

Curriculum Making in High School English: Teachers' Perspectives and Practice in a Time of Curriculum Reform

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Author attribution statement

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

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

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Abstract

In 2018, the New South Wales (NSW) Government set a course to reform the NSW education system and rework the curriculum that would be taught in every NSW classroom. English teachers would be some of the first to navigate this complex phenomenon. As a collective, secondary English teachers were already navigating change fatigue, unmanageable workloads and teacher shortages. Against this backdrop, the question of what English teachers think about their practice and how they respond to curriculum reform was crucial to understanding how the intended curriculum is enacted in classrooms.

The primary aim of this small-scale qualitative study was to investigate the conditions enabling and constraining secondary English teachers as they enacted the *English K–10 Syllabus* for the first time as part of the NSW curriculum reform. Taking an interpretivist approach and using semi-structured interviews, I have provided a point-in-time snapshot of the English teachers' perspectives and experiences of curriculum making. Through a combination of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), and the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014b), I identified four salient conditions that enabled and constrained the curriculum making practices of the eight secondary English teachers. These included: the vital role of collaboration and ongoing professional learning in curriculum making; the personal significance of using the syllabus to construct student-centred learning experiences and English curriculum materials; the complexities of enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage; and the importance of trust-based professionalism. This thesis contributes to the ongoing debate about the need to interrogate and understand the connections and contradictions between the practice of education and the institution of schooling and the phenomenon of curriculum reform. It seeks to do this by focusing on the human impact of curriculum reform at the level of the classroom teacher as they engage in the practice of curriculum making for their students.

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Chapter one – introduction and study overview

Introduction

In 2024, New South Wales (NSW) high school English teachers commenced teaching a new *English K–10 Syllabus* and engaging in classroom-level enactment of the NSW state Government’s curriculum reform agenda (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c; NSW Government, 2020). In May 2018, the NSW government commissioned a review of the curriculum, the first of its kind since 1989, and released its response to the ensuing report in June 2020 (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2020; NSW Government, 2020). The review was designed to reform the NSW education system and change what is taught in every NSW classroom (NSW Government, 2020). The Terms of Reference for the review identified the need to ‘rework’ the “NSW curriculum to ensure it equips students to contribute to Australian society in the 21st century” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2018c, p. 1). This reform aimed to “examine, declutter, and improve the NSW curriculum to make it simpler to understand and to teach” from Kindergarten to Year 12 (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2018a). It was designed to provide an opportunity for a re-set, evaluation and refinement of current curriculum-making practices so students are effectively prepared for an unpredictable future (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2020).

The *English K–10 Syllabus* was released by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) at the end of 2022 (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c), during a time of significant challenge and change for the teaching community. By the first year of syllabus enactment (2024) many NSW English teachers had already experienced seven significant syllabus-related changes over a 20 year period (Albright et al., 2013; Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2020; Manuel, 2002; O’Sullivan, 2005). As an English teacher and Head Teacher, I experienced much of this change and the ensuing evaluation and refinement of the English curriculum across Years 7 to 12. This constant change has created a long history of increasing workload challenges, experiences of change fatigue and innovation overload (English Teachers’ Association NSW, 2022; Manuel et al., 2018; O’Sullivan, 2020; O’Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; O’Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021; Stacey et al., 2022). This experience was in stark contrast to other Key Learning Areas

where some courses had not experienced a single syllabus change in over 20 years¹ (Board of Studies New South Wales, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023a).

Despite these challenges, curriculum making for many English teachers, including myself, remains a reflection of a deep philosophical commitment to creating meaningful learning experiences for all students. This is usually grounded in a desire to support student needs through quality learning experiences, which are grounded in the study and exploration of engaging texts. This type of classroom curriculum making involves teachers translating and transforming curriculum policy into classroom-specific practices. It is a complex social practice enacted by every teacher in every school as they produce learning experiences for their students (Priestley et al., 2021). As an English teacher, it is also one of the most rewarding. This illustrates the deeply personal and contextual nature of English teachers' practice.

Personal interest in curriculum making practice

My interest in the curriculum making practices of high school English teachers has developed over the past 17 years. This inspiration has stemmed from professional and personal experiences. Change has been my constant companion as a teacher of the subject of English. The ongoing development of my curriculum expertise has channelled its way into my curriculum making. As I have moved between roles in various school and corporate settings in the NSW Department of Education, I have expanded my understanding of what it means to enact a syllabus in a specific site while simultaneously being influenced by the broader education complex.

My first long-term teaching role was in a hard-to-staff, low socio-economic semi-rural high school in NSW, Australia. Despite the challenges presented, the power of hindsight has highlighted how 'lucky' I was to have this formative experience. This was a dynamic, largely cohesive, and high-functioning faculty. Colleagues and the broader school community respected us. The school leadership supported my desire to engage in ongoing learning opportunities which enhanced

¹ One such example would be in Creative Arts where the *Music 7 – 10 Syllabus*, *Drama 7 – 10 Syllabus*, *Dance 7 – 10 Syllabus* and the *Visual Arts 7–10 Syllabus* are undergoing review for the first time since 2003.

my content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. As I transitioned into a range of leadership positions, including becoming an English Head Teacher², I was inspired by the unique ways English teachers approached curriculum making. I was also struck by the siloed nature of curriculum making for many English teachers and the associated workload pressures.

I have always sought learning opportunities (in school and externally) and these opportunities have helped me learn, grow and persevere. I understand and appreciate that these opportunities and experiences have not necessarily been available to, or accessed by, all English teachers in NSW high schools, as is demonstrated across several studies (Manuel, 2002; Manuel & Carter, 2016; Manuel et al., 2018). Despite my 'lucky' situation I have also experienced the unmanageable stress levels and unpredictable increases in workload highlighted in many studies (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2021; Holmes et al., 2013; NSW Public Service Commission, 2021; Stacey et al., 2022) and this led me to question whether I would remain in education.

As we approached the NSW curriculum reform, the most significant educational reform in over 30 years (NSW Government, 2020), my personal experiences were the motivation behind undertaking this research. They inspired the desire to understand the impact of curriculum reform on English teachers, and to shed light on the enabling and constraining arrangements impacting their curriculum making practice.

Context of the study

This opening chapter identifies the connections between my personal experiences as a teacher of secondary English in NSW, Australia, recent discussions about NSW curriculum reform, and the experiences of NSW high school English teachers. This provides context for the ongoing significance of this study in schools and an overview of the impact change has had on NSW high school English teachers. This contextual overview is followed by a rationale for the study, which takes place in the context of global education reform through a focus on curriculum reform. An

² A Head Teacher in NSW public secondary schools is a Head of a Faculty or Department. In non-government schools the equivalent role is a Head of Department.

introduction to the rationale for the study and the research question is followed by a brief introduction to the theory of practice architectures (TPA) as the theoretical framework informing the study methodology. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Research aims and research questions

This qualitative study occurred in a post-pandemic context. It was designed against the backdrop of educational change informed by global trends. Some of the most influential changes included the rise of neoliberal forms of governance (Connell, 2013); inter-related reform ideas that have permeated and reoriented education systems (Ball, 2003); and curriculum reform agendas focused on minimum competencies by which students and schools are ranked and graded (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Sahlberg, 2006; Sahlberg, 2023). The teacher shortage has continued to increase (Mills et al., 2024), and there have been unexpected shifts in attention and resources away from teachers (Sahlberg, 2023). Many of these changes have challenged teachers' professional identities (Fray et al., 2023), and negatively impacted the curriculum experienced by students and teachers (Sahlberg, 2023).

The study was framed by the understanding that successful and sustainable educational change is accomplished by and with teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) because it is the teachers and the systems that support them who are the most significant drivers of change (Fullan, 2021; Sahlberg, 2023). Large scale reforms must factor the teacher into the system-wide response to change. Seeing the enactment of change as a system responsibility may help avoid perpetuating the cultural myth of the "centrality of the teacher" (Larsen, 2010, p. 208). The individualisation and responsabilisation of teachers are often accompanied by discourses and politics of derision and blame (Done & Murphy, 2018; Larsen, 2010; Mockler, 2023b). This is reflected in the growing media discourse where blame for many educational failings is directed at teachers (Mockler, 2022). This complex context highlighted to me the importance of understanding the site-specific ecologies of practice in which my colleagues (NSW high school English teachers) were operating (Kemmis et al., 2014b). I wanted to recognise and share an understanding of the broader socio-political contexts in which my colleagues were working and the "complex, messy and contextualised nature of [their] work" (Larsen, 2010, p. 209).

Understanding teachers' perspectives and experiences can illustrate ways to make changes in the education complex that enhance future teachers' curriculum making practices. Thus, the research provided the opportunity to explore and describe the perspectives, experiences and initial enactment practices of those in the field in real time as participants experiencing curriculum reform. This would help frame an understanding of the enabling and constraining conditions faced by high school English teachers as they engage in the *practice* of curriculum making in response to the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). These conditions impact the capacity of teachers to engage in individual and collective praxis-oriented curriculum making practice (Kemmis et al., 2014b). Against this backdrop, the question of how English teachers respond to curriculum reform is crucial to understanding how the intended curriculum is enacted in classrooms.

This study addresses the following overarching and contributing research questions:

What factors have enabled and constrained the curriculum making practices of NSW high school English teachers as they plan and program for enacting the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022b)?

- What are high school English teachers' perspectives on the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?
- What support do high school English teachers require during curriculum reform?
- How do high school English teachers design teaching and learning programs in response to the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?

Understanding the role of the NSW English K–10 Syllabus

The responsibility for schooling in Australia primarily lies with subnational governments (individual states and territories) as this is their constitutional responsibility (McPherson & Lampert, 2024; Savage et al., 2022). Australia has both nationalised and centralised aspects of schooling to bring about consistency, including the “development of a national curriculum, standardised national assessments in literacy and numeracy, national standards for teachers and

principals, and a revised national model of school funding” (Savage, 2016, p. 833). Federal government education policy contexts and discourses have increasingly shaped the actions of Australian states territories, including New South Wales (NSW) (Hughes, 2019; McPherson & Lampert, 2024). This means state-based curriculum reform occurs in a complex federal education and policy context (Hughes, 2019).

