

FEDERAL/STATE MEDIATIONS
IN THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION AGENDA:
FROM THE AEC TO MCEETYA 1987-1993

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Abstract

Drawing on research interviews with some key participants and relevant document analysis, this paper analyses the changing forms of the national education agenda as it was developed and modified in the Australian Education Council (AEC) from 1987 to 1993. Particular attention is given to four significant developments in this period: national curriculum statements and profiles in schooling, and Mayer competencies; the training reform agenda; higher education; and the National Strategy for Equity in Schools. The study is located against general developments in Australian federalism and the changing political complexion of State governments across the period which led to the creation of the new inter-governmental council in education, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Across the last twenty years or so, there has been a worldwide shift from nation@state based economies to a more borderless, globally integrated economy. This change has in some ways weakened the salience of the nation@state in policy terms. The impact upon the OECD style nations, as described by Cerny (1990), has been a move from the old Keynesian@style welfare state to a new competitive state(2). By this he means that the nation@state itself now almost operates as a business or economic player in a less regulated and less state mediated global economy. The consequence for the OECD economies has been the resurgence of an

old style economic liberalism which gives priority to the market over the state as the chief economic and societal steering mechanism, and a managerialist restructuring of the shape and modus operandi of the state's administrative apparatus. As Pusey (1991, pp.210@211) has stated,

integration with the world economy clearly presupposes a closer functional incorporation of the 'political administrative system' (the state, and with it the obligatory conditions of elected governments) into an augmented economic system.

Specifically, in Australia and mediated to some degree by a social democratic Labor Party ideology, we have seen a resurgent economic rationalism (Pusey, 1991) framing all policy domains including education (Marginson, 1993); and a corporate managerialist revolution inside the state itself (Considine, 1988; Yeatman, 1990). The particularly Labor characteristic of this policy settlement in Australia has been the attempt to co@join the managerialist concern for efficiency and effectiveness with an older Labor agenda about equity (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1993).

The federal political structure in Australia has not been immune from these pressures. Indeed, both economic rationalism and corporate managerialism have precipitated a concerted attempt under national Labor to reconstitute federalism. (See here Galligan, Hughes and Walsh, 1991; Wiltshire, 1992; and Groenewegen, 1994.) That attempt has, of course, been mediated by politics internal to and between the States. The managerialism within the state (at both Federal and State levels) has been characterised by a ministerialisation of policy making and a redefined Minister™bureaucrat relationship; and by governments at all levels pursuing narrower but more tightly controlled policy agendas with a related emphasis on policy outcomes in a situation of limited financial inputs (cf. Offe, 1985). The latter has been manifest in the "more for less" thrust of contemporary public policy. Additionally, the new managerialism has been concerned to eliminate inefficiencies, including lateral duplication of policy coverage. All of these features of the new managerialism have impacted upon federalism and more specifically on the working of federalisms in the

education policy domain.

In this context, Special Premiers' Conferences (SPCs) to consider the possibly more efficient reconstitution of the working of federalism were held in October 1990 and July 1991, while an SPC planned for November 1991 was cancelled, partly because of the leadership challenge from the former Federal Treasurer (1983-1991), Paul Keating, to the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke (1983-1991). Nevertheless, some significant agreements for change emerged, including:

- * establishment of a national market for goods and occupations;
- * national supervisory arrangements for non-bank financial institutions;
- * establishment of a national rail freight corporation;
- * agreement on a national road transport commission;
- * agreement to a national grid for electricity;
- * national performance monitor of government trading enterprises.

(Premier Goss, Queensland Hansard, 12 November 1991, p.2673)

In summary, the SPCs

...sought to rationalise the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the States, to rationalise functional responsibilities between the various levels of government in order to minimise duplication and to improve the economic efficiency of the country through the implementation of wide-ranging micro-economic reforms. (ibid)

The SPCs were driven by Hawke in conjunction with State premiers who sought to rationalise federalism by some rejigging of funding (including revenue powers) and functions. Keating's stance on this issue was a central factor in his leadership challenge to Hawke, who appeared to be happy to return some taxation powers to the States under his new federalism. For Keating, and for many within the Labor caucus, this would have meant an unacceptable weakening of the Federal government's capacity to influence a national policy agenda (Kelly, 1992, p.641). Keating's more centralist tendencies were evident in his National Press Club speech of October, 1991 in the lead up to his successful challenge to Hawke, where he stated:

Next month's Special Premiers' Conference is to be devoted to remedying, among other things, what is now often referred to as "vertical fiscal imbalance".

I have always thought that clumsy term misleading and designed to be

misleading...

The term simply means that the national government raises a great deal of the money that is spent by the States.

To my mind, that is no "imbalance" at all. (Keating, 1991, p.1)

Paradoxically perhaps, John Dawkins, the then Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, attempted to push a more Keating-style federalism in education across the period 1987-1991, while the subsequent Minister, Kim Beazley, took a less dogmatically centralist position, at least in the school sector, under the more centralist Prime Minister, Keating (1991 - present).

At the Heads of Government meeting of May 1992, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) was established, inter alia, to consider ways to increase cooperation amongst levels of government so as to achieve a more efficient national economy and single national market (James, 1992, p.64). Another important goal of COAG as part of the efficiency strategy was to review the number and operation of intergovernmental councils and thus the intergovernmental council in education, the Australian Education Council (AEC), came under review.

The AEC was established in 1936, with the Federal Minister becoming a full member only from 1972. Andy Spaul (1987), in his fifty year history of the AEC, argues that from 1972 the AEC became a forum at which the States largely responded to the Commonwealth's agenda. We would argue that in the period 1987-1993 the AEC has been substantially affected by the broader policy culture alluded to above and was the site at which the Commonwealth, particularly through Minister Dawkins (1987-1991) supported by the ACTU and the predominance of Labor States (particularly South Australia and Victoria) sought to pursue something of a national agenda in education.

Prior to 1987, the idea of national collaboration in curriculum had already been pursued by the AEC through the Directors-General. Partly as a response to this situation, the AEC Ministers sought to take control of these developments. The 57th AEC meeting (June 1988, Darwin) established a review of the AEC secretariat, while the intransigence of the new Liberal New South Wales Education Minister, Dr Terry Metherell (attending his first meeting following the defeat of the New South Wales Labor government), to the national agenda resulted in a Ministers-only session at this meeting in

an effort to achieve some political consensus. A consequence as noted below, was the significant weakening of the policy influence of the Directors-General vis-à-vis the AEC. From that time, the Ministers would seek to control initiatives in national collaborative developments. It should also be noted that the 57th AEC marked the end of the prior Labor dominance which was replaced with an even balance of Labor and non-Labor Ministers.

Hence, where previously the AEC had functioned more as a forum for discussion, the increasing ministerialisation of policy formation saw it become a more significant policy body. This change is evidenced in the "Ministers only" segments and increased frequency of subsequent meetings. Also facilitating this development was the shift from teacher@professional Directors@General to managerial Chief Executive Officers within some State bureaucracies, and the concurrent predominance of generic managers and economists in the Federal shift to the new mega@Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). Additionally, across this time the number of political advisers to Ministers attending the AEC meetings increased. There was also a political and economic character to the Commonwealth's educational agenda pursued at the AEC, notably the goal of developing an integrated quasi@national system across the sectors of education and across State boundaries to the desired end of producing a multiskilled, flexible workforce. Education policy was framed by the broader goals of economic reform and facilitated by the processes of ministerialisation referred to above.

