

## Secondary Teaching Administrators in the Government Schools of Western Australia and the Challenge of Change

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### Abstract

Educational restructuring and the ongoing reform agenda of the Education Department of Western Australia have massive implications for the work of Level 3 secondary teaching administrators (STAs). By comparison with principals and teachers the work of STAs has been largely neglected by educational policy makers, system level administrators, academics and researchers. In high schools and secondary colleges STAs hold positions as heads of department, senior lecturers and program coordinators. They have a strategic location for the management of change. This paper reports on a survey of 265 STAs as they respond to changes in the administration of schools and specific program initiatives. The data analysis considers their biographical characteristics, the departments and teams which they coordinate, their work during 1996 and their perceptions of the future.

In the context of educational restructuring special attention is given to their views about the future of the position of head of department. The purpose of the paper is to assess the capacity of STAs to respond

to the challenge of change.

## Introduction

Change has become an enduring feature of all government education systems in Australia. Since 1987 the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) has embarked upon an ambitious program of educational restructuring. The ongoing reform agenda is guided by an attempt to shift from a bureaucratic model to corporate managerialist and also market models of school organization and administration. (See Robertson, 1990; Trotman, 1996) The reforms attempt to reverse 93 years of centralized administration of schools and staff so as to develop capacity for school based decision making and management (SBDMM). System level restructuring also converges with other change forces such as the nationally developed curriculum frameworks, review of traditional patterns of work organization and the application of information technology to administration and teaching. From 1994 the onset of a phase of quality assurance has seen the focus of the reforms shift from the establishment of planning and decision making infrastructure in the school to the implementation of an outcomes based approach to education (EDWA, 1996a) improving and reporting school performance (EDWA, 1996b) and the performance management of staff (EDWA, 1996c). In the current era educational restructuring is increasingly 'standards driven'. The scope and intensity of the policy turbulence have no precedent in Western Australian education. The onset of an era of SBDMM has massive implications for the organization and administration of schools as well as the pedagogy and curriculum decision making of teachers. In this context the roles and responsibilities of many categories of school staff become problematic.

This paper considers the case of the level 3 secondary teaching administrator (STA) in the government schools of Western Australia. There are three categories of level 3 STAs:

head of department, secondary (HoD);  
program coordinator, secondary; and  
senior lecturer, senior college.

STAs appear to have a key strategic location in schools and colleges where there is a demand for improved performance. The purpose is to assess how STAs are responding to the challenge of change. Educational restructuring has largely focused on the work of the principal and the teacher. By comparison the work of the secondary teaching administrator has been neglected. The paper reports on a survey of STAs to assess how they are responding to the challenge of change. The findings are used to develop a framework that is intended to assist STAs to gain greater control over their work and careers. The proposals are for the consideration of the Western Australian Secondary Teachers Administrators' Association (WASTAA).

The questionnaire was administered by the Heads of Department Association of Western Australia (Inc.). 265 questionnaires were returned from a population of 798. In the context of the work pressures of educators the 33 per cent response rate represented a high rate of return. Despite the large number of respondents to the questionnaire it should be recognized that the sample may contain bias.

The absence of systematic information about contemporary STAs makes difficult estimation of any selection factors that may predispose STAs to respond to the questionnaire. Therefore all findings should be considered as being tentative. Validation of the survey data requires that the findings are checked and further refined in a variety of school contexts. Selected quantitative and qualitative data are reported. The comments of respondents are included to illustrate some of the perspectives of STAs.

The data analysis is organized according to the biographical and career characteristics of STAs, the department or program team, the work of STAs during 1996 as well as the influence of policy initiatives on STAs during 1996 and beyond. An assessment is then made of the way in which practitioners are responding to change and of the issues that they face. Finally, some proposals are advanced as to how practising STAs can further improve their capacity to manage and to respond to the challenge of change.

#### Biographical and Career Characteristics of STAs

In attaining their current position STAs have developed preferences for their work. As experienced educators it is to be expected that biographical and career characteristics will influence the way in which practitioners respond to change.

85 per cent respondents were occupants of HoD positions in high and senior high schools and a further 2 per cent were senior lecturers in senior colleges. These practitioners hold STA positions that are intimately linked with the old bureaucratic order that is being transformed by educational restructuring. 11 per cent of respondents held program coordinator positions which are more closely linked with corporatist organizational structures. Most of these positions occur in the newer schools where since 1990 where there has been growth of student numbers in some curriculum areas or a need for special programs and services. 91 per cent of all STAs were in senior high schools. 68 per cent of STA positions were located in the Perth metropolitan area.

Only 21 per cent of the STAs were female<sup>1</sup>. This under representation suggests that female secondary teachers are restricted in their capacity to compete for STA positions. The greatest gender imbalances may exist in the learning areas of Health and Physical Education, Mathematics, Science and Studies of Society and Environment. (See

Figure 1) By comparison, Technology and Enterprise, special program or whole school responsibilities as for program coordinator positions, The Arts and English were characterized by lower levels of gender imbalance. Male STAs had more years of experience in the position than females. (Males = 12.14; females = 6.34;  $t = 5.84$ ,  $p = 000$ ). This may suggest that there has been a reduction of any gender bias in the STA selection process in recent years. The creation of Technology and Enterprise learning area from up to five subject disciplines - Business Education, Home Economics, Manual Arts, Computer Studies and Agricultural Studies - will see a loss of positions for female HoDs. Nearly all HoDs in Business Education and Home Economics are female.