In NSW, Australia’s most populous state, schools enact curriculum through subject-specific syllabuses. There is one syllabus for subject English across Kindergarten to Year 10 titled the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). The syllabus, while identified for use in English K–10 classrooms, contains three sections that align with stages in NSW schooling. Section 1: English K–2 — Kindergarten to Year 2/Early Stage 1 to Stage 1. Section 2: English 3–6 — Years 3–6/Stage 2 to Stage 3. Section 3: English 7–10 — Years 7–10/Stage 4 and Stage 5. The aim and rationale for the syllabus demonstrate that English remains focused on enabling students to enjoy their use of and engagement with language, and enhance their ability to make meaning in diverse and powerful ways (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). The research questions identify a focus on the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus* because they are the secondary school stages, and this study is focused on secondary English teachers.

NSW secondary English teachers started enacting the new syllabus in 2024. For Stages 4 and 5, the syllabus includes three focus areas that frame the outcomes for these stages. These focus areas are linked to associated content groups, which outline the key knowledge, understanding and skills students are expected to develop by the end of each stage. The outcomes are structured around receptive skills (understanding texts), the knowledges associated with the ability to understand and respond to texts (this knowledge structure is referred to by many English teachers as the “English textual concepts”) and expressive skills (expressing ideas and composing texts).

The final report of the NSW curriculum review identified the textual concepts resource (*English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes – Early Stage 1 to Stage 6*) as an example of “what a more conceptually organised subject might look like,” as it helped teachers “focus at the heart of the subject” and helped them define

and understand the subject of English (English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2020, p. 17). The government response confirmed the new syllabuses would “clearly identify essential concepts” (NSW Government, 2020, p. 9). The goals of the NSW curriculum reform are evident in the syllabus especially in the “explicit focus on writing skills ... to improve writing, grammar and use of language” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022a) and the conceptual organisation of outcomes (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2020, 2022c). The textual concepts now organise the content in three of the six mandated syllabus outcomes (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c).

The *English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes ... (2017)* resources were developed by the NSW English Teachers Association and the NSW Department of Education, Dr Brian Moon from Edith Cowan University was their critical friend (English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017; Gold & Greene, 2016). Much of the terminology in the resources aligns with Moon’s work (Moon, 1992, 2000, 2004). These resources mapped the key concepts and the processes through which they were learned in the 2012 K–10 English syllabus and the 2017 Stage 6 English syllabuses (except English EAL/D and English Life Skills) when they were released (Board of Studies NSW, 2012; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023b). In my role as Head Teacher, English, I loved the *English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes ... (2017)* resources and I used them extensively in my curriculum making practice. They made the abstraction and sophisticated processes of the composer-responder relationship more concrete. In my role as a Head Teacher supporting a community of schools, this language supported English curriculum transition between primary and secondary schooling. I used these resources in professional learning and the design of educative sample curriculum materials as the English Advisor and Coordinator for the NSW Department of Education (Gyenes & McWilliam, 2023a, 2023b; NSW Department of Education, 2023d, 2023e). They inspired many ‘light-bulb-moments’ for teachers. The language helped English teachers move away from the ‘Racism unit’ (where students learnt about issues caused by racism as experienced in texts), to a focus on the rich and complex textuality involved in representing issues and ideas associated with race, and the ways this influences human behaviour.

Nature of the research

This small-scale qualitative study aimed to capture the perspectives and experiences of eight high school English teachers in NSW, Australia, as they engaged in the *project* of curriculum enactment as they taught the *English K–10 Syllabus* for the first time (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). Participants were selected from two distinct career stages including three early career teachers (capped at the first three years) and five teachers with more than five years teaching experience. The participants were from eight schools across NSW (inner regional and major cities) and across two education sectors (government and non-government – independent). The experienced practitioners included classroom teachers and English faculty or department leaders (herein referred to as faculty). The eight participants represented a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

The narratives of the teachers were captured through individual semi-structured interviews, conducted and transcribed via Zoom. The data was analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This fluid and theoretically flexible approach is grounded in interpretivism and guides the respectful representation of participants' subjective accounts of their perspectives and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It is a highly appropriate method for studying the underlying theoretical and paradigmatic assumptions of the study through a constructivist conceptualisation of language as symbolic and socially created (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2022). This ensured the analysis remained focused on understanding the teachers' perspectives and experiences of the structures they encountered that enabled and constrained their curriculum making practices (Priestley et al., 2021).

Introducing a theoretical framework

This study uses the theory of practice architectures (TPA) as a theoretical, methodological and analytical framework to assist in understanding what curriculum practices are composed of and how why some practices connect, intersect and/or disconnect and change in particular education contexts (Kemmis, 2010, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). This theory posits that practice is enabled and constrained by arrangements that exist in each site of practice (Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). TPA was used to identify and understand the diversity of

arrangements in the education complex (the five practices of student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading and researching) (Kemmis et al., 2014b) that enable and constrain English teachers' curriculum making practices as they responded to the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c) during a period of curriculum reform (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023a). This theory provides a method for discovering the diversity of arrangements (Mahon et al., 2017) and enables a contemporary account of the social reality of English teachers' curriculum making practice. The TPA is a site ontology-based practice theory that provides a theoretical, methodological and analytical resource for examining the perspectives and experiences of teachers and thus illuminates the broader practice landscapes and practice traditions that influence, shape, mediate, enable and constrain their practices (Kemmis, 2010, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). The TPA 'table of invention' was used as an analytical resource to reveal the ways the English teachers' practice was enabled and constrained by the conditions in their practice landscape. This framing helped identify the '*what*' and '*how*' of the English teachers' practice in their site-specific conditions and in turn explore the interconnected webs of practice.

This thesis argues that to harness the potential benefits of education change (such as those proposed by curriculum reform) and challenge and change unsustainable or unproductive practices, the sites of activity in which teachers operate must be interrogated (Mahon et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2021). Otherwise, practices will likely remain the same, the challenges facing the teaching profession may remain unaddressed, and the opportunities and potential benefits of praxis-oriented curriculum reform will be missed. It is with this intention that this research was conducted: to contribute to an understanding of the complex nature of curriculum making post-COVID (in the context of NSW curriculum reform); to capture high school English teachers' voices and perspectives on their work; and to expand existing understandings of the site-specific conditions that enable and constrain practice.

Thesis overview

The final section of chapter one presents an outline of the intentions of the remaining five chapters.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review to position the study within research relating to four research areas: the complex phenomena of curriculum, curriculum making and curriculum reform with English teachers used as an example of this context. This extends the discussion introduced in Chapter One regarding the current state of English teaching and the impact of global education reform. Relevant definitions are introduced, and the chapter concludes with an introduction to the research questions in response to the literature.

Chapter Three expands on the research design and the theoretical framework that informed the study. The key terms are defined, and a rationale is provided for the methods used. Several processes are described including: participant selection, the five-steps for creating the semi-structured interview schedule (Kallio et al., 2016), and the use reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022) with the 'table of invention' (Kemmis et al., 2014b). This allowed for deeper interpretation of the practices identified and guided the grouping of the cultural-discursive, material-economic and socio-political enabling and constraining arrangements at each site (Mahon et al., 2017). The ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also explored.

Chapter Four reports on the key research findings and explores how themes were categorised and used to identify enabling and constraining conditions. The findings indicated that curriculum making is impacted by interconnected elements including: the vital role of collaboration and ongoing professional learning in curriculum making; the personal significance of student-centred customisation of English curriculum materials; the complexities of enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage; and the importance of trust-based professionalism. These areas directly impact the participants' confidence, relationships and attitudes, and their contribution to the collective response to change. They also impact professional identities and perspectives on the discipline of English. This chapter is used as a framework to establish the discussion and analysis of the data in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five draws together the study's findings and the associated connections in the literature using the theory of practice architectures as an interpretive framework. This chapter provides more clarity on English teachers' approaches to curriculum making by exploring the elements of their practice (the

sayings, doings and relatings) and the way these *hang together* and are enabled and constrained by *cultural-discursive, material-economic* and *social-political* arrangements that are part of practice traditions and operate in sites of practice.

Chapter Six presents the conclusions from the research. Key concepts related to curriculum making are identified as are recommendations for future research and suggestions for better supporting teachers in future curriculum change. The study's limitations are explored, as are the possible implications beyond the context of this study.

Chapter two – literature review

This literature review positions the research study within the context of existing research on curriculum, curriculum making and the complex and contested nature of these phenomena. This frames the introduction to curriculum reform and a discussion of the arrangements and conditions that have historically enabled and constrained English teachers' ability to engage in praxis-oriented curriculum making as they respond to curriculum change. This frames the context of this study and English teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experience with respect to subject English in NSW, Australia. This shapes the concerns for current practice and the enactment of the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c).

The complexity of “curriculum”

Curriculum, as a “cultural construction”, (Grundy, 1987, p. 5) is a complicated and contested concept that has been conceptualised in many ways throughout the history of education (Bellack, 1969; Schiro, 2013; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). Educational philosophers and theorists have been deliberating over the ways to develop (Goodson, 1994), design and organise sets of educational practices for specific social, moral and economic purposes at least as far back as Plato's design for education (Flinders & Thornton, 2017; Grundy, 1987; Lundgren, 1983; Schiro, 2013). The sixteenth century saw the first recorded use of the term “curriculum” as “the entire multi-year course followed by each student” (Hamilton, 2013, p. 45). The pivotal role of the teacher in this process is consistent throughout curriculum history. They play a vital role in developing the “plan for learning” in multi-year courses (Thijs & van den Akker, 2009, p. 9), which are ordered in terms of “structural wholeness and sequential completeness”, for student study (Hamilton, 2013, p. 45). In its simplest terms, curriculum is what is taught and learned in schools consisting of the “cultural and scientific content of education that is transmitted by the message systems of pedagogy and assessment” (Woods et al., 2010, p. 362). I use this section to shed light on the complexity of this term and the way it is conceptualised and presented. This frames the understanding that teacher's ‘curriculum’ practices are highly complex and personalised.