In Labor Essays 1983, Dawkins and Costello (1983) argued that a national presence in education was required by Labor governments for economic and equity reasons. On this point they stated:

Thus these two great themes, the need to take control of our own economic destiny and the need to give expression to our vision of a just and equal society provide the settings in which the education policies of the federal Labor government have been conceived. By their very nature, these objectives require of the Labor government that it provides new forms of national leadership in education. This is a task which goes beyond the provision of grants of money to schools, school authorities and tertiary institutions. It requires the national government to be concerned with objectives of education and the structures through which it is provided and with the adequacy of our total educational efforts. (Dawkins & Costello, 1983, p.68)

While the focus of the earlier Labor government under Gough Whitlam (1972@1975) in education was on equality and increasing resources for schooling, the focus under Hawke/Keating was upon outcomes from all levels of education. Education was now reconceptualised as part of the broader micro@economic reform agenda without any increase in funding. A central intent was to produce a multiskilled and flexible workforce as part of the non@tariff protected integration of the Australian economy with the global one. As part of that agenda, a Ministerial Council of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) was created in 1990, and from October 1991 met jointly with the AEC. This structural rearrangement was intended to integrate policy across all sectors of education with a greater emphasis on training and the needs of industry. In this context, the commissioning of the Finn and Mayer Reports on postcompulsory education by the AEC is particularly significant. The Carmichael Report on the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System, though developed through the Employment and Skills Formation Council, was also discussed within the

AEC/MOVEET.

The AEC (and from 1991, AEC/MOVEET) was one site on which the Federal Labor government pursued this national agenda in education and training.

However, the politics of the AEC and MOVEET, the very structure of federalism itself and attempts to reconstitute it, together with the changing political complexion of governments at the State level, have in varying degrees, mediated the achievement of this agenda. Other important mediating factors included the policy and strategic (as opposed to system management) roles of the Commonwealth in schooling. This allows the Commonwealth to focus on policy formation, while the States actually have to run the schools. The different federalisms operating in each of the schooling, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and university sectors, and the related and different Federal@State funding arrangements in each of these sectors (Lingard, O'Brien, Knight, 1993) should also be noted. Thus, for example, from the Whitlam era the Commonwealth provided almost all of the public funds for universities, but it still only provides about 11% of the funds for public schools. More recently it has sought a stronger policy presence in TAFE through the federalist structure of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the earlier offer of full federal funding from Prime Minister Paul Keating's (1992, pp.55@57, 165) One Nation package. However, the creation of the federalist, as opposed to Commonwealth controlled, ANTA is a witness to Keating's failure to engineer a Commonwealth takeover of TAFE parallel to the Commonwealth takeover of the universities under Whitlam in 1974.

Indeed, it could be said that the AEC mediated the Commonwealth agenda so that it became more of a national agenda. In that context, for example, the strategic placement of "collaborative" between "national" and "curriculum" in all AEC minutes and documents is significant. Furthermore, the federalist character of the recently created (December, 1993) Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) to replace the AEC/MOVEET (and also incorporating Youth Ministers) is an indication of that very mediation at work. (MCEETYA met for the first time in April 1994 in Sydney.) In many ways the July 1993 69th AEC/MOVEET meeting in Perth slowed down, and changed the character of the national agenda in education (Bartlett, Knight, Lingard, Porter, forthcoming). The presence of a majority of non™Labor State governments was centrally important in that process. While the Commonwealth preferred option for the new ministerial council was a Commonwealth funded and chaired body, as with MOVEET, the negotiations which ensued between the July Perth and December 1993 Hobart meetings resulted in a Council which was to be funded and run in a federalist fashion similar to the AEC which it replaced. Here, it is significant to note that its Secretariat will be employed by the Curriculum Corporation of Australia (CCA), a limited company run by the State and Federal Ministers. (NSW finally became a member of the CCA in 1993.) This is another important signifier of the mediation of the national agenda and the impact of the increasing number of

non-Labor State governments with a Federal Labor government.

Despite these political and structural shifts, however, the reality now is that even the most strident of States' Rights advocates (for example the new Liberal Minister for Education in Western Australia) accept the need for at least a degree of national collaboration across the sectors of education. As one interviewee in our research (a former Labor State Minister for Education), put it, we now have at least a 'minimalist commitment to a minimalist national agenda'. To that extent, John Dawkins (with the support of State Labor Ministers and benefiting from a lengthy period of federal Labor) was successful in shaping a new conceptual and policy terrain in Australian education.

In what follows, we document and analyse specific areas of collaborative development pursued or achieved by the AEC and later AEC/MOVEET from 1987 to 1993, along with a general assessment of the achievements in this era in the light of our perception of the original "Dawkins national agenda". We then attempt a preliminary evaluation of the current situation, with

particular attention to the implications and consequences of the rejigging of intergovernmental agencies in the shift from AEC/MOVEET to MCEETYA in the context of the changed politics of Federal-State relations. Thus, to some extent the subtext of this paper is concerned with the impediments to the creation of a national system of education within a federal political structure, particularly one, as with Australia, where the second tier (the States) manages the schooling system. It is equally important to recognise the impediments to individual State systems pursuing their own agendas without reference to the national context. A crucial factor here is the greater capacity of the Commonwealth, vis-à-vis the States, for revenue raising. What this means is a tension between the financial strength of the Commonwealth and the fiscal needs of the States in the provision of education and other services, a situation usually referred to as "vertical fiscal imbalance". This became particularly significant in the post-1987 Dawkins context when the Commonwealth was cutting grants to the States. Another interesting point here is the fact that the financial strength of the Federal government means that issues to do with constitutional responsibilities for education are seldom debated at the AEC.

2. MEDIATING THE NATIONAL AGENDA:

In the section above we placed quotation marks around the Dawkins national agenda. This was to indicate that there was not a simple unified coherent agenda for the long-term integration of schooling, TAFE and training, and universities across State boundaries across the nation. Rather, the different federalisms operating in each sector, and the internal complexities of the state, mediated the possibility of such an agenda. Thus for example, John Dawkins as Federal Minister clearly had a national agenda for higher education, evident in the creation of the Unified

National System, and linked to the fact that the Commonwealth was the major funder. In TAFE and training, he also had an agenda first evidenced when he was Minister for Trade in for example the report, Australia Reconstructed (ACTU/TDC, 1987). In the schooling domain, federalism operated in a different fashion. From the late 1960s, there had been some collaborative curriculum development. In mid-1986, the Standing Committee of Directors-General (of the AEC) established a committee to look at national collaborative curriculum development. It would appear that the AEC, via John Dawkins in conjunction with State Labor Education Ministers from South Australia and Victoria, sought to take control of a national schooling agenda from the middle of 1988. "Take control", in this context, meant strengthening the hand of the Ministers' forum as opposed to that of the Directors-General. The Dawkins publication of Strengthening Australia's Schools (1988) later in that year was one indication of that development. Another result of this process was the 60th AEC Hobart Declaration (April 1989) on Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia.