1 EDWA Annual Report 1994-1995 Secondary Teachers 50 per cent female, HoDs 20 per cent female.

Figure 1 Responsibility of Current STA Position by Gender

Figure 2 Age of STAs

Figure 2 shows the age distribution of STAs. 75 per cent of STAs are 40 years or older. The distribution reflects the progressive ageing of the teaching service throughout Australia (See Dinham 1995). STAs have

a wide range of experience in the position. 51 per cent have nine or more years of experience while 14 per cent have 20 or more years of experience. It is to be expected that collectively STAs have valuable knowledge about the history of curriculum development, student needs and school operations. (See Figure 2)

Respondents have a wide range of experience in STA positions. (See Figure 3) Program coordinators have less experience ( $= 6.0$  years) than HoDs (from  $= 9.1$  to  $13.8$  years depending upon the learning area). It

is expected that practitioners will have different professional development needs depending upon whether they are 'beginning', 'mature' or 'expert' practitioners in what is their first career ladder or administrator position. 56 per cent of STAs have 10 or more years of experience in the position while 14 per cent have 20 or more years of experience. These practitioners can be expected to have valuable knowledge of department and program administration that is necessary for the management of change. However, it is also to be expected that a sub-group of STAs require a professional challenge or incentive or significant opportunities for professional development in order to remain effective.

#### Figure 3 Years of Experience of STAs

Statements of career aspiration showed that for 51 per cent of respondents the STA position was a 'terminal career' position. 31 per cent expected to progress to higher career ladder positions. STAs with more than eight years of experience had lower levels of expectation for career advancement than less experienced STAs. 8 per cent expected to leave teaching before the end of their work career.

#### STAs, Departments or Teams and the School

Investigation of the circumstances of the department or program team for which the STA is responsible also provides insight into the potential of practitioners to manage change.

#### Figure 4: Full Time Teaching Staff in the Department or Team

The size of departments or teams for which STAs are responsible is shown in Figure 4. 51 per cent of STAs were responsible for the supervision of between five and eight staff. Some STAs were responsible for committees or services or projects that involved large segments of the school staff. In addition 31 per cent of STAs were also responsible for the supervision of 1-3 support staff. Program coordinators had more support staff to coordinate than other categories of STAs. A significant group of STAs are responsible for what must be seen as 'small departments' in the context of total school operations.

In assessing the level of security of their positions 54 per cent of STAs believed that the position which they held was not secure. This meant that the position was or would come under threat or would not be

filled if they vacated the position. Figure 5 shows that HoDs in the learning areas of Technology and Enterprise, Science, The Arts and Society and Environment perceived higher levels of threat to their position than for other learning areas. Overall program coordinators (69 per cent) perceived less security to the position than other categories of STAs (40 per cent) (Chi-square = 8.67, df = 1, p = .003). Program coordinator positions are school based positions that reflect current priorities. Changes to school priorities emerging from strategic planning processes can lead to the termination of program coordinator positions. Many program coordinator positions are limited term appointments.

Figure 5: Security of Position for STAs

STA positions where there was less than five full time staff in the department or team were perceived as being less secure than larger departments or teams (Chi-square = 16.61, df 2, p = .000). STAs perceived the following influences as threatening the security of their position:

the trading of promotional positions for school based appointments (25 per cent);  
declining school enrolments (25 per cent);  
new grouping of subject areas (24 per cent);  
declining choice by students of the learning area (8 per cent);  
organization of the school according to a corporate or a mini-school model (18 per cent); and  
school amalgamations (1 per cent).

The responses show the influence of flexible staffing policies, the shift from faculty to program centred organization and 'a market' for educational 'products'.

It appears that flexible staffing policies as advocated by the Western Australian Secondary Principals' Association are being adopted in many schools. (See Chadbourne and Clark, 1994, pp.65-66) Flexible staffing policies influence STA positions by:

evening out imbalances where subject departments of similar size have unequal numbers of HoDs;  
moving away from subject specialist to more generalist staffing profiles;  
using 1.0 full time equivalent appointments in more cost effective

ways, i.e. special responsibility allowances, clerical staff;  
organizing staff around programs and cost centres rather than learning  
areas; and  
increasing the use of short term appointments for positions of special  
responsibility in the school.

In most senior high schools it seems that at least one and up to three  
HoD positions is or will come under threat. The 'game plan' of  
flexible staffing policies is to reduce the number of HoD positions  
across the education system. In this context it becomes important that  
all STAs and the associated departments or teams are seen as  
contributing to SBDMM.

SBDMM requires that schools have capacity for policy making, strategic  
planning and program development. STAs have a strategic location for  
the development of learning programs. They should work to ensure that  
school administration is focused on improving and supporting the

learning program. Alternatively STAs have a responsibility to ensure  
that the collective energy of the subject department or program team is  
connected to the purpose and plan which underpins the administration  
and organization of the school. In the context of SBDMM the work of  
STAs in the key policy forums of schools is central to their  
effectiveness. STAs reported varying levels of effectiveness in  
contributing to corporate policy making and planning beyond the subject  
department or program team:

very effective 33 per cent;  
effective 54 per cent; and  
not effective 10 per cent

Overall the findings are promising. STAs are well placed to contribute  
to decision making in key policy forums. Failure to do this may weaken  
the collective voice of STAs in the educational discourse of the  
school. In the corporatist model of administration all categories of  
STAs will be expected to contribute to whole school planning and policy  
making.

STAs differed in their capacity to contribute to corporate planning and  
policy making. Some practitioners could draw on the resources of the  
subject department or program team to influence the policy process:

Whole school planning and policy making occurs within a collegiate  
model where open discussion and full contribution are both sought and  
welcomed. (107)

Society and Environment teachers are on all committees. I network  
with most teachers so that my opinion is valued. Our faculty lobbies  
effectively and non-obtrusively on important issues. We have effective

contacts in parent and student groups. (110)

These practitioners were favoured by collaborative processes in key policy forums so that decision making is based upon knowledge and information. Also educationally cohesive subject department or program teams have potential to extend the influence of the STA into additional policy forums. Other STAs were less fortunate:

The senior staff meeting is largely ceremonial. Decisions are made by an administrative committee which includes no level 3 STAs. There are many committees but they have no decision making power. (101).