Seeing curriculum as ‘*culture*’ reflects the complex nature of curriculum studies. It leads to a focus on people's experiences within education because of the

existence of contextually situated notions of 'curriculum' rather than a potentially limiting focus on its compositional parts (Grundy, 1987). Perspectives on curriculum have deep historical roots and reflect the different needs and values placed on education over time. While curriculum has long been used as an "instrument for the state to organise in the interests of the state" and "a way to control discourse about education", (Lundgren, 1983, p. 34) the global rise of neoliberal forms of governance and the interrelationships between them have permeated and reoriented education systems all over the world (Ball, 2003). Connell has described this as the "neoliberal cascade" (Connell, 2013, p. 101), and Ball as an "epidemic" and "unstoppable flood" of closely inter-related reform ideas (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Curriculum as a means by which education systems are transformed for social engineering purposes, meeting systemic, political and economic goals (Kress, 2000), in a constantly changing world, has also been vigorously debated (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Priestley & Philippou, 2018).

Viewing curriculum as a '*product*' reflects a focus on achieving technical, productive ends often "delivering – somebody else's curriculum product" (Priestley et al., 2021, p. 2). This type of curriculum is sometimes referred to as 'textbook teaching' (Taylor, 2013; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). These materials are often organised according to sets of value laden human educational practices that are used to develop and maintain processes of social, cultural and economic production (Grundy, 1987; Grundy et al., 1994; Lundgren, 1983; Priestley et al., 2021; Sahlberg, 2023; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). For example, in many countries, including Australia, it is elected governments and those in power who are provided the authority to "enshrine certain value positions in curriculum and schooling policy" (Grundy et al., 1994, p. 111). This means that policymakers play a significant role in planning education change for social and economic development. For many teachers, this results in a type of 'product' that exists as 'approved' curriculum materials produced by educational institutions. They often contain specified objectives, goals, assignments and so on. Teachers are expected to transfer these products into their schools and broader community and achieve the 'expected' results (Baker, 1996; Hamilton, 2013; Lynch & Smith, 2011; Taylor, 2013). This has contributed to an "unattainable ideal of fidelity in implementation" as (Priestley et al., 2021, p. 2) and contributed to problematic notions of 'teacher-proof' curriculum

(Priestley et al., 2021; Stacey et al., 2024; Tanner, 1992; Taylor, 2013). For teachers across a variety of educational settings, their professional process has become akin to a “conveyor belt” where they deposit “context-free” knowledge and skills into students (Tanner, 1992, p. 243). It is useful to note that this type of policy to practice fidelity has been proven to be a fallacy because even the most prescriptive of policies still requires human interpretation as part of implementation or enactment (Ball et al., 2012; Priestley et al., 2021).

Curriculum as a ‘*process*’ to be implemented refers to teachers’ judgements, reflective of what Schiro (2013) has referred to as their ‘curriculum ideologies’, both conscious and unconscious. These impact the teacher's decisions in designing classroom learning experiences (Grundy, 1987). Teachers’ perspectives on the goals of education and schooling guide this process (Lundgren, 1983; Schiro, 2013).

Bernstein considers that formal educational knowledge is realised through three interconnected message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation, which reflects the “specific pedagogical relationship of teacher and taught” (Bernstein, 2005, p. 158). Curriculum here refers to both the structure of the content taught by a teacher and the theoretical foundations guiding the teacher’s methods (Grundy, 1987; Lundgren, 1983). Bernstein argued “curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as a valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught” (2003, p. 77). He theorised that educational knowledge codes impact these interconnected message systems and that social principles impact and regulate the “classification and framing made public in educational institutions”, and that these reveal distributions of power and control (Bernstein, 2003, p. 77).

Curriculum as ‘*praxis*’ is understood as a way of thinking about education that guides both process and product (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Grundy, 1987; Lundgren, 1983; Schiro, 2013). This educational action is informed by the practice traditions in a field while being morally centred, aiming for the development of social and political life that results in the “the good for persons and the good for humankind” (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 28). It moves beyond the technical dimensions of teachers’ work taking a site-based ontological perspective (Schatzki, 2005) where the teacher’s practice is examined in the context of their educational milieu. This

requires an examination of the teacher's context and whether they are empowered (Bogler & Somech, 2004) and supported to educate with agency and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). This context impacts their ability to apply their practical wisdom in consideration of the "ethical, moral and affective dimensions of their pedagogy" (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015, p. 151). This is evident in the dynamic interactions of the teacher, the student, and the curriculum/pedagogical content in the context of educational action and ongoing teacher reflection (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015; Grundy, 1987; Lundgren, 1983; Lynch & Smith, 2011).

It is clear why '*curriculum*' cannot be universalised. It is made in various forms and must be understood in terms of a country or institution's social, cultural, economic and philosophical history (Baker, 1996; Hamilton, 2013), "in the actions of the people engaged in education" (Grundy, 1987, p. 6) as a social practice in multiple sites (Priestley et al., 2021). Lundgren (1983) captured the complexity of this situation when he theorised that curriculum thinking needs to be discussed as:

- a) transformations of society that slowly change the structure and modes of production,
- b) the conditions regulating various social contexts, and
- c) the creation of pedagogical texts (or curricula) (Lundgren, 1983, p. 15).

The inclusion of pedagogy and pedagogical texts is vital for teachers as this captures the interconnected relationship between what the curriculum prescribes and the role of the teacher's "practical reasoning" as they identify and act in response to the demands of a pedagogical situation (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 210). Kemmis et al. (2014b) described this as the pedagogical triangle: the teacher; the students; and the social context of the classroom operating in a school community in a moment in history. This requires the teacher to:

make the practical leap from the plan into the particularity of the situation: the leap from an intention into history—the historically-formed situation in this particular place and time, under the particular circumstances of the continuous present, unfolding and changing as it happens (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 210).

This highlights the importance of viewing curriculum as a complex system:

involving teachers, students, curricular content, social settings, and all manner of impinging matters ranging from the local to the international. It is a system that needs to be understood systematically. The question is not which of the various factors

explain high achievement ... but, rather how it all works together (Connelly, 2013, p. ix).

Thus, while curriculum involves the technical selection and organisation of knowledge and content it is driven by the pedagogical approaches and decisions made by the teacher (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2015). This educational “design for the future” relies on agency (Kress, 2000, p. 134) and sees teachers making choices in response to site and context specific factors (Priestley et al., 2021).

Curriculum making

Priestley et al.'s. (2021, pp. 8-13) heuristic “sites of curriculum making” illustrates the site and context specific actors involved in curriculum making and remaking practices that they have labelled supra, macro, meso, micro and nano sites of curriculum making activity. Table 1 represents the sites of activity heuristic and it is a useful tool for reflecting on the complexity associated with a teacher’s curriculum making practice. While a teacher may only act in the ‘micro’ and ‘nano’ sites, their curriculum making practices are impacted by all sites in the system (Kemmis et al., 2014b; Priestley et al., 2021; Priestley & Philippou, 2018). Key to understanding the “curriculum-teacher relationship” is understanding and acknowledging that teachers enact curricula as a personal design process fitting and scaling the curriculum to their particular context (Doyle & Rosemartin, 2012, p. 138). Kress (2000) referred to this interplay of curriculum and pedagogy as “design” where both the teacher and student are agentic in the learning environment as interests, needs, and resources impact the production of new learning experiences. Priestley et al. (2021) identify that this school-level curriculum making, occurring in ‘micro’ and ‘nano’ sites, takes place in every classroom as teachers operationalise and customise teaching and learning programs or frameworks into classroom-specific schemes of work containing pedagogical plans.

Curriculum making is a non-linear, interdependent and interrelated practice requiring teachers to use their professional content and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986), as well as their dispositions and beliefs about their students and subject (Priestley et al., 2021) to produce learning experiences for students (Priestley et al., 2021). Teachers engage in a process of “enactment”, mediating, interpreting and translating (Braun et al., 2010, p. 547) local and official

policy and materials to support student learning outcomes. As teachers transform official curriculum materials into educative experiences they engage in a “dialectical relationship” (Goodson, 1994, p. 112) between the curriculum, pedagogy and text production (Priestley et al., 2021). It is highly dynamic process involving negotiation and translation for teachers as they navigate system change in an individual social context, such as a school (Alvunger et al., 2021) while often also relying on multiple sites of activity for curriculum making (Priestley et al., 2021).

Table 1 – Sites of curriculum making adapted from Priestley et al (2021)

Site of activity	Examples of activity	Examples of Actors
Supra	Transnational curricular discourse generation; policy borrowing and lending; policy learning; international student assessments; international education rankings	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
Macro	Development of curriculum policy frameworks; legislation to establish agencies and infrastructure	National governments, state governments, curriculum agencies
Meso	Production of guidance; leadership of and support for curriculum making; production of resources	National governments; curriculum agencies; district authorities; textbook publishers; curriculum brokers; subject-area counselors
Micro	School-level curriculum making: programme design; lesson-planning	Principals; senior leaders; middle leaders; teachers
Nano	Curriculum making in classrooms and other learning spaces: pedagogic interactions; curriculum events	Teachers; students; community and family connections to the students

Pedagogical and curriculum texts are entwined with society and are both shaping and being shaped by history (Grundy et al., 1994; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Lundgren, 1983). Many have argued that the exploration of curriculum, what goes into the *plan for learning* and why, must be understood in the context in which it is experienced by both teachers and students (Bellack, 1969; Lundgren, 1983; Priestley et al., 2021). This is particularly important because the individual nature of enactment practices, and the varied impact on teachers and students, is well researched (Grundy, 1987; Hamilton, 2013; Priestley & Biesta, 2013). The difficulties of turning policy into practice often creates an “implementation gap” (Gouédard et al., 2020, p. 4) between the way curriculum is positioned at the political or institutional level and the personal curriculum making practices that take place at the school and classroom level (O’Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; Priestley et al., 2021).