There is a set of very complex politics surrounding the AEC. It sits in an interesting relationship to the Conference of Directors-General and the Standing Committees of the AEC and the AEC Secretariat. Thus while there are clearly Minister/Director-General relationships within a State, there are also Director-General/Director-General, Minister/Minister, Minister/Director-General and Director-General/Minister relationships which work across State boundaries prior to, during, and after Standing Committee and AEC meetings. The Commonwealth DEET bureaucracy also has an interesting and on-going day to day relationship with each of the State bureaucracies. The multiple AEC working parties and committees operate in ways which tend to advantage the Commonwealth. As one senior State bureaucrat said in a research interview:

This tangled network of committees is a source of great strength to the

Commonwealth, since there is a common core of senior bureaucrats who attend all those meetings whereas States tend to have different people from different ministries, conceivably with different agendas of their own.

Another relevant factor is what Margaret Archer (1985, p. 40) has referred to as 'high education politics', that is, the role of the personalities of the specific individuals involved in this complex melange of relationships. A good example, mentioned by many of those who were interviewed, was Dawkins' "crash through or crash" approach to educational change.

Reflecting this complexity, and prior to discussing specific areas of development, many of which involve some form of collaboration between State and Federal governments, it is worthwhile keeping in mind recurring themes or emphases embedded in the terms "national" and "collaboration" when

discussing "new" developments. Firstly, the term "national" does not mean Commonwealth as in Commonwealth Government which has positioned itself in a number of ways strategically in the promotion of its objectives and agenda. Its position has shifted as new areas such as the national curriculum statements and profiles have emerged. Neither does national mean standardised as, for example, in a "teacher-proof" curriculum. In the Australian context national has a more organic meaning variously consisting of the following elements: the highest level of abstraction or consensus; the lowest common denominator or consensus; derived from constituent individuals or groups; and inclusive of all constituent units.

The Commonwealth through its agency, the Commonwealth Schools Commission (abolished in 1987), first defined the idea of national in its National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987). It suggested that a national policy: addresses matters of concern to the nation as a whole; adopts a comprehensive approach; is based on principles of collaboration; and involves commitment and agreement from various parties (including the Commonwealth). More specifically, that policy document observes:

There is a necessary distinction between Commonwealth and national policies in education. Commonwealth policies relate specifically to the objectives of the Commonwealth Government, such as those addressed through the Commonwealth's general resources programs and its specific purpose programs. In contrast, a national policy in education addresses matters of concern to the nation as a whole in which a comprehensive approach to policy development and implementation is adopted by school and system authorities across the nation. A national policy, based on principles of collaboration and partnership, necessarily involves commitment and agreement from the various parties responsible for schooling, including Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and non-government school authorities. (p.11)

The semantic complexity surrounding the notion of national developments as opposed to the pursuit of a Commonwealth agenda should be considered as well as the structural and relational complexities in the workings of the AEC. It appears that considerable contestation has gone on over national agendas in education, indicating that to some extent the semantic shift from "Commonwealth" to "national" was something of a (perhaps surreptitious) political strategy pursued by the Commonwealth to achieve its own agenda. Debates at the AEC over the national agenda were basically about the "form" of collaboration between the Commonwealth and the States, and over what is "defined" as national and by whom. Thus, while "national" might be different from "Commonwealth", further mediations of the national occur at the AEC.

The term "collaboration" also has a high semantic overload: it has been used by the Commonwealth in an attempt to incorporate the States into its own agenda; it has also been used by the States to resist this process and

to assert their primacy in determining schooling policy. With this in mind, it is probably more meaningful to talk about "types" of collaboration in theorising federalisms in education policy. For example, collaboration can mean avoidance of duplication, a means to cost effectiveness and efficiency, consensus on national priorities, sharing of expertise and responsibility, a strategy to ensure quality and equity, a response to the diminished school curriculum development capacities of the States, a strategy by the States to resist Commonwealth agendas, and a strategy by the Commonwealth to achieve its agenda.

In what follows, we discuss, albeit briefly, four recent developments which reflect different forms of collaboration and types of federalism. They are:

- * the national curriculum statements and profiles in schooling and the Mayer competencies;
- * the training reform agenda;
- * the role of higher education;
- * the national strategy for equity in schooling.

3. NATIONAL CURRICULUM STATEMENTS AND PROFILES IN SCHOOLING AND THE MAYER COMPETENCIES

At the 69th AEC meeting (July 1993 Perth), a dramatic shift in the national agenda occurred. The AEC voted along party lines, after a heated party political debate in which the then Federal Minister Beazley attacked the States for their "rail gauge mentality", to stop the work of all AEC/MOVEET committees and working parties. This had the effect of slowing work on national collaboration in curriculum, profiles and key competencies and of returning power over the agenda to the States. More specifically, the minutes (AEC Minutes, July 1993) on items 2 (Postcompulsory education and training) and 6 (National collaboration on curriculum) 'referred these matters back to the States and Territories for further review involving consultation with their own educational communities, so that each State and Territory could determine if the initiatives should be proceeded with' (p.2). 'AEC/MOVEET noted that this resolution implied neither endorsement nor rejection by all States and Territories of the Key Competencies or National Outcome Statements or Profiles' (p.3) with Queensland, South Australia, ACT and the Commonwealth having their dissent recorded.

As early as June 1985, the Conference of Directors@General had considered a NewSouth Wales paper on responsibilities and roles of the Commonwealth, States and schools in curriculum development. At the same time the AEC meeting discussed a Western Australian paper entitled The National Curriculum. In September 1986 the Conference of Directors@General examined a paper titled National Collaborative Effort in Curriculum Development in Australia. Subsequently in July 1988 the 58th AEC agreed to a "curriculum

mapping" exercise (ie, a documentation of existing curricula in the various States), and at the same meeting resolved to prepare a statement of agreed goals for schooling. In October of that year at the 59th AEC Melbourne meeting, there was consideration of a draft statement on the national goals which stressed that such a document would be useful for further cooperation and collaboration between the States, and to assist the development of specific objectives by each system.

The April 1989 Hobart 60th AEC agreed that the curriculum mapping project

would look first at the maths curriculum, then technology, science and English literature. The Curriculum Corporation of Australia was also established for future implementation purposes, while the historic Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia were endorsed. As the minutes of this meeting indicate, the AEC agreed to promote higher levels of cooperation in curriculum development for effectiveness and efficiency reasons through 'the sharing of knowledge and scarce curriculum development resources across systems' and to 'remove unnecessary differences in curriculum between systems' (AEC Minutes, April 1989, p.9).

In Canberra, June 1990, the 62nd AEC specified that the National Policy for the Education of Girls should be used as 'one of the terms of reference for the writing of curriculum statements issued by the AEC' (AEC Minutes, June 1990, p.6). At the 63rd December 1990 Adelaide meeting the terms of reference for the Finn Review were established. These included a consideration of 'appropriate national curriculum principles designed to enable all young people, including those with special needs, to develop key competencies, with the associated implications for curriculum development, initial teacher preparation and continuing professional development' (AEC Minutes, December 1990, p.9). At the 64th April 1991 Adelaide AEC meeting the eight areas of learning for national collaborative curriculum (English, mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, LOTE, the arts, technology, health) were approved. At the 65th AEC Melbourne August 1991 the AEC established the Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) to replace the roles performed by the Directors of Curriculum and the Australasian Co-operative Assessment Program (ACAP) in national curriculum. Significantly, the AEC agreed that the priority for CURASS was to develop a framework for national collaborative curriculum development in order to link curriculum mapping, AEC curriculum statements, and reporting, using profiling. (Reporting refers to the desire to produce annual national reports on Australian schooling; profiling refers to a descriptive form of assessment.)

