers issued from 1984 (after the release of the Review), until the end of 1987, with some passing reference to later modifications of the policy, will be considered as part of the memoranda period.

As there were numerous documents released during this period, to support and modify the policy, as well as to make it operational in the schools, it is impractical to expand on the content of each. All the papers released during this period have something to contribute to the topic at hand. This discussion however, will omit the majority of these, in order to emphasise several of the memoranda that have particular significance when considering the way the subjectivity of youth with disability was constructed during the period. During this period for example, several different memoranda were devoted to the nature, responsibilities and composition of the individual collaborative decision making bodies that were set up for each student being supported by integration resources in schools. Each of these memoranda slightly altered the balance of power within these groups by changing the guidelines that addressed the secondment of 'experts' to the meetings. These alterations could justifiably be the subject of a paper themselves. Of particular interest however, is that one such memorandum redefined the key term

'problems in schooling'.

The original intention of the Collins Report in using 'problems in schooling' was not to create a new disability label, but to draw attention to the idea of schools as disabling structures. In that the report aimed "to clarify instances where a school's organisation or curricula or pattern of relationships systematically disadvantages children... to the point that the school educationally handicaps" (Collins, 1984, p.9), its intention was transformative. 'Problems in schooling' were to be perceived as a problem with the system, and not a problem with

the individual. The inclusion of this concept marked a strong paradigmatic shift away from the perspective previously adopted by special education. The Collins Report observed that students with impairments and disabilities are often regarded as having 'problems in schooling', and argued that "it is more accurate to describe these latter children as facing educational handicaps consequent on their impairment or disability, to the degree that educational services do not reduce such handicap" (1984, p.10). 'Problems in schooling' such as 'learning disabilities' may well occur in children who do not have disabilities or impairments. The problems of such children may be the result of schools as disabling structures, rather than of an impairment in the child. The notion of 'problems in schooling' then, was one manifestation of the Collins report's anti-categorisation strategy. It was not a new label to be applied to children that schools were unable to successfully educate, but who had no named impairment or disability. Some children are handicapped by their educational experiences; these children were to be considered as having 'problems in schooling'. The memorandum Integration Support Group Procedures for Regular Schools (August 17, 1987), was to change the way 'problems in schooling' was to be perceived in schools. In its second appendix, this memorandum redefined the nature of 'problems in schooling'. By way of introduction, the memorandum outlined the perspective of the Review on 'problems in schooling', noting that these problems may be the result of "a wide range of interacting factors such as the organizational and curriculum structures of the school as well as the community and social environments of these students." (August, 17, 1987, p.18) Such an argument suggested that for children from non-Anglo Saxon, non middle class backgrounds, the school should not bear blame for their 'problems in schooling'. To accept this, is to accept the argument that cultural difference might fairly be described as a disability.

Evaluations of the Policy-- 1987-1993

The memoranda period, it has been noted, overlapped to some extent with the later period of evaluations. Generally however, the flow of new policy perspectives expressed in Ministerial memoranda slowed down after the memoranda period, and the

Ministry began to evaluate its policy of integration. This is not to say that the period from 1987 to 1992 was free of memoranda, for that is far from the case. It is reasonable to say however, that apart from a few notable exceptions, these memoranda were not so much altering policy, but reiterating aspects of it.

It should be emphasised that the Ministry was not the only organisation evaluating the policy. Some studies commissioned by other bodies however, have been viewed with suspicion by the academic research community. Interestingly, not all of the Ministerial evaluations has ever been publicly released, although the others have been leaked to the media by the Liberal Party (as part of The Coalition), who were in opposition in Victoria at that time. Further, the recent Auditor-General's report (1992) on integration in Victoria that caused some uproar in Parliament, was leaked to the media in draft form, and aggravated upheavals and divisiveness in education and special education faculties within Victorian universities. The period since the beginning of 1991 has been a trying time for the Ministry of Education in this area, and one that has prompted strong comments in school communities, in universities, in the media, and amongst the general public.