Curriculum making is a key part of the creative and intellectual work of teachers (Priestley et al., 2021; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009), undertaken both collaboratively and individually it is central to their work and identities as teachers (Mockler & Stacey, 2024). This pedagogical labour (Stacey et al., 2024) sees individual teachers translating, interpreting, and transforming curriculum policy into day-to-day, classroom-specific practices (Ball, 2015b; Doyle & Rosemartin, 2012; Mahon et al., 2017; Priestley et al., 2021). This process relies on a diverse range of contextual factors including, but not limited to, the teachers’ willingness to innovate, their perceptions and attitudes towards the curriculum, the support and/or resources provided in context, their place in the ‘team’ of teachers and the school culture (Priestley et al., 2021; Thijs & van den Akker, 2009). The process also relies on the teacher’s understanding of and perspectives toward their subject, the curriculum, and their ability or willingness to exercise their professional judgement, expertise and autonomy as they adapt and enact the curriculum materials for specific learners and contexts (Doyle & Rosemartin, 2012). This may become more complicated than expected if what constitutes the subject itself is contested as is the case for the subject of English (Dixon, 1969).

Using the subject of English as an example, what English looks like is likely to differ from classroom to classroom and that is not just because of the needs of individual learners. According to Dixon, this may relate to the broad and varied interpretations and understandings of what constitutes the subject. For some it may

be “a focus on literature, of composition, of language, of speech”, while for others it may reflect a focus on “skills ... *cultural heritage* ... [or] *personal growth*” (emphasis in the original), or a combination of all of the above (1969, p. vii and 1). In contemporary terms, subject English may be all of these things and others such as the need to explore and understand the role and impact of multimedia texts and the media on the self and society (Goodwyn et al., 2018). The complex history of the subject of English (both as language and literature) is reflected in these different perspectives and interpretations and ongoing debates (Dixon, 1969; Green, 2021; Newbolt, 1921; Perry, 2019). Dixon suggests that English as a subject differs from others like mathematics because it is far less homogenous as it is a “meeting point of experience, language and society” with English teachers setting up frameworks for their students often very dependent upon the system they are in or the values/perspectives they have toward the subject (Dixon, 1969, p. 85).

Despite the differences in opinion and understanding of what should be counted in English as a subject, English teachers share an interesting set of similarities as professionals as they engage in curriculum making. This may reflect the ongoing significance and primacy of certain models of English for the profession, such as the ‘Personal Growth’ model (Doecke, 2002; Goodwyn, 2016b; Goodwyn et al., 2018; Goodwyn, 2019; O’Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021). According to Goodwyn (Goodwyn, 2016b; Goodwyn, 2019), English teachers’ practice often moves beyond mandated curriculum materials and into particular value-laden areas such as a focus on student-centred pedagogy, focusing on how the subject of English can support individual students to form their identities; the fundamental role of talk in the teaching and learning process; and the importance of studying texts beyond the traditional literary canon. This is likely, however, to look very different in each classroom and for each teacher of English. English teachers’ curriculum making process is often a deeply personal and transformative experience founded on the desire to support student learning through the design of engaging teaching and learning structures (Goodwyn, 2016b; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019; Manuel, 2002; Manuel & Carter, 2016; Manuel et al., 2018; O’Sullivan, 2005, 2020). This practice is also deeply dependent on context (Albright et al., 2013; Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Manuel & Carter, 2016). For English teachers, the materials created become emblematic of individual professional identities, often demonstrated through their text selection, and

deeper philosophical commitments to education (Diamond & Bulfin, 2021; Howie, 2014). Doecke (2002; 2017) and Kress (2000) further this argument by highlighting that to understand the practice of English teachers one must also understand how they approach and understand curriculum, subject English and how their professional practice is influenced or shaped by the history and traditions of English teaching. This supports the view that curriculum is a “sociological construction” that arises “out of a set of historical circumstances and ... a particular social milieu” (Grundy, 1987, p. 6). Understanding the impact of change must take place in the context of the ecology of practice in which the teacher is operating (Kemmis et al., 2014b).

Curriculum reform

Curriculum is not static, and it is understandable and expected that the curriculum evolves with time, with interpretation, and with the reinterpretation that takes place in educational contexts (Gilbert, 2010). However, international trends such as globalisation, marketisation and increased comparative standardised student assessments have led to unpredictable changes in education. Curriculum reform has been one response by nation-states to try and enhance their international competition in a global economy (Gilbert, 2010; Gouëdard et al., 2020; Henderson, 2021; Sahlberg, 2023). Here, curriculum is often presented as an essential measure to ensure students are equipped with the necessary competencies, knowledge and skills for success in an unpredictable future (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Henderson, 2021). As a complex phenomenon, curriculum reform often sees educational organisations attempting to identify and define the knowledge, abilities and competencies necessary to equip children to function and thrive in this great unknown. The curriculum is often refined, renewed or rewritten to identify explicit outcomes or standards, knowledge and skills, and observable competences as a way to identify the form of knowledge that ‘matters’ (Gouëdard et al., 2020).

Sahlberg (2023, p. 1) argues that “reforming national education systems has become a global phenomenon” with common features and consequences across different contexts. He refers to this phenomenon as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM). The metaphor suggests that these reforms are “germs causing educational epidemic in many countries and even [a] global learning crisis”

(Sahlberg, 2006, p. 4). Despite this spread, it is widely acknowledged that curriculum reform is difficult to achieve (Chapman, 2020; Gilbert, 2010; Gleeson et al., 2020; Gouédard et al., 2020; Hardy, 2015; Henderson, 2021). The process is far from straightforward and the term itself is imprecise and contested in educational policy and research (Gilbert, 2010).

How curriculum reform is actualised in schools is also diverse. It “commonly refers to creating or revising curriculum documents, policies, or practices in order to improve what is taught and learned in educational programs and institutions” (Gilbert, 2010, p. 510). The revision of the ‘*content*’ to be taught, includes its selection and organisation with this process identifying which knowledge, skills, competencies, values and attitudes students are expected to develop (Gouédard et al., 2020, p. 8; Henderson, 2021). Often, schools are expected to “radically change their practice” (Chapman, 2020) with the changes to the objectives or expected outcomes of learning having corresponding impacts on policy (Gilbert, 2010). This type of education policy often circulates globally and results in ‘*policy borrowing*’ where technical solutions are proffered as appropriate means for addressing complex site and context-specific problems (Mills et al., 2024; Timperley & Twyford, 2022).

Across the Western world, curriculum reform shares characteristics: there is often a narrowing of the curriculum due to a pattern of top-down “back to basics” structures, usually focused on literacy and numeracy (Sahlberg, 2023; Savage, 2016). Measurement frameworks have been created and then used to grade and rank students and schools often creating destructive cultures of competition (Fullan, 2021). The establishment of assessment and high-stakes testing structures often results in a focus on testable skills (Doecke et al., 2011; Gannon, 2019; Gannon & Dove, 2021). Attempts to standardise teaching and learning has coincided with the setting of standards, and the establishment and enforcement of accountability measures (Fullan, 2021; Gilbert, 2010; Gouédard et al., 2020; Sahlberg, 2023). The negative impacts of this focus on high-stakes testing, and the associated accountability, performativity and reporting are well researched (Carter et al., 2018; Gannon, 2019; Gannon & Dove, 2021; Priestley et al., 2021; Sachs & Mockler, 2012; Sawyer, 2016).

The way curriculum reform is realised in classrooms and the impact on teachers and students is also complex and at times unpredictable (Gilbert, 2010; Gouédard et al., 2020). There is an associated increase in workload (Gouédard et al., 2020). For English teachers, this top-down change has often coincided with insufficient support for teachers to create contextually appropriate curriculum materials for their students (Ireland, 2014; Manuel, 2002; McGraw, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2020). When teachers feel underprepared to enact the requirements of curriculum, research has highlighted that they engage in strategic compliance rather than genuine, thorough and rigorous engagement with the new curriculum (Priestley, 2011a; Woods et al., 2011). This creates contradictory consequences in terms of what is taught and learned in educational programs and institutions (Fullan, 2021; Gilbert, 2010; Sahlberg, 2023).

For many teachers their unsustainable workloads are already re-shaping and re-defining their professional identities and challenging “what it means to be a teacher, and what teachers ‘do’”(Stacey et al., 2022, p. 1). There are also significant concerns that teachers are beginning to perform their roles as “*operatives* of the systems in which they work” (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 8) rather than as professionals with “agency, autonomy and responsibility to practise their professions” (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 8). This is caused by a range of factors including increased performative accountability and compliance pressures, and a narrowing of teachers’ pedagogic repertoires (Day, 2017; Manuel & Carter, 2016; Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; Sachs & Mockler, 2012). Thus, structures are required to support teachers in the process of change. Sense-making by teachers (in the form of both time and resources) is an essential ingredient in the successful enactment of large-scale curriculum reform projects and this is often overlooked and undervalued (Marangio & Heyting, 2023; Priestley et al., 2021). It is a key part of enabling the development or refinement of influential factors such as subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge (Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Manuel, 2002; Shulman, 1986). It also impacts the teacher’s ability to transform the programmatic curriculum (prescribed or personally constructed curriculum materials) into educative experiences lived by their students (Priestley et al., 2021).