The report from the AEC Schools Working Party which resulted from the October 1990 Special Premiers' Committee affirmed support for national collaboration in education, but argued 'that Commonwealth involvement in the operational management of any shared responsibility programs should be reduced to the greatest possible extent, whilst ensuring that national objectives are able to be met' (AEC Minutes, August 1991, p.5). In

addition, it was at this 65th AEC meeting 1991 that the Finn Report was tabled, noted, and released. A steering committee (formalised as the Mayer Committee in the October 1991 66th AEC) was also established to further explore the key competencies. In an attempt to refocus CURASS, the AEC Standing Committee (Schools) meeting of May 1992 appointed the New South Wales Director-General, Dr Ken Boston as the new chair. This was an attempt to ensure the commitment of States to the national process while leaving the implementation timeline as a States' prerogative. It was observed in research interviews by several senior level State bureaucrats that State commitment to this exercise was partially an important defence mechanism to obviate the possibility of rigid national testing and the possibility of the Finn (and Carmichael) agenda dominating schooling.

In the Auckland 68th AEC September 1992, the Mayer Key Competencies Report was tabled, and a definition and list of "essential" key competencies for effective participation in work were endorsed: viz, collecting, analysing and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; solving problems; and using technology. Queensland reserved its position, arguing the need for "cultural understanding" as an additional competency, while New South Wales and Western Australia also expressed the view that the list might need to be expanded. (There were a variety of other areas of competence which had been

discussed for inclusion.)

The outcomes of the July 1993 Perth meeting of the AEC/MOVEET with respect to curriculum statements, profiles and competencies were influenced by three agendas. (See Bartlett, Knight, Lingard & Porter, forthcoming.) First, the non-endorsement of the national curriculum statements, profiles and Mayer competencies may be seen as a "face saving" exercise by the coalition governments. The new non-Labor government in Victoria, pressured inter alia by the University of Melbourne and its Vice-Chancellor, had made commitments to reject the profile statements, although the other non-Labor States were more supportive. To extricate the Victorian government from its predicament, Virginia Chadwick, the New South Wales Liberal Education Minister, linked the statements, profiles and competencies in the one motion so that they stood or fell together. The concerns of many of the States over aspects of the Mayer competencies were such that the national implementation process was thus halted. However, the message broadcast by coalition States was that they wanted "more time", an indication that all other things being equal, the profiles would be approved (as they were) at the December final meeting of the AEC, (which included the ministers who would be included in the new ministerial council, MCEETYA), but with the balance of power now shifted to the States. Implementation will now proceed via bilateral relations between the States and the CCA.

Second, it is important to recognise that the decision to reject the national curriculum statements, profiles and competencies was based on

party political persuasions with Coalition States versus Labor States. (The subsequent change in government in South Australia has exacerbated this imbalance.) Queensland, although a Labor State, was (and continues to be) not particularly disposed to aspects of the Commonwealth's agenda where issues of States' Rights are involved. In this changing context, the Commonwealth will have increasing difficulty in implementing its curriculum agenda. Non-endorsement of the national curriculum statements, profiles and competencies was a clear message to the Commonwealth by the States that they would not be dictated to, rather than a direct rejection of the profiles, statements, and competencies per se.

Third, the States have always indicated they wanted to develop curriculum statements and profiles of some kind but, by themselves, for their States. The national curriculum statements and profiles have now become a "show and tell" exercise. The States' intent was that any notion of testing to be implemented in education should be confined within States. (New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland are well advanced in this area.) Their "problem" was that the Commonwealth "controlled" funds to develop statements, profiles and competencies. At the same time, to develop them within a State is very costly. This is particularly true given the substantial demise of curriculum branches following State restructurings. Hence, it was argued that if the development of curriculum statements and profiles for a large number of students grouped by year/age and levels of achievement in each State were controlled by the States, but assisted and funded by the Commonwealth, then a commitment by States and a national "picture" might emerge. It was also the case that collaborative development of statements and profiles was a defensive mechanism heading off any possible move to rigid national testing.

The background context to the decision to reject the national curriculum and profile statements at the July 1993 meeting should not be overlooked. There was a desire by Ministers to appropriate the discussion, the agenda and decision processes from Directors-General, as well as from chief advisers and policy staff who, in the past, have had a significant influence on the outcomes of AEC/MOVEET meetings. States have also aimed to reduce the size of their bureaucracies (a reflection of their fidelity to corporate managerialist and economic rationalist policies). They also

wished to streamline procedures in the decision-making processes within the AEC and to reduce the number of subcommittees. These three areas of ministerial concern represented the changing face of collaboration in the context of changing party political persuasions within the former AEC which met for the last time in Hobart in December 1993, and MCEETYA, which met for the first time in Sydney in April 1994.

With regard to the Mayer key competencies, the States were not opposed to the idea of competencies provided they could develop and implement them within their individual States. They were opposed to the nationally imposed Mayer competencies and to any national testing potentially

associated with them. The Mayer competencies were also seen to be too cumbersome in their implementation. The costliness of implementation was exacerbated by the fact that many State Ministers argued that the Mayer competencies were already being "done" within their schools. Queensland had always been "cold" about the industrial and work related nature of the competencies and the narrow conception of skills informing them. It insisted on a broader conception of competence and the inclusion of cultural understanding, a competency which has now been added. It may be argued that States were generally satisfied with the development of their own competencies for their own purposes.

The most significant reason, however, for the rejection of the Mayer competencies at the Perth July 1993 AEC/MOVEET meeting was the States' rejection of what they saw as the Commonwealth's hidden agenda to introduce a form of national testing through the Mayer competencies. The Commonwealth has always wanted some form of national testing of schools for comparison across States. The States have always seen this as an intrusion into their constitutional rights to provide education and their right to test educational achievement according to "their" agenda.

The problem for the Commonwealth is that it has already expended large sums of money on the development of the Mayer competencies. After the July AEC/MOVEET Perth meeting, the Commonwealth vigorously negotiated with States to find a solution to this impasse. The States on the other hand, while rejecting the Mayer competencies, remain reluctant to see the millions of dollars potentially available to them, returned to consolidated (Federal) revenue. The counter argument by the States has been that the funds may be more appropriately used for further development of the national curriculum and profile statements for schools.

One subsequent strategy used by the Commonwealth has been to bypass the States in distributing finance. In funding the development of competencies the Commonwealth is directly allocating funds (\$60m) to professional associations. This kind of fiscal strategy is one way the Commonwealth attempts to effect its own objectives and achieve a national agenda outside of AEC negotiations. States' responses to these situations vary from outright resistance (eg, Western Australia and Victoria) to reluctant acceptance (eg, Queensland). For example, recently Victoria and Western Australia have drawn on the States' Rights argument to oppose the funding of the National Mathematics Association to develop key competencies in Mathematics. Yet on the issue of funding a national principals' association for professional development, States such as Queensland appear to have little concern.

