

“Is this actually a good thing?”

Teacher professional identity and professional ethics under neoliberalism

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Statement of originality

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signed:

Date:

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Abstract

This study considers the way teacher professional identity and ethics come into tension with governing policies in education.

Informed by institutional ethnography, the research is a case study of a public secondary school in Sydney, Australia. This case study begins from the standpoint of five teachers, mapping outwards through significant policy texts to the 'ruling relations' and discourses that articulate a vision of teacher professionalism in New South Wales. A series of classroom observations contrast these governing discourses with the material reality of the classroom. In this way the design of the study mirrors the tension between neoliberal policy and the practices of teachers as they engage in policy enactment.

Through the course of this research, a mandated professional development process emerged as a significant mode of discursive governance that conceptualises professional identity in particular ways. Reflecting neoliberal accountability approaches as well as diluted goals of 'equity and excellence' expressed in Australian education policy, this process purports to define teachers' work and professionalism. While teachers find the process useful, it contributes to the growth in administrative workload that is emblematic of neoliberalism. This thesis understands policy enactment as involving practices of attachment, aversion, and indifference, designed to mitigate the impacts on teacher workload of new accountability demands and frequent policy changes. However, there is also an excessive and contingent dimension to classroom practice for which teachers must also prepare: something that cannot be captured in policy and paperwork. This dimension demands a strong sense of ethical identity and professionalism; practices that are not privileged in the quantifiable, thinned-out logic of neoliberalism.

This thesis contributes to ethical and political debates about the nature of teacher professional identity under neoliberalism. It argues that teachers have a role as 'truth speakers' as well as an ethical duty of care to help their students prepare for the challenges of a transformed and transforming world. While professional development processes may be helpful in developing some elements of pedagogical and professional practice, this thesis shows that the attitudinal and ethical domains of teacher professional learning deserve a greater emphasis in education policymaking, and teachers deserve greater freedom to strengthen the moral and transformative capabilities of their students.

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA:	Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority A national statutory authority responsible for the Australian Curriculum, standardised testing programs and school reporting.
ACER:	Australian Council of Educational Research An independent education think tank, established in 1930 to provide advice to educators.
AITSL:	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership An arms-length corporate entity established by the Commonwealth Government to develop policy and recommendations for teaching in Australia.
CESE:	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation An “in-house” research unit within the New South Wales Department of Education.
COAG:	Council of Australian Governments A peak decision-making body that brings together state and federal ministers.
The Department:	NSW Department of Education The state bureaucracy that runs government schools in New South Wales.

HSC:	Higher School Certificate The final school leaving assessments taken by students in Years 11 and 12 in New South Wales.
ICSEA:	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage A measure of socio-economic status, calculated using parental occupation and education, school location and proportion of Indigenous students enrolled.
MCEETYA:	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs A high-level decision-making body involving State and Federal education ministers.
NAPLAN:	National Assessment Program (Literacy and Numeracy) Annual national standardised testing program in Australia, undertaken by all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
NESA:	NSW Education Standards Authority The statutory authority responsible for teacher accreditation and curriculum development in New South Wales.
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PBL:	Project-Based Learning
PDP:	Performance and Development Plan A mandatory annual performance and development plan completed by all teachers in New South Wales government schools.
PIP:	Personal Interest Project A project-based learning task for Year 10 students at Olivetree High.
SEF:	School Excellence Framework A framework for creating high-quality schools in New South Wales.
SPaRO:	School Planning and Reporting Online An online reporting tool for uploading school plans and reporting progress in New South Wales government schools.

Chapter One: Introduction

Even those teachers whose projects have been otherwise are constrained by state action plans and testing mechanisms. The rebellious teacher, the “reflective practitioner” is asked to tamp down dissonant conceptions of what education might be and perhaps ought to be in a chaotic, uncertain time. We do not know how many educators see present demands and prescriptions as obstacles to their own development, or how many find it difficult to breathe. (Greene, 1988, p. 14)

Neoliberalism is a dominant social imaginary in the world: a way of conceptualising the relationships between people, institutions, capital, and economy. While some have argued over the past few years that recent global crises – like the 2008 Financial Crisis or the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic – herald the end of neoliberalism, the logic is so embedded in our existing institutions and political habits that, in all likelihood, it still has a long course to run. For those who work in intellectual, artistic, or care professions, there is a tension between the commoditising consumerist logic of neoliberalism and the social and civic duties expected from those who help create a life worth living in a world worth living in (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, & Edwards-Groves, 2014). Teaching, for me, is a prime example of those professions caught in the policy grind of neoliberalism: public servants, nurturing role models, administrators, carers, frontline staff, essential workers, and enactors of policy. How then do teachers navigate these multiple competing demands in their work?

One insight that led me to this question emerged during my honours research, when teachers described the effects of Australia’s then recently introduced national standardised literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) tests on their teaching. They reported narrowed curricular focus and weeks of test preparation because of the intense focus that had come to exist around NAPLAN. This focus was partially a consequence of the Rudd-Gillard Labor Government’s *My School* website – which put school-level NAPLAN results online for all to see, generating performative pressures in a market for students. I was a political staffer for a local Member of Parliament in the government at the time; a government which had located education at the heart of its policy agenda:

'Building the Education Revolution' (Rudd & Gillard, 2008). But this was a technicist, technocratic, predictable revolution: there was an important program of capital works in schools and a trial of digital resources, but after this was over Australia was left with a suite of policies which imply a particular *purpose* for education – one that emphasises human capital formation over all else. These policies crystallise twin goals of standardisation (an Australia-wide curriculum! Teacher Professional Standards!) and accountability (parents *should* have access to school performance data!). These goals for schooling are at best unimaginative and at worst undemocratic. Their effectiveness – at least in terms of the “problems” they were formulated to address – is uncertain. The question for me was how this kind of hegemonic policy formation, which automatically accepts the premise that competition and standardisation are a good thing in education, could co-exist with the genuinely felt ethical and moral concerns of teachers.

The neoliberal agenda reaches further than these policies: it is a social formation that thins out the texture of our civic life. I am troubled by the way the term “customer” has come to displace so many richer descriptions of people going about the world: on public transport we are no longer “passengers”; in libraries we are no longer “patrons”; the state of New South Wales (NSW) now has a “Department of Customer Service”, as though citizenship was a commercial relationship and not one of mutual obligation and community-building. This logic shapes the subjectivity of everyone who lives in societies where it takes hold. Wherever neoliberalism gazes, social relations are ossified into market relations. This research is one attempt to find ways for alternative imaginaries to thrive.

In a world dominated by the messaging that “there is no alternative” to the logics of competitive markets and consumption, education remains an important space for an alternative imagination. The rapid expansion of globalised neoliberal capitalism has had a corrosive effect on our society: exacerbating inequality (Piketty, 2014; Therborn, 2013; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), eroding democracy in the name of the market (Klein, 2007; Roy, 2010), and seriously damaging our natural environment and climate (Klein, 2014; Shiva, 2013). Recent events have seen a retreat from global citizenship, cosmopolitanism,

and international solidarity, and around the world we are seeing the rise of nationalist, isolationist, xenophobic and anti-intellectual political movements. In the context of these changes, it is important that schools continue to educate for democracy and freedom – and to attend to the critical faculties that a healthy civic sphere demands. This thesis explores the ways in which the often-contradictory rationalities of neoliberalism and critical education play out in teachers’ work and ultimately, in classrooms.

Research aims and significance

The impacts of what Connell has termed the “neoliberal cascade” and the market agenda are keenly felt in schools (Connell, 2013a, 2013b). Neoliberal policy is highly globalised and the “borrowing and lending” of policy around the world means that transnational logics can dominate the thinking of policymakers (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Despite Australia’s long history of research into effective and rich teaching, Australian politicians have often looked to global policy trends – particularly in the United States and United Kingdom – to inform our education systems (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). At the same time, these policies are realised in localised “vernacular” ways (Lingard, 2000) and are used to express national priorities and values. In the case of Australian education, much of the policy agenda that shaped school policy during the course of this research draws on the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) with its joint pillars of “equity and excellence” and “active and informed citizens and lifelong learners”. How these goals are developed and derived into practical policies which can be enacted in classrooms is a concern taken up here.

This thesis explores some of the specific ways that these policies are translated into classroom practice through the process of enactment (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). In NSW schools, one of these mechanisms is the Performance and Development Plan which must be completed by all teachers annually. This process of goal setting is connected to a wide array of policy texts that reach up to national agreements and frameworks, including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011). Tied to the broader accountability and

standardisation agenda, the Performance and Development Plan and the Professional Standards are a space for audit and accreditation as well as a potential opportunity for generative professional learning (Baker, Chaseling, Boyd, & Shipway, 2018; Mockler, 2020). This thesis aims to contribute to the literature in the field of professional learning and development under conditions of audit and accountability. Research suggests that teachers experience the additional administrative work associated with the accountability agenda as either unhelpful, underutilised, or as a form of accountability and control that contributes to extra workload (Kim, 2019; McGrath-Champ, Stacey, Wilson, & Fitzgerald, 2018; Spina, 2021; Talbot, 2016). This thesis looks at the networks of policies and their logics which inform this type of work and considers the way these documents can be applied more effectively in schools.

This research also seeks to contribute to literature on teacher professional identity and ethics, particularly as they relate to the problems of neoliberalism. The way that teachers come to form professional identity under a variety of policy regimes can be understood in Foucauldian terms as the dynamic of power/knowledge and the subject (Foucault, 1982). Much research literature has addressed the influence of *governmentality* on teachers – the way in which policy measures and governing structures shape teacher subjectivity (for example Lewis, Savage, & Holloway, 2019; Niesche, 2015; Perryman, Ball, Braun, & Maguire, 2017). Connell (2009) has argued that standards are one such tool which “embeds neoliberal distrust of teachers’ judgement”, narrowing practice and “decomposing [it] into specific, auditable competencies and performances” (p. 220). However, good teaching cannot ultimately be reduced to these limited criteria: there is a contingent excess that comes from dealing with the authentic and complicated world outside of the classroom. Teaching is bound up in values, so much that Biesta (2010) argues that values are *constitutive* of education. It is difficult to conceive of a way for neoliberal education policy to capture this rich complexity, indeed Santoro (2011) argues that it is necessary for teachers to find the moral rewards and capacity to “do good” within the domain of teaching in order to confront a range of other problems that stem from neoliberal policy, such as administrative burden, heavy workload, and teacher

burnout. To that end, this thesis also seeks to understand the strategies teachers employ to cope with the burden of policy enactment.

Political leaders may set policy priorities, but the way those policies are enacted in classroom can be transformed by the personal values and ethical sense of duty of teachers. Teaching is, or at least should be, a subversive activity, argue Postman and Weingartner (1969), and I was curious to find out the extent to which teachers are able to resist the more damaging effects of neoliberal policy. Anfinson (2017) suggests that political and ethical values – particularly those that relate to global challenges like climate change – must necessarily be refracted through the subjectivity of individuals:

There is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself (Foucault 2005, p. 252). If governmentality always has to pass through the relation one has with oneself, then the self is one important node of political intervention. (p. 219)

This thesis attempts to navigate these competing interests by exploring the ethical elements of transformative pedagogy, the governing regimes of neoliberalism, and the complex and contextual ways that these tensions are negotiated by teachers in their practice.

Research questions and design

Given that these concerns operate both at an individual level and an organisational and social level, the research question that drives this thesis seeks to locate the study at the intersection of policy and practice: how does the power of neoliberal education policy shape rationalities of classroom practice? In order to respond to that question, four sub-questions were developed that guided the research project itself:

1. How do the rationalities of neoliberalism play out in Australian educational policy?
2. What are the tensions between these policies and teachers' practice?

3. What are the strategies and practices enacted by teachers in classrooms in the light of encroaching demands of the neoliberal project?
4. What insights can be gained from different cases to inform the development of education policy?

A single-site case study approach was used in this research, informed by institutional ethnographic methods of inquiry and policy enactment research. The case study approach enabled me to develop an understanding of the day-to-day practices of five teachers in a public secondary school in Sydney. Institutional ethnography starts from the lived experience and standpoint of practitioners, making it a suitable approach to begin with these experiences rather than foregrounding my own concerns. During my time with these five teachers – Stephanie, Charlotte, Julia, Cate, and Sara – over a period of six months, I conducted interviews and observations to learn about the way policy comes to intersect with their practice. During the interviews, informants described their work and the organisational processes it involved. During observations, I noted the dynamic interactions between teachers and their students, the physical space, and looked for the ways that governing texts described in the interviews might be understood to shape classroom practice. These data were then coded using qualitative data analysis software, looking for themes, key people, organisations and, significantly, policy texts. Borrowing from the mapping approaches taken by other institutional ethnographers I was then able to produce a map of the “ruling relations” of governing texts in this school (Nichols & Griffith, 2009; Turner, 2006). This map uncovers some of the discursive ties that connect the process of enactment in the classroom to the broader governing logics of education policy in Australia. Analysis indicates that there are discontinuities and contradictions throughout the map, but perhaps more significantly the interviews and observations indicated that there are significant broader political and social issues, such as climate change, impinging on classroom practice in unexpected ways.

The structure of this thesis

The next chapter is a literature review that defines the key terms and terrain of the debate in this thesis. It aims to conceptualise the tension that sits at the heart of the research questions: that between neoliberalism and critical or alternative imaginations for society. It begins by defining neoliberalism and then tracing the research literature on neoliberalism as a policy rationality in Australia. Neoliberalism is a deeply contested term; this section provides clarity regarding its use in this thesis as well as a brief outline of its function as a social and policy imaginary. The chapter then turns to the question of teachers' work both under neoliberalism, as well as in a critical-transformative mode. Critical and transformative approaches to education can be understood as a kind of antithesis to neoliberal hegemony, and Chapter Two outlines how that can be understood within broader questions of teacher identity and ethics. Finally, the chapter turns specifically to studies of policy enactment in schools which have informed the research approach taken in this thesis. In particular, Chapter Two looks at the way policy enactment research has explored the way teachers experience, interpret, resist, and accept policy reforms. Through its focus on neoliberalism, its antithesis in the form of critical approaches to education, and a focus on policy enactment, this thesis aims to contribute to the conversation about the role of teacher ethics and identity in policy enactment under neoliberalism.

Chapter Three introduces the theoretical lens that structures this project and its epistemological and ontological foundations. This chapter argues that social science is particularly useful for interrogating questions of values and ethics (Flyvbjerg, 2001), which are key to understanding the tensions outlined in the research questions. At the same time, however, any research necessarily involves a "truncated ontology" (Walby, 2007) owing to the particular focus that determines what is present and what is excluded from study. The chapter outlines the truncated theoretical ontology, which takes the notion of discourse and power as a guiding frame for understanding the relationship between policy and practice. The chapter explores the theoretical work of Foucault, highlighting the significance of his concepts of governmentality, performativity, and counter conduct in the interpretive approach of this thesis.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the methodological approaches that underpinned this research project and explains how these led to the particular methods and modes of analysis used. The chapter outlines the rationale for a case study approach and the way it has been deployed in this research. It then traces the methodological foundations of institutional ethnography and how this method of inquiry has been used to inform the process of data collection and analysis. Institutional ethnography provides a standpoint from which to begin inquiry and a strategy for mapping upwards through the “ruling relations” of governing texts. In addition, this approach privileges the voices and experiences of teacher informants, helping to temper the assumptions about policy with which I entered this study. Chapter Four then goes on to provide a more detailed description of the data collection methods undertaken in this study – a whole-school survey, interviews, and classroom observations – as well as the approach to coding and data analysis. This chapter concludes by discussing questions of validity and ethical conduct in this research.

The next four chapters report and analyse the data collected during this study. Chapters Five and Six focus on the themes that emerged during the process of coding interview transcripts, with a particular focus on the professional environment at the school and the relationship between teachers and policy texts. Chapter Five begins to trace the way that throughout the interviews professional development emerged as a site of enactment for the ruling relations of teacher practice. Chapter Six focuses more closely on a significant coordinating text in the school that articulates these relations: The Performance and Development Plan (PDP). This chapter reports on conversations with informants about the PDP, the way it is used in their work, and the way it relates to another higher-order text – the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Chapter Seven takes the PDP as a starting point for the policy mapping process and traces through the texts that inform this document to provide an overview of the discursive logic of the ruling relations. In particular, this chapter notes the way the goals of excellence and equity in Australian education are not equally cascaded through layers of policy: the explicit focus on equity is diminished. Chapter Eight then returns to the classroom to explore the extent to which these ruling relations could be observed in actual practice. This chapter

uses vignettes combined with interview data to build a picture of practice, noting the way teachers adapted to policy demands and how these demands came into tension with unexpected material effects. This chapter also notes the way contingent factors from the “outside world” require complex ethical judgements of teachers and takes the issue of climate change as an example.

Chapter Nine draws the preceding four chapters together in order to discuss policy enactment and teacher professional identity and ethics at Olivetree High. It begins with a discussion of the PDP as a policy site through which the broad ruling relations of education policy come to focus on the individual teacher. These ruling relations reflect a general shift towards paperwork, “administrivia”, and increasing workload associated with regimes of accountability and standardisation under neoliberalism. Reflecting on the findings in Chapter Seven, the discussion turns to the way certain forms of evidence and practice are privileged within governing texts which can act to constrain the rich professional learning and practice associated with generative ethical practice. Chapter Nine develops this argument further by exploring teacher professional identity and policy enactment through the lens of attachment, aversion and indifference approaches described by one of the informants. These approaches are understood within the context of teacher identity under neoliberalism, and Chapter Nine discusses the way policy can produce particular effects, but also the way the “attitudinal” domain in teaching is primary in identity. This attitudinal domain finds its transformative expression in the notion of ethical counter conduct, which is the point to which Chapter Nine finally turns. This chapter argues that teachers need the freedom to respond to complex ethical contingencies in the classroom in order to help learners to navigate the changing world they will inherit.

The final chapter of this thesis returns to the central tension and research questions around which this study was articulated: neoliberalism and classroom practice. It identifies the logics of standardisation and accountability as the dominant neoliberal features of Australian education policy, features that are given effect in teacher practice through the professional standards and the PDP. Despite this apparent privileging of

the quantifiable and measurable teaching subject, it is argued that there remains room for ethical and generative practice, as well as affirmative uses for the PDP. The conclusion outlines the issues related to administrative and accountability demands that combine with the effects of external contexts to produce tensions in teachers' practice, including increased workload and potential conflicts associated with personal political values and sense of ethical duty. This chapter then recaps the strategies and tactics employed by teachers to navigate these tensions. These include policy attachment, aversion, and indifference approaches, as well as acts of counter conduct that speak back to the political concerns underpinning this thesis. Chapter Ten also highlights insights that can be taken forward in the development of education policy, including emphasising richer forms of professional learning and development, giving teachers more latitude and protection to discuss controversial political issues, and ensuring that equity remains a focus in education policy. This chapter closes by reviewing the contribution of this research and future directions that emerge from its findings.

Wrigley, Lingard, and Thomson (2012) argue that "school change cannot be divorced from the wider challenges facing our world", most worryingly because "the world's owners, relentlessly chasing profits, are acting as if there is no tomorrow" (p. 97). This thesis is an effort to link significant political concerns on a global scale with the more specific ways those concerns are manifest in education policy and teachers' practice in Australia. This dynamic represents the complex relationship between the individual subject and the power of policy rationalities. Perhaps most importantly, it gives form and texture to some of the ideas that sit within the field of teacher professional identity as they relate to ethics. My hope is that what follows can make a case for the important role that teachers play in the moral and political development of learners in the world today, and the need for policymakers – and political leaders in particular – to trust, respect and nurture teachers' ethical autonomy. While neoliberalism can be understood as just one hegemonic narrative in our social imaginary today, its policy effects are significant. An alternative imagination is necessary if students in classrooms today are ever to overcome the future challenges they may face, in line with what Freire (2012) called "the right and duty to change the world".

Chapter Two: Literature review

The literature review process can, therefore, be seen as a complex hermeneutic enterprise in which the researcher engages in a dialogue with individual texts and gradually extends this dialogue to include different texts talking to each other. In such a way the fusion of horizons may assist unfolding of a broader whole or a body of relevant literature which can open new horizons for understanding the research problem or puzzle. (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014, p. 263)

Introduction

Like any large research endeavour, this project began with a literature review that sought, as Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) suggest in the quotation above, to “engage in a dialogue” with texts. They describe the process of conducting a literature review as a kind of *hermeneutic circle* that moves between *search and acquisition* phases and *analysis and interpretation* phases (p. 263). These phases mutually inform one another, deepening understanding and opening new areas for reading and research. This chapter reflects an understanding that developed throughout a widening process of searching, sorting, analysis, comparison, and reflection based on the initial concepts and ideas that underpin this study, as well as new ideas that have emerged as the study has developed. The aim of this chapter is not only to clarify and define the key concepts and debates that are relevant to studies of policy enactment under neoliberalism, but also to begin a process of opening a “new horizon for understanding”. This literature review makes the case for this research project both in terms of the policy moment that dominates transnational policy making and also by positioning the “thinning out” of pedagogies implied by neoliberal education policy against another imagination. This alternative imagination is one of transformative pedagogy and ethical professional identity. The tension between neoliberal policy and transformative and ethical professionalism plays out in weird and wonderful ways in the classroom, and the interaction between policy and practice is, of course, not a smooth one of implementation, but rather one of enactment (Ball et al., 2012).

To begin with, this literature review outlines the development of neoliberalism as a concept – particularly as it has become such a dominant axiom in social research. Neoliberalism is frequently invoked in research and there is a risk that using the term

without properly defining it, and defining a clear position regarding it, undermines its relevance as a theoretical tool. This is an argument that has been made by many scholars (Rowe, Lubienski, Skourdoumbis, Gerrard, & Hursh, 2019; Rowlands & Rawolle, 2013; Stacey, 2016), and one that will be taken up in this chapter. This chapter provides a working definition of neoliberalism for this thesis, outlining its deployment in education policy, and the way this deployment has been examined in policy research. This thesis is a response to the dominance of the *neoliberal imaginary* – the conception of society as constituted by consumerist individuals – and is an attempt to determine how this imaginary functions in practice. This thesis aims to extend current analyses of neoliberal education policy into a broader understanding of the way power functions, using the neoliberal moment as a starting point. This chapter will consider arguments about the efficacy of neoliberal policy in transforming social relations and its influence on individuals in environments like the classroom, as well as the scope for acts of resistance or *counter conduct* in the classroom. Counter conduct as an *alternative imagination* is introduced in this chapter and will be discussed in greater detail as a theoretical construct in the next chapter.

This chapter understands possible sites of counter conduct within two domains: critical pedagogy and conceptions of ethical practitioner identity. This project was conceived with a critical philosophical frame – one that seeks to give voice to alternative ways of being a teacher to those that have come to dominate in our technocratic, consumer-oriented times. For that reason, this chapter will discuss the literature around pedagogy, policy and practice, and the way scholars have conceptualised “quality teaching” through the lens of the *productive pedagogies* literature. The chapter also provides an overview of literature related to teacher professional identity, particularly as it relates to notions of ethics and moral responsibility. This literature is important both in that it provides a language to discuss what happens in the classroom, but also because it represents a particular ethical position regarding research and classroom practice. Most significantly, these approaches give teachers a means to imagine a world other than one constrained by neoliberal governmentality. They are pedagogies of freedom and liberalism, and the spaces between these practices and professional communities are the

spaces of enactment this present project seeks to explore. While the next chapter will describe the theoretical basis for this approach, this chapter will trace some of the arguments made in the research literature so far.

Finally, this chapter addresses the idea of policy enactment itself, focusing particularly on the work of Stephen Ball, Meg Maguire, and Annette Braun (eg. Ball et al., 2012; Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011; Braun & Maguire, 2018; Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2014). The concerns of this work strongly inform this study and it is out of this tradition that the warrant for this research is established. Studies of policy enactment aim to capture the messiness of policy work. The major studies discussed in this chapter take place in public schools, as does the research on which this thesis is based. These previous studies identified opportunities to further their research: by mapping more of the governing texts, by exploring the mechanisms of enactments in different contexts, and by taking up different methodological and theoretical tools for similar problematics. These are problematics in among which this project finds additional warrant. This chapter takes the thesis of neoliberal logic, its antithesis of critical and productive pedagogies, and then looks at the way this tension is sublimated in the process of policy enactment.

Neoliberalism

Everywhere we hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neoliberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, that there is no alternative. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 29)

As neoliberalism has become a dominant social imaginary, so too has it become a kind of ill-defined antagonist in progressive academia – a “monolithic presence in education research” (Rowe et al., 2019, p. 150). Ball (2012a) suggests that neoliberalism is “one of those terms that is used so widely and so loosely that it is in danger of becoming meaningless” (p. 3). Rowlands and Rawolle (2013) stress the importance of providing a clear and concrete definition, suggesting that a failure to do so runs the risk of

perpetuating neoliberalism's "habitus-producing" hegemonic world view, and becoming colonised by its logic even when seeking to contest it.

When language becomes colonised in the way that appears to have been the case with regard to 'neoliberalism' in education, it is inadvertently put to use on behalf of the dominant discourse. (Rowlands & Rawolle, 2013, p. 268)

This echoes the Foucauldian notion that an idea is made more concrete – given more substance – through its continued performance. In the introduction to a special issue addressing neoliberalism, Rowe et al. (2019) suggest that it has "mutated" to such an extent as to have little analytic power or precision. They argue:

Neoliberalism is over-utilised but also under-examined as an explanatory or descriptive theoretical lens for studying educational reform. In education, researchers continue to rest on neoliberalism as a readily understood instrument with defined functionality. This has benefits in taking up a unified critique, but also has a clear disadvantage in running the risk of abstract application, like a standardised template, applied to any given reform or situation, person, place or thing. (Rowe et al., 2019, p. 151)

This point is salient, given that part of the argument of this thesis leans on the idea that the rationality of neoliberal policy is improperly understood or poorly theorised. In addition to this, things that are characterised as neoliberal may not be as neoliberal as they seem, but only appear that way because of the vague and general ways that the term is deployed. This argument will be addressed later in this chapter, after first offering a more precise definition of neoliberalism as it is treated in this thesis.

First and foremost, neoliberalism stems from the tradition of economic liberalism. The aims of economic liberalism are broadly the reduction of barriers to free trade – tariffs and other government protections – and the maximisation of competition in the

economic sphere by promotion of the free market (Brown, 2005; Connell, 2013a, 2013b). While classical liberalism was broadly contrasted with Keynesian economic doctrine for most of the 20th Century, it was not until the conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the 1980s that neoliberalism began to take on its aggressive modern iteration in Anglophone countries (Apple, 2006; Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009). Prior to this, these policies had been experimented with aggressively under regimes in the Global South, as was the case in Pinochet's regime in Chile, the Brazilian junta, and the Argentinian regime that overthrew Perón during the 1970s (Klein, 2007). The political programs of these governments – vastly increased power of capital over labour; a concerted state attack on unionism; and extensive privatisation of government assets and accompanying reduction in the size and role of the state – was lent intellectual legitimacy by the Chicago School of Economics and, specifically, the theories of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman (Connell, 2013a; Klein, 2007). However, these features are not unique to neoliberalism, having existed in various modes of capitalism throughout history. The thing that distinguishes fortified neoliberal capitalism from its ideological forerunners is its scale (through globalisation); its deliberate organisation; and its metastases into the social sphere (Ball, 2012a; Bourdieu, 2016; Giroux, 2008; Klein, 2007; Pieterse, 2004).

It is this social dimension that most crucially signifies the neoliberal experience in the contemporary age. Henry Giroux, persistent critic of the neoliberal project, explains that neoliberalism is a system that “is reproduced daily through a regime of commonness and a narrow notion of political rationality” (Giroux, 2008, p. 1). Brown (2005) stresses that it is the *neo* in neoliberalism that marks it out as a distinctly social project, unlike classical economic liberalism. She argues:

Neoliberalism carries a social analysis that, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and

social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player. (Brown, 2005, pp. 39–40)

Neoliberalism is marked by its totality (Dean, 2008), by its ability to construct subjectivities through its consumer logic (Wilkins, 2012), and by the way in which it compels engagement on its own terms – and thus distorts the basic terrain of discussion (Rowlands & Rawolle, 2013). Stacey (2016), in her discussion of the *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* policy in New South Wales, notes that there is no consensus regarding what is constitutive of a neoliberalism proper – she draws on Connell & Dados (2014) to describe the “re-weaving of worldwide economic and social relationships” to inform her understanding of the concept. The contested nature of neoliberalism often leads to contrasting representations of its status, either as a kind of totalising theoretical leviathan (Collier, 2012) or as a site of multiple “neoliberalisations” (Stacey, 2016). Rowlands & Rawolle (2013) suggest that neoliberalism is frequently used to explain “almost anything and everything”. It is in a very real sense a re-articulation of the colonial empire – social and economic imperialism rewritten for our contemporary, globalised, information-age world. Against this conception of “neoliberal empire”, it is necessary to identify alternatives that may exist as critical and postcolonial sites of resistance.

How, then, is neoliberalism distinct from consumerism or capitalism? It is in the emphasis on the individual and the way policy mechanisms are refracted through this prism. Liberalism privileges the individual, seeking to free the individual to make their own decisions within a broader social framework. Philosophical and political liberalism never seeks to deny that people are parts of a society. Neoliberalism, to borrow from Margaret Thatcher’s famous formulation, denies that there is such a thing as society. Where the impulse of liberalism is towards freedom, neoliberalism instead traps the individual, stripping away the protections and freedoms that come with being part of a community and replacing them with an illusory freedom that keeps the individual caught in consumer-market relations. Neoliberalism centres the effects of all policy and all responsibility on individuals – it is the product of a process hundreds of years in the making, according to Foucault (2008): moving from the confession as a telling of the self,

to the production of the self on social media for the consumption of others. Policy formulation in this era reflects this hyper-individualisation in that individuals are increasingly nudged to account for themselves and the source of all problems and their solutions is located in individuals, rather than systems, procedures, and institutions (Bourdieu, 2016). The essence of neoliberalism is the powerful impulse to consume and to be consumed as a hyper-visible and unique individual, completely responsible for every facet of personal identity.

Neoliberalism as a policy rationality

Education policy in Australia has consistently shifted under a series of governments, both centre-left Labor and conservative-right Coalition. This shift has occurred in line with a global movement away from social democratic orientations in thinking and a concomitant embrace of market solutions and private enterprise (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Scholars have documented the way political manoeuvres – especially amid crises – are often used to privatise services, deregulate markets, decrease public spending and expand the power of private enterprise (Apple, 2006; Brown, 2005). Connell (2013a) argues that while neoliberal policy formulations such as these have affected all domains of human civilisation, their effects are most keenly felt in the field of education. Here, the problems of education systems are reconceptualised around competition in the global education “race” (Savage, Sellar, & Gorur, 2013), and the purpose of education itself is aligned with the expansion of national productivity and prosperity (Rizvi, 2007; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

The development of education policies that sit in concert with the neoliberal imaginary have largely been outsourced to non-government players – neoliberal networks of think tanks and enterprises like McKinsey, the Gates Foundation or Pearson (Ball, 2012a) and transnational organisations such as the OECD (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Savage, Sellar & Gorur (2013) note that often the language of “fairness and inclusion” is imbricated into complex assemblages of neoliberal logic – for instance enabling the OECD to produce reports such as *Equity and Quality Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2012),

which “co-opts equity discourses into economic rationalities” (Savage et al., 2013, p. 163). These reports measure and understand equity via student outcomes on comparative tests such as PISA, allowing this problematic language to be reshaped and manipulated by economic rationalities. These tensions are likely to become more pronounced as public discussion increasingly responds to research that highlights the social damage done by rising inequality (Au, 2015; Connell, 2013b; Piketty, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010) and the role neoliberalism has played in accelerating that process.

In Australia, these shifting policy trajectories have seen the emergence of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (Sriprakash & Loughland, 2014); the My School website (Gorur, 2013, 2016); the Australian Curriculum (Brennan, 2011; Ditchburn, 2012); and a range of other measures including Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Mockler, 2013b), all of which have been articulated through the language of productivity and quality education (Cullen, 2014; Hurst, 2013; Rudd & Gillard, 2008). Tensions surrounding these policies have emerged in the ongoing political debate around *teacher quality*. Mockler (2011, 2013b, 2014) has identified the subtle language shift from teaching quality to teacher quality, a change that signifies the neoliberal focus on measurement and accountability over innovation, support, and collaborative development of practice. This echoes the argument of Taubman (2007), that the discussion of pedagogy has shifted from “what leads to good teaching” – a concept that requires an understanding of good *learning* – and instead taken a neoliberal turn towards the accountable individual “good teacher” (Taubman, 2009). Pressures such as these can lead to a reduced focus on good teaching, and instead emphasise teaching to the test (Thompson & Cook, 2014) promoting a culture of compliance (Sriprakash & Loughland, 2014). For example, Thompson and Lašič (2011) reported a range of responses in their study of representations of the NAPLAN tests in the public domain that linked results to teacher performance and – more significantly – treated NAPLAN as a kind of “Key Performance Indicator” similar to those that make “other businesses” accountable (p. 14). Teachers have described the process of resisting accountability pressures as being “swamped with performative goo” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013). Far from improving student outcomes, these policy mechanisms are seen to restrict the scope of

education (Polesel, Rice, & Dulfer, 2013), limiting the pedagogical styles of teachers (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013).

A tension exists between democratic schooling, as exemplified in critical and socially just pedagogies, and the depoliticising, “rationalist” neoliberal imaginary. Comber (2006) argues that “since the nineties some would argue it has become more difficult to be overtly ‘critical’, to frontload one’s social justice agenda in curriculum initiatives, and to politicise the [...] classroom, due to a burgeoning conservative backlash” (p. 54). This backlash, driven by what Clarke (2012a) identifies as the “depoliticising” rhetoric of neoliberalism, can be easily identified in conservative political claims that critical pedagogy and critical literacy are “ideological” (Donnelly, 2010; Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014; Pyne, 2014). One of the central tensions I seek to explore in this thesis is the way in which these modes of thinking sit in tension in the classroom, and how teachers respond to this tension through the pedagogies they adopt – a notion that has been referenced in a range of literature:

Productive pedagogies are set against the thinned out pedagogies, which result from the cold rapture of the market and loss of civic imagination, but at the same time show us what classroom research can teach us. (Lingard, 2005)

Citing Foucault, Ball and Olmedo (2013) note that while power relations are not bad in and of themselves, when they act to preclude possibilities of change and transformative potential, they become states of domination that limit “practices of freedom”. Understanding how transformative teachers can respond to the structuring power of neoliberalism in the classroom is crucial to reinvigorating these practices of freedom. In seeking to understand how teachers – teachers as intellectuals, transgressive teachers, or even “quality” teachers – negotiate the challenges of democratic schooling in a neoliberal system, this thesis explores the alternative imaginations that exist at present in Australian classrooms. These are the sites of resistance that are produced in pedagogic discourse.

Neoliberal policy and teachers' work

Just as there is much literature on what constitutes critical and quality teaching, there is an extensive literature exploring the proliferation of neoliberal policy in education. One such example in Australia is that related to the uptake of national standardised testing in the form of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Research literature on NAPLAN has explored the way tests can be culturally inappropriate (Creagh, 2016; Ford, 2013; Ng, Wyatt-Smith, & Bartlett, 2016; Vass & Chalmers, 2016), the inappropriate use of data by government (Klenowski, 2016; Thompson & Cook, 2014; Wu, 2016), the narrowing of curriculum as reported by teachers (Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013), and most troubling of all, serious concerns about the impact of high stakes testing on students (Cumming, Wyatt-Smith, & Colbert, 2016; Howell, 2016; Ng et al., 2016). The stakes on the NAPLAN tests have been raised by the publishing of data on the My School website (Gorur, 2013, 2016), a policy introduced during the Rudd–Gillard Labor government (2007–2013), and which has led to intensified media focus on the tests (Mockler, 2016; Thompson & Lašič, 2011).

These effects contribute to a particularly powerful rationality in the classroom – one to which teachers often object, but into the orbit of which they are nevertheless drawn. Studies conducted thus far have investigated the way teachers respond to these different policies, directly asking them about the influences they have in the classroom. Examples include Thompson's exploration of teachers' perceptions of NAPLAN (Lingard, Thompson, & Sellar, 2016; Thompson, 2016; Thompson & Cook, 2014; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013), which draw on extensive interview data, Polesel's investigations of teachers' perceptions of the impact of high stakes testing on student wellbeing (Polesel et al., 2013; Rice, Dulfer, Polesel, & O'Hanlon, 2016), or Howell's (2017) case study exploring differing and contradictory perceptions between teachers and children. While much of the academic literature confirms the deleterious effects of these policies, there remains a space to investigate the way specific rationalities are manifested by teachers in their day-to-day practice in different school environments. In an institutional ethnography of several schools that sought to investigate how teachers experience data

in their everyday work, Spina (2021) found that NAPLAN has a powerful “subjectifying” effect and contributes to the rise of a “data culture” amongst teachers. She identified a significant “issue of teachers describing that they spent extensive amounts of time collecting and uploading data in accountability systems, but then not having to seriously engage with it because of subsequent cycles of accountability” (Spina, 2021, p. 113). This present study begins from a similar point to Spina’s: exploring the ways that teachers respond to these performative pressures, the way this powerful rationality is taken up or resisted in practice.

While NAPLAN is often identified as one of the most powerful expressions of neoliberalism in Australian education, it is not the only one. Following the definition of neoliberalism as applying market mechanisms into social spheres, the proliferation of *accountability* measures is another neoliberal mechanism impacting the work of teachers (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). Thompson and Cook (2012) argue that assessment mechanisms – such as the NAPLAN tests and associated reportage – are shifting the logic of what constitutes a good teacher, compelling them to engage “tactically” and exerting control over practice. This aligns with what Ball and Olmedo (2013) refer to as the enactment of “‘a new type of teacher and head teacher’ that is formed within the logic of competition” (p. 88).

Indeed, other accountability measures such as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) and performative measures such as the My School website also act as mechanisms for assessment. These directly impact the work of teachers. Ball (2003, 2012b, 2015a; Ball & Olmedo, 2013) has documented the way performative accountability measures narrow the practice of teachers. The preparation for assessments – and all manner of accountabilities – is marked quite profoundly in Comber’s (2012) account of preparation for literacy assessment in schools. She noted a process of “work intensification” associated with these forms of assessment:

A number of teachers were unhappy with the effect it was having on their practice and reported that the allocation of time towards it was having a

negative impact on relationships with students and curriculum delivery.

(Comber, 2012, p. 129)

Critical assessments of NAPLAN's misuse and methodology are compelling (Wu, 2016), and the pressure that is exerted on teachers and school principals is undeniable (Gorur, 2016; Thompson, Adie, & Klenowski, 2017), however the extent to which these tests are taken up by parents in the way it has been described is not fully understood. Larner (2005) calls for analyses that create more nuanced understandings of neoliberal effects in the space of education, and some of these do exist. For instance, Forsey and Brown (2019) conducted an analysis of ICSEA score concentration, a measure of socio-educational advantage, using data available on the My School website. Their hypothesis was – in line with broader critiques of NAPLAN and My School – that these tools were increasing socio-economic concentration in schools, since wealthier parents were freer to use the data to exercise school choice. Instead, the results of their simple regression analysis seemed to indicate a significant *restraining* effect on socio-economic concentration as a result of the My School website over the period of 2010–2018, suggesting that the “neoliberal choice machine” may not have the intense effects its critics argue. This supports earlier findings from a small-scale study by Rowe and Windle (2012), in which middle class families were shown to have access to a range of strategies for selecting a school – and in some cases found My School to merely provoke feelings of anxiety or frustration. Of course, one convincing analysis does not negate other concerns with these examples of neoliberal policy, such as the way the publishing of league tables and “shaming” of schools has other damaging discursive effects. Rowe and Windle (2012) suggest that while these tools may not be used for the purpose of decision making, they still frame *choice* as an important middle-class value. While studies of mediatisation of the field of education may explore media representations – which are important – they do not systematically drill into the reception of those media images by the public at large. This may go some way to explaining the gap between expected use of these tools by parents and the findings of Forsey and Brown and Rowe and Windle.

One of the consistent themes in much of the literature is the way neoliberal policy is de-contextualised, reflecting a significant concern about the influence of neoliberal policy settings on the *social world* of the classroom. In his study of neoliberal reform in a Western Australian high school, Forsey (2007) notes the way the transition to a devolved state education system – a process also associated with neoliberal modes of governance – generated a “competitive” attitude between schools. The policy logic that plays out here is one in which competition, as in the consumer market, will lead to improved quality. Devolutionary policies like those Forsey studied, and the recently retired *Local Schools, Local Decisions* (NSW Department of Education and Communities [NSW DEC], 2011) in New South Wales, shift the burden of quality onto the individual school or teacher rather than the *system*, a process described in research literature as *responsibilisation* (Done & Murphy, 2016; Foucault, 1978, p. 105). This so called “hands-off” approach occurs at the same time as standards, standardised tests and league tables work to regulate the “teacher’s soul” (Ball, 2003), simultaneously demanding of teachers that they work collaboratively (AITSL, 2011), while at the same time creating structural conditions of competition. These apparently irreconcilable tensions take their toll, and the literature has documented the impacts that are felt by students on their relationships and learning (Cumming et al., 2016; Howell, 2016; Rice et al., 2016; Thompson & Harbaugh, 2013), and teachers’ professional identity, autonomy, and the community perception of their work (Connell, 2009; Mockler, 2013b; Moore & Clarke, 2016). Yet despite these impacts, the efficacy of these policies at achieving their stated goal of “improving education” is not at all clear. Talbot (2016) observed that for many teachers the process of meeting accountability requirements – whether in the form of teacher standards or the national curriculum – bears no relation to transformed teaching practice. Instead, participants in her study noted that the most transformative moments were found “through the variety of social relationships that existed in each context” (Talbot, 2016, p. 88). In light of this, Talbot, citing Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, calls the products of these teacher accountability measures “evidence for no-one”.

Talbot’s (2016) study focused on a policy measure that is emblematic of the productive function of education policy: the Australian National Professional Standards for

Teachers (AITSL, 2011). Developed in consultation with teachers, unions, school leaders and teacher researchers by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the professional standards play a significant discursive role in defining the work and professional identity of teachers in Australia. Révai (2018) argues that the professional standards reflect implicit ideas about the knowledge teachers must have (of learning processes, for example) and are more explicitly focused on elements of practice. In a discourse analysis conducted with 13 teacher educators, Bourke, Ryan, and Ould (2018) found that there were discourses of both compliance and non-compliance regarding the use of the standards. Across both, however, the common theme of “box ticking” seemed to arise, whereby teacher educators understood that standards could often lead to administrative work without the kind of professional development Révai (2018) suggests underpins appropriate use of professional standards. A similar concern was expressed by participants in Talbot’s (2016) institutional ethnography, where a dialogic analysis found teachers were often ticking boxes for the purposes of accreditation: a process that falls under the rubric of bureaucratic “administrivia” (Churcher & Talbot, 2020; Graeber, 2018). The professional standards are mapped quite closely to professional learning and development in New South Wales, with the PDP process and documentation drawing extensively on the standards (Mockler, 2020; NSW DEC, 2015). A policy analysis by Mockler (2020) argues that standards, read alongside tools like the PDP, give rise to particular “practice architectures” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) which both enable and constrain understandings and capabilities regarding teacher professional development and identity. The relationship between teacher professional standards and the neoliberal project is described most sharply by Connell (2009) who, while acknowledging that there are some benefits to having a common understanding of teacher competencies, suggests that, as introduced in Chapter One:

The Standards framework embeds the neoliberal distrust of teachers’ judgment. What teachers do is decomposed into specific, auditable competencies and performances. The framework is not only specified in managerialist language. It embeds an individualized model of the teacher that is deeply problematic for a public education system. The arbitrariness

of the dot-point lists means that any attempt to enforce them, on the practice of teachers or on teacher education programmes, will mean an arbitrary narrowing of practice. (Connell, 2009, p. 220)

Indeed, Clarke and Moore (2013) argue that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are part of a broader neoliberal agenda of responsabilisation, whereby teachers are co-opted into the “frontlines” of national economic development and accordingly their work is mapped, scrutinised, and surveilled in increasingly intensified ways. A consistent theme in the research literature, then, is that the standards have both positive and negative impacts on teachers’ sense of professionalism, identity, and responsibility, that this is bound up in a broader neoliberal regime of accountability and standardisation, and that the standards have a significant impact on teacher practice. This audit culture has narrowed the possibilities open for transformative classroom practice: what Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) might call “the courage to be progressive and take a liberatory stance” (p. 34). The next section traces the moral stance that flows from the critical pedagogy movement as one alternative to the neoliberal imagination, before discussing in greater detail the notion of teacher professional identity and ethics.

Curriculum, pedagogy, policy

While neoliberalism acts as a particular kind of policy rationality – one that privileges competition, accountability, standardisation and privatisation – it is not the only way to understand rational practice. Ball et al. (2012) noted that studies of policy implementation tend to explore how well policies are realised in practice, but studies of enactment capture the messy and creative ways that teachers respond to the often-contradictory demands of policy. This study seeks to understand the rationality teachers express in this process of enactment, and the tensions that exist between the neoliberal rationality and that of the teacher, and the way these rationalities govern the work and logics of the “good teacher”. For that reason, this section discusses constructions of teacher practice and professionalism before moving more specifically to the idea of ethical professional identity in the next section.

Pedagogy as a site of transformation

Critical pedagogy is one of the philosophical approaches to education that informs this study. Critical pedagogy, like neoliberalism, is interpreted widely and needs a clear explanation for its use in this project. While scholars such as Henry Giroux (2011), bell hooks (1994), Michael Apple (2011) and Paulo Freire (1970, 1985) locate pedagogy within the dynamic of “oppressor-oppressed” and its tensions with conservatism and colonialism, they also argue that it captures the notion that teaching is a transformative, democratic, and hopeful process (Giroux, 1988; Reid, 2006; Wrigley et al., 2012). Critical pedagogy casts teachers as active agents in a process of transformative education, taking on the guise variously as “transformative intellectuals” (Giroux, 1988b), “transgressive” freedom fighters (hooks, 1994), or, to borrow Ali Shariati’s Farsi terminology, “rufanshekr”: situated, free thinkers who are concerned with the troubles of the zeitgeist (Connell, 2007). What these concepts of a critical educator hold in common is a dialectical, constructive, and historically and socially situated understanding of knowledge and learning – and a commitment to *repositioning* students in this social order (Apple & Au, 2009).

Critical pedagogy is not ubiquitous in Australian education systems and those features which might be regarded as critical are sublimated to some extent through some approaches to professional identity discussed in the next section. Much of the policy gearing towards critical pedagogy has been enacted through curricular reform – particularly around critical literacy education (Comber, 2006), and to a lesser extent social justice and sustainability education (Reid, 2006; Tudball & Gordon, 2011) – as well as through pre-service teacher education. Even amongst teachers whose disposition is critical, there are pressures related to being time-poor and the difficulties that arise from this for engaging in deep, conceptual learning, which resonates with the findings of Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig (2004) in relation to productive pedagogies. They noted that a deep investment in productive education is required, from the commencement of teacher education right through to classroom practice. The productive pedagogies research is part an intellectual tradition that traces from critical pedagogy to more

contemporary, “concrete” research on teacher practice. That tradition comes from Newmann & Associates’ (1996; 1996) work on authentic pedagogy, through the literature on productive pedagogies (Gore et al., 2004; Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003; Lingard et al., 2001) to implementation as policy in Queensland in the form of the New Basics project (Luke et al., 2000) and in New South Wales classrooms via the Quality Teaching Framework (Ladwig, 2009; Ladwig, Gore, Amosa, & Griffiths, 2009; McLeod & Reynolds, 2007; NSW Department of Education and Training [NSW DET], 2003). For the purposes of this study, I use “productive pedagogies” to describe this style of pedagogy, since “quality teaching” is an expression that has become bound up in public policy debate around *quality teachers* (Department of Education and Training, 2016; McEvoy, 2013; Mockler, 2013a).

Part of the challenge for finding space for such authentic practices in the classroom no doubt stems from the perception of critical and transformative approaches as “gobbledygook” and “incomprehensible sludge”, to borrow the phrasing of former-Prime Minister John Howard’s critique of “postmodern” new curricula (Brabazon, 2013; Maiden, 2007). Referring to the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS), the landmark study out of which productive pedagogies was developed, Bob Lingard (2007) observed these pedagogies as marking a break for critical pedagogies from an “often exhortatory” nature, to something more grounded in “deep empirical accounts of classroom practice” (p. 251). Responding to the proliferation of “labels” applied to critical pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) had argued that a failure to properly realise pedagogical practice around, *inter alia*, “empowerment”, “dialogue” and “radical pedagogy” was “not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbating the very conditions we were trying to work against” (p. 298). The QSRLS helped to provide a constructive and practical understanding of the way various postcolonial, postmodern, feminist, and critical pedagogies could function in classrooms (Lingard, 2005). This presents both challenges and opportunities in a globalised educational context:

...there is a need to deparochialize pedagogies and in so doing to consider the place of pedagogies. This requires a working together of Gilroy’s (2004)

'planetary humanism' and Said's (2004) 'democratic humanism' with difference, a working together of sameness and difference. Expressed another way, this is Luke's (2006) call for 'the reenvisioning of a transcultural and cosmopolitan teacher'; at the same time, he argues that contemporary policy actually restricts teacher habitus to a 'narrowly local, regional, and national epistemic standpoint' (p. 135). Such a cosmopolitan teacher would have, Luke suggests, 'the capacity to shunt between the local and the global, to explicate and engage with the broad flows of knowledge and information, technologies and populations, artefacts and practices that characterize the present historical moment' (p. 135). Deparochialization requires pedagogies to reach beyond the local and the national to the global, but also demands deep connectedness with the local. (Lingard, 2007, p. 247)

The cosmopolitan challenge that Lingard outlines here is an ethical challenge, as much as it is a practical one. Neoliberalism produces a particular kind of subject – it is a system of governmentality that works on the individual's sense of identity, defining the behaviours and possibilities that are available for the constitution of the self in globalised market relations. While much of the empirical literature emphasises the central importance of context, this does not negate the moral imperatives that present themselves to teachers today. Appadurai (2006) argues that research itself has been transformed by the vicissitudes of globalisation. Research-produced knowledge is constantly held in tension with other forms of knowledge, and the domain of knowledge production itself is now global. Lingard (2007) argues for the capacity to "shunt between the local and the global", and this is in a sense the challenge that Appadurai lays out for teachers: to draw on local as well as global knowledges. It involves a recognition that pedagogical practice – good teaching – is located in a broader context than just the classroom itself, and the truncated ontologies of policy. Most germane to this study, however, is the way that concepts of good teaching, indeed of being a good teacher, are also a product of personal and professional ethics and identity.

Teacher ethics and professional identity

So far, this chapter has defined neoliberalism, outlined a set of policies that are broadly constitutive of the neoliberal imaginary in Australia, and considered critical pedagogy as one alternative to that imagination. This section grounds these various strands in the notion of professional identity and the way that relates to teacher ethics. There are a range of ways to conceptualise professional identity, far too many to be comprehensively described in this chapter. Instead, I have chosen to describe the frameworks of teacher professional identity that are most clearly oriented toward engagement with acts of *practical wisdom*. These acts comprise a part of self-formation in the face of the ethico-political demands of context (Clarke, 2009).

The ethical relationship between the self and the other is a core component of teacher professional identity. In her extensive work elaborating a theory of teacher professionalism, Evans (2011) suggests that it is a “tripartite” construct composed of the *behavioural* dimensions of teachers’ work that cover what people do, the *attitudinal* component that refers to the attitudes and beliefs that teachers hold, and the *intellectual* element which relates to the knowledge, reasoning and understanding of their professional lives (p. 856). These constructs are mediated by a range of factors, most notably the personal ethical construction of professionalism – which Moore and Clarke (2016) note is tied to the *affective* domain of teachers – and broader policy measures, like standards, that seek to legitimise and impose certain constructs of teacher professionalism (Clarke & Moore, 2013; Evans, 2011; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2018). Mockler (2011), taking a broader view of professional identity that accounts for these factors, proposes three domains: *personal experience*, *professional context*, and *external political environment* (p. 521). This framework suggests that questions of professional identity are bound up not just in the *behavioural* questions that Evans (2011) noted: professional identity involves asking who teachers *are*, rather than just what they *do*. It is in this space, argues Mockler (2011) that the “moral purpose” of teaching enters into the equation as “a complex and significant link to the formation and mediation of teacher professional identity” (p. 522). There is a sense in which this moral-political dimension

to teaching exceeds the capability of professional standards and other policies to represent fully the nature of professional identity.

Clarke and Moore (2013), taking up the psychoanalytic philosophy of Lacan and Žižek, position this kind of ethical “sublime” as a counterpoint to the closed-off, legitimised and fixed discourses of professional standards. They argue that standards fail to grasp the excessive surplus nature of the Real¹ – that which cannot be integrated into the rational texture of existing discourses – and that in doing so they fail to account for the rich complexity of teacher professional practice (p. 496). Mockler (2020) makes a similar case for the constraining effects of policy and professional standards using the theory of “practice architectures”. Using the state of NSW as a case study, Mockler argues that professional standards can lead to a mismatch between the kinds of “effective and generative” professional learning recommended by researchers and ethical practitioners and the demands that are conveyed in policy texts like standards (Mockler, 2020, p. 2). Teacher professionalism is grounded in context and ethical identity in a way that professional standards struggle to articulate. Ryan and Bourke (2013) suggest that professional standards are “performative texts” which “metaphorically represent teachers as cogs in the bureaucratic machine, who need to be told what to do, what to know and how to be a ‘good’ teacher” (p. 420). This view of teacher professionalism is representative of the kinds of “reform-imposed changes” that constitute “new professionalism” (Evans, 2008) – though this “new” professionalism might now be regarded as more mainstream. This version of professional identity thins out the moral purpose of teachers’ work.

¹ The Lacanian Real is capitalised by Žižek and Lacan to distinguish it from ‘reality’. Žižek explains that the Real is the traumatic substrate of existence onto which the symbolic order – the order of language and culture which we would regard as ‘reality’ – is projected. The third element in the Lacanian triad is the *imaginary*, which correlates roughly to the Freudian ‘ego’: it represents the efforts of the subject to conceive of themselves as a coherent whole. Žižek’s work is challenging to apply into educational contexts, but worthwhile for its richness and breadth (and creativity). A good example of its application to education can be found in the work of Matthew Clarke (2012b, 2012c, 2014, 2015).

If a fundamental concern of critical pedagogy is giving students the power to name their world and its conditions of justice (Freire, 1970, 2012), then teacher research is a tool through which ethical knowledge about this political domain can be achieved. Critical pedagogy comes to intersect teacher professionalism and ethics through morally informed, authentic engagement with the issues and problems of the world – an act that requires teachers to reflect not only on their own practice, but the way that practice is entwined with political, personal, and professional logics. Carr and Kemmis (2004) suggest that one way to mediate the critical and the interpretive dimensions of teacher research and professionalism is through the tool of action research. While this thesis does not take action research as a focus, it is worth noting the way the tradition of practitioner research – with its active attention to ethical concerns as well as “inquiry as stance” – has the potential to generate powerful ethical knowledge about the role of the teacher in their broader social context. Noffke (1997) referred to the personal, professional, and political dimensions of action research, which can be understood as core elements of teacher professional identity as it has evolved over time. She argued that action research, which is rooted in the critical tradition, has strands that deal more explicitly with the professional learning and development of individual teachers, and other strands that are tied more closely to the notion of “community” and practical action in the world (Noffke, 1997). Both of these strands have in common a concern for the ethical function of the teacher – they foreground what Santoro (2011) argues are the important “ways in which teachers experience moral dilemmas and ethical concerns in the pursuit of good work” (p. 9). In another typology, Clarke (2009) argues that there are four constructs within ethical teacher identity: the *substance* of ethical concerns, the *source* of moral or ethical authority, the specifically ethical *practices* in the classroom, and the aim or *telos* of these practices. Across these typologies, there is a consistent focus on the relationship between the ethical self and the external world with which that self engages: attitudes, rationalisations and practices are situated in the “external” domains of policy and material reality.