It is important to note that curriculum reform has the potential to establish productive and supportive conditions for education. There are signs of an international shift in curriculum implementation practices moving away from notions of “implementation fidelity” (Gouëdard et al., 2020, p. 7). There are examples from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia where traditional ‘top-down’ curriculum reform structures are slowly being replaced with ‘bottom-up’ teacher and student-centred approaches that emphasise autonomy, agency and the co-construction of curriculum with teachers (Fullan, 2021; Gouëdard et al., 2020). While in Finland and Japan, there is a clearer focus on trust-based professionalism for teachers enacting change (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Sahlberg, 2023). In these situations, teachers have self-efficacy, a positive attitude toward change and appropriate support to guide them through this process (Fullan, 2021; Gouëdard et al., 2020; Sahlberg, 2023). Teachers are recognised as playing a crucial role in curriculum implementation and they are factored into the planning for all elements of the reform process (Gouëdard et al., 2020).

Taking NSW as an example, the NSW Government’s plan to support curriculum reform by providing teachers more time and “new resources and professional learning” (NSW Government, 2020, p. 25) could enable them, in theory, to spend more time focusing on the core work of their key learning areas, planning teaching, learning and instructional leadership. The NSW Department of Education planned to support the government’s curriculum reform goals by providing teachers with sufficient “curriculum reform release time”, a range of teaching and learning resources, professional learning and other advice and supports for teachers in various roles across schools from K–12 (NSW Department of Education, 2023b). Guidance is also provided for engaging with and enacting syllabuses which signifies a potential move away from notions of implementing with ‘fidelity’ (NSW Department of Education, 2023c). This approach may be a response to the way other Australian states have approach curriculum reform, such as Queensland’s ‘Curriculum into the Classroom’ initiative, and the backlash that ensued (Alford et al., 2022; Barton et al., 2014; Hardy, 2015). While the impacts of these specific plans and processes need further research, there are recent studies that highlight the ways some of these well-meaning approaches may not be having the desired effect because they misunderstand or misrepresent the workload problem teachers are facing (Stacey et

al., 2024). Many teachers appreciate and value supports like sample teaching and learning materials provided by educational institutions. However, they have expressed that it is more important for them to have sufficient time and space to exercise professional control and autonomy to conduct the deep intellectual work involved in planning and preparing for the learners in front of them (Mockler & Stacey, 2024; Stacey et al., 2024). Concerningly, Stacey et al. warn that this type of resource production as 'workload mitigation' may act as a form of de-professionalisation and result in the deskilling of teachers (2024).

A teacher's ability to enact curriculum reform is complicated and is influenced by many factors including: their epistemological assumptions and beliefs (Pajares, 1992); their conception of their subject knowledge (Diamond & Bulfin, 2021; Doecke, 2017; Doecke & Mead, 2018); and their contextual teaching experience and skills (Doecke et al., 2011; Yinger, 1980). Their perspectives on curriculum reform and the institution in which they operate contribute to engagement with suggested and mandated curriculum materials (Diamond & Bulfin, 2021; Doecke, 2002; Ireland et al., 2017; Manuel, 2002; Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Thus, curriculum reform involves a complex interplay between global and local sites of policy, practice, action and reaction, and the layered and complicated nature of these sites have increased since the 1990s (Gouédard et al., 2020; Sahlberg, 2023).

Transforming schooling and making this vital educational experience beneficial for all is a difficult "dance between reproduction and transformation ... [that requires] significant refinement of the practices that reproduce and reconstitute schooling as we now know it" (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 3). Mahon et al. (2017) hope that the changing nature of education structures may create praxis in action in schools:

Praxis, which can be enacted by people individually or collectively, involves acting in ways that are morally, ethically, and politically responsible, and acting with awareness that when we act, we are acting in history, changing the world around us, even if only in small ways (Mahon et al., 2017, p. 14).

For this to take place, educational institutions must evaluate and review practices within the education complex with and alongside teachers (Kemmis et al., 2014b) and not to or for them.

English teachers and curriculum reform

The experiences of English teachers are used here as an example of how curriculum reform may impact the curriculum making in a specific subject area. English teachers are recognised as a group of teachers who have experienced significant change and their once flexible content has become increasingly inflexible (Goodwyn, 2019; Kress, 2000; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020). They are also recognised as a group of teachers whose practice is deeply dependent on context (Albright et al., 2013; Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Manuel & Carter, 2016), and a group who has been experiencing change fatigue, innovation overload and workload challenges for many years (Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021).

Historically, English teachers have welcomed curriculum change and it is their professionalism, and agency (particularly adaptive agency) (Goodwyn, 2019) that have been a significant contributing factor to their resilience in the face of change and increasingly difficult teaching environments (Brown et al., 2021; Gleeson et al., 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021). Adaptive agency is a term conceptualised by Andrew Goodwyn and it refers to a teacher's, particularly English teacher's, ability "maintain a form of agency despite both external constraints and internal selfregulations" (2019, p. 153). His research highlighted that many English teachers maintain and expertly use this particular form of agency. They manage to maintain satisfaction in their work despite facing long-standing emotional strains, constraints, and regulations that contribute to tensions and frustrations that have caused many teachers to leave the profession. He argues that the subject of English itself may create more affordances and flexibility for teachers than other subjects and this requires particular self-regulation because of the confines of external demands. However, this creates a paradoxical push-pull for English teachers as they navigate the complexities of exerting agency while experiencing limits on their autonomy and this, in turn, impacts their personal and professional identities (Goodwyn, 2019).

There is a long history of increasing workloads associated with curriculum change for English teachers (Manuel, 2002; Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2005; O'Sullivan et al., 2008; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021).

This “invisible workload” (Manuel, 2002, p. 71) impacts a teacher’s ability to make quality curriculum for students. This has been exacerbated by limited or inconsistent access to: training or resourcing (Holmes et al., 2013; Manuel et al., 2018; Marangio & Heyting, 2023; Quigley, 2020), high quality and ongoing professional learning (Albright & Knezevic, 2017; Albright et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2013; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019; Manuel, 2002; Manuel et al., 2018; Quigley, 2020), and insufficient time to create contextually appropriate curriculum materials (Ireland, 2014; Manuel, 2002; McGraw, 2010; O’Sullivan, 2020).

Using Australia as an example, there is a long history of curriculum reform at both national and state levels (Henderson, 2021; Hughes, 2019; Woods et al., 2011) with returns to traditional notions of academic disciplines (Doecke, 2017). There have also been decades of reform in teacher education policy (Mills et al., 2024; Mockler, 2023a). Major developments at the federal level included:

the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the My School website (which provides standardised reporting on the academic outcomes and profile of every Australian school), ... a model for the federal funding of schools, known as “the Gonski model” (Savage et al., 2022, p. 963).

The inception of the Australian curriculum (2010-2012) and the increased pressures associated with testable content through structures such as NAPLAN – ongoing since its introduction in 2008, has given rise to concerns about the trend towards a narrowing of the curriculum and a focus on testable content knowledge (particularly literacy skills and writing genres) (Atweh & Singh, 2011; Carter et al., 2018; English Teachers' Association NSW, 2022; Macken-Horarik, 2011; O’Sullivan, 2020; Sawyer, 2010, 2016). There are consistent and persistent concerns about the impact of policy changes on teachers and calls to consider the role and placement of knowledge in the reformed curriculum (Atweh & Singh, 2011; McLean Davies & Sawyer, 2018; Yates & Collins, 2010). The problematic use of the My School website (a website that compares schools using high-states testing data), is an important and concerning example of the impact of these reforms as it has had a particularly negative impact on disadvantaged communities (Mills, 2015). Also of concern is the reduction in process-oriented knowledge that allows teachers autonomy to cater to diverse students needs because of the environment of intensified competition (Goodwyn, 2016a; Hughes, 2019).

In Australia, English is prioritised as a key subject in all Australian schools, and it is the only mandatory subject from Kindergarten to Year 12 in New South Wales. It is a key subject (alongside mathematics) that is most frequently aligned to and assigned responsibility for the results of external testing and credentialing associated with mandatory national examinations (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020), particularly in relation to writing results (Gannon & Dove, 2021). This has led to negative pressures on English teachers internally and externally (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020), is a cause of stress and anxiety for students (Carter et al., 2018) and has skewed pedagogical practices (Gannon, 2019). This pressure and responsibility has shaped both national and state curriculum materials and has influenced the way literacy, and writing in particular is taught in English classrooms across Australia (Gannon & Dove, 2021). A key symptom of curriculum reform at a national and international level is a “back to basics” focus on literacy (Sahlberg, 2023; Savage, 2016) and the accompanying focus on performance management and high-stakes testing (Goodwyn, 2016a; Stacey et al., 2022). This has become the responsibility of English teachers (Doecke et al., 2011; Gannon, 2019; Gannon & Dove, 2021; Quigley, 2020) because they are positioned as literacy experts and in turn face the “burden of success” (Gannon & Dove, 2021, p. 674).

Traditionally, secondary teachers have not been responsible for initial literacy instruction and are often seen, and view themselves, as subject specialists first. They may not see literacy instruction as foundational or the “media through which subject knowledge is codified and transmitted” (Moon, 2014, p. 114). Unfortunately, this does not marry with the increased pressures or expectations to teach, address literacy goals. These goals may not be achieved if teachers do not have the time or resources to address student needs, particularly if they feel they have a gap in their knowledge, skills or resources to facilitate increased ownership and agency to enact such a change (Ciampa et al., 2024; Quigley, 2020).