At the December 1993 AEC meeting, the State Ministers agreed that information should be gathered on the approaches taken by the States and Territories on national curriculum statements and profiles and competencies with a report going to the first meeting of the new Ministerial Council (MCEETYA) in 1994. This development indicates the new States-driven agenda.

4. THE TRAINING REFORM AGENDA

As early as 1987 the AEC expressed interest in the issues of the articulation of upper secondary, TAFE and university education. Concern about the Federal government's motives in establishing a task force on education and training 'without TAFE involvement and without consultation with the systems responsible for delivering education and training' (AEC Minutes, 31 August @ 4 September 1987, pp.26@27) also emerged at the 54th AEC meeting. The AEC resolved 'to stress the need for Commonwealth funding authorities at all times to recognise the TAFE sector as an integral component of State tertiary education systems' (ibid., p.27).

At the 58th July 1988 AEC meeting in Melbourne, training issues were among those considered in the context of Minister John Dawkins' tabled paper, Strengthening Australia's Schools. At the 59th meeting in October, a Working Party on the Links between Schools and TAFE was set up which subsequently reported to the 62nd meeting in June 1990. Its recommendations were endorsed and the need to develop policy in this area confirmed. As a result a Working Party in Post@Compulsory Education and Training was established. At the same meeting, national progress on competency™based training (CBT) was noted. In Adelaide at the 63rd December 1990 meeting the terms of reference and membership of what became known as the Finn Committee (after Brian Finn, Chair of IBM) were endorsed. The consideration of post@compulsory education was to include participation targets, national curriculum principles, principles for key competencies, links, roles, barriers, career education and resources. The Finn Report was tabled at the 65th August 1991 AEC meeting and was subsequently released for comment. At the same time it was observed that further work on the key competencies was necessary and a Working Party chaired by Eric Mayer (Chair of the Business/Higher Education Round Table and former CEO of National Mutual) was established to pursue this area. However, research interviews indicated that the Directors@General were more concerned about the Finn recommendations than were their Ministers. It appeared that the Directors@General were supportive of a broader liberal conception of schooling, while Ministers of all political persuasions tended to be supportive of a more vocationally oriented schooling. There were also differing opinions, particularly between New South Wales and Victoria, on the appropriate length of schooling (ten versus twelve years) in relation to TAFE provision. Some States were concerned that one effect of Finn would be an earlier streaming into vocational as opposed to academic routes for students. Another underlying issue was the balance of growth across schooling, TAFE and university (an issue subsequently referred to the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET)).

From the October 1991 66th AEC Melbourne meeting, the Ministers for Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) met jointly with the AEC. Training issues took on greater significance after this. The 18th October 1991 AEC/MOVEET meeting (reconvened 8 November) was dominated by the

culmination of the consideration of various training concerns. The need to provide Ministers with advice for the SPCs was also an incentive to deliberate these issues. At the 66th meeting the links between schools, TAFE, and employment became apparent and were a focus. For example, it was decided that school/TAFE articulation and credit transfer arrangements would be included in the Annual National Report on Schooling. It was also at this meeting that issues previously discussed only by MOVEET became general agenda issues for the Education Ministers as well, for example, reports from the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Council (VEETAC) and the National Office for Overseas Skill Recognition (NOOSR). In this way the AEC/MOVEET became increasingly central to policy across what had previously been more distinct sectors.

As noted previously, the 66th meeting was also the first major discussion of the Finn recommendations. The Ministers endorsed the report in principle and all States agreed to a new national goal of universal

participation in post compulsory education and training so that by the year 2001, 95 percent of 19 year olds will have completed Year 12 or other initial post@school qualifications, or will be still participating. A very wide variety of other recommendations from Finn and other issues was discussed, with most being consigned to further working parties or to other bodies for comment, including the Special Premiers' Conference.

Research interviews and documents have indicated that the 66th meeting was a tumultuous occasion set against a backdrop of Keating's mounting challenge to Hawke for leadership of the Labor Party and framed by politics of new federalism and SPCs. Some evidence suggests that during this meeting the Commonwealth made a bid to take over TAFE from the States. Such a bid was vehemently rejected by the States. For example in press releases by Mike Rann, Minister of Employment and Further Education in South Australia, he stated:

South Australia will reject any East German centralist model for TAFE. TAFE must be able to respond quickly to industry and community needs. The last thing our TAFE system needs is to become a colonial outpost for the clammy hand of Canberra's DEET bureaucracy. (Mike Rann, Media Release, 16 October 1991)

South Australia today rejected a bid by the Commonwealth to take over control of TAFE training by the States. South Australia was joined by other States and Territories in rejecting a hastily prepared take@over move by Commonwealth Employment Education and Training Minister John Dawkins... We are committed to working to ensure a strong national system of vocational training. But we will not allow our TAFE college network in South Australia to be transformed into a gray, sluggish bureaucracy that responds to Canberra on whim rather than on local industry need. That is why it was important today to foil Canberra's raiders. (Mike Rann, Media Release, 18 October, 1991)

An ongoing concern for the States from this time was the question of the appropriate boundary between TAFE and schools if TAFE funding was to be taken over by the Commonwealth. A concern of Rann and others was that this move would pre-empt discussion and decisions to be taken at the forthcoming SPC. In his press releases, Rann also noted that the focus ought to be on expanded training provision for all, youth unemployment, and increased Commonwealth funding overall. Subsequently, after Keating became Prime Minister, one of his first moves was to produce the One Nation policy statement which included a proposed Commonwealth take-over of TAFE. The political compromise actually reached was the creation of the federalist Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). ANTA's brief was agreed to at the December 1993 AEC/MOVEET meeting.

At the 67th June 1992 AEC/MOVEET meeting the Ministers endorsed (with some reservation by Tasmania) the Carmichael Report's Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (AVCTS). As noted in the minutes:

Ministers agreed that the Report should be seen as a natural progression in the development of strategies emerging from the Deveson and Finn Reports, the establishment of the National Training Board (NTB), and the development and implementation of a competency based training system in Australia'. (AEC Minutes, June 1992, p.3)

At the 68th September 1992 Auckland meeting, the AEC/MOVEET also discussed the Mayer Report with Queensland still arguing for cultural understandings to be included, as mentioned earlier.

There are yet many unresolved tensions within States and between States and Federal agendas in this area, for example, there are different relationships between schooling and TAFE from State to State. These

tensions will continue to be played out in relationships amongst and between MCEETYA, the ANTA Ministerial Council, the ANTA Board, State TAFE administrations, and DEET. However, research interviews have indicated that there exists more of a national consensus on the training reform agenda than is the case for the schooling domain or TAFE-higher education links. This is probably the case for a number of reasons. They include the TAFE Directors' views that they have been underfunded at the State level, a general perception that training has direct links to economic well being which is a focus of national level policy, and an acceptance of the need for national portability of training qualifications. Amongst other factors were Commonwealth dependence upon States' advice, the movement of officials between Commonwealth and State offices, the TAFE sector's welcome of being a focus of policy attention, and the extent of personnel and portfolio restructurings at the States level which probably limited the capacity for organised opposition.