In 1987, the Review of Human Resources for Integration was released. Rather than focus on how integration has worked for the people concerned (students, parents, and teachers, for example), this document addressed the allocation of human resources in a manner that suggested there was little else about integration deserving of evaluation. The evaluators did not

consult with all members of the school community or collaborate on the findings and report. Instead, this document was produced by a team of Ministerial bureaucrats who consulted only with special educators, specialists, regional Ministerial bureaucrats, and principals. There was no discussion with representatives of teacher unions, classroom teacher, parents (or their organisations), or students. It is little wonder then, that this document is a lumbering dinosaur of nearly two hundred pages, in which it is clear that the committee has not even understood the terminology of the Ministerial policy document, let alone the philosophical perspectives that informed the policy.

This evaluation described as problematic four distinct areas. Firstly, it targeted the non-categorical service delivery, asserting that it is not possible to precisely define the students who might need integration resources. This, it contends, creates conflict between eligible groups and makes the regional process of resource allocation time consuming and costly. "There is need for statewide guidelines to ensure adequate monitoring of resource usage, and a revision of restrictive industrial agreements." (1987, p.vi) The second

group of issues addressed by the evaluation was that of special education resources. This is an interesting move, as special education was never considered part of integration policy. This evaluation however, apparently sees them as one and the same, and actually refers to integration as a special education strategy. Thirdly, the report argued, there is confusion about the educational needs of students. There are too many "different processes to determine the educational needs of students with disabilities." (1987, p.vii) These, it suggests, should be consolidated. And finally, the document argues that "many special educators themselves report feeling that their work has been undervalued since the release of the Integration Report." (1987, p.vii) Thus, it seems, the Ministry is to be more concerned for the way the special educators feel than the quality of education of the students the Ministry was originally set up to serve.

This document was followed, in 1989, by the evaluation document *The First Five Years of Integration Policy in Victoria*. This evaluation was unlike the previous document, in that it was clearly grounded in a strong understanding of both the language and philosophy of the integration policy. It was an evaluation that, according to the overview, "was never intended for publication, but regarded purely as an internal document to assist the new management of integration" (n.d., but probably 1991). This evaluation was, in the main, strongly supportive of the Ministerial policy, but made no bones about describing the inadequacies of the policy, and the way it had been implemented. Its authors, Cook, Lewis and Sword, are all known to be advocates of integration, so in a sense, the choice of these researchers as evaluators should have been a safe one for the Ministry. The Victorian Coalition however, obtained this document under the Freedom of Information Act, and leaked it to the media, claiming that the Ministry's failed to release the document because it was damning of integration. This misreading, and the responses of the media and the various organisations involved in integration, make for interesting reading, but will be the subject of a later paper.

The document made twenty two recommendations, which fell into six major policy areas. These were: the focus on integration as a curriculum issue; the documentation of exemplary practice, and development of research in this area; aspects of special schools and their organisation and service provision, and its interaction with integration; resource provision for integration; information to parents and support to parent advocates; and liaison with tertiary institutions and tertiary educators. It was an evaluation that was clearly informed by both the rhetoric

of the 1984 Review, and by what had transpired since. The authors condemned the creation of 'problems in schooling' as a new label,

and noted that this was no longer to be used as a category for resource provision, and it observed the danger of increased professionalism, in the creation of new levels of special educators (such as integration teachers and aides), arguing: "All people involved in this process are vulnerable to traditional views of special education, which may perceive newly created disability groups and related workers as possible clients requiring special services." (1987, p.ii)

In 1992 however, the State Auditor-General evaluated the integration policy in Victoria. The resulting document, *Integrated Education for Children with Disabilities*, was less negative and, many critics argue, poorly researched. The Department of School Education was less than delighted with the results, while the Victorian Coalition Opposition made strong political use of the document. Irrespective of political stance however, this report is condemning, but in terms that inadequately address the real issues. The Auditor-General based his evaluation on a reading of the government policy that aligned far more closely with the special education perspectives adopted by opponents to integration. The Ministerial bureaucrats concerned with integration considered that the Auditor-General had misunderstood the policy, misinterpreted its intentions, and according to many interest groups, as well as the Ministry, exceeded his brief. The Auditor-General, for example, argued that the policy of non-categorisation should be changed, on the grounds that this policy "has led to a lack of comprehensive data for performance evaluation. Such data is essential in view of the Department's obligation to ensure that public resources are being applied in the most cost-effective and efficient manner for the ultimate benefit of students on the Integration Program." (1992, p.78) This perspective strongly contests both integration policy, and with the ALP policy on social justice generally. It was certainly beyond the audit brief to recommend policy changes - the audit is intended to judge performance within the parameters of the policy.