Moon (2014) suggests that there are three dimensions to teacher literacy in the secondary classroom with each relying on competence in personal literacy. The three areas include professional literacy, general pedagogical literacy and discipline-based pedagogical literacy. Professional literacy is the ability access and present information in a variety of forms and the basic requirement for any profession. General pedagogical literacy is the capacity to model Standard Australian English to

students, and the teacher's capacity to provide appropriate instruction and correction and foster high literacy standards in the classroom. Discipline-based pedagogical literacy is fundamental to secondary teaching, and it is the capacity to link curricular content to the forms of language and literacy associated with the specialist knowledge and the unique challenges posed by the discourse of a particular discipline. Secondary teachers must be capable of teaching the language of their specialisation (Moon, 2014) and they must be provided the opportunity to develop and refine their knowledge and skills when there is change in these areas. They must be supported to "master their craft" and in turn have the self-efficacy to provide students with learning experiences that meet their needs (Brown et al., 2021, p. 27; McKnight, 2021). The most effective forms of support are whole school approaches that support all teachers to see themselves as teachers of literacy and who are afforded the time, space and resources to give explicit attention to the specific features of language and text that are characteristic of their key learning areas (2014). Many pre-service teachers in Moon's (2014) study did not display this type of competence.

Other Australian studies on pre-service teachers' personal literacy and preparedness to teach literacy also suggest there are knowledge and skill deficiencies (Stephenson, 2018). This connects with poorer abilities to teach literacy (Louden & Rohl, 2006; Stephenson, 2018), with grammar being particularly problematic (Harper & Rennie, 2009). This was echoed by Cremin and Oliver's (2017) American study, where they found that many pre-service teachers have low self-confidence in writing, low self-efficacy as teachers who write, and low self-confidence with the teaching of writing. Louden and Rohl's (2006) study highlighted the value both primary and secondary teachers place on specific literacy teaching knowledge and a desire to be more prepared to teach literacy. There are calls for further study in this area, especially in relation to the confidence and capacity for secondary school teachers to teach the literacy required of their subject areas. There is a particular call for large scale comparative studies that go beyond studying a small number of universities or schools, as much of the research relates to pre-service teachers and there is great variability across teacher preparation programs (Ciampa et al., 2024; Stephenson, 2018). This may, however, mean that some teachers may be missing the knowledge and skills to teach the mechanics of

reading, language and text that are characteristic of their key learning and essential to success in secondary school (Moon, 2014).

Time and resources for individual and collaborative sense-making and engaging in professional dialogue are vital supports for teachers and their engagement with a new curriculum. Without these, teachers may engage in strategic compliance because they feel underprepared and unsupported to enact change (Priestley, 2011a; Woods et al., 2011). Several studies have identified the role the provision of appropriate professional development can play in addressing gaps in content knowledge and pedagogical challenges (Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Stephenson, 2018) such as a lack of knowledge and confidence in teaching writing in subject English. Practical support must be provided and this should be guided by theory (Louden & Rohl, 2006). Teacher ownership, agency, support for reflective and collaborative practices and observations of colleagues are also essential if learning is to become part of ongoing practice (Day, 2017). High-performing education systems provide policy and structural support for ongoing collaboration, networking and professional learning (Fullan, 2021). This guides and enhances the sharing of ideas so teachers are able to help one another as they create customised curriculum materials for their students (Sahlberg, 2023). This may help avoid the destructive competition that has emerged in response to increased competition between schools, and at times between teachers (Goodwyn, 2016a).

The NSW curriculum reform is the latest part of a suite of historic policy reforms (Hughes, 2019). Like the Australian curriculum, the curriculum content is presented as an online resource that requires teachers to navigate a complex website. This type of technological change requires ongoing support and professional learning (Ageel Mutlaq Alswilem, 2019; Fray et al., 2023; Harris & Hofer, 2011). While growth in technological skills was reported during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fray et al., 2023) it is important that teachers are not viewed as a homogenised group (Dindar et al., 2021). Technology use is particularly complex with many teachers needing further support to develop a deep understanding of their needs and the ability to access appropriate learning or resources (Dindar et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2024). The research landscape is rich in this area and demonstrates the extensive resources that need to be provided to enhance the digital capacities of all teachers (Ageel Mutlaq Alswilem, 2019; Albuloushi, 2019;

Alford et al., 2022; Dindar et al., 2021; Harris & Hofer, 2011; Kajder, 2005; Ranellucci et al., 2020). The provision of this is a significant predictor of behavioural intention and action (Dindar et al., 2021), however, this would benefit from further research in Australia, particularly in NSW, where all teachers will be expected to use the digital curriculum after the curriculum reform. This is where all syllabuses and support materials created by the NSW Education Standards Authority will be located.

Many changes in education reflect a technical-rational approach with negative implications for teachers including the workforce becoming de-motivated and de-professionalised (Larsen, 2010). In NSW, a preoccupation with standards (the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers), policy reform and tradition has seen the curriculum reform shaped by three principle characteristics: “an emphasis on the centrality of academic knowledge; an insistence on rigour and competitive assessment; and a preference at the secondary level for conventional subject matter disciplines” (Hughes, 2019, p. 155). This reform is also occurring in an increasingly devolved public education policy context, placing greater responsibility and pressure on NSW schools, particularly school executives (Albright et al., 2016; Stacey et al., 2022). This includes responsibility and accountability for funding that directly impacts teachers’ access to and engagement with the type of professional learning that is expected to contribute to a school’s improvement (Day, 2017). Thus, curriculum reform has become symbolic of a redoubling of state control and intervention in curriculum design, interpretation and implementation that is part of a broader global trend designed to exert greater control over schooling (Gouëdard et al., 2020; Savage, 2016).

The COVID-19 global pandemic placed unprecedented pressure on teachers and raised significant concerns about workload, wellbeing, morale and self-efficacy (Fray et al., 2023). Globally, it worsened the shortage of teachers (McPherson & Lampert, 2024) which has contributed to an already growing phenomenon of teaching out-of-field (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). Secondary teachers feel very strongly about teaching in their specialist subject areas and teaching outside these areas is seen as problematic (Priestley, 2011b). Confidence to teach an unfamiliar subject is a cause for concern and often results in increasing workloads (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). Much of the evidence about teachers’ experiences and perspectives on curriculum reform and its impact on their curriculum making practices is pre-

pandemic, and this has created a gap in the literature (O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; Priestley et al., 2021). McPherson and Lampert's (2024) study also highlighted that workforce planning continually fails to address the conditions impacting teachers day-to-day practice such as their working conditions, the status of the profession, and support structures.

English teachers and the teaching of English

The subject of English is underpinned by abstractions that guide analysis, interpretation and compositional processes of and with texts through an exploration and understanding of the nature of textuality (Doecke & Mead, 2018; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). John Dixon referred to English as the “quicksilver among metals—mobile, living and elusive” (Dixon, 1969, p. 1) and this is still a valid claim when one considers some of the ‘*models*’ of the subject of English: skills; cultural heritage; literature and literary study; adult needs; cross-curricular; cultural analysis and cultural history; social justice and personal growth (Dixon, 1969; Doecke, 2017; Goodwyn, 2016b; Manuel & Carter, 2019; Newbolt, 1921). This list alone highlights the difficulties English teachers face when trying to develop the ‘*content knowledge*’ (Shulman, 1986) that they may be expected to possess. The English curriculum has a long history of supporting students to develop their expressive and receptive skills and their knowledge of textuality (largely through the study of language and literature) (Dixon, 1969; Gold & Greene, 2016; Manuel & Carter, 2019; Moon, 1992; Newbolt, 1921; Pope, 2012; Smith et al., 2010).

In Australia, English as a subject (both language and literature) has been a core and compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum for over one hundred years and it is the subject that has carried the curricular responsibility for “advancing the weight of self-formation, socialisation and nation-building project of education” (Manuel & Carter, 2019, p. 224). The inaugural NSW secondary school English curriculum of 1911 saw English teachers assigned the responsibility of developing students’ moral, spiritual, intellectual and social character, as well as a love and enjoyment of reading, through the study of literature (Manuel & Carter, 2019; New South Wales Department of Public Instruction, 1911). Curriculum materials at this time in Australia and internationally were influenced by New Education theorists and perspectives which saw a commitment to a liberal education that had practical

outcomes for the student (moral, intellectual, emotional and social development) and for social stability and productivity (as a productive and constructive member of society) (Doecke, 2017; Manuel & Brock, 2003; Manuel & Carter, 2019; Newbolt, 1921). Several elements from this period have become normative in the English curriculum both nationally and internationally including a focus on: the primacy of language development for self-expression; of literature and language as an instrument for self-formation; for English as a subject to support personal, social and cultural experience; and the study of mandated types and quantities of texts for study (Goodwyn, 2016b; Manuel & Carter, 2019; Manuel et al., 2018; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2024c; Perry, 2019). This has shaped the professional identities of English teachers who often share, at times idiosyncratic, characteristics as teachers of much more than language skills. They see themselves as individuals who are responsible for educating the 'whole' child (including their moral development), who support and guide a love of the aesthetic and creative elements of the subject, and support the students' personal and intellectual growth for life inside and beyond the classroom (Day, 2017; Doecke, 2002; Gannon, 2012; Goodwyn, 2004; Goodwyn, 2019). The personal growth model remains important in English discourse and practice (Goodwyn, 2016b; Goodwyn et al., 2018). So too does the focus on English as a subject dedicated to engaging students in language and learning that enhances their senses of "the *'life'* available to them" (Doecke, 2017, p. 242).

Unfortunately, English teachers' identities, and teacher identities more broadly, have become challenged, degraded and undermined in recent years due to neoliberal reform agendas and a culture of performativity (Goodwyn, 2004; Mockler, 2011, 2013; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020). Neoliberal reform agendas and their focus on high-stakes testing, fuelled by fears of educational underachievement, have led to a curriculum emphasis on testable skills (Carter et al., 2018; Frawley & McLean Davies, 2015; Gannon, 2019; Gannon & Dove, 2021; Wall, 2017), and pressures to shape future adults who can contribute to an unpredictable economy (Connell, 2013). The irony here is that a focus on a narrow set of testable skills has changed the curriculum and pedagogical landscape of the English classroom, particularly in relation to the development of heavily prescribed, homogenised, formulaic and limiting approaches to how writing is taught (Gannon & Dove, 2021;

Gibbons, 2019; McKnight, 2021). This conflicts with the benefits of providing a reading (particularly fiction) and writing rich classroom. These learning environments support students to experience academic success in high-stakes tests (Jerrim & Moss, 2019). This is not to imply that many English teachers are not already teaching writing, and other parts of the subject, in engaging and effective ways. It is designed to highlight the existing pressures that are externally driven and promote “homogenising approaches to writing” which forces teachers to comply or, if they are able, respond in creative individualised ways (Gannon & Dove, 2021, p. 657; Goodwyn, 2019). This type of response requires skilled and confident teachers to educate with agency.