In some ways, this ethical self exists in tension with the demands of neoliberal governmentality, a concept explored in greater detail in the next chapter. It is often that

which comes into tension as *values schizophrenia* – the conflict between higher-order institutional demands and the personal ethical and professional interests of the teacher (Ball, 2003). The notion of values schizophrenia will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but what is relevant at this point is the way teachers are compelled to negotiate competing, frequently quite serious, moral demands in their practice. In Chapter Four of *The Ethical Teacher*, Campbell (2007) discusses at length the ethical challenges associated with political issues in the classroom. Naturally there will be circumstances in which contentious issues – such as climate change – arise in the course of school life. Campbell argues that the ethical teacher must navigate these issues without conveying their own political opinions or transforming the classroom into a “soapbox”. While Campbell acknowledges there are some limits to this political tolerance – the example she most frequently cites is “the neo-Nazi”, which resonates somewhat given the rise of right-wing extremism in the world today – her point about the moral imperative for teachers to seem politically neutral for the sake of the profession does not extend so neatly to all areas of civic and political debate. Santoro (2011) suggests that Campbell fails to account for “the possibility that teachers *know* what it would take to engage in good teaching but are prevented from *enacting* good teaching by the constraints of pedagogical policy” (p. 9). Politically neutral approaches advocated by Campbell might come into conflict with the “right and duty to change the world” articulated by Freire (2012), for example. The question for teacher professionalism and ethics ultimately becomes one of *where the line is drawn* as far as the teacher’s moral duty towards their students. While the ethical position can be easily understood for what Campbell (2007) describes as “polarized examples”, the challenge rests in those areas of teaching that are controversial simply because the act of teaching and learning is “inherently and unavoidably infused with aspects of social and moral inquiry” (p. 79).

Teacher professional identity, professionalism, and ethics intersect strongly with the neoliberal policy trends that frame this project. Having explored the political logic and roots of transformative practice as an ethico-political approach to teaching, this section has traced a specific range of literature that deals with notions of professional identity and teacher ethics, which are frequently brought into tension with the standards agenda

of neoliberalism. The next section turns to questions of policy enactment in the classroom and the contexts and mechanisms in which these standards are activated in practice.

Studies of policy enactment

While the next chapter will more fully develop the theoretical frameworks around teachers' work and subjectivity that underpins this thesis, there are several significant studies that have explored the governance of teachers' work. Following a brief survey of the field, this section will discuss the ethnographic work of Martin Forsey in a school in Western Australia, and a large study by Stephen Ball, Meg Maguire and Annette Braun that explored policy enactment. These studies have conceptualised the relationship between the rationalities and practices of teachers, and the broader governing logics of neoliberalism, and strongly inform the methodological and theoretical choices of this present study. It should be noted that much of the theoretical apparatus of these scholars – questions of power and standpoint – are central to the theoretical and methodological structure of this thesis. For that reason, I have chosen to address those ideas and their associated literatures more fully in subsequent chapters.

The work of Ball et al. (2012) is seminal in the field of educational policy enactment, and much of what follows refers back to their qualitative study over a number of schools. In part that is because this research explicitly sought to “take context seriously” (Braun et al., 2011), incorporating the particular features, discourses and typologies of the schools they were investigating into their work at the same time as they weighed the broader institutional discourses of policy (Maguire, Hoskins, Ball, & Braun, 2011). Gerrard and Farrell (2013) employed institutional ethnography with a Bourdieusian lens to investigate the way such policy discourses led to the enactment of translocal logics in classroom practice. They explain that documents “do not by themselves, however, constitute educational policy” (p. 15), rather it is the processes of interpretation that puts the document “into action” and invests it with institutional power (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). Taking the example of professional development as a policy enactment, Hardy and Melville (2018) explain that these interpretations are also mediated by the epistemological and cognitive logics of the individual, as well as the “epistemic

community” to which they belong (p. 165). They suggest that this rich understanding of the individual circumstances that attend policy enactment are important complements to the notion of context adumbrated by Braun et al. (2011).

Research on policy enactment in Australia has explored the way federal policies have come to shape classroom practice. Particular attention has been paid to the way the NAPLAN tests discussed earlier in this chapter have come to shape curricular and institutional logics (Hardy, 2014; Wall, 2017). Singh, Heimans, and Glasswell (2014) consider the way the National Partnership Agreement (Council of Australian Governments [COAG], 2008), an intergovernmental agreement designed to improve teacher quality, functioned as an ontological foundation for classroom enactments. They note that the Agreement detailed a range of policy measures that could have a regulative function – indeed this thesis explores a number of these in Chapter Six – however their intent in this research was to “slow down” the kinds of heuristic and theoretical approaches taken to policy enactment research. Of note was their concern that contextual enactment research itself can “enact” a particular “real” (Singh et al., 2014, p. 839), producing what Walby (2007) describes as a truncated ontology. This notion is discussed further in Chapters Three and Four.

Policy actors, policy work

Policy should not be understood as something that is located entirely within documents and legislation. Forsey argues that policy should also be regarded as a social practice that moves beyond its textual dimensions into an understanding of it as a social, cultural and structural phenomenon (Forsey, 2007, p. 8). His use of ethnography is appropriate for unpacking this richer sense of policy and the way it becomes embodied in practice. Smith (1987, 2005) explores *ruling relations* in a similar way through institutional ethnography – by taking the standpoint of the practitioner as a starting place.

The school Forsey (2007) explored in his ethnography seems, in the context of neoliberal policy, a typical one: the school principal, Grace, makes an assessment of the needs of her school, the demographic and political trends of the time, and decides to make

changes to the accommodate them. The deputy principal felt, despite his ideological disagreement with the position the principal was taking, that there was no alternative – a familiar neoliberal refrain – otherwise the school might have seen a flight of middle class parents and their students (Forsey, 2014). As the narrative unfolds, Forsey traces the resistance to Grace’s neoliberal policy prescriptions, which eventually lead to open conflict, and her termination as the head of school. Forsey encounters tensions between broad policy demands, the competing tensions between actors in the field, and the conflicts that are produced in the act of implementation and enactment.

Ball et al. (2012) published a significant qualitative study that explored policy enactments in secondary schools in England. They produced a typology of policy actors: people within a school environment who respond to policy in various ways. They do not suggest that this typology is a complete picture – in fact they express wariness about creating a typology at all. However, the various ways in which actors in a school are able to respond to policy is a useful tool for researchers engaged in this kind of research, as the significance of each role may shift from context to context, but the essence of the role itself is unlikely to change.

<i>Policy actors</i>	<i>Policy work</i>
Narrators	Interpretation, selection, and enforcement of meanings
Entrepreneurs	Advocacy, creativity, and integration
Outsiders	Entrepreneurship, partnership, and monitoring
Transactors	Accounting, reporting, monitoring/supporting, facilitating
Enthusiasts	Investment, creativity, satisfaction, and career
Translators	Production of texts, artifacts, and events
Critics	Union representatives, monitoring of management, maintaining counter-discourses
Receivers	Coping, defending and dependency

Table 1: Policy actors and policy work from Ball et al., 2012, p. 49

Golding (2017) has since argued that this typology should be extended to cover policy “survivors”: people who “receive” a policy but put in place minimal strategies to enact

it. The challenges these different actors face give texture to the process of policy enactment. For instance, for policy narrators – often head teachers and senior leaders in a school – there is a “fine balance between making a policy palatable and making it happen” (p. 50). This observation seems apt, given the situation in which Forsey (2007) reports that Grace found herself. In finding that balance, there is significant risk for head teachers – as Forsey’s case demonstrates – particularly if those policy narrators are engaging in a highly contested or contentious space. Ball et al. (2012) note that certain actors seemed to have muted roles in policy development – for example the critic – or their role was significant in unexpected ways, like the transactors. These phenomena are interesting, and it would be valuable to see the degree to which this typology translates to other national and school contexts, and the way individual teachers take up or reject these roles in their classroom practice. Ball et al. (2012) note the limitations of this kind of ethnographic work, in particular that there are forms of tacit knowledge in a given context that may not be apparent to a researcher:

It may be that what is seen to be ‘significant’ to the researcher, perhaps because of its ubiquitousness, its coerciveness, might, to the eye of the student or the teacher, simply appear as so much visual noise or simply just space-filling (Messaris 1997). (p. 125)

This is a tension that lies at the core of social science research in schools: the degree to which the interpretation of the researcher overdetermines the meaning of an object in the field – which, alongside the interpretations of participants in a field, constitutes what Giddens (1982) calls the double hermeneutic. That interpretation must be weighed against the possibility that participants in a community miss the tacit assumptions which act to normalise certain values and behaviours. Forsey (2007) encounters a similar phenomenon, where teachers act to resist the neoliberal logics being imposed by the new principal – and in so doing are integrated into the discursive production of that very struggle: by playing “the social game”, the game itself is validated as a mode of social relations, a phenomenon that Bourdieu described as *illusio* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Rowlands & Rawolle, 2013).

It is this bind that makes governmentality an effective tool for the production of compliant subjects: even the act of resistance strengthens the logic of governmentality, although the same can also be said in reverse – a logic of power involves the production of a logic of resistance at the same time. Foucault (1982) explains that without this possibility of resistance, power does not function: it simply becomes domination, as though teachers were mere objects without ethical independence. Governmentality operates at the level of suggestion, even persuasion, rather than enforcement and direction. Resistance can be understood in several ways. In her exploration of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Talbot (2017) has drawn on Dorothy Smith's Marxian notions of "consciousness" amid "objectified social relations" (p. 4). Talbot (2020) conceptualises "spaces of resistance" to "hegemonic accountability practices" as *moments* of "everyday utopia" or of "boredom". While these affective notions of resistance are useful and will be discussed in later chapters, this thesis takes a Foucauldian approach to these social relations which centres discursive, "subjectifying" logics which can lead to resistance in the form of *counter conduct* discussed in the next chapter.

In synthesising the findings of their study, Ball et al. (2012) acknowledge the difficulty teachers have in managing their time, given the array of competing and capricious demands policy makes. They saw precious few instances of resistance, and these instances were mostly located around trade union or explicitly political activities. They argue that the capacity of teachers to "think differently" is constrained by the demands of the neoliberal project. In scenarios where rationality is constituted by policy and power, Flyvbjerg (1998b) argues that the operation becomes tactical, as actors negotiate complex and competing discourses – a theoretical notion that will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. What constitutes a good teacher in this tactical space is a problematic and contested notion. Ball et al. (2012) argue that it is impossible to produce a clear "set of ingredients for how schools do policy" (p. 142), but certainly what is neglected in studies of policy implementation is an understanding of the way policies "call up" actors and subjects in particular ways. The focus of their study was schools,

and the strategies schools use to negotiate these contradictory demands: they explain that “at the centre of policy enactment is the school” (p. 144) – a network of students, teachers, administrative staff, parents and so on. Policies – whether they be explicitly political or ideological, or whether they are addressing a small element of school life like uniforms or bell times – operate on the individual. The focus of this present study is the nature of professional identity and ethical practice itself, and the way teachers operate not only as expert teachers, but as expert tacticians, forced to utilise their tacit feel for the rules of the game to negotiate their role.

One limitation that Ball et al. (2012) identify in relation to their research is their limited work on local policy documents, produced within schools. These documents serve a dual purpose, both as a form of enactment of broader policies (from departmental or government imperatives), but also to produce and translate subjectivity in the lived experience of teachers and students in the school itself. This is a challenge to which this current research also responds – using an institutional ethnographic approach to trace the lived experience of teachers and map back through the policy documents that purport to define and circumscribe their practice.

Ball et al. (2012) note that “the school is not always sensible as the unit of analysis for policy research” (p. 69), and in a sense this project takes that observation and shifts the unit of analysis. It is the standpoint and approach of five teachers – and the structure and experience of their classrooms – that will be the core “unit of analysis” of this project. After all, the classroom is the site upon which all this policy inevitably comes to bear. Significantly, they explain:

The school is continually disrupted or faced with contradictory expectations, but this is an incoherence that can be made to work, most of the time...There is a danger that as researchers we try to analyse away this incoherence as an effective complexity and represent ‘school’ as more stable and coherent than it really is. (Ball et al., 2012, p. 70)

Grappling with this apparent incoherence is a challenge, but one that enables a more substantive interpretation of the complex ways in which schools function. The contradictory demands and expectations that press on schools similarly press on teachers and their practice in ways that produce as well as constrain possibilities. Ball and Olmedo (2013) report on the volume of email they receive from teachers who try to cope with these demands, and their observations echo those of Graeber (2018) who describes receiving countless emails detailing the “meaningless” and contradictory demands of other work. Subsequent research by Braun and Maguire (2018) which builds on the policy enactments work of Ball et al. (2012), highlights both the emotional costs to teachers of this extra work – which is often framed in terms of accountability – but also the way it generates additional busywork ostensibly to “cover our backs” (p. 11).

Central to all of these studies is a respect for context. Context is something that must be taken seriously in studies of policy and how policy is experienced and enacted in the workplace (Braun et al., 2011). Ball et al. (2012) argue that policy work rarely takes context seriously, despite how core it is in understanding effective power relations. However, it is not purely for methodological reasons that the centring of context is important. Policy analysis – which includes the way policy is enacted – must account for the “interpretational dynamics” that cut across a given social field (Ball et al., 2012). Ball et al. (2012) group these dynamics into four categories, which help to better understand the contexts of a school:

- *Situated contexts* refers to the social environment, geographical location, demography, and intake of a school.
- *Professional cultures* include the way staff relate to one another, share knowledge, and the social dynamics that play out in these relationships.
- *Material contexts* refers to the materiality of the school, its buildings, and often the financial logics that underpin the maintenance of the environment itself.
- *External contexts* situate a case within the broader policy narratives and political pressures that exist outside of the school, for instance reporting on the My School website.

These studies of enactment are all highly localised – their context is key to understanding what is transpiring in these schools. While the concrete manifestations of power in each instance cannot tell us much about how the same documents or approaches might play out in a different setting, each of these studies does give a view to the operation of governmentality and power in school contexts. Forsey’s (2007) study follows a similar pattern to Flyvbjerg’s (1998b) work with the city of Aalborg. In both of these cases, the presence of the researcher not only came to impact the power dynamic of the environment, but it also gave an intimate understanding of how power functions: a way more tacit and embodied than the researcher had initially considered. There is a double lesson here. Research in schools and school environments is reflexive for both participants and the researcher, but also there is scope for resistance against the deprofessionalising, thinned-out pedagogies of neoliberalism, and that resistance can be produced in the act of research itself. In each of these studies – and in most literature that seeks to understand the impact of neoliberal policy rationalities in schools – the researcher takes a clear values position. This is appropriate, given that the focus of such research is deeply political, but that position must be managed carefully. Studies of governmentality and discourse, like Ball et al. (2012), can properly mobilise Foucault’s analytic methods to avoid presuming a given ethical position, and institutional ethnographies like Comber (2016) or Nichols and Griffith (2009) explicitly privilege the standpoint and knowledge of practitioners. These are the methodological and theoretical assumptions that underpin these studies and as will be discussed in the next chapters, they underpin this project as well.

Forsey (2007) describes his research as the study of “neoliberalism in practice” (p. 17). He positions his investigation of neoliberal reform as one that looks at “‘the hybrid, multi-vocal configurations’ that Lerner (2005) associates with the practice of neoliberal projects” (Forsey, 2007, p. 17). This study recognises the prevalence of “market-based reform”, which Forsey argues are “essentially hostile to reciprocal community relationships” (p. 27). In seeking to explore the way these policies are implemented, an approach that enquires about the ruling relations in these contexts can help uncover the way practice operates in this policy context, in Forsey’s words the way “the great is often

found in the small” so as to “shed light on the issues face on a daily basis by teachers and educational administrators in many parts of the world” (Forsey, 2007, p. 2). This study extends from literature that investigates the enactment of neoliberal policies, as is the case in Ball et al. (2012). In that text, Ball et al. (2012) suggest that policy *implementation* studies look at how well policies are realised in practice, but that studies of *enactment* explore the messy and creative ways that teachers respond to contradictory demands. While they noted the way teachers’ practice was altered and shaped by neoliberal policy, they stressed the need for context to be taken more seriously (Braun et al., 2011), and in particular for studies to avoid “imposing a theory from above” (Ball et al., 2012). For this reason, while this study implies the influence of neoliberal policies in the classroom – indeed much of the literature makes clear that this is the case – it is undertaken with the intent to work from below: to explore the “complex micro-physics” of the classroom (Ball et al., 2012), and to map the “locally-produced texts” (Talbot, 2016). What is seen as significant to the researcher because of its apparent ubiquity, might appear to the student or teacher as noise or space-filling (Ball et al., 2012, p. 125), and for this reason the theoretical and methodological framing for this study is located in the context-focused traditions of case study and institutional ethnography. It is to those theoretical concerns that the next chapter turns.

Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

The point of theory and of intellectual endeavour in the social sciences should be, in Foucault's words, 'to sap power', to engage in struggle, to reveal and undermine what is most invisible and insidious in prevailing practices. Theories offer another language, a language of distance, of irony, of imagination. (Ball, 1995, p. 268)

Introduction

As the quote above suggests, theory in this study operates in an imaginative sense as well as a political one. Theory contributes to a problematisation of the taken-for-granted features of our social world. As Biesta, Allan, and Edwards (2011) explain: "theory is generally deployed in order to make things visible or intelligible that are not immediately observable" (p. 227). Theory is used in this project as a staging platform for thinking through the implications of policy, power, and practice. It is not, as will be discussed shortly, an explanatory tool that *overrides* the experience and understanding of the informants in this study: their experience and interpretation is primary. Instead, theory is used in this study to "*add* interpretations to those of social actors themselves" (Biesta et al., 2011, p. 231), rather than to replace those interpretations with something "higher".

While my own epistemological position is influenced by constructivist and post-structural theory, the aim of this project is to seek out the ways that classroom rationalities are shaped by neoliberal policy, and to do so without necessarily imposing a "theory from above" (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011). To do this, I employ Flyvbjerg's (1998b) theoretical case study approach combined with institutional ethnographic methods. Flyvbjerg's approach begins from Foucault's conceptualisation of the relationship between power and knowledge. With this abstract, "agnostic" theoretical frame, it becomes possible to explore teacher practice without attempting to fit it into a model. This approach aligns with Dorothy Smith's (1987, 2003, 2005) *institutional ethnography* (IE), a method of inquiry that emphasises the *sayings and doings* of people and starts from the standpoint of the participant, which I will outline in more detail in the next chapter. In line with Flyvbjerg's (2001) injunction for social scientists to "understand" before attempting to explain, I am seeking not to describe practice as it fits

a structural model, but rather to capture the local effects and complexity of teachers' practice *as they describe it*. Because of this analytic quality, Foucault's theoretical understanding of power and knowledge opens a space for exploring the ruling relations of schools – in effect seeking the alternative rationalities that can be traced in policy enactment.

This chapter will first explore the ontological and epistemological foundations of this project by arguing that social science necessarily “truncates” by focusing on elements of a constructed social world. It then turns to the argument made by Flyvbjerg (2001) that this constructedness lends itself to investigating questions of value and values, the domain in which the social sciences are strongest. The chapter then turns to Foucault's understanding of discourse and power, which is a key conceptual framework underpinning the theoretical approach of this study. After outlining this conceptual understanding of power, it traces the way people are constituted as subjects under regimes of truth, in particular via the technologies of *governmentality* and *performativity*. The chapter then turns to the role of counter conduct as a form of ethical practice under neoliberalism, connecting the more subtle forms of resistance and adaptation that such conduct implies with broader concepts of professional identity. Finally, this chapter returns to the idea of values as embodied in practical wisdom and Flyvbjerg's notion of phronetic social science.

On the social ontological condition

This research takes place in a constructed space: the school as an institution. For Dorothy Smith, whose institutional ethnography approach informs the method of inquiry used in this study, institutions are constituted through the texts and textual relations that “authorise” people's activities (Smith, 2001, p. 160). While the next chapter will discuss the use of institutional ethnography in this study in more detail, Smith's argument has significant implications for the theoretical framework of this project. Since institutional ethnography takes the standpoint of people as the starting point for inquiry, it also demands that those practising IE try to avoid imposing theoretical constructs and explanations that are external to this standpoint (Smith, 1987, 2003, 2005). However,

interpretive social science struggles to come from a place that is “without theory”, and what distinguishes IE from an approach like grounded theory is that there is an implicit theoretical assumption that texts do the work of coordinating and producing institutions and practices (Smith, 2006; Turner, 2006). Policy texts not only coordinate work in a given context, but also work “to connect local and translocal practices and discourses” (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013, p. 8). The presence of these translocal discourses represents the intrusion of power and values – following Easton’s (1953, p. 129) formulation of policy as the “authoritative allocation of values” – and as such leaves space within research that employs institutional ethnographic methods to theorise the way discourse, power and values come to operate in a given field.

The process of identifying a research problem to investigate produces a *truncated ontology* – a kind of boundary condition beyond which the research does not explore. Foucault (1970) argues that these boundary conditions are in part constitutive of the disciplines and categories of social sciences, a notion that will be explored in more detail shortly. Žižek suggests that these boundary conditions are like the edges of a map or houses in a town in an open world video game: we can see them and they add texture to the world, but we cannot cross that threshold without significantly changing the focus of the game (European Graduate School Video Lectures, 2018). Walby (2007) explains that institutional ethnography produces one such truncated ontology. By this he means that the limits of an investigation mark out a kind of discursive limit to “what exists”. This limit is produced in the terms of the language used to communicate in research, in the problem that research chooses to investigate, and in the methods taken up as part of the study (Walby, 2007). The ontological horizon in social science is produced in the human mind and is “always already enclosed within the world horizon of language” (Gadamer, 2013, p. 450). For Walby (2007), writing about one research approach, this horizon is also produced within method itself: inquiry questions – in an interview, for example – function as “a constitutive hermeneutic that corrals what could possibly be said into a form that satisfies the demands of the ontological claims philosophically and methodologically girding institutional ethnography” (p. 1021). It is possible to construct a narrative that marks out the spaces – the void or lacuna – around which the symbolic

register flows. In a sense this is what a constructivist approach to social science does: it traces the structure of our social experience as we build it and helps us to understand the social world. Where gaps exist in the symbolic texture of our institutions and relations, good social science attempts to theorise what is happening in that space.

Recognising that social science is embedded in the social suggests that there are limits as well as possibilities in research. The question in this project is not about *uncovering* a truth, but rather working with informants to understand and develop an interpretation of the tensions and circumstances confronting teacher practice under neoliberal policy. Research that starts from the standpoint of the practitioner, as this project does, seeks to *understand* the social world in which it is located, rather than offer explanations for the phenomena it encounters (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 1987). This contributes in obvious ways to the truncation of the ontological horizon of this project: the institution itself is a boundary for the investigation. Given this situated, highly contextual, and mostly ungeneralisable field of research, some might ask what value such a circumscribed project may have for the field of social science. Flyvbjerg (2001), in making a case for social science, argues that it cannot achieve the same things as natural science – that it is most effective when it is focused on questions of value and ethics. Since it is values themselves that are most profoundly captured by this kind of research-for-understanding, it is to the question of values that this chapter now turns.

Values as central to social science

Social science is situated in a constructed onto-epistemological space. The social nature of this kind of research lends itself to questions of value and values, which is perhaps why it is accused of allowing values to “intrude” upon its findings (Stenhouse, 1981). Such a belief stems from a particular paradigmatic approach to science, which sees replicability and validity as core markers of quality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that the idea of replicability and validity is inappropriate to the social sciences, suggesting instead that they should instead focus on questions of value that inform the direction of technical and scientific pursuits. Stenhouse (1981) suggests that the questions of value and values in social science research might sometimes be better

characterised as ones of “interests”: since curiosity and inquiry is rooted in our values, the critical element is that research is systematic.

There is a long tradition of ethico-political reasoning in social science research. Knowledge is produced through relations of power, and social science is at its most useful when it seeks to understand the ways power is deployed to produce rationalities and understanding in the world. At the same time, relations of power are also underpinned by dynamic ethical relationships which characterise social values systems. In arguing for educational research to engage in questions of “the good”, Hostetler (2005) suggests that wellbeing and ethics are legitimate pursuits for social science: “if science has its experiments, so does ethics. Life is the laboratory for ethics” (p. 19). Stephen Kemmis has written extensively about the central role that the critical tradition can play in research that informs and transforms schooling. Carr and Kemmis (2004) argue for an interpretive and critical approach to research that takes into consideration *praxis* and the notion of values, ethics and virtue. Kemmis (2006) himself inclines towards the work of Jürgen Habermas, whose approach to social systems is frequently positioned in opposition to that of one significant theorist of power and rationality: Michel Foucault.

Habermas and Foucault are both theorists of power. Habermas broadly represents a constitution-building system of consensus through “communicative rationality”, whereas Foucault seeks to understand strategies and tactics of power in particular contexts, an approach Flyvbjerg (1998a, 2001) describes as *Realrationalität*². Kemmis (2006) characterises Foucault as postmodern – in this context meaning anti-enlightenment or against grand narratives – when he suggests that education, contra the position Foucault takes in *Discipline and Punish*, “always aims at emancipation from irrationality, injustice and unproductive and unsatisfying forms of life” (p. 467). This argument is sound; however, the crucial point Foucault would make is that the terms of “irrationality” from which someone is liberated by education are themselves a product

² “Real rationality”. This is an understanding of the way rationality works in real contexts, similar to *realpolitik* as characterised in the work of Machiavelli.

of a particular regime of truth. Foucault's engagement with questions of power did not merely seek to investigate the epistemological limits of human sciences, but also enabled a contextualised understanding of the strategies of power, rationality and ethics that function in a particular domain (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This contextualism is a powerful tool for understanding the forms of conduct in schools that not only constrain emancipatory practices but enable them as well.

While this study seeks to avoid the exhortatory instincts of some critical approaches (as named by Gore, 1993), questions of values and ethics remain a central concern. One way to centre these concerns is through a focus on the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*: a morally informed practical wisdom that comes from the synthesis of theory and practice. The idea of *phronesis* will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, however a key proposition of Flyvbjerg (2001) for this study is that *phronesis* is a way to understand the ethical relationship between the particular and the general in everyday practice. He argues that social science can act as a kind of "public philosophy", but a public philosophy that must grapple with issues of power. While many theorists have described power, few have given as much consideration to the way it permeates and penetrates social discourse and knowledge itself than Foucault. This chapter now turns to Foucault's understanding of power, its strategies and tactics, and the way this understanding gives shape to the theoretical framework of this study.

Discourse and power

Given the argument that the centrality of values is a key strength of social science, a correlated concern is that of the role of *power*. Power can be conceptualised in a range of ways. Flyvbjerg (2001) suggests that one version of power sees it as emanating from a particular locus of authority. This view lends itself to the Habermasian logic of rationality and regulation associated with Habermas' constitution-building approach to society. An alternative understanding of power is that of Foucault who breaks with "juridical" conceptions of authority to argue that "power is in reality an open, more-or-less coordinated (in the event, no doubt, ill-coordinated) cluster of relations" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 199). It is that understanding of power which underpins this study. Foucault

(1980b) understood power as intimately tied with notions of truth and understanding, or the *discourses* that structure a particular social construct. He explains:

Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 131)

The regimes of truth that constitute the discourses of an institution are intimately tied to the flows and strategies of power. In the terminology of institutional ethnography, these discourses also constitute the *ruling relations* of a discursive field (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Peacock, 2017). Policy is one concrete representation of these symbolic relations of power and knowledge. Ball (2015b) draws a distinction between "policy as text" and "policy as discourse". When considering policy as text, he suggests that the relevant features are the content of policy documents themselves and the way that teachers go about enacting these. Ball et al. (2012) suggest that two heuristic processes occur in the process of policy enactment: *interpretation* and *translation*. Interpretation involves working within the discursive space of a given policy – it is the process by which a teacher questions what the policy is and how it is supposed to function. In their study, Ball et al. (2012) noted that this act of interpretation often came from an authoritative figure in the school – a head teacher or principal – and that conversations and meetings designed to introduce teachers to these policies were actually used to circumscribe particular interpretations as well (p. 44). Translation, on the other hand, is the process

by which these policy documents are realised “in practice”. Where a policy text is translated into classroom activities or practical learning objectives, it can be understood as a site of enactment.

The logic of policy as discourse as articulated by Ball (2015b) takes a different view, informed by Foucault’s notion of discourse, and focuses on the way that policy calls forth particular ways of being. Here discourse should be understood in the Foucauldian sense as a *regime of truth* – a guiding logic that constitutes forms of subjectivity. In this regard, Ball (2015b) suggests that policy functions in a *productive* manner: it creates a vision of the good teacher and encourages the production of subjects who understand themselves in the light of this discourse. This enables teachers to “bathe in the afterglow of ‘successful’ practices and ‘what works’” (Ball, 2015b, p. 307). This understanding of policy as a twinned product, both a text and a discourse:

... draws attention to the idea that policies are ‘contested’, mediated and differentially represented by different actors in different contexts (policy as text), but on the other hand, at the same time produced and formed by taken-for-granted and implicit knowledges and assumptions about the world and ourselves (policy as discourse) (Ball, 2015b, p. 311)

Policy rationalities give shape to practices by producing particular senses of “the right way to be” and “the right thing to do”. The challenge for the researcher is to understand the dynamic that exists between these two modes: that the policy as discourse is a product of policy as text at the same time as it contributes to ways of being that will in turn influence the policy text itself. This recursive cycle is a difficult one to navigate, particularly for a researcher who is not living and working in the contexts he researches. As someone from “outside” the teaching machine, I must rely on informants to give me the fullest sense of the policies they enact. But at the same time, I am not – to the same extent at least – a subject *produced* by the policies I am inquiring into (although there are myriad policies that mediate and produce my identity as a researcher). Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) suggest that this position of distance is a necessary one to bring about

an interpretive analytics of a field of action, although this notion does undermine the priority afforded to standpoint in institutional ethnographic research. This tension will be explored in more detail in a later section of this chapter and in the next.

These acts of interpretation are central to understanding the power-mediated rationalities produced in the classrooms and practices explored in this thesis. Flyvbjerg (1998b) highlights the way in which rationality is shaped by power. Borrowing the Foucauldian notion of *rationalisation* as rationality, he explains that “rationalisation presented as rationality is a principle strategy of power” (Flyvbjerg, 1998b, p. 228). This theoretical frame is referenced in studies of policy enactment, including Ball et al. (2012) and Forsey (2007). It offers a compelling way to analyse the “perverse effects” policy can have when it is enacted (Lingard & Sellar, 2013), and the “unintended” consequences this process generates (de Zwart, 2015), as well as the silences where discourse does not reach. Flyvbjerg draws on Foucault’s analytics of power, explaining that truth is not “outside of” or “lacking in” power, but rather that it is bound in it:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. (Foucault, 1980b, pp. 72-73)

Foucault (1978) describes truth as being caught in a “circular system of relations” with power. He suggests that he is constructing less a “theory” of power, and more a mode of analytics – a way of understanding the flow, form and function of power. Olssen (2003) sees Foucault’s theoretical work as “materialist post-structuralism” in the way that it sees meaning and signification as effects of a “system of material and discursive articulation” (p. 194). In his concern with embodied operations of Nietzschean Will and Desire, Foucault departs from other post-structuralists, such as Derrida or Baudrillard, in that he is “not concerned with language, but with politics” (Olssen, 2003, p. 194). Foucault claims new forms of power have penetrated society, and because of this it is necessary to develop a new model that breaks from these historical formations. In the context of education, this analytics can look at the broad systemic changes by individuals

and institutions, but also the small acts of resistance and colonisation that take place in the classroom at the level of the individual. This perspective is taken up in Chapters Six to Nine, since the way policy logics are translated into the classroom represent particular formations of ruling relations, and the question with which this thesis is concerned is the analysis of different strategies and tactics under neoliberalism.

In schools, this theoretical frame involves the investigation of the strategies involved in policy enactment, seeking what Gore (1995) describes as “regimes of pedagogy”: the power/knowledge relations that exist in the work of teachers in the context of their classrooms. Flyvbjerg (1998b, p. 6) conceptualises power as a set of “strategies-and-tactics” that can be used both constructively and repressively. This reflects a shift made earlier by Foucault, outlining an understanding of power that moves away from the idea of “power-as-commodity”, instead describing it as a “multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation” (Foucault, 1978, p. 92). He argues instead for an analytics of power, one that looks at *how* it operates, the *technologies* of power that bring lines of local forces together, linking them and creating larger effects. Power is mobile, tactical, and shifting, resistance is immanent to it, and it shapes the relations between actors in varied and complex ways. Putting it another way, Ball (2013) suggests that “there are effects to which we have to respond, but what is important here is strategic knowledge, rather than abstract bodies of thought” (p. 148). Using Flyvbjerg’s articulation of Foucault’s analytic method, it is possible to uncover the strategic knowledge that is operating in school classrooms and school policy in the neoliberal moment. Or, to quote Foucault:

Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. (Foucault, 1982, p. 780)

It is this antagonism that this study takes as a central tension between neoliberal policy and classroom practice. These tensions contribute to the ongoing production of schooling as a discursive domain. Within this interrelated field of power/knowledge,

teachers must negotiate their own professional identity and subjectivity. The analytic approach of this project understands this antagonism as dual: policy as discourse calls forth particular practices and subjectivities from teachers while, as will be discussed shortly, enactment involves complex tactics of interpretation and translation. Having given consideration to the way power and knowledge are “entwined” and how necessary it is to explore this entwining in a given context, this chapter now turns to the question of the practitioner and professional who is, argues Ball (2013), “brought into being by the knowledge that makes them an expert” (p. 15). Through practices of “self-care”, the subject is produced within the regimes of truth that comprise our social relations.

The subject and power

Since the mid-twentieth century, argues Foucault, a set of logics that evolved out of Christian technologies of the self – such as confession – have come to exercise power over the individual as a neoliberal subject. In his 1977–1978 lecture series *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault (2007) traced the evolution of *governmentality*, a technique discussed in greater detail shortly, out of what he calls the “pastoral power”. The roots of our modern modes of government, he argues, lie in the Christian notion of the shepherd looking after his flock. Around the time of the sixteenth century, as the idea of the nation began to take hold after the treaty of Westphalia, this function transferred from the church – which was concerned not only with regulating behaviour, but with saving *the soul* – and was realised in a new way by the state. Where the state previously, in the guise of principalities and sovereign domains, was concerned with territory and the integrity of borders, the new state turned its attention inwards to the problem of population. The productivity of a population became critically important as the “art of government” came to centre on the economy, rather than the model of the family (Foucault, 1979). Since the state was now concerned with the health, wellbeing, mentality and compliance of the population, a new set of strategies and tactics came to constitute practices of government. Foucault flagged this idea earlier in *Discipline & Punish* (1977) in which he notes the way the plague in Europe enacted a new political dynamic in response to the medical crisis: individuation and control (p. 198).

Much scholarship drawing on Foucault focuses on the disciplinary technologies of power explicated in his middle phase (roughly correlated to his genealogical work in the 1970s), which traced how sovereign power came to focus on the intellect and the “soul” of a person, rather than enacting physical control over the body (Foucault, 1977). These technologies constitute the subject not just through repressive techniques, but also through the production of accepted modes of behaviour. This effectively situates our understanding of social behaviour and identity within a contingent set of discourses: studying the dynamic relationship between subject and power involves exploring *how* the power relations have come to be:

Foucault historicised questions of ontology, substituting genealogical investigations of the subject for the philosophical attempt to define the essence of human nature, aiming to reveal the contingent and historical conditions of existence. (Besley, 2009, p. 78)

This study takes up this theoretical orientation because it leaves open the possibilities of ethical and political subjectivity, rather than foreclosing them within a particular narrative of historical formation. While the previous chapter outlined concerns with neoliberalism and the impact of these policies on classroom practice, my approach to this research has been to seek ways to privilege the standpoint of practitioners and to keep open the possibility that acts of resistance and transformation are possible within the regimes of truth in schooling today. This theoretical framework sees subjectivity in the following way:

... as processes of becoming that focus on what we do rather than on what we are, that is to say, the work of the care of the self. The point here is that there is no individual, no self, that is ontologically prior to power. There is no subject that is already formed. In this sense, the self is not only a constant beginning but also a constant end (in the double sense of the word, both as consummated entity and envisioned objective) (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 87)

While this theoretical frame leaves open the possibility for acts of resistance – or *counter conduct*, which will be discussed later in this chapter – there are two key mechanisms that are significant for understanding the way contemporary political discourses come to enact regimes of truth in the classroom. These are *governmentality* and *performativity*.

Governmentality and performativity

Studies of the way technologies of power come to produce the subject under neoliberalism have come to focus on the notion of *governmentality*. Best understood as a conjunction of the words “govern” and “mentality” or “rationality” (Foucault, 1979, 2007, 2008), Lemke (2001) describes it as “the conduct of conduct” (p. 191), and suggests that it is through this concept that Foucault’s research into the spheres of government and subject are brought together (Lemke, 2002). Neoliberal governmentality demands accountability and transparency from the individual, fixing them within specific relations of power. It does this through various techniques and social technologies that seek to isolate and monitor the individual, even in circumstances where they may feel unmonitored or alone:

Management, effectiveness and appraisal, for example, as I have suggested, work together to locate individuals in space, in a hierarchical and efficiently visible organization. In and through our research the school and the teacher are captured within a perfect diagram of power; and the classroom is increasingly one of those ‘small theatres’, in which ‘each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible’. (Ball, 1995)

The most significant policy implication of this mode of governance is the way policy comes to focus on the individual, rather than the system. Perryman et al. (2017), referring to the context of teachers’ practice, explain that these “technologies of the self” influence the professional concept of the good teacher, good practice, and the good lesson (p. 2). However, they argue that disciplinary power has not yet evolved into “something more subtle and more intense” (p. 5), a claim that suggests the circuit of governmentality in schools and education systems still operates in the domain of surveillance and control,

still requiring these external technologies. While there remain many policy technologies in Australian schools that function as mechanisms of surveillance, the production of the teaching self cannot be purely understood in terms of discipline. Perryman et al. (2017) noted that in some cases teachers considered “observations” to be a learning opportunity and embraced the idea of “self-improvement” (p. 6). While this desire for self-improvement might seem to be an expression *par excellence* of the power of governmentality to shape subjects, it can also be a site of creative enactment, interpretation and even resistance to the demands of the system. Governmentality also reaches into the *attitudinal* domain – it seeks to govern the mentalities and logics of its subjects. This reaching has implications for the ruling relations explored in this study, since the question of how neoliberal governmentality shapes the practice and attitudes of teachers is central to this research.

Closely associated with governmentality is the notion of performativity. Performativity can be seen as the subject’s response to governmentality: what governmentality calls forth; performativity seeks to enact for the sake of the governing regimes of truth. Performativity is the process of enactment under regimes of accountability, with a view to the subject being recognised as occupying the discursive role recommended to them by the ruling relations. Where a subject seeks to enact a particular policy or governing logic, they are producing that discourse within their own practice. Today, many accountability practices for teachers, some of which are explored in this study, can be read as another form of accounting and performance of the self. While these are not necessarily *neoliberal* practices, they are broadly understood within the research literature as expressions of governmentality in action. Ball (2003) argues that the process of policy enactment can lead to conflicting sets of values, what he calls *values schizophrenia*. This sense occurs when a particular value – perhaps the duty to care for students or differentiate learning – comes into conflict with the demands of a governing regime of truth – such as the demands of government for standardised testing or administrative accountability. The previous chapter discussed the way teacher ethical and professional identity is understood in the research literature. Professional identity, even when structured by performativity, can be an expression of this ethical sense of the

self. Ball (2013) argues that the ethical turn in Foucault encourages us to “produce” and “re-write” ourselves, to escape the “paralysing impasse of governmentality” (p. 143). This production, interpretation, and re-writing – the hermeneutics of the self – is also the site on which small acts of resistance can emerge. In his late phase, Foucault explored the idea of *counter conduct*, and it is to this concept that this chapter now turns.

Counter conduct

Invoking Foucault’s work can create the sense of a circuit of domination – as though the influence of governmentality is so pernicious that there is no stance that allows a teacher to form an identity that resists its logic. Earlier I mentioned the possibility of enactment as a site of creativity and resistance as part of a process of self-improvement, and the idea of counter conduct, a form of resistance that is immanent to modes of governmentality (Niesche, 2015). Counter conduct is central to understanding acts of resistance and adaptation to policy identified in this research. It is helpful precisely because acts of resistance are often less overt than the term “resistance” suggests: counter conduct can take on subtle forms of disobedience, interpretation, translation, and avoidance, many of which are described in Chapters Five to Eight.

Foucault’s notion of power/knowledge suggests that acts of resistance are constitutive of a governing logic since power must necessarily produce resistance to that power, or else it would simply be domination over an object. In this way, acts of resistance seem to be totalised within given regimes of truth – they are simply a part of the game and “accounted for” within the ruling relations. Žižek (2008) argues that this lack of fundamental antagonism is a weakness in Foucault’s theory, explaining:

Foucault does not consider the possibility of an effect escaping, outgrowing its cause, so that although it emerges as a form of resistance to power and is as such absolutely inherent to it, it can outgrow and explode it. (p. 303)

For Žižek, it is the subject themselves who exceeds the limits of power, being as they are constituted by multiple intersecting regimes of truth, masks, and contradictions, and

having the capability to turn the gaze of power back on itself. Counter conduct is the concept that begins to develop the idea of this excess. It may start as everyday acts of resistance, but it can also proceed from needs that stem from the intrusion of “the Real” into institutions. The symbolic texture of an institution can only assimilate as much as the ruling relations have been able to inscribe in policy: something excessive – like climate change-intensified bushfires or a global pandemic – marks out the intrusion of the pre-symbolic Real into this space. In the field of education, it is also worth considering how the technologies of the self described earlier, which are more likely to describe “normal times”, can also become sites for counter conduct:

To put it simply, to the extent that neoliberal governmentalities have become increasingly focused upon the production of subjectivity, it is logical that we think about subjectivity as a site of struggle and resistance. (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 85)

In his later lectures, Foucault developed an interest in the Ancient Greek concept of *parrhesia*, or “fearless speech” (Foucault, 2001). Foucault’s effort to problematise concepts that are taken for granted is expressed in his late work as a desire “not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of the truth-teller, with truth-telling as an activity” (p. 169). This keeps with his focus on exploring the way knowledge is mediated by power and understanding the particular strategies and formations that are involved. He suggests that *parrhesia* isn’t simply “free speech”, but that it comes with a sense of duty to speak – to speak truth to power – often at great risk to self.

Knowing when and how to engage in counter conduct – or to be the truth-teller – is not just an act of rebellion. When first introducing the term, Foucault (2007) explains that he is not referring to outright “dissidence” or “misconduct”. Rather, it should be understood as contextualised conduct that takes a stand against the ruling relations. As with much of Foucault’s work, this should not imply a judgement about whether this stand is good or bad, but simply that it is a tactic within a discursive field, and that like everything else it is “dangerous” (Foucault, 1983, p. 231). One way of understanding the

mediation between counter conduct and governmentality that takes place in practice is the notion of *practical wisdom* referenced in the last chapter. The next section more fully elaborates the way practical wisdom and phronesis can be understood within the theoretical framework of this study. This study seeks to link practices of counter conduct with practical wisdom, understanding these subtle acts of resistance as expressions of ethical professional practice.

Practical wisdom: phronesis, context, expert standpoint

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that social science is strongest when it answers questions about moral and ethical responsibility in the form of values: including one of two key hermeneutic questions: *what should we do?* Flyvbjerg sees questions of power and knowledge bound up in social science, but that rather than offering explanations about the world, or what *can be* or *is* done (erklären), it is more useful to offer an understanding (verstehen) and a rationale for what *should* be done. Reconciling the tensions between the governmentality of ruling relations and the counter conduct that attends ethical professional identity brings this study back to the question of *values*.

These questions imply the production of the subject under various regimes of truth, as well as the hermeneutic process by which ethical identity is understood. Gore (1993) argues that it is this ethical domain that opens the widest possibilities for ethical practice:

If there is a space for freedom in the technologies of the self because we make choices about the specific practices with which we will regulate our own actions, then it may be in the realm of the ethical that we have the greatest capacity to make alterations to dangerous aspects of our regimes. The more aware we are of the practices *of self*, the greater the space for altering those practices. (Gore, 1993, p. 155)

However, practices of the self are best able to open up spaces for ethical transformation if they are thought through with the benefit of experience and wisdom. Mockler and

Groundwater-Smith (2018) suggest that practical wisdom is one key underlying principle for teachers to develop the kind of morally informed professional identity discussed in the previous chapter. Practical wisdom is the product of experience, of morally informed practical and theoretical knowledge, and the ability to apply that knowledge in specific contexts. It involves an understanding of values, institutions, and the relationship of self to others. One way to understand how this functions is to take the standpoint of the practitioner: the expert in their professional environment. It is to that concern which the next chapter will turn. One of the interesting dimensions of the virtuoso actor is the way they no longer operate on the basis of *rules* applied to different situations, but rather acquire the ability to recognise the features of a given context and respond *automatically* (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 17). Ball et al. (2012) note the way some expert teachers are comfortable deciding to avoid or ignore particular policy demands – having the experience to determine what will be required of them and what they can safely negotiate. However, as argued in the previous chapter, this process of negotiation and self-formation transpires within a neoliberal policy framework, so the question of how teachers understand their subjectivity also involves understanding the way practical wisdom and ethical identity are formed. The theoretical challenge of Foucault is profoundly relevant in these conditions:

Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity, maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. And in this case, one of the main political problems would be nowadays, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves. (Foucault, 1993, pp. 222-223)

Teacher professional identity develops, in part, through the application of Aristotle's triad of *techne*, *episteme* and *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is one way of integrating many of the unpredictable, complex, and varied elements that make up professional identity outside of the theoretical and practical knowledges of pedagogy

itself. Aristotle's model of ethics positioned *phronesis* as central to the development of the virtues (Aristotle, 2009). It is through *phronesis*, knowing the right ways and times and reasons to do something, that practical knowledge (*techne*) and scientific knowledge (*episteme*) are enacted in a morally informed way. Most significantly for this study, that wisdom not only enables teachers to improvise in their classrooms, but also to make complex ethical judgements about what is best for their students. Practical wisdom is the kind of *phronetic* knowledge that occupies the highest tier of the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) model of learning. It is expert knowledge applied with the benefit of contextual experience and understanding (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In the previous chapter I discussed the role that teacher professional identity plays in mediating education policy at the same time as it is produced, encouraged, and called forth by it. This theoretical approach provides a way to conceptualise how that professional identity not only mediates but is shaped, produced, and resists the regimes of truth in education. Since teacher professionalism and expert knowledge are so central to understanding that dynamic, the next chapter outlines a method of inquiry that blends the standpoint of the practitioner with the theoretical concerns outlined in this chapter.

Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that social science is strongest where it starts from the questions "where are we going?", "is this desirable?", "what should be done?", and "who gains and who loses by which mechanisms of power?" (p. 60). This theoretical framework draws on elements of each of these questions, concerned as it is with the social construction of a truncated ontology in research, the belief that values are central to social science, and the regimes of truth that produce forms of teacher professional identity and practice under neoliberalism. However, this chapter can be understood as adding a fifth question which combines Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) with Foucault's hermeneutics of the self: "who ought we to be?". That question underpins teachers' responses to the technologies of governmentality embedded in neoliberal education policies. Those responses can take the form of performativity or counter conduct, and it is in the domain of counter conduct that opportunities to employ practical wisdom arise; concepts that are significant in discussions of ethical teacher professionalism.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In teaching you philosophy I'm like a guide showing you how to find your way round London. I have to take you through the city from north to south, from east to west, from Euston to the embankment and from Piccadilly to the Marble Arch. After I have taken you many journeys through the city, in all sorts of directions, we shall have passed through any given street a number of times – each time traversing the street as a part of a different journey. At the end of this you will know London; you will be able to find your way about like a born Londoner. Of course, a good guide will take you through the more important streets more often than he takes you down side streets; a bad guide will do the opposite. In philosophy I'm a rather bad guide. (Wittgenstein as quoted in Flyvbjerg, 1998b, p. 7)

Introduction

Wandering lost through the streets of a big city is one of the best ways to get to know it intimately. Finding the hidden places that reveal the truth of day-to-day life in a city is a colourful and enlightening experience. In many ways, research in the social sciences is much the same – the deeper understanding of the city, or the *case*, is often found in the small diversions and intimate details of the particular. The identity of a city is constituted by the millions of people and the communities of which it is comprised. Wittgenstein's exploration of the streets of London is an appropriate metaphor for the methodology of this project. A description of London may suffice to get an overview of how the city looks, what drives its economy, how people vote, or how all of this functions at a macro level. But the micro details of people's lives can be occluded by this overview, and missing these details neglects an equally important and vital aspect of the life of a city: the way life itself is lived in it. Flyvbjerg originally used this metaphor to outline his method "narratology", or storytelling through case study.

This thesis aims to tell the story of policy enactment as it unfolds in the context of a school in New South Wales, in the lives of five teachers. Like Wittgenstein's guide to London, much of the story happens in the side streets and alleyways of local practice. There are overarching narrative themes, to be sure, but these do not explain the particularities and complexities that go on at the level of teacher practice. Understanding the whole story requires a deep understanding of the local. The methodological principles outlined in this chapter are reflective of that assumption. The aim of this

project was to determine the ways in which the “context-independent” formulation of neoliberal policy is realised in the specific, practical, and local contexts of the professional practice. It is this concern with the local enactments of policy that made a multiple case study approach an appropriate design for this research, particularly given that the epistemological frame that informs this project is constructivist and interpretivist: concerned with building knowledge and understanding through perspective and interpretation, rather than testing specific theories (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do the rationalities of neoliberalism play out in Australian educational policy?
2. What are the tensions between these policies and teachers’ practice?
3. What are the strategies and practices enacted by teachers in classrooms in the light of encroaching demands of the neoliberal project?
4. What insights can be gained from different cases to inform the development of education policy?

This chapter lays out the broad design of the study – a single school case study with five teacher informants – before describing the methods of data collection involved in building this case study: surveys, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. This project is informed by institutional ethnography, which has been used to interrogate the practices of both individuals and the governing texts of these practices as they exist in “the real world”. Institutional ethnography is used here as an approach that short circuits the research logic which posits a particular *policy* as an object of inquiry, such as professional standards or standardised tests, and instead looks to teachers themselves for advice on which texts and policies most significantly influence their work. Institutional ethnographic methods also enable this research to “bracket out” some of the presumptions that underpin the research questions, such as the notion that neoliberalism is a powerful governing influence in classroom practice. Using institutional ethnography as a starting point for inquiry, the data gathered was used to inform a case study of a single New South Wales school, in line with Flyvbjerg’s notion

that the complex relationship between power and rationality is best interpreted through case study. The nature of this case study and the way data was collected will be explained in the remainder of the chapter before some concluding considerations about the ethics of this kind of research.

Case study

Case study, argues Stake (2008), “is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 119). The choice made for this study was to explore the experiences and tensions that face teachers as they work under neoliberal policy regimes at a single school. Merriam (2009b) defines case study as the exploration of a “bounded system”, and stresses that the crucial characteristic of a case study “lies in delimiting the object of study, the case”. This study considers the way individual teacher informants operate *within* the bounded system of their school: their experience helps to situate the school case within the broader relations of schooling in New South Wales. Yin (2009) suggests that a case study should be employed when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) a researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) the research aims to cover contextual conditions because the researcher believes they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. While Yin’s observations are useful for defining the boundary conditions of a case study, and the research questions in this project are specifically concerned with the “how and why” of policy enactment, his argument that researchers “cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved” belies a positivist stance which is not reflective of this study, since interpretive research affects and is affected by researcher and participants.

Yin’s other categories are mobilised in various ways in the questions that drove this study: *how* does neoliberal policy intersect and shape the logics of practice in teaching, in what ways do teachers *do* this in the classroom, how do the nested fields of education policy contexts influence teacher practice and the ways that teachers think about their role (Grenfell & James, 2004), and how do these fields influence and intersect with the rationality of the classroom? These questions involve complex and uncertain answers

that are best expressed through the power of example which case study permits. The questions also lend themselves to two additional contributions that case study supports: the generation of theories about the influence of policy on the classroom, and the development of *normative theory* that might suggest “how things ought to be” (Schwandt & Gates, 2018). This approach enabled this study to address the fourth research question regarding insights *for* policy development.

Case studies enable the researcher to explore the values and structures that inform teacher practice – allowing an understanding of the contours of teacher experience and knowledge, their conditions and consequences, without expecting to generalise findings to a broader population (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In breaking with the positivist notion that knowledge should be concrete, and capable of generalisation and replicability (Cresswell, 2012), case study permits a discussion of the literature surrounding education policy and its enactment, and provides an opportunity not to *prove* anything but rather to “learn something” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 73) or, following the argument of last chapter, to address questions of *values*. Through exploring the lived experience of teachers, this case study yields authentic and trustworthy data based on the experience of informants (Sparkes, 2001). What is most important in educational research is understanding the perspectives that inform the world and the actors within it (Merriam, 1995), since establishing a fundamental, “scientific” truth in a constructed epistemological frame is neither possible nor desirable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Instead, this thesis focuses on the experiences of individual teachers and their descriptions of practice. The research questions that underpinned this project were open-ended and did not seek to prove a hypothesis, but rather to use case study to build a picture of teacher practice that might help understand the way policy is enacted.

By locating the site of research in the practical experience of actors in a particular case with a local context, judgement about the importance of ideas surrounding this project – neoliberalism in particular – can be withheld to some extent. This withholding of judgement is similar to the way that institutional ethnography begins from the lived experience of actual people, and in doing so helps to set aside theoretical constructs and

preconceived assumptions during the process of collecting data and initial analysis. This study sought to describe the experience of informants, to tap into their own knowledge, interpretations and understanding of their contexts, and to use that knowledge and understanding to speak back to the research questions. These experiences and interpretations also inform the theoretical concerns outlined in Chapter Three by giving local context and texture to the matters of values, ethics, and subjectivity raised by that theoretical framework. The power of these richly described, context-dependent examples is an understanding of the subtle and complex ways that policy is enacted in the classroom. Case studies that draw on the experiences of individuals help to make the stories of policy enactment become real: they keep in view the concrete ways that policy is realised in the context of the classroom.

Institutional ethnography

The methodological approach to building this case study was informed by institutional ethnography, which begins with the lived experience of teachers, and then traces upwards from these observations through hierarchies of governing texts to produce maps of the ruling relations of an institution. This process of data collection draws attention to localised, school-based policies that constrain and influence teacher practice, which serve to mediate broader departmental, state, and federal policies. It is the focus on the relationship between individual experience and the way work is coordinated by governing texts that made institutional ethnography suitable for this project (Smith, 2001; Turner, 2006). While Smith (1987) has argued that institutional ethnography should avoid imposing theory onto the phenomena it studies, I take the position that theory is a rich tool that complements the local theories found in the everyday life and institutional ethnography aligns with the theoretical focus on discourse and power outlined in Chapter Three.