I am not very effective. I have access to many policy forums but feel that the admin. team has an agenda which will get rammed home. Also I am the newest member of the team at the school. (129)

Here school decision making was a micropolitical process. Some HoDs believed that their influence was being eroded by the entry of school based appointees and inexperienced teachers to many of the key policy forums:

The growth of non-promotional positions such as 'year leaders' and 'house coordinators' has swamped the decision making of HoDs. Junior and inexperienced teachers are making too many decisions with an over-emphasis on the 'pastoral' and 'social role' at the expense of the curriculum. (100)

Some program coordinators believed that their professional effort was limited because of lack of professional support by HoDs. If STAs are to retain their voice in the school community they must adopt non-zero sum views of leadership. Here influence grows and wanes depending upon

the capacity of leaders to facilitate collective decision making. To exercise influence in the robust decision making forums of the school STAs must have important knowledge about the learning needs of the various student groups as well as the worth of existing programs and policies. By cultivating educative relationships with colleagues STAs can play an important part in shaping the educational discourse of the school. (See Duignan and MacPherson, 1992)

Some STAs face greater difficulties than others in managing a subject department or program team. The working relationship among subject department or program team members was as follows:

a socially and educationally cohesive group (58 per cent);  
a socially cohesive but educationally diverse group (19 per cent);  
a fragmented group, low on cohesion and support for learning area policy (9 per cent);  
split, existence of rival interest groups (5 per cent).



Where departments or teams are characterized by a collective view, purpose, action and even identity among the participants, then there is a large potential for STAs to harness the creative energies of staff to specific change initiatives. However, other departments or teams may exist as little more than forums for the allocation of a minimal set of responsibilities and duties. In these circumstances there is little coherence in the collective delivery of the educational program. Large amounts of professional effort are required to extract commitment from at least some members as to the minimum expectations for agreed practice.

The management of the people in the department or team was made difficult by a number of circumstances. 'Personality clashes', 'experienced teachers who do not wish to learn', 'lack of a common educational goal', 'incompetent staff' and 'communication' were used by STAs to explain the condition of the department or team. For example:

... the staff are very experienced. Most staff have more than 10 years of experience but have limited promotional prospects. The result is that they want to have their say and have it acted on. Some, not all, respond poorly to suggestions or when their view is not taken. (130)

In some schools the establishment of the Technology and Enterprise learning area includes up to five subject groups. This placed extra demands on STAs when implementing the outcomes based approach to education.

Program coordinators had responsibility for teams where the professional or group identity of members centred on subject departments. Managing teams proved difficult where regular and meaningful contact was not possible.

... the fact that they (team members) are not in one department but spread across a number of subject areas it means that the group find it difficult to be cohesive, for example the Vocational English teacher is situated in the English Dept. etc.

The micropolitics of the school meant that some STAs had to constantly work at team building.

(We are) largely professional and socially cohesive, but it is constantly eroded by a strong allegiance to a naive union line, a gendered line across departments... and a Social Studies interest position which is in opposition to subject area influences. It

(Management of the department) requires very complex or delicate trade-offs and the building of partnerships based on common interests, etc. This is energy sapping. (22)

The absence of either a shared educational perspective or social cohesion amongst team members limits the capacity of STAs to manage the challenge of change.

#### The Work of STAs during 1996

Attention is now given to identifying the orientation of STAs to their work. The increased workload that derives from the educational reforms and SBDMM is central to the STAs' experience of work. There was a perception that:

... more and more responsibilities are coming down the line. (99)

... any new policy means additional work (172)

In the context of an expanding workload, time becomes a precious resource that must be carefully allocated. STAs are one of a limited number of EDWA positions which combine administration and teaching. The allocation of professional effort between teaching and administration is a constant dilemma for STAs. Both of these responsibilities have capacity to demand the full professional effort of the practitioner. The allocation of professional effort to the various facets of their work is a 'juggling act'. Some practitioners gave priority to teaching.

As all of the extra crap continues to roll in from head office the amount of time doesn't change. I believe that my 80 per cent teaching load should always be my main priority, but given the avalanche of reforms on the way something will have to give way so that I can still teach effectively. (29)

Most gave priority to administration:

My professional satisfaction would improve if I could do everything properly. My teaching of my own classes often suffers as I always try to complete some admin. tasks during class time just to survive. (58)

There were consequences for not having sufficient time:

The pressure means that I spend less time preparing for teaching. As a result I now get very little satisfaction from teaching. My work is now so diverse (in scope) that it is beyond me how it can all be done well. The work load is open ended. There is always something which hasn't been done. Higher salaries wont make the job more palatable. (189)

As HoDs are being asked to do more and know more they are having less time to concentrate on their own needs. (199)

I see my four-fifth teaching time being slowly but surely eroded. I wish that I had time to assist my teaching staff but I don't. Discussion outside teaching time doesn't exist, or even after school as no one wants to be at this school after 3.15 pm. (216)

The nett effect is to allocate more personal time to the HoD job, which takes time away from effective teaching preparation. (This is) a moral question. What are we supposed to prioritize our students or the administrative position? (138)

It is evident that many practitioners have made a significant emotional investment in their work. Crafting and refining the policies, practices and routines of the department or team can become personal life-projects. The increased workload is reducing the professional satisfaction of these practitioners. There was also a risk that work overload would influence the professionalism of staff.

I find I sometimes resent having a class because it prevents me from completing these administrative tasks in a single bite. (154)

In responding to the time-workload dilemma some practitioners advocated that the STA position should have an increased administrative time allocation, i.e. two fifths administration.

Figure 6 shows how STAs allocate their time between teaching and administration both during and after school hours over the course of a typical week. 90 per cent of STAs allocated between .1 to .5 of their time to administration rather than teaching. Most STAs have a .2 FTE administrative time allocation. 87 per cent of STAs reported a greater than .2 administrative time allocation.