Following the damning report from the Auditor-General, the Ministry of Education sought a management review of integration and special education. Entitled *Integration and Special Education in Victorian Schools: A Program Effectiveness Review*, this report by Cullen and Brown was released late in 1992. In this document, they clearly and effectively dispute much of the Auditor-General's report. Most notable, is that Cullen and Brown rework the statistics generated in the Audit and used to condemn, and then make recommendations about the future of the integration program. These figures are discussed further later in this paper, and so will not be outlined here. The Cullen and Brown report has recently been reviewed by a committee appointed by the new Liberal state government, and advocates of integration have expressed grave concerns about the possible outcomes of this review.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SUBJECTIVITY OF STUDENTS IN THE INTEGRATION PROGRAM

The way in which the subjectivity of students with disabilities has been constructed by educational policies has been far from fixed, and this is clearly evident from the observations made in this paper. People with disabilities have always been constructed in terms of binarisms, irrespective of the intent of those who have done the constructing. Even this paper has been unable to discuss the topic of the construction of subjectivity without a reversion to binarisms. To speak of disabilities is to acknowledge the existence of people without disabilities; to speak of the 'differently abled' is to contrast these people with the 'similarly abled'. In the early part of this century, the 'mentally deficient' were contrasted with the 'mentally

sufficient', and later still, the 'mentally retarded' were compared with the 'mentally advanced', and the 'developmentally delayed' were contrasted with the 'developmentally proceeding according to schedule'. Our unfamiliarity with the valorised binarisms in these pairs does not mean they did not exist. Even if the terms did not overtly exist, they exist by implication. Similarly, the construction of adults with disabilities as children infantilised them in a way that was not valued, and made being a child the undesirable half of a binary pair.

With the shift to principles of 'normalisation', there existed by implication, people who needed normalisation, and people who did not need normalisation. One of the more obvious advantages of normalisation however, was that officially at least, people with disabilities were no longer to be considered children, irrespective of their age. The move to establish and maintain 'culturally normative' behaviours and characteristics strongly suggested that age appropriateness should be a high priority when considering education, as well as other service provision.

However, in its consideration that there were people who were at risk of social devaluation, there was an implicit belief that there were people who were not at risk. Normalisation was for deviants: "the basic premise... remains the same, namely, that normative behaviors and images will enhance the social acceptance of mentally handicapped and other deviant groups" (Szivos and Travers, 1988, p.643). Individuals who are deemed not to be in need of normalisation can be as socially unacceptable as they wish.

Despite the changes to the rhetoric and terminology in the period preceding the development and release of the 1984 policy document, through the changes to the Education Act, the release of the Karmel Report, and the publication of the Ministerial papers, none of these policies and acts of Parliament attempts to construct a view of students without reverting to binarisms. No document refers to 'all students', although Ministerial Paper

No.6 avoids binarisms in the actual paper, but makes use of them in the supporting documents designed to facilitate implementation. Although this Ministerial paper attempts to construct all students as alike, its reference to the more 'mature' students reverts to implied binarisms. Even in its statement that it is the government's intention "that all students have access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful and comprehensive and that result in all students improving their educational achievement" (1984, p.12), it is, by omission, forgetting to say "except those who will go to the special schools and have access to a highly diluted curriculum."

Interestingly, despite the noble intent of non-categorisation, the explicit rhetoric of social justice, the challenge to special education outlined in the Collins Report, as well as its contention that the "area of disability and handicap is characterized by conceptual chaos" (1984, p.10), the 1984 policy document did little to change the widespread use of binarisms. Disability and impairment were still used to distinguish students from their age peers, although the report did take the progressive step of placing the student first, and then the disability. However, irrespective of whether reference is made to the 'student with a disability' or the 'disabled student', these students are clearly being contrasted unfavourably with students who do not have disabilities.