Institutional ethnographic research begins from the standpoint of the activities of actual people (Smith, 2005). Dorothy Smith's concern with the practical sayings and doings of people in institutional contexts helps to create a picture of the real-world setting of the classroom. Smith argues that too often sociology gets caught up in theory, which can

obfuscate the actualities of a social environment. She highlights the example of Sarah, a teaching assistant, who went through the process of a workplace grievance with her union (Smith, 2005, p. 117). As the process continued, and administrative forms were completed and her complaint moved through the bureaucracy, Sarah was increasingly made invisible – her case became an instance of elision, swamped in *empty shells* – bureaucratic, institutional words that are presumed to mean something but are often vaguely defined – where the perspective of the “actual person” is lost. This phenomenon is particularly relevant to the question of neoliberal policy and classroom practice, since the processes of accountability and standardisation discussed in Chapter Two are mechanisms by which the individual is both addressed by policy but also submerged within it. An approach that starts from the standpoint of teachers was employed in this study in order to preserve their personhood within policy.

A significant part of the analysis in this study explored the way policy texts not only structured teachers’ work, but also encouraged particular readings and understandings of the texts themselves. Policy texts, such as a Performance and Development Plan or professional standards, are not static documents, but rather are activated by the process of reading, interpretation, and enactment. Smith (2006) discusses how “grammars” have a way of orienting readers when they activate a text. Texts carry signifiers and contextual meanings that loan themselves to these local grammars. Smith argues that these are the structures that institutional ethnographers should look for: the ways that texts control and order responses. She suggests that “becoming [an] agent of the text in activating it is unavoidable”, but that this does not automatically mean a reader agrees with or implements the text (Smith, 2005), suggesting processes of *enactment* like those highlighted by Ball et al. (2012). Spina (2021), using institutional ethnography to investigate the way the NAPLAN tests formed a type of standardisation and subjectification through data, explains that “the generalising work of texts not only promulgates standardised language, but also the ideological code of the institution” (p. 38). However, resistance, repudiation, disagreement, and rejection all work from the agenda of the text itself. The use of institutional ethnography in this study was a way to recognise that while governing texts and policy actors can shape the practices of teachers

in the classroom, this kind of field work also has the potential to uncover the way these practices reach back up and activate, even contest, these rationalities of power.

In order to begin from the standpoint of informants, this study began with a series of interviews which DeVault and McCoy (2006) argue are an effective place from which to approach an institutional ethnography. The interview transcript is a key text in institutional ethnographic analysis as the talk it captures can “not only illuminate a particular circumstance but also point towards next steps in an ongoing, cumulative inquiry into translocal practices” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 3). This approach was valuable in this study since informants’ interview transcripts included moments of agreement, pointing towards key texts and processes, and highlighted the different ways each participant responds to the governing texts of the school and education bureaucracy. The actualities of practice that respondents describe are processes that are “made intelligible” in their conversion from experience to text: “the overall aim of institutional ethnography has a double character. One is to produce for people what might be called ‘maps’ of the ruling relations and specifically the institutional complexes in which they participate in whatever fashion” (Smith, 2005, p. 51).

From these conversations, as well as classroom observations, the analysis looked for references to policies and broader structures that could be investigated further. The intention of this approach was to allow participating teachers freedom to describe their work, without leading them directly towards a conversation about “neoliberal” policies. The interview questions were open-ended and focused on practice, rather than policies, in order to avoid the presumption that any particular policy was significant. This responds to questions two and three: to see the way conflicts, challenges, or resistance of policy occur in the process of enactment, but to do so in a way that does not automatically invite teachers to assume that any particular policy impacts their lived experience. The policy mapping process that extends from this helps to answer question one by tracing the rationalities and relations that comprise the governing texts identified by informants during their interviews.

The case

This study drew on participants from a single school in NSW. Where this thesis refers to “participants” it includes survey respondents and members of the school executive. “Teacher informants” or “informants” is used to describe the five teachers who participated in the second phase of this project which included interviews and observations. Access to the school was negotiated by first emailing the school principal. The principal referred this email to the Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning for consideration. Following a meeting with the researcher to discuss details about the project, the principal consented to the school participating. Potential schools to approach were identified using the principle of “extreme case sampling” (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Yin, 2003), though the initial research design called for two schools using the principle of “maximum variation”. This research drew on the experience of teachers from a school with a very high socio-economic background, as measured by the ICSEA score on myschool.edu.au, an Australian website providing school financial, demographic and performance data, in line with Flyvbjerg’s principle of “extreme case” sampling, and Ball et al’s (2012) suggested focus on “outstanding schools”. In choosing an advantaged school, this study was able to draw attention to policy tensions that might otherwise be obscured by competing pressures in mainstream or disadvantaged schools. Some of these pressures, such as the prominence of standardised testing, are alluded to by Spina (2021). However, the focus on an “elite” school also means that the findings of this research, which is critical in orientation, may not reflect experiences and realities within other schools. The project took place in a public school, making it possible to consider the exposure to departmental policy that may be enacted in different ways across the various levels of that education system. The relationship between policy and practice explored in this study concerns individuals and their responses to these governing texts, rather than systemic responses. Mapping aspects of the policy and institutional domain in which participants are involved can help uncover what Bourdieu called the “logics of practice” that comprise policy enactment (Grenfell & James, 2004).

Methods

Data collection for the study included a whole-school survey, interviews with a number of informants, analysis of publicly available and school-provided documentary evidence, and finally a period of classroom observation with each participating teacher. These methods were chosen in order to gain varied perspectives and narratives around the implementation of policy in the classroom. At individual teacher level, semi-structured interviews were conducted to enable a conversation about practice which then led to ongoing conversations throughout the period of fieldwork, in line with the institutional ethnographic method of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Nichols & Griffith, 2009; Smith, 2005). Classroom observations were used to validate themes that arose during interviews, as well as to identify other factors impacting practice. Each of these methods are discussed in more detail in this section.

Survey

An online survey was used to provide a sense of the context within the school, including attitudes towards pedagogy, practice, and professional community. In combination with school-level data – such as My School profiles, school website and school newsletters – this whole-school survey sought to form a picture of how teachers respond to and position themselves in relation to the dominant policy rationalities. Survey data was used to create a descriptive picture of pedagogical practices and teacher orientations to curriculum and professional community. The complete set of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Part One of the survey used the *curriculum practice profile*, an instrument developed by Schiro (2013), to take an inventory of teachers' orientations to curriculum. It provides insight into the way teachers see themselves in relation to the subject areas that they teach, their role in the classroom, and their broad understanding of learning and curriculum. This section of the survey sought to understand the broad attitudes in the school regarding the purpose of schooling and the role of teachers in the learning process, in short, *why* participants taught the way they did. The inventory involves a ranked-preference choice of four statements across six domains of education:

Purpose/Aims, Teaching, Learning, Knowledge, Childhood and Evaluation, explained in more detail next chapter. Each statement corresponds to one of Schiro's four "curriculum ideologies" that reflect different sets of values and beliefs about teaching and learning: *Scholar Academic*, *Social Efficiency*, *Learner Centred*, and *Social Reconstruction*. For example, Schiro (2013) identifies the Social Reconstructionist orientation as one oriented towards social transformation, embedded in a concern to address injustice in the world. A school or teacher predisposed towards this orientation may be more inclined to resist neoliberal policy for political or moral reasons than one with a stronger emphasis on the Scholar Academic or Social Efficiency orientations, so this context contributed to understanding the school culture in which participants were situated. Case study informants were given a summary of their profile with a guide to the four ideologies, an example of which is included in Appendix I.

Part Two of the survey drew on work done in the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2006; Lingard et al., 2003; Lingard et al., 2001) and the Systematic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement study (Ladwig, 2009; Ladwig et al., 2009; NSW DET, 2003) to frame questions around classroom practice and pedagogy. The questions were constructed in a similar way to the QSRLS, where key ideas were "recontextualised" out of the literature that informed that study: Newmann and associates (Newmann, 1996; Newmann et al., 1996) work on "authentic pedagogy" (for discussion see Lingard, 2007). This literature explores broad notions of what constitutes quality pedagogical practice in the classroom. This survey section provided a baseline understanding of the strategies and practices enacted in the school in order to give some insight into and comparison with practices observed during the classroom observation phase. This section aimed to shed light on the self-reported approaches to classroom practice and highlight the different pedagogical and ethical components of classroom practice emphasised in the school.

Finally, Part Three asked teachers to reflect on their attitude to professional community and their sense of autonomy. Drawing on the work of Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) which explored the restructuring of teachers' work, this section provided context around

the way teachers at the school understood their relationship with the school executive and decision making that governed their practice. This data gave an insight into the ways policy and practice were conceived at a school level, helping to represent how much agency teachers felt they had in the school and the degree to which they felt their practice was in tension with higher-order policy demands. This section also sought to provide an overview of the relationship between teachers, policy, and the school executive. A snapshot of the survey data across the three sections is included at the start of Chapter Five to provide context for the study and the school environment.

Interviews

During the negotiation for access, the Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning explained that five teachers had already expressed interest in participating in phase two of the project, which included semi-structured interviews and observations. In order to accommodate the rhythms of the school and the willing participation of these teachers, I contacted each teacher to discuss the project and seek their written consent to participate. The perspectives provided by these five informants in this study represent a small sample of the possible views available at the school. However, their perspectives are diverse and represent a range of different faculties within the school, so while limited in some senses, these interviews nevertheless provided an entry point to the textually-mediated governing relations of the school. Teachers who nominated to participate in interviews and observations completed the survey before the rest of the school. These informants were then invited to participate in a semi-structured interview, followed by a period of classroom observations. The nature and timing of these interviews and observations was negotiated with informants based on convenience and what they felt would best exemplify their practice. In the semi-structured interviews, informants were asked to report on the elements of their practice. Two follow-up questions exploring policy were included in the interview schedule in case no policy texts were raised by informants prior to the end of the interview. The interview questions are included in Appendix B.

The shape of this project evolved during the process of data collection. In part this is because it was informed by institutional ethnography, which requires a degree of flexibility in research design. After the first round of interviews and observations were completed, it became clear that the perspective of members of the school executive would help to build a clearer picture of how policy is enacted in the school environment. A modification was submitted to the University ethics committee seeking to conduct additional semi-structured interviews with the school executive. In addition to this, during the period of fieldwork the COVID-19 outbreak began to impact the university and schools, as the New South Wales government mandated physical distancing and some closures. Because of the severe disruption this created for schools and the fact that it had occurred mid-way through this project, an additional application was made to the ethics committee to add a supplemental follow-up interview into the project. This semi-structured interview was designed for teacher informants to reflect on how their work had been affected by the outbreak, how they had adapted, and how they perceived the policy environment during this period.

These interviews responded to the second research question focusing on the tensions between policy and classroom practice, particularly in a space where the mediating influence of the Department and School Executive was less pronounced. These interviews were conducted online using the video calling platform Zoom, in order to maintain appropriate physical distancing during the pandemic. Video calling is an effective way to conduct interviews for this kind of qualitative research: the platform allowed for easy recording of the audio for transcription, and the use of video enabled a more natural conversation than a phone call. While it is not a substitute for physical presence – which can be important for initially building the relationship between researcher and informants – it was an effective way of continuing the research remotely, as well as mitigating risks associated with physical environments. The school executive and supplemental interview questions can be found in Appendices C and D.

After each interview was completed, it was transcribed and uploaded to NVivo for coding. There are many different conventions around transcriptions that seek to

preserve the fidelity of an interview. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) note that transcriptions are decontextualised abstractions that cannot include everything that takes place in an interview (p. 282). Interview data is co-constructed both in the dialogue itself as well as the process of transcription (Kvale, 1996), so the choices a researcher makes reflect a unique understanding of fidelity. Many researchers include spoken errors in transcriptions for this reason. For these transcripts, I have chosen to “smooth” verbal errors and tics where they do not significantly impact the meaning of what a participant has said. In part this was because certain verbal statements are a natural part of language – the use of phrases like “you know” or “like” – and these can become distracting if included exactly as they occur in natural speech. In addition, transcripts were negotiated with informants at various stages of analysis.

Walby (2007) notes that much of the “data dialogue” process in institutional ethnography involves a necessary act of interpretation by the researcher. There is no escaping the subjectivity of the researcher in the transcribing and re-reading of an interview: what is represented in a piece of writing like this is always a mediation of data for the reader. In addition to smoothing, informants were each given a copy of their interview transcripts and invited to adjust any language to reflect their views more accurately and to add annotations with any additional thoughts they may have had during the process of review. Later in the process, informants were provided with individually marked-up versions of each chapter of analysis in this thesis, highlighting where their remarks had been quoted, so that they could review their comments in context and determine whether this analysis accurately reflected their views. This approach was designed to ease the burden of this research on their time while still ensuring the validity and rigour of its findings. It also addressed an ethical value inherent to this inquiry which was to ensure that informants’ views and meaning are conveyed accurately and in a way that aligns with their lived experience. The consent form that informants signed included a release for de-identified full transcripts to be made open access via a national data repository after a five-year embargo period so that other researchers might benefit from this data.

Classroom observations

The interviews provided context for field notes made during classroom observations, which aimed to observe the way the practices teachers described were enacted. Classroom observations were designed both to validate and illustrate the experiences of practice described by informants during the interviews, as well as to identify other factors that might be influencing classroom practice. Research questions two and three focus on the tensions and strategies felt by teachers in their practice, and a period of classroom observation sought to identify any improvised or unexpected effects that policy may have. Informants had the opportunity to identify up to five lessons which would be suitable for observation, and these observations were arranged on a weekly basis until all five were complete or both researcher and informant felt saturation had been reached. Observations took place over a six-month period, and involved lessons, staff meetings, and development opportunities. Observations were accompanied by debriefing conversations to give teachers the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Field notes were kept from each observation and included time stamps throughout the lesson. During observations, I was seated with a notebook and pencil at a table, usually to the side or back of the room, to avoid my presence becoming too disruptive. I took notes with regular time stamps as I observed the happenings in the classroom, trying not to impose judgement or analysis throughout. During quiet periods when students were working, I recorded details about the layout and physical environment of the room. When the informants or students were speaking, I tried to keep notes that were as faithful as possible to the general flow of the conversation, noting in particular when details emerged that reflected elements of informants' remarks during interviews. These field notes were then digitised and added to NVivo to be grouped with interview data. During the course of observations, key events that reflected themes from the interview coding process were highlighted as exemplars of the tensions the research questions sought to explore. These moments were re-articulated as vignettes that can be seen in Chapter Eight, where narratives of practice illustrate the way material and discursive effects impact the classroom.

This project also included the opportunity for a final “unstructured conversation” with each informant after initial findings had been developed during the data analysis. The intent of these conversations was to check the validity of preliminary findings made by the researcher. This conversation involved my sharing findings with informants, and then arranging a conversation after they had reviewed the findings to discuss whether they were consistent with their own experience or whether they felt that these findings did not accurately reflect their practice and why.

This research also involved the collection of rich, sometimes intangible data that is collected due to the position of the researcher as “the primary instrument” of data collection in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009a, p. 15). I attended the school on many occasions over a period of six months of deep engagement, talking to the school executive, having ongoing conversations with teachers, attending staff meetings, spending time in staffrooms before and after class, joining teachers while on lunch duty, and towards the end of fieldwork attending a staff development day. This degree of “living with” the informants provided an insight into the school context, captured in my field notes, and some of which can be seen in the vignettes in Chapter Eight. The table below summarises the various forms of data collected during the fieldwork phase of this research.

Whole school data	Survey responses (n=58) School executive interviews (2 interviews) Ongoing observation and conversations while on site Myschool.edu.au
Teacher informant data	Initial interview (5 x 1 hour) Classroom/practice observations (Up to 5 each, approx. 25 hours) Follow-up conversations Ongoing conversations on site, by phone, by email Casual observations during school visits Follow-up interviews during COVID-19 pandemic (4 interviews) Unstructured conversations following data analysis (3 responses)
Documents	Peer observation template School plan PDP Higher order policy texts

Table 2: Summary of data collected

Analysis

Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to support data analysis, including coding of transcripts. A start-list of codes was generated out of the relevant literature, and sub-codes were added iteratively throughout analysis. This necessitated returning to earlier transcripts to re-code them for themes that emerged in later stages of the coding process. This qualitative coding looked for recurring themes and ideas that imply the effects of policy, which then directed further inquiry (Walby, 2013). Codes were both descriptive means to categorise and organise research data, as well as being *analytic* in nature. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) explain that analytic codes leave more room for inferential and interpretive reflection by the researcher (p. 671). Analytic codes in this analysis focused on practices, emergent concerns in the classroom, and a particular category of terms called *empty shells* that reflected potential sites where institutional discourse shapes the talk of informants. Following the coding of these interviews and other texts, results were analysed for ways in which responses traced the influences of policy on teacher practice. This analysis involved exploring a set of codes related to governing texts and identifying mentions of practical effects that these texts had on teachers work. For example, a text may call on teachers to complete documentation at set times of the year or to submit reports or requests to a particular system.

Classroom observation field notes were added to NVivo and associated with each case. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that because of the volume of data that case studies can generate, it is best kept organised in an easily retrievable location. NVivo allowed for observations and interviews to sit alongside each other, enabling easier comparison between the two. Observation data was not analysed until all observations, interviews and the coding of interviews was complete. This meant that key themes that emerged during the coding and analysis of interview data served as a basis for an analytic reading of field notes. Significant moments in the field notes that reflected these themes were identified and linked. In addition, moments in the classroom that reflected broad political concerns that were not captured by institutional policies were also highlighted as significant. These moments necessarily involved a degree of interpretation and

reflexivity on the part of the researcher: their significance to the case study can only be understood in light of an extended period of partnership and observation. A number of these moments are highlighted in the latter half of Chapter Eight. The final stage in building the analysis of this case study involved a three-step structure: firstly, by writing about the standpoint of informants as they reported it as a way of summarising the themes that emerged from coding and analysis. Secondly, a summary of interview remarks regarding significant governing texts was created, comparing remarks about these texts across the five informants. Finally, significant moments from classroom observations were reviewed in light of the concerns raised in the previous two steps. Across these three analytic frames, a key process that emerged – the Performance and Development Planning process – was selected to form the basis of a policy map.

The Performance and Development Plan emerged as a key document, which implicated a range of higher-order policy texts, known in the institutional ethnographic literature as “boss texts”. A mapping process was undertaken to visualise the discursive relationship between these texts. This involved identifying “boss texts” that regulate practice and then identifying key themes, institutional discourses and instances of empty shells that are reflected in the language of each of the texts, as well as links to higher-level texts. Where the texts referenced a higher-order text, they were included in the policy map. The map also sought to trace themes that were described in lower-order texts and follow their development from higher governing texts. This mapping process is reported in Chapter Seven. While Smith (2003, 2005) emphasises that it is important to start from the standpoint of the informants in research, rather than looking directly to the dominant texts, she still argues that texts such as the policy texts identified in Chapter Seven provide an insight into the governing logics of the ruling relations: the extra-local discourses that give structure to and reproduce the “ideological code” of institutions (Spina, 2021). The policy map, combined with the interview and observation data, formed the basis of the case study that structures the next four chapters of this thesis.

Validity, authenticity, trustworthiness

To ensure “trustworthiness”, Shenton (2004) suggests that researchers adopt well-established research methods, give participants opportunity to review and withdraw from the project to ensure their genuine willingness to participate, and provide thick description of the phenomenon being studied. I aimed in this project to be conscious of the potential to “colonise” participants in the research; to avoid suggesting my own interpretations in place of their own. Social research positions the researcher *themselves* as a powerful actor, so it is vital that the development of rich descriptions of teacher practice is co-constructed with participants, and this co-construction included informants having the opportunity to review transcripts of interviews, as well as to determine which classroom observations best reflected their practice. This is particularly significant, given that my position as a critical researcher brought with it the potential for an imbalance of power. I aimed to position myself not as an expert, but as a student seeking to learn from participating teachers. Interview questions were also framed in such a way as to minimise, as far as possible, my own interpretations and concerns and instead foreground those of informants.

One key consideration was also the way in which the voice of informants is privileged: a concern that is especially important where the tension between the personal interpretation and standpoint of informants is central – as is the case in institutional ethnographic approaches – and the need for the researcher to add their own interpretive analytic to the field of research. This tension was noted in the previous chapter. This study has aimed to address that concern by seeking not to substitute the findings of researchers for the lived experience of teachers, but rather to *add* these additional interpretations to provide additional layers of texture and understanding to the field, a point made by Biesta et al. (2011) that was noted in the previous chapter. In this way, interview data was made “polyvocal” (Brinkmann, 2018) through the interaction of interviewer and interviewee, of multiple interviews, and of the interaction between the interview and other forms of data collected during the project.

Arguing in support of the representational validity of experience, Smith (2005) reminds us that the experience that is produced as data in an ethnographic study, whether it be from interviews or our own writing, is *dialogic* in nature. This dialogic nature refers to Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic – that representation and speech are constructed through a process of dialogue, taking meaning from past language and giving meaning to future language. "Dialogue is involved in [experience's] production," explains Smith (2005, p. 125), "even when the experience is the researcher's. There is no alternative". Acknowledging this exchange of meaning and recognising the fundamentally constructed and socially mediated nature of experience, leads to an alternative understanding of validity and integrity: that the multiplicity of views within this study can lend authenticity to each of the voices. Smith (2005) explains that "experiential accounts cannot give direct and unsullied access to an actuality; actuality is always more and other than is spoken, written, or pictured" (p. 125). While this study has a conventional rigour in the sense that theories and interpretations are triangulated from a range of data, saturation was sought during observations, and the design sought to align theoretical assumptions with methodological practices (Morse, 2018), it is also crucial to remember the interpretive and normative bases on which this inquiry rests. On that basis, the most crucial measure of the validity and authenticity of this research is that it offers a new way of understanding the relationship between neoliberal policy and practice that accords with the values, beliefs, and experiences of the informants in this study.

Ethical considerations

Approval for this project was gained from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and the New South Wales Department of Education State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP). The approval documentation for these is included in Appendix E. At all stages, it was crucial that participants provided informed consent, and participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time. This was both to ensure that the study itself is conducted in a safe and ethical manner, but also to remain commensurate with the principles of ethical research which inform this project (Bouma & Ling, 2004; González & Lincoln, 2006). This refers to the fact that

the goal here is not to apply dominating modes of thinking to the experience of informants, but rather to provide a space for their voices to construct a sociological description of their practice from the ground up (Smith, 2005). This also speaks to the validity of the research itself: qualitative research, which depends on the co-constructed stories of practice, must be ethical to be authentic (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Burgh, Field, & Freakley, 2006). In the context of this project, that extends to building a strong relationship between the researcher and the participants in order to find ways that participation can contribute to and support discussions around teacher practice. It also involved giving informants the opportunity to reflect, justify and comment on observations, transcripts, and lesson observations, so that they were comfortable with the representation of themselves presented in this research.

In outlining an approach to research ethics, it is useful to appropriate Mockler's (2013c) "five critical ethical dimensions of practitioner research", and use them in a slightly, although not radically, different context. Those five dimensions are: *informed consent*, *avoiding harm*, *student voice*, *power dynamics within the classroom* and *teacher judgment*. Mockler outlines these dimensions within the context of practitioner inquiry, however these principles are easily adapted for other research related to the classroom. The dimension of *informed consent* is a fundamental corollary of the kind of case study research being undertaken in this project. Without the permission and engagement of participating teachers, there can be no authentic data with which to understand their sayings and doings. Informed consent is implied in the practice of institutional ethnography as well since the voice of the informant is primary site of inquiry. *Avoiding harm* expands on the notion of informed consent and places the extra ethical imperative on the researcher to do no harm to participants in research. There is a tension here, given that often the airing of perspectives and lived experiences under contentious policy regimes might be perceived to harm the livelihoods of participating teachers. This can be negated through anonymity and negotiating the use of informants' voices throughout the research. *Privileging participants' voice* expands that concept further as well and aligns neatly with the practice of institutional ethnography and case study.

Mockler (2013c) argues that “part of the intent of practitioner research, connected to its critical and emancipatory roots in action research, lies in privileging the voices of those with less power” (p. 154). In the same way, the intent of this case study and of institutional ethnography is the privilege the voices of those people who must enact policy – whose rationality may not carry the same power as the dominant policy regimes. From here, the shift to *understanding power dynamics* is natural, and the focus of this research is achieving an *understanding* of these dynamics. Identifying power relations, between researcher and participant and other agents in that process, is a necessary process in this kind of social science – and links reflexively to the central purpose of this inquiry. It is crucial to recognise the role that power dynamics play in this environment. It also leads to the final dimension Mockler discusses, which is the need to *exercise sound judgement*; in effect calling for a context-dependent, situated, and nuanced understanding of the process of research. This includes having both an awareness of the preconceptions and biases that the researcher brings to their research, but also, in seeking to enact all these dimensions, the researcher should strive for an ethical practice that makes their research ethics an “everyday ethics”. In a sense, this ethical project becomes a part of the “sayings and doings” of the researcher and their work, a “virtuoso” for whom ethical care in research is second nature.

A significant element of risk was introduced with the emergence of the COVID-19 virus. As referenced earlier, a follow-up interview was added to the project with the approval of the University HREC, in response to informants’ request to have their experience of the crisis put on record. A primary consideration in conducting these interviews was the risk of imposing additional work and stress on teachers who were likely feeling anxious about the situation. Media reporting of the highly politicised environment around schools meant that these interviews required greater sensitivity and care. Accommodating informants’ desire for a follow-up meant that my ethical position as a researcher was not just one that sought to mitigate risk, but also to take an active role in supporting the goals and capabilities of informants in the research. This contributes to the sense of validity and ethical alignment that underpinned the entire project.

The unstructured conversations that concluded this project were another opportunity to ensure this research was ethically sound. This follows from the ethical position of standpoint research, described by Smith (1987), which underpins this project: it is appropriate that the researcher validate any conclusions they might draw from research data by inviting informants to reflect and comment on those conclusions. This ensures that the research accurately reflects the voice and experience of informants. These conversations sought to give informants an opportunity to validate the research findings as accurate representations of their experience.

A note about anonymity

It is difficult to preserve the anonymity of individual teachers when reporting on a single school, particularly for any readers who are aware of the research taking place in that site. To mitigate this, I have employed a range of techniques in this thesis to preserve confidentiality where comments could generate controversy. Where the identity of a particular teacher is relevant to trace throughout the study, I have used a pseudonym. For example, where one informant describes a particular practice in an interview that becomes specifically relevant during observations of her class, I have used her pseudonym. Where linkages between interview comments and specific observations of individuals are not relevant, I have chosen to speak in more general terms by describing “one informant” or “several teachers”. While this might seem to have the effect of “removing” people from the text, something not desirable in an institutional ethnography, it does enable the research to report on views that informants might be less comfortable being associated with should their colleagues be able to identify them. Teacher informants were given the opportunity to provide their own pseudonym, however all preferred for me to invent them.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the processes through which data was collected and analysed for this research project. The research questions are focused on the sayings and doings – the actualities of classroom practice – and the way these intersect the rationalities of policy. The research has been structured as a single school case study which has been

assembled in a way informed by the principles of institutional ethnography. This enabled the process of data collection to bracket out assumptions about policies as well as to privilege the voice of informants. This research sought the lived experiences of teachers, their descriptions of policy and practice, the way they can construct a sociology of teaching from the ground up. Ranging across the experiences of five different teachers, this project explored the rationalities that are generated in conversation with people who are responsible for realising these policy texts in the classroom. Using the methods of surveys, interviews, and classroom observations, as well as a policy mapping process stemming from the coding and analysis of these experiences, this study sought to begin from the standpoint of teachers as an entry point to the tensions described in the research questions. My aim was to engage way with the story of policy as practice, to explore the way these dominant rationalities play out in classrooms, to draw out the voices of teachers – those specific *people* who are often the subjects of elision in the formulation of policy. Institutional ethnography seeks to find and interrogate the “empty shells” of the institution, and in so doing bring the lived experience of individuals back into the view of research. This approach also ensures the analysis and findings are trustworthy, that they align with the expectations and experience of informants, and that they enable the interpretation of practice and policy described in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Five: Context and teachers' work at Olivetree High

It is not that the world would cease to exist if humans were without language, but that how we conceive of what is real in the world manifests itself in one's talk. (Walby, 2007, p. 1020)

Introduction

The work of practitioners is the central focus of this study, and Smith (2005) stresses the importance of *standpoint* in institutional ethnographic work. Research into the experiences and enactments of teachers should therefore begin with the way they report their lives and practice at work. The focus of this thesis developed iteratively throughout the analysis and one of the most significant sites that demonstrated the tension between neoliberal policy and teacher professionalism was in the paperwork and processes that surrounded professional development. As will be seen in this chapter, while this research started by asking informants about their classroom practice, professional development soon emerged as a significant issue for all five teachers. Before coming to that important finding, some contextual understanding of the case study school is necessary.

This chapter will first introduce the school context, outlining the professional environment as described by teacher informants and informed by survey results. It then turns to descriptions of professional development that arose during the interviews when informants were discussing features of their practice. This focus on professional development emerged as teachers described the kinds of regular procedures and administrative work that exists outside of their classroom but that influences their practice. This chapter outlines the organisations and practices that seem to govern and constrain teachers' work – specifically focusing on technologies of surveillance and reporting as well as administrivia that often stems from new systems and policy changes. Finally, this chapter reports some of the *empty shells* – terms that stand in for actual things, with no clear referent (Smith, 2005) – that were identified during the process of coding the interview transcripts. These empty shells indicate spaces where the actual work of people can be linguistically erased and give a sense of the operation of policy as a governing technology in the work of teachers.

Context: the school and the participants

Olivetree High is an academically selective public secondary school in Sydney, Australia. The school caters for students from Years 7 to 12 who have achieved highly on the Selective High School Placement Test³, part of the ability-grouping approach taken the NSW Department of Education in selective schools (NSW Government, 2021). The school's ICSEA score – a measure of relative socio-educational advantage – is more than two standard deviations above the national mean, placing it in the 99th percentile⁴. The school has approximately 900 students, 60 teaching staff, and 10 non-teaching staff. Olivetree High has a very high proportion – approximately 90% – of students with a language background other than English. This section reports on findings from the whole-school survey (n=58) to build a sense of the curriculum, pedagogical and professional perspectives of staff at Olivetree High. The survey results reported on here are designed to provide a snapshot and broad overview of the school context.

The first section of the survey invited teachers to rank a series of statements in order of agreement, across six different domains, drawing on the work of Michael Schiro (2013). Schiro's curriculum "ideologies" are a typology of orientations towards curriculum, with teachers indicating preferences for four different orientations across six different domains. The orientations are the *Scholar Academic*, which sees the purpose of education as the transmission of academic knowledge about a discipline; *Social Efficiency*, which sees the purpose of schooling as a kind of preparation or apprenticeship for productive participation in society and economy; *Learner Centred*, which understands education as being about the personal growth and development of individual learners and their interests; and *Social Reconstruction*, which sees education as a public good, a means to address social injustice and transform society to become more equitable. Within Schiro's model, these orientations are characterised by particular beliefs regarding six domains: the *purpose* of school education, what constitutes *knowledge* worth teaching in schools,

³ The NSW Government explains that the program "caters for academically gifted students with high potential who may otherwise be without sufficient classmates of their own academic standard" (NSW Government, 2021)

⁴ ICSEA statistics and general school demographic data were drawn from the myschool.edu.au website.

appropriate forms of *evaluation* and assessment, approaches to *teaching* and pedagogy, what *learning* consists of in schools, and the nature of *childhood* and children (Schiro, 2013, p. 2). As explained in Chapter Four, this section of the survey sought to understand the way teachers at Olivetree High understood the mechanisms by which learning takes place, the purpose of schooling more broadly, and their understanding of their role within it.

Figure 1 below represents average responses on each of the six dimensions, along with an average response overall. Appendix G includes a table of results. Each dimension graph represents the average of respondents' alignment toward each of the orientations for that dimension and were derived via a conversion of respondents' rankings within each dimension. For example, in relation to *purpose*, respondents strongly prioritised "Schools should provide children with the ability to perceive problems in society, envision a better society, and act to change society so that there is social justice and a better life for all people" (Social Reconstruction) and "Schools should be enjoyable, stimulating, child-centred environments organised around the developmental needs and interests of children as those needs and interests present themselves from day to day" (Learner Centred) over "Schools should fulfil the needs of society by efficiently training youth to function as mature constructive members of society" (Social Efficiency) and "Schools should be communities where the accumulated knowledge of the culture is transmitted to the youth" (Scholar Academic).

Results indicate that there is, on average, an overall preference at Olivetree High for the Learner Centred orientation, and a secondary preference for Social Efficiency approaches. This implies a broad concern for students' personal growth and meaning making, facilitated by well-structured lessons, with a view to students' future contribution to society. The Scholar Academic profile did not emerge as dominant in any of the dimensions other than *childhood*, which was surprising considering the academically selective nature of the school and the focus on Higher School Certificate (HSC) results. Similarly, the Social Reconstruction approach was only dominant in the dimension *purpose*, suggesting that teachers at Olivetree High see the purpose of

schooling as addressing inequities in society. When the survey was reported on at a whole-school staff development day, several teachers offered theories as to the dominance of different orientations. One teacher noted a general concern for issues like climate change as influencing the choice of the Social Reconstruction item for the purpose of schooling – in line with a concern for students’ futures. The results suggest that the staff at Olivetree High are less concerned overall with the transmission of the canon of knowledge associated with their disciplines, and that while they see matters of social justice as important, the pathway to achieving that is more practical than exhortatory.

The emphasis on the Learner Centred and Social Efficiency approaches suggest that teachers at Olivetree High are conscious of the need for meaning making experiences for their students, but that these should be weighed against clear learning objectives. The Learner Centred approach implies a concern with the personal growth and concerns of students, and the Social Efficiency preference, which was dominant in the domains of *teaching* and *knowledge*, sets this growth within an understanding of knowledge as a “set of skills and capabilities” acquired through the careful management of learning conditions by the teacher (Schiro, 2013, p. 84). As highlighted above, there are two notable exceptions to the emphasis on these two orientations. The first regards the domain of purpose, where the preference for the Social Reconstruction orientation suggests teachers at Olivetree High see the role of education as socially transformative, equipping students with the ability to perceive and intervene to make society more just. This sense of purpose, when considering the dominant orientations found in the survey, suggests that teachers at Olivetree High separate broader political and social approaches from the practical domains of teaching and learning. Secondly, the domain of childhood showed a preference for the Scholar Academic orientation, implying a concern for the transmission of “missing” knowledge and capabilities necessary for intellectual development. These results suggest that the teachers at Olivetree High broadly align on issues regarding the learning process, for which there is a greater emphasis on the construction of personal meaning through carefully planned teaching.

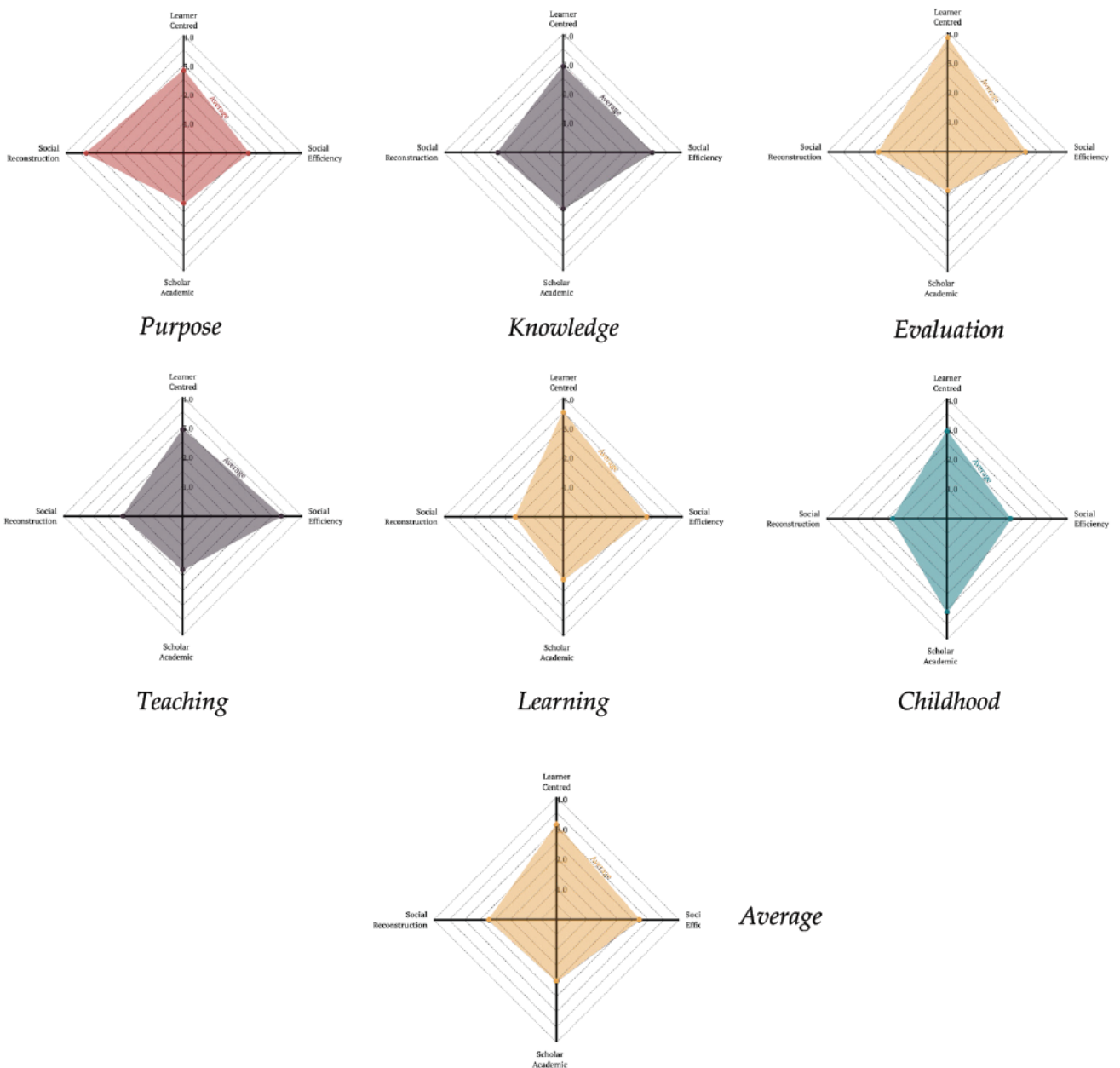


Figure 1: Curriculum ideologies inventory

Section Two of the survey focused specifically on classroom practice with a view to understanding how teachers at Olivetree High reported their pedagogy and some of the ethical features associated with it. This section asked respondents to rate how often they felt different elements of productive pedagogies could be seen in their classroom, with a score of five indicating an element was present in every lesson or almost every lesson, and a score of one indicating an element was rarely or never present. The productive pedagogies model is divided into four dimensions – intellectual quality, connectedness,

supportiveness, and recognition of difference – which are each comprised of a number of elements. Table 3 below highlights the response means for all 20 elements and an overall mean for each of the four dimensions.

Staff at the school felt quite strongly that there was a robust presence of *intellectual quality* in their classrooms, indicating that students were frequently engaging with deep knowledge and deep understanding of complex and problematic concepts in the classroom. The dimension of *intellectual quality* had a mean score of 4.1, which is higher than the mean of 3.89 for a control group in recent research by Gore et al. (2017) which drew on the NSW Quality Teaching *intellectual quality* construct derived from productive pedagogies. There was also a strong presence of *connectedness*, suggesting that teachers tried to connect the concepts and knowledge in their lessons to contexts outside of the classroom. This aligns with the school profile from section one, which indicates that teachers at Olivetree High take seriously the need to make learning meaningful for their students, and to address concerns that have real-world relevance. It is particularly interesting to note on the *connectedness* dimension that the problem-based curriculum element scored 3.6 (out of a possible 5), which is significantly higher than the mean of 2.01 reported in the original productive pedagogies research (Ladwig, 2007, p. 65). During the course of this research there were a number of occasions where I observed Problem-Based Learning (PBL) embedded in practice, which suggests that teachers at Olivetree High saw PBL as a valuable tool for developing capabilities in the classroom and connecting those capabilities to “real-world” problems.

The lowest scoring individual element was student self-direction, suggesting that teachers were largely responsible for setting tasks in the classroom – a finding that aligns with the Social Efficiency focus under the domains of “teaching” and “knowledge” in section one. Yet the focus on PBL within the school, as expressed by the teacher informants, suggests a higher degree of student self-direction than this score implies. Nevertheless, these results make sense in the context of the school’s highly academic focus and, as we will see in the next few chapters, a desire to implement project-based learning that addresses real-world issues. *Recognition of Difference* was the lowest scored

dimension on the survey, though not dramatically lower than other dimensions. This dimension focuses on the civic, cultural, and socially just elements of classroom practice, suggesting that while some importance is placed on these elements, they are secondary to academic pursuits at Olivetree High. It is worth noting that these scores are significantly higher than those reported by Ladwig (2007) in the original productive pedagogies research. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003) has been in NSW schools for some time, and was one of the few policy “posters” that could be seen on walls in staff rooms at Olivetree High. Seen in this light, the school’s focus on integrated curricula through project-based learning goes some way to explaining why “knowledge integration” had a mean score of 3.9, substantially higher than the original productive pedagogies research which had a mean of 1.76 (Ladwig, 2007, p. 65). This supports the findings in section one of the survey, which suggests that while teachers at the school believe the purpose of schooling is providing learners with the opportunity to transform society for the better, this is realised through a range of teaching strategies that support the development of integrated skills and capabilities for life.

Intellectual Quality		Connectedness		Supportiveness		Recognition of Difference	
Problematic Knowledge	3.4	Knowledge Integration	3.9	Academic Engagement	4.3	Cultural Knowledges	3.5
Higher-Order Thinking	3.8	Background Knowledge	3.9	Student Self-Regulation	2.5	Active Citizenship	3.2
Deep Knowledge	4.3	Connection to the World	4.2	Students’ Direction	3.3	Narrative	3.4
Deep Understanding	4.5	Problem-Based Curriculum	3.6	Social Support	4.4	Group Identities	3.6
Substantive Conversation	4.2			Explicit Quality Criteria	4.2	Representation and Inclusivity	3.0
Metalinguage	4.5						
Dimension Mean	4.1	Dimension Mean	3.9	Dimension Mean	3.7	Dimension Mean	3.5

Table 3: Productive pedagogies scores

Section Three of the survey addressed the professional environment of the school, which was thought to be important for understanding the relationship between teachers, the school executive and policy, as discussed in Chapter Four. Most of the survey results indicated broad agreement across the school, particularly where the goals of the school and the commitment to students' success was concerned. There was strong agreement that staff in the school were committed to quality teaching and the success of their students, with over 90% of respondents agreeing on both items.

While the majority of respondents agreed in some measure with all the statements in the survey, it is notable that some of the items related to teacher agency and control over the development of policy that affects their work saw more disagreement. As can be seen in Figure 2, the statement which had the strongest disagreement was "I have influence on the decisions within the school which directly affect me", suggesting that some staff recognise there are significant factors outside of their control that shape their practice. In a comment at the end of the survey, one staff member noted:

The question that asked about having control over decisions that directly [affect] me was difficult to answer because there are so many different levels of control and authority within schools, from classroom to curriculum, faculty to school.

This statement reflects both the findings of the survey – particularly with the increased disagreement with statements about policy influence and teacher agency – and remarks made by the five teachers who participated in interviews. The statement with the least agreement (but not the most *disagreement*) was "teachers focus on what and how well students are learning rather than how they are teaching", suggesting that the culture in the school has something of a "teacher" focus, rather than a "teaching" focus. This notion will be explored in more detail as the performance development and planning process is analysed in this chapter and the next.

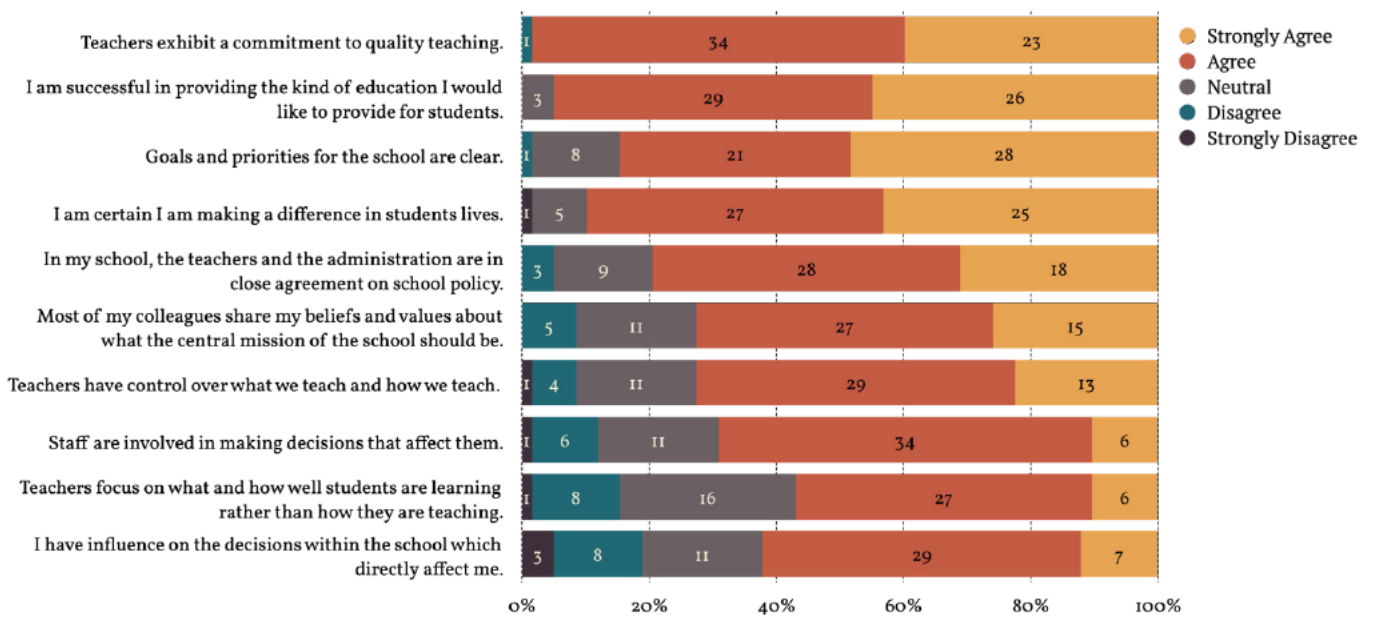


Figure 2: Professional environment profile

While these survey results cannot serve as a comparative tool and are descriptive only, they help to situate teacher informants in their school context and professional culture – one of the key mediating contexts in policy enactment described by Braun et al. (2011). What these results indicate is that there is a broad sense of commitment to quality teaching and student success, coupled with an ethical concern for students’ personal growth in a just and improving world. Teachers at Olivetree High generally feel a shared sense of purpose, but there is some doubt about the degree to which teachers have control over the policies and decisions that impact their work.

There are some key resonances across the three sections of the survey. The dominant curriculum orientation regarding the *purpose* of schooling indicates that teachers at Olivetree High consider the building of a more just world a significant priority. The emphasis on the Social Efficiency approach for *knowledge* and *teaching* reflects an assumption that learning is an active process that involves practice and developing skills and capabilities under guidance – it reflects models of learning found in behavioural and cognitive psychology which emphasise control over the learning stimulus in the classroom. This result reflects some of the comments made by one informant during the interviews, where she noted that students at Olivetree High preferred “lectures” and where certain classroom programs depended on teaching approaches developed for any

teacher to deliver, supported by appropriate textbooks. This also reflects the relatively frequent presence of *intellectual quality* that was reported in section two of the survey: teachers at Olivetree High place more emphasis, in a pedagogical sense, on these disciplinary areas and less on the social and cultural elements associated with *supportiveness* and *recognition of difference*. This does not mean that the staff at the school see no value in these domains, but rather that in the context of their pedagogy they are more likely to emphasise intellectual quality, articulated within the Learner Centred orientation towards *learning* and *evaluation*. In a sense, teachers at the school draw a boundary around their political and ethical values when it comes to the learning of syllabus content, seeing the development of skills and capabilities set within a constructivist approach to learning as the best way to prepare students for a changing world (Schiro, 2013, p. 116).

This concern for intellectual quality flows through to the professional culture at the school. Participants indicated that they are committed to good teaching and feel that they are successful at it, and most believe that they are making a difference in students' lives. Interestingly, there is some disagreement regarding the focus on "student learning" as opposed to "staff teaching", which aligns with the approach to *learning* and *intellectual quality* outlined in sections one and two. While participants seemed to broadly align in terms of the purpose and approaches that they take to teaching and learning, there was more disagreement about the level of control they had over the policies that affect them, with a significant minority suggesting they have little influence. There was also less consensus on the issue of whether teachers focused more on their teaching or on students' learning, a tension that is expressed in section one with the teacher-focused Social Efficiency approach to "teaching" and the Learner Centred approach to "learning". Despite this, there was near universal agreement that teachers at Olivetree High exhibit a concern for quality teaching, and strong agreement about a common sense of mission – something reinforced by the sense of "purpose" reported in section one. These results paint a picture of a staff with a general ethic of care for the wellbeing and moral life of their students, tempered by the demands of academic disciplines and policy over which they have little control.

The standpoint of the teacher informants

Having set the context with the whole school survey, this section turns to the five teacher informants who participated in phase two, the primary phase of the study, comprising semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and follow-up interviews as outlined in Chapter Four. A brief profile of each of these teachers is provided below:

Charlotte	Charlotte is an English teacher with nearly nine years of teaching experience. She had been working at Olivetree High for the past two years at the time of data collection, so considered herself a relatively new member of staff. While she teaches from Years 7 through to 12, she was primarily focused on Years 10–12 during this study. Charlotte was job-sharing the role of Head Teacher Teaching and Learning, filling in for a colleague who was on leave.
Stephanie	Stephanie is a science teacher. She teaches science for Years 7 to 10, and the HSC science subjects of chemistry and physics for Years 11 and 12. She has 13 years of teaching experience and had been teaching at Olivetree High for the past nine years. She was job-sharing the Head Teacher Teaching and Learning role with Charlotte.
Cate	Cate predominantly teaches drama, although she is occasionally allocated an English class when the school needs her to do so. Cate was the most experienced of the teachers who participated in this phase of the project, with over 30 years of teaching at Olivetree High. Her institutional memory of the school, as well as the evolution of school policy in New South Wales during the course of her career, gave her a longer perspective on the matters we discussed. She was also a delegate for the Teachers Federation – the teachers’ union in New South Wales.
Sara	Sara is a languages teacher, specialising in Japanese. She has 23 years of teaching experience. Her previous school

	<p>experience was in non-government schools. Sara had been working at Olivetree High for two years, so alongside Charlotte she was the newest member of the school community that participated in this study.</p>
<p>Julia</p>	<p>Julia is a languages teacher, mainly teaching Latin, though she is qualified to teach several other subjects as well. During my time at Olivetree High her primary focus was Latin, and I observed only her Latin classes. Julia had been teaching for eight years and was recruited to the position of Latin teacher at Olivetree High straight out of university. She also took on a role supporting student welfare and during the course of this project took on the coordination role for the incoming Year 7 cohort.</p>

The rest of this chapter reports on comments made during interviews with the five teacher informants. The interview questions allowed participants to discuss in greater detail some of the issues that arose out of the survey questions and invited informants to reflect on their work in the classroom, in the school more generally, and then to reflect on their broad concerns with education as a process. Informants were not asked about any particular policy, rather they were invited simply to describe elements of their regular practice.

I was introduced to the whole-school staff during a morning tea. Each faculty takes a turn on a monthly basis to cater for the whole staff morning tea, and everybody gets together to share news and interact across faculties. Charlotte explained the meeting culture that exists in the school:

Charlotte We don't have too many meetings either, which is good. We only have three staff meetings a term, at lunchtime. We try to fit everything in the day here, rather than before or after school – it's quite unusual to have anything at those times. So, it means that leaves you free to have time with a student or to be preparing for

your lesson the next day. So that management of time I think is quite effective.

When I was introduced to the meeting, I had already interviewed a number of informants and was beginning lesson observations, so Charlotte explained to everyone that I would be on site over the next few months. As I explained the project and then apologised for not having much more to say about it, the principal said, “just smile and say hello!”. Over my time at the school, this struck me as a fundamental characteristic of the culture of this school: the openness and warmth of the staff. While this is not unique to Olivetree High, it enabled many of the practices described in the next three chapters. What follows should be framed by that understanding, which was described by Charlotte in this way:

Charlotte Lines of communication are pretty open here. I feel trusted and valued as an employee.

The ethos of Olivetree High was a collaborative, supportive, and trusting one. During my interview with the school principal, she indicated the history of the school was a strength, as well as the community and culture of the place:

Principal This school is an amazing school. And I mean, one of the strengths is its great history and great tradition of excellence in education ... It's like a beacon, this school. ... It's the reality of where you work and the fact that you appreciate what you've got around you. ... So it's extraordinary, there's very high expectations of what happens here. And they're not just high expectations of the academic results of students, but high expectations of the way students connect socially and with the community and have an outward looking kind of aspect about how we impact our community in a positive way. And that's globally as well.

The sense of collegiality described by the principal extended to the staff and students in the school, who seem to have a shared sense of mission:

Principal I think it exists amongst the students and amongst the staff and intra staff and students. ... this school is quite exceptional in that there is a deep concern for what happens to students' wellbeing and academic potential, etcetera.

The school's sense of mission does not just extend to present day colleagues. As Julia explained, and in line with the long history of the school, her work with a previous teacher of Latin at the school informed and developed her own professional practice:

Julia My previous colleague, she was here for thirty-something years. So, she really left her mark upon the subject in this school, and I taught with her for seven years basically. ... To have that colleague and mentor and to be able to feel like there is this basis for what I'm doing ... as well as the fact that there is scope for me to be able to leave *my* mark on the subject as well.

The strong professional relationships within Olivetree High also help teachers to find solutions to problems as they arise. Cate was glad that her physical space within the school – her office and the central hall in which she held most of her classes – enabled her to connect with colleagues from a range of different faculties whenever she needed assistance for a particular task or project:

Cate And just because I'm collegial ... my main classroom is next to maths staff room. So, they're the first people I go to when I need help and support for things.

Cate described an openness to learning new skills and supporting her colleagues. Her experience of the culture of the school was a positive and collegial one, although she

tempered this with her consciousness of the challenges facing teachers across the institution. She felt that she had a strong relationship with the principal because of her role in the union as a voice for teachers in the school and felt that she was listened to and valued in this capacity. As the representative, Cate spoke about this relationship:

Cate Well, very good. Very good. ... The second you walk in and go – whether it’s the principal or the deputy – ‘I actually have my Teachers Federation hat on’, and they go ‘okay’. But they’re actually Federation members, so ... and they come from the grassroots of wanting this to work. So that’s a very big positive. I guess not every senior executive would fit under that category because they’ve got other agendas. They’ve got other bosses to serve. They’ve got other timelines. But no, I haven’t found it [tension] at all.

What is notable in these comments is the way Cate refers to “other agendas, bosses and timelines”. Remarks like these indicate the external contexts and pressures that are brought to bear on schools, and we will return to these for exploration in more detail in Chapter Six. What is notable is that informants were quite aware of the fact that the school executive did much work mediating the influence of these contexts, and the professional culture contributed to that process. Later in this chapter these acts of mediation will be discussed in more detail as informants explicate their views of the administrative tasks that govern their work – the “textual” external contexts that make up the ruling relations of the institution (McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2001; Turner, 2006).

Professional development: ticking the boxes for accreditation

As this study continued, one of the most prominent recurring themes that emerged was that of professional learning and development, which is significant because of the way the texts that support this are bound up in neoliberal logics discussed in Chapter Two. It is also significant because the interview questions began by asking about classroom practice specifically: professional development was raised by informants at various

stages of the interviews as a mediating factor between the classroom and the broader governing relations of their work. During coding, professional learning was aggregated under the parent node “Practices”, and within that parent node it was the most prominent (see Appendix H for a complete hierarchy of nodes). References to professional learning most frequently overlapped with discussion of the PDP process, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. This section addresses professional learning in a more general sense, giving an overview of the way informants spoke about it in relation to their practice and standpoint as teachers. This leads to Chapter Six, which discusses the PDP and its relationship to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which were described as an important part of ongoing professional development at Olivetree High.