Figure 6 Allocation of total work time to administration rather than teaching.

Figure 7 Allocation of work time to whole school rather than learning area or program duties

Figure 7 shows the allocation of time, both during and after school, to whole school administration rather than the administration of the learning area or department or program or project for which the STA has responsibility. 80 per cent of STAs allocated between .1 and .4 of their time to whole school administration. Some differences among STAs were:

program coordinators ( $= .44$ ) gave more time to whole school administration than HoDs and senior lecturers ( $= .23$ ) ( $t = 5.3$ ,  $p = .000$ ); and younger STAs gave more time to whole school administration than older STAs. (39 or less years = .31, 40-49 years = .26, 50 or more = .18) ( $F = 6.7$ ,  $df 2, 251$ ,  $p = .002$ .)

STAs identified a number of time consuming administrative tasks that were taking up valuable time. The main categories were:

- managing student behaviour;
- responding to the vast amount of daily mail;
- reviewing documents, draft policies;
- cost centre management, budgeting;
- management of physical resources;
- preparing documents;
- correcting the mistakes of other administrators;
- whole school planning;
- committee membership.

These demands suggest an intensification of the work of STAs.

The STAs responded to a 12 item instrument which focused on some of the

conflicts, dilemmas and choices that are inherent in their work during an era of restructuring. It was found that:

- 95 per cent believed that they were providing educational leadership in the learning area;
- 81 per cent were guided by a clear purpose of how they contributed to school effectiveness;
- 78 per cent were giving attention to the professional development of teachers;
- 76 per cent were improving their own professional performance; and
- 70 per cent were performing a role that included significant whole school rather than learning area responsibilities.
- 54 per cent were obtaining a high level of professional satisfaction from their work; and

Items with a negative experience of work showed that;

- 37 per cent were mainly reacting to problems rather than systematically improving the operations of the learning area;
- 37 per cent were responsible for a broad range of disparate tasks with no coherent purpose;
- 40 per cent believed that they were caught in a crossfire of conflicting expectations about their work from the principal, deputy principals and teachers;
- 55 per cent believed that they were preoccupied with administration

which restricted their capacity to demonstrate educational leadership in teaching programs.

In the context of the massive change agenda that is confronting school educators the STAs appear to have a positive view of their work. As a group they are guided by a purpose and believe that they are providing leadership to teachers as well as linking to the corporate plan of the school. Within this overview it is evident that at least some groups of STAs do not have a clear purpose. Others are not able to focus their work so that there is improvement to the operations of the department or program. They are reacting to a continuous stream of demands which fragments their professional effort. 46 per cent of STAs do not receive a high level of professional satisfaction from their work. Over time this orientation to work can be expected to progressively disable practitioners who have a critical role in the management of school staff and programs.

Factor analysis of the orientation to work instrument identified one major and two minor factors:

Factor 1: accounted for 34 per cent of the variance. Positive orientation to administration and teaching, sense of purpose, experience of satisfaction from work.

Factor 2: accounted for 9 per cent of the variance. Focus on the needs of staff and the learning area, sense of purpose.

Factor 3: accounted for 9 per cent of the variance. Focus on whole school policy and administration.

The factors reveal the broad outline of three types of orientations to work that are held by practising STAs. The minor factors identify STAs with either a learning area or a corporate view of the school as being the purpose of their work.

STAs were also asked to identify the source of their professional satisfaction. (See Figure 8) The most important sources of professional satisfaction came from relationships with teachers. Although relationships with school administrators was a source of

satisfaction there was a wide range of variation among practitioners ( $M = 3.45$ , standard deviation = 2.72). Administration of the department or program provided a higher level of satisfaction than school administration. The following difference was evident between STAs for the experience of professional satisfaction from school policy and administration:

program coordinator ( $M = 3.2$ ) greater than HoDs, senior lecturers ( $M = 2.8$ ) ( $t = 5.95$ ,  $p = .016$ )

Although opportunities for professional development may have improved

during the quality assurance era there was wide variation among practitioners in their level of satisfaction (standard deviation = 1.65). Lower levels of satisfaction were experienced from opportunities for professional development than from nearly all other sources. Most STAs perceived blocked opportunities for career progression. Many respondents from schools in rural areas perceived a lack of professional development opportunities. New career pathways or alternative work experiences are needed if STAs are to improve their level of professional satisfaction. Surprisingly, teaching duties was not one of the most important sources of professional satisfaction for STAs.

#### Figure 8 Sources of Professional Satisfaction

STAs experience different levels of satisfaction. Their orientation to work is influenced not only by system level reforms but also by school level factors and personal preferences. Many STAs found their work rewarding:

After 20 years as a HoD I still find the work satisfying and challenging. (125)

I like the position of HoD with its mix of teaching and administration.

The teaching part of it and working with my team in the Society and Environmental Studies Department is very positive, rewarding and satisfying. However working with various administrators and other HoDs of certain departments are very negative aspects of the job.

Here the department rather than the school provided the primary source of professional and social identity. Other STAs were not as fortunate.

Their work beyond the department was a continuous political struggle.

I get no support from the school administration. I am constantly frustrated by a system that doesn't give a damn about me or how I feel about what is happening in reality in the schools. School philosophy does not reflect the type of students we attempt to cater for. My subject area is seen as a 'dumping ground' for non academic students. Hence my low satisfaction I am trying to project my professional interests into the year 2000 but I get absolutely no support or professional development. Hence my feeling of frustration. (149)

Some STAs believed that change had eroded the educational values of the school and education system.

I am seriously lacking in professional satisfaction. There is very little curriculum direction from EDWA, only irrelevant policy statements and a clear lack of leadership from the top. (148)

The era of managerialism had created:

... an educational or philosophical or curriculum vacuum that no one has filled. (150)

Other STAs expressed a lack of confidence in the fairness of the promotion system. Some perceived that school level opportunities of staff created a mix of senior staff who were 'yes people'. The professional satisfaction of education workers is an important issue especially during a period of profound change.