The education system then, still separated students into two groups-- those who were not disabled, and those who were. Furthermore, the integration policy, with its antecedents in the Collins Report, actually generated a new binarism-- that of the 'integrated child', as opposed to the student who would normally be expected to be educated in the regular school. It certainly was not a stated intent of the report to do so. Rather, this new

distinction came about as a result of the bureaucratic procedures linked with the allocation of resources and personnel for integration. The establishment of Integration Support Groups for students for whom funding was being sought prompted the labelling of these students as 'integrated children'. In many cases, this choice of label had been a well meaning attempt to avoid using other labels which judge ability or otherwise. The truth cannot be avoided however. There existed a new disability, and a new binarism. What is worse however, is that the term 'integration child' has frequently been applied to students who were never labelled in the first place, but were now considered to be 'at risk'.

Lewis (1989b, p.33) observed that one of the unexpected effects of the Victorian integration policy was the increase in the number of children tagged as disabled, and it seemed that "integration children are in danger of forming a new and

permanent category of disability and being used to legitimise a new period of expansion of special education interests". The Victorian educational community rapidly embraced the term 'integration child', as "one of the local... variants for 'special educational needs'" (Fulcher, 1989, p.14). Students have been suspended from school once this label has been applied, until any additional resources deemed necessary have been made available. As in Britain, one of the consequences of the integration policy "has been to extend a discourse of disability to more children even via such allegedly benevolent labels as 'integration child'. All this language -- integration child, 'special educational needs'-- is of course political and an instance of language as 'both the instrument and object of power' (Codd 1988: 241)" (Fulcher, 1989, p.14). Over 5500 students in Victoria are now labelled as 'integration children'. Before the development of the integration policy, no such disability existed (Lewis, 1988). The authors of the evaluation The first five years of the integration policy in Victoria expressed considerable concern about the way students were being labelled within schools. They objected, for example, to the appropriation of the term 'problems in schooling' by the Ministry in an attempt to label students who were still not fitting into schools. It was Cook et al's perspective that there was still much about schools that was disabling students. It was the system that needed to be changed, not the child. Similarly, they expressed concern about the way children were being labelled as 'integration children' as if something inherent in the student made them in need of labelling. These labels, Cook et al argued, were not for the benefit of the students, but rather were an overt expression of the expansion of special education interests. Labelling students in this way, they contended, made them the domain of special education and special educators, and was antithetical to the anti-categorisation intention of the Collins Report in 1984. The idea of 'problems in schooling' was pivotal to the perspective taken by the Collins Report, and was indicative, in its early manifestation, of a strong paradigmatic shift away from the tendency to blame the students for their disabilities. While the report argued that children who have 'problems in schooling' may also have a disability or impairment, this is not necessarily the case. 'Learning disabilities', for example, may "for certain children, be a misnomer for problems in schooling which emerge from disabling school structures rather than any assumed but unidentifiable impairment a child may be deemed to have." (1984, p.10). The use of 'problems in schooling' was as a strategy to avoid labelling students, and blaming them, when it was really the system that was failing. The term was manipulated from the very beginning however. Teachers and school communities took it as a new disability label, and some saw fit to apply the new label to students who were culturally different from the white Anglo orientation of

education in Victoria. This provided the opportunity for more students to be constructed as disabled. Unfortunately too, the Review failed to give any guidance as to how schools might decrease their disabling effect, and thereby minimise 'problems in schooling'. Collins' memorandum on Integration Support Group Procedures for Regular Schools (August 17, 1987) changed the way 'problems in schooling' was to be perceived in schools, by redefining 'problems in schooling' in its appendices. Collins remarked that despite the efforts of schools "a small percentage of students may still present with 'problems in schooling' that have been long-standing and are considerable in degree and for whom it has been affirmed that continued maintenance in the regular school is at risk." Suddenly, a new and progressive concept had been converted into a discriminatory label that blamed the student for what had previously been constructed as a fault of the system. The pendulum appeared to have begun its swing back to special education.