Professional learning was understood in two ways: firstly, as an ongoing process of improvement and accreditation in practice, often with a view to achieving Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) accreditation, and secondly in a more organic sense through taking on additional responsibilities and leadership within the school community. Stephanie’s interview was notable for the strong way she framed her practice around professional learning. Stephanie was very active in her approach to professional development, seeing it as an integral part of her career, and her participation in this project was an expression of that. This was partially motivated by her desire to achieve Highly Accomplished Teacher accreditation, and also due to her role as Acting Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning. Highly Accomplished Teacher accreditation is the first of two voluntary levels in the Australian Professional Standards, emphasising teachers who support, guide, and contribute to their colleagues learning. Stephanie explained that her approach to professional development involved developing resources for her colleagues:

Stephanie See my philosophy is, I don’t want to create all these extra activities for myself, I want to tie in everything. So, I’m very passionate about the professional learning of teachers.

While Stephanie emphasised her support for the development and learning of her colleagues as an integral part of her own professional development, she still saw her own classroom as a space to experiment with new practices which she could share.

Stephanie But in order to do that I believe I should be experimenting [with] things in my classroom and present illustrations of practice. So, everything that I do in my classroom is driven by ‘am I creating something new?’, or trialling something new that I can then share first with my colleagues in my science faculty, and then beyond that to the whole school.

What is clear in this statement is the way the professional culture of the school is thoroughly imbricated with the development of Stephanie’s own classroom practice. In fact, these processes are inseparable for her: what she does in the classroom becomes a practice that she can share with her colleagues to inform their professional learning, and in so doing she is able to progress her own professional goals with a view to achieving HAT accreditation. She regarded this process as a core part of her career track, and was open about where she wanted to take these development opportunities:

Stephanie That also then leads to my career goal. Eventually, I see myself as you know, moving towards, you know, either Department of Education professional learning, whatever they have got, directorates up there, or as a Head Teacher Teaching and Learning and then finally, you know, looking at that senior level where I can drive teaching and learning programs at that level.

Stephanie was initially very engaged with the research process itself, seeing it as a way to achieve part of her accreditation and as an opportunity to present at research conferences, as well as potentially leading to postgraduate research studies of her own. Her engagement with this research was also part of a broader strategy for helping teachers in the school to maintain their professional learning for the year, leading to a

co-presented workshop with me at a staff development day. Stephanie saw professional learning as a core part of her professional identity as a teacher – more so than any other informant in the study. In part this was motivated by her pursuit of HAT accreditation, though she was not the only informant in the study undertaking this process. Stephanie reported that she often found herself pushing for new frameworks and approaches to be adopted, and looked for ways to facilitate that within her faculty:

Stephanie When I'm sitting in my faculty meeting, because I know that the faculty head is trying to push [a professional development activity] through, because of that reason I then try to encourage that, even as a classroom teacher by promoting that amongst other faculty. So that is why in my faculty, because of me being there from professional learning team⁵, and other staff also being very receptive, our staff room is very, very proactive that way.

When I asked her why she thought more teachers might not engage in developing professional learning to the same degree that she does, Stephanie was very certain:

Stephanie This is additional responsibility from the existing structure. As a classroom teacher you're expected to teach, mark your assessments, finish. Why would you give up more time in designing and delivering a professional learning session? Why would you? It takes away your holiday. Why would any teacher, a classroom teacher, why would a head teacher design it?

Pat And what's your answer to that?

Stephanie Unless you have a goal. If you're looking for a promotion, if you are wanting to do... or if you enjoy. I don't think there are many

⁵ The professional learning team is a group of teachers that support professional learning and development activities across the school.

who enjoy. I don't think there are many. And I've told you, like, I would want to get involved with teaching at the university level. Both for financial benefit and for bringing back expertise to school. So that is another reason why I want to engage in all these additional projects.

The professional learning program in the school was tightly integrated with the PDP process, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The deputy principal explained that a professional learning calendar was developed for the whole year, drawing on themes that had emerged from the school planning process and reflection on staff PDPs:

Deputy We then used that to actually publish starting from the beginning of last year a calendar, where we identified all the professional learning events for the year and map them to what people have been requesting.

My interview with the deputy principal, who was responsible for the development of teaching and learning within the school, focused on the professional learning activities in the school, given that they had emerged as a significant concern during the initial interviews. He explained the way these opportunities were developed in response to needs identified during the school planning process. When I asked the deputy principal why the professional learning program was so well resourced and integrated into the practice of the school, he explained:

Deputy I think that there is... there's always a feeling in a school which has achieved very high results over a long period of time to think that there's nothing wrong. So, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. And professional learning is not about finding things that are broken. You know, that's what... that's part of the normal day-to-day administration of the school. What professional learning is about

is foreseeing what obstacles might lie ahead, so that you can be properly prepared for when they do happen, and you couldn't get a better case in point than the COVID.

In referring to COVID-19, the Deputy was indicating the way the school shifted to a program of peer supported preparation for delivering remote learning. It is notable here that the Deputy identifies "foreseeing the obstacles" as a central goal for professional learning. This acknowledgement of contingency is one that was articulated by informants but as can be seen in Chapter Seven, receives little attention in the governing texts themselves.

Aside from whole-school development opportunities, staff could attend individual professional development opportunities like those described by Sara. Sara explained the value she got out of attending professional conferences for language teachers:

Sara I like to go to the Japanese teachers' conference. I get inspired by listening to what other teachers are doing in classes and how I might apply... I might try those things. So, other great teachers influence me as well.

Sara felt supported by the school to attend these conferences, an allowance that the deputy principal said the school was happy to provide for teachers. Staff who elected to do this were given a space to report their learning back to the whole school if it was considered valuable:

Deputy Obviously, if one person has a bee in their bonnet about wanting to do a particular course, the most cost-effective way is to say, 'yep, okay, you apply for it. We'll organise some release time and you can go and do it'. And that's what probably happens in most schools. The problem with that, is that what happens if somebody else would like to do that course but just couldn't be bothered?

How, when you pay a thousand dollars to release someone and the course fee, what do they give back to their school or their faculty? So, we started to organise for people once a term to have a forum where if they went to an external professional learning event, they could debrief with the whole school at a staff meeting, if they thought it had whole school relevance.

In addition to individual teacher development and whole-school activities, there was also a large amount of collaboration with another nearby high school in delivering professional learning:

Pat How often do you collaborate with [that school]?

Stephanie So, we run one staff development day in July. It's run as a joint staff development day. So, coming together to plan that day, what workshops, what teams, and how we manage the logistics and the NESA-registered course. So, I've done that in my capacity as Head Teacher. And then I have now promoted that further with delivering of Mini-COGE.

Mini-COGE is a program delivered by the University of New South Wales, the Mini Certificate of Gifted Education. Both Stephanie and the deputy principal explained that this paid course could be made more economical by involving other schools, to increase the number of staff attending, a practice that extended to a range of professional development opportunities:

Deputy And also, we found that it was a lot better use of resources if everybody in one area said I'd like to do the Mini-COGE, you know, the Certificate of Gifted Education from UNSW. So rather than send six people to do it, and a cost of about 1500 each, we get the presenter to come into the school. We provide the venue, we

ask other schools to come to defray the cost and have it for a larger group, which we would never have known about if we hadn't done some sort of analysis of what people were actually asking for.

Mini-COGE is an example of “one-shot” professional development opportunities which are registered with NESAs as satisfying the accountability requirements for registration. Mockler (2020) notes that these opportunities “may align more with the managerial or organisational forms of professionalism that underpin [teacher professional] standards than with generative, occupational or democratic professionalism” (p. 5). For the deputy principal, the consideration of registration was secondary to the broader planning of the school and the value that might be extracted from a given program. Without the analysis of the school's needs the deputy referred to earlier, they would not have been able to identify demand for a given course – regardless of accreditation requirements:

Deputy So yeah, better use of resources and drill down deeper to find out what sort of feedback can enhance or even stimulate the idea that somebody else might want to adopt a strategy or to go and do a particular course or whatever.

These economies of scale do seem to apply primarily to one-shot development opportunities. He explained that a larger group of staff enabled the two schools to draw on “international standard” speakers in these one-shot formats for development:

Deputy But that is a major initiative that we actually have done is to put the two schools together and focus on things like gifted education. We had June Maker from the Maker Model, come out and speak to both schools. You can get ... if you put the two schools together and have 150... you can get often an international standard speaker or somebody at the high end in the Department ...

Across many of these comments, it is notable the way professional development is characterised as attendance at workshops, training sessions, or involves visiting experts. For some informants this was associated with accreditation requirements, the need to get the minimum professional development points for NESAs. There is little that points to richer ethical and attitudinal practices such as those described by Evans (2008, 2018), which may also be more *informal*. Rather, as noted in the case of Mini-COGE, there is an emphasis on one-shot opportunities that meet the standards for registration with NESAs, and which might be more aptly characterised as accreditation than learning. The approach to professional learning and development employed at Olivetree High will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, which discusses the PDP and the planning process that surrounds it.

The coordination of teachers' work

This section turns to some of the ways in which practices and the professional culture at Olivetree High are coordinated in the school. The particular focus here is on the way routines and “policy work” were described by informants. During the process of re-reading and coding interview transcripts, a number of coordinating practices emerged, many of which centred on the systems that help to organise work, the policies that these systems support, and the technologies and administrative workload that are associated with all of this.

Meetings are a central way in which relationships are managed and ideas disseminated within the school. Meetings were described in several interviews as occurring at faculty, executive and whole-of-school level, as well as for different groups and committees as appropriate. For some informants, meetings are also a time challenge to be negotiated:

Cate So I guess those kind of structures are trying to find the flexible within every person, so not every person will work to your timetable. So, you find a way to meet or compromise or address. I mean, I'm going to faculty meeting on Fridays, and I can never make it. I'm always with kids at lunchtime. I want to faculty

meeting after school. But everyone else wants to go. So, I almost feel like they should ring me on the bell and say, "don't forget about the faculty meeting".

Cate had also developed a satisfactory debriefing rhythm with her head teacher where they could speak to each other over the phone on Fridays when they didn't have time to meet in person. Charlotte described the way meetings help her to coordinate and enact policy as part of her role as Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning:

Charlotte I have to do ... a rolling to-do list [laughs] essentially every day. And I have a lot more meetings and things that I have to run. So, I run induction meetings once a week for the professional experience teachers and new teachers in the school, where we talk about our policies and our practice and the way we do things essentially.

These duties also extended to coordinating professional development opportunities. It is notable that Charlotte sought feedback on professional development opportunities in order to improve them for future rounds. The difficulties in coordinating all of these different meetings come from both having to manage people's time – finding ways to accommodate different rhythms – and also the paperwork associated with these tasks:

Charlotte The planning of effective and engaging staff development days can be difficult as all schools across the state have a professional development day on the same date. So, there's so many schools wanting to lock in experts as presenters, meaning that we often draw on our own practitioners to design and deliver professional learning. At the moment, I'm preparing a presentation that I'm giving at the induction session next week, an overview of differentiating for our gifted learners... I'm coordinating our professional experience teachers, along with their university

supervisor visits and checking in with their supervising teachers. I've got new ones starting next week, I've got to make sure they've done OH&S and got connected to the Department IT systems. It has been challenging to get used to all the forms and other administrative duties of my leadership role.

What Charlotte is describing here reveals the scope of administrative work that sits underneath the regular practice of “meeting people”. Meetings do not happen in isolation – there is a significant amount of preparatory work involved and if they are effectively run there are likely to be tasks to follow-up after they are completed. In the case described above, Charlotte would have ongoing engagement with staff members, organisations, events, and systems on top of the relational setting of meetings. Stephanie also expressed the way the process of relationship-building through meetings outside of the classroom was a central element of her work:

Stephanie So meeting with [a colleague], presenting things either in a professional development kind of a forum in staff meetings in science, the other thing would be meeting with, you know, either deputy principal or the principal on some projects, which can either come and go, or targeted, like, designing for staff development days particularly. Currently I'm also working with [another] school. We are delivering Mini-COGE from UNSW. So that is another network that I'm trying to develop so that we can collaborate together and run sessions.

Stephanie tended to focus on the way meetings and coordination was done at the level of her faculty and how this could be supported with various tools. The science faculty employed technology like Google Drive to compile and share resources – a fact borne out by my own experience building a professional development workshop with Stephanie. The motivation for this shared activity was to create “consistency”, an idea that was central to Stephanie's work:

Stephanie What we have decided is we are going to invite each other to our Google classrooms, so teachers can have access. Teachers can grab other people's resources, look at what others are doing and then design their own learning activities to make sure that their class or their students are not learning ... they're not missing out on anything that the other ... that is our way of bringing consistency at the moment.

This idea of consistency is an interesting one to explore in light of Stephanie's attitude towards the Department of Education, expressing as she did a professional desire to move into that space. It suggests that her desire for consistent practice across teachers and consistent delivery of curriculum helps her to negotiate the frameworks and policies released by the Department. The language that Stephanie used in her interview centred on three actions: **influencing**, **embedding**, and **pushing through**:

Stephanie The aim of the professional learning team or the goal of the professional learning team was to make sure that there was a follow up from that staff development. So, we **embedded** some activities like some of the whole school faculty meetings were coming together in group to **show** and share how you have **embedded** what you learned in the staff development day into your teaching a learning program. That was **pushed through** executives. So, executives were told to go to their staff and conduct some faculty based professional learning session to **embed** some differentiation strategies in their teaching and learning program as part of the review of the teaching and learning program. And the faculty heads were encouraged to promote that within their faculties. So that was happening at... in each faculty. Now. I then, working as a classroom teacher under my faculty head, then went on and **embedded** some of the quality teaching in the program that I wrote, and I **embedded** that in my

classroom in terms of, you know, some of the things we identified, like, you know, cultural aspects. The topic that I wrote was astronomy. So, I focused on **embedding** some of the cultural aspects in our astronomy topic. And I **embedded** that in my classroom. I made sure that, because as a writer of the program, I was able to **influence** other teachers who were teaching that program. So, I was able to **influence** other teachers as a classroom teacher who has written that program. And I mean, part of the professional learning team, I made sure that whatever was **pushed through** from the executive level, as a follow up from staff development day, I was able to incorporate that into my classroom.

These three processes – influencing, embedding, and pushing through – are an interesting triad of actions given that they all rest on a presumption that a policy position or a particular practice is valuable and worthy of enacting in classrooms. Stephanie positions herself as an agent of change and a voice that defends policy in practice. Her approach seems to be that of someone who feel creatively involved in the development of policies, rather than someone who receives or interprets them. Stephanie frequently used the term “implement” when talking about policy and practice, which has a distinct meaning and tone when contrasted with terms like “enactment”.

Given her focus on professional learning and her role as Acting Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning, Stephanie explained how the relationship with her colleagues was an important one for her professional development. She stressed that this was not just in the way that she shared what she developed for her own classroom (the practices of influencing, embedding, and pushing through), but also in having colleagues observe and critique her own practice using a “peer observation template” developed for Olivetree High:

Stephanie There are two things that I do with that colleague who I work very closely with. I first implement a project in my classroom, invite her as part of my classroom observation, which is mandated. And then I also request her to embed the same thing to trial, our faculty level implementation of a project. And then both of us then are able to report back to our science faculty. So, organizing a meeting with my colleague who works with me on a different project, and we both then design our...I'm not sure whether you have heard of Professional Development Goals, PDP goals that we are supposed to do?

Significantly, Stephanie identifies a number of meetings – faculty meetings, meetings with colleagues, and earlier whole-school meetings and professional development days – as being essential to the coordination of professional development activities. It is after these meetings, which are used to discuss and build momentum around professional development activities, that Stephanie and her colleagues can turn these discussions into goals on the PDP. Administrative work can often become so abstract and decontextualised that people no longer see themselves in it. It appears that the meetings that take place at Olivetree High are a way for informants to *write people back into* the policy texts – some of which are discussed in the next section.

Much of the description of professional development thus far reflects an approach that emphasises forums, meetings, and staff development days, rather than ongoing processes of learning embedded in practice. In one way this reflects the emphasis placed on the PDP as a coordinating text, however the focus on accreditation which underpins this approach also highlights the importance of the Australian Professional Standards on which this accreditation process is based. The next section turns to the way broader departmental policies that aim to coordinate and regulate informants work also has the effect of generating “meaningless” administrative burdens.

Departmental policy

The most frequently mentioned non-school organisations were the New South Wales Department of Education (almost always referred to as “the Department”), and the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA). The ease with which informants referenced these two organisations was striking: the shorthand names “the Department” and “NESA” are clearly a part of ordinary discourse within the school. The way these organisations coordinate is most often by policy text, the extent of which was described by several informants as excessive. This was expressed by the principal, particularly regarding the role of NESA and the Department in “monitoring” the school. For example, the principal described the process of “external validation” that schools in New South Wales must regularly complete for the Department, suggesting that the administrative work involved in external validation seemed to be out of proportion to the way this documentation was received by the Department:

Principal It took me away from my job for almost a term, I would say, with the deputies and the head teacher teaching-learning, maybe all of term two in about 2016 to prepare this thing called external validation. And then two people from the department came in and had a panel meeting with us and looked at the document. And then we got an email back, almost a one-line email saying, you know, the department has looked at your external validation data and processes and we think it’s satisfactory...It was just, you know, just disgusting. So, these kinds of things that come over the top and you’re not quite sure at times where they’re coming from, you know.

It is interesting that the principal does not consider these policies as part of her actual work. She suggested that this administrative work and reporting “took her away from her job”, meaning that this work was not, in a sense, a part of that job. Rather than see her professional identity as one produced by these cumbersome processes, the principal separates the needs of the Department from her role within the school. Similar notions

were reported by the other informants in the study. For Julia, the feeling that the paperwork generated by these departmental imperatives contributed to a sense of guilt for some teachers:

Julia And the other thing is it makes teachers feel guilty. People like myself who actually want to do the best by the Department and by the students. ... people can feel bad that they're not following everything. And they're not reading up on everything, and they're not all up to date with everything. Well, I'm sorry, it's just too much.

Her strategy for dealing with this was one of adaptation – doing what she could as though it were a box-ticking exercise, so that she could point to her administrative duties being done and focus on her teaching:

Julia I'll take in as much as I can. And I'll sift through what I think is actually going to be beneficial and I know or feel like I can implement. And if I have time in my busy schedule and getting through all of the course content, if I can weave that into it somehow, then I feel like I've done enough. And I haven't ticked off the box, but at least I can say yes, I've acknowledged that.

Here Julia is describing a similar attitude to that of the principal in the way that she regards this process as something *in excess* of her role as a teacher – a box to tick for the Department – and not something that goes to the fundamental nature of her ethical identity as a teacher.

In contrast, Stephanie regularly emphasised the value the Department could offer as a central point for disseminating knowledge, advice, and examples of “best practice”. One criticism she did make was that the Department at times developed policy that was not as “classroom-ready” as it might have been:

Stephanie When they design the strategic directions at the Department level, which then filters down to the school level, which eventually comes down to the school, we need more classroom examples before it comes down.

What Stephanie describes here is the broad process through which policy is formulated and then cascaded through layers of bureaucracy into classroom practice. It positions these policy directives as carrying a “top-down” logic that influences classroom practice, an approach that aligns with Stephanie’s notion of *embedding* and *pushing through*, and which policy literature might understand as *policy implementation* rather than *enactment*. Curiously, Stephanie’s call for policy to be made more “classroom-ready” suggests that there is insufficient movement back up the chain: that the lived experience of teachers in the classroom can be used to inform these strategic directions to make them more meaningful. It might be argued that these directions need to have the standpoint of the teacher and learner *written back into them*, as they may be operating at too high a level of abstraction. Alternatively, it may be the case that where Stephanie values clear direction and guidance regarding “what works” and “best practice”, departmental policy is set at a *strategic* level to enable more local freedom in enactment.

Administrative work and change

Administration, or “admin”, was often referenced as a burden that affects the work of teachers, in particular because of the way it takes them away from the classroom and preparation time for teaching. Admin is also often a place where policy prescriptions were seen to intervene in teacher practice. In many of the interviews and classroom observations there was an acknowledgement that much of the work involved in preparing rich lessons and resources is done at home after school has finished. Time at school when teachers have a period with no lessons seems to be a time for admin work to be completed. Cate summarised the problem succinctly, given her role as Federation representative:

Cate There are concerns in this school about the overwork and the underpay, and projects, and expectations and admin and paperwork, that I will acknowledge across my colleagues.

Several informants identified changing technologies and systems as a significant factor in generating this administrative burden:

Julia The inputting of marks is more difficult now than it used to be because with the program that we're using, you have to individually click on the fields before you can enter data, but I used to be able to input it in an Excel spreadsheet and transfer it wholesale. That sort of thing. **It just eats into your time.**

Cate ...majorly about all the paper chasing. And sometimes it's electronic versions of the paper chase. And sometimes it's because we're moving from paper to electronics, and then they're bringing in a new system and a new platform and a new... and **there's no time to learn it.**

Charlotte We have multiple communication channels which is problematic. We're currently focused on trying to streamline it. We have Sentral⁶. We have Edval⁷. Our Department portal. And we have the intranet. And all of these have slightly different information and utilities, so you have to check all of them. **Which is a bit time consuming.**

Charlotte Unfortunately, [NESA's] website has never been very good, and they've had multiple different ones and different platforms that

⁶ Sentral is a student and school management system.

⁷ Edval is a piece of timetabling software.

didn't speak to each other. And so **those kinds of things are annoying...they take up time.**

In theory these systems exist to speed up the transmission of data from the school to the department, making data more seamlessly and centrally available. However, while these systems may make life easier and faster for the Department, they significantly impact on teachers' time. We saw earlier how Julia described the process as creating a feeling of guilt amongst teachers who have good intentions but who find it difficult to balance these administrative demands against the needs of their students. Julia explained how the process of engaging in professional learning itself can become complex:

Julia And then, for example, I was just applying to do a TPL⁸, so professional learning, earlier, before you came for the interview. And I was like, 'okay, so here's the form we use. Oh, now I need to check off what professional standards it matches – go and find my professional standards document. Okay, where's the code for NESAs. What's my maintenance date?' So there's all these little things that, you need, documents, codes and whatever. But that's just part of the day.

Julia's concerns here reflect a constraint imposed on the development of teacher identity and ethical professionalism: the sheer burden of administrative load involved in the professional learning process seems to be in tension with the aim of the exercise. Supporting this observation of Julia's, the principal suggested that the overwhelming amount of policy might contribute to the difficulty in dealing with the administrative burden:

Principal One of the problems is that there are too many competing documents as frameworks.

⁸ Teacher Professional Learning.

Stephanie also felt that there was insufficient support from the department in showing how the different frameworks speak to each other. For the principal, these frameworks not only required understanding and negotiation in order to enact them within the school, but they also came with a great deal of reporting and administrative work. For example, while the recently replaced *Local Schools, Local Decisions* policy claimed to empower schools with more control over the budgets, the processes of accounting that sit around that are byzantine for both the school executive and even for individual teachers. Julia described the elaborate process involved in approving payments for extracurricular activities:

Julia Trying to pay for anything is quite difficult now because we're not allowed to use our own credit cards, which means that we have to go and find someone with a departmental card. We have our go-to person with the credit card, but sometimes they're not available. So, you check their timetable. Try to find them in class, try to catch a time to see them, call them, etc. And then because the school has so many expenses, they might not have any credit left. So, you call someone else. So, there's that process. And of course we have to okay it with our head teacher. So, the whole payment process can be cumbersome. We have so many things to pay for and especially for Latin, we are involved in a lot of international competitions that we need to use a credit card for. At certain times of the year, I feel like it's just all happening.

...

And then getting that paperwork through. All of the forms that we need, the cost centres, I still can't get my head around with the new LMBR changeover. LMBR? It's the new system that all public schools use to manage their finances. **It's darkly arcane.**

These challenges were not unique to teachers. The principal referred to the problem of *time*, arguing that many of the “cumbersome, complex, frustrating, almost debilitating”

processes and systems that are designed to support the bureaucracy of the state are compromising the ability of staff in schools to properly do their job. Julia's critique of the "darkly arcane" Learning Management and Business Reform system captured the general feeling about these technologies:

Pat It sounds like there's a lot of managing systems rather than...

Julia Negotiating systems. I don't know that I'm at the stage of managing them. [laughs] **I'm being managed by them.**

Here Julia quite explicitly references the kinds of neo-Taylorist logics that underpin systems like School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO), a system discussed by the principal, and LMBR: these are managerial reporting systems, which feed information back to the central bureaucracy and generate administrative burdens. Even the level of access to seemingly meaningful systems – such as those regarding student welfare – seemed illogical to some teachers. Sara explained how this impacted one lesson of hers:

Sara Last year in my first year here, I made this Year 8 girl cry in class. She was a girl who had high anxiety. And particularly when she is asked to speak in front of others, she gets very nervous. She gets very emotional. I didn't know any of those things.

...

There was nothing. Like at my previous school, there's this, like, database. I could always access... every teacher [could access it]. But here we have that sort of similar thing, but to be able to access the database you have to be Head Teacher or above.

In our conversation Sara acknowledged that lack of access to this information may be a consequence of privacy considerations, but she weighed this against the welfare needs of the student, which reflects a sense of teacher ethical reflection. For many of the informants, they could see the intended value of these processes, but they felt that the

implementation of them sidelined or elided the role that *people* play in using them. These concerns become more apparent in Chapter Eight.

Alongside the proliferation of systems, Julia felt that the sheer volume of policy changes was confusing, creating a kind of tumult that negated the intended benefits associated with a given change:

Julia I can't put my finger on any one thing. It's just the **sheer weight of them all**. And as I said, you think about the fact that, I've been teaching now for eight years. It's teachers who've been here for 20, 30, 40, 50 years, and they think "oh, *another* policy". And this is updating the other one. Okay, well, that's good. What was the other one again?

To some extent, Julia felt that the principal moderated this effect:

Julia The leadership within schools has to be very aware of what they choose to implement ... what's appropriate for their context. And if that's done at the leadership level, then that means that the teachers feel more confident with what elements of the policy they might move forward with their students.

This observation aligns neatly with the experience of the principal reported during her interview. The principal described a wide range of policies from the Department for which she needed to account and integrate into her planning for the school. The principal described several policies that sit almost unseen by teachers in the process of planning, such as the *School Excellence Framework*, and systems like SPaRO. It appears "the sheer weight of them all" is only carried by a collective effort of staff and a significant amount of translation by the school executive. Julia located this concern in a broader question relating to education systems and politics more generally:

Julia But if you just say, ‘Okay, now schools, you have to look after all of these things’, and it just keeps adding on and on and on, that’s where the problem lies.

It seems obvious then that while there are mediating strategies that teachers put in place when enacting policy, they are nevertheless explicitly conscious of the way their work is being reconfigured by broader contexts.

Conclusion: empty shells in descriptions of practice

In the methodology chapter, I noted that Smith (2005) suggests that researchers should be mindful of *empty shells*. These are words that come to stand in for more developed concepts – placeholders that make sense within the context of an institution. They also tend to mark out discursive spaces in which hidden assumptions operate. Many of the ideas discussed in this chapter indicated the presence of these empty shells. During the process of iterative coding of interview data, when a term seemed to me ill-defined or vague, I coded it under a parent node for “empty shells”. These empty shells are interesting in that they speak to the bureaucratisation of teachers work. These were:

Empty Shell	Description
“Admin”	References to administrative work that occurs outside of the classroom and does not directly relate to pedagogical practice.
“Budget”	References to spending constraints or processes of procurement that involve school finances.
“Changes”	References to unspecific changes, for example related to society or education in very general terms, or the school or individual processes specifically.
“Policies”	Use of the word “policy” when not tied to a specific policy document (for example, the ‘Gifted & Talented Policy’).
“Systems”	References to computer systems used to conduct work, that are not a specific technology or tool.
“The Government”	References to political leaders or parties, and state or Commonwealth governments.

"The System"	References to "the system" that are not explicitly tied to a particular system but are more abstract. "The school system" was included within this category, whereas "the NSW Education System" was not.
"They"	"They" was often used to indicate familiarity with a group or person in a way that could at times seem vague. Unspecific use of "they" was coded at this node.

A noticeable feature of these empty shells is that they mark out linguistic sites of erasure where people are abstracted out of the policy process. This is readily apparent in phrases like "the system" and "they", where people are made vague and unspecific, or the process-oriented shells like "admin", "budget" and "changes". In each of these shells, the roles of individual teachers are unclear because they represent spaces where bureaucratic tensions play out in teacher practice. Smith (2005) would argue that these are the gaps in which institutional capture takes place, that they refer to things "presumed to exist" – a kind of bureaucratic *blob ontology*:

Such stylistic devices constitute what might be described as a 'blob ontology'; that is, for every such concept, there is taken to be a something out there corresponding to it. The disappearance of people and activities is striking once we attend to it. Agency is assigned to conceptually constructed entities that lack determinate referents. It is left to readers to fill in for an absence of specified referent or clearly defined meaning. (p. 56)

As the quote from Walby at the start of this chapter indicates, it is through *talk* that our social reality is produced. These shells point towards a particular social world – a *utopia of rules* (Graeber, 2015) – where people are written out, supplanted by bureaucratic processes and systems and texts. Admin, for example, is not a phenomenon unique to the work of teachers, and there is a great deal of literature referring to the expansion of administrative tasks and paperwork. At the lower end of the spectrum this takes the form of accountability, measurement, and risk aversion. At the more extreme end, it creates what Graeber (2018) refers to as "bullshit jobs". Clearly, teaching does not fall at

that end of the spectrum, but the proliferation of paperwork that seems meaningless or burdensome – “evidence for no-one” as Talbot (2016) describes it – could be regarded as a function of “bullshit work”. As we will see in the next chapter, it is not that teachers do not see value in *some* of the processes that generate this work, but rather that the way in which these processes are implemented – the paperwork that comes with it – that is a problem. In a sense, it is the way in which the human and the social is *written out* that contributes to this sense of frustration. These feelings are echoed in a report by McGrath-Champ et al. (2018), which suggests that teachers are feeling a significant burden of extra workload, much of which is completed in personal time.

Another understanding might also be that these processes are reconceptualising the nature of the job itself. For example, rather than acting as a school leader, the investment required in these managerial and bureaucratic systems repositions the principal as an administrator. Eacott (2017) suggests that this kind of shift in the running of schools is an example of “neo-Taylorism”, locating the model for school leadership in Frederick Taylor’s model of workplace management described in *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor, 2012)⁹. Referring to Raymond Callahan’s (1962) book *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, Eacott (2017) explains that “central to Callahan’s thesis was that questions of education and educating had been replaced by business imperatives and in particular the pursuit of efficiency” (p. 413). This seems to reflect the imperative driving the adoption of systems which circulate information back to the state bureaucracy extremely rapidly, but which do not enhance the complex contextual work that leaders and teachers do in their schools. The collection of data echoes a similar process described by Ball et al. (2012, p. 85), where it functioned as a kind of monitoring system to broadly improve the quality of education. Fundamental to these kinds of processes, and in line with neo-Taylorist management approaches, sit the twin texts which anchor the ruling

⁹ Taylor argues for “scientific” managerial approaches that emphasise efficiency and productivity, claiming that “in the case of any single individual the greatest prosperity can exist only when that individual has reached his highest state of efficiency; that is, when he is turning out his largest daily output” (Taylor, 2012). The *neo*-designation marks out post-Fordist approaches to management: those that operate not on factory lines like the early 20th century, but offices and professional environments under neoliberalism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

relations of schooling in teacher subjectivity: The Performance and Development Plan and the Australian Professional Standards. These two documents both aim to define the work and practice of teachers in a way that extends beyond simply “professional development”. These two texts will be explored in the next two chapters, first reporting interview data and then by mapping the policy field. Chapter Eight which then follows will explore examples of actual practice gathered over a period of classroom observations, exploring the “excess” of teachers work that is not accounted for in these processes.

This chapter has explored the work of teachers from the standpoint of teacher informants in this study. Supporting the professional environment of Olivetree High were practices around professional development which were raised by informants during interviews, with the Performance and Development Plan functioning as a dominant discursive artefact. However, professional development was frequently understood in the mode of forums, workshops, and staff development days, rather than an ongoing process of professional learning in practice. This points to the tension between the ethical values expressed by teachers at Olivetree High as they approach their practice and the processes by which policy is enacted in the school. These processes most obviously link the work of teachers through to the texts, processes and organisations that coordinate their practice. Informants noted the role of government and organisations like NESA; however, the most significant coordinating policy body was the NSW Department of Education (“the Department”). Policy and processes formed within the Department reach into the school in a variety of ways, sometimes ignored, sometimes adopted, sometimes transformed by the informants as they are enacted in the school, mediated by the school leadership. This process of enactment necessarily generates additional workload for teachers – and much of this relates to the management of new systems and regular changes to policy. The next chapters identify spaces where teachers’ work is circumscribed by particular policy imperatives.

Chapter Six: The texts that drive the agenda

A particular document's usefulness and meaning arises in the context of other institutional texts. Texts create a textual reality that is sustained through the actions they coordinate and the concepts they legitimize.
(Nichols & Griffith, 2009, p. 245)

Introduction

During the analysis of the initial interviews in NVivo, mentions of policies and documents were iteratively coded, in line with institutional ethnography's approach of using texts to trace the coordination of people's work (Smith, 2001, 2006; Turner, 2006). As can be seen in Appendix B, policy texts were not explicitly raised in teacher interviews but rather emerged as teachers discussed their work inside and outside of the classroom. In some cases, these documents were only mentioned in passing, or mentioned in the context of a broader conversation about practice. In other instances, particular documents became increasingly salient across conversations, so it was possible to discuss these without explicitly raising the issue of policy texts. The interviews conducted with members of the school executive – the principal and deputy principal – were specifically framed around the policy texts in this chapter. These policies and documents represent the boss texts that coordinate work. These boss texts are the documents that establish the ruling relations in the work of these teachers – they coordinate activity within the school, and the purpose of this chapter is to introduce two of the foundational texts from which the following chapter will map upwards. In doing so, we can see how the lived experience of these teachers links up with broadly neoliberal policy settings, and how these settings are enacted in everyday life.

This chapter is divided into two sections that focus on key texts that coordinate the logics of professional development and teacher professionalism described during interviews: New South Wales' Performance and Development Plan (PDP) and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers ("the standards"). During analysis, codes were developed inductively whenever any policy or document was mentioned, and the full set of codes can be seen in Appendix H. Once the coding was completed and analysis of classroom observations conducted, these two documents were selected for inclusion here due to the significant discursive role they were observed to play in defining

teachers' work. These documents were referenced by all the informants during their interviews, and, because of the reflexive relationship between professional development and professional identity highlighted in the literature review, occupy an influential role in the coordination, regulation, and production of teacher professional identity in New South Wales. The next chapter will engage in a mapping process looking at how these texts can be traced to find "higher-level" texts that enunciate the position of the ruling relations.

The PDP: implementing and evaluating professional learning

Performance and Development Plans (PDP) are a widely used document within organisations – both schools and otherwise. The NSW PDP is a mandatory tool used in public schools throughout New South Wales that was introduced in 2015 (Baker et al., 2018). It involves the setting of a number of annual goals and provides a structure for reflection and review with supervisors in schools. A sample of the PDP template is included in Appendix J. The aim of the PDP at Olivetree High is to trace performance goals for a year, to provide a means to check in on these at an annual review (or more regularly in some instances), and to inform school planning processes:

Charlotte We do PDPs which is our yearly goal setting where we have interviews with our head teachers and we have to do lesson observations in the year.

Sara We also have at the beginning of the school year, each teacher has to set three goals we want to achieve but it can be, well it can be professionally related to... like for example... one of the things was on to set up a speaking / listening resource for students to sort of study or something.

The PDP was a recurring theme when informants discussed their professional learning and development. While this may seem obvious, the fact that professional learning was understood through the lens of the PDP document itself indicates the central role that it

plays in development. In a sense, the PDP came to replace more generative modes of professional learning because of the way it was structured as an annual review process. The regular check-in was seen by some informants as an administrative task rather than an enriching one. Of the many governing texts referenced during interviews, this was the one to which informants most often referred. Their stance towards the document was largely ambivalent – there was not a particularly negative or positive sentiment expressed by any of the teachers toward the process. Some saw the benefits of the PDP while at times perceiving it as an administrative burden. Overall, informants recognised that there were advantages to going through the PDP process in order to contribute to their ongoing professional learning and improved teaching practice.

Charlotte described the process of defining goals for her PDP:

Charlotte So, you try to align them, well they have to be aligned with the school plan. And ideally aligned or **use the language of** the standards as well. Three to five goals. And then you have a mid-year review, with your head teacher, to reflect on how you're going and if you are on track in fulfilling those goals and how you're going to prove it, that you've filled those goals, is it a lesson observation or a measurable outcome etc, and then you do a yearly reflection, making new goals.

...

It might be that you wanted to further embed differentiation strategies within your programming and lessons. And so obviously, that could be observed in a program and in a lesson observation.

Notably, Charlotte explains that she tries to align her PDP goals to the school plan. The principal described the PDP process as primarily a personal one – so while there were elements of broader school needs involved, it was not necessarily a requirement that teachers consider the school plan. Rather, the principal described the PDP as an

“empowering” process. However, while the principal felt that the PDP needed to be couched in these terms for teachers to see its value, informants did not universally share this view. Some saw the potential for the PDP to be empowering, but this notion was not strongly expressed, unlike the consideration of the workload involved in the annual paperwork. The principal also explained how the PDP process was first introduced to the school:

Principal When it was launched, the Federation representative and myself, stood in front of the whole staff as a united front and said that this is a professional platform and it’s an industrial platform for you. And I tried to frame it as the positive spin... or the positive messaging that ‘this says you have a right to have your own goals, this says you have a right to express your professional needs’. And if you look at it in that way, it’s a very empowering process.

This accords with the view of one informant, who was the Federation representative in the school. Cate explained:

Cate I’m always finding the good in things. It’s like I said with the PDP you know, everybody goes, ‘what do we have to do now?’ And I’m like, this could be a good thing. I’m a silver lining [person]. So, I always try and find the good thing. That means I’m happier. That means my work-life balance is better.

She explained in detail how she understood the PDP process, and what it should look like for teachers in the school:

Cate I think sometimes it’s just talking to somebody and saying this is what I plan to do, will that work directly? It’s the same as how you work with a student teacher. It’s that moment of having a conversation. And now I think sometimes the Department started

to... have imposed [conversations] in the PDPs and the observations. And I see them totally as a way of not policing, by putting in structures and supports and scaffolds where maybe they weren't being used the right way. So, it's saying to your Head of Department or your colleagues 'check on me', you know, give me a pat on the back when it's working. And give me some pointers when things aren't.

Most informants sought ways to make their PDP relevant to the school plan, despite this not being a requirement within the document itself. In part, the school culture encouraged staff members to build their goals around the school plan, so there was an institutional logic at play here – but the school plan itself was also informed by the goals of staff members each year. Stephanie was quite involved in developing ways to enact the PDP process in the school. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, Stephanie designed and delivered professional learning sessions that gave teachers ways to observe and analyse their classroom practice – which was tied closely to this research study in the school. But Stephanie also described ways that the PDP had become part of her routine work at Olivetree High:

Stephanie We both design our PDP goals in a manner that we can go into each other's classroom trial different projects. So then organizing a face-to-face meeting with my colleague so that we can discuss if she has come into my classroom, or if we are designing a resource together. So, having a briefing meeting with my colleague, and then during those meetings, we also decide, okay, do we need to put this as an agenda item in our faculty meeting. So then, either personally, I will drive an agenda item in the meeting, or I'll get her with me to drive an agenda item. So, I use my faculty meeting as a forum to drive some of these projects that I'm doing in my classroom...

Stephanie looks for ways to connect her PDP goals with her classroom practice as well as translate this professional learning into a broader faculty or school-wide practice. Stephanie felt that observations and peer feedback were an important part of professional learning. On the other hand, Cate was more ambivalent when describing the role peer observation played in her practice. When discussing “being supervised by an outsider with a different eye”, she explained:

Cate I didn't want to do it too much. So, we worked on it. But yeah, they got somebody else sometimes non-subject specific, witnessing their teaching practice in a different way. Which is all part of the New PDPs and observations in schools as again parts of quality education blah blah blah standards.

This language suggests that Cate is dismissive of the PDP process and the standards, but as the interview continued, and in observing Cate's classroom practice, it became clear that she was very attentive and supportive of the professional learning objectives the PDP seeks to enact. She recognised that the documentation may be a contrivance but that it nevertheless enables conversation and reflection that can improve practice:

Cate Notionally I see the PDPs and the interviews, and the ongoing observations is not a sabotage for teachers but a support. Older teachers sometimes go 'neh neh neh' ... and I say, 'it's only meant to support you'. And even if sometimes writing and filling out those PDPs – which is what my plan is for the year and where I am – I don't get to it until the next time they say, 'look at it'. And that's okay. In that minute, I go, 'Oh, I should be thinking about this'. Or 'Oh, I did say I was going to do that. I haven't, okay, how do I fit that back in?' So, it's a formal manipulation that should support. And I like it too. It works for me.

The fact that the PDP is a “formal manipulation” meant that some informants still interpreted it as something of a burden, even if they still recognised it as a valuable exercise. Some informants described the PDP process within the context of broader admin work – an empty shell that came up quite regularly, as discussed in the previous chapter. For Sara, this meant that there were occasions where the PDP was a distraction from important other work – that it was simply “evidence for no-one” (Talbot, 2016):

Sara I think it’s good. It’s good but sometimes we’re, we get just too busy and we ... it’s so easy for us to forget. And I don’t know about other faculties but in our faculty we just ... it’s not very good but we forget, we do forget. And until our head teacher reminds us ... like, ‘okay everyone please do your lesson observation or whatever, PDP, by the end of the week’ and we’re like, ‘Oh my goodness’ [laughs] and we just do it. Like, **sometimes I feel like we do it just for the sake of doing it.** ... and that’s not good.

Similarly, Julia described the process of “ticking off” the elements of the PDP and the Standards:

Julia And trying to isolate, or steer the school in a positive direction, and then make sure that the staff are actually on board with these changes, and then showing that you’re complying with them by **ticking them off** and saying my TPL matches this standard or my own performance and development plan for this year meets those standards...

A central issue with these coordinating texts is the extent to which they are regarded as admin as opposed to serving the generative function for which they are intended. As a coordinating text, and a central one in the work of teachers, the PDP is a prime candidate for the *productive* discourses that Ball et al. (2012) consider central to the shaping of

teachers' work in policy enactment. The principal understood the tension between professional growth and the admin side of the document clearly:

Principal People are good about it. People are very good about it. And I think ... I think they're very interesting. I think it's a very interesting thing to be able to sit down, and it doesn't matter where you are in the organization. And I mean, I do it too, of course, with my director. And I even I think 'Oh I hate that documentation'. It is quite good to be able to say to somebody, 'these are the things that are really concerning me, and these are the things I do want to develop' and to have that conversation with somebody. Yeah. For me, I don't know how effective it is.

While the PDP process was broadly understood as effective at achieving development, there was a general perception that the process it involved was more of an administrative burden:

Pat ... is that for a check in at some point in the year when you're being asked to do those things, or is it when you're approaching the end?

Sara It is now.

Pat Now? Wow.

Sara Yes, but, like way overdue. It had to happen like end of last term.

Pat Yeah. And is it just that you're too busy for this?

Sara Too busy.

Sara's comments indicate that the paperwork itself is something of a barrier to achieving the stated aim of the process. The paperwork takes on a life of its own, as though it were the purpose of the exercise and not professional learning in a more generative sense. The principal said that she "hated the documentation", describing it as "clunky":

Principal I think these things are implemented, and then people see the time and the energy spent as probably not as worthwhile as it could be. And I think part of the problem, if there is a problem, is this very clunky documenting style of the actual PDP thing itself, rather than actually saying sit down once ... So, this was an attempt to do something that came more from the teacher rather than the supervisor, but it is a very clunky process to use that kind of language.

However, it should be recognised that these minor objections are set within a broad acceptance and understanding of the purpose of the PDPs that permeated the whole school. Most conversations about the administrative burden of the PDP nevertheless concluded with a recognition of its value:

Pat What do you think is the idea behind the PDP itself?

Sara For us to become a better teacher, I think. Better teaching. Also teach our [students] well, and we needed to... we needed to improve ourselves as an educator as well.

Pat Do you think it works?

Sara I think so. Yes. Like I said, I like my [students] to learn something new every lesson of mine. And I think it's important for me to learn something new, to try something new every year.

Pat Okay, so you do, kind of, even if there's that sort of scramble to do something at the end, you still see some value in it?

Sara Yes, yes, definitely.

Clearly, the PDP is an important document in the work of teachers – even if it is one to which they only return when prompted throughout the year. The principal explained that the aim of the school executive was to find ways to weave key elements of the school plan throughout the year – a process she called “drawing the thread” through the year – and those activations would be tied into professional development opportunities, staff development days¹⁰, and workshops. All of this was intended to give life to the school plan, and in a sense to justify the “clunky” administrative work involved in the PDP document itself. The Deputy felt that the way the school used the PDP contributed to it being valued by staff and not perceived as explicitly being a piece of administrative work:

Deputy This school plan's coming to an end this year, and we'll do an evaluation probably around October/November. My gut feeling is that I think people respect the process, if they know that it's not being filed away somewhere for no other reason than to tick a box. I think the staff are realising that we are actually paying attention to what they're asking for. And if that's all it achieves, it's going somewhere because it's making a process actually lead to something that's tangible. Rather than just being an accountability document.

¹⁰ Staff development days in New South Wales usually take place on the first day of school term, on the day prior to students returning to school. Staff attend school for workshops, meetings and professional development opportunities.

He emphasised that the relational aspect of the PDP – the interview with their Head Teacher – was the most significant part, and this accords with the importance the informants placed on collegiality and relationships in the school:

Deputy The other thing too, is it's a two-step process. And I think a lot of schools get caught up in the paperwork. I think the other issue is that there's an interview with the person, twice a year. Certainly once a year. It's face to face at the end of the year, where the supervisor can discuss, you know, 'I see this in your document, now did you get to do that this year? Why didn't it happen? Was it because you didn't have enough resources? Or what can we do? If you're going to carry that? Would you like to carry that one forward into the next year, and I will make it a priority to ensure that you get a place in that course that might have been subscribed or...' So there is a continuum there as well. Rather than... Oh, look, I would say at least half of the staff would carry forward at least one goal to a future year from a previous year. So that says to me that they're serious about it, and it's not something that they just plucked out of their head in isolation.

It is notable here that the Deputy frames this conversation around the specific process of meeting or not meeting goals – and whether this was a product of missed professional development opportunities such as courses – rather than a broader, though perhaps less measurable, concept like teacher identity or learning. One of the ways the PDP was activated in the school was using the peer observation template. This template included space for teachers to identify areas of their practice that they wished to focus on, drawn from the professional standards. The template was used by staff at Olivetree High to observe colleagues' classroom practice with a view to recording these findings as part of the PDP process. One observation the deputy principal made would seem to hold true for most professional development documents in workplaces, whether schools or otherwise:

Deputy People tend not to be ... if they think that something is just an accountability document, they will tend to tell the person what they think that they want to hear. They will not ... they will not use it for the purpose it's meant to be, and that's developing them professionally.

At Olivetree High, the PDP is a part of the annual process of professional development and school planning. Accordingly, it is bound up in a range of broader policy imperatives, providing a mechanism through which these concerns can be enacted at a local level. One of those broader policy documents is the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. While the standards outline a language to describe practice, they are also enacted in a complex assemblage that is made active in teachers' annual cycle of professional development planning. In this way, the PDP fundamentally rests on the structure and discourse of the professional standards. These two documents play a significant discursive role in policy enactment at Olivetree High, making them a point from which the broader coordinating texts that comprise the ruling relations in NSW schools can be mapped. Before moving to the policy map in the next chapter, the remainder of this chapter will look at the way informants understood and engaged with the professional standards.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Throughout the discussion of the PDP process, there was frequent mention of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (NSW Education Standards Authority [NESA], 2018). These were often referred to by the shorthand "the standards". The standards are a core element of the PDP process: informants reported goals to be oriented around both the school plan and the Professional Standards for Teachers.

Stephanie I don't think it's very easy. For all classroom teachers to understand the link between all these different frameworks. But I

think, I think it's for good. It's for good and it does give us a good base to plan our professional learning and practice.

The administrative burden of the standards was a concern for some teachers. They were perceived at times as an inconvenience, and as a tick-box model of accountability. In the previous chapter, Julia explained the complex process involved in connecting professional learning with the professional standards:

Julia ... having to show them that you're complying with them by ticking them off and saying, my TPL matches this standard or my professional development, my own personal development program thing, my plan for myself for this year meets those standards.

Charlotte also elaborated on these complex processes:

Charlotte I get kind of annoyed that the whole accreditation process has been so watered down now that it's rolled out to general staff.

Pat In what way?

Charlotte When I did it as a New Scheme¹¹ teacher, the accreditation you had to do in your first year was quite comprehensive and detailed. And then the maintenance report at the five-year point, the rigor of that, and the amount you had to do for it was a lot more than... than I think the accreditation body realised. The prospect of all existing staff having to undertake this, and the time required to read and process their reports, was problematic so it has been

¹¹ "New Scheme Teachers" refers to teachers who completed their initial teacher education after 2004. These teachers were the first required to go through a probation and registration process under NESA's predecessor organisation, the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. Following a change in legislation, this process was extended to all teachers to be effective from 2017.

reframed as a much less onerous and rigorous task. There is a feeling among New Scheme teachers that the process which was developed with the goal of developing teaching as a professional body and enhancing teacher accountability has placed onerous demands on them at a time in their career when their preparations for their practice is at its most time consuming. And in watering down the process before rolling it out to the profession more generally means that the general aims of the enterprise are undermined.

Charlotte suggested that the implementation of the standards might lead experienced teachers to “feel demeaned” by “this attempt to control and quantify something”. However, for New Scheme teachers such as herself for whom the standards are a kind of default, she says she sees the benefits more than the downside:

Charlotte Well, I think if you’ve come through with it all the way through and you do the bulk of it, in your first year, really, and you are just learning and you know, you are. So, it’s not... it doesn’t feel as much of an imposition. The maintenance was a bit harder than having to write the report, proving that I’m hitting all the standards. Yeah, but really. Not amongst me or my friends, really. ...

The benefit of it is you take it as an opportunity to reflect ‘well what have I done?’ And I mean, that’s partially what made me apply for this role in a high performing selective school. The maintenance report¹² made me recognise that much of what I had done in my practice in the classroom and beyond fulfilled standards beyond just the proficient level, making me realise that I was perhaps more capable than I thought. You get so caught up

¹² Teachers in NSW schools must complete a five or seven-yearly cycle to maintain accreditation, depending on their current level of proficiency.

in the day to day that ... you don't have time to reflect as much as you should in the day to day.

Here Charlotte expresses the view that the standards provide a “common language” with which to describe professional practice and that the accreditation process can be productive. It is an argument that lends credibility to the productive power of the discourse of standards and policy texts – they can shape understandings of good practice in the classroom. Informants regarded them in a positive light because of the way they provided a language to talk about practice and acted as a reflective tool. The standards *do* produce a particular teacher subjectivity, as can be seen by the fact that teachers were prepared to engage in the complex paperwork required for higher levels of accomplishment and accreditation. The standards also produce a particular understanding of good teaching and good practice, which sits beneath much of the professional development taking place in this school, an example of the way these policies act to produce a regime of truth within schools.

Stephanie saw the benefit as a way to describe good practice, likely because she too came in under the New Scheme and understood the standards as a “default”:

Stephanie I strongly believe that we need a framework to operate within. What is good practice, what is bad practice?
...
Because I was one of the beginning teachers, I started teaching in 2006, I was always driven by professional standards. And also looking at the career goal. I always wanted to come out as a leader. Initially, not by any promotion or anything, just I love sharing my practices. So that is why one of the first things I did was joining the professional learning team. So, from that point of view, I always thought you have to look at what the strategic direction is. And then thankfully now everything has come together in the form of standards.

Here Stephanie suggests that the standards represent a synthesis of a range of frameworks and policies that work to define teachers and teacher practice. Leadership and community are ethical domains which Stephanie believes are codified in strategic ways in the standards. One concern of Stephanie's was the way different documents and frameworks relate to each other, specifically when considering the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET, 2003), a model of pedagogy that was introduced into public schools in NSW in 2003:

Stephanie I still am struggling to find a coherence with the standards, School Excellence Framework, and seeing what is ... like how do they both fit in? And then there are other parallel frameworks like the Quality Teaching Framework. How does that fit in? I can see that there is a common thread teachers don't consider. ... **That thread has to be pushed out** in all professional learning. You know why, all of a sudden, why have we chosen differentiation? Now you're talking about standards. Now you're talking about School Excellence Framework ... how do they all fit in? And I strongly believe that every professional learning should be looking at all these aspects and tying them together. That's what I tried to do in every professional learning that I design and deliver. I try to link it back to the standards now that all teachers are part of that.

Here Stephanie positions the discursive aspects of these policies as central to the process of professional learning. Professional learning is understood as being both grounded in policy frameworks, but also as a process of learning *about* these policy frameworks. She also noted that the administrative burden associated with accreditation processes puts unfair demands on teachers themselves. While she felt supported by the principal in pursuing accreditation as a Highly Accomplished Teacher, she recognised that it was difficult for the principal to give teachers extra time to work on the application:

Stephanie And that's why the HAT does not work very well because it requires teachers to do things in their own time, plus pay money. Plus pay money. But I think it fits into my goal because I think it is something which I do anyway, which I love doing anyway. And it will give me extra money when I do it.

What is particularly notable here is that the standards were a central text for the three informants who were New Scheme teachers. For New Scheme teachers the experience of using these standards was not as difficult as it was for some of the more experienced staff at the school. Stephanie was particularly conscious of the way the standards were interpreted and understood by teachers who started prior to the New Scheme:

Stephanie Anecdotally, especially the older scheme teachers who have just come under that, and they are confused, what are these standards? Aren't we doing this anyway? Earlier we were looking at quality teaching. How does that fit in? Like, anecdotally. I have not collected data about that. But that's from my experience as a professional learning author. And I have also dealt with, I'm active in casual teachers' network. So most of them are like, you know, teachers who are trying to work as casual teachers, they are old scheme teachers, and now they have to engage in these standards.

This implies that the proliferation of policies and frameworks is a notable concern of some teachers, but more significantly it indicates a site of enactment. Stephanie is describing a process of mediation between different documents, such as the Quality Teaching Framework and the newer standards document and trying to help teachers to "draw the thread" between these texts. *Drawing the thread* is a metaphor also used by the school principal as she explained the way professional development opportunities were woven throughout the year as part of the school planning process. Stephanie goes on to

explain that her objective is to help teachers link it all up in this way, and to look at how it will practically play out in classroom observation and professional development:

Stephanie ...it's very hard. I am finding it hard to pull it all together. Because when I present [at a staff development day], I have to tell them, 'look, you are designing your PDP, you have to do classroom observation, how does that fit into this framework?'

However, despite the difficulties, she maintains that the Standards and the PDP process is a valuable one:

Stephanie But I think, I think it's for good. It's for good and it does give us a good base to plan our professional learning and practice.