The knowledge structures of English as a subject are hard to discern and ‘pin down’ for many students and some teachers (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). This has contributed to over one hundred years of debate surrounding what constitutes the subject English (Dixon, 1969; Green, 2021; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019; Manuel & Carter, 2019; Newbolt, 1921; Perry, 2019). Traditional knowledge structures, particularly those associated with representation and communication, have also changed significantly in the twenty-first century (Kress, 2000; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). The *English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes ... (2017)* resources were developed by the NSW English Teachers Association and the NSW Department of Education as a way to provide a knowledge structure for the subject of English as a twenty-first century discipline. The goal was to make explicit what was implicit in the 2012 NSW English K–10 syllabus and the 2017 English Stage 6 syllabuses and provide a pathway that allowed English teachers to plan, program and scaffold learning across units, years and stages (Dixon et al., 2016; English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017; Gold & Greene, 2016; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). They were an attempt to support students and teachers to explore how meaning is made in the subject of English through the study of quality texts. Engaging in the learning processes was designed to help students to understand the textual concepts as the ‘*big ideas*’ that are stated or implied in the content of English (Gold & Greene, 2016; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). While they speak to the heritage of the subject they also align with and represent the work of contemporary English academics and teachers (Beveridge & Murray, 2022; Dixon et

al., 2016; Gold & Greene, 2016; Moon, 1992, 2000, 2004; Reynolds, 2018; Young, 2021).

The language and ideas presented in the English textual concepts resource are evident in several models of English including two seminal texts. 'The Teaching of English in England' (commonly referred to as 'The Newbolt Report') and Dixon's 'Growth through English' share several connections and represent the wide ranging debates around the subject (Dixon, 1969; Newbolt, 1921). They resonate with the ideas expressed in the textual concepts resources through the importance placed on: developing language skills (including grammar); the study of texts including works of 'great' literature; exploring literature to understand one's cultural heritage and to deepen an understanding of the self; a focus on developing the ability to express one's own ideas; and the study of English for personal development or growth (1969; Newbolt, 1921). Across these texts there is an emphasis on English as a place and space for exploring texts in terms of their form, language and structure and using texts from the 'canon' because of the messages/lessons represented, as well as the beauty in the form and style of the narratives and characters. They also placed importance on the opportunity to use these texts for mimicry as experimentation that deepened students' appreciation for a great author's language and style. Many of these ideas continue to resonate and provoke debate and discussion with English teachers and researchers today (Dixon et al., 2016; Doecke, 2002; Doecke, 2017; Goodwyn, 2016b; Green, 2021; Manuel & Brock, 2003; Manuel & Carter, 2019; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021; Perry, 2019).

The textual concepts are now firmly situated in the English K–10 Syllabus as they structure the outcomes and content contained in three of the six mandatory syllabus outcomes (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). Initial evidence highlights that high school English teachers need explicit support to design teaching and learning programs through the textual concepts, and the most effective ways to support teachers in this area also needs further research (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). The explicit focus on literacy requirements (Moon, 2014; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2018b; Quigley, 2020) and the conceptual nature of outcome content may cause concern for English teachers (English Teachers' Association NSW, 2022; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). Research into the role the textual concepts can play in the knowledge structure of the subject English, and their impact

on the practice of programming, is just beginning and needs further development (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This literature review has positioned this study within the following areas of research and their historical contexts: the phenomena of curriculum, curriculum making and curriculum reform, and an exploration of the English teacher as an example. This positioning has highlighted the gaps and opportunities to deepen understanding of the ways educational systems can refine their support for teachers as they enact praxis-oriented curriculum in response to change. I return to these connections in later chapters. The next chapter elaborates on research design and methodology, explains the key terminology and presents the research questions to reinforce the goals of the study.

Chapter three – research design and methods

This chapter presents the theoretical and methodological framework that informed the research design, and the methods used in the collection and analysis of data. The chapter is organised into four key parts. The opening section identifies the research aims, questions and definitions of key terms for the study. This is followed by an explanation and rationale for the use of the theory of practice architectures as the theoretical framework for the study. It also highlights the effectiveness of practice theory as a way of conceptualising teachers' perspectives and experiences of curriculum making. The third section details the research design processes, including participant identification and recruitment, and justifies methods for data collection and analysis including the use of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022) and the 'table of invention' (Kemmis et al., 2014b). This tool was used as a theoretical and analytical resource to identify the enabling and constraining conditions impacting curriculum making practice (Kemmis et al., 2014b). The chapter concludes with an overview of the ethical issues pertaining to the study and a brief chapter summary.

Research aims and questions

The primary aim of this small-scale qualitative study was to investigate the conditions enabling and constraining secondary English teachers as they enact the *English K–10 Syllabus* for the first time as part of NSW curriculum reform. It was motivated by a desire to understand what English teachers think about their practice and how they understand and respond to complex change. Taking an interpretivist approach and using semi-structured interviews, provided a point-in-time snapshot of the English teachers' perspectives and experiences of curriculum making and the conditions that enabled and constrained this practice. A focus on teachers' representations and responses to "what are you doing?" (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 14) provided an opportunity to listen to the participants' perspectives as they discussed their curriculum making activities as they took place in site-specific contexts and were influenced by broader educational relationships.

The study also aimed to interrogate and understand the connections and contradictions between the practice of education and the institution of schooling at the level of the classroom teacher as they engaged in the practice of curriculum

making. As noted in earlier chapters, English teachers are operating in a period of significant challenge and change (Bradfield & Exley, 2020; Fuller & Stevenson, 2019; Priestley et al., 2021; Sahlberg, 2023). ‘Thick’ descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the site-specific experiences were created to represent the enabling and constraining arrangements that the participants encountered during curriculum reform. Against this backdrop, the question of how English teachers respond to curriculum reform was crucial to understanding how the intended curriculum is enacted in classrooms.

Research questions

The title of this thesis, ‘Curriculum making in high school English: teachers’ perspectives and practice in a time of curriculum reform’ articulates the core concerns of this study, the desire to understand how this “once in a generation” (The Educator, 2023) curriculum reform was impacting high school English teachers’ practice. The following overarching and contributing questions directed the study:

What factors have enabled and constrained the curriculum making practices of NSW high school English teachers as they plan and program for the enactment of the Stage 4 and 5 components of the English K–10 syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022b)?

- What are high school English teachers’ perspectives on the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?
- What support do high school English teachers require during curriculum reform?
- How do high school English teachers design teaching and learning programs in response to the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?

Definitions and explanations of key concepts

For the purposes of this study the following definitions have been used to create a clear outline of the phenomenon under study.

Curriculum enactment: a deliberative social practice engaged in by teachers when they translate, interpret, judge and transform curriculum policy into day-to-day contextualised teaching practice taking responsibility for their students’ learning

within contextually specific enabling and constraining factors (Ball et al., 2012; Doyle & Rosemartin, 2012).

Curriculum making: a dynamic, purposeful, and ongoing social practice engaged in by teachers in context-specific sites of activity. A non-linear, interdependent, and interrelated process involving interaction and translation between teachers, their students, resources, and official materials. It is influenced by a teacher's professional knowledge, dispositions, beliefs (Priestley et al., 2021) and the ecologies of practice in which they operate (Kemmis et al., 2014b).

Theoretical Framework – the theory of practice architectures

This study uses the theory of practice architectures (TPA) as a theoretical, methodological and analytical framework (Kemmis, 2010, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). This theory posits that practice is enabled and constrained by arrangements that exist in each site of practice (Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). The focus on curriculum making practice was guided by the following understanding that a practice is a:

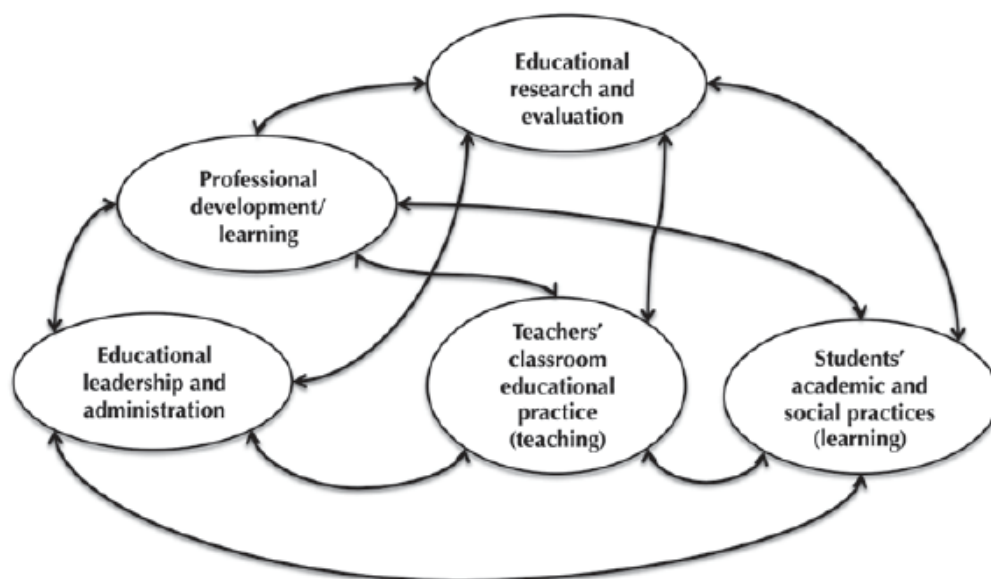
form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings 'hangs together' in a distinctive project (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 31).