By the time this memorandum was rereleased as a booklet two years later, the appendix had been replaced by a list of Ministry of Education Regional Offices and Schools Support Centres. However, the first version had been in the schools nearly two years, and the perception of 'problems in schooling' as a deficit, or indicative of resistance in the student, was by then well entrenched. This paradigmatic shift was not overlooked however in the document *The first five years of the integration policy in Victoria*, which was far more consistent with the Review in the way that it viewed and constructed students. The authors objected to the appropriation of the term 'problems in schooling', claiming that there was still much about schools that was disabling students. Furthermore, they recommended that "the term 'problems in schooling' no longer be used as a category for the allocation of integration resources" (1989, p.30)

The evaluation by Cook et al made important observations about the way students were infantilised within the education system in Victoria. It argued, for example, that post primary aged students in special settings should have post primary trained teachers. This says much about the tendency of special education to infantilise students labelled as having disabilities. Teenaged students in special schools have always been taught by primary and special trained teachers. This infantilising was not just confined to education, but extended to all aspects of life for institutionalised people with disabilities, and for many adults living with their families too. In a similar vein, this report objects to the increased number of students over eighteen years who are now being retained in special schools, despite the suggestion that the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system should be made responsible for students over sixteen years, and that the Ministry's responsibility should cease when a student

turns eighteen (and legally becomes an adult). The report suggests:

Those pupils leaving the special school system, and those integrated into the regular schools, should have access to rewarding adult lives, including the right to work. Incentives in the form of preference for contracts or taxation relief may need to be offered by the government to employers willing to employ these students. The government itself should set an example by providing employment opportunities of this type. (1989, p.21)

These authors clearly construct a view of the students as age appropriate; children should be constructed in the way other children are, teenagers should be seen in the same way as all other teenagers, and adults should have the right to be constructed as adults. This view, however, is one that is still uncommon in the field of special education, and integration has much to learn in this area.

Finally, the report from the Auditor-General said much about the

way students with disabilities were to be constructed. This evaluation however, once again shifted towards the deficit model of disability so popular with special educators in this state. The most distinctive way this report constructs the students is in its perspective that students who have been integrated need teachers trained in special education to educate them, and that all such students need additional support. This is very much a construction of the students as disabled, rather than as having disabilities (they are students first, and then impaired), and suggests that students with disabilities need to be educated differently. The report shows no inkling that it may be schools that need to be changed, and that they play a significant rôle in the construction of disability in many students.

Furthermore, the audit sees integration as being about resources, and students therefore as statistics that would be more readily quantifiable had they been categorised in a fashion with which the auditor-general's department was sufficiently familiar.

Without this knowledge, the department feels, it cannot be sure whether the money for integration has been spent well. This is however, only one aspect of the way the audit views students as statistic. It claims for example, that although the number of students who are integrated has risen to over five thousand over the period of the policy, the numbers of students in special schools have not significantly decreased. This is a case of stubborn denial of the facts, for it was clearly indicated to the Auditor-General that several new populations of students had joined the special school ranks. Thus, the over eighteens, and the children from Day Training Centres, who have become the responsibility of the Ministry since the advent of the policy have artificially inflated the figures. The audit however,

prefers to describe all these students as school children, and hence the domain of the Ministry. The Ministry figures show that after discounting the students who have transferred from Day Training Centres, the enrolment of school age students at special schools has decreased by 43.5 %. The way an evaluation constructs the students gives quite a different picture of the success of the program.

These figures were confirmed by the Cullen and Brown report, which reported that in 1991, over 1200 students over the age of eighteen were attending special schools (1992, p.3), and that the 18+ program is currently developing options to meet the needs of these students. So while there was an overall decrease in the number of schools aged students attending special schools (from 5442 in 1984 to 3677 in 1991), the number of adults in special schools actually doubled. This does not give a positive impression of the way adults with disabilities are viewed.