The principal, like most of the participating teachers, recognised the value of the professional standards as a tool for describing practice. As mentioned earlier in the context of the PDP, she aligned with the union representative to pitch the PDP process, showing a "united front" on the matter. The documentation produced by the Teachers' Federation to support the implementation of the PDP provides detailed explanation as to how it can be used for the benefit of staff, rather than as a punitive or managerial administrative process. However, politics are not invisible. Interestingly it is regarding the way the PDP interacts with the standards that the Federation issued a cautionary note in 2018:

Members are therefore advised that the policies, practices and processes produced by AITSL from June 2015 are not to be accepted as educationally sound or reflective of the views of the teaching profession. (NSW Teachers Federation, 2018)

The objection of the Federation was couched in terms of representation on the board of AITSL, and accordingly the appropriateness of choices made by a governing body

apparently without “appropriate” expertise in education. The Federation felt that the board of AITSL was stacked with political appointees that reflected the political views of the deeply conservative and pro-market Coalition government elected in 2013 (NSW Teachers Federation, 2018). This commentary is significant, as it indicates the intrusion of explicitly political and ideological debates into the formulation of policy texts. A similar concern was expressed by Julia, who noted that while she was confident with the way the principal and Federation had united to “sell” the policy, she was still worried about the broader implications of the professional standards:

Julia You look to your leaders and you know they are trying to present it in the most positive light, especially because it’s mandated now. And it seems like they’re trying to put on their best face to say ‘let’s just do our best with this situation’, but [their resignation to implementing policy is] not necessarily to do with the Strategic Directions or PDPs or any particular policy, it’s the very fact that it’s top-down change that we all have to comply with.

This is a significant critique given Julia’s general sense of autonomy and respect for her work, and it is particularly significant that she considers the broader political implications of note. Given the significance the PDP clearly held for all five informants, a policy mapping exercise was undertaken, starting from the PDP document, and this will form the basis of the next chapter.

Conclusion

Amidst all of the discussion about the PDP process, one thing that is striking is that the development of the PDP seems to function as a very *individual* task. Mockler (2020) notes that the collegiality that should attend professional learning as a process is absent from the way the standards and PDP are codified. Instead, the document focuses quite explicitly on the relationship between an individual teacher and their supervisor. At Olivetree High this effect is ameliorated somewhat by the process of observation and regular program of activities, which encouraged staff to draw on the expertise and

advice of their colleagues – but there is little structure or guidance around how this should appear in the document itself.

The PDP process seems to have paradoxical effects on teachers work at Olivetree High. While nearly all informants admitted that they found the professional standards a valuable document for describing their practice, and they all considered the PDP a useful part of their professional learning, they all expressed concerns about the paperwork and admin associated with the PDP. In very few of the conversations were the PDP or the professional standards positioned as mechanisms for cooperative and collaborative learning. Instead, the PDP was seen as an individual process. The real opportunities for collaboration and rich professional learning seem to happen in organic relationships between teachers – for example the way Julia learnt from her previous colleague in the Latin faculty, or the way Sara used language teacher professional networks to improve her practice. In her follow-up interview held during the COVID-19 pandemic, Cate noted that the whole-of-state Microsoft Teams site was an incredibly valuable opportunity to learn from colleagues and share resources. She regarded it as a shame that so many teachers began to leave the site as schools re-opened for students to attend in person.

These forms of professional learning – organic and collaborative – are not explicitly recognised in the PDP process. During my time at Olivetree High, several instances were mentioned where the school paid for partnerships and consultants to come in to deliver professional development experiences. And yet, as the principal noted in our conversation on the staff development day, partnering with a researcher had been an enriching experience for the school and the teachers involved: it was just a matter of ensuring the research did not demand too much of the students or the staff themselves. That kind of relationship creates possibilities for the forms of dynamic and ongoing professional learning that are difficult to capture in one-shot workshops and professional development sessions. It also opens up spaces for generative conversations about the ethical identity work involved in teacher professional learning, something explored further in Chapter Eight.

The next chapter will map the coordinating texts that inform the PDP process at Olivetree High, starting with the peer observation template developed by the school and then moving upwards to higher-order policy texts.

Chapter Seven: Mapping the agenda

Policymaking does not take place in a vacuum. It is performed by someone (sector) and happens somewhere (level). There is a who and a where as well as a how and what to public policy making. (Helms & Biggs, 2007, p. 579)

Introduction

The previous chapters have established that the Performance and Development Plan coordinates the professional learning and development of staff at Olivetree High. Embedded in the Department's Performance and Development Framework, the PDP is an annual process whereby teachers engage in "professional goal setting, professional learning, evidence collection, reflection, self-assessment and annual review" (Baker et al., 2018, p. 571). As this document was identified as playing a significant role in governing the work of informants, this chapter undertakes a mapping exercise to trace the ruling relations that feed into the PDP – a kind of genealogy of the ideas that extend into teacher practice by way of the PDP process. As discussed in Chapter Four, this analysis involved identifying key themes and "empty shells" that provided discursive links between the different levels of these texts, as well as points where each text explicitly describes the role and work or coordinates the time of teachers. Once an initial pass was completed, the themes were considered across the whole of the map to trace the relationship between higher-order and lower-order texts to identify which themes were "carried through", suggesting a kind of "discursive cascade" from the texts that comprise the ruling relations of education in Australia. What follows is not a critique of any individual policy, rather it is an analysis of the way these policies interact with lower-order texts and call forth actions or dispositions from teachers and school leaders.

This exercise began with the peer observation template developed by Olivetree High, which is the document most immediately tied to classroom practice. This form records the experiences of a teacher during a single lesson and must be completed several times each year as a way of collecting evidence about practice to inform the PDP. In this way the peer observation template explicitly ties classroom practice to the PDP and the professional standards. From this, I trace upwards to texts that govern the content of the peer observation template, reading these texts for references to other policy documents

or higher-level texts that indicate the influence of ruling relations. Higher-level texts are only included in this process if they are explicitly referenced in the mapped policy, except in the case of the peer observation template and the school plan, which were embedded in practices surrounding the PDP process at Olivetree High, and so are included in this map. Related texts that are not explicitly mentioned cannot be assumed to directly indicate the way ruling relations are nested in policy.

This process enabled me to produce a map of these boss texts, the final version of which appears in Figure 9. This map will be constructed in stages over this chapter. Each document is classified within levels on the map: at the base of the map is the peer observation template and the PDP as these largely relate to the practice of *individual teachers*. The second level refers to the text that operates at the *school level*: the school plan. At Olivetree High, the school plan both informs and is informed by the contents of teachers' PDPs. The school plan is connected to higher-order *system texts*. These system texts include the School Excellence Framework, the professional standards, and a range of other frameworks and charters that are common to teachers across the New South Wales education system. They are the primary mechanism through which discursive authority is exercised textually in school planning and PDP processes. The final level refers to national texts which are linked to political leaders through a number of organisations, such as the AITSL, the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and its associated bodies. These are the National Partnership Agreement, the Melbourne Declaration, and the National School Improvement Tool. It is out of these three texts that many of the lower-order texts emanate, notably the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers which, while ostensibly a national text, does not operate at the same level of higher-order strategy and abstraction as the three texts characterised as national in this chapter. Rather, the standards operate in conjunction with system-level bureaucracies such as NESAs in New South Wales as part of the teacher accreditation process, a product of the history of Australian federation and the constitutional responsibility for schooling (and thus the employment of teachers) residing with the states rather than the Commonwealth. The map that follows begins with the peer observation template as it is

the most concretely connected to practice in that it aims to capture observations from a single lesson at a specific point in time.

Peer Observation Template

The peer observation template was developed by staff at Olivetree High to formalise peer observations of classroom practice, in support of the PDP process. It is expected that each teacher at Olivetree High complete a number of these throughout the year and incorporate feedback into their PDP. The document includes basic information about teacher and observer names, and space for providing “context” to the lesson, such as the unit of study in which it is situated.

A table provides space for teachers to nominate an “area of focus”, with the second column enabling observers to leave their comments. The areas of focus are informed by the teacher’s **Professional Development Plan** and the **Professional Standards**. The remaining pages of the peer observation template provide space for teachers to nominate “areas to discuss”, as well as a space for reflections on the lesson and *plans for future improvements or extensions to this work*. This template anchors the practice of classroom observation in the professional standards, since observers are given a predefined standard on which to comment. While this may help provide specific feedback to teachers, it also can have the effect of circumscribing descriptions of practice, in a sense producing a truncated view of the classroom. The peer observation template, therefore, is a mechanism through which the discursive logic of the PDP and the standards is enacted in a single lesson.

Performance & Development Plan

The PDP was first introduced into NSW schools in 2015 for both New Scheme and existing teachers in response to the national move towards accreditation and standardisation in the teaching profession (Baker et al., 2018). The NSW Department of Education has a standard PDF template for teachers to complete for their annual Performance & Development Plan. A copy of the template is included in Appendix J. The document is broken into three stages: *plan*, *implement*, and *review*, with space to

record goals, professional learning opportunities and “activities and resources” needed to achieve up to five goals. Each stage includes space for teachers and supervisors to “sign-off”. Notably, the final section calls for “evidence of progress towards achieving professional goals”. What constitutes “evidence” is left undefined, but this is a significant issue throughout each layer of this map. While the sorts of goals teachers can include on their PDP are open-ended and so the forms of evidence that might be collected are open to interpretation, the notion of “progress towards achievement” implies that professional development has a definite start and end point, rather than is an ongoing process of *becoming* or growth. Subsequent sections of the PDP suggest that flexibility in achieving these goals is built into the process: “ongoing feedback, reflection and refinement” are understood to be part of the annual cycle which can take place prior to the annual *written assessment* and *structured discussion* with supervisors. This suggests that the PDP provides some scope for the kinds of contingent situations that arise in actuality, though the process itself is still bounded by annual assessment and review.

The PDP references many other policy texts. In a preamble, it explains:

The following documentation is to be completed consistent with the requirements of the **Performance and Development Framework for Principals, Executives and Teachers in NSW Public Schools (Jan 2015)**, which includes three phases: Plan, Implement and Review. These processes are based on the **Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**, the **Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework** and the **Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders**.

Each of these policy texts are included in higher levels of this map. Charlotte and Stephanie, as acting Head Teachers Teaching and Learning, both noted that teachers at the school often referred to the school plan in developing their PDP goals and the principal and deputy principal both referred to the role the PDPs played in identifying goals to incorporate into the school plan. This reflexive relationship creates a bridge

between the reported practices of teachers – particularly as they are captured in the annual review cycle of the PDP – and the broader relations that produce the institution and tie the school into the state bureaucracy.

The peer observation template and the PDP operate at the level of the teacher’s personal and professional relations. The base of the policy map is depicted below, in Figure 3. At this point, the diagram does not draw relationships to higher-level texts that directly impact the PDP process – such as the teacher standards or the school plan. Those relationships will be added as higher levels are mapped into the diagram.

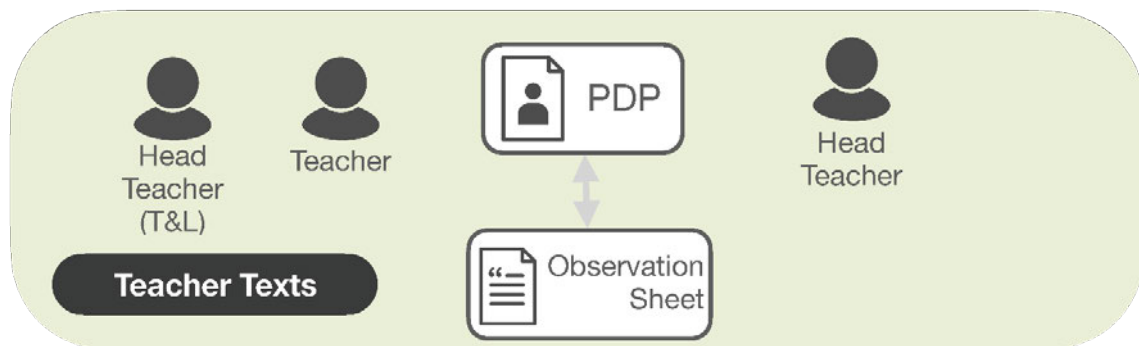


Figure 3: Teacher level texts

The School Plan

Charlotte explained that the school plan occupied a central role in the formation of professional goals for the PDP. School plans in New South Wales are made available on school websites. This research took place towards the end of the current three-year school plan, and a new plan was to be put in place in 2021. The deputy principal explained that the Executive, and particularly the school principal, took the time to look through a range of data sources – such as the PDPs and associated feedback – to identify strategic directions for the school that form the school plan:

Deputy We decided that it was about time that we actually, instead of just jumping through a hoop and ticking a box, that we actually started to do some qualitative analysis of what people were saying in their PDPs. So, we got individual faculty head teachers to go

and look at the people that they supervised and see if there were any common themes.

The school plan includes a vision statement and a section outlining the school context. The vision statement underlines the domains of giftedness that the school takes as a focus, given that it is academically selective. The vision statement elaborates on the school's commitment to "pursuit of excellence", as well as social responsibility, student voice and leadership, and respect and care for others. The plan also includes a statement reflecting on the heritage and history of the school itself, which aligns with the culture that was described in Chapter Five. It seems that the values and ethic outlined in the school vision statement is one that the school lives up to in practice. As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, the students at this school took an active and engaged interest in the School Strike for Climate movement, and teachers worked as best they could to accommodate this desire to "make a difference in society" and "meet the future challenges of a global community".

The school plan includes a set of "strategic directions" that align with the three domains of the *School Excellence Framework* (NSW Department of Education [NSW DoE], 2017). The first direction is "learning", and the Olivetree High school plan focuses on resilience as well as "collaborative learning", "intellectual risk", "growth mindset" and "critical thinking". Crucially, the measure of success in this strategic direction draws on "end-of-stage" surveys¹³ and the numbers of students engaged in extracurricular activities and leadership roles. The second strategic direction focuses on the "Teaching" domain of the SEF, and accordingly sets out goals for staff development and "growth". Here there is a pronounced focus on the themes of technology and professional learning, with measures of success including staff progress on accreditation tracks and the number of staff involved in the delivery and development of NESA-registered professional learning experiences. This seems to reflect the experience of teachers within the school where, as both Cate and Stephanie explained, there was a strong push to apply for Highly

¹³ The New South Wales school syllabus is organised into 'stages'. In secondary school these stages are Stage 4 (Years 7-8), Stage 5 (Years 9-10) and Stage 6 (Years 11-12).

Accomplished Teacher accreditation. In addition to the SEF, this strategic direction also references AITSL, tying the school plan to the Professional Standards for Teachers. Like most of the documents in this map, the understanding of what constitutes good teaching practice articulated in the school plan appears to flow from the professional standards.

The school plan is the only school-level text in the policy map, linking the school level to the higher-order system level, with school plans uploaded and developed using the SPaRO software. The teacher level and school level texts can be seen below in Figure 4. The next section moves from the school level to higher order system level texts, which govern schooling across NSW.

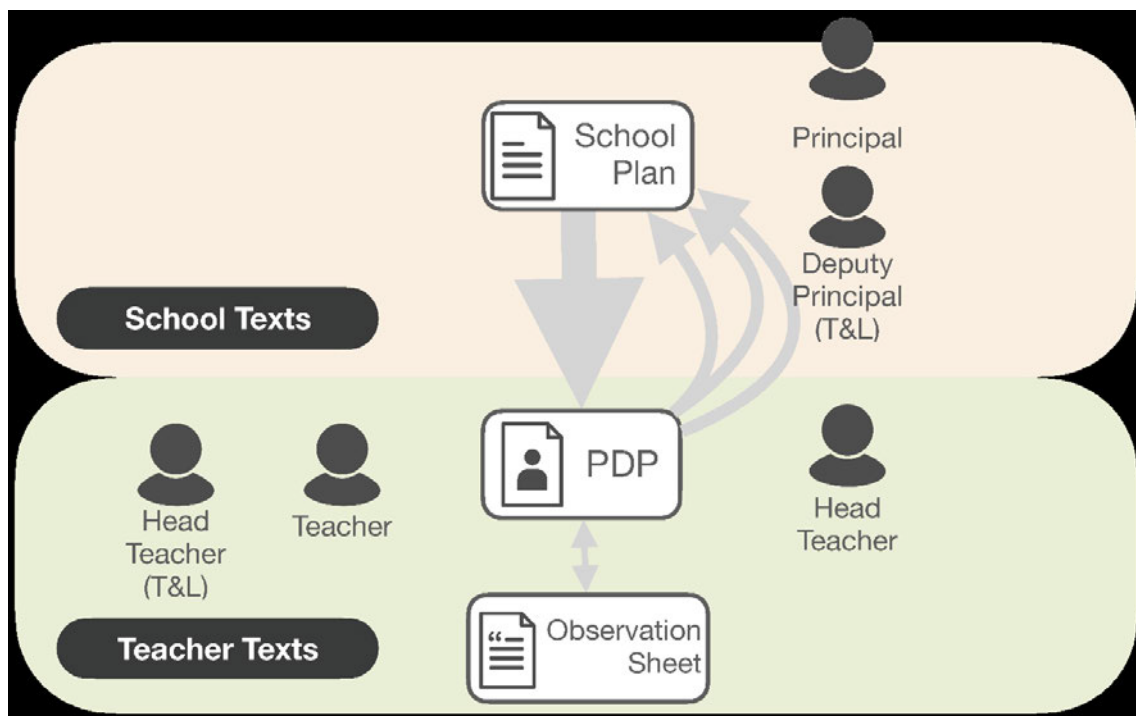


Figure 4: Institutional and teacher texts

Performance and Development Framework for principals, executives, and teachers in NSW public schools

The *Performance and Development Framework (NSW)* (NSW DEC, 2015) is designed to help teachers and school leaders as they prepare their PDPs. The framework is “referenced in the Terms of Settlement for the Salaries and Conditions Award 2014–2016 for teachers in the NSW Teaching Service” (NSW DEC, 2015), replacing a series of other schedules related to assessment and review in professional practice. The introduction to the framework locates it in a culture of “continuous improvement”, the assessment and

guidance of which is based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (p. 1). It maps the performance and development process into three phases: Plan, Implement, and Review, suggesting that these “encompass the various activities teachers, executives and principals are already undertaking in the normal course of their work, rather than create separate and additional processes” (p. 2). The Performance and Development Framework (NSW) explains that “care should be taken to avoid checklists and proformas that create unnecessary paperwork and detract from teaching and learning” (NSW DEC, 2015, p. 2). This seems problematic, as these kinds of assessment and evaluation processes – linked as they are to standards with clear assessable items – appear to encourage checklist and proforma approaches. The PDP document and the peer observation template themselves work with the professional standards to create a kind of proforma checklist. While the Performance and Development Framework stresses that these should be avoided, the clear picture from practice and from policy mapping is that these appear to be part and parcel with the coordination of professional development. In part this may be because what constitutes “necessary” paperwork is not clearly defined.

The document describes a range of processes that need to be completed by actors within the school such as teachers, head teachers, principals, and support staff. These appear to further weaken the document’s opening concern to avoid creating checklists and proformas and other processes that detract from the act of teaching. The Appendix, for example, refers to the following processes:

- Maintaining accreditation
- Implementing performance and development processes in conjunction with the Department’s Accreditation at Proficient Teacher Procedures (October 2014) (or) Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher Procedures
- Developing a program of induction, professional development, and mentoring
- Regular mentoring from an experienced teacher colleague, aligned to the beginning teacher’s PDP and their accreditation requirements
- The teacher efficiency process

- Implement the Department’s teacher efficiency procedures (where necessary)
- Sign copies of the PDP, Self-Assessment and Annual Review to indicate this documentation has been sighted
- Address concerns in a timely fashion with reference to the Department’s Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines.

Within these quite specific practices rest a number of assumptions which are perhaps best exemplified by the “teacher efficiency process”. This is a pseudo-disciplinary process “to be implemented as soon as possible” when “a teacher’s efficiency is causing concern” (p. 8). Here the language clearly demonstrates the way teachers are positioned within policy as a variable to be accounted for in planning, characterised here as potentially “inefficient”. Like the AITSL-developed framework and charter discussed later in this chapter, the logic here is one of *human capital* rather than ethical professionalism and personhood. The language that the Performance and Development Framework uses regarding monitoring, accreditation and evaluation reflects many higher-order texts in this map, notably the Commonwealth-State National Partnership Agreement. It seems that this framework provides one of the most concrete and immediate links between these higher-order texts and the individual teacher as they develop their annual PDP.

NSW School Excellence Framework

The *School Excellence Framework* was one of the documents identified by the principal as being particularly valuable for the school and which informs the language of goals set in the school plan. The first version of this framework was released in December 2014, and the significantly revised current version was released in July 2017. A summary of the SEF is presented in Appendix K. The introduction to the framework explains its purpose in the following way:

The School Excellence Framework supports all NSW public schools in their pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of the key elements

of high quality practice across the three domains of learning, teaching and leading.

The framework describes 14 elements across these three domains which define the core business of excellent schools in three stages. (NSW DoE, 2017, p. 1)

The NSW Department of Education website explains that the School Excellence Framework “draws on evidence from national and international research and improvement processes, including the National School Improvement Tool developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research” (NSW DoE, 2020a).

The School Excellence Framework influences the language used to describe practice at Olivetree High. This may be because the framework acts as an aggregator for a range of other documents and draws its language from those, but it seems significant that a planning tool that is so central to the development of school plans, and which the principal regarded as a particularly useful document, should come to reflect so much of the discourse around teaching practice. The School Excellence Framework is deeply enmeshed with a number of other supporting documents. For example, in the Teaching Domain there is substantial reference to the Australian Professional Standards and Professional Development Plans under two of the three themes. Under the theme of “improvement of practice”, the analysis of teacher practice and professional development is considered in light of both of these documents:

Teachers use the Australian Professional Standards to measure themselves, reflect on their practice and plan for and monitor their own professional development to improve their practice.

Teachers’ Professional Development Plans are supported by a coordinated whole-school approach to developing professional practice, informed by research. (NSW DoE, 2017, p. 10)

The School Excellence Framework structures the school plan and defines the domains of “excellence”, in particular by coordinating the timing of reporting and evaluation, as well as reiterating particular logics about the use of professional standards. In describing the process of “measuring the self” and “planning and monitoring”, the SEF reaches into the individual PDP process for teachers by proposing activities and focus areas for improvement as well as defining a number of the professional development activities of the school. The SEF effectively coordinates the discourse of school excellence in New South Wales – a fact reflected by its recent centring in the policy that replaced the NSW *Local Schools, Local Decisions* devolutionary policy: the *School Success Model* (NSW DoE, 2020b). The SEF, like a number of other texts discussed so far, is derived in part from the structure and content of the *National School Improvement Tool*, produced by the ACER. This tool will be discussed later and represents a higher-level coordinating text. When added to the policy map, we can see the way the School Excellence Framework occupies a central role in the bureaucratic logic of NSW schools. In concert with the school plan, the SEF contributes to the process of “external validation” described by the principal, whereby the school is made accountable to higher order system logics. This can be seen in Figure 5 below.

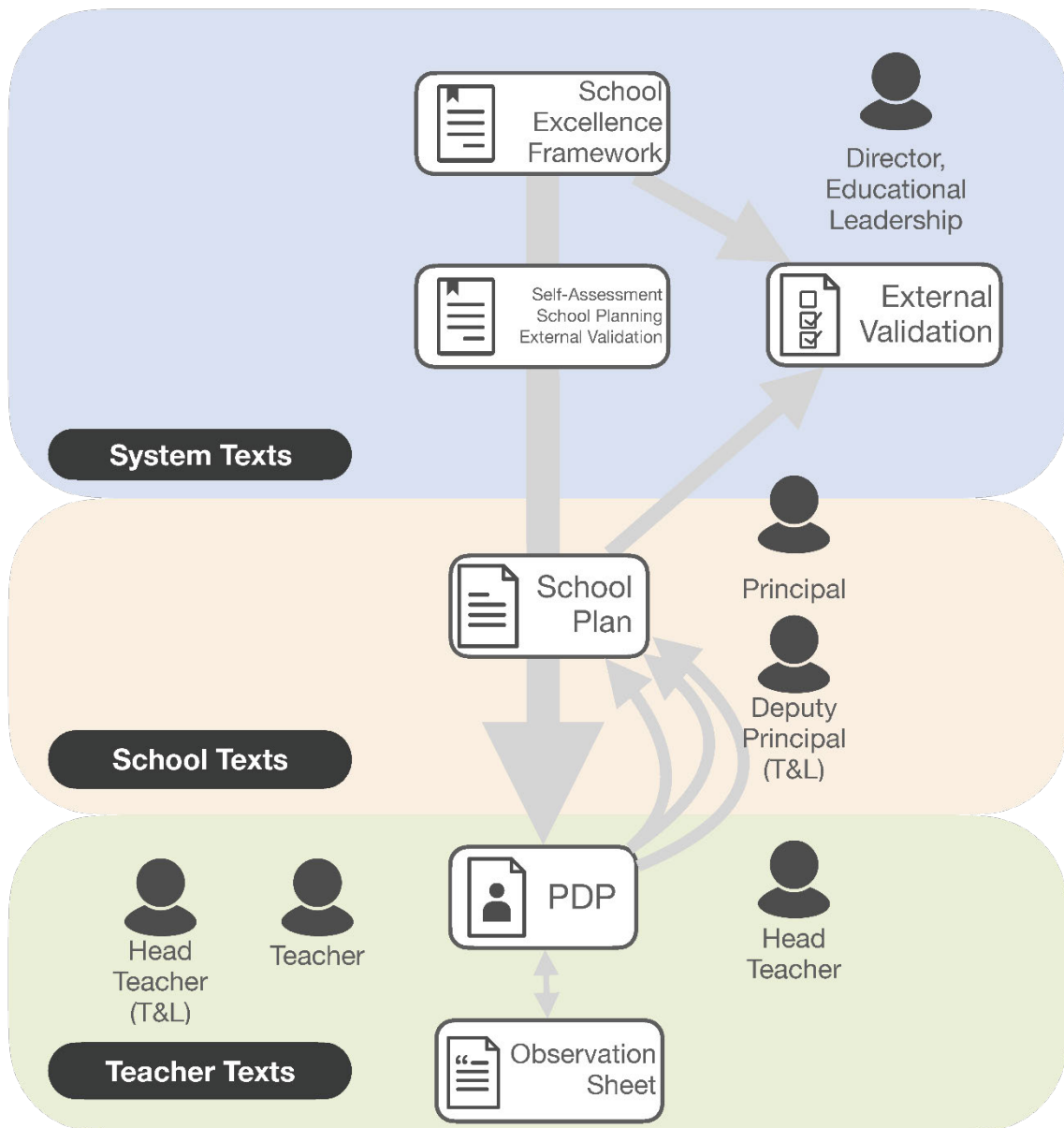


Figure 5: Departmental policies and process

Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* is one of two AITSL-developed documents teachers are invited to consult when preparing their PDP. It opens with twin goals drawn from the *Melbourne Declaration*: promoting excellence and equity, and developing all young Australians as successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. This framework was developed by AITSL with the intention of highlighting:

... the characteristics of an effective performance and development cycle that are essential for success and should be implemented in all Australian schools. (AITSL, 2012b, p. 3)

“Professional culture” is a salient focus in this document, and it calls repeatedly for the creation of a “performance and development culture” as a means to improve student outcomes in schools. While there is an emphasis on evaluation and feedback, the document does note that “excessive attention to process is a common feature of less successful approaches” (AITSL, 2012b, p. 4). This statement appears to contradict its enactment in practice, where bureaucratic process often seems to obstruct good professional conversations. In an attempt to emphasise and simplify this point, the document includes a diagram (Figure 6) of a Performance and Development Culture.

The framework uses this diagram as a basis for guiding statements around each of the domains in the outer circle. For instance, it suggests that the professional standards represent a “**comprehensive** picture of the elements of effective teaching” (emphasis added, p. 5), and across each of these domains there is a call for alignment and reflection of professional goals with other documents such as the standards and the school plan, while still having “flexibility” in localising these documents. The framework, like its partner document the Charter (discussed below) and the National School Improvement Tool, operate a higher level of abstraction than lower-order texts: the diagrams and language in these documents seem to obscure the practical things that teachers do while emphasising alignment with the standards they promulgate.

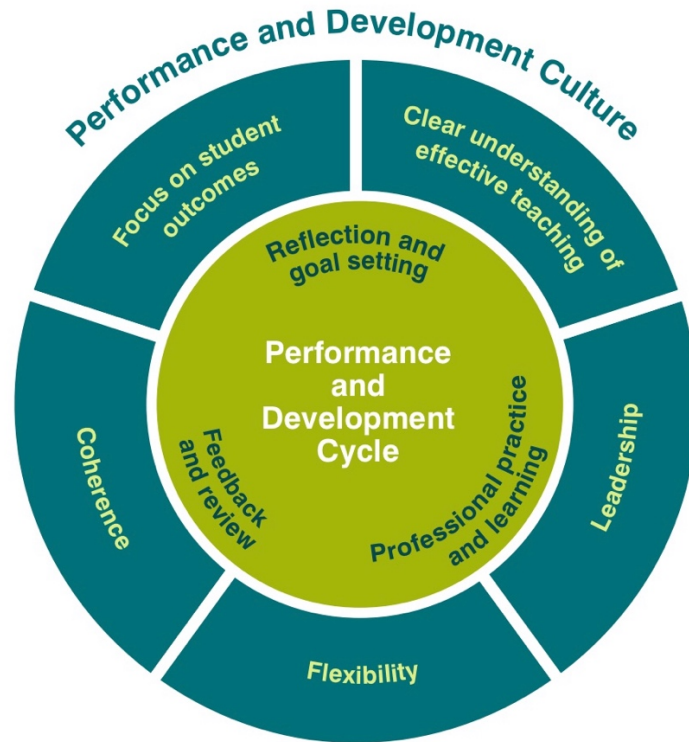


Figure 6: Performance and development culture (AITSL, 2012b)

A significant feature of this framework – and the Charter and the National School Improvement Tool – is the way that it calls on teachers and school leaders to take a particular stance in relation to evidence and to effective practice, in particular explaining that goals should be “based on the school’s shared view of effective teaching, derived from the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers” (AITSL, 2012b, p. 7). Here the framework demands of teachers that their goals must be based on a “shared view of effective teaching”, implying that the school is a homogenous institution with no room for diverse understandings of teacher practice. It also calls for this view of effective teaching to be grounded in the professional standards, which again circumscribes the logics of practice in schools and classrooms to the policy formations that emanate from AITSL itself. While informants in the study were generally positive towards the “shared language” that the professional standards gave to conversations about practice, the practices described within were primarily activated in the context of accreditation. Many of the classroom practices seen in Chapter Eight indicate that there are a great deal of additional factors that play out in actuality, which the “official” version of teacher practice represented by the standards cannot capture.

Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders

The *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* is the other AITSL-developed document teachers are invited to consult during the PDP process. Both documents include a diagram that puts them into a broader context of professional learning:

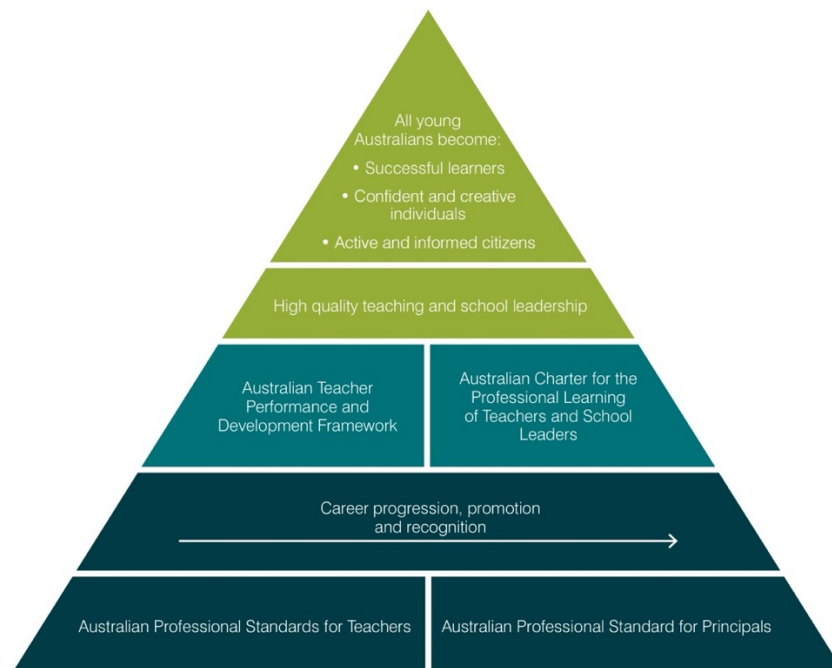


Figure 7: Professional learning in context (AITSL, 2012a, p. 4)

It is unclear what the relationship between each element on this hierarchy is supposed to represent or why these different elements are represented hierarchically at all. The Charter clearly takes the Melbourne Declaration as its guiding principle, however in achieving these goals it states that “research tells us that there is no higher priority than further improving the quality of teaching in Australian schools” (AITSL, 2012a, p. 3). Notably, the “research” that the Charter draws on has largely been undertaken by AITSL itself, by multinational consultancy firms such as McKinsey & Company, or by organisations such as ACER and the OECD. Very little of the research referenced constitutes peer-reviewed academic research, and little if any focuses on the question of *equity* in school systems. The twin goals of *equity* and *excellence* around which Australian education policy is articulated are represented disproportionately in the Charter: equity

is mentioned once, whereas excellence is mentioned five times. This emphasis on “excellence”, a quality that suggests individual achievement and competition, further embeds the discursive logic of neoliberalism in this network of policies. Where equity might be understood as one of the ethical goals of a transformative education system, excellence can be made to work at a more individual level and lends itself to particular modes of measurement.

The Charter gives a great deal of space to the form and features of effective evaluation, with a strong focus on quantitative measures. It introduces the term “effect size” within a broader conversation about “the research” that shows “what effective professional learning looks like” (p. 5). It explains:

Sophisticated, robust, multi-method ways of evaluating professional learning are required to identify the impact and effect size of professional learning activities. (AITSL, 2012a, p. 5)

However, it also includes three characteristics of effective professional learning (AITSL, 2012a, p. 6): that it is *relevant* to improving student outcomes and linked to school, system and student goals, that it is *collaborative*, and that it is *future focused*, orienting practice around adaptability and “unexpected challenges” (p. 7). This aligns with the view of the Deputy principal who explained that professional learning is about “foreseeing what obstacles might lie ahead, so that you can be properly prepared for when they do happen”. The *future focused* characteristic includes richer conceptions of professional learning, promoting *action research* and the subject position of *teacher as researcher*, and encourages teachers to “explore research that challenges their thinking encourages them to develop their own theories of practice, and promotes use of a range of effective pedagogical practices” (p. 7). However, based on my observations at Olivetree High, the extent to which this is enacted in practice is not obvious, given the regular administrative cycles and particular standards through which teachers’ work is made accountable.

Despite a call for “multi-method ways of evaluating”, the use of the term “effect size” and qualifiers like “robust” implies a particular epistemological standpoint in relation to evaluation and assessment. The Charter indicates that research “summarised” in the document – though notably not referenced throughout – is able to provide guidance on effective professional learning. There is a reference list at the end of the document called “Evidence that informed the development of the Charter” which draws on sources which articulate an epistemic logic that privileges quantitative, statistical data. The section of the Charter on “characteristics of effective professional learning” opens with an extended discussion of the “size effects” of various kinds of professional learning. This epistemic privileging is evident in other texts in the policy map and has the effect of limiting the scope of richer forms of evidence about practice. This flows on to the types of evidence that can be used to account for practice in lower-order texts, such as the PDP and the peer observation template.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are a common reference point for many of these governing texts and are used by teachers in forming PDP goals and professional accreditation. This section focuses on those elements that either *call forth a disposition* or that *explicitly structure teachers’ time* in a way that relates to professional learning and development described thus far.

The introduction describes the “powerful impact” that teacher effectiveness has on students, explaining that “teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement” (NESA, 2018, p. 2). The standards draw on research by Hattie (2003) and the OECD (2005) to make these claims, situating the document in the broader teacher effectiveness – or “what works” – literature. The standards explicitly link to two higher-order texts: the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality (COAG, 2008) and the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). The document explains the centrality of teaching quality to educational reforms:

The greatest resource in Australian schools is our teachers. They account for the vast majority of expenditure in school education and have the greatest impact on student learning, far outweighing the impact of any other education program or policy. (NESA, 2018, p. 2)

The sentiment of this statement is clearly aimed at valuing teachers; however, it is significant that the language writes out the “personhood” of teachers. Instead, teachers are understood in terms of “expenditure”, as a “resource” to be compared to “other programs or policies”. As with much of the bureaucratisation of the profession, the way policy texts shift an understanding of practice away from the local and contextual towards the impersonal, standardised, and accountable marks out a significant discursive act characteristic of neoliberalism. This is reinforced where the purpose of the standards is described, explaining that they are:

...a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st-century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students. (NESA, 2018, p. 2)

Here the standards shape the educational imagination: they tell us what constitutes “teacher quality”, as though a single conception of such a thing exists. Similarly, they define the work of teachers, as though what is described in the standards can both capture and convey the breadth and scope of teachers’ work. Significantly, an explicit link is made to the process of professional learning, where the standards are positioned as a “framework by which teachers can judge the success of their learning and assist self-reflection and self-assessment” (p. 3). This reflects the role the standards play in the PDP and peer observation process at Olivetree High. A number of informants in the study described the way the standards were able to give them a common language – a definition – of practice. Of course, actual practice exceeds the scope of the standards, as is demonstrated in Chapter Eight: the role of contingency in the classroom necessitates practical wisdom and ethical judgement from teaching professionals.

The professional standards, the Charter, and the Performance and Development Framework all contribute to the logic of the PDP document directly – acting as policy mediators for the political logics outlined in the subsequent two texts. The professional standards represent an intersection between system and national levels, since they are developed by AITSL, but the document used by teachers in NSW is published by NESA. The standards themselves are identical in each document, however the NESA version includes some specific contextual information related to NSW schools, and for that reason the NESA version is used in this Chapter. AITSL is an arms-length corporate entity created by the Commonwealth Government, which has no constitutional responsibility for the delivery of education. AITSL should be understood as a properly “political” body, in that it is a manifestation of the long-running trend towards centralised policy making in Australia, focused on the Commonwealth (Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, Reid, & Keating, 2010). The professional standards are bound up in this political process, however the form in which they currently exist is the product of extensive consultation with teachers, teacher unions, community stakeholders and other parties. In this way the standards play a complex role in NSW schools: they promulgate a particular understanding of teachers’ work, while at the same time embedding a logic of standardisation and accountability in professional accreditation. These texts are most active within the system level, although their influence reaches across all levels of the map in profound ways.

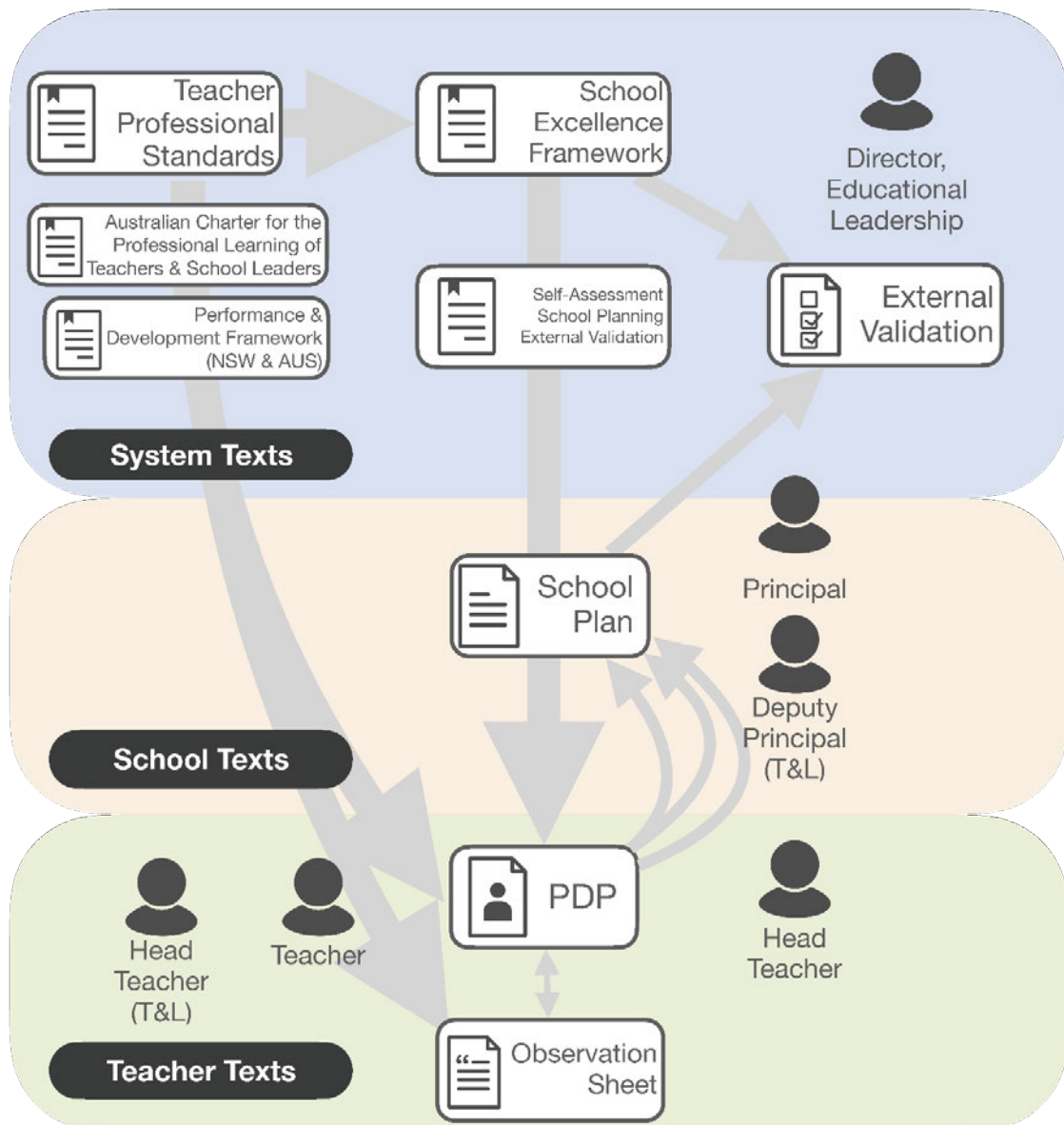


Figure 8: System texts

National School Improvement Tool

The *National School Improvement Tool* was developed by ACER (2016) and is cited in several lower-order texts in this map. It claims to “assist schools to review and reflect on their efforts to improve the quality of classroom teaching and learning” (p. 1) and situates itself as part of a suite of school “improvement programs, frameworks and initiatives”. The foreword explicitly ties school improvement to “direct measures of student outcomes”, an approach that complements the “performance level” approach the tool takes in qualitatively describing “low, medium, high and outstanding” performance across nine “domains”.

In particular it reifies quantitative types of data collection, indeed the second domain in the tool focuses exclusively on *analysis and discussion of data*. Within this domain, the tool explains that “outstanding” schools will not only prioritise data literacy amongst staff and the provision of analytic software, but also have conversations and “language” that is grounded in “data concepts” such as “value-added” and “statistical significance” (p. 5). These concepts are firmly grounded in quantitative measures and go some way to precluding the usefulness of qualitative data and expert judgement. The section on “outstanding” schools in this domain opens by calling forth another disposition towards schooling: “the principal and other school leaders clearly *articulate their belief* that reliable data on student outcomes are crucial to the school’s improvement agenda” (p. 5, emphasis added), and this involves “systematic use of assessment instruments” – specifically “standardised assessment tasks and teacher developed assessment tools” (p. 15). The key term here – *reliable* data – indicates what it is to which the tool refers: quantitative data drawn from testing as distinct from “unreliable” professional intuition. The “outstanding” rubric item refers to “test data” several times, and stresses that this data should be available electronically in order to “analyse, display and communicate data on individual and class performances and progress, including comparisons of **pre- and post- test results**”, and that teachers should “routinely use **objective** data on student achievement as evidence of successful teaching” (p. 5). In this regard the tool reinforces a particular policy logic that has been enacted in Australia for some time: that of a standardised, highly accountable, and centralised schooling system.

Unlike other coordinating texts, the National School Improvement Tool is explicit about the fact that the plans it recommends should “have impacted significantly on teachers’ day-to-day work” (p. 3). The tool is notable for the way it demands a particular disposition of teachers and school leaders. Measures of success call on staff at schools to display “eagerness”, to “tell stories of significant student improvement”, and to demonstrate “a high level of enthusiasm for personal change” (p. 3). While equity does not appear, where the document does make note of differentiating learning the only student cohort it references is *high achieving students*, implying that there is at present an inadequate focus on this group. The tool argues that “outstanding schools” include in

their school plan an explicit outline of “what (and when) teachers should teach and students should learn” (p. 13), as well as employing testing to gather “reliable” and “objective” quantitative data to inform practice (p. 5). It also suggests that these schools will have teachers that “regularly invite leaders and colleagues to visit their classrooms to observe their teaching” (p. 7), a specific action that has reached down through layers of policy interpretation and been enacted at Olivetree High.

National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality

The *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* (“the Agreement”) outlines a formal agreement between the Commonwealth and the states that ran from 2009-2013 with the explicit objective of “raising overall attainment so that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society”, with a view to “boosting Australia’s participation and productivity” (COAG, 2008, p. 3), a reflection of the human capital logic that underpins neoliberal policymaking. In order to do this, the Agreement identifies the quality of the teacher workforce as a significant issue, with the preamble explaining that the “Agreement aims to address the significant challenges Australia faces to maintain the quality of its teaching workforce”, in part by “rewarding” systemic reforms (p. 4).

The professional standards reference the Agreement as a guiding document for understanding education reform in Australia (NESA, 2018, p. 2). The “outputs” section of the Agreement describes a number of policy directions that can be seen in this policy map (COAG, 2008, p. 7). Relevant directions include:

- (a) New professional standards to underpin national reforms;
- (b) Recognition and reward for quality teaching;
- (c) A framework to guide professional learning for principals, teachers and school leaders;
- (e) National consistency in teacher registration;
- (f) National consistency in accreditation/certification of Accomplished and Leading Teachers;

- (i) Improved performance management in schools for teachers and school leaders; and
- (j) Enhanced school-based teacher quality reforms.

The National Partnership Agreement does not specify particular actions that state bureaucracies should take, but rather outlines the financial relationship and national framework for delivering these reforms. Schedule B in the Agreement outlines a number of “reward reforms” which attract payments as assessed by the COAG Reform Council (p. B-19). These include the creation of “rewards for high quality teachers”, in part tied to high-quality accreditation as well as encouraging teachers to engage in mentoring and developing colleagues. Schedule B also outlines a “continual improvement program for all teachers” (p. B-20) reward reform, which indicates a desire to see “delivery of innovative best-practice, evidence-based professional learning, resources and materials (including via online delivery) that are shared nationally”. This last item does heavy discursive work: it uses the phrases “best-practice” and “evidence-based”, which reflect a particular orientation to teaching practice and research (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation [CESE], 2015b; Hattie, 2012) but which are not uncontested or unproblematic (Biesta, 2007; Chahal, 2017; McKnight & Morgan, 2019; Welch, 2015). Yet this should also be considered alongside the other economic logic in this schedule: the “reward reforms” that imply a competitive workplace in which individual action is the focus of policy. These reforms manifested in the experience of informants through the emphasis on achieving higher levels of professional accreditation and the annual cycle of the PDP. In this high-level intergovernmental agreement, there is a presumed “solution” to the challenges faced by education policy makers that is imposed from above, one that is articulated in market terms, a logic that Stephanie sums up when she explains that it is, in part, about “the money, of course”.

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) outlines at a political level the objectives for schooling and schools policy in Australia. The most recent declaration, the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Council

of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019), updates and replaces the Melbourne Declaration. However, the network of governing texts in this policy map has been produced between 2008 and 2019; the Mparntwe Declaration has not yet had time to manifest in policymaking. These Declarations do not prescribe particular policy solutions, nor do they mandate specific practices. Instead, they outline a vision for education, leaving it to state and federal governments to enact that vision as they see best. The Melbourne Declaration is centred on two goals:

- Goal 1:
Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
- Goal 2:
All young Australians become:
- Successful learners
 - Confident and creative individuals
 - Active and informed citizens

The language of “equity and excellence” permeates much education policy in Australia; however, it is worth noting that of these twin objectives it is “excellence” which has most explicitly translated through this policy map. The objective of “equity” becomes less apparent as it moves through layers of interpretation. In part, this stems from the fact that the goals outline a moral, educational, and aesthetic notion of personhood that should come from schooling rather than a specific vision of the system. This notion does not describe concrete processes, which are instead outlined in the subsequent section called “a commitment to action”. Of the eight steps described in this section, only one mentions teachers: “supporting quality teaching and school leadership” (p. 11). In general, the document focuses on system-level actions such as partnerships and curriculum reform – the role of teachers is described only briefly in terms of supporting and nurturing students’ unique talents. In this regard, the Melbourne Declaration is the policy document which references broader ethical goals that resonate with the understanding of teacher professionalism outlined in Chapters Two and Three. It centres the idea of students as citizens, learners and creative individuals and sets that ideal within a system that promotes equity and excellence – leaving the achievement of these nebulous goals to the lower-order, more *material* texts.

Consistent with a “renewed commitment to federalism” (p. 18), the Melbourne Declaration includes a number of points which appear to centre responsibility on the Commonwealth, rather than the states. This includes a statement in the section on assessment that “national testing” comprises an important part of “rigorous and comprehensive assessment” (p. 14), and in the latter quarter of the document which outlines a need for comprehensive data, transparency, and “comparability” between states and systems. However, the extent to which the Melbourne Declaration directly calls for a process like the PDP is unclear. The aspirational goals do not imply a particular course of action, though Australian education policy development over the past decade or more has zeroed in on “equity and excellence” and this has in turn produced a focus on the way teachers are bound up in the “excellence” component of that goal. The Melbourne Declaration, the National Partnership Agreement and the National School Improvement Tool each express political logics. Rather than enacting these values within the education bureaucracies in Australia, they operate at a discursive level – prior to and above the more detailed policy translation that takes place from the professional standards onwards into teachers’ practice. These documents complete the policy mapping process, which can be seen in Figure 9.

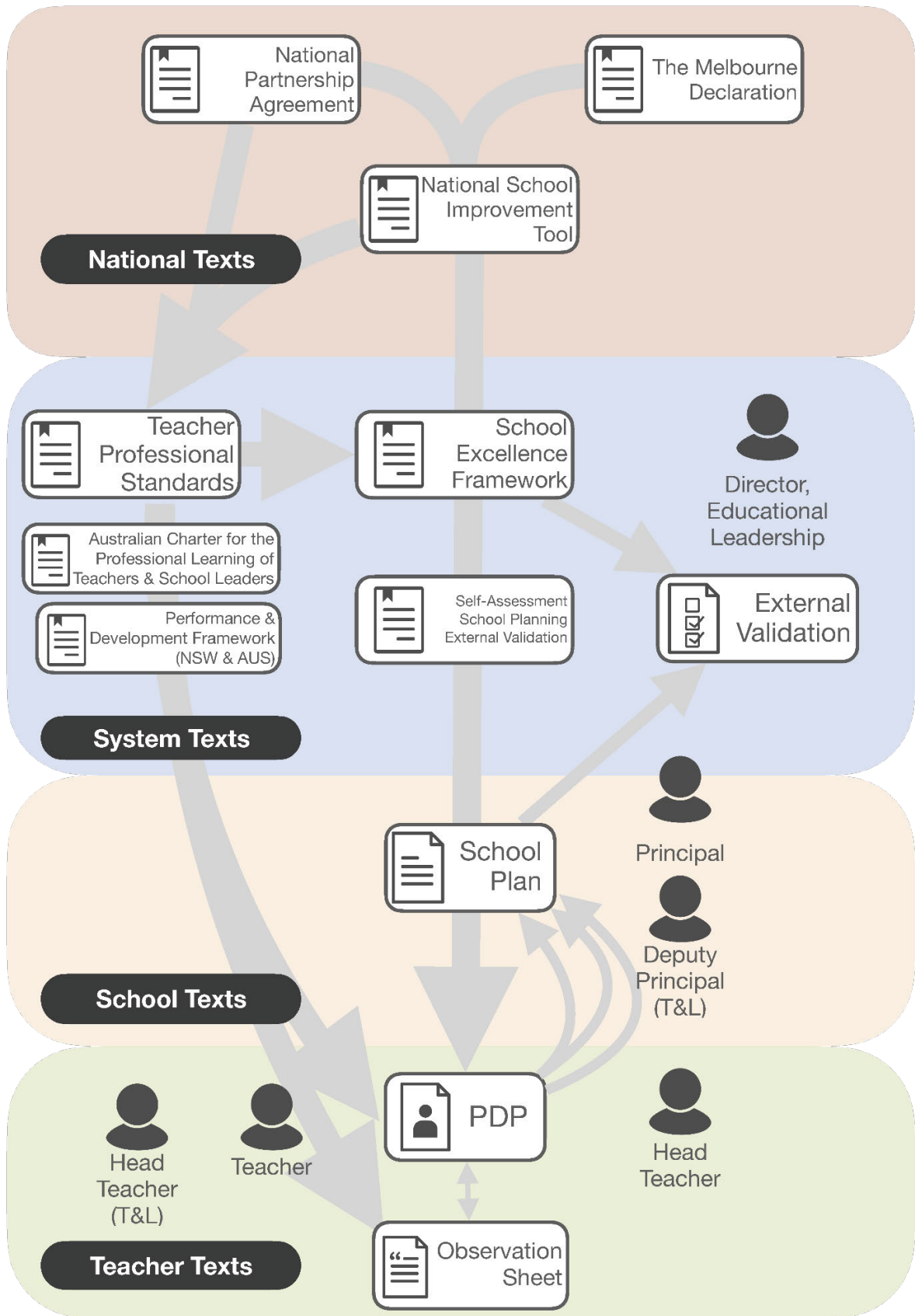


Figure 9: Policy map for NSW PDP

Conclusion

This policy map reveals the way the broad political goals of equity and excellence are transformed through layers of policy development into something quite different. It is worth considering how this map might have looked had it started from the top with the overarching political statement of the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) and worked down through lower-order texts. There are a significant range of programs at Commonwealth and state level that are designed to deliver these objectives. Amidst all these policies, the PDP emerged as a significant focus during interviews. Mapping from the PDP upwards through higher-level texts traces a journey of policy development that reaches back over ten years. At a practical level, these policies become concretised in a process of annual review and development. As informants explained, some of these documents facilitate professional learning conversations. They also enable the school to develop goals, professional development opportunities, and provide a common language for describing practice. But this language also goes some way to limiting possible discourses. Interestingly, the moral and civic ethic described in the Melbourne Declaration seems to diminish as lower-order texts seek to concretise these goals. While the logics of these documents are not uncontested, these policies tend to promote a culture of accountability within professional development. The relationship between these different governing texts is clear: higher-order texts give shape to a particular understanding of the teaching profession: continuously improving, but also monitored and accountable.

At the height of education policymaking in Australia sit two advisory bodies that exist outside of the constitutional province of the states in delivering education: AITSL and ACER. These bodies have significant discursive authority: they shape the language and objectives of education policy in Australia. The twin political documents agreed nationally at COAG and ministerial level – the Melbourne Declaration and the National Partnership Agreement – outline a goal and a framework for achieving that goal. However, there is some incoherence between them: where the Melbourne Declaration emphasises equity and excellence (not to mention the ethical and civic dispositions inherent to the second goal), the Agreement focuses on teacher quality in a way

somewhat divorced from the Melbourne Declaration. The Agreement doubles down on a “parallel stream” – best understood as “what works” in the classroom – and calls for cultures in school to demonstrate “evidence-based best-practice”. It appears that the stress falls on excellence in educational attainment, sidelining the decidedly un-neoliberal notions of equity and ethics. The discursive work being done in the education policy in this map privileges quantifiable and standardised approaches with a market logic of competition and *responsibilisation* of the individual.