5. HIGHER EDUCATION

Federalism in higher education underwent a significant change in 1974 when under Whitlam the States gave the financial responsibility for higher education to the Federal government, while retaining the constitutional provision for establishment and oversight. As a result the Federal government has not needed to "negotiate" collaboration to the same degree as in the schooling and TAFE sectors and has been freer to pursue reform in higher education on its own terms. Smart (1991) refers to this as 'coercive federalism'. Yet the States have remained sensitive to what they see as their legislative responsibilities in the higher education sector. The 1987 54th AEC meeting laid out the States' view on this matter in a way which characterised the AEC's perspective for the entire period under discussion:

Council, recognising the constitutional responsibility of the States for education at all levels, and the funding role of the Commonwealth government, re@ndorsed its decision of the 52nd (October 1985) AEC meeting in respect of the Commonwealth/States interaction in the planning of higher education in the following terms, namely that the Commonwealth should:

a acknowledge that the wishes of each State with respect to the development of its tertiary system should be treated as the most important source of advice about needs at the State level during the triennial planning process;

b negotiate a final decision with the States concerned where the wishes of the States are mutually incompatible or inconsistent with agreed major national objectives or constraints;

c follow a planning process and timetable which would give the necessary emphasis to State views and which would facilitate educational provision within the States in accordance with those views; and

d communicate, at the final stage in the decision@making process, its proposed decisions to relevant State governments to enable reaction before such decisions are finalised. (54th AEC Minutes, 31 Aug @ 4 Sept, 1987)

Within this power framework, higher education issues have been discussed regularly by the AEC. At the same 1987 meeting the AEC expressed its opposition to the principle of the Commonwealth imposing an administration

fee in higher education. They also began a discussion of the binary system as a result of a paper from Western Australia and agreed to a series of principles as a basis for a modified system which would clearly indicate the demise of the binary framework within which CAEs and universities

operated. Later in November 1987 (the first meeting attended by Minister Dawkins and following a statement by him) there was discussion of the issues confronting the structure and operation of post-secondary education. These included the relationship of different kinds of post-secondary education with funding and accreditation policies, the need to provide more places in tertiary education, the problems with the binary system, and the roles that could be played by the States and the Commonwealth. The AEC also agreed to endorse a proposal to undertake a Joint Review of Teacher Education.

The 56th AEC meeting held in Melbourne in February, 1988 involved a major discussion of Dawkins' Green Paper on higher education. Council agreed to the general concepts underlying the paper: 'the need for growth in enrolments and graduates; the need for higher education system to operate in the most efficient manner possible; and the need to ensure quality of teaching and research' (AEC Minutes, Feb 1988, pp 203). Reservations were expressed on other areas. Discussion on restructuring higher education continued during the 57th June 1988 meeting with additional comment on the recently available Wran Report, which was finally implemented as the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. The States were concerned that any revenue generated under this scheme or any future system based on Wran be discussed with them, and that funds so gathered be reimbursed to the States appropriately.

Discussion on the White Paper on higher education continued at the 59th October 1988 AEC meeting. At the 60th meeting in April 1989 there was again a series of resolutions about the need for Commonwealth consultation with the States on major issues, planning and proposals. It was also agreed to establish a Register of Australian Tertiary Education to: develop a framework and principles for the accreditation of awards in tertiary education; to establish a set of national guidelines for course classification, length and nomenclature; and to form a single register of authorities to accredit tertiary course awards. At this meeting a working party to review teacher education (chaired by Dr. Fred Ebbeck, Director, Office of Tertiary Education, South Australia) was established in response to the substantial national and State changes going on at all levels of education with implications for teachers. At the 62nd June 1990 Canberra meeting the AEC responded to the well publicised problems with unsatisfactory provision for overseas students, by endorsing national minimum standards for the approval of institutions/courses in this area.

In December 1990, the AEC met in Adelaide at its 63rd meeting and considered a wide number of reports on teacher education, including the Schools Council's Teacher Quality: An Issues Paper, the Speedy Report, Discipline Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science, the Ebbeck Report, Teacher Education in Australia and others. (For a fuller account of developments in teacher education across this period, see Knight, Bartlett and McWilliam, 1993 and for an account of federalism and teacher education policy see Bartlett, Knight and Lingard, 1991.) The Ministers then adopted the following resolution:

Council acknowledges the need for immediate and sustained improvement in the quality of entrants to and graduates from teacher education programs within the current level of resources available for pre-service teacher education, together with greater efficiency in teacher education programs and recognition arrangements for teacher education qualifications. (AEC Minutes, December 1990, p.5)

At the same 1990 meeting the Council considered a paper from the Commonwealth as a follow up to the SPC to set up a Working Party on Higher Education to address possible duplications and inefficiencies in Commonwealth/State provision. The respective roles of the Commonwealth and the States in higher education were to be examined taking into account principles for assigning roles and responsibilities from the SPC, including the balance of national, State and/or Territory and regional interests and objectives; which level of government could achieve the most efficient system and best outcomes for clients; and the scope for introducing different funding mechanisms such as block funding, or direct funding from the Commonwealth to institutions. This SPC initiative was brought back to the 64th April 1991 meeting where it was agreed that higher education should be classified as a Shared Responsibility Program in which the responsibilities would be shared as follows:

the Commonwealth would have primary responsibility for funding higher education and with that, the attendant responsibilities for determining national policies, objectives and priorities, the administration of funds and accountability through the profiles process for the use of public funds; and the States would have responsibility for developing State objectives within the framework of national priorities, and legislative responsibility for the establishment and oversight of institutions and the maintenance of standards through controls on the use of terms such as 'university' and 'degree'. The States would ensure that institutions meet the reporting obligations and financial management and accounting standards for public authorities. (AEC Minutes, April, 1991, p. 14)

One consequence of these discussions can be seen in the November 1992 Higher Education Funding Amendment Act (No.2) in which direct Federal funding of institutions was introduced:

In the context of the 1991 review of Commonwealth-State relations, all Governments agreed that the funding mechanism for higher education should reflect the reality, that universities are part of a national system of higher education and the Commonwealth has primary responsibility for the public funding of that system. There was agreement that direct funding from the Commonwealth to higher institutions is appropriate to improve accountability and transparency of the Commonwealth to the electorate. (Peter Baldwin, Minister for Higher Education, Second Reading Speech, 4 November 1992)

An interesting consequence of this situation can be seen in the paradox that, as the Federal government has worked to systematise higher education and pull its activities closer to national economic goals, in a period of declining public and increasing private resources to higher education, it has reduced its long-term capacity to direct the institutions. Jane Marceau (1993) has referred to this and the profiling process, as well as the accountability emphasis on outcomes, as steering from a distance.

While the thrust of the Finn Report, tabled at the September, 1991 AEC/MOVEET meeting, was more directed at school retention and an expansion of training, it was obvious that it might also lead to increased student numbers in higher education. At the September, 1992 meeting, where Mayer was discussed, one of the areas noted for possible further work was the use of key competencies in post-secondary education admission procedures. This potential connection between university admission and key competencies led a number of Vice-Chancellors to conclude that the AEC/MOVEET did not understand the meaning of university autonomy in Australia, that is, that admission was a matter for each institution. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Mr. Beazley, confirmed that the Mayer competencies did not apply to universities.