### Perceptions of the Future

This section reports on the way in which STAs see possible changes to their work and to the position of head of department (HoD) in schools of the future.

Table 1 Importance of Policy Initiatives for the Work of STAs

Collectively STAs have a high level of awareness of the current policy initiatives that are transforming their work. Their perception of the relative importance of system level and school level initiatives is shown in Table 1. The three most highly ranked initiatives represent specific facets of system level quality assurance. Factor analysis also revealed a 'concern for quality assurance' factor (34 per cent of variance). The high levels of variance of the school based initiatives suggest that there are clear differences between schools in the priorities for SBDMM. The high variance for outcomes based pedagogy may suggest that some STAs are not yet focused on what is clearly a key reform initiative. The adoption of an outcomes based approach to education is a major system level reform that may require four or five years of implementation and review. The most important feature of Figure 8 is the broad scope of the initiatives that have been generated in the current phase of educational restructuring. For many practitioners the broad front of the reform agenda is overwhelming. If STAs are to focus their professional effort they require a high level of awareness of how specific policy initiatives relate to the education reform agenda. They should be able to anticipate the ways in which specific initiatives will be progressively refined.

Currently the great majority of STAs hold HoD positions. The position of HoD is intimately linked with the old bureaucratic order which is being progressively dismantled by the education reform agenda. Firstly, the corporate managerialist and market models of schooling administration shift the focus away from the maintenance of stability to responsiveness to change. Secondly, the subject fields that were

the responsibility of HoDs are largely based upon an early twentieth century view of knowledge as defined in the curriculum of the university. The key competencies (workplace competencies) , the eight learning areas (broad fields not subjects) and the student outcome statements (an outcomes based pedagogy) provide a new map for defining the curriculum terrain of HoDs. Thirdly, the adoption of the Structural Efficiency Principle has linked wage determination with measurable productivity gains. (Macpherson and Riley, 1992) Review of the traditional patterns of work organization has seen the emergence of the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) class as well as other categories of teachers with special administrative responsibilities. The appointment of ASTs 1-3 creates both a dual authority structure within the school as well as an alternative career ladder. In the context of the calculus of change forces both the traditional responsibilities of HoDs

and even the position of HoD has become problematic.

The way in which practising STAs see the work of the HoD in schools of the future is shown in Table 2. The overall high rating of nearly all of the broad fields of responsibility suggests that STAs recognize the increased demands of work in schools of the future. Staff management, curriculum management, administration of the department and financial management of the department and teaching were seen as being of greatest importance. The high variance for classroom duties may reflect an expectation that HoD positions will have less responsibility for doing teaching and an increased administrative time allocation. School level planning, student discipline and school community relations have a lower priority. The lower rating of student management could reflect a hope that at least some HoDs will have reduced levels of responsibility for this aspect of their work in schools of the future. The lower rating of school-community relationships for HoDs may underestimate the importance of both the internal and external markets for 'education products' if 'consumer choice' becomes the steering mechanism for educational change. Staff management and curriculum management are shaping as a contested terrain for HoDs and the AST 1-2-3 class of educators.

Table 2 Responsibilities of HoDs in Schools of the Future

Mean  
s.d.

Staff management in the department  
4.69  
.61

Administration and financial management of the department  
4.67



.61

Curriculum management in the department

4.65

.63

Classroom teaching

4.60

1.01

School level planning, policy making, administration

4.17

.90

Student management

4.22

.93

School and community interaction

3.88

1.04

A forced choice item revealed the preferences of STAs for the future of the position of HoD. (See Figure 9) Relatively few practitioners believed that the position would remain with minor changes (14 per cent). There was an expectation that the position would be either

enhanced by pedagogical, curriculum and staff management responsibilities (43 per cent) replaced by other types of staff appointments (44 per cent). Many respondents preferred the former but expected that the latter was more likely to happen.

Figure 9 The Future of the Position of HoD

Respondents reflected on the choices. One view was that HoD positions were fundamental to the educational program and the organizational effectiveness of the high school regardless of the nature of the reform agenda.

We (HoDs) are indispensable to the infrastructure of the system. (143)

If the HoD position goes then I foresee a further collapse of educational standards. HoDs must continue to exist as the major guardians of educational standards. There will be minor changes to the role of HoD in the future, due to their position in the line of

accountability. But there will always exist the two major roles: (1) to be an exemplary classroom operator and set the work ethos of his/her department. (2) to support his/her teachers in matters of professional development, resources, discipline, etc. (142).

I cannot see them (HoDs) being replaced totally as they are arguably the most important members of staff in that they are the contact points between the consumer (students) and the administration who are largely out of touch with the classroom teachers. (141)

These practitioners believed that HoDs have a key strategic location in the school. Although positions may be linked to learning areas rather than subjects these coordinators would remain as key educational leaders with responsibility for the development and delivery of learning programs.

Another view was that the progressive broadening of the responsibilities of HoDs beyond the traditional subject fields and also the more recent learning areas would continue. Here HoDs would acquire significant whole school administrative responsibilities. Many advocates of this view could see the beneficial outcomes for HoDs.

It is inevitable that a widening of responsibilities is going to fall on HoDs leading to 'globalization' of their role. HoDs who see themselves as 'protectors' of little enclaves in schools who do not involve themselves more broadly in educational issues and administration should investigate EDWA's redundancy offer. (140).

The HoD position has been enhanced by the pedagogical, curriculum and staff management responsibilities. It has made the job more interesting but also much more demanding of time and energy. (138)

HoDs were central to the facilitation of change in schools:

HoDs are pivotal to the essential changes in schools. Without their fullest cooperation, energy and enthusiasm changes will only be limited or not take place at all. (124)

During an era of educational restructuring the management of change becomes a focus of the work of STAs.