This chapter has mapped from the most fundamental document described by informants during the interviews – the peer observation template – through layers of policy to the politically-informed texts that make up the ruling relations in Australia. The trail of policy outlined here is a map of the hermeneutic-discursive work that produces the teaching subject as it is inscribed by politicians, bureaucrats, school leaders, and teachers. In Chapter Five, Julia described “the sheer weight of them all”, and the principal suggested there were “too many frameworks”. It seems that the complex web of relations operates at both a discursive and a material level in imposing itself on teachers, yet it is consistent in the promulgation of certain logics. The next chapter turns to the classroom practices of teachers as I observed them during my time at Olivetree High. Observing these practices helps us to understand the extent to which these policy hermeneutics shape what happens in the classroom.

Chapter Eight: Classroom enactment and ethics in practice

[Institutional ethnography's] discoveries and analyses depend, as maps do, on the actuality in which they originated – they make no sense without it and are intended to extend rather than displace people's expert knowledge as local practitioners of their everyday worlds. (Smith, 2005, p. 52)

Introduction

So far these analysis chapters have described the ways that informants spoke about their work and have then mapped upwards from those descriptions of practice through a range of policy measures that inform and are enacted in the mode of the PDP – the tool used annually to set and review goals. Like the accreditation process, the PDP falls within the domain of *administrative* work. It is designed to support and improve classroom practice. This study sought to understand the tensions that arise in the classroom because of neoliberal policy, and it is to classroom practice specifically that this chapter turns. So much policy can be formulated, implemented, “embedded and pushed through”, but in the end what matters is how it shapes what happens in the classroom. The act of teaching is saturated with moral significance and values, which suggests that there is a point at which teacher professionalism in its ethical domain may come into tension with the demands of policy. This chapter seeks to describe what was happening in teacher informants' classrooms at Olivetree High during the period of my observations, and in doing so to trace some of the dynamics of this tension. These are the tensions that Santoro (2011) described as *knowing* what constitutes good practice and being *prevented* from doing it by policy. Ultimately where that ethical line is drawn is one of the concerns of teacher professionalism under neoliberalism, and this chapter explores different examples of practices that tease out those concerns.

For the observations, informants were invited to nominate up to five lessons that they felt might best reflect their classrooms. In practice, most informants chose classes that would give a sense of the spread of ages they taught. Stephanie specifically nominated classes where she would be experimenting with new approaches to teaching. Charlotte and Cate chose several classes for which they wanted feedback using the observation template, which I provided drawing on my field notes. This chapter reports on practices which were bound up in politics of the world outside of the classroom in a range of

ways: both in the sense of education policy concerns as well as broader social concerns. While I observed a range of interesting practices, this chapter specifically focuses on those practices which directly relate to the questions of policy and politics that emerged in this research.

Fieldwork commenced during a particularly intense bushfire season over the Australian summer, and much debate in the public space at the time centred on the role of climate change in exacerbating the crisis. External, politically charged contexts such as this represent spaces in which the strategies associated with *practical wisdom* might be more readily apparent, and where the *attitudinal* domain of professional learning comes to the fore. They are also sites where politics and the political imaginary of the wider world intrudes on classroom practice, making apparent the elements of “social and moral inquiry” that are inherent to teaching (Campbell, 2007), and where the attitudinal, interpretive and ethical domains of teachers work discussed in Chapter Two come into tension with broader material realities. This chapter begins with the typical classroom practices that informants mentioned during their interviews, followed by reflections drawn from my field notes constructed during classroom observations. Finally, the chapter turns to the way the dramatic contingencies of global events manifested in teachers’ work.

Descriptions of classroom practice

While there are a range of administrative tasks and support work and planning that goes on outside of the classroom, it is practices *in* the classroom that sit at the core of teachers’ work. During the interviews, I asked informants to describe what they thought a “good lesson” looked and felt like. Many of the teachers described a kind of “flow state” in the classroom. Julia describes the way students “vibe” with the content of the lesson, seeing how it connects to their own lives and the world beyond the classroom:

Julia So in the junior school a good lesson would be the students are... you know, they’re vibing with the grammar and they’re making connections with the language and the grammar that they’re

learning as well as with the history and culture of the Romans and the mythology and they're also making those connections with their current lives and with modern life and with English and everything. And what we tend to do is that we will read stories in Latin, and then we'll talk about the contents of those stories, the relationships between characters, the reactions that characters have, and you know who they are and why they do the things that they do, and then link that back to their lives and the decisions that they make as adolescents.

This vibing manifested in a range of ways in Julia's classroom. During one lesson, she explained how she was able to improvise a game in her classroom one afternoon, and this had since become a recurring motif in her teaching. The vignette that follows takes place as Julia's Year 8 Latin students were completing a classroom quiz:

Year 8 Latin (5 Dec 2019)

"Make sure we give ourselves some pats on the back," says Julia, and the class giggles as they pat themselves on the back. "I can see that you are feeling the heat a little bit." Having just completed a quiz, students are now working in pairs or groups of three to read a passage of Latin. They are also asked to create drawings of each character. As Julia writes the task on the white board – pick out key events that summarise the story – a student asks if it's possible to play the Labyrinth Game on the last day. Julia says we'll see how we go, and the class starts talking about how much they enjoy the Labyrinth Game.

After students begin working on the task, Julia explains that the Labyrinth Game involves building a 'labyrinth' out of the tables in the classroom, filled with Minotaurs, Hydras and all manner of mythological creatures. The class works together to solve puzzles to advance through the Labyrinth, defeating each of these monsters. As we speak, a student in the classroom poses for a photo wearing the textbook as a hat. Julia turns to the class.

"Magister Norman wants to see a game!" The class is excited, and they clear the tables, form groups of four and grab mini whiteboards from the cupboard. Today they are playing a game called 'Flyswatter'.

To manage the excitement, Julia tells the class that if they get too rowdy their team will lose points. Flyswatter involves buzzer-style questions where students hold a flyswatter in the air, or 'wax tablet' questions, where an answer is written on the whiteboards and then revealed by all teams simultaneously. The first question, building on the vocab focus of the quiz that started the lesson, is a wax tablet: write five separate Latin words beginning with B. The class proceeds through a number of rounds, some questions the instructions are given entirely in Latin. Julia gives them a maths problem:

Student: "Do we have to write it in Roman or in actual numbers?"

Julia: "Roman numerals *are* actual numbers!"

After a few more questions, Julia concludes with a wax tablet: how would you convince a Year 6 student that they should study Latin? They respond that it's good for their English, for creating memes, that they love their teacher, that it helps to understand Harry Potter, and then the bell rings. They stick around for the points to be awarded.

What is notable here is the improvisation and flow that the classroom enters. Julia's knowledge of the content facilitated this activity, which was largely directed by the students themselves. This kind of flow required an established relationship and a degree of prior knowledge to function effectively. Charlotte described a similar flow state as part of a good lesson:

Charlotte A good lesson would be one where there is a good balance between teacher and student in terms of participation. I keep thinking of this lesson that I had last term actually, that was just so joyful. Not in terms of pedagogy or anything but it's... I have this wonderful Year 10 class. And when I first got them, they were quite reticent. I mean, so much of English is talking about texts and looking at a piece of text and deconstructing it and looking at its representation and things and I'd done that with them very early in the year. And they had been very, very hesitant to express their opinion about the text or what they thought about the way

it was constructed. Class discussion was like pulling teeth, essentially, it can be the worst. When you feel like you're almost talking to an empty room, not getting anything back from students. That can be one of our biggest hurdles with some of our gifted students, a deference to the expertise of the teacher which can be seen as more important than their own perspective ...

...

Then last term, we did a similar activity from a different perspective. Throughout the year, we've gone from analysis and essay writing to looking at texts to emulate for creative writing. I just gave them these three beautiful passages of description, very short and I asked them to look at those in groups, and then we came together and the difference in their willingness to contribute from the first term to the third term was just astounding and so rewarding. I'd only meant it to be a half an hour plenary of the activity, because our lessons are 80 minutes, you need to really have movement within them. But they were enjoying it so much, and they were sharing so much and obviously feeling very proficient in what they were doing and confident to express very high order and nuanced perspectives, so much so that I allowed the activity to take most of the lesson. It was a successful lesson because the class had an atmosphere of collective construction of understanding, underpinned by a recognition that no one interpretation is the 'right' one and that they, as students, were not *tabula rasa* receivers of knowledge

Enjoyment and flow were repeatedly highlighted as crucial components in good lessons by all informants. Curiously these are things that were absent from the policies identified in the policy mapping process which are supposed to articulate a vision of "good teaching", nor were they apparent in the professional development described in the interviews. Of course, other processes in teachers' work are designed to support and

facilitate this kind of rich classroom experience, but it is interesting the way teachers reported the best lessons in a way that sidelined much of what is described in the ruling relations reported in Chapters Six and Seven. The language informants used to describe these classes is significant for its positive and affective dimension: Julia called it “vibing”, Charlotte called it “joyful”, and Cate describes a good class as “cooking”:

Cate But it’s when the kids play the willingness card, they’re ready to lead the electives more often. So, if a junior class goes ‘yeah, it’s cooking’, that’s ... that’s a reward for me. ... the big successes are [that] they want to lead some part of it, they step forward with offers, and those offers are an articulation of what they think we want to do together. So that unification thing that we’re all in the learning together.

One theme that consistently comes through in these descriptions of practice is the idea of flexibility, an understanding that teachable moments occur during lessons which means that the class might deviate from the lesson the teacher had anticipated. Stephanie explains:

Stephanie The other way of looking at what a good lesson is... sometimes you go into class and you think about, okay, this is something that is needed right now, you’re not planned for it. And you implement it then and there. And it turns out to be an excellent lesson. And that feeds into the very core principle of being flexible in your class, you know, identifying a need on the go.

This improvisation could be seen during Julia’s class mentioned above, and was a prominent feature of Cate’s drama classes, where improvisation is not only warranted but is in fact a core skill developed through the curriculum:

Cate I did a *Frantic Assembly* workshop last week. And it's like I embedded it immediately in my practice. I found another way to be flexible in the classroom. Told the students in all honesty why and what I was doing and we, you know, I said it's just pertinent that luckily we've just finished a task. We're about to springboard into something new. So, I have the wherewithal. They just took to it. And I just leapt at it too, I had such a good time. That to put it straight into the practice of me not being a doer, but a teacher of it, crafting it. And I didn't overuse notes, either. I just remembered what I did and did it in different orders for every class. ... I kept mixing it up and playing around with it.

For Cate, this skill involves drawing on her many years of professional experience. She has a broad sense of the direction she intends to take a class, and then works towards those learning goals based on an “organic” experience in the classroom:

Cate ... I had the material though I didn't actually dot-point, write everything down, but I knew how long it was going to take. So, I guess I had mapped it out here [points at head]. And that was significant, and practical, and things they love. You know, a really hot lesson is stuff that they could eat up and jump into and go away going 'Yeah'. And it's not always that they tick boxes and go 'we know exactly what you were planning for us, Mrs. B'. They just feel really good. And that word organic works for me. It's an authentic, authentic experience as well.

There was also an understanding that a good lesson did not always demand improvisation – that there was often a degree of struggle involved. For Charlotte, sometimes this meant working against her conception of good practice. On a number of occasions during her interview, she regretted the amount of direct instruction she felt

she was doing in the classroom. She felt that her English classes were more like academic lectures at times:

Charlotte Unfortunately, there's a lot of teacher talk in Year 11 and 12. Which I don't like. But students like it. I found that, especially here, students really want to just soak up your knowledge, like sponges.

Pat How do you mean? Like, they want to get it ...

Charlotte They want you to lecture.

Pat And that's not something you want to do.

Charlotte I don't mind it, but I don't think it's the most effective way of learning. I mean ... there's take up time. There's studies that suggest that someone can really only absorb something like 20, 25 minutes of information and so I know that I'm going against the research in this practice but the demands of the students and the amount of syllabus content often demand it. Of course you try and break it up. You're like, 'okay, we're going to talk about this question for a minute and talk to your partner and then come back together and share ideas or write something and share ideas', but it's still also back to me.

Here Charlotte expresses a number of important ideas that emerge from the teacher effectiveness literature. For example, the notion of finite attention and the value of direct instruction and "teacher talk" is traced by Hattie and Yates (2014). They argue that a mixed-mode instructional strategy is important and suggest that this teacher talk can be particularly useful in helping students to understand a complex subject area before they work with the ideas more actively. This seems to accord with Charlotte's earlier remarks

that once students were more familiar with the content, they were more able to be flexible and engaged with enjoyable classroom tasks. This tension for Charlotte is interesting – it suggests that there are two competing conceptions of good teaching that she is attempting to reconcile in her practice. This can be seen by comparing two different Year 12 English classes Charlotte taught: An Extension II class, and an Advanced English class¹⁴:

Year 12 English Extension II (15 Nov 2019)

It's a very hot, smoky day outside and this lesson takes place in the early afternoon. Charlotte is concluding a study of the previous text – Virginia Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall'. A brief recap talk starts the class, as Charlotte raises questions and conceptual work about literary theory: mimesis, phenomenology, temporal play. I'm impressed by the complexity. Charlotte promises the class the slides will be available after class. Following this short lecture, Charlotte moves into a 'Quick Write' activity. The class is given 5 minutes to write as much as possible about a central concept. Charlotte explains: "Look at a blank page, it's period 4, it's Friday, it's 34 degrees, Mrs C is annoying me – write it and your ideas will follow". The class lapses into silence as writing begins. After five minutes, the class comes back to debrief. Nobody is volunteering their writing, so Charlotte reads a sample that she worked on the night before. She calls attention to the literary devices she uses throughout the writing, encouraging students to try something similar in their own writing as they revise it for homework. The class is very quiet, but not disengaged. Charlotte moves to introduce Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* and the concept of metafiction, and this lecture and reading of the text takes up a large portion of the remainder of the class. There is a fair bit of teacher talk, broken up with the occasional question-response. When the class is asked to start reading chapter one, they get to work. After a time, there is an audible rise in chatter – on-task chatter – as groups start to talk about the text. But this is only shortly before the bell rings, and that conversation ends. A student explains to Charlotte that they are all very tired.

¹⁴ English is mandatory in the NSW Higher School Certificate, the final assessment in secondary schooling. Students can choose from English Standard or English Advanced as their mandatory unit. Students who wish to undertake further studies can choose Extension I which involves expanded studies of texts and ideas, and Extension II which involves an independent research project for the major assessment.

Student exhaustion likely plays a significant role in the volume of “teacher talk” in this class. The time of day, the temperature, the weather, and the fact that the school does not have air-conditioning all contribute to a less than optimal learning environment. If the classroom windows are opened to let air in, they also allow smoke and the sound of traffic to enter as well. These material realities shape the pedagogical options available to Charlotte in the classroom. In addition to general lethargy, she is also introducing a new text to the class, which requires explanatory background. Charlotte wants the class to consider a set of literary devices as they read and react to Calvino’s writing, so her teacher talk is aimed at providing these foundations. This class still engaged with the work that Charlotte set, but she reported afterwards that she thought the class felt flat. This contrasted with the energy of a later, Advanced English class, where the energy level and engagement in the room was significantly higher:

Year 12 English Advanced (12 Dec 2019)

This lesson commenced with a Kahoot Quiz about the author Nam Le, with whose work the class has been engaging this term. While the class is engaged in the task, one student in the back row observes – *sotto voce* – that the questions are extremely specific. Charlotte notes as the quiz concludes that there is often a blurring of fact and fiction in the biographical details of Le’s life in his writing. This opens up a whole-class discussion of the short story form, and in particular the way that Le engages the device of ‘metafiction’. This begins a conversation where students are engaging in an elaborate discussion about postcolonial themes in the text and the ethical issues involved in representation. The students have clearly spent a lot of time thinking about this as they read the set text. Charlotte segues from the discussion into a collaborative exercise using Google Classroom. Each table group in the class has been allocated a colour with which to highlight and annotate a passage of text that the whole class is editing in a single Google Doc. After reading the text as a class, the coding task begins, and aside from a few technical issues with accessing the Google Doc and using the annotate functions, the students are very engaged with the intellectual dimension of the exercise.

The Advanced class is clearly quite comfortable with the text and content of the unit and the students are able to move into the task quite quickly. However, their understanding has been aided by a degree of teacher talk throughout the lesson that helps frame the

task. Where the Extension Class was lethargic, this class was more energetic. This may also be a reflection of the time of day: the Advanced class took place at nine in the morning, before the full heat of the day had hit and when the students were relatively fresh. This does suggest that material contexts in a classroom can be significant factors in the success of a lesson.

For Julia, another consideration is the emotional disposition of her students. Julia was very concerned about student wellbeing and considered the way the academically selective schooling environment could create a culture that feared failure. One way that she addressed this was through celebrating mistakes:

Julia Part of my work as a teacher is actually to talk them through the process of decoding, if you will, what's in front of them, but also their own emotional responses to what they're putting forth. Students can be shy to present their answers and need encouragement to do so and to understand that they're learning and that making mistakes is normal.

In many ways this kind of emotional-empathic work is absent from the policy texts described in Chapter Six. While Julia is responding to policies related to student wellbeing and comes to take an active role in student welfare as a year coordinator, this level of emotional concern was one expressed by all teachers, as in the case of Sara when she described feeling that her lack of access to welfare systems could sometimes compromise her ability to adjust lessons and her personal approach to students.

The personal interest projects

Throughout the initial interviews, most informants referred to the "Personal Interest Projects" which were being launched for Year 10 just as my time at Olivetree High started. These projects involved a detailed investigation by students into a topic of their own choosing, although they were encouraged to focus on something relevant to their intended HSC studies. The coordinating teachers – one of whom was Julia – produced

an extensive and detailed suite of resources to support students and teachers in the delivery of these projects. These projects reflected similar approaches to pedagogy that had been tried in several other year groups, which sought to integrate knowledge from across a range of domains and to encourage students to engage in higher-order reasoning and research through project-based learning. Stephanie explained:

Stephanie Our school decided to implement a Year 10 cross-curriculum project. It will now be embedded in all Year 10 teaching and learning program every year. And it needed development of standard resources. It has been developed this year. Two staff were tapped on the shoulder and they took on the responsibility of developing those.

The projects were divided into three “streams”: *problem-solving*, *critiquing* and *creating*. An extract of the streams is included in Figure 10. As my arrival at the school coincided with the launch of these projects, I was able to follow their enactment closely. The PIPs generated a highly innovative scholarly culture, where teachers were working with students on widely varied and interesting problems.

Cate They had a launch on Friday. [The students are] meant to put in a Survey Monkey to say kind of what they’re thinking. But I talked to them this morning about how to do it like a rationale for an HSC project. 300 words, that is your pitch, and your target and then start the research. So, you can see if your hypothesis is actually, not potentially, in-built into a research platform. You know, where you’re going, doesn’t answer or even address it. But as you start to research, re-form that.

In addition to an extensive set of resources created for the students, there was a comprehensive guide to supervising groups of students on their projects. The teachers who were participating acted in a research mentor role, helping students to form and

develop their projects and create a research approach. Class time was dedicated not only to discussing how these projects might be handled, but also sharing the different problems students were investigating. Participating teachers were required to support students who were working across a range of subject areas, so the pedagogical approach they took with the PIPs was in many ways different to a “normal” lesson.

	Choose from one of the 3 Streams		
	STREAM 1 ↓	STREAM 2 ↓	STREAM 3 ↓
Primary learning objectives	Problem Solving	Critiquing	Creating
Examples of methodological approaches appropriate for this Stream	Investigation or case study (including own surveys, interviews, data analysis and recommendations for solution) **Annotated design plans, samples or sketches of textiles, coded instructions	Literary criticism or comparison Historical investigation Art criticism	Sketches / excerpts / samples of a musical composition, script, Maths problems
Choose the genre of your final paper	Research Report Business / Government Report **Design process report	Essay	Literature Review and Rationale for your product(s)
Word count guidelines	1000-2000 **1000-1500	1000-2000	1000-1500
A reference list or bibliography is to be submitted together with your final paper. This will NOT be included in the word count.			

Figure 10: Personal interest project streams

Charlotte explained how valuable and interesting she found project-based learning, since the pedagogical approach was so widely used at Olivetree High:

Charlotte I do love the projects that we do at the school, the cross-curriculum projects, PBL...

At the moment we do it with [Years] Seven, Eight, Nine. They do it every year. The duration is between a week and a half and two weeks, they're out of their regular scheduled KLAs¹⁵ for a project... Cross-curricular problem solving, for example., I think

¹⁵ Key Learning Areas

that's wonderful. I think it's a wonderful antidote to the heavy curriculum focus that they get later on. And now we're trialling it in Year 10. Except Year 10 will be with a bit more academic rigour. A personal interest project kind of thing. Where they do proper research and ... they can choose their domain and then whatever teacher will best fit for that domain. They'll be their mentor... Yeah, depends on their, on their interests. It might be a niche genre that they want to explore if it was an English piece, or they might like to look at a particular facet of their science in a little bit more detail or think about the real-world implications. They could do an ethics or philosophy thing. It's really open. They can do whatever they want, basically.

In one class, Cate was checking in with her group of students about the progress of their PIPs. Each student was invited to give the class an update on the topic they were pursuing and why they found it interesting. The depth of understanding and complexity in the projects surprised me. A number of students had projects that explored various dimensions of the climate change challenge.

Year 10 Drama (6 Dec 2019)

Cate has brought all of the students together as a group, they're sitting cross-legged on the floor of the large school hall. I am sitting out the front as well, with a notebook, visible and present but they seem content to ignore me – aside from a smile and a handshake from a student, Jane. There has been some banter about what constitutes the modern 'canon' of film – *Forrest Gump* and *Shrek* feature, and Jane exclaims that those are excellent candidates. Cate brings the class to attention – it's time to mark the roll, but as she does so, she is getting each student to share some details about their Personal Interest Project. A conversation breaks out about intergenerational issues and race in relation to one of the students' projects. Cate turns to me: "have you heard of Seven Up?". I am not sure how this relates, so I reply "I've...heard of the drink?" The class launches into a complex conversation about how generations relate to each other – whether they are Gen Y or Gen Z. One student refers to their age group as 'Gen Zee', to which Cate replies, "I'm Australian, so I say Gen Zed" and Jane cuts in sarcastically "I've heard of that

before". The conversation turns to Cate's position as an authoritative figure as one student recounts the details of the Stanford-Milgram experiments. I am impressed by the deep engagement with theory and philosophy in this class. The students are profoundly engaged with issues facing the wider world: they are investigating racism, climate change, public health, economics, environment, culture. Screaming starts to build outside the room, and Cate sends a student to investigate. While this is going on, we hear from another project and Cate offers a thought, to which Jane loudly replies, "GOOD ONE MISS!". Cate turns to Jane to find out about her project, and asks "can I throw you a curly?" "What's a curly miss?" She *totally* knows. There's a fun dynamic between Jane and Cate – it's a relationship that visibly requires care, not because of tension but because Cate knows Jane's confidence masks vulnerability, she tells me later. As the projects roll on, we hear from a student who wants to investigate the way cognitive biases influence climate change denialism. Another is looking at the behavioural economics of Apple's marketing strategies. A third student is addressing the economic impacts of climate change.

After they all run off to form groups and work on their projects together, I turn to Cate and we look through the project booklet. Students are encouraged to choose projects that will lead into their HSC subject choices. I tell her how impressed I am with the ideas and detail of the projects the students are investigating. She agrees with me. "Oh yes," she says. "They're fuck off brilliant!"

The PIPs involved a significant amount of coordination between staff in the school, as highlighted by the both the teacher support document produced for the PIP, and remarks made by Julia, one of the teachers who developed the projects. She noted that there were administrative considerations that she had not even considered which needed to fit into the rhythm of her existing work:

Julia Because we weren't marking the roll in the classroom, we were in the library, I printed off rolls for everyone. The rolls were no longer attached to the teacher, I needed to individually look students up for their class rolls.

Here Julia is describing the tension that exists between the day-to-day administrative requirements of her work – those things which in Chapter Five fell under the rubric of

“admin” – and the desire to create exciting and engaging learning experiences. The PIPs are a rich form of learning but finding the time to develop them reached outside of school hours: many of the teachers involved needed to do additional preparation that had to fit in with existing workload. Often this work spilled over into the homes of teachers – a phenomenon that was exacerbated during the COVID-19 crisis.

Practices of policy enactment

Given that much of the policy described in the previous chapters gave rise to a great deal of admin work, it is unsurprising that informants often reported fitting it into their day in varied ways. Individual teachers have unique strategies for responding to the practical demands that policy makes on their time. This section explains how the adapting practices of teachers were observed and described by teacher informants.

Julia explained that much of the policy that she was explicitly aware of was often filtered through a layer of interpretation before she put any element to practice. She explained that this process of interpretation involved seeing what was most relevant to her students’ learning:

Julia It’s, I guess, a good amalgamation of all the things that you’re told about from the department and picking out what I think is the most critical that is going to affect what I see to be the needs of the students.

Julia proposed a metaphor drawn from psychological literature in order to explain teachers’ relationship with policy:

Julia There are three responses when you practise mindfulness: **Attachment, aversion, indifference.** ... I think that it would be very hard to accept wholesale everything simply because there’s just too much to accept. It’s a lot to process and implement if you want to reflect on it.

The idea of “accepting wholesale” the vast scope of policies and documents that coordinate teachers work seems intuitively correct. Where documents promulgate contradictory demands, there must naturally be a point at which teachers make a choice about which pieces of guidance to follow and which to ignore. In a sense this triad involves three approaches: avoiding the policy, adapting the policy, and adopting the policy wholesale as a form of attachment or implementation. Julia’s logic here is salient when read in the light of Stephanie’s earlier comments in Chapter Five, where she talked about *implementing*, *embedding*, and *pushing through* policy, all three of which would appear to sit neatly within the adoption/attachment domain of Julia’s triad. The way Julia described the process of enactment was quoted earlier, but it is helpful to remember how she talks about her professional judgement regarding coordinating structures:

Julia I’ll take in as much as I can. And I’ll sift through what I think is actually going to be beneficial. And I know I feel like I can implement and if I have time to, in my busy schedule as a teacher and having to get through all of the course content if I can weave that into it somehow, then I feel like I’ve done enough. And I haven’t ticked off the box, but at least I can say, ‘yes’, nod to work and say I’ve done that ...

An interesting example of how this operates in Julia’s practice can be seen in the rituals and routines of her classroom. She incorporates Latin into the administrative duty of calling of the attendance roll, with students announcing when others are “abest” (absent). Interestingly, this short vignette captures the way a range of different elements identified in Chapters Five and Six intrude on Julia’s classroom:

Year 7 Latin (12 Mar 2020)

In the language faculty staffroom, a short discussion takes place about the way elements of Australian Aboriginal culture and history can be incorporated into the classroom – something the Principal has asked staff to consider. At first it might seem difficult, given that Latin is a subject that draws on the culture and practice of a European civilization on the other side of the planet, but Julia doesn't seem to think so. She points out that there are elements of Latin grammar that can be taught with reference to the same structures in Aboriginal languages, such as grammatical gender and noun declension. Following this conversation, we wander down to the classroom and the students are already standing at their desks, chatting away happily. This is a Year 7 group and only their third class of the year, so Julia takes a moment to organise them into a seating arrangement – this will help her to remember their names. She takes the roll and a number of students are 'abest'. Julia checks with the class that they were told by another Latin teacher that their common assessment task has been postponed, and they are shocked (it's an excited shock, one of relief more than anything else). The task was supposed to be today! Julia explains to the class that she's learning how to use a new piece of software called Vivi which is a school-wide system containing assessment tasks, classes, and acts as a kind of central planning tool. The students have many questions about the common task: "will we have to know everything about Roman architecture?", "if we learn something new will it be added to the test?", "will we be asked about Caecilius?". Julia goes through the answers to these questions and gives some background to the school policies around notification requirements for assessment tasks. But more importantly, Julia wants to give some time to the class to plan for the upcoming languages festival: the class erupts in a giant "YESSSSSS!!". To begin the planning process, Julia brings up a Google Doc and asks students to log in and add their email address and ideas for activities at the languages festival. A couple of groups want to design an escape room activity. In order to encourage the class, Julia reminds them "you'll get a Head Teacher's award for the best activities", but there's a bit of confusion at this in Year 7 and one student pipes up: "what's a Head Teacher's award?"

A range of coordinating processes appear in this classroom vignette. The first involves the cross-curricular capabilities during the discussion in the staffroom. The need to incorporate and celebrate Aboriginal knowledges and culture at first might seem like a candidate for tick-box responses, but the staff at Olivetree High recognise that this should not be a tokenistic practice. Julia finds a way to integrate this meaningfully into

her practice, and this kind of recognition of difference and the significance of Aboriginal culture and history is seen again later in this chapter when a student asks about the origins of the Latin phrase *terra nullius*.

The Languages Festival was a rich activity that encouraged students from all grades to interact with each other and celebrate diverse cultures. Senior students were responsible for coordinating much of the day, and the school put in place a special form of currency with which students could trade. Students who prepared food to sell were required to label it properly so that risk was minimised for students with allergies, and there was a focus on a culturally diverse and inclusive set of activities. A nearby school was also invited to join, increasing the number of students present, and the festival was planned to take up the whole day. During the follow-up interviews, it transpired that this lesson had turned out to be for naught: the outbreak of the virus meant that the Languages Festival had to be cancelled to guarantee the safety of the students.

In this vignette, external texts – assessment, administrative work, technology and tools, the syllabus – are woven into classroom practice, sitting alongside processes like the learning of names, pedagogical and engagement activities. In this short passage, a sweep of the intersecting processes of teachers’ work can be seen. On top of classroom teaching itself, there are a whole set of complex demands that constitute teachers’ “work”, and these demands necessitate the processes of attachment, aversion, and indifference. For Julia, elements of both attachment and indifference can be seen in this vignette: the roll is an administrative task to which she is indifferent, whereas the incorporation of Aboriginal cultural awareness into her teaching is a policy to which she is attached and happy to commit her energy. This attachment manifests in planning outside of class, though later it became clear that Julia could integrate this focus into the context of a language class. Cate coped with the broad demands of the school by fitting her programs around the coordinating rhythms in a similar way to Julia, another example of indifference:

Cate I just manipulate the structures of the whole school. I will have to fall to like any assessment protocols or deadlines for reporting or things that we've put in their booklet about when they should be doing things. But I go, 'I'm going to do an extra week on that'. And I will allow my program to shift and change according to the needs of the group. ... I really am my own boss.

Observing Cate's practice supported these statements. During one lesson that took place in the school hall, we went for a brief tour of the backstage area that served as her second "office". This space had accumulated resources over many years, and it is clear that her time and experience at Olivetree High enabled Cate to control this space in a *de facto* ownership. Cate felt a similar sense of ownership for the hall itself, since so many of her classes took place in the space, as well as extracurricular activities she coordinated. At the time of our first interview, Cate was also waiting for a guest school to come to Olivetree High. When they arrived earlier than expected, she arranged for them to wait for her in the hall while we finished our interview. Cate's confidence in owning these spaces likely comes from her years of experience:

Cate I find it very easy in my modus operandi to work within other people's structures and to make them work for me. I'm not afraid of speaking up. Sometimes it's just a little too freely. I've been learning that over 30 years, I've been learning sometimes to shut up. But typically, I can make the framework and the structure work for me. And that doesn't mean make demanding changes. Sometimes it's changing *me*. But for all intents and purposes I change to make my life good. I'm a glass half full, Pollyanna.

For other teachers, the processes of attachment, aversion or indifference were enacted less explicitly. Sara, for example, seemed to create a classroom that functioned as an island, isolated from the vicissitudes of policy change. Where she felt the pressure of policy was less on her classroom practice and more in the work that she was required to

do outside of the classroom. When discussing which policies most influenced her practice in the classroom, she replied that there weren't any: "I just try to do my best".

Stephanie, on the other hand, found ways to integrate the demands of policy into her practice, something most visible in her approach to professional development. Stephanie's focus on the PDP was strongly informed by her push for Highly Accomplished Teacher accreditation. She embraced the process as an opportunity to develop herself professionally, and as a means to advancing her career. During the study, Stephanie was the most forward about this element of her involvement. She recognised that classroom observation was an excellent opportunity to develop her practice, since she would have an external partner to observe her classroom. After each observation, Stephanie also asked whether I would mind completing the peer observation template for her. I agreed and referred to my field notes as I did so. These documents specify elements of the Australian Professional Teaching standards that teachers need to have signed off. I found this interesting, because the formalised paperwork for reviewing classroom practice was mostly articulated around the standards, rather than more specifically around pedagogical practice. This despite the principal having observed to me in conversation that the introduction of the Quality Teaching Framework had been important and beneficial because it provided a language and a coherent model with which teachers could talk about teaching and pedagogical practice. And yet it seems that the focus in practice as it is expressed in professional development within the school is narrowed to the contents of the standards, rather than these other frameworks. While this does not reflect an impoverishment of practice itself, it does narrow the terrain on which conversations about and observations of classroom practice can take place.

Teacher professional ethics under contingency

I don't know that our school is – or any school, especially like one of our size – is able to adapt fast enough to the needs of the students and the changes that are taking place in the world. I think that individually

teachers are able to do that. But when it comes to mobilising the whole staff, that takes a lot of time. (Julia)

In Chapter Two, I argued, with the literature, that the moral and political dimensions of teaching exceed the capability of professional standards, and other policies, to fully represent the complex formation of professional identity. One of the reasons for this is that classroom practice exists within layers of context: there are personal factors that relate to the classroom itself, which have been explored so far in this chapter, as well as political factors outside of the classroom that shape what goes on inside it. Climate change is discussed in this section as one example of these political factors. While it is an extreme example, it is demonstrative of the external contexts that draw on teacher professionalism in practice. In Chapters Six and Seven, the discursive role of policy in the formation of teacher subjectivity was traced through the professional learning process. What this discourse seems to circumscribe is space for the attitudinal, political, and ethical dimensions of teaching. This section indicates that these factors are not only present in the classroom, but also come into tension with these discursive ruling relations in the way that they lend themselves to a morally informed stance.

Julia's remarks above were made during her first interview and they speak to the challenge that faces all teachers: how to prepare students for a world that is unpredictable. During the process of collecting data for this project, two external issues that became politicised – bushfires and pandemic – came to shape the discourse that surrounded teachers' work in schools. However, while these two events seemed to be "unprecedented" and dramatic contingencies, the seeds of these crises were in some senses planted long ago. The next section looks at the way discourses about climate change were visible in the classroom and in teachers' work, as an example of the ethico-political contingency in practice.

The intrusion of climate change

An unexpected aspect of this research was the way in which the material reality of climate change became a contextual frame for many of the ethical considerations

involved in informants' practice. My research questions were framed in a way that sought to understand the influence of neoliberal policy measures. I sought to confirm or refute the notion that a particular economic doctrine and project had come to transform the "soul" of contemporary teachers: that neoliberalism had become a regulatory discourse that penetrated classroom practice. Yet alongside the discursive structure of neoliberal capitalism exists the consequences of globalisation and industrialism, notably the warming earth. Teachers themselves felt compelled to respond to climate change – since their classrooms often demanded a response for which there is little policy guidance, but where the ethical demands of the profession necessitate it.

The day of my first interview at the school, I arrived in the afternoon to meet Cate. It was a reasonably warm day, but the atmosphere was stung orange and humid. Smoke had descended on Sydney for a number of days – the early stages of the Black Summer fire season that would roll on for the remainder of the year and right through the school holidays. On many occasions I would walk across the oval near the school and see an eerie landscape – I would imagine smog-choked London during the Industrial Revolution. The school doesn't have air conditioning, so the students are faced with the choice of oppressive heat from closed windows, or letting the smoke flow in. The Guardian's headline for that day: "nation braces for most dangerous bushfire week ever seen" (Doherty, 2019).

Cate first had to stop into her staff room and introduced me to her colleagues. The head of faculty was having to stay back late trying to solve a developing crisis related to the bushfires. A group of students were – among many others – travelling to a school on the Central Coast, a region about an hour and a half north of Sydney, for a performing arts event the next day. However, the fires bearing down on the Central Coast had forced the closure of a number of schools, and now the head teacher was looking for alternatives the night before they were due to travel. At the time I observed that the fires were so far from Sydney, and yet even schools that weren't closing were affected.

Earlier in this chapter we saw Charlotte's English Extension class, where the material conditions of the classroom – hot, smoky, noisy – had an impact on the students' physical engagement with the lesson. This shaped Charlotte's pedagogical possibilities and increased the amount of teacher talk. However, it was not just these tangible, physical realities that impact on the school's physical environment. The learning content that goes

on in classrooms was also affected. As discussed earlier, one of the innovative practices in the school was the Year 10 Personal Interest Projects. In Cate's class, the students were asked to outline their project focus and how they were progressing with their research. There was a significant depth of engagement with deeply complex and technical "wicked problems". One student had chosen to do a research project on the behavioural psychology of climate change denialism. Another had elected to look at the economic impact of climate change. Students create these projects; they choose their own topic. They are not prompted, they are simply given a scaffold for three streams: problem-solving, critiquing or creating. Climate change was, for many of these students, a particular curiosity that they had brought to the classroom, and one that placed extra demands on teacher professionalism because of its political and politicised nature.

Two informants mentioned the school strike movement, and how that had played out in the school. Cate explained that many of their students went on the strike, but that the Department of Education policy required teachers to remain apolitical on such matters. Cate was disappointed with this: she noted that many friends from independent schools were actively *taking* students to the strike, to accompany them, to use the climate action movement as a significant learning moment connected to students' world. Media reporting around that time focused on one of the state's highest achieving students in the HSC, who had also been a key organiser of the climate strike and had received an offer to study her preferred degree at the University of Sydney (Ward, 2019). She was in a similar category as many of the students who attend Olivetree High school: bright, passionate, concerned about the future, prepared and able to apply her intelligence to the problem. In the case of the school strikes, it seemed that the Department policy preventing their attendance was inhibiting teachers from using this opportunity to inform and educate – an effort to "depoliticise" the profession, but one that in fact takes a political position despite itself. Chapter Seven noted the way that the broad educational aim of active and informed citizenship, alongside equity, is diluted as it is translated through the layers of policy that form the PDP and Professional Standards. On this issue, the tension between what is morally right and what is discursively constructed by policy as good teaching is particularly salient.

The way teachers navigate the politics of the world outside the classroom is challenging. Teachers must walk the line between developing the critical, democratic, and civic capabilities and concerns of their students, while avoiding being too contentious. In a Year 7 Latin class, Julia was teaching the class Latin pronunciation and phonemes. To do this, she projected a Roman map of Europe in the classroom and using a query and response strategy invited students to explain where *Roma* was (in *Italia*, in *Europa*, and so on). This strategy was effective: the change in the class' – and my own – pronunciation of *Aegyptus* was rapid. But when Julia came to the question of “where is *Europa*?”, the class was stumped. Some students understood that the word they were looking for was Latin for “the world” or “earth”. Julia told them that it was *terra*. She then invoked the “derivatives game”, which she said is a student favourite right through to senior years:

“Where else have we seen the word *terra*?”

“*Terra nullius*?”

The phrase *terra nullius* prompted a political conversation. Julia explained the usage of that term in the context of Australian history – an instance of a teachable moment that also satisfied the cross-curricular general capability of awareness of Aboriginal history in Australia. It also demonstrated the kind of ethico-political concerns that I have argued are fundamental to teacher professional identity. Following this discussion about “justice”, which dove-tailed with an earlier conversation about slavery and exploitation, the class returned to the derivatives game.

“*Terracotta*?”

“Yes! And where have you seen that *cotta* ending before?”

“*Panna cotta*?”

“Great! And another word is *biscotti*. The ending ‘*cotta*’ means *cooked*. So, *terracotta* essentially means ‘cooked earth’, which is how it gets its red colour and texture.”

At this point a student raised her hand and posed a striking question:

“Would that be the Latin way to describe climate change?”

Julia seemed stunned for a moment. She congratulated the student on a good question and said she would have to look into it. This was a perceptive and unprompted question from a Year 7 student in her third Latin lesson. That climate change weighs so strongly on her mind that she would read it as “cooked earth” seemed significant. I spoke about this incident with Julia after the lesson, and she agreed. This example indicates the site of a teachable moment that demands of teachers a political response. The tension here is that very little in the way “good teaching” is conceptualised within professional development processes outlined in Chapters Six and Seven gives teachers the opportunity to think about how to navigate an issue such as this. Whether teachers might take the “politically neutral” approach advocated by Campbell (2007) or a more transformative or “radical” pedagogical position is a conversation that moves beyond standards and syllabi. In this moment, Julia was forced to rely on her own professional judgement and personal sense of professional identity to respond to a contentious issue.

However, not all of these teachable moments occurred by accident. There was a moment in Stephanie’s science lessons where students began to explore at the length the resilience and adaptation of Australia’s natural environment to bushfire. This was notable because of the ongoing concerns and intense media focus on the bushfires across the country. The next vignette indicates the way the content of a lesson can be used to understand the issues that underpin these broad ethical and political issues.

Year 7 Science (13 Dec 2019)

Year 7 Science has been working on a new task developed by Stephanie. She wants them to use the syllabus outcomes to deliver a presentation to the class, and so far we have heard from one group who presented on the notion of adaptation and how Australian flora and fauna – such as the waratah flower – show remarkable resilience to bushfire as an adaptive mechanism. The bushfire conversation is a highly engaging one and one student asks, “what happens if the whole thing is on fire?” The group of students presenting at the time explain that the resilience is

within the system: that Australia's natural environment regenerates as a result of fire, rather than resists it in the first place. The conversation turns to the topic of koalas, and how they have adapted their diet and lifestyle to the natural environment. Stephanie has been offering questions to encourage the conversation to continue – she obviously finds it a really valuable and rich discussion – but at one point prompts two students to start asking questions they were asked to prepare “because I’ve roasted them enough.” The students struggle for a moment, but then they turn the conversation to marsupials generally, and it continues. However, Stephanie has been wandering around the room and noticed that the rest of the class aren’t taking notes during the conversation. “You need to take notes!” Stephanie says, so that they can learn and to challenge the speaking group with questions. A student asks about adaptation to desert conditions, and after some theorising from the class Stephanie explains Darwin’s theory of natural selection. She wants to know if anybody in the class can think of an alternative theory and one student offers creationism. As the conversation about adaptation and natural selection continues, a student makes a really perceptive observation about humanity: “we don’t change because of our environment, we change our environment”. I am surprised again, because this is a Year 7 class showing a sophisticated interest in humanity’s impact on the natural world. The whole class is engaged in evaluating the role of humans and natural instinct in the shaping of species and the environment. Stephanie is facilitating the discussion and only occasionally offering new ideas and directions, for example offering the concept of ‘vestigial organs’ to get students to theorise about the way adaptation manifests in different contexts. She explains the way a leaf will dry up and shrink, and the class bursts into laughter. “I don’t know what’s funny about that.” Stephanie deadpans to the room. As each group presents, the class becomes more and more engaged with the scientific concept underpinning the lesson. A final group poses the question: why have polar bears got white fur and big pads? Stephanie brings in additional scientific concepts like force in order to get the class to answer. But when they arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, she brings them back to the first slide of the lesson – her slide – which introduced the syllabus task. Stephanie reminds the class that they are supposed to be looking at Australian flora and fauna. The group who discussed the polar bear objects to this, because they were only using it as an example of the broader concept of adaptation. Stephanie says this is fine but tells the class that they must know about Australian animals and plants for their assessments. She gives the class advice on interpreting and using the syllabus for their studies. With that, the presentations end and the conversation shifts to next Monday’s class party. A cheer goes up.

Stephanie's approach to her work aligns very strongly with the values she expressed in her interview. As can be seen in this vignette, she aims to make the syllabus active in her classroom practice – quite explicitly so. Rather than use the syllabus as a tool for her own lesson planning and seeing it as something that must be interpreted for the students, she has actively encouraged students to look at the outcomes as a part of their learning process, and to explicitly reference them in an in-class assessment. Stephanie was the informant who most actively elaborated on the value of the governing texts of the school, particularly the texts that came from the Department. This goes some way to explaining why she took such an active role in the enactment of the PDP process in the school in her capacity as interim Head Teacher Teaching and Learning. Stephanie sees policy texts as a tool to describe teacher practice, but also one that gives *consistency*, a word she returned to regularly during her interview. Stephanie explicitly incorporates these documents into her practice in a way that contrasts with the approach of other informants, such as Cate, who tended to rely more on experience and improvisation. At the same time, however, Stephanie also found ways to address the ethical concerns of the “real world”. Her lesson gave students a scientific language and literacy with which to understand their broader social concerns.

The students, like so many during my time observing classes at the school, expressed a deep concern about the natural environment. They showed an openness to theorising about the world and they were attentive to the relationship between the scientific concepts they discovered in the classroom and the things going on outside of the classroom. A school program is written for a whole year, not invented at the last minute. At the start of 2019, it would not have been possible to predict the scale of the bushfires that would take hold later in the year, and the fact that Year 7 was in the middle of a unit about adaptation indicates how the syllabus can be made relevant and significant for students who are concerned about the world outside the classroom. The ability to respond to these contingent events in a way that authentically engages with the external political environment reflects the morally informed professional identity discussed in Chapter Two. This form of professionalism was demonstrated by teachers at Olivetree High in ways that were not “accounted for” in the professional development process.

Conclusion

I think it's just human nature. It's not that we don't like change *per se*, but we're creatures of habit, and that's comfortable. And sometimes 'different' can be uncomfortable, especially when we don't directly see the benefits for students. I think that that's probably not a concern specific to our school though. (Julia)

Ordinarily, policy developed by political leaders and the government is first interpreted and developed into something workable by the Department, then disseminated to principals who do further work with their school executive adapting it for their school's unique context, then distributed to faculties and then to teachers. It is then for teachers to determine how that policy is enacted in practice. During their study of policy enactments in the United Kingdom, Ball et al. (2012) noted the way certain documents – posters, texts, guidelines – could be found throughout the school putting certain ideas into practice. These were less apparent at Olivetree High. During my time there I noted posters about the Quality Teaching Framework in a staff meeting room, but very little overt messaging designed to extract policy “compliance”.

However, while these policy texts promulgate particular descriptions of practice, they do not account for all of the contingent ethical aspects of classroom practice. One example of this is the issue of climate change: its material effects on the classroom and the ethical issues that it raises – are not likely to subside, and indeed are more likely to increase in years to come. While it represents only a part of the things that transpire in the classroom, it is indicative of the connection between the politics of the world outside and the experiences and concerns of students. It is an issue of equity and ethics – one that will increasingly impinge on the practice of teaching in its material, situated and professional domains. Significantly, it shows the way external political contexts enter into the domain of teacher professional identity (Mockler, 2011). While Chapter Seven indicated that notions of citizenship and civic virtue are not entirely absent from the coordinating texts related to practice in schools, the enactment of these texts in practice at Olivetree High does not foreground the notions of community and practical action

that ought to be associated with connected and transformative civic responsibility (Clarke, 2009; Freire, 2012; Noffke, 1997). Rather, the teachers in this study relied on their own professional judgement, identity, and practical wisdom in order to navigate complex ethical and political issues.

The classroom practices described in this chapter show that teachers' work cannot be captured by the coordinating texts of schools for a range of reasons, meaning that the understanding of what constitutes teachers work traced in these texts is only partial. Classroom practice is necessarily messy: it responds not only to the emotional and material contexts of the learning environment on a given day, but it also involves the construction of personal relationships over time. Even the syllabus itself cannot account for the contingent events that affect the lives of students and teachers – and this is particularly the case as the global environment changes. Climate change seems to press into classrooms whether policy makers choose to make it explicit or not, so teachers must find ways to adapt to that reality across all the domains of their professional identity: the behavioural, the attitudinal, and the intellectual (Evans, 2011). The next chapter turns to the broader meaning of these findings, in particular what they mean for our understanding of teacher subjectivity under the ruling relations of NSW schools.

Chapter Nine: Competing conceptions of teacher professionalism

The point of education is not that students learn. Formulating the issue in this way is relevant because many discussions about education (in policy, research and practice) keep using the language of learning in this abstract and general sense. In contrast I wish to suggest that the point of education is that students learn something, that they learn it for a reason, and that they learn it from someone. (Biesta, 2015, p. 76)

At the heart of the conflict between the individualising impulse of neoliberal policy and the society-focused needs of authentic learning sits the *someone* of the teacher: a person with a sense of identity and ethics that forms their practice in the classroom. Over the past four chapters, this thesis has surveyed the way informants expressed their professional autonomy and capability at work, and how the burden of administration often impacted their time and workload. In Chapter Seven, the coordinating texts that define professional development and teacher practice in New South Wales were mapped, indicating a particular privileged conception of teachers' work. Chapter Eight showed that classroom practice involves a broader range of contexts – material and political – that exceed the circumscribed logics described in the policy map, and that in responding to these contexts informants rely on their sense of professional identity and professional ethics. The central question driving this thesis seeks to understand the way neoliberal policy shapes teacher practice. Responding to this, it appears that neoliberalism has impacts in a dual sense: at the discursive level in education policy by circumscribing conceptions of teacher professional identity, as well as the material level by generating particular practices and demands in the form of accountability and evidence-gathering. This investigation has been underpinned by four research questions:

1. How do the rationalities of neoliberalism play out in Australian educational policy?
2. What are the tensions between these policies and teachers' practice?
3. What are the strategies and practices enacted by teachers in classrooms in the light of encroaching demands of the neoliberal project?

4. What insights can be gained from different cases to inform the development of education policy?

The approach taken by this project began from the standpoint of the teachers involved, tracing the contours of their working lives. Institutional ethnographic approaches also pay attention to the texts that coordinate work, and it became clear in Chapters Five and Six that there were a number of texts within the *ruling relations* – the overarching logics that coordinate institutions like schools – that manifest in teachers’ work as admin and discursive regulation, among other practices. This chapter will argue that two key textual components of the ruling relations that emerged from this process – the Performance and Development Plan (PDP) and a constellation of documents that support the professional standards – represent instantiations of what Graeber (2015) refers to as the “utopia of rules”. While these documents produce a particular imaginary of the ideal teacher and the ideal school, and in doing so carry discursive authority, they also have material effects on practice. These effects include not only the burgeoning of administrative work associated with accountability, but they are also performative owing to the narrow forms of evidence that are privileged in this network of policies.

The chapter then turns to the idea of teacher professional identity more broadly, arguing that expansive, generative forms of ethical practice exist in tension with the neoliberal logic of much education policy. These policies and standards partly circumscribe ideas of practice by choosing to focus on *behavioural* elements of teacher professionalism, as distinct from what Evans (2011) calls the “attitudinal and intellectual” components. This chapter argues that, for these five teachers, navigating the tension between policy and practice involves complex approaches to enactment that draw on attitudinal and ethical beliefs. This chapter concludes by arguing that the formation of ethical teacher professionalism involves creating a space for hope and counter conduct under neoliberal regimes of truth, and that even small strategies of enactment can mark a break from the neoliberal imaginary.

The PDP as policy enactment

The Performance and Development Plan in NSW schools is a mechanism that translates a broad suite of policies into teachers' practice. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the PDP serves a range of purposes at Olivetree High: it provides teachers and head teachers with a template for reflection on practice, it helps school leaders to better plan professional development opportunities throughout the year, and it allows for complex policy demands at a bureaucratic and political level to be cascaded into classrooms. At the same time, however, the PDP contributes to the administrative workload of teachers and becomes a part of the broader set of systems, documents, policies and work that comprise a *utopia of rules* that emphasises "schematisation" by "ignoring all the subtleties of real social existence and reducing everything to preconceived mechanical or statistical formulae" (Graeber, 2015, p. 75). This section introduces the twin aspects of the PDP's *material* impact on teacher practice: the bureaucratic demand for systems and the people who work within them to account for their work; and the interaction between these demands and practical demands of "real life".

The needs and demands of the utopia of rules

Systems, documents, policies, and administrative work can get in the way of classroom practice, compelling teachers to account for themselves in ways that do not seem to directly connect to practice. Julia, talking broadly about policy as it is formulated for schools, suggested that it was *probably* a good thing because "it addresses a need", implying that the specific details of that need were unclear. Bacchi (2000, 2009) addresses the idea of policy *producing* a sense of need through her "what is the problem represented to be?" approach. Policy is often formulated to address a particular problem, but the policy itself also *constitutes* the problem through its discursive logic. Policies that might be regarded as neoliberal in orientation apply certain logics to address problems, however in doing so they constitute a regime of truth and a set of problems that are divorced from pragmatic reality. It is possible that when these logics reach into the practices of teachers in the classroom, they do not make sense in the same way that they might have within government bureaucracies. This concern was flagged by Stephanie when she noted:

When people at the department level are designing those policies and strategic directions they should, at that point, think about as the first step ‘we need some pilot schools’ and we need to have community design some kind of, you know, support material before they push it down to all schools.

While informants in this study sometimes expressed frustration at the amount of administrative work that attended the PDP, it was evident that the process nevertheless plays a significant role in the work and development of teachers. This is not only because it is mandated in New South Wales, but also because at Olivetree High it plays a role in the development of the school plan: teachers discuss their goals with their head teachers, the PDP aligns with strategic plans and staff development, and the principal and deputy principal seek to “draw the thread” throughout the year by tying professional development activities to these objectives. When the new PDP process was launched in schools, it was launched as a partnership – “a united front” as the principal said – between the union and the school management. The Teachers’ Federation also released extensive documentation to support the PDP process. The PDP links through to the teacher professional standards, and through that process reaches up to the governing imperatives of the NSW Department of Education, NESA, and AITSL.

Informants explained that they found the process useful, if a little procedurally difficult. That was a complaint shared by the principal – the problem is not the PDP itself or even teacher standards, but rather the implementation of them. She described the paperwork itself as “clunky”, and consequently teachers were likely to “see the time and the energy spent as probably not as worthwhile as it could be”. The PDP seems to have taken on the form of additional paperwork, rather than the rich and reflective activity it is supposed to be. This was captured in Sara’s observation that for many teachers they were playing catch-up on late administrative work and that sometimes “we do it for the sake of doing it”, or as Cate explained “not getting to it until *they* say, ‘look at it’”, or where Julia described the process as “ticking off”. Yet despite this, teachers still described the PDP as valuable, perhaps reflecting their willingness to look for a positive outcome. Sara saw it as a “way to learn something new”, and Cate described it as a

“support, not a sabotage”. Similar positive sentiment was reported in a study by Baker et al. (2018) which investigated teachers’ perceptions of the PDP process. They suggested that the PDP went some way to connecting professional learning opportunities to improved teaching practice and that prior to this there was a more general “tick the box” approach to accountability (Baker et al., 2018, p. 576). However, they note that their study is focused exclusively on the uptake of the policy in practice, rather than the policy context – the focus of their study was on how teachers used the PDP over a one-year period. Such an approach was not designed to find the spaces for non-compliance, innovation, and creativity, but rather asked teachers about the effectiveness of the new policy. When read in the light of research by Mockler (2020) that explored the policy context surrounding the PDP, it seems that if teachers are better able to connect generative professional learning to their improved teaching practice, then this process would constitute an “act of resistance” to the “preferred version of teacher professionalism” (p. 11) promulgated by the policy ensemble within which the PDP is located.