At the 69th AEC/MOVEET meeting in Perth 1993, an even more potentially contentious university issue was resolved in a way which was guaranteed to attract negative university response: a series of decisions was taken which recommended a coordination of education research activity through AEC/MOVEET, including removing education research funds from bodies like the Australian Research Council (ARC) so as to strengthen a 'coordinated approach to establishing a national research agenda' (AEC Minutes, July, 1993, p.3). In December, when the last meeting of the AEC was held, these issues were not yet resolved. However, elements of the national agenda with implications for higher education which were introduced included a National Qualifications Framework and a National Framework for the Recognition of Training.

Thus it can be seen that federalism in the higher education sector as manifest in the AEC arena during this period has been primarily concerned with the Dawkins restructuring, teacher education, and the respective and appropriate roles of the States and the Commonwealth government in this area. It may be the case that further transformation of federalism in higher education is occurring as the federal gaze shifts to the training sector. With the offering of degrees in the TAFE sector, particularly in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, we may be witnessing the gestation of a new binary system.

6 THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR EQUITY IN SCHOOLING

From the time of the Whitlam administration, the Commonwealth government has pursued equity in schooling primarily through tied grants programs such as the Disadvantaged Schools Program. In 1990 in the context of attempts

to rejig federalism via the SPCs, a working party was established by the SPC to consider the untying of a range of Commonwealth Tied Grants to States. As was appropriate, given its increased significance in Federal@State relations and policy making in education, the AEC considered the educational implications of such a move at its 63rd December 1990 meeting. Subsequently, John Dawkins requested that the Schools Council of NBEET provide him with a report on broadbanding Commonwealth equity programs. This report of the Task Force on a Broadbanded Equity Program was tabled at the 67th AEC meeting in June 1992, and later distributed to the States for further comment. This led to the formulation of the National Strategy for Equity in Schooling (NSES), which is yet to be approved by MCEETYA. At the same time, DEET developed the National Equity Program for Schools (NEPS). The States have now (early 1994) begrudgingly signed NEPS agreements with the Commonwealth.

Broadbanding in this context means that the smorgasbord of specific purpose equity programs, each with its own tied grant, disappeared and was replaced by one policy funded through a single lump sum grant, here NEPS. The greater flexibility that this gave to State governments was intended to be matched by tighter accountability to the Federal government in terms of outcomes. Aside from these new federalism and bureaucratic imperatives, there was also a theoretical rationale for the move to broadbanding in the rejection of the "commatation" (O'Brien, 1984) of different forms of equity with separate attention to the effects of race, gender, class, ethnicity, disability, etc. (Rizvi, 1993).

While the AEC meeting agendas were dominated by discussions about national curriculum and training, when the issue of broadbanding the equity programs emerged it raised other concerns. Though the States were pleased with the longer triennial funding proposed, they were concerned that the accountability mechanisms were excessively strenuous and required added expenditure of State funds to meet the Commonwealth requirements. The States also argued that agreement had already been reached about the appropriate national reporting mechanisms to the Commonwealth through the

Annual National Report and did not like the addition of even tougher requirements in relation to equity money. The Commonwealth, on the other hand, may not have trusted the States and their Departments of Education to spend the money as they wished. This was particularly true given the lessened political commitment to equity, especially in the non@Labor States. The NSES/NEPS development remains a good example of the issues arising in relation to tied grants versus block funding from the Commonwealth. The first meeting of the MCEETYA in 1994 will discuss and possibly approve NSES, following its deferment at the December AEC meeting.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The Special Premiers' Conferences were central to the attempt to rework federalism so as to eradicate inefficiencies flowing from its dual

jurisdictional character and to create an efficient national economic infrastructure and single market. Their replacement, the Council of Australian Governments, agreed to rationalise intergovernmental councils, including the AEC and MOVEET, resulting in the creation of the new council, MCEETYA.

It is significant that this agenda was driven by the Prime Minister and Premiers, rather than Ministers in specific portfolio areas. There are tensions between Premiers' departments, Treasuries, and service departments within State bureaucracies regarding untied as opposed to tied grants. Premiers' departments and State Treasuries generally prefer untied grants which give State governments the greatest freedom in expenditure in policy terms. On the other hand, service departments such as Education often prefer tied Commonwealth grants because the funds come directly to them rather than via Treasury.

The shift from AEC to AEC/MOVEET to MCEETYA is a consequence of the new federalisms at work in education against a backdrop of efforts to revamp federalism generally. Across the Hawke/Keating period, there has been an increasing ministerialisation of policy processes concomitant with these changes. We note, at State and Federal levels, the shift in authority in real terms from bureaucrats, CEOs and Directors-General to Ministers; the related shift from secretariats, ministries and departments to Ministers and the political apparatus; the policy and funding shift from single programs (for example, the Disadvantaged Schools Program) to broadbanding (National Equity Program for Schools); the whole push to rationalise secretariats, subcommittees and agencies; in short, the political and economic drive to streamline and steer the executive process. There is another component of this ministerialisation, namely the way in which SPC and COAG decisions have framed the policy development role, firstly of the AEC, and subsequently of MCEETYA. Perhaps the most concrete example of this was the creation by COAG of the National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools (COAG, 1994).

As requested by COAG, the new ministerial council (MCEETYA) has resulted from a merging of the AEC, MOVEET, and the Youth Ministers' Council (YMC). The funding of the council and its secretariat will remain on a per capita federalist basis, with the new secretariat being located within the Curriculum Corporation of Australia (putatively "neutral" vis-à-vis both State and Federal governments), an important signifier of the federalist character of the ministerial council. Here the States were successful in defeating the Commonwealth's push for a fully Commonwealth funded secretariat and permanent chair of the council. The changed political complexion of State governments was important in achieving this shift, but the federalist structure was supported by the States irrespective of political persuasion. It is significant that there was not a formal Standing Committee meeting prior to the December 1993 AEC/MOVEET meeting which resulted in the formation of MCEETYA. This was so because Ministers

wished to retain control of AEC agendas. John Dawkins may have wished to retain control of the AEC agenda so that he could pursue his version of national goals, but now the non-Labor States wish to control the AEC agenda so that their version of national collaboration is predominant. The size of the new council, however, will most likely ensure in the long if not the short term, a bureaucratic mediation or filtering of the agenda. A reconstituted MOVEET, now the Ministerial Council on the National Training Authority, will continue as a statutory requirement of the legislation establishing ANTA.

The changed political complexions of the States led to a slowing down of "the national agenda" in the July 1993 AEC/MOVEET meeting. At the December 1993 meeting it appears that the States took back control of a minimalist national agenda. It is significant in this context that the coalition States have put forward a proposal for a State-funded school education forum 'to develop common positions in relation to "national" initiatives from the Commonwealth'. This proposal argued the need for the coalition States 'to be more proactive in shaping the education agenda and generating positive educational initiatives on a cooperative basis' (AEC Minutes, 25 November 1993).