These were some negative perceptions of broadening the responsibilities

of HoDs:

... they will change from a HoD to the administration of an area which he/she may not be conversant with. More time will be taken up with budgeting, staffing, monitoring and appraising. (83)

What worries me is the phasing out of the 'authority' of HoDs over staff. All staff appear to be a power unto themselves. Without being dictatorial the HoDs need to be able to have greater influence on the performance and behaviour of staff. (75)

By asking HoDs to do so many different things we will not be able to do them well and therefore our ability to lead by example has gone. (65)

The reshaping of the position around management responsibilities brings a shift in relationships with staff. STAs will have to redefine the bases of their authority and influence.

A third broad view that HoD positions would be phased out was associated with a belief that most administrative positions would become closer to level 4 positions.

I believe that ten years down the track HoDs will be non-existent as subject specialists. They will be replaced by 'area managers' (who are) responsible for subject groupings. I also believe that all administrative positions should be of limited tenure and based on merit promotion. Such managers should have a much reduced teaching load.

A small number of HoDs supported a spill of positions.

This position (HoD) should be placed on a two year contract basis so that the large number of level 3's who sit on their butt and do little or nothing get moved on or out and people who are more dynamic get a go. (63)

I think there needs to be greater flexibility in this (HoD) role. I believe all should be limited tenure so that as schools change their focus so does the need for particular expertise. Spill all the HoDs positions. I believe we should move towards more cross-curriculum leadership, rather than retaining the traditional 'faculty based' HoDs. (31)

Also there was a recognition of the need for all HoDs to be effective.

Sadly over the years I have had the misfortune to see some HoDs who believe their promotion to this position is a reward for hard work done in the past - but they believe once promotion is gained they can sit back; take all the good classes; tell others to get organised when student misbehaviours appear; resist positive changes to the school; and be down-right pains at Senior Staff meetings.

I have also had the privilege to work with some of the most dedicated, hard-working HoDs I can imagine. They are tireless in their efforts to improve education and conditions for the staff in their areas. Some adopt a whole-school ethos and put aside petty fighting for school resources.

HoDs can be our own best advertisement or our most negative. The WASTAA has a large challenge to promote the positive aspects of its membership. (25)

Many of the perspectives about the future of the position of HoD

represent statements of faith. Alternatively others are grounded in a deeper appreciation of the change forces influencing Australian schools. At this point the future of the HoD position has not yet been decided. The forthcoming EDWA policy for a revised career structure may influence the outcome. Meanwhile school level decisions about the worth of HoD positions will prevail.

#### A Framework

In this section of the paper a framework is presented for consideration by the members of WASTAA. The framework is intended to further assist STAs to gain a greater collective and individual control over their work and careers during a period of educational restructuring. The framework consists of five sets of questions. These questions are an expression of important choices and issues which underpin constructive thinking about the challenge of change. Some questions have a stronger focus on the individual practitioner while others require collective action through WASTAA. The questions are derived from the findings of the survey as well as research literature on the policy context of Australian education, school management and the secondary school head of department. The framework is tentative and should be scrutinized by practising STAs. In applying the framework practitioners should focus their thinking on the contribution of STAs to SBDMM. In responding to the challenge of change STAs should attempt to promote a calculated mix of change and stability as they manage a learning area or team or program.

STAs are a diverse group. Biographical characteristics such as age, gender and years of experience as an STA influence their professional experience. They hold different level 3 positions in a variety of school contexts. In many institutions school restructuring, a scarcity of resources and the uncertainty about change have created conflicts among STAs. Consequently the questions are generic and should be applied to the circumstances of the STA in the context of the schools or colleges or education offices in which they will work.

1. What model of school organization and administration is guiding educational restructuring? What model should be guiding school organization and administration and curriculum or program development?

As a precursor to any analysis of the work of STAs it firstly becomes

necessary to conceptualize the administrative arrangements that are evident in contemporary schools.

Change is no longer optional in schools (Fullan, 1993). The challenge of change has created two broad categories of schools. In some schools there is a reactive approach to change. Each new policy initiative or set of centrally determined guidelines or demand from parents makes difficult a coordinated response from staff. Consequently inordinate amounts of professional energy are diverted away from the educational program. By comparison there is also a class of schools with a capacity to anticipate change. Here there is a legitimate school policy process and a critical density of leadership in the overlapping planning and program teams. (See Walker, 1994) Key staff adjust or develop policy, procedures and practices to any new demand without major disruption to the educational program.

In responding to change principals are endeavouring to develop capacity for SBDMM by transforming schools from a bureaucratic model of organization to models which emphasize more collaborative forms of decision making and more systematic approaches to the planning,

implementation and review of learning programs. The prescribed EDWA model for SBDMM is a form of corporate managerialism. This 'performativity' model centres on strategic planning and the reporting of performance so that schools are:

efficient in maximizing output relative to input;  
effective in achieving improved learning outcomes;  
responsive to the dynamic market environment for educational 'products';  
flexible in the use of resources; and  
accountable in reporting policies, program outcomes to the community and the education authority.

In some schools principals have moved away from the line of authority of the corporatist model and are endeavouring to achieve SBDMM through what could be described as a professional or a learning community model. Here the focus is on the development of educative relationships so that school staff understand the purpose of their work and are encouraged to harness their will, intentionality, commitment and professional values to individual and collective projects that will improve the educational program. Principals work to cultivate teamwork and collective responsibility are less concerned as to whether 'everything is under control' (Johnston & Pickersgill, 1992; Walker, 1994). Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) recognize that a condition of 'interactive professionalism' develops when colleagues collectively scrutinize practice and provide mutual support as they trial new processes. Holly and Southworth (1989, p.23) propose that innovative learning by teachers and administrators enables schools to become:

interactive and negotiative;  
creative and problem solving;  
proactive and responsive;  
participative and collaborative;  
flexible and challenging;  
risk taking and enterprising;  
evaluative and reflective; and  
supportive and developmental.