There is a large body of research that traces the influence of audit culture and accountability and its influence on teacher practice. In taking an institutional ethnographic approach, it seems that teachers’ work – at least the rhythms that coordinate it outside of the classroom – can be traced to this culture of accountability, something that reflects the findings of Spina (2021) with regard to the NAPLAN standardised tests. Neoliberalism, as Wendy Brown (2005) argues, “reaches into the social” and it is notable that the growth of administrative work extends the ruling relations of teaching into teachers’ private time. This has the effect of bureaucratising the private lives of teachers – taking over more and more of their time, further blurring the lines between the professional and the private. Similarly, Julia described the way teachers were required to manage systems or, more accurately, “the systems manage us”.

The PDP seems to constitute two particular problems: the first a need for structured annual goal setting for teachers; the second a need for ongoing professional learning and

professional conversations. As was seen in Chapter Seven, this latter objective may be a realisation of higher-order goals to create a particular professional culture within schools. However, the first problem implies that a lack of structured, recorded, annual goal setting is somehow contributing to diminished teaching quality or student outcomes in schools. A PDP, even if it does “facilitate a conversation” or “provide a common language”, cannot achieve the objectives for which this process is formulated. There are many ways to facilitate far richer and far more productive conversations, for instance via collaborative inquiry-based approaches such as “quality teaching rounds” (Gore, 2018; Gore et al., 2017). Professional learning too can be conceived as something ongoing and transformative, rather than subject to regular audit and sign-off. Mockler (2015) has argued that the use of professional standards and the rise of discourses of “teacher quality” have the effect of narrowing definitions of “generative professional learning” (p. 121). Offering a pathway to more ethically informed practice, Kemmis (2006) suggests that action research – as one model of professional learning and development – should not just address practice in the narrow sense of development, but also with a critical view to addressing problems facing our communities and world. However, this is not to diminish the important role that the PDP played in school planning, rather to point out that it is here that the tension lies.

The kinds of practices that are encouraged through generative professional learning are not so easily measured, particularly within the domain of the utopia of rules. This utopia, as was seen in Chapter Seven, seeks *valid* and *statistical* evidence to support the standardised processes that it engenders. The professional standards themselves create a circumscribed understanding of teacher practice – and the “sheer weight” of admin associated with accreditation materially limits teachers’ time to consider those things that are left out. Graeber (2015) argues that this utopia that privileges schematisation has the effect of ignoring or de-emphasising the subtleties of “real social existence”; or to translate that into institutional ethnographic terms, the ruling relations work to elide the standpoint and perspective of people. The maps of policy that comprise the ruling relations become increasingly abstract and discursive and pay less attention to the

ethical and political concerns that teachers must address in the classroom. These are subtleties of practice that reveal tensions in the “real”.

Material policy effects on teachers’ work

The pathways of enactment – where policy is filtered from political leaders and policymakers down to classroom teachers by a range of intervening factors – are important for addressing workload concerns, as was explained by Julia when she suggested that the school leadership “cherry picking” for their local context gave teachers confidence in enacting policy. This mediation helps teachers at Olivetree High to manage the burden of additional admin work associated with policy change. Informants reported that admin work took time away from lesson preparation, forcing them to do more and more work outside of school hours and into their home life. Charlotte reported doing lesson preparation through to as late as nine in the evening, before starting work the next day at eight in the morning. For teachers, the more certainty that exists in the policy frameworks that govern their work, the better able they are to plan rich learning experiences for their students, as was the case for Charlotte who suggested that curricular and programming changes prevented teachers from improving lessons iteratively.

Typically, teachers have the benefit of school leaders and education bureaucracies to do some filtering work before they look at ways to respond to and enact policy. Ball et al. (2012) describe the way this functioned for a school in the UK as follows:

The school here is represented as a cipher of government policy, policy that comes from the outside, and which ‘overrides’ local particularities or priorities or principles... (p. 93)

Julia described a similar process at Olivetree High, when she explained that normally teachers at the school would expect policies to be selectively interpreted and filtered by the principal and deputies so that teachers were not required to spend as much time doing this work themselves. This process goes some way to moderating the intense

workload demands that would come with reading all of these policies directly and finding ways to enact them locally. In effect, school leaders take on the role of policy mediators, laying the groundwork for system and government policy to be adapted for local contexts.

However, material realities also come into conflict with these ordinary processes, and demand independent professionalism to navigate tricky political issues. During the Australian bushfires, teaching and learning continued in the school despite the smoke and heat, despite the lack of air-conditioning, and despite the broader environmental and material contexts that made learning difficult. More than this, teachers worked with students who were actively engaged in the politics of a changing climate, of which the intensity of the 2019–2020 bushfires was a product signalled years in advance (Garnaut, 2011). Contrary to suggestions by conservative commentators, Cate explained that teachers in public schools were concerned to stay as apolitical as possible, given the sensitivity about their roles in the broader media discourse. This is one example of the kinds of external contextual factors which require moral engagement from teachers that Campbell (2007) suggests constitute a delicate political challenge. As discussed in Chapter Two, Campbell argues that teachers must avoid the “soapbox”, but teachers also have a responsibility to teach students about the science and civics of a changing world, one that students will have to attend to in their adult lives, and that sometimes involves engaging with politicised issues such as climate change. In addition to this, it is well established that learning that is connected to the world beyond the classroom is more significant and powerful and is a hallmark of quality teaching. The teachers at Olivetree High found ways to navigate these contradictory and delicate tensions between the politics of the crisis and the needs of their students. However, as Santoro (2015) rightly suggests, there may be specific constraints that emanate from policy that prevent teachers working through these “moral situations”. In a sense this is one of the tensions that neoliberalism brings to bear on the classroom, although the seeds of the climate problem predate neoliberalism, a political phenomenon that is around 80 years old.

If teachers are experiencing constraints that prevent them properly exploring these moral challenges, it seems that the sheer volume of policy to understand and enact acts as one such constraint. One of the central concerns that teachers identified was the fact that things were being reviewed and changed too quickly; something that compromised the quality of their work. The frequency with which the range of policies affecting teachers can change is a major concern, as Charlotte noted when she talked about the curriculum reviews:

Constant, constant new curriculum. When this is my ninth-year teaching, and I don't think I've taught the same curriculum more than two years in a row.

Research by Stacey, Wilson, and McGrath-Champ (2020) has shown that where time must be given over to learning new policies, procedures, and ways of doing, teachers are unable to focus on improving their practice and the learning of students in the classroom, instead enacting a kind of “triage”. This triaging likely sees the setting aside of the kinds of ethical considerations raised earlier, as Julia explained:

Let's put aside all of the things that are happening with global politics and the economy and climate and everything. But with all of the policy documents that are coming out like it feels like every year we come back from our summer holidays, and the principal is saying 'I've just been getting my head around this new policy document that's come out' ...

Graeber (2018) notes that in late capitalism there is a tendency to generate administrative busywork. This is work that is unsatisfying, and which is understood by the people that do it as inessential. The job of a teacher is of course a rewarding and important one, however Churcher and Talbot (2020) have noted that the intensification of administrivia has impaired the ability of teachers to do more meaningful preparation for classroom activities:

Top-down systems of auditing, evaluation, assessment, and accreditation in education that are intended to improve the quality of educators' work, to boost efficiency, and to reduce system costs are having precisely the opposite effect ... Data collection for 'school improvement' and for evidence of 'quality teaching' has crowded out activities associated with planning, delivering, and assessing activities designed to engage students in reflective learning practices. (p. 31)

This crowding out was visible in a number of ways at Olivetree High. Julia described being "managed by" the system when she spoke about the need to do data entry and engage with new computer software. Cate was frantically trying to correct Excel spreadsheets before one class and had to rely on her years of experience to improvise a lesson. Similarly, Sara explained that the PDP process was often something rushed towards the end of the year, rather than a seamless process integrated throughout. Baker et al. (2018) report that teachers in their study found the PDP beneficial, however the real benefit seems to come from the conversations and reflections rather than the paperwork itself. Quite apart from the attitudinal work implied by the policies that make up the coordinating texts around the PDP, there is a well-documented increase in teachers workload – which necessarily extends into their personal life – that is associated with these auditing, evaluation and assessment processes (Fitzgerald, McGrath-Champ, Stacey, Wilson, & Gavin, 2019; McGrath-Champ et al., 2018; Stacey et al., 2020).

These material effects literally constrain teachers' time, leaving little spare to consider how to navigate these complex political and ethical issues. In those circumstances, there is a dual impact on the discursive work that policy does, which will be addressed in detail in the next section. Firstly, through technologies of accountability and performativity these policies call forth particular dispositions in teachers. In the typology described by Ball et al. (2012), policy materially produces enthusiasts and narrators like Stephanie, critics like Julia and Cate, translators like Charlotte, and receivers or survivors like Sara. And yet this typology does not reflect the shifting and changing modes in which these informants engage with policy – their approach varies

by circumstance, as became clear when looking at their classrooms, or where the process of completing the PDP brought forth a transactor disposition. Similarly, some systems and processes themselves function as policy actors – notably SPaRO and the professional and school planning processes, which demand accounting and reporting. The other material-discursive effect is in limiting the space for a different imagination, for reflection and critical interrogation of practice, and for generative forms of professional learning that do not necessarily meet the criteria of the standards or the requirements for registration with NESAs. It is the combination of these two material rationalities – one productive, the other repressive – that most visibly creates the tension between teacher professionalism and neoliberal policy.

The field of discursive production

There is a discursive function embedded in the ruling relations, in addition to their significant material effects. This section will first address the particular regime of truth around evidence that is privileged in the ruling relations that govern schools. This episteme – broadly quantitative and standardised – reflects elements of the “what works” approach, which seeks to identify decontextualised and supposedly generalisable and replicable approaches to teaching. These approaches, associated with the standards agenda of neoliberalism, leave little room for more generative forms of evidence which might inform school planning and professional learning processes. This section then goes on to explore the construction of the teacher under these regimes of accountability and evidence, noting that the PDP links teacher practice to the highest-order coordinating texts and acts as a conduit to these understandings of the teacher-as-subject. However, as can be seen in the instances where external contexts and concerns that demanded an ethical response entered into practice, the understandings of teacher professionalism promulgated by these policy regimes are not total. Rather, to borrow from Ball et al. (2012), they function as *exhortatory/developmental policies*, which can still enable more authentic and individual forms of professional identity.

A particular episteme of evidence

Rather than fixing a set of values, the documentation surrounding professional learning and development in New South Wales carries implicit *valuing* of certain practices and forms of evidence, which in turn regulate teacher work. This regulation is particularly relevant outside of the classroom, where teachers engage in the administrative tasks that make up the demands of the utopia of rules. Performance and Development Plans can play an important role in helping schools to plan and prepare for what the deputy principal called “the road ahead”. As the deputy principal explained in Chapter Six, the PDP is very valuable for helping school leaders to develop the school plan and schedule professional development. It serves as a form of *rich evidence* that breaks with the privileging of quantitative evidence described in much of the school improvement literature. But this is a paradox: for the teacher themselves, the ruling relations lean towards a particular epistemological paradigm – the quantifiable, what works – and do not leave a great deal of room for rich descriptions of practice.

Mapping the ruling relations that extend upwards from the PDP reveals a clear epistemic stance towards what counts as evidence. This regime of truth privileges quantitative measures of accountability that are replicable and depend on a thin conception of reliability. This literature often describes what works in the classroom in terms of decontextualised statistical effect sizes, reflecting a hierarchy of evidence that borrows from the medical sciences. The New South Wales Department of Education Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) produces a series of reports describing what works based on data collected from NSW schools (CESE, 2015b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). CESE (2016) explicitly acknowledges this stance towards evidence in a guide to “effective evaluation”, in which it produces a hierarchy that closely models similar hierarchies of evidence used by medical and health science researchers, reproduced here as Figure 11. While these forms of statistically reliable, generalisable evidence can be a valuable part of the educational picture, they represent a particular episteme that may not be valid in the context-rich and subjective environment of a particular classroom where personal and ethical relationships mediate these “objective” findings.

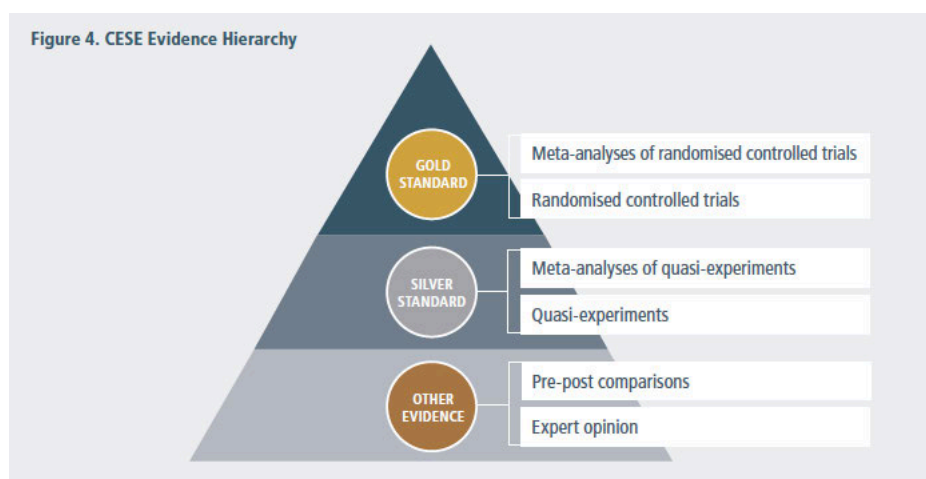


Figure 11: CESE evidence hierarchy

Despite this privileged episteme, Olivetree High still found ways to broaden the types of evidence that informed teaching in the school. The deputy principal and the principal both explained that it was only through qualitative analysis of the PDPs of many teachers that the school professional development strategy could be set for upcoming years. The deputy principal noted that the process of incorporating the PDPs into the school planning process had a dual impact, both in attenuating the feeling, described by the principal, that the PDP was “not worthwhile”, and better informing the leadership strategy:

When it [the PDP] was mandated, we looked at what was required, and everybody just jumped through the hoops and the bit of paper ended up in a filing cabinet or something filed on a hard drive of a computer. In the last school planning session, it was in the strategic direction two, the one that was about professionalizing, about professional learning. We decided that it was about time that we actually, instead of just jumping through a hoop and ticking a box, that we actually started to do some qualitative analysis of what people were saying in their PDPs.

Later in that interview, the deputy principal noted that many of the conventional quantitative measures the school might use for planning – such as NAPLAN results –

were less valuable since students at the school were inevitably in the top performance bands in the state. These forms of evidence were consulted and useful for identifying gaps that may emerge, but their value was secondary to qualitative data for informing school planning. This attitude reflects the need to contextualise any understanding of what works for a school's particular circumstances. Julia felt that the school leadership had a special responsibility for this when she described the process of cherry-picking policy elements that would apply most appropriately in context.

The PDP process at Olivetree High, far from privileging the quantitative evidentiary regime of truth, seems instead to emphasise collegiality, observation, and rich description of practice, though framed by the professional standards. The peer observation template which was designed to inform professional learning conversations throughout the year did not include space for quantitative measures of success. This echoes the findings of Mockler and Stacey (2020) that teachers in their study took a position in relation to evidence that implied "intelligent accountability" – emphasising the importance of "rich, nuanced sources of evidence" (p. 1). It seems that the process at Olivetree High emphasises more generative forms of inquiry which Mockler (2015) argued lend themselves to enactment in line with the Professional Development Framework (NSW DEC, 2015). These forms of evidence represent what Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2018) regard as "forensic" rather than "adversarial" evidence: evidence that is used in a generative and productive way, rather than defensively to account for the self. This is significant given the distinct privileging of standards and standardised forms of accountability that are more salient in a number of other texts, such as the National School Improvement Tool (ACER, 2016) and the systems and processes introduced to support school planning, such as SPaRO.

What is a teacher under regimes of accountability?

The PDP does occupy a *discursive space* in chains of policy formation by virtue of its connection to higher-order coordinating texts. The PDP has two functions: one is the explicit function of tracking professional goals and development over time; the other is a discursive-regulatory function that aims to discipline teachers. However, as will be

discussed shortly, it is not from the PDP itself that this disciplinary function is projected, and there remains a dimension in which the PDP can be understood as exhortatory/developmental policy which facilitates different kinds of teacher professionalism (Ball et al., 2012; Mockler & Stacey, 2020). It encourages practitioners to interpret policy prescriptions about teacher identity, to monitor and account for their practice, and to do this through a particular evidentiary lens. The PDP is the interface between teacher practice and a wide chain of coordinating texts that seek to establish a particular way of understanding the job of a teacher. Like Foucault's "hermeneutics of the subject", this represents a continual act of interpretation and becoming as part of the ethical development characterised as "care of the self" under neoliberalism (Foucault, 1993, 2005). Used appropriately, the performance and development plan could be a space for rich forms of evidence – a space Mockler (2015) foreshadowed when analysing the Performance and Development Framework (AITSL, 2012b) – approaches that encourage rich "inner processes of formation" like action research and which have an explicitly ethical character (Kim, 2013; Noffke, 1997). However, this generative interpretation of the teacher's self is not the only, or even the most obvious, conception of 'the teacher' expressed under dominant regimes of accountability.

Can a professional culture – or a profession itself – be regarded as independent and professional if it is subject to infantilising rules, regulations, and reporting? The degree to which teacher professionalism is codified and regulated by a national body like AITSL suggests that – unlike professions such as law or medicine – teaching has less room for professional judgement and variability. Looking at a set of texts within the New South Wales educational context, Mockler (2020) argues that professional standards and the documents that attend them "align more with the managerial or organisational forms of professionalism that underpin said standards than with generative, occupational or democratic professionalism" (p. 5). While it is reasonable to have a common understanding of "good practice", and documents like the professional standards go some way to doing that, the emphasis on constant evaluation, reporting and feedback undermines the independence and professional credibility of teachers. It is de-professionalising, particularly in the way that it calls forth a *particular* disposition

towards teaching: one that is grounded in a positivist epistemological approach to data collection and analysis. The highest-level coordinating texts emphasise a particular episteme of evidence, privileging quantitative and replicable data over qualitative and interpersonal sources of understanding that rely on expert judgement. This is not to suggest that quantitative data cannot be useful – valid and reliable quantitative data absolutely should play a part in the evaluation of teaching practice, but as part of suite of measures rather than one that is reified above the contextual and interpersonal.

The language of these documents reflects a managerial discourse. It reflects a disciplinary orientation towards the teacher, a mode of governmentality designed to “produce a primarily passive policy subject” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 92). As could be seen in Chapter Seven, the logic in teacher professional development – as it is explicated by policy in Australia – is saturated with managerial language, what Don Watson (2018) calls “dead sentences”. Watson is particularly critical of the term “value add”, and it is significant that this phrase is used extensively in CESE’s research papers such as “High Value-Add Schools: Key Drivers of School Improvement” (CESE, 2015a). The National School Improvement Tool (ACER, 2016) exhibits many of the hallmarks of this kind of language. This language represents, in a sense, a capitulation to the market logic. Schools and school bureaucracies rely less on the professional ethical language of education philosophy – leading to fewer initial teacher education programs explicitly focusing on this domain – and more on the language of business, neo-Taylorism, and bureaucracy. It is a phenomenon common to institutions under neoliberalism, just as, as observed in Chapter One, passengers on New South Wales public transport are now referred to as “customers”, many agencies of government have collapsed the rich texture of subject positions in society into that of the consumer. The thinned-out, deadened language of bureaucracies in market societies is catching and saturates the structure and content of much education policy. Yet despite this catching language, the way that informants at Olivetree High engaged with policy was complex: Cate when referring to the “blah blah blah standards”, whereas Stephanie was more inclined to “embed, influence, and push through” policy mandates.

As was noted in Chapter Seven, the Performance and Development Framework (NSW DEC, 2015) suggests that care should be taken to avoid checklists, proformas, and “unnecessary paperwork”, a point that Mockler (2015) argues leaves scope for richer forms of evidence and professional learning. A challenge for teachers is identifying which paperwork is necessary and which unnecessary – a site, argues Ball et al. (2012), where there might be space for interpretation, creativity and resistance. Education bureaucracies are answerable to government and political rhetoric increasingly demands accountability for the investment of public money. While the *stated* goal of education policies might be to improve student outcomes, the *realised* function of these policies is often exactly the opposite. Time is taken away from planning and programming for classroom activities and instead given over to the admin and paperwork that was referenced by informants in Chapter Five, where they described this kind of work “eating into”, “consuming” and “taking up” their classroom preparation time. Spina (2021) found something similar, where teachers’ work was “now so fundamentally oriented towards data-for-accountability that their jobs would need to be redesigned if they were to be allocated sufficient time to make use of data for educative purposes” (p. 150). These findings contradict the suggestion in the frameworks that this should not happen. In a sense these performance frameworks become deeply performative: teachers gather evidence to complete these documents and justify themselves, despite years of teacher education and professional experience. In addition, it is unlikely any individual would actually find a way to hold all of these coordinating texts in mind while formulating their PDP goals. If they were to do so, the amount of time given over to the process would be overwhelming – so much so that one informant asked of all these competing frameworks “is this actually a good thing?”.

These pressures do not seem to impact the highly ethical and reflective way that the teachers in this study think about their practice. In part this may be an effect of the culture within the school, a testament to strong and supportive leadership both within the school executive and also in the domain of pedagogical leadership (Grice, 2018). But culture aside, there was still a significant sense of teacher identity – of the role and ethical responsibilities of the teacher – that extend far beyond what was demanded by the policy

texts that comprise the ruling relations. Informants were engaged in interpretive work, translating the demands made of them into practices that accorded with their personal sense of identity in a classroom. In doing the interpretive work required for policy enactment, teachers are able to “move between these different forms of policy, these different professionalisms and subjectivities and modalities, for the most part, with unreflexive ease” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 95). Rather than being paralysed by values schizophrenia, the teachers at Olivetree High seemed to square the circle of their ethical responsibilities with the demands made of them by the various bureaucratic processes to which they were “subjected”. In the next section this is discussed through the lens of Julia’s *attachment, aversion, and indifference* heuristic. Significantly, each teacher held their own unique understanding of what constitutes good teaching practice, and this hermeneutic understanding was developed by layering their own professional experience into the policy processes of which they were a part. There is a particular conception of “good teaching” and “what works” that permeates education policy, one that can seem detached and decontextualised by focusing on the effect size of particular pedagogical strategies. What is clear from this study at Olivetree High is that teachers find ways to interpret these prescriptive documents through the lens of their own practice and experience, another example of resistance and transformation in the enactment of neoliberal policy.

Teacher professional identity

This section aims to explore some of the hermeneutic strategies employed by teachers in formulating a professional identity under neoliberal policy. There is a tension between the regulatory/disciplinary function of the ruling policy relations, which tend to focus on behaviour, and the attitudinal domain of the teacher. This can become a site of values schizophrenia (Ball, 2003), where teachers’ ethical values – care for students, their future, their understanding of the world – come into tension with policy that either ignores or restricts their capacity to work in that space. One striking example of this was exhibited during interviews, when Charlotte explained that “I know I’m going against the research, not doing the right things” when justifying her decision to deliver “lectures” when students asked for it. Yet there is a body of research that suggests direct instruction

is a useful classroom strategy (Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Yates, 2014; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006), particularly when used as part of a mix of strategies. Reconciling these tensions involves reflexivity, interpretation, and professional judgement.

Attachment, aversion, indifference

Teachers each have different approaches to the policy texts that comprise the professional development process. As we saw in Chapter Eight, the approach can vary between the very explicit enactment of a text with very little adjustment – as was the case with Stephanie – or a more generalised *tacit* understanding of good practice, as exemplified by Cate. The degree to which informants took up the different texts depended on their immediate perceived needs and stage in their career. Cate and Stephanie were both pursuing Highly Accomplished Teacher accreditation, so they were more consciously aware of their practice. However, their career aspirations also influenced the direction that this might take: Cate saw herself staying within schools but taking on a head teacher role, whereas Stephanie saw herself moving into the policymaking space in the Department. Recognising that these individual desires and subjectivities form part of the professional repertoire in responding to policy is important. They can lead to a range of resistances, transformations, and unintended consequences.

Professional judgement is articulated in dynamic ways, often leading to enactment through attachment, aversion and indifference to policy, the heuristic that Julia suggested when we discussed the role of policy in generating workload for teachers. This section aims to develop this heuristic more comprehensively as a way to describe different approaches to policy enactment. Significantly, the heuristic reinforces and affirms the categorisation of stances outlined by Moore and Clarke (2016), who describe the implementation of public policy locally. Drawing on data from interviews with over 70 teachers in the United Kingdom, they situated responses on a spectrum of *compliance*, *resistance*, and *affect* (Moore & Clarke, 2016, p. 667). Teachers exhibiting compliance responses were broadly supportive of education policy; those with resistance responses tended to seek spaces for alternative pedagogies and approaches; and those with

affective responses were often displeased with policy but felt obliged to go along with it. Crucially, these various responses, like attachment, aversion, and indifference, demonstrate that policy enactment is complex and that there are sites of resistance as well as transformation.

Policy attachment approaches can be understood as seeking to “implement” or “push through” a particular policy, as was described by Stephanie during her initial interview. These approaches mirror the kind of *compliance* responses described by Moore and Clarke (2016), or teachers “doing” policy (Ball et al., 2012). Attachment approaches have a high fidelity to policy texts and ruling relations, while tending to leave less room for responding to context and contingency. Attachment approaches allow professionals to embody the discursive logic – the regimes of truth – that comprise the ruling relations. In doing so, a teacher is more likely to meet the audit and accountability requirements of these regimes of truth. This is a logical approach taken by Stephanie as she prepared for accreditation as a Highly Accomplished Teacher, particularly with a personal goal to move into policy and professional development spaces within the Department, or when Charlotte reported striving to align her PDP goals with the school plan. Another example of policy attachment was seen in Chapter Eight, when Julia enthusiastically sought ways to incorporate Aboriginal language awareness into her teaching. This example demonstrates that policy attachment should not be understood as aligning only with bureaucratic or neoliberal policy regimes but can also be used to support highly ethical and culturally sensitive policies as well.

Aversion approaches contrast with attachment in that they reflect a conscious choice on the part of professionals to engage in conduct that is not necessarily called forth by policy, or that might even be proscribed. Moore and Clarke (2016) categorise these as *resistant* approaches, where teachers seek out means to engage in practices that might exist outside of or subvert the dominant policy logics. Aversion approaches at Olivetree High tended to be taken up by those informants who felt confident in their planning and experience, but more significantly these approaches were demonstrated whenever informants saw a conflict between the demands of a policy and the wellbeing and

success of their students. Aversion approaches are not necessarily an outright rejection of a policy or “breaking the rules”, they should be more accurately understood as acts that cannot be accounted for in the ruling relations. One example might be the intelligence gathered by informants such as Sara and Cate by doing HSC marking¹⁶, or the embrace of teachable moments in the classroom when such opportunities present themselves. The way Cate occupied physical spaces – such as the school hall – for her classes, even when this had to be achieved by unscheduled and unrostered occupation of the room, is another example. Cate had a *de facto* office of her own backstage in the school hall, filled with teaching resources from many years of practice. The critiques of policy that informants made during this project might also be conceived as an act of aversion.

Indifference represents the domain of *unconscious* rejection of policy prescriptions, where professionals will still perform the tasks required of them but without the proactive engagement characteristic of attachment. Here there is an affective dimension, following from Moore and Clarke (2016), which Talbot (2020) might characterise as ripe for moments of *boredom*. These responses typically arise in response to the “tsunami of paperwork” that has intensified teachers work (Fitzgerald et al., 2019). Indifferent approaches tend to occupy the same territory as bullshit work, where professionals engage in tick and flick practices, doing the minimum required to get a task off their plate. Sara and Cate both explained that the PDP was often a piece of administrative work that had to be dealt with and then revisited once a year *when they are asked to*. Sara expressed this as “we do it just for the sake of doing it”, even though she recognised the intention was to improve their practice. Indifferent approaches comply with the letter of the ruling relations – particularly where they organise time and activities – but not the spirit, where they might call forth a particular disposition or epistemic regime from teachers. This should not suggest that an indifferent approach means that teachers are not caught up in the performative regimes of audit culture. In a sense, the indifferent approach still sees teachers effectively integrated into this logic, since the bare minimum

¹⁶ Teachers in New South Wales can get leave to mark the Higher School Certificate school leaving examinations.

they must provide are the thin forms of evidence and accountability demanded by that particular episteme. For Julia, this meant “just ticking them off”, and Stephanie suggested that for many teachers there would need to be a financial incentive to justify the additional paperwork involved in achieving higher levels of accreditation.

These varied approaches to policy enactment suggest that the influence of policy – whether neoliberal or otherwise – is deeply complex. Teachers do not uniformly *embed* or *push-through* policies, instead they make decisions based on intuition, experience, and their professional identity. Even a teacher like Stephanie, whose approach to her professional development was firmly grounded in the logics of the professional standards and associated policies, demonstrated a commitment to an ethics of care when actually teaching in the classroom. Her students interrogated the science of their world on fire – an act that she fully supported, giving the students a scientific literacy with which to critique the political crisis they will face as adults. Two subjects as distinct as Latin and science each gave rise to this intellectual counter conduct in the context of students’ futures on a planet that is warming. Acts of counter conduct are complex and ethical. They occur in the interpersonal spaces that define the teacher-student relationship. These special relationships, central to the act of teaching, are not written into policies and PDPs. Counter conduct will be discussed more fully toward the end of this chapter, after further discussing the conceptions of teacher identity this research made apparent.

Farmers or gardeners?

The reality of classroom practice is not fully represented in the PDP and the policy logics that inform it. While the process of reflection and professional development provides one means to improve practice, the way that practice is described in the standards, frameworks and charters that inform the PDP leaves out the sense in which classrooms are *messy spaces full of contingency*. Despite the presence of admin work which is meant to serve a coordinating and discursive function, in fact teachers are exercising their professional judgement in a range of circumstances. Olivetree High also encouraged students to exercise their moral and intellectual judgement by giving them the

independence and choice of focus in the Year 10 Personal Interest Projects. This task was authentic and deeply challenging, locating learning in a broader critical and creative engagement with the world outside of the classroom.

As has been noted earlier in this chapter, there is a logic underpinning many of the documents that comprise the ruling relations of teacher practice that involves a particular conception of evidence and evidence-based practice. This quantitative, standardised paradigmatic approach to evidence and pedagogical decision making represents a “farming” approach to the classroom: where pedagogical choices, like fertiliser, can be consistently applied to different crops of children (Stenhouse, 1988). The alternative metaphor for the work of a teacher is that of the gardener. Gardens are filled with a variety of plants and flowers, each requiring its own care and attention. While some fertilisers might be useful, they cannot be applied uniformly, and the conditions under which each plant thrives is unique. This metaphor was applied most aptly by Stenhouse (1988):

... it is the teacher’s job to work like a gardener rather than a farmer, differentiating the treatment of each subject and each learner as the gardener does each flower bed and each plant. The variability of educational situations is grossly underestimated: sampling procedures cannot be related to educational action except on a survey basis rather than an experimental basis. Further, behavioural objectives are quite inappropriate to education except in the case of skill learning. They are a monument to the philosophical naivete of a psychological tradition which simplifies intentionality and purpose to ‘having a goal’. Purpose in education is about having agenda. (Stenhouse, 1988, p. 44)

While Stenhouse was in this instance speaking about the approach to educational research characteristic of psychological traditions, the same lessons apply to both the evidence-based practice movement in education, which is closely related to the what works literature and has proponents both for and against (for example see Biesta, 2007,

2010; Blackmore, 2002; CESE, 2015b; Chahal, 2017; McKnight & Morgan, 2019; Welch, 2015; Wrigley & McCusker, 2019). The what works literature can inform the teacher-as-gardener, but it cannot substitute for the contextual understanding of each classroom and each student. This contextual understanding demands professional autonomy, a significant investment of time and resources, and – perhaps most significantly for this study – a profound sense of ethical teacher identity. This sense of teacher identity can bridge the “democratic deficit” (Biesta, 2007) inherent to policy imposed from above and the concerns and desires of students in their classroom as they seek to understand their world. This sense of identity was the most marked difference I observed in classrooms compared to the reported descriptions of informants’ work contained in the interviews. While informants described a range of bureaucratic processes that structured their practice, the most profoundly powerful dimension – and the most difficult to describe – was the attitudinal and ethical practices that were demonstrated in the classroom.

This ethical dimension was salient in classrooms when students asked for support from Cate for assignments about climate change and consumerism, just as this ethical dimension affected Julia when she incorporated the history of Australian Indigenous dispossession into a lesson about the Latin phrase *terra nullius*. Stephanie equipped her students with the scientific literacy to understand the Australian natural environment as it burned in a lesson that was ostensibly focused on biology, Charlotte stayed up till nine in the evening writing prose for her students so they could see what the task looked like and how rewarding it could be outside of an English classroom. Perhaps the most poetic expression of this care was that of Sara expressing her frustration that online learning prevented her from seeing whether students were struggling in the same way she could in a classroom: “I could almost feel... it’s like that sand running through your fingers...”. These relational practices are immeasurable and cannot be understood in a properly material sense by a performance and development plan or a standardised assessment, yet they represent the ethical “agenda” of these teachers: to ensure their students are successful in both their studies and their lives – to see to it that they remain, to quote Cate, “fuck off brilliant”.

The primacy of the attitudinal

Professional identity and ethics emerged as an important factor during the analysis in this study. This was the case whatever informants' approach to the coordinating texts that make up the ruling relations of schooling in NSW. Attachment, aversion, and indifference approaches characterise a relationship to policy, but they do not characterise a relationship to the teacher's self. Instead teachers are engaged in a kind of interpretive hermeneutics of the subject (Foucault, 1986, 2005), developing an ethical self in relation to these texts, their students, their colleagues, and their sense of professional identity. Significantly, very little room is left in the ruling relations for this kind of complex attitudinal work – it is as though a fundamental part of good teaching is muted by the standards and school improvement agenda.

The ruling relations elide the “attitudinal” domain to which Evans (2011) refers – they focus instead on coordinating the domains Foucault described as disciplinary, such as body, space and time, reflected in Evan's *behavioural* domain. The model of discipline Foucault describes in *Discipline & Punish* involves “arts of distribution” and the “control of activity”. As described earlier, these involve practices of enclosure, partitioning, establishing functional sites, ranking, timetabling, temporal elaboration, correlation of body and gesture, articulation of bodies and objects, and exhaustive use. Many of these are recognisable in the coordinating rhythms of the ruling relations mapped out in Chapter Seven. For example, the process of accreditation clearly establishes rankings and describes the practices expected of teachers at different stages. The PDP process “timetables” the year, establishing a temporal elaboration that operates in cycles of interviews, observations, and accounts of the self. The PDP represents a “collective obligatory rhythm, imposed from the outside” (Foucault, 1977, p. 152). Teachers' time is highly regulated, from the ringing of the bells for each period to the longer-term rhythms of the year in terms, professional development days, accreditation requirements, evaluations, and assessments. The gap that is left for the attitudinal is a crucial one for the ethical formation of teacher identity: it is a lacuna in the ruling relations, meaning that it acts simultaneously as a site of resistance – or counter conduct, as will be discussed

shortly – as much as it is the critical relational domain through which teachers practice in the classroom.

Whatever the “norms and expectations of the state” (Mockler, 2020) that professional standards and requirements may convey, these bureaucratic practices are inevitably contextualised and mediated by local factors in schools. At Olivetree High, the five elements of professional community identified by Louis et al. (1996) were quite apparent: shared values, focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatised practice, and reflective dialogue. This culture was facilitated by the collective sense of mission and the leadership of a principal who understood their position as school leader in a highly political environment (Niesche, 2013). Earlier I recalled Julia’s effort to “put aside” the political dimension of teachers’ work in order to focus on the administrative tasks that are required of the teacher. However, for Julia this putting aside is merely a mechanism that allows her to properly analyse the way her work is shaped by coordinating texts and ruling relations. The fact that Julia must bracket out of her work a key ethical dimension so that she may understand what tasks “must be done” is itself a reminder that these attitudinal dimensions are persistent and important in teachers work.

Teachers under neoliberalism

There is a neoliberal logic underpinning a great deal of policy development, both in education and beyond. Policies that situate the locus of societal and systemic change – and blame – in the individual reflect a political agenda that has gone on for more than half a century. This is one of several underpinning logics which also include a bureaucratic inertia and an epistemological privileging of certain kinds of – quantitative, positivist – data which speaks to a technocratic logic. Bureaucracy and technocracy are not necessarily *bad*, but when they crowd out the ethical, or when they orient practice around standardised, generalisable, “clinical” understandings of evidence, they become, to paraphrase Foucault, “dangerous”. They prevent teachers from fully engaging in the moral and civic development of students.

Teachers' work is reconfigured by the demands of neoliberal policy, even if it struggles to restructure their ethical identity. At least as far as could be seen in this study, teachers are able to hold Evans (2011) three dimensions of professionalism – *behavioural* practices, *attitudinal* beliefs, and *intellectual* knowledge – in balance across the demands placed on their time. As will be discussed soon, this stems from practical wisdom built up by experience, but also in the gaps and spaces left open by the coordinating texts. While policy aims to codify much, it cannot capture or measure everything. But there are also limits to teachers' abilities to engage with the political crises exacerbated by neoliberalism, limits that are not strictly related to the stipulations of education policy. The example of the Languages Festival cancelled by the pandemic is one, the hot and stuffy classroom that confronted Charlotte, or the need for Cate's head teacher to find a new site for a performing arts event during the bushfires are others.

One question this raises is just how useful a rubric neoliberalism is for describing these matters. In some respects, it seems teachers are caught in the domain of bureaucracy – Weber's iron cage (Churcher & Talbot, 2020), or Graeber's utopia of rules – rather than the subjectivising, individualising gaze of neoliberalism. While it is clear that the ruling relations that are codified in coordinating texts in schools – such as the professional standards, the National School Improvement Tool, or much of the research done by CESE – are oriented towards a neoliberal worldview, they also represent an approach grounded in bureaucracy and its associated rationality. The logic of what works instead reflects a paradigmatic "engineering" mindset, one that overlooks the complex interactions between educational means and educational ends (Biesta, 2007). Perhaps most significantly, teachers themselves do not necessarily feel compelled to take up these worldviews in their personal classroom practice (the behavioural), in their educational philosophies and knowledges (the intellectual), or in their ethical position (the attitudinal). Rather, it is intensifying demands placed on teachers' time that stem from these texts that does the most harm – inducting teachers less into the discourse and more into an overworked schedule that leaves less room for the political and ethical.

This is the site at which the tensions between neoliberal policy and teacher practice play out in ways that suggest the potential for resistance. There is no doubt that there exist regimes of truth which constitute “official” definitions of teachers work. In this thesis, these are the documents, texts and policies that comprise the ruling relations of schools in New South Wales. Through the accepted forms of evidence and accountability that they privilege, these standards and processes make teachers more responsible for systemic change and changing themselves to model this kind of professionalism. Yet this discursive power paradoxically seems to be most effective at the *material* level: teachers maintain a kind of distance from the discourses of these policies in the way they understand their practice. One example of this is the way these policies are understood by informants less in terms of their specific content and more for their “weight” and “clunkiness” and “process”. They are not seen as intrinsic to the practice of teaching, rather they are an administrative “add-on”. A similar attitude is described by Baker et al. (2018), where teachers discussed professional development as a “strategic activity”, as related to “career”, and linked to accreditation (p. 579). There is less emphasis on the links to teaching practice, and fewer still to broader notions of teacher identity or ethical responsibility. Churcher and Talbot (2020) have noted that despite these kinds of challenges, there are traditional visions of educators that “remain embedded in the collective social imagination and serve to attract strong affective investments” (p. 33), indicating that there are limits to idealised bureaucratic structures. The findings in this study also indicate that there are external ethical and political contingencies that operate in practice to prevent total bureaucratisation of teacher professional identity.

Clarke and Moore (2013) suggest that standards, as expressions of neoliberalism’s “fetishisation” of measurement and accountability, purport to identify “what constitutes effective teaching and what is required of teachers at various stages of their career” (p. 496), and in so doing deny the existence of a surplus or excess. The surplus or excess in fact exists, both in the way the Real enters into the classroom through the external political environment and its associated contingencies, or through the personal experiences of individual teachers. These are factors that, following Biesta (2010), rely on *values*, not just to inform educational practices but because values “are actually

constitutive of such practices” (p. 501). While the demands of neoliberal policy may provoke performative behaviours or seek to circumscribe understandings of good practice, the excessive domain of actual practice – the contingent space of actuality – provides space for teachers to do “good teaching” that differs from the official version. This is not a form of values schizophrenia, but rather a legitimate act of counter conduct that transpires in the shared social space of the classroom. This is one way for teachers to navigate these private and public spaces, and to hold these competing concepts of teaching in tension.

Values schizophrenia in neoliberal policymaking

If the bureaucratic features of school life are understood as being a function of neoliberalism, then a kind of values schizophrenia – Ball’s (2003) term for the tension between higher-order policy demands and values and experiences at a more local level – is also being produced within the system of schooling itself. At the very least, there is a tension being produced in this environment whereby the stated objectives of policymakers and policy is not realised in practice because of the perverse features of policy enactment. If the “busy work” of admin, which leaves teachers with less space for the attitudinal components of their practice and gives them more work in the behavioural/regulated space, can be conceived as stemming from neoliberal imperatives, then it is likely this strategy contributes to a narrow education in the area of climate change and activism, which will likely contribute to the market agenda. Ideally, these coordinating texts would encourage teachers to give time and space for identity work, since it is the relational domain that best supports what teachers do in the classroom with their students. This contradiction between the ethical objective of an active and informed citizenry and the achieved outcome of narrowed curriculum and burgeoning administrivia is emblematic of neoliberal policymaking.

The administrative work that is generated under neoliberal policy regimes compromises both the objectives it seeks to achieve as well as broader ideas about good teaching. This seems to be the case at Olivetree High, where school improvement policies – which are translated into the school via the PDP – are enacted using heavily textual, “clunky”

processes that rely on teachers spending large amounts of time working on administrivia. Sara reads much of this policy as stemming from “the government” being “picky”, leading to the kind of environment in which intended benefits are overwhelmed by, to quote Julia, “just the sheer weight of them all”. This is perhaps the most significant way in which the neoliberal project, quite apart from its ideological logics, comes to bear on teacher practice in this context. The school improvement agenda imposes excessive administrative workload burdens on teachers at the same time as governments pare back the scale of the support workforce in education systems, meaning that ever more “bullshit work” is demanded of teachers while leaving less room for what actually matters in the classroom.

Policy involves the “authoritative allocation of values” (Easton, 1953, p. 129), so it stands to reason that a critique of policy should also take stance on the values that it represents. Biesta (2010) suggests that one road out of the “evidence-based” paradigm for educational practice is to take a “values-based approach”. Similarly, Wrigley (2013) argues that paradigmatic questions about “policy and its determination of everyday life” cannot overlook considerations of politics, power and ethical stance (p. 35). Many of the tensions highlighted in this study represent contradictions immanent to the “neoliberal cascade” that Connell (2013a) wrote about. The question to which this chapter now turns is a way through the cascade for teachers.

Ethical counter conduct

These questions of teacher identity and ethics under neoliberalism remind us that educational research serves multiple purposes: it can inform the technical craft of teaching as well as inquire into the moral and political questions of *purpose*. Biesta (2007) argues that one of the signature deficits in what works research and standards agendas is the evacuation of these ethico-political questions. Like Flyvbjerg (2001), he reminds us that social science broadens the scope of inquiry to cover not just what *can* be done, but also what *should* be done – posing the question “what is the right thing to do?”. For teachers this is a way for research to contribute to their sense of ethical identity, but the significance of this ethical dimension is magnified somewhat in the context of climate

change and pandemics. Given the crises that confront our world today, it seems only reasonable that research inquires not only into what can and should be done, but also what *must* be done. This sense of moral duty was present in much of what I observed at Olivetree High.

The challenge for schools and school systems (and school leaders, and political leaders, and teachers) is how to hold two logics in tension: the need for a formalised bureaucracy in an advanced capitalist democracy which is itself split between the demands of the market-economic sphere and the demands of the environmental and civic spheres, and the need to give teachers the intellectual and professional freedom and trust to teach students about matters that are going to be crucial in order to sustain democracy. Paradoxically, these *should not* be in tension, since the preservation of a healthy market economy depends on the alignment of civic, environmental, and democratic interests. Connell (2013a) has argued that the neoliberal cascade in schools has manifested in restricted curricula, devolutionary and competitive policy measures, and a general approach that sees education as vital in the formation of “human capital”. The challenge for *teachers* in this environment is finding space for democratic and civic knowledge, for explicating their understanding of the purpose or *telos* of education (Biesta, 2010). At Olivetree High, the challenges presented by the neoliberal cascade relate to the rise of administrivia, “constant change”, and some of bureaucratic inertia that can be seen to obstruct good practice. This inertia was described by Sara in terms of being fully informed about student welfare or, along with Julia and Cate, planning extracurricular activities for their students. These necessary, enriching, and therefore ethical practices which go some way to developing this *telos* are constrained by the demands of the utopia of rules.

However, there are spaces for counter conduct. By this I am not referring to conduct that rejects the bureaucratic obligations placed on teachers by the system. As was reported in interviews and through my observation of the learning and development practices in the school, these obligations were being met, though perhaps not in the fullest sense in which they are intended. Sara described the rush to get the process done so that it

seemed like a tick the box exercise, rather than developing her practice in line with the goals. These are indications of the attachment-aversion-indifference triad in policy enactment, a triad that also suggests the presence of *affective* and emotional responses (Talbot, 2020). Talbot (2020) has argued that resistance in this space can take the form of *utopic* moments of enthusiasm and joy, as well as *boredom* moments characterised by flatness and detachment. But counter conduct runs deeper in the sense that teachers step around the disciplinary function of governing texts, often in response to ethically contingent moments that are informed by external contexts. Instead of transpiring in the domain of administrivia and planning, counter conduct happens *in the classroom* where the full ethical responsibility of the teacher is restored. Here the considerations demanded by these coordinating texts appeared to fall away in the face of the immediate needs of students. When students raise issues like climate change in this environment, these teachers have a moral obligation to help learners to understand and explore the problem.

Interestingly, the role of “truth speaker” – *parrhesiastes* in ancient Greek (Foucault, 2001) – in schools can often fall on the students themselves. A surprising number of times during my period at Olivetree High I was struck by the way students would call attention to the “real problems” of the world. They cut through the language and conditions imposed by governing texts and spoke to the authentic issues that they face outside the classroom. The student who asked whether *terracotta* – cooked earth – was another word for climate change spoke a truth that brought a confident and creative teacher to a pause. The students who did projects on climate change for their Year 10 PIPs investigated complex ideas and problems that are not dictated by the curriculum, and that teachers themselves may be politically bound to avoid raising. Some teachers find ways to navigate this within the context of their classroom, as could be seen in Stephanie’s science lesson. Here, students were conscious of humanity’s impact on the natural environment, as one student observed: “we don’t change because of our environment, we change our environment”. This comment was set within a lesson about adaptation, and it is a poignant metaphor for the adaptive challenges that schools and schoolteachers face when confronted with a changing environment. What this indicates

is that the impact of crises, exacerbated and even enabled by neoliberalism, is being felt in the classroom and there is little in the domain of coordinating texts to account for these challenges.

When teachers are compelled to operate in the grey zones of policy, a certain practical wisdom is necessary. Flyvbjerg (2001) refers to the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, the kind of highly contextual expert knowledge that leads a practitioner to *instinctively* know what the right thing is to do. This is built up over many years of experience – a merger of technical and theoretical knowledge (*techne* and *episteme*), as well as practices of professional learning that extend into the social and global conditions in which teaching is situated: conditions in which teachers may need to play the role of *parrhesiastes* themselves (Kemmis, 2006). The PDP may be one possible mechanism to equip teachers to deal with the ethical contingencies of classroom practice, but at this stage the ruling relations that govern it do not lend themselves to that kind of values-oriented sensibility. Instead, the PDP is tied quite firmly to a set of texts – such as the professional standards as well as a suite of policies located in the “what works” domain – that leave little room for complex moral reasoning. Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2018) have argued that the Australian Professional Standards do leave room for contextual interpretation – an argument that is supported by the findings of this study at Olivetree High – but more importantly that this can provide space for a more expansive understanding of teacher professionalism that embraces the idea of practical wisdom as a form of counter conduct. Perhaps most significantly, what this ethical counter conduct does is create space for hope in a world that sorely needs it (Wrigley et al., 2012).

Conclusion

There are policies in education which can be broadly categorised as neoliberal in that they reflect logics of competition and accountability. More significantly, they centre the *individual* teacher in their gaze, rather than the profession, the system, or logics of pedagogy and practice at a whole-of-profession level. The site of policy enactment for school improvement is located in the teacher themselves as an isolated and accountable professional. Even the emphasis on professional community is attenuated by the

structure of the PDP process and refracted through the lens of individual professional learning. While some of these policies and processes, such as the PDP, are not so easily understood as purely neoliberal, there remains a distinct set of values in the ruling relations of education policy in New South Wales. The discursive terrain clearly draws on neoliberal approaches of managerialism and “neo-Taylorism” (Eacott, 2017; Gronn, 1982), and is packed along with the technocratic logic of what works.

What these policies tend to crowd out is reflexive space for the development of ethical teacher identity work. There is a spectrum of ways that informants deal with neoliberalism-as-policy, whether that be by attachment-compliance, aversion-resistance, or indifference-affect, but they are consistent in the way they deal with neoliberalism-as-crisis. When the external contexts of climate change and bushfire demands a response, teachers draw on their own ethical judgement, attitudes and values, recognising that these are in many ways constitutive of their practice even if they are not explicitly referenced in professional development texts (Biesta, 2009, 2010; Mockler, 2011). This points towards one way to resolve the values schizophrenia that Ball (2003) wrote about. For the teachers in this study, the contingent realities of classroom practice mean that even without the support of the coordinating policy formation, there is a sense in which ethical professional identity is always being developed. While this sense may be constrained in some spaces by the demands of policy, when it comes to the relationships they build with their students and the collaborative and collegial spirit of the school, these “values” make up the attitudinal gap in neoliberal policy.

The kinds of ethical spaces opened up in the classroom are indicative of the central tension that exists between neoliberal policy and teacher practice. The map of these policies in Chapter Seven supports Mockler’s (2020) analysis of the discursive structure of professional development in New South Wales schools, arguing that teacher professionalism has an ontological dimension, and that it involves the complex mediation of policy, context and professional identity (p. 3). This thesis finds that not only is that the case, but also the very contingency and excess of the classroom environment gives rise to challenges that shape ethical responses and demand forms of

counter conduct in teacher practice which can subvert the governing logics that are propagated via policy. In short, the ruling relations define the work of teachers and create work in the form of evidence gathering and accountability, while teachers find ways to do what is right and good in their classroom despite these demands. The ethics of authentically “real” learning transcend the logics of neoliberalism.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

We are not 'against' bureaucracies, any more than we are 'for' them. They are like electric plugs. They will probably not go away, but they do need to be controlled if the prerogatives of a democratic society are to remain visible and usable. This is why we ask that the schools be 'subversive', that they serve as a kind of anti-bureaucracy bureaucracy, providing the young with a 'What is it good for?' perspective on its own society. (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 1)

Neoliberalism has restructured social relations over many decades now. In all facets of our social lives, we have been repositioned as consumers and customers. The rights and privileges and responsibilities that inhere in the community of citizens that make up nations have been displaced by a consumer logic, as though government were a shop from which goods and services are purchased, rather than a collective social enterprise. Aligned with this consumerist logic is one of individuation whereby responsibility for problems – systemic or otherwise – is pushed onto the individual. This effect can be seen in the subtle discursive changes in education policy like the shift from *teaching* quality to *teacher* quality (Mockler, 2018). These policy shifts encourage particular practices of the self and recommend modes of identification, standardisation and accountability, processes that necessarily elide the collective effort and systemic change necessary to address the problems of neoliberal capitalism.

These policies cannot possibly account for the excessive features of the real world that impact on classroom practice, and yet these are features of authentic practice with which teachers must contend. The example of climate change discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine is particularly relevant because it is the most significant challenge we face on a global level, and one that will shape the future of learners in the classroom, as well as the learning environment itself. But it is significant also because it crystallises the reflexive tensions that exist within neoliberalism. Unrestrained consumerism and transformed social relations further degrade our response to climate change, and at the same time neoliberal policy constrains teachers' ability to educate a new generation of students about the crisis. It is a double bind that is characteristic of neoliberal policy.

This double bind is evident in a range of ways throughout this study. This study has explored the way it plays out as a tension between policy and practice for five teachers at a secondary school in Sydney. It has looked at the way teachers describe their work, traced the discursive terrain of the ruling relations of policy, and then explored how this connects with the actual practices of the classroom environment. This chapter returns to the research questions that were used to frame this study, before turning to the possibilities for future work in this domain. It then concludes with an act of *parrhesia*: truth-telling about the problems of our times.

The question of neoliberal policy

The question that drove this thesis asked how the power of neoliberal education policy shapes rationalities of classroom practice. I approached this question in two ways: firstly, by starting from the standpoint of teachers to explore what elements of their practice converge with governing logics as they can be traced through the ruling relations, and secondly, by seeking to understand how the logics of neoliberalism are made manifest in the ruling relations of this specific context. This approach did not presume to investigate any particular policy, instead I was guided to relevant governing texts by the informants. Teacher practice reflects the impact of neoliberalism in complex ways, both material and discursive. To respond to the research question that underpins this project, four sub-questions were developed which can help to understand this complex problem. It is to these sub-questions that this concluding chapter now turns.

How do the rationalities of neoliberalism play out in Australian educational policy?

While competition is the defining social logic of neoliberalism, in education policy it is through the processes of standardisation and accountability that it is expressed. This became most apparent during the policy mapping process where higher-order policy texts, such as the professional standards, the National Partnership Agreement, and the National School Improvement Tool all articulate goals that entail consistency, standardisation, and accounting through usually quantitative forms of evidence. It must be said that standardisation and accountability are not inherently or only neoliberal modes of governing: they significantly predate our current hegemonic imaginary.

However, in line with the individualising instinct for competition that comprises that imaginary, they are modes of governance and management that have become inseparable from a broader project of responsabilisation: projecting responsibility for the success or failure of systems onto the individuals who comprise them.

These policy approaches privilege the quantifiable teaching subject. As can be seen with the various systems, accreditation processes, forms, and forms of evidence that the teachers in this study must work around, there is a significant emphasis on the measurable. In Chapter Seven this was noted in the professional standards, where this logic is explicitly articulated in terms of human capital: it describes teachers as “the greatest resource” in Australian schools, accounting for “the vast majority of expenditure” and comparing teachers to “any other education program or policy” (NESA, 2018, p. 2). This supports the logic of “what works”, which implies that decontextualised, generalisable and easily measured approaches to education are superior forms of practice to complex and contextual practices associated with professional judgement and practical wisdom. Such a “measurable” teacher implies boundary conditions around professional identity: what cannot be measured is de-emphasised at best, discouraged at worst. This is despite those boundary conditions in teaching often being the most important and ethically sensitive element: the edge cases of contingency in which authentic teachable moments can occur. There is also an implied privileging of particular forms of evidence and forms of professional learning associated with this quantifiable teacher. Generative professional learning practices – such as action research – may be confined to the explicit process of classroom improvement, rather than the broader ethical and global concerns described by Kemmis (2006). This regime of evidence has the effects of promulgating a particular vision of teachers’ work, as well as demanding teachers account for themselves against this standard.