Clearly, they are still being considered as children, despite a decade of progressive policy. Cullen and Brown go on to argue that when the 18+ program removes the adults from the special school system, many special schools will face dwindling enrolments: "28 of the 90 special settings are projected to have seven or fewer students" (1992, p.23) The report then goes on to suggest that rather than close these schools, a preferred option may be to combine them with primary schools. "The idea that a special school might also be part of a regular school illustrates how some of the dichotomies between these two options can and probably will break down over time." (1992, p.23) Indeed. But it also indicates the way teenagers who are still being educated within the special school system will continue to be infantilised.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

Individual subjectivities are constructed by negotiation, consent, contest and coercion. This is nowhere more obvious than in the construction of students within disability. Despite the "struggles against being tied to identities of self that subject... to domination and exploitation" (Gotfrit, 1988, p.28),

individuals who are integrated are constructed by and within discourses that valorise normality, and regard difference as deviance. In the Foucauldian sense, students with disabilities are frequently disciplined and punished for their disabilities, even within policies and education systems that espouse commitment to social justice. To have a disability is to be inscribed as other, and as such, requiring of special attention. The Victorian policy of integrating students with disabilities into regular schools, despite its emancipatory intent, still constructs those students as different, obvious, and in need of additional attention and resources.

Despite all the rhetoric and good intentions of policy developers

in Victoria, students with disabilities are still infantilised, labelled, and devalued. It is time for educators to take on board that disability is purely a cultural construct, and to remember that "social policy emanates from a social context" (Biklen, 1987, p.515). Disabilities as we perceive them are not characteristics of individuals, but rather "the act of others placing a symbol on an individual in the context of social encounters" (Burbach, 1981, quoted in Manion and Bersani, 1987, p.238). To label and devalue is to oppress. Abberley (1987, p.5) argues that "a social theory of disability can best be developed through the use of the concept of oppression" (Abberley, 1987, p.5), and asserts that "the sociology of disability is both theoretically backward and a hindrance rather than a help to disabled people." He argues: "A crucial feature of oppression and the way it operates is its specificity, of form, content and location; so to analyse the oppression of disabled people in part involves pointing to the essential differences between their lives and those of other sections of society, including those who are, in other ways, oppressed." (Abberley, 1987, p.7) The claim that people with disabilities are oppressed acknowledges that they form "a group whose members are in an inferior position to other members of society because they are disabled people." (Abberley, 1987, p.7)

Liggett (1988, p.263) argues that the "politics of disability are usually interpreted as attempts to influence government policy in the direction of reducing the negative effects of impairment." However, it is important to expand conventional ideas in order to consider "how the disabled subject is produced by the discursive practices within which disability is administered." (Liggett, 1988, p.263) Liggett contends "that the politics of disability entails the production and administration of the notion of disability. Becoming conscious of the institutionalized practices in terms of which disability is constituted broadens the arenas within which political strategies can be promoted and legitimated." (1988, p.263)

It is Liggett's concern that people with disabilities should be empowered to act as a minority group that participates in its own decision making, but warns that such an approach necessarily carries with it an enlargement of the discursive practices that work to constitute disability. "In other words, the price of becoming politically active on their own behalf is accepting the consequences of defining disability within new perspectives, which have their own priorities and needs. The new perspectives then become involved in disciplining disability." (Liggett, 1988, p.272) In this way, the oppositions observed by Foucault, between normal society, and the varying forms of deviance, will unfortunately remain unchallenged.

Similarly, Fulcher has argued that the discourse of disability is a discourse of exclusion. Disability, she writes, "denotes deficit, loss, difference, marginality: it contains a logic of

exclusion which, given the institutionalized bases in the educational apparatuses for excluding some children from regular schools, can be deployed whenever someone in power makes a decision which lends itself to the exclusion of that child."

(Fulcher, 1989, p.21) This discourse is very much the wrong choice to inform a policy of integration, and provides little impetus for educators to challenge the further institutionalised hegemony of special education. Such a discourse deflects attention away from "the more appropriate themes of pedagogy and teaching practices" (1989a, p.21), and towards a concern about difference and disability. Rather than reforming the special education, the discourse of disability institutionalises an awareness of difference and deficit.

In order to change the way young people with disabilities are viewed, it seems we need to let go of old ways of knowing and understanding about disability and special education. We need to develop new discourses, new ways of seeing. "Somehow we have to try to start somewhere else, to speak, mean and write outside these limitations on what can (is possible/ is allowed to) be spoken, meant and written." (Threadgold, 1990c, p.2)

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