In the learning community administrators work to create purpose and cultivate collegial relationships. They should ensure that decision making centres on professional knowledge and not micropolitical processes (Smyth, 1991). Promising examples of the empowerment of school staff are evident in many schools. The Flexibility in Schooling Project, The National Schools Project (Ludwig, Currie & Chadbourne, 1994) and the National Schools Network provide examples of how the professional interests of school staff can guide school level change.

Both the corporatist and learning community models have potential to cultivate organizational learning and to make the school a learning organization. (See Senge, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Fullan, 1993) In the learning organization relationships focus on mutual learning rather than control. Each model has capacity to promote SBDMM and cultivate ongoing improvement of administrative and pedagogic processes and outcomes. There are important differences in the extent to which there is emphasis on either hierarchical or professional relationships, planning or 'purposing' and the demands of the mass world of education system administration or the interests, creative energies and life-world of professional educators. (See Starratt, 1993) The differences parallel Sergiovanni's (1993) concern as to whether schools should be conceptualized as either organizations (corporations) or communities (learning communities). The learning community model has greater potential to allow educational values to be

incorporated in SBDMM.

The calculus of change forces is transforming Western Australian schools from bureaucracies that are characterized by organizational stability to organizational and administrative forms with potential for SBDMM. Traditional structures and cultures are being assailed and more flexible and responsive forms of administration have been asserted. Corporate managerialist and learning community models of school organization and administration are being used to guide the transformation of schools. (See Table 3) Each model represents a choice of values as to 'how schools should be'. Practitioners should develop a high level of awareness of how their preferred model of school organisation and administration guides and also constrains their thinking about the work of the STA. Although there may be some common

elements between models, from a holistic perspective the models suggest different approaches to school administration. Consequently the work of the STA will vary according to the model(s) which underpins the organization and administration of a particular school.

Table 3: The Competing Models of School Organization and Administration

The position of STAs is not an end in itself. Instead the position is a means to the end of maintaining and improving the educational program of the school. Any justification of the position of the STA should show how the work of practitioners contributes to the pattern of organization and administration that is necessary to sustain the distinctive educational program of the school or college.

2. What should be the purpose of the work of the STA? Should STAs be educational leaders? How can STAs demonstrate educational leadership? What is the relationship of the work of the STA to that of the AST 1-2-3s?

Change creates conditions where STAs can quickly lose sight of the purpose of their work. They must understand how they are connected to the purpose of the educational program of the school. Practitioners can be 'attached' to their work at the level of tasks or responsibilities or purposes. Without understanding of the purpose of their work then they are not able to redefine the allocation of their effort in the context of change. Here the practitioners drifts into a 'personal comfort zone' and become marginal to SBDMM.

Practitioners have a key responsibility to understand how they are 'attached' or 'connected' to the operations of the school. For some the attachment to the school is through a set of traditional tasks or responsibilities rather than a purpose. Without an understanding of the purpose of the STA position in the context of ongoing change then STAs may develop a practice which centers on the 'familiar' while the educational program and the pattern of school organization and administration changes. STAs, like other educators, must have an understanding of the 'big picture' of educational change. If STAs do not comprehend the direction of on-going change and continuously refocus their professional effort then they will become a barrier to enhancing the educational program of the school. The purpose of their work in the school should be understood if they are to interpret the meaning of the responsibilities that are prescribed in the Job Description Framework (JDF) or that are determined by the principal.

In the absence of a rationale as to how the STAs should contribute to the learning program and the administration of the school it will be easy for the professional effort of practitioners to drift toward responsibilities and tasks that are within a personal zone of comfort. Under these circumstances their contribution may become marginal to SBDMM.

The Position Description Form of the Level 3 STA positions (EDWA, 1995) prescribes seven categories of responsibility for the work of practitioners. Collectively the JDF descriptors identify a formidable range of work activities. The impact of SBDMM has led to a quantitative expansion of responsibilities as well as a qualitative upgrading of the level of performance of most responsibilities in a context of increased accountability. It therefore becomes essential that STAs have a clear sense of the purpose of their work and the priority of the responsibilities when allocating their professional effort.

The shift from the old bureaucratic order to SBDMM using corporate managerialist and learning community models of school organization has created a set of traditional and emergent responsibilities for STAs. (See Table 4) The emergent responsibilities represent a new valuation of the worth of professional practice. The shift to the emergent responsibilities requires both a new allocation of the professional effort of the STA and a qualitative change to the way in which responsibilities are performed. If the work of STAs is to be transformed from a traditional to an emergent set of responsibilities then significant professional effort should be shifted from a concern with discipline (student management) and administrative routines (management of school finances, operations) to a concern with school planning, staff management, curriculum management and school and community interaction. STAs will make a more significant contribution to SBDMM if their professional effort is focused on the emergent set of responsibilities. In many schools this reallocation of effort may be difficult as student discipline and staff support take up inordinate amounts of time.

Table 4: Traditional and Emergent Responsibilities of the STA

STAs are well positioned to provide educational leadership. Through interactive professionalism they can work to cultivate collaborative processes about the extent to which current curricula and pedagogies meet the needs of all categories of students. The STA becomes an educative leader (See Duignan and Macpherson, 1991) by encouraging staff to learn about the operation of current programs and practices. Collaborative learning goes beyond error correction to encompass



problem reformulation and even reassessment of priorities. Collective action comes when staff are challenged to change their practice and have a commitment to colleagues. Here staff choose not to remain professionally isolated in the department or team.

STAs can also do much to initiate and encourage professional contact with staff who are outside the department or teaching team. This provides opportunities for teachers to learn from other groups of teachers in the school. Historically departmental defensiveness created strong boundaries which served to divide or 'balkanize' the schools. (Hargreaves, 1993; Siskin, 1994) The limited professional interaction of school staff especially with respect to the review of

learning programs has prevented organizational learning.