The primary document through which these broader policy imperatives were translated into practice for the teachers at Olivetree High was the New South Wales PDP. It became clear that the PDP was bound up in a range of administrative processes that translate policy into teachers work. The PDP operates as an annual inflection point through which

many of these processes flow. Previous research conducted by the Department indicates that teachers find the PDP process valuable and the required conversations with supervisors useful for developing their professional practice (Baker et al., 2018). However, this valuable process is a product of a set of ruling relations that give rise to professional learning approaches which encourage one-shot experiences, leading also to the proliferation of a pseudo-market for workshops, facilitators, and accredited course providers in schools (Mockler, 2020). These conflicting features of the ruling relations were noted in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, where the school planning process was both informed by PDP goals, but also led to a calendar of events or demand for opportunities that satisfied the demands of a tick and flick approach to accreditation. These forms of professional development do not lend themselves to the kinds of rich, complex, contextual, and ethically informed practices that are constitutive of ethical and good teaching (Biesta, 2009).

What are the tensions between these policies and teachers' practice?

The proliferation of policy, policy change and accountability requirements contribute to the growing presence of administrivia in teachers' work. This phenomenon has been reported in a wide range of literature (For example Churcher & Talbot, 2020; Holloway & Brass, 2017; Kim, 2019; McGrath-Champ et al., 2018; Talbot, 2016). Graeber (2015) suggests the proliferation of paperwork is itself a function of late capitalist and neoliberal sensibilities, although it could just as easily be the inertia associated with bureaucracy. In Chapters Five and Six, we saw the way the growing range of policies, procedures, and systems was understood by informants as contributing to the feeling of "weight", of time burdens, as though they were spending their time managing as well as being "managed by" these systems. Contributing to this were elements of the PDP paperwork itself, with Sara noting the way it occupied background mental space at particular times of the year, rather than being used in the highly generative manner for which it is intended. There seems to be much goodwill from teachers at Olivetree High which allows them to respond to these varied demands and tensions, however, there remains an important moral and economic question about the appropriateness of this work extending into teachers' private lives.

The burden of administrative work and accountability requirements adds to teachers' workload. A large recent survey of New South Wales schoolteachers found that workload concerns were intensified under a "tsunami of paperwork" (Fitzgerald et al., 2019). This is a significant issue because while there are finite working hours in the day, many of which teachers spend in the classroom, this administrative work takes over out-of-class time, forcing teachers to do lesson preparation and additional work at home. Stacey et al. (2020) describe this process as "triaging", where teachers must make choices about what work to complete, when, or whether it can be completed at all. Informants noted in Chapters Five and Six how much work needed to be completed at home, such as the case of Charlotte creating slides and writing exemplars until late in the evening the night before class, Julia composing resources for the Year 10 personal interest projects, or Stephanie explaining that teachers who want to take on higher levels of accreditation should *expect* to have their personal time taken up by the extra work. These represent the intrusion of working life into leisure time and home life, the "reaching into the social" that Brown (2005) wrote about. These concerns distract from the core matter of teaching – the preparation for what goes on in the classroom – instead demanding valuable and limited time for things that ultimately serve the dominant logic of accountability.

The intensifying demands on teachers' time associated with these accountability measures prevent them from engaging in reflection on the generative and ethical practices which are necessary for good teaching. Authentic pedagogy draws on the world outside the classroom, it gives learners a sense of the connectedness between the concepts and ideas they learn about at school and the world outside of which they are vital citizens. These objectives are acknowledged at the highest levels of education policy in Australia, with the Melbourne Declaration, which framed the development of the current Australian Curriculum, stating that the goal of education is to create active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008). Yet despite this, the material influence of external contexts is felt in significant ways in classrooms. These tensions were felt in a dual sense in this study: in the materiality of the classroom environment – hot, smoky, punctuated by evacuations and absences – and in the political way that students were posing

questions, inquiring into the world, and attending rallies. When government policy is formulated to avoid reference to climate change, teachers experience a significant ethical tension in their work. At Olivetree High, where the project-based learning initiative of the PIPs enabled students to research a subject of their choosing, informants were navigating highly politicised issues that included not only the changing climate, but fundamental political, economic, and moral structures in society. This tension is acutely felt by teachers in government schools, since as public servants they are exposed to the political dynamics of the climate change debate in the media and amongst political leaders. However, these policy tensions also create a paradoxical space for freedom, since the conception of teacher identity that is traced in neoliberal education policy does not account for the excessive contingency of the classroom: the very act of creating professional standards defines areas that are “unaccountable”. These gaps must be filled somehow since ethics and identity are fundamental to the act of teaching. These are the sites where policy enactment manifests in forms of counter conduct.

What are the strategies and practices enacted by teachers in classrooms in the light of encroaching demands of the neoliberal project?

Counter conduct is not *misconduct*, but rather modes of behaviour that subvert the dominant discourses and expectations in a field. Julia’s heuristic of “attachment, aversion, and indifference” aligns conceptually with the findings of Moore and Clarke (2016), suggesting that strategies employed by teachers revolve around compliance, resistance and affective dimensions. For some, attachment or compliant approaches look for ways to “push through” and implement policy changes with great fidelity to the literal textual intentions of a policy. Attachment approaches embody the discursive logic of policy and are characteristic of professional subjectivity that meets the demands of neoliberalism. Aversion or resistant approaches involve seeking out alternative practices that may subvert the dominant logics of policy. While this might not necessarily involve an outright rejection of the demands of neoliberalism, aversion approaches open up spaces for ethical engagement and an alternative imagination. Finally, indifferent, or affective approaches represent compliance with the *letter* of the policy, but not its *spirit*. These approaches are characteristic of professional identity under neoliberalism, where

the amount of time and energy demanded of teachers is so great that the administrative work becomes a “tick and flick” affair – its influence is not significant enough to invoke a deep performative shift in identity, but neither is it so irrelevant that it can be ignored entirely or not have any influence on practice at all.

Those approaches are indicative of the responses to the *discursive* domain of neoliberalism, a different set of practices was apparent in response to the *material* effects that neoliberalism has on the classroom. The crises that were observed during this study – the bushfires, COVID-19, and climate change more broadly – are exacerbated by economic and social forces which are broadly understood in this thesis as part of neoliberal global capitalism. These external contexts raise ethical issues in the classroom, and Campbell (2007) argues teachers must do their best to avoid conveying their own political views. In doing so, however, it is important that teachers do not overlook the basic premise of education, particularly as it is described in the Melbourne Declaration: that education should make students active and informed citizens, and that it should engage in critical and authentic inquiry into the world (Carr & Kemmis, 2004). Classrooms, like Hostetler’s (2005) characterisation of life, are “laboratories for ethics”. These laboratories are a kind of unaccountable, or rather *uncountable* space: teachers are able to engage in counter conduct precisely because the ethical space in which they operate – the classroom – is a relatively private one. Paradoxically, the act of peer observation at Olivetree High, which creates spaces for generative professional conversations, is a kind of intrusion into this small ethical community, an intrusion that is structured around the professional standards. While it may not seem like a deliberate strategy, the sense of care, duty, and ethical concern for their students, represents one practice through which these five teachers were able to enact a form of professionalism that runs counter to the logic of neoliberalism. Because it is located in the *ontological* domain, the *being* of a teacher (Mockler, 2020), and because values are *constitutive* of good teaching (Biesta, 2010), when not strongly mediated by policy constructs teacher professionalism is able to create generative, reflective, caring practice.

Concerns about the state of the world are bound up in a sense of professional and ethical identity. Cate described her frustration that colleagues at some independent schools were able to escort students to the School Strike for Climate, ensuring they were safe and using the demonstrations as a profound learning opportunity. As an employee of the government schooling sector, Cate and her colleagues were prohibited from doing so – a challenge at the ethical level of teaching students about their world and the politics of their future. In a sense, through this research, Cate was engaging in an act of *parrhesia* or truth-telling. These acts are vital to the future of our communities and it is this strategy that is most significantly curbed by neoliberal bureaucracy. Acts of counter conduct are subtle since the speech of public employees is constrained. Ironically, in schools the people with the loudest voice and capacity to speak “truth to power” are the students themselves. This is not a deliberate design of education policy, rather it is the consequence of a naïve effort to regulate and depoliticise the act of teaching. The truth of the matter is, of course, that preventing teachers from discussing climate change is a political choice itself – one that calls to mind the way in which climate change, in Australia in particular, is treated as a political problem rather than a scientific one. The perverse effect of this depoliticising policy approach is that it renders schools *even more* political by taking a scientific reality about the world about which students need an understanding and making it controversial. Teachers who choose to teach the politics of the crisis – and there was a pronounced avoidance of that in this study – are putting themselves at enormous professional risk. Doing so is the mandate of the *parrhesiastes* (Foucault, 2001).

What insights can be gained to inform the development of education policy?

The policy-mapping process indicated that the “equity and excellence” agenda in Australian schooling is lop-sided: while excellence as a virtue is reinforced as it trickles down through the ruling relations, approaches to equity are not given anywhere near the same emphasis. This may be because the approach taken in this research started in an academically selective school in which excellence can be taken for granted, but then if this is the case it might be expected that the equity agenda would be given more room to breathe. In any case, the policy map from the PDP – a document common to all

teachers in New South Wales – upwards to national documents such as the Standards and the National Partnership Agreement, indicates that equity is discursively emphasised to a lesser degree than excellence in the formation of policy around professional learning. The focus on equity diminished, particularly where these documents call on teachers for a greater focus on data and an emphasis on the context-independent logic of “what works”. Spina (2021) explains that “although equity is a part of neoliberal discourses, it is generally framed in terms of individual rights and responsibilities” (p. 18). In a policy environment where equity is understood in these terms, excellence – a quality that is inherently individual in education systems that privilege standardised test data – seems to re-emphasise this neoliberal logic, and diminish the moral component implied by the goal of equity.

At the level of the classroom, the teachers in this study expressed their concern for equity, many of which were made clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example where students from disadvantaged backgrounds may be further disadvantaged by remote learning. While policy measures designed to address equity in the schooling system are most effectively targeted at systemic concerns, and likely involve increased funding, a more thorough approach might include scope for this ethical practice in the classroom. To do so, policy would need to recognise and support forms of practice that are explicitly concerned with social justice, a position similar to the case argued by Kemmis (2006) for participatory action research in professional development. These forms of practice exist in various forms around the world and draw on the tradition of critical pedagogy to address issues of social inequity, and include approaches like critical mathematics (Gutstein, 2012), “fair go pedagogy” (Munns, 2007; Munns, Arthur, Hertzberg, Sawyer, & Zammit, 2012), or critical literacies that help students address gaps in cultural and social capital (Comber, 2006; Shor, 2009). These approaches would demand a privileging of the attitudinal dimensions of professional learning, and policies oriented towards equity and social justice must therefore also consider the organisation of professional development, accreditation, and planning in schools.

Rich forms of professional learning should also emphasise the attitudinal domain of teacher practice. Schools are sites of complex ethical reasoning and teachers must be equipped with the social licence and professional trust to conduct these kinds of conversations with their students. As was noted in Chapter Eight, students are not only posing these questions in the context of the syllabus – as was the case in Julia’s Latin class or Stephanie’s science class – but they are also inquiring into the conditions of the world outside of school. The informants in this study found ways to engage in those moral lessons, but they are nevertheless constrained by the strategic political considerations they must make when discussing such matters. Policy in government schools in particular presents conflicting interests. Teachers are encouraged, ethically obliged even, to help their students learn about these political problems in order to participate in the world as “active and informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008). However, as employees of the state, it can be challenging for teachers to critique policies that may be unjust or inadequate where that critique can be interpreted – rightly – as a criticism of the government that employs them. While the material effects of crises like climate change are being felt increasingly in the classroom, this study indicates that policy and professional development ought to give space to the attitudinal components of practice, as much as it does the behavioural and intellectual.

The privileging of quantitative forms of evidence and accountability in education policy can narrow the scope of professional development opportunities. Generative professional learning should emphasise qualitative evidence and rich forms of practice. One approach developed by Gore et al. (2015) is “quality teaching rounds”, which facilitate rich conversations about practice. Evidence indicates that this approach is an effective way to create a deep and productive culture of continuous professional learning (Bowe & Gore, 2017; Gore, 2018; Gore et al., 2017). Action research is another possibility, which the Department of Education already outlines on its website (NSW DET, 2010). However, action research should not be understood as limited purely to developing simple improvements to practice in the classroom but also, following Kemmis (2006), should take into account the broader moral and transformative concerns of the society outside the classroom. What is most clear is that professional learning that

emphasises quantitative measures tends to also encourage “one-shot” professional development experiences, enabling a “tick and flick” mentality to processes of accreditation that do no justice to the complex demands of teaching as a profession (Mockler, 2015, 2020; Mockler & Stacey, 2020). Ultimately, policy that does justice to the complexities and ethical tensions of practice set in real and contingent contexts must recognise that there are forms of evidence that are not so easily measured, that cannot be “benchmarked” or compared to other contexts, and which reflect the unique relationships and ethical dimensions of a given classroom and group of students.

In this space, ethical professionalism relies not on the decontextualised logic of “best practice” and “what works”, but rather a sense of expert knowledge and practical wisdom, described by Aristotle as *phronesis*. *Phronesis* was seen to be essential in the formation of an excellent and virtuous character, and the tradition of *virtue ethics* broadly takes the development of *character* as its aim – as opposed to deontological or consequentialist frameworks which see *action* as the proper target of ethical consideration (MacIntyre, 1981). There is a sense in which mechanisms like professional standards and the policies around them reflect action-oriented ethical logics since they seek to quantify and prescribe particular actions. However, professional identity and professional ethics operate in the contingent domain of interpersonal relationships, mediated by the external contexts of the world. In these spaces, checklists and standards and guides to practice might inform action, but an answer to the question “what is this good for?” asked by Postman and Weingartner (1969) depends on the ethical character and values of the teacher.

Contribution and limitations

This thesis contributes to understandings of teacher professionalism, professional practice, and professional ethics under contingency. It has found that professional standards are not able to account for many of the rich and complex demands of actual practice, which means that teachers under these conditions are required to exercise their expert judgement. This practical wisdom is more difficult to standardise or quantify, and as such represents a site of counter conduct. Teachers who exercise this practical wisdom

are not necessarily doing so as a form of active resistance. Rather, it is a mark of their professionalism and professional ethics that they find ways to respond to the tensions posed by factors outside of the classroom. This thesis sheds light on some of the ways teacher judgement works in domains where they must make tricky decisions that have political and ethical implications beyond the classroom. It also acts as a spotlight on the phenomenon of neoliberalism as a discursive policy regime in this particular context. Taking the example of the PDP, this thesis has mapped the way neoliberal logics of standardisation, accountability and managerialism are imbricated within the broader texts governing professional development in NSW schools. In particular, it has identified the way discourses of teacher professionalism are promulgated by these governing texts in ways that can narrow the professional imagination: chief among them the limited space given to “attitudinal” work associated with political and ethical values under the previously mentioned conditions of contingency. While much of this policy is steeped in the neoliberal imaginary, this thesis has also found that bureaucracy itself can “crowd out” much of the attitudinal work that is required to address conditions of external contingency. The very process designed to improve teacher practice – ongoing professional learning and development – can, if poorly enacted, contribute to the burgeoning administrative workload that is impacting teachers’ work.

This thesis has identified a set of practices – attachment, aversion, and indifference – that lend weight to and extend those identified by Moore and Clarke (2016). These practices are the ways in which teachers attempt to “do”, to “resist” and to “avoid” the work associated with bureaucratic and neoliberal policy demands. It is in this final domain that this thesis contributes to the literature on education policy enactment. This study has demonstrated the utility of research informed by institutional ethnographic approaches in understanding the tensions experienced in policy enactment. The methodology used in this study, starting from the standpoint and experience of teachers and mapping upwards through higher order policy texts, reveals an assemblage of governing texts that would look very different had the research started with the presumption to investigate a *particular* policy. The teachers at Olivetree High, like many teachers, struggle to balance the imperatives of governing policy texts with the actual

demands of everyday practice. Responding to these demands, navigating these tensions, requires an awareness not only of what *can* be done within the circumscribed domain of these ruling relations, but also what *ought* to be done in response to broader ethical and professional concerns. This study has drawn on the expertise and wisdom of these teachers to enrich a case study of an outstanding school in Sydney, and in doing so has some broader implications for policy research and teacher practice.

Having said that, it is important to note that this study is a snapshot of a single school, looking at the complex ways that policy enactment works in that environment. In that regard, and as highlighted in Chapter Four, this study is a necessarily truncated ontology. The findings in this thesis represent the experience, views, and judgements of five teacher informants set within the context of a single school case study. Spina's (2021) findings show that quite different results can be found in different environments, so while there is value in using a case study to build a rich picture of practice and policy enactment, the results must still be read within their context. The sample size for this study – drawing on the experiences of five teacher informants at a single school – is small. While the intention of this thesis was not to make generalisable observations, a larger sample that drew on more teachers or several schools might reveal other dimensions to the tensions these policies create. In Chapter 4, I referred to Olivetree High's status as a relatively advantaged school and noted that this both reveals some tensions in schools at the same time as it obscures others. One limitation of this research, then, is that some critical concerns – concerns which might also be understood through the lens of ethical professionalism – have not been made visible due to this sampling. It is important that similar research explores these issues to add breadth to the findings in this thesis and to address concerns of ethics and social justice in different contexts.

In addition, since this research took as its starting point the standpoint and experience of the teacher informants, the findings are necessarily focused on things that are of concern to those individual teachers at that particular point in time. As explained in Chapter 4, informants were given the opportunity to review both their interview transcripts and draft chapters of the analysis and findings of this thesis. They

consistently felt that the findings were an accurate reflection of their standpoint. The culture and practices surrounding professional development at Olivetree High offer some insight into possible ways that policy is understood in practice, but these are insights that are uniquely informed by the culture from which they emerged. Similarly, my interpretations and perspectives as a researcher, the primary instrument of data collection in this research (indeed much qualitative research), are unique and in some ways intangible. They are bound up in my own values, experience, and personal engagement with the informants in this study. I have attempted to provide a trustworthy account by documenting the processes and decisions I have made as a researcher which have led me to these findings. Finally, there are other contextual factors surrounding this case, such as its status as an academically selective institution, its geographical location near a capital city, or the demographic profile of its students, which mean that the experiences described in this thesis cannot and should not be taken as broadly representative of all schools.

Future directions: where next?

This study has highlighted ways that the culture of audit and accountability associated with neoliberalism has come to exercise discursive authority in the domain of practice, and particularly through professional learning. Datafication is a parallel process that sits alongside these accountability and audit regimes. Spina (2021) notes the way the collection of data recharacterises teachers' work: it becomes about the collection of evidence for the purposes of reporting, and that takes place across various performative domains including student achievement (Gorur, 2016; Spina, 2021; Thompson & Cook, 2012) and teacher accreditation and work (Bourke et al., 2018; Talbot, 2016). Teachers must also collect data for their PDP as evidence to support their annual goals. The discourses of teachers' work that the policy context surrounding the PDP articulates emerged through the course of this research, notable among those discourses being the emphasis on a particular regime of evidence. That regime of evidence, like the "data culture" that Spina (2021) describes, lends itself more to quantifiable, generalisable, and positivist understandings. This thesis has also shown that counter conduct in the classroom – by processes of aversion and indifference – is one way that teachers manage

the competing demands of audit culture and the ethical contingency of the classroom. These approaches have the effect of “problematizing the essence and ‘raw material’ of our own practices” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013, p. 89), a way in which the “performative goo” of managerialism or the logic of “what works” is overcome by necessity. Dealing with the contingent environment of the classroom demands ethical professionalism and professional identity in ways that are not just “irresponsible” (Ball & Olmedo, 2013) nor characterised by “everyday utopia” or of “boredom” (Churher & Talbot, 2020). The ethical approaches to practice and the identity positions associated with them identified in this study are key areas for further research and theorising.

These findings suggest that further research is needed to build understanding about the interaction between ethical professionalism and different modes of professional learning in schools. Counter conduct takes many forms, and while it is the “tacitness” of it that makes it so tactically mobile, research that unpacks the way identity is informed by this kind of practical wisdom can help newer teachers as they prepare to enter the profession. The forms that these practices take – as well as the complex judgements associated with them – can contribute further to the literature on teacher professionalism and professional learning. Research could also identify ways in which these forms of knowledge and identity can be used to temper the circumscribing influence of datafication and audit culture under neoliberalism. It may even be the case that research in this space can enrich the “what works” literature, finding ways to marry highly contextual, local, and practically wise professional practice with the insights available from statistical and quantitative analyses of teaching and learning.

Ball et al. (2012) have argued that research which looks for “exceptions to prove the rule in enacting policy” might build on their work by looking at “outstanding” schools (p. 149). This research has chosen one such site: “outstanding” because of the academically selective environment and in line with Flyvbjerg’s (2011) rationale for selecting “extreme” cases discussed in Chapter Four. Spina’s (2021) research, conducted in “ordinary” schools, reported quite different findings. Where the teachers in the schools Spina describes experienced their work and subjectivities as organised and coordinated

by “data culture” associated with NAPLAN, the teachers at Olivetree High instead experience a culture of professional learning and development that draws on a different set of ruling relations. It seems then that pressures and constraints of neoliberal policy, while still felt in both settings, are experienced differently in different school settings. While the focus on “data” can be found in both, the intensification associated with NAPLAN is less relevant at Olivetree High, one possible explanation for which is that students in the school must be high achievers (in NAPLAN and other terms) in order to enrol. Another explanation may be the culture within the school and its leadership team. Instead, the intensification of work at Olivetree High comes from other accountability practices: systems, processes, policies, and procedures. Even at “outstanding” schools, as Ball et al. (2012) put it, there are pressures, constraints and “threats” to which teachers must respond. Future research might begin to explore how those pressures might be met from the kinds of “bottom up” strategies of resistance highlighted here and in other literature which take place in the context-laden and contingent reality of the classroom.

Concluding remarks

Foucault is not interested in telling a story of decline. What is important for Foucault is not that some particular danger is the culmination of our history; rather, he seeks to diagnose and confront whatever the danger is at the time. (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 264)

In hindsight, I should have known that a thesis that investigates the politics of neoliberalism would come to focus on the individual. Even acts of resistance – so Foucault would argue – are bound up in the dominant discourses against which they are positioned. The specific forms of resistance available under neoliberalism are diverse, but perhaps most significantly they turn on the ethical. Reflecting on my own ethical position as a researcher, I am reminded of the calling proposed by Kemmis (2006): that research should address “important problems in thought and action, in theory and practice – problems worth addressing in and for our times, in and for our communities, in and for our shared world” (p. 471). I would like to take up that challenge in this final

section, to play the *parrhesiastes* and give voice to some truths that for some in power may be unwelcome bad news, but which in my view based on this research are necessary to change our world.

Firstly, the example of climate change shows the way broad and global political concerns are felt in the classroom, as well as being deeply felt by students themselves. It is possible this concern stems from anxiety about the future, although the insightful research by students at Olivetree High suggests to me that these students are morally engaged with the world because of a sense of justice. They are invested in their future and seek actions today that can mitigate damaging effects in the future. For teachers, this involves helping these students to develop moral, intellectual, and political capabilities to engage with the problem, as well as the scientific and social literacies necessary to build a world worth living in. The ability to respond creatively to the political and ethical contingency of these external contexts depends on the freedom and flexibility to think and act in contingent and serendipitous ways. This kind of messiness cannot be easily measured, if it can be measured at all.

Secondly, bureaucracy – rather than simply neoliberalism – crowds out notions of attitude, values, and ethics. Many of the problems that policy creates in schools are not, contra the view of many in the academy, products of neoliberal hegemony. Rather, the burden of accountability systems, of big government, of public interest, and of policy changes have a significant impact on teachers' time. This study indicates that teachers need, to paraphrase Helen Sword, "air and light and time and space" to develop their craft, their professional identity, and their ethical capabilities (Sword, 2017). They need moral freedom and trust in their professionalism. Most importantly, policymakers need to recognise that much of what matters in the classroom cannot be quantified or counted, and that there is significant value in the practical wisdom teachers develop practicing their craft. As Spina (2021) argues, "standardized processes and categories can lead to a perception that measurement eliminates bias or subjectivity" (p. 32). But teaching is subjective and subjectifying in its very nature: practical wisdom cannot be standardised since it is an expression of ethical subjectivity under conditions of contingency.

Finally, this practical wisdom should be nurtured so that, following Santoro (2011), teachers are not prevented from enacting good teaching by the constraints of policy. Practical wisdom is the most powerful thing teachers bring to their classrooms. It is the unmeasurable factor that is present in good practice and good teachers: how to do the right thing at the right time. We must trust that this capability can be developed, indeed is present in one degree or another, in all teachers. To believe such is to take seriously Freire's duty to "never, under any circumstances, accept or encourage fatalist positions" (Freire, 2012, p. 48). The neoliberal hegemony that has defined policymaking for the past few decades may limit opportunities to develop practical wisdom by narrowing the scope of professional practice to standards, dot points, and politically unproblematic knowledge. However, the vocation of the teacher is not just to provide knowledge to learners: it is to unlock their ethical capabilities so that the world they live in is a good one and able to be made more so as children grow. It is through practical wisdom that teachers may navigate the complex tensions of neoliberal policy in the hope of making the world and the students in their care so brilliant. And it is from that brilliance, I hope, a new wisdom will emerge.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey questions

Context questions

What are your teaching areas?

What age groups do you teach?

How long have you been teaching at this school?

How long have you been teaching?

Section 1: Orientations to curriculum

This section is adapted from Michael Schiro's notion of 'Curriculum Ideologies' (Schiro, 2013: *Curriculum Theory 2nd Ed*). For each question, you will be given a series of statements.

Please rank these statements from 1 to 4, where 1 is the statement you agree with most strongly, and 4 is the statement you agree with the least. Each set of statements will appear on a separate page.

Take your time with this, there is no correct answer. The data generated from this exercise can be used to create a profile of your orientation to curriculum, which will be provided to you if you wish.

Question 1: Schools

- Schools should provide children with the ability to perceive problems in society, envision a better society, and act to change society so that there is social justice and a better life for all people.
- Schools should fulfil the needs of society by efficiently training youth to function as mature constructive members of society.
- Schools should be communities where the accumulated knowledge of the culture is transmitted to the youth.
- Schools should be enjoyable, stimulating, child-centred environments organised around the developmental needs and interests of children as those needs and interests present themselves from day to day.

Question 2: Teachers

- Teachers should be supervisors of student learning, utilising instructional strategies that will optimise student learning.
- Teachers should be companions to students, using the environment within which the student lives to help the student learn.
- Teachers should be aids to children, helping them learn by presenting them with experiences from which they can make meaning.
- Teachers should be knowledgeable people, transmitting that which is known to those who do not know it.

Question 3: Learning

- Learning best proceeds when the student is presented with appropriate stimulus materials and positive reinforcement.
- Learning best proceeds when the teacher clearly and accurately presents to the student that knowledge which the student is to acquire.
- Learning best takes place when children are motivated to actively engage in experiences that allow them to create their own knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.
- Learning best occurs when a student confronts a real social crisis and participates in the construction of a solution to that crisis.

Question 4: Knowledge

- The knowledge of most worth is the structured knowledge and ways of thinking that have come to be valued by the culture over time.
- The knowledge of most worth is the personal meaning of oneself and of one's world that comes from one's direct experience in the world and one's personal response to such experience.
- The knowledge of most worth is the specific skills and capabilities for action that allow an individual to live a constructive life.
- The knowledge of most worth is a set of social ideals, a commitment to those ideals, and an understanding of how to implement those ideals.

Question 5: Childhood

- Childhood is essentially a time of learning in preparation for adulthood, when one will be a constructive, contributing member of society.
- Childhood is essentially a period of intellectual development highlighted by growing reasoning ability and capacity for memory that results in ever greater absorption of cultural knowledge.
- Childhood is essentially a time when children unfold according to their own innate natures, felt needs, organic impulses, and internal timetables. The focus is on children as they are during childhood rather than as they might be as adults.
- Childhood is essentially a time for practice in and preparation for acting upon society to improve both oneself and the nature of society.

Question 6: Evaluation

- Evaluation should objectively indicate to others whether or not students can or cannot perform specific skills. Its purpose is to certify students' competence to perform specific tasks.
- Evaluation should continuously diagnose children's needs and growth so that further growth can be promoted by appropriate adjustment of their learning environment. It is primarily for the children's benefit, not for comparing children with each other or measuring them against predetermined standards.
- Evaluation should be a subjective comparison of students' performance with their capabilities. Its purpose is to indicate to both the students and others the extent to which they are living up to their capabilities.

- Evaluation should objectively determine the amount of knowledge students have acquired. It allows students to be ranked from those with the greatest intellectual gain to those with the least.

Section 2: Orientations to Pedagogy

This section is adapted from a field of research literature related to ‘productive pedagogies’. In this section, you will be asked a series of statements related to your teaching practice.

Thinking generally about your classroom, reflect on the frequency with which you do these things in practice, where 1 is very rarely or not at all, and 5 is every lesson or almost every lesson.

There are no right or wrong answers, these statements are designed to reflect your own observation of classroom practice.

Questions

- I encourage students to see knowledge as the constructed product of political, social and cultural influences.
- I challenge students to manipulate ideas in ways that transform their meanings and implications.
- I ensure that students in my class develop complex, deep understanding of central concepts in a unit of study (e.g. photosynthesis, probability, intertextuality, colonisation).
- My classroom supports students to discover relationships, solve problems, construct explanations and arguments, and draw conclusions.
- Students in my class are regularly engaged in *sustained* communication (written or oral) about the concepts and topics I am addressing.
- I ensure that my students learn about the special vocabulary of the topics we are covering, and the principles of talking and writing.
- My lessons find ways to connect different sets of subject area knowledge together (for example, science and history).
- I provide students with the opportunity to connect their own linguistic knowledge, cultural and everyday experiences and the topics and skills in my class.
- I ensure activities in my classroom have value and meaning in contexts outside of school.

- My classroom includes complex, real-world problems that don't have a clearly defined solution, and sometimes require work over multiple lessons.
- I ensure that my classroom is engaging so that students are work-oriented and enthusiastic about learning.
- I find that I need to prompt students to stay on task.
- I give my students control over the specific tasks/activities they will do in class, and how these will be realised.
- I ensure my students feel comfortable and that they are safe taking intellectual risks.
- I include frequent, clear and specific statements about what is expected for high-quality student achievement in classroom activities.
- My classroom actively includes perspectives from a range of cultures.
- I find opportunities to discuss the concept of citizenship and civic rights and responsibilities with my students.
- My lessons often involve narrative elements, such as stories, biography or historical texts.
- I make an effort to positively develop and recognise group identities from diverse backgrounds.
- I ensure that students from non-dominant ethnic, religious, socio-economic, gender and sexual backgrounds are represented and given voice in my classroom.

Section 3: Professional community and policy

This section is adapted from a survey conducted by Louis, Marks & Kruse (1996) that explores the restructuring of teachers' work.

Thinking generally about your school and work, reflect on the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 is the statement you agree with strongly, and 5 is a statement you disagree with strongly.

Questions

- I am certain I am making a difference in the lives of my students.

- I am successful in providing the kind of education I would like to provide for students.
- Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.
- Goals and priorities for the school are clear.
- In my school, the teachers and the administration are in close agreement on school policy.
- Teachers focus on what and how well students are learning rather than how they are teaching.
- Teachers exhibit a reasonably focused commitment to quality teaching.
- Teachers have control over what we teach and how we teach it.
- Staff are involved in making decisions that affect them.
- I have influence on the decisions within the school which directly affect me.

Finish

Are there any other thoughts you may have had in completing this survey, that you think are relevant?

Appendix B: Teacher interview questions

1. How would you describe a good lesson? Can you describe an example that stands out?
2. Who decides what and how you teach in the classroom?
3. How does the organisation of your school impact on your classroom practice?
4. What things aside from your students do you think influence your classroom practice?
5. Describe some of the typical daily tasks you would undertake at work in addition to teaching in the classroom.
6. Can you describe what's involved in a typical week at school?
7. What would you describe as your primary concern with *your school*?
8. What would you describe as your primary concern with *education* more generally?

Follow-up Questions on Policy

1. How has the nature of your work changed over the time you have been a teacher?
2. What policies, if any, do you think have the strongest influence over your work?

Appendix C: Executive interview questions

1. Tell me a bit about your school. What are its strengths and challenges?
2. How would you describe the Personal Development Planning process within the school? What is the rationale for it at a school level?
3. What things do you consider when developing the school plan? What are the key things that inform that document?
4. What do you regard as the most significant operational constraints on the school?

Appendix D: COVID-19 follow-up interview questions

1. How has the Coronavirus outbreak affected your work?
2. How have you prepared for online/distance learning?
3. What is your understanding of the process that has driven your school's response to the outbreak?
4. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to add?

Appendix E: Participant information statement



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Teachers, Practice and Education Policy: How does contemporary education policy frame and shape teachers' work?

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about the impact of contemporary education policy on teachers' work in classrooms.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary.

By giving your consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Dr Nicole Mockler, *Associate Professor of Education*, University of Sydney
- Mr Pat Norman, *Doctoral candidate*, University of Sydney

Pat Norman is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of PhD (Education) at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of *Associate Professor Nicole Mockler*.

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Phase one involves an online survey. This survey is comprised of three sections, which will ask you questions about different aspects of your work as a teacher. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. At the end of this survey, you will have the option of nominating to participate in phase two.

If you decide to nominate for phase two, you will be asked to participate in two interviews, which will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. These interviews will involve questions about your classroom practice, including the sort of activities you plan, the pressures you face, and the changes and challenges that you feel are present in your professional work. The date and times of these interviews will be arranged for your convenience, and the interviews themselves can be held at a location that suits you.

You will be provided with copies of your interview transcripts to check over, and make sure they accurately reflect your views. You will be invited to make any changes you feel are necessary.

After the first interview, a researcher will sit in on approximately four classes for observation. The times and dates of these classes will be arranged for your convenience, and these will take place over a six-month period. After each of these classes, you and the researcher will have a debriefing conversation. Observations won't interfere with your teaching responsibilities.

You will be given a chance to review transcripts and other information generated prior to publication. In addition, you will be provided with a summary of the research findings prior to submission, and a copy of the resulting thesis will be made available to you.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Interviews will require approximately one hour each. Debriefing conversations would take approximately ten minutes after lesson observations.

(5) Who can take part in the study?

The focus of this study is on the experience of participating *schools*. For this reason, only teachers currently working at participating schools can be included in this study.

(6) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney, or the school at which you work.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by emailing the researcher.

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, we will not collect any more information from you. Please let us know at the time when you withdraw what you would like us to do with the information we have

collected about you up to that point. If you wish your information will be removed from our study records and will not be included in the study results, up to the point that we have published the results.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

Other than the opportunity to reflect on and share information about your practice, we cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

(9) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but neither you nor your school will be identifiable in these publications.

Audio-recordings will be transcribed, and then deleted. These transcripts will be used in analysis, and any identifying features will be removed so that people won't be able to identify you. Electronic data will be securely stored in a password-protected and encrypted data store at the University of Sydney. Hard copy data will be kept in a secure location in the Education building of the University of Sydney.

Results from this study will be published in a thesis and in academic publications such as journal articles, book chapters and/or books.

We intend to submit the information from this project to a public database for research information, so that other researchers can access it and use it in their projects. Before we do so, we will take out all the identifying information so that the people we give it to won't know whose information it is, and you will be given the opportunity to review this data. People won't know that you participated in the project and they won't be able to link you to any of the information you provided.

(10) Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(11) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Pat Norman will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact:

Pat Norman
Doctoral Candidate
pat.norman@sydney.edu.au
0421 959 307

(12) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell us that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the participant consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a one page summary of the research findings. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished. A copy of the final thesis will be made available to you with this one page summary.

(13) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney *PROTOCOL NUMBER 2017/938*. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- **Fax:** +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep

Appendix F: Ethics approvals



Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Human Research Ethics Committee

Wednesday, 13 December 2017

Dr Nicole Mockler
Office of Professional Learning; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au

Dear Nicole

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

After consideration of your response to the comments raised your project has been approved.

Approval is granted for a period of four years from **13 December 2017** to **13 December 2021**

Project title: Rationality and Power in Australian Education

Project no.: 2017/938

First Annual Report due: 13 December 2018

Authorised Personnel: Mockler Nicole; Norman Patrick;

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version number	Document Name
03/12/2017	Version 2	Initial Contact Recruitment Email
03/12/2017	Version 1	Parent-Student Newsletter Information Item
03/12/2017	Version 1	Research Data Management Plan
03/12/2017	Version 1	Safety Protocol
01/11/2017	Version 1	Participant Information Statement - Teacher
01/11/2017	Version 1	Consent Form - School
01/11/2017	Version 1	Participant Information Statement - School Principal
01/11/2017	Version 1	Interview Questions
01/11/2017	Version 1	Consent Form - Teacher
01/11/2017	Version 1	Survey Questions/Instrument

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Level 2, Margaret Telfer Building (K07)
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

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W sydney.edu.au/ethics

ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00025A

- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
- Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
- Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
- The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.
- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely

[REDACTION]
E

Professor Glen Davis
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 2)

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the NHMRC's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007).



**Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Friday, 7 June 2019

Dr Nicole Mockler
Education; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au

Dear Nicole,

Your request to modify this project, which was submitted on 20/05/2019, has been considered.

This project has been approved to proceed with the proposed amendments.

Protocol Number: 2017/938
Protocol Title: Rationality and Power in Australian Education

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version Number	Document Name
10/05/2019	Version 2	Consent - School
10/05/2019	Version 2	Consent - Teacher
10/05/2019	Version 2	Initial Email
10/05/2019	Version 2	Interview Questions
10/05/2019	Version 2	PIS - School
10/05/2019	Version 2	PIS - Teacher
10/05/2019	Version 2	Survey Questions

Special Condition/s of Approval

- Please ensure SERAP is notified of the change in study title.

Please contact the ethics office should you require further information.

Sincerely,

[REDACTION]

Associate Professor Mark Arnold
Chair
Modification Review Committee Chair (MRC 2)

The University of Sydney of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\)](#) and the NHMRC's [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2007\)](#)

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**Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Dr Nicole Mockler
Education; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au

Dear Nicole,

Your request to modify this project, which was submitted on 30/01/2020, has been considered.

After consideration of your response to the comments raised, this project has been approved to proceed with the proposed amendments.

Protocol Number: 2017/938
Protocol Title: Rationality and Power in Australian Education

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version Number	Document Name
30/01/2020	Version 1	School Executive Interview Questions
26/02/2020	Version 1	School Executive Consent Form
26/02/2020	Version 1	School Executive Participant Information Statement
26/02/2020	Version 1	School Executive Recruitment Email

Please contact the ethics office should you require further information.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

[REDACTION]

Dr Kym Sheehan
Chair, Modification Review Committee (MRC 2)

The University of Sydney of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\)](#) and the NHMRC's [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research \(2007\)](#)

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Mr Patrick Norman
[REDACTED]

DOC18/717962
SERAP 2018255

Dear Mr Norman

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Rationality and Power in Australian Education*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 17-Aug-2019.

The following researcher has fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Patrick Norman	WWC0124997E	17-Oct-2018

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTION]
[REDACTED]

Elsa Lat
R/Director, School Policy and Information Management
17 August 2018

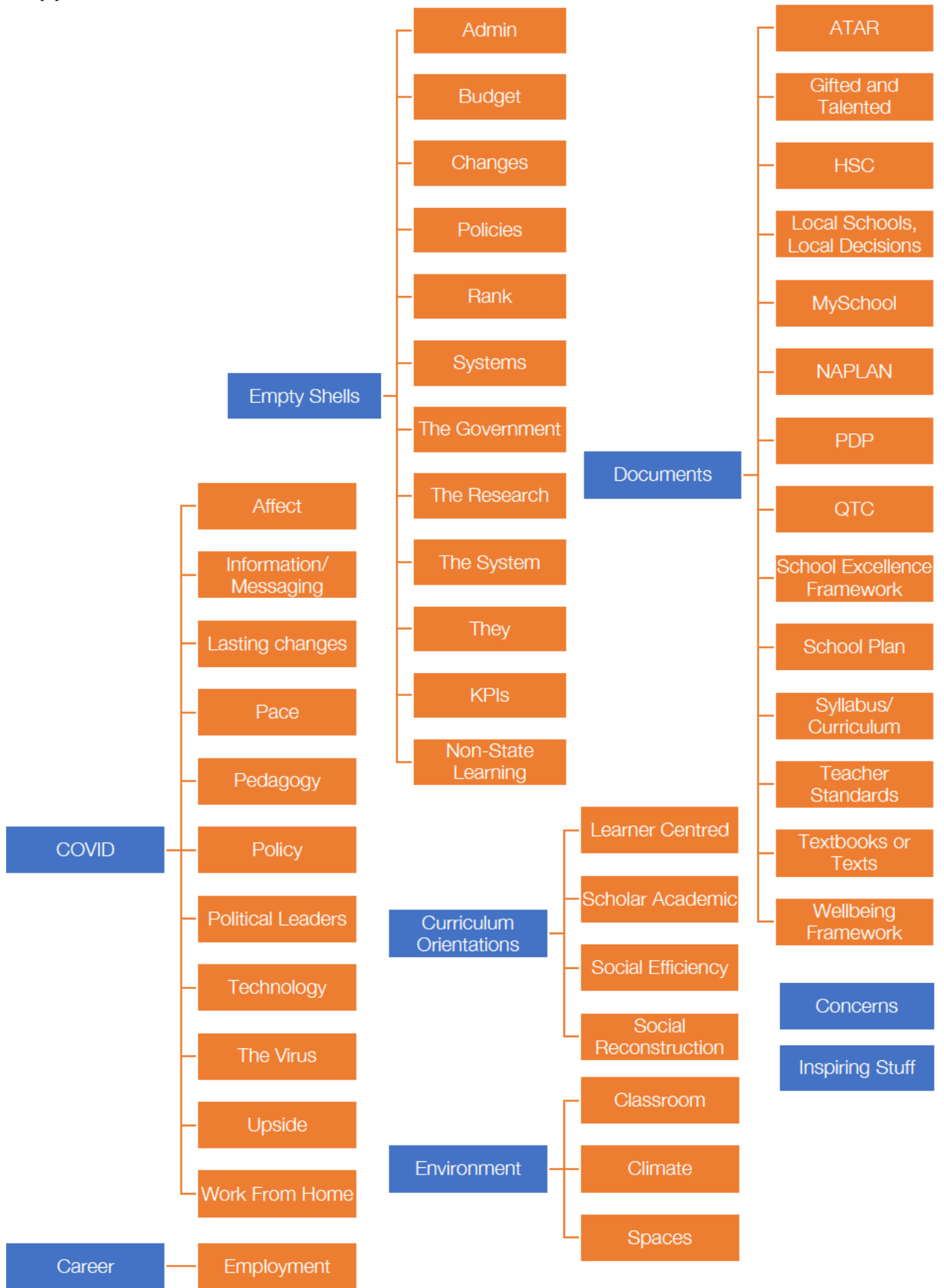
School Policy and Information Management
NSW Department of Education
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

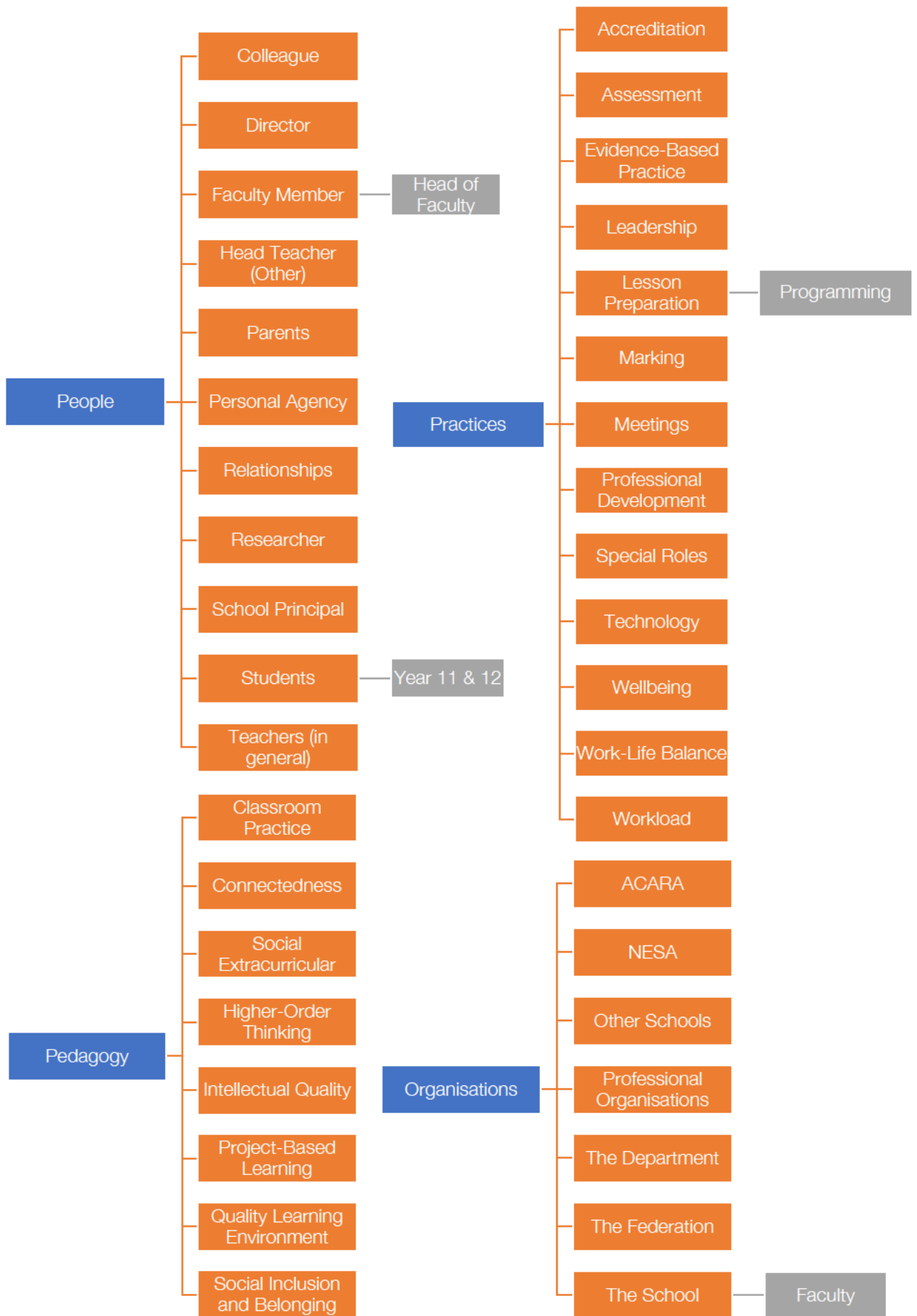


Appendix G: Curriculum orientations raw data

Dimension	Orientation	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4
Purpose	Scholar Academic	3	7	18	30
	Social Efficiency	6	13	25	14
	Social Reconstructionist	29	22	4	3
	Learner Centred	20	16	11	11
Knowledge	Scholar Academic	5	10	15	28
	Social Efficiency	19	23	14	2
	Social Reconstructionist	8	13	18	19
	Learner Centred	26	12	11	9
Evaluation	Scholar Academic	0	5	9	44
	Social Efficiency	6	26	24	2
	Social Reconstructionist	4	19	23	12
	Learner Centred	48	8	2	0
Teaching	Scholar Academic	3	10	19	26
	Social Efficiency	34	11	10	3
	Social Reconstructionist	8	9	14	27
	Learner Centred	13	28	15	2
Learning	Scholar Academic	3	18	17	20
	Social Efficiency	15	21	19	3
	Social Reconstructionist	1	9	14	34
	Learner Centred	39	10	8	1
Childhood	Scholar Academic	27	19	5	7
	Social Efficiency	7	10	24	17
	Social Reconstructionist	2	11	19	26
	Learner Centred	22	18	10	8

Appendix H: List of codes

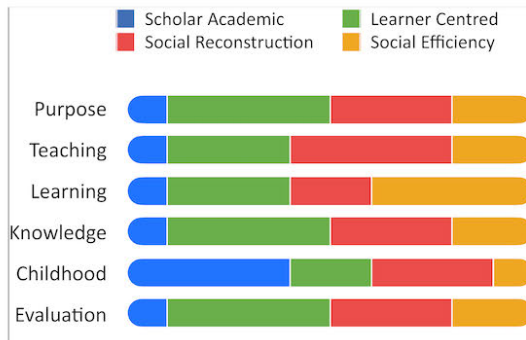




Appendix I: Sample teacher profile

Teacher Identifier		Teaching Areas	
Email		Age Groups	0
		Time Teaching	0

Curriculum Orientations						
	Purpose	Teaching	Learning	Knowledge	Childhood	Evaluation
Scholar Academic	1	1	1	1	4	1
Learner Centred	4	3	3	4	2	4
Social Reconstruction	3	4	2	3	3	3
Social Efficiency	2	2	4	2	1	2

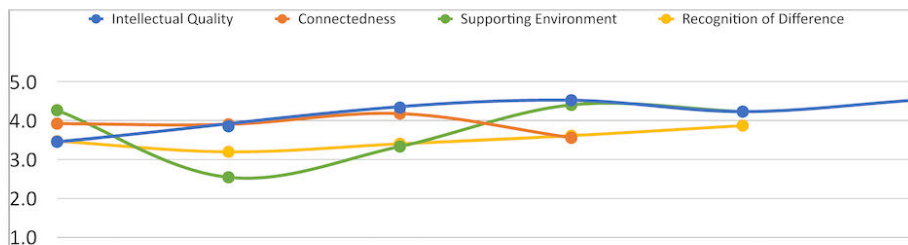


Pedagogical Orientations: Intellectual Quality	
Problematic Knowledge	3.4
Higher-Order Thinking	3.8
Deep Knowledge	4.3
Deep Understanding	4.5
Substantive Communication	4.2
Metalinguage	4.5
Total	4.1

Pedagogical Orientations: Connectedness	
Knowledge Integration	3.9
Background Knowledge	3.9
Connection to the World	4.2
Problem-based Curriculum	3.6
Total	3.9





Pedagogical Orientations: Supportiveness	
Academic Engagement	4.3
Student Self-Regulation	2.5
Students' Direction	3.3
Social Support	4.4
Explicit Quality Criteria	4.2
Total	3.7

Pedagogical Orientations: Recognition of Difference	
Cultural Knowledges	3.5
Active Citizenship	3.2
Narrative	3.4
Group Identities	3.6
Representation and Inclusivity	3.9
Total	3.5



What are the 'curriculum ideologies'?

The curriculum practice profile is an instrument developed by Schiro (2013) as a way to take an inventory of teachers' orientations to curriculum. It provides insight into the way teachers in schools see ourselves in relation to the subject areas that we teach and our role in the classroom. There is no one 'best' way - there are just different ways of understanding practice, and the possibilities that flow from that approach.

Scholar Academic	The purpose of education is to help children learn the accumulated knowledge of our culture as it is expressed in academic disciplines. Teachers see themselves as 'mini-scholars', responsible for continuing the project of a discipline. Curriculum is designed as an extension of the concepts, knowledge and traditions of these disciplines, and should be constructed in such a way as to reflect its essence.	
Social Efficiency	The purpose of schooling is to efficiently meet the needs of society by training youth to function as mature, contributing members. Education should focus on skills and procedures that help students to live productive lives. The essence of learners and learning lies in competencies and capabilities. The objectives of the curriculum should reflect these competencies, and learning should be sequenced in a way that leads from one outcome to the next.	
Learner Centred	The focus of education is not the needs of society or disciplines, but rather the needs and concerns of the individual. Schools should be enjoyable places where people develop naturally according to their innate nature. Personal growth is the core concept, and people achieve this through interaction with their environment. Curricula are thought of as contexts, units of work, or environments through which students can make meaning for themselves.	
Social Reconstruction	Conscious of the problems and injustices in society, the purpose of education is to facilitate the construction of a new or more just society that benefits all of its members. The nature of truth and knowledge is based in cultural assumptions. The nature of the good individual stems from a good society, and curriculum is positioned as a way to critique injustices and bring about material, spiritual, cultural and intellectual change for the better.	

Appendix J: NSW Performance and Development Plan template



Performance & Development Plan

The following documentation is to be completed consistent with the requirements of the [Performance and Development Framework for Principals, Executives and Teachers in NSW Public Schools \(Jan 2015\)](#), which includes three phases: Plan, Implement and Review. These processes are based on the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#), the [Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework](#) and the [Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders](#).

TEACHER'S DETAILS	SUPERVISOR'S DETAILS	ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CYCLE	
Name	Name	From	To
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
School/Work Location	Supervisor Work Location		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		

PLAN – Performance and Development Plan (PDP)

A. Professional Goals - Record at least three and no more than five goals.

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>

B. Professional Learning – Record the activities and resources needed to support the achievement of professional goals. (100 words maximum)

C. Evidence – Record the types of evidence to be used to indicate progress towards achieving professional goals. (100 words maximum)

The teacher, executive or principal and supervisor are to sign below to indicate that the PDP has been sighted and the original has been retained by teacher, executive or principal.

Teacher/Executive/Principal signature

Date

Supervisor signature

Date

Optional comment (see Note 1)

IMPLEMENT

The performance and development cycle is a dynamic process characterised by ongoing feedback, reflection and refinement. Record any adjustments made to the PDP to meet the professional learning needs of the teacher. (100 words maximum)

REVIEW

Self-Assessment

A self-assessment is to be conducted by teachers, executives and principals mid-way through the annual performance and development cycle. It provides for reflection on teaching and/or leadership practice, assessment of progress towards achieving professional goals, evaluation of professional learning, and for the PDP to be refined and adjusted if necessary. (200 words maximum)

The teacher, executive or principal and supervisor are to sign below to indicate that the PDP has been sighted and the original has been retained by teacher, executive or principal.

Teacher/Executive/Principal signature

Date

Supervisor signature

Date

Optional comment (see Note 1)

Annual Review

At the end of the annual performance and development cycle, teachers, executives and principals participate in a structured discussion with their supervisor to facilitate a review on progress towards achieving professional goals. This will include an agreed written assessment, informing the next performance and development cycle. (200 words maximum)

The teacher, executive or principal and supervisor are to sign below to indicate that the Annual Review has been sighted and the original has been retained by teacher, executive or principal.

Teacher/Executive/Principal signature

Date

Supervisor signature

Date

Optional comment (see Note 1)

Note 1: Where either party wishes to comment on the performance and development process, this should be recorded in the relevant section.

Note 2: The original copy of this documentation should be retained by the teacher, executive or principal to whom it pertains. A copy should be retained and stored securely at the workplace. Documentation practices should be consistent with the NSW Department of Education and Communities' Record Management Program.

Appendix K: School Excellence Framework

	Elements	Themes				
Learning	Learning Culture	High expectations	Transitions and continuity of learning	Attendance		
	Wellbeing	Caring for students	A planned approach to wellbeing	Individual learning needs	Behaviour	
	Curriculum	Curriculum provision	Teaching and learning programs	Differentiation		
	Assessment	Formative assessment	Summative assessment	Student engagement	Whole school monitoring of student learning	
	Reporting	Whole school reporting	School reports	Parent engagement		
	Student Performance Measures	Value-add	NAPLAN	Student growth	Internal and external measures against syllabus standards	
Teaching	Effective Classroom Practice	Lesson planning	Explicit teaching	Feedback	Classroom management	
	Data Skills and Use	Data literacy	Data analysis	Data use in teaching	Data use in planning	
	Professional Standards	Improvement of practice	Accreditation	Literacy and numeracy focus		
	Learning and Development	Collaborative practice and feedback	Coaching and mentoring	Professional learning	Expertise and innovation	
Leading	Educational Leadership	Instructional leadership	High expectations culture	Performance management and development	Community engagement	
	School Planning, Implementation and Reporting	Continuous improvement	School plan	Annual report		
	School Resources	Staff deployment	Facilities	Technology	Community use of facilities	Financial management
	Management Practices and Processes	Administrative systems and processes	Service delivery	Community satisfaction		

Adapted from NSW DoE (2017) School Excellence Framework