The sayings, doings and relatings that compose the practice of curriculum making for secondary English teachers 'hang together' in the project of curriculum enactment in the context of curriculum reform. They are made possible by practice architectures (conditions and arrangements that enable and constrain practice) (Kemmis, 2019). This framed my thinking and the desire to understand the conditions enabling and constraining English teachers as they enacted the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c) in diverse site-specific conditions across NSW during NSW curriculum reform.

The theory of practice architectures 'table of invention' represents a key analytical tool for revealing the way the English teachers' practice was being enabled and constrained by practice traditions and the conditions in their practice landscapes. This analytical approach recognises that context and the practice landscape in which practices are enacted are a key determinant for the possibilities

and consequences of the practice in each site. This framing, and the ontological focus of TPA, deepened the interpretation of the site-specific peculiarities and particularities of the practice landscapes influencing the teachers, and the practice traditions informing their practice. Viewing English teachers' curriculum making practice as a 'social thing' helped identify the 'what' and 'how' of the English teachers' practice and shaped the understandings and interpretations of the interconnected webs of practice (Kemmis, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). Kemmis et al. (2014b) highlight that these sites act as ecologies of practice that are influenced by a broader education complex: student learning, teaching, professional learning (initial teacher education and ongoing learning), leading (educational leadership and administration), and researching (self-study on the part of teachers and administrators). The interdependence and interconnections of the ecologies of practice are demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – the theory of ecologies of practices (Kemmis et al., 2014b)



Thus, the individual practice of curriculum making is enabled and constrained by diverse arrangements. As an individual practice, it is intersubjective and historically formed. However, it is also transformable through individual and social action (Kemmis et al., 2014a).

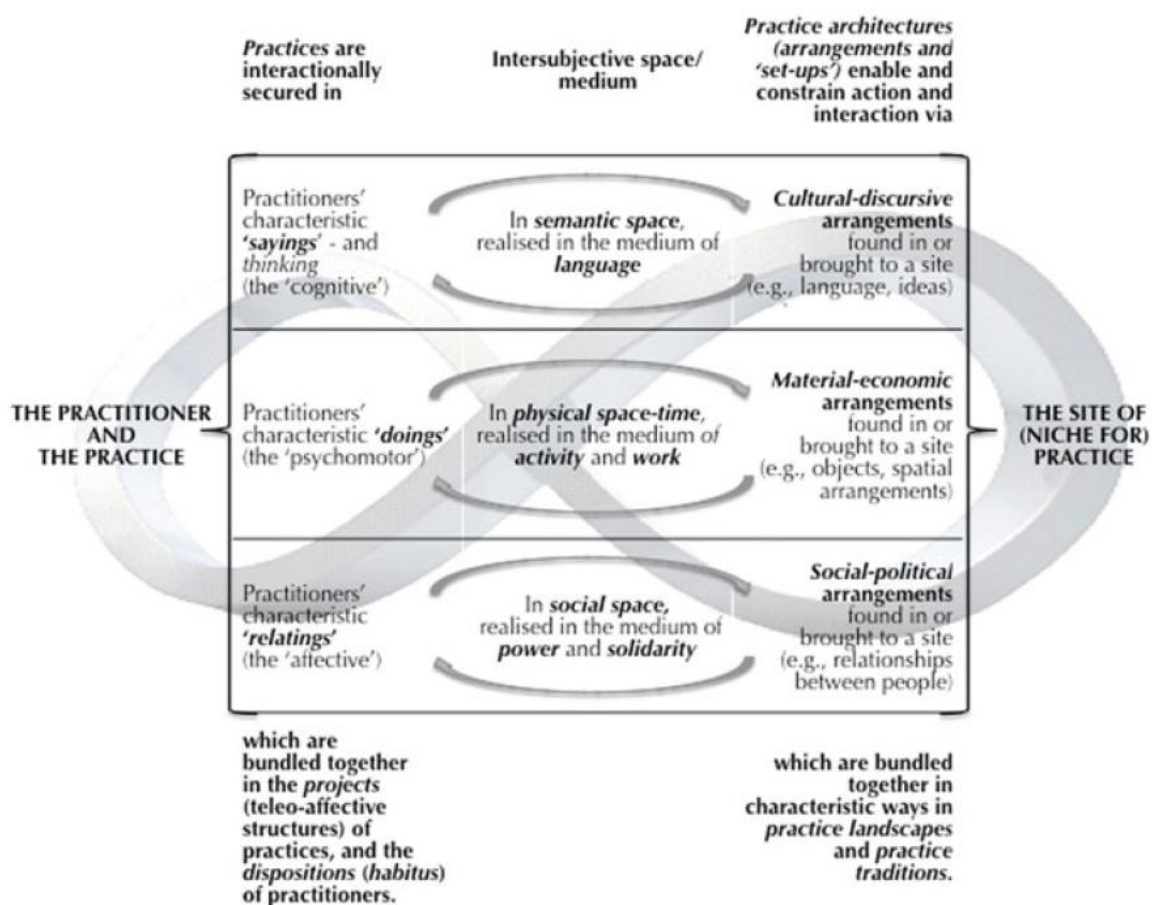
The theory of practice architectures posits that there are three-dimensions to intersubjective space and seeing practice in this way “allows us to see our practices, understandings and conditions as malleable rather than as fixed and final” (Kemmis

et al., 2014a, p. 78). For this study, the teachers' knowledge, meaning and experiences are represented as located in three analytically distinct but intertwined intersubjective spaces (Mahon et al., 2017):

1. the *sayings*—the thinking, words and language used by teachers and students—occur in a practice are made possible by *cultural-discursive arrangements* found in or brought to a site as discourse and ideas, in the shared medium of *language*, and in *semantic space* in which people encounter one's ideas and perspectives as *interlocutors*;
2. the *doings*—characteristics, activities and resources that may be present or absent—are made possible by *material-economic arrangements* found in or brought to a site as objectics and material resources, in the shared medium of *activity or work*, and in the *physical space-time* in which people encounter one another as *embodied beings*;
3. the *relatings*—pre-existing affective relationships between people and their interactions with non-human entities—of a practice are made possible by *social-political arrangements* found in or brought to a site, in the shared medium of *solidarity and power*, and in *social space* in which people encounter one another as *social beings* (Kemmis, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014a; Mahon et al., 2017).

The interconnected nature of practice as one that is politicised, humanised and theorised and existing in specific sites is illustrated by the mobius strip in the TPA model in Figure 2 (Mahon et al., 2017).

Figure 2 – The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 38)



This study is an important account of human experience taking place during a volatile period, and it contributes to a growing body of literature about site-specific arrangements that support teachers as they respond to change (Brown et al., 2021; Diamond & Bulfin, 2021; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The TPA supported an understanding of the site-specific arrangements and how these were or were not informing, shaping and mediating English teachers' curriculum making practices as they responded to NSW curriculum reform.

Research design

English teachers' practice is profoundly personal and contextual, with memory and perspective shaping their ways of knowing, believing and thinking (Albright et al., 2013; Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Manuel & Carter, 2016). For this reason, the semi-structured interview was identified as an appropriate and useful tool for understanding the impact of change on their "individual subjectivities, ideals and envisioned futures" (Manuel & Carter, 2016, p. 92). This allowed the participants to

share how the change was taking place in the ecologies of practice in which they were operating (Kemmis et al., 2014b). This study highlights the importance of research that values and captures the perspectives of teachers' through their voices as they respond to complex change.

Sampling and participant characteristics

Purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to select eight NSW high school English teachers in two distinct career stages. Participants met the inclusion criteria: (a) qualified to teach high school English and (b) teaching the *English K-10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c) at the point of recruitment. The participants included three early career teachers in their first three years and five teachers with more than five years of teaching experience. The experienced practitioners comprised two classroom teachers and three English faculty leaders, thus contributing diverse perspectives and experiences.

The inclusion of teachers at different career stages captured experiential data that represented a diverse yet connected suite of perspectives and experiences. The experienced teachers had either taught or led the English curriculum response to the last system-wide syllabus change. This occurred in 2017 when the current Stage 6 English syllabuses were released and then examined for the first time in the Higher School Certificate in 2019 (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017). The early career teachers were experiencing curriculum change for the first time.

Demographic data is provided for each participant in Table 2. Pseudonyms are provided to ensure anonymity. The school type, sector, geographical location and the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was determined through the data provided on the Australian My School website. The data for this site is provided by the national body the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2025)³. The dominant quartile of the Distribution of Socio-Educational Advantage

³ A description of the ICSEA is provided as opposed to identifying the numerical detail so as to ensure the anonymity of the participant and their school. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a measure of schooling advantage provided on the Australian My School website. The median ICSEA value is 1000. In this study ICSEA descriptions align with the following details: a "very low ICSEA" school had an ICSEA of less than 900; a "low ICSEA" school

(SEA) is also provided in Table 2 and this data is also sourced from the My School website.

Recruitment

Recruitment was conducted through the NSW English Teachers' Association (ETA) Facebook page and via posts on social media. English teachers use a broad range of social media platforms, and this recruitment strategy secured responses from early career and experienced teachers across diverse geographical locations and sector/school settings.

Interested participants completed an expression of interest where inclusion criteria and general demographic data were collected. This was used to identify appropriate participants to be invited for interview according to principles of maximum variation based on experience, sector and geographic location. Several prospective participants sent enquiry emails or messages via social media. Participants who did not meet the selection criteria but were interested in the study offered to share the study details with colleagues.

had an ICSEA of between 900-975; a "mid ICSEA" had an ICSEA of between 976-1050; a "high ICSEA" school had an ICSEA of 1050-1125; and a "very high ICSEA" over 1126.

Table 2 – participant overview

Pseudonym	teaching experience	Current role	Duration in current role	School type and sector	Geographical location	ICSEA and dominant SEA
Jane – EXT