If STAs are to be educative leaders in the school they should be:

- facilitators rather than barriers to change within the school;
- acquiring knowledge of the new pedagogies;
- guiding program or curriculum planning, implementation and review;
- cultivating a subject field ethos, promoting the ethos in the school community;
- facilitating the professional growth of staff within the department;
- assisting staff to develop new forms of work organization;
- a significant voice in the policy forums of the school; and
- focused on outcomes, especially with respect to student learning and the performance development of staff.

As educative leaders STAs do not rely on the authority of their position. Instead their influence comes from a high level of awareness of the educational needs of students and their access to information about the worth of current educational programs and practice. They are prepared to present arguments and debate the issues relating to pedagogy and program development.

The creation of the AST 1-2-3 classification has implications for the work of STAs. It appears that both categories of school educators will have a focus on staff management and curriculum management. If schools are to respond to the challenge of change then there must be a critical mass of leadership and professional interaction. However, it will be important to ensure that these categories of educators do not work at cross purposes both within and across departments, teams and project groups.

3. How can the work of STAs within the school be made more effective and professionally satisfying? Can and should the administrative time allocation for STAs be increased to .04? Should there be a forum for STAs within the school?

Change has brought an intensification of the workload for STAs. To

some extent the corporatist approach to school organization has led to a reinventing of the wheel in each department or team. There may be greater possibilities for STAs to share information and to take collective responsibility for some projects. Performance management and the outcomes based approach to education offer scope for the mutual exchange of ideas and knowledge. In the learning community model STAs will learn from each other as well as departmental colleagues. It is evident that in many schools and colleges the politics of departments and programs prevents authentic communication between different groups of educators. STAs should collectively scrutinize their workloads. In the context of the constraints of the school or college environment (i.e. time, limitations of resources, organizational problems) they should develop expectations as to what is a realistic workload or an achievable level of performance. Some practitioners may have useful strategies to reduce the conflicts and dilemmas of combining teaching and administration. In some schools there may be possibilities for the restructuring of traditional patterns of work organization. Ashenden's (1990, 1992) model suggests the use of non-professional staff to accept responsibility for administrative routines. The WASTAA should assess the implications of any system level claim for an increase in the administrative time allocation of STAs. The consequences of such a change should be fully understood.

The networking of STAs that exists in most schools should be further developed. The emergence of an STA forum in schools would reduce the professional isolation of many STAs.

4. What types of professional development programs are needed by STAs if they are to be responsive to change? Do STAs have access to worthwhile professional development?

The WASTAA has and will continue to play an important role in channelling the demands of STAs for significant professional development experiences. Also WASTAA is well placed to recommend worthwhile programs to STAs. There is an increasing level of awareness of the need for professional development. Changes to the nature of the work of STAs means that they must have knowledge and competencies of school administration, especially with respect to planning and managing people. However as educational leaders they also require access to programs which enable them to further develop their knowledge of curriculum fields and pedagogy. For many STAs there is a view that they have neglected their own professional development needs with respect to teaching and curriculum development. In some rural schools few meaningful programs are available for STAs. If STAs are not able to access worthwhile professional development at a level that is comparable to other categories of practitioners then they will be disadvantaged in their practice and in their prospects for career progression.

5. Should there be a recognition of STAs as 'beginning', 'mature' and 'expert' in their level of performance? Should there be a systematic induction program for beginning STAs? What opportunities exist for STAs with blocked careers?

Increasingly in the professions there are different levels of accredited performance. In an era of 'standards driven' quality assurance it may be appropriate for WASTAA to consider the identification of different levels of performance. WASTAA could also play a central role in the induction of staff into STA positions. Current performance management policy does not define standards. It is appropriate that standards of practice are established by STAs. For many practitioners the STA position is a terminal career position. It comes essential that they have legitimate benchmarks for practice against which to judge their performance.

For practitioners who perceive blocked career opportunities it would be beneficial if job rotation schemes could be developed. Job rotation of STAs into other aspects of public sector or private sector work could provide new challenges, knowledge and experience. Alternatively possibilities could be explored to see if some private sector employers would recognize the expertise and experience of STAs. Some STAs may prefer to change career if there are no salary penalties.

## Conclusion

Although many STAs have a positive professional identify some work in micropolitical rather than collegial environments. The demands of work make these practitioners reactive rather than proactive. Here there is a lack of professional recognition from their colleagues and senior administrators. They have limited opportunities for professional development and perceive blocked career opportunities. These practitioners are in need of an enhanced professional identify. At system level level there is a need for EDWA to offer further career or administrative time as incentives for STAs to improve their practice.

Through their professionalism STAs have made an enormous contribution to the transformation of schools. Their work is not without difficulty. STA positions are being redefined. Some STA positions in

schools are no longer secure. It is now appropriate that STAs collectively review their role and set directions for their work in late twentieth century schools. It is essential that the voices of educators rather than systems of mass administration inform further educational reform. Quality assurance should be critiqued, planned and implemented using educational rather than managerial perspectives. EDWA has presented the corporate managerialist model as the guiding frame for redefining the work of educators. This paper proposes that

WASTAA considers the learning community model as a *modus operandi* so that STAs contribute to the management of change and also prove their professional satisfaction.

Opportunities exist for the transformation of their work of STAs. WASTAA can play an important part in articulating the preferences of practitioners. STAs have an important strategic location in their school or college. They are the sole category of administrators who have direct experience of the success and operation of learning programs. They have a responsibility to ensure that this knowledge is accessible to the key decision making forums of the school or college and EDWA. STAs should be prepared to argue their case and continue to demonstrate that they are participants in SBDMM. Alternatively, failure to respond to the challenge of change provides opportunities for other categories of educators to become the key change facilitators and educational leaders in the school or college.

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Figure 10 = Table 2.



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