The question to be addressed in the remainder of this conclusion is the extent to which continuing structural, as opposed to changing political features, will ensure the continuation of such a "national agenda". 1994 sees a different context to Federal-State relations than was the case in the last few years of the Hawke prime ministership. At one stage, the Hawke Federal government was complemented by a large number of State Labor governments and the Greiner government of New South Wales which also supported the broad thrust of Hawke's reforms. Keating has been much more centralist than was Hawke, refusing to rectify the degree of vertical fiscal imbalance, while (perhaps partly precipitated by Keating's centralism) States' Rights arguments have been resurgent with the election of conservative governments in almost every State. Significant here has been the ardent States' Rights approach of Western Australia, particularly in the context of Federal Mabo legislation and with respect to future COAG meetings. A possible future States-sponsored agenda item at COAG will be an attempt to return responsibility for schooling entirely to the States, a move foreshadowed by several State Premiers.

However, certain structural features remain intact within the terrain of contemporary Australian education policy. These, in conjunction with the new political situation briefly alluded to above, mean that a minimalist national agenda will most likely continue. The ongoing structural features include the fact that the Commonwealth is in a stronger financial position than the States, and will continue to be parsimonious with its grants to them (Groenewegen, 1994). Indeed, it was the tightening of Commonwealth grants to the States after 1987 which encouraged the States to pursue collaboration in national curriculum in schools. This situation of vertical fiscal imbalance ensures that the Commonwealth will remain in a strong financial, and thus policy position in education vis-à-vis the

States. However, there has been intermittent Federal consideration of pulling to the Commonwealth those functions necessary for micro-economic reform and pushing back to the States all other policy domains including schooling (Knight, Lingard and Porter, 1991), a position strongly advocated by the States but opposed by the Australian Education Union. Indeed, as the following press release (20 January 1994) from Ross Free, the Federal Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, indicates, there are competing economic and equity agendas at the Federal level, as well as other State-driven pressures:

The Commonwealth plays a leading role in developing national education policy. This is what the conservatives want to stop. They want the

freedom to spend Commonwealth funds wherever they choose. State treasury officials care less for education than their budgets and there is simply no guarantee that money intended for education would be spent on education. Any hope of uniform excellence in schooling across the entire country would disappear.

At the July 1993 meeting, Beazley in his attack on States for slowing down the national agenda, noted that the peak councils of business and the trade union-supported national approaches. Such support remains an ongoing structural feature of the Federal-State educational policy terrain.

Different federalisms will continue to operate in each of the sectors of education. As noted earlier, Smart (1991) has spoken of coercive federalism operating in the higher education sector; Lingard (1991) has spoken of corporate federalism operating in the school sector during the period of Labor dominance in the AEC; while Lingard, O'Brien and Knight (1993) have spoken of a more cooperative federalism operating in the TAFE sector through the workings of ANTA. Across the time focus of this paper, first the AEC and then AEC/MOVEET were important sites at which the different federalisms in each of these sectors were both contested and constituted.

During the research interviews, two extreme positions in relation to federalism in schooling were put by different players. One political adviser argued that the ideal political scenario for the new council would be the exclusion of the Commonwealth, the situation which existed from 1936 to 1972 (Spaull, 1987). In contrast, a former State Minister for Education suggested that some DEET bureaucrats would have preferred what he called an economic rationalist version of federalism in the schooling domain. This would have seen Commonwealth monies going directly to schools in a fashion similar to the Federal funding of universities. That neither of these scenarios have come to fruition is an indication that federalism mediates the policy goals of both the States and the Commonwealth, and that the AEC/MOVEET and the new MCEETYA are sites where that mediation is played out. We would also note in this context a continuing Federal and States' push for efficiency which conceptualises efficiency as the cheapest State services delivered.

The financial and organisational situation within the State bureaucracies, where curriculum development capacities have been somewhat reduced, will probably continue to encourage States to share curriculum development and materials, perhaps on a bilateral State to State basis. All of the States, irrespective of political persuasion or commitment to States' Rights, support the move for better integration of schooling, training and higher education, as well as some move towards articulated competencies and the use of profiles. The Curriculum Corporation will play an important role in the ongoing collaborative activity on curriculum statements and profiles in the eight key learning areas. Its involvement is indicative of a more collaborative sharing: States will purchase profiles from the CCA and utilise them within their own curricula as framed by broad national statements.

On present indications, with the predominance of coalition governments in MCEETYA, we would speculate that the "Dawkins national agenda" will become a more States' driven "show and tell" exercise. This is the minimalist national agenda. However, to the extent that all States (including those with coalition governments) now agree that there is a need for some national collaboration across all levels of education, it can be said that John Dawkins was successful in reframing attitudes to national frameworks in education. Even though to some extent the Directors@General had been pushing in this direction prior to the Dawkins period, eleven years of Labor government at the national level and a broad consensus on Australia's desirable economic future, despite the resurgence of States' Rights, have

seen the construction of a new federalist Australian policy terrain in all areas of education. In a sense, however, the States would still prefer to see the Commonwealth's role in schooling as simply one of "banker", a perception rejected by Dawkins in a 1990 speech in which he argued that the Commonwealth must take a leadership role in respect of schools (Dawkins, 1990).

However, this terrain is not fixed; the Commonwealth appears to be set on the pursuit of a more maximalist national agenda through refocussing on teachers (as with the Australian Teaching Council), and on directing inservice funds to professional associations within the States, thus attempting to bypass State Ministries and Departments. This refocussing from curriculum to teachers (who are clearly State employees) will certainly create ongoing political and policy tensions between the Commonwealth and the States, particularly those with conservative governments.

Placing the findings of this research within policy sociology debates (Ozga, 1987) and within debates about the role of the state in policy making, Offe's (1975) insight that the structure of the state mediates policy production is clearly confirmed. In the context described above, state structure clearly includes the federal political arrangement.

However, we would make an additional point that the interior of the state (including Federal@State relations) is a strategic@relational terrain (Jessop, 1990) upon which micro@politics are played out in the processes of policy production (Lingard, 1993). Neglect of the micro@politics played out within the interior of the state, including the high educational politics of personality, leads to an inadequate understanding of policy text production within the policy cycle (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) in policy sociology. The research reported here documenting the mediations of the national agenda at the intergovernmental councils, AEC and MCEETYA, clearly supports this view.

NOTES:

1. This paper is work in progress from an ARC funded study of the AEC 1987@1993. To this point (February 1994) research interviews have been conducted in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane with significant policy players. The paper derives in part from those interviews and analysis of AEC minutes and related documents for the period in question.
2. Note that throughout this paper State refers to specific entities such as Queensland or Victoria, while state refers to the more abstract entity consisting of government, bureaucracy, judiciary and so on. Federal similarly refers to the Australian Federal government, while federal refers to the general concept of the incorporation of several States into a national unity.
3. The Mayer key competencies have been treated here rather than in the section on the training reform agenda for these reasons: first as "generic" (rather than "work specific") competencies, they were to be as relevant to the school sector as the training sector; second, their implementation would have had substantial implications for upper secondary school curriculum, assessment and reporting; third, at the 69th AEC they were linked with curriculum statements and profiles in one motion and their further development and implementation were temporarily halted.
4. The Carmichael Report was a Commonwealth initiative to develop an integrated national system of vocational education and training incorporating the relevant recommendations from the Finn Report, commissioned by the then Minister Dawkins through the Employment and Skills Formation Council of NBEET. It was submitted to the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee in March 1992 and then to the

AEC/MOVEET meeting in June 1992.

Keywords

educational administration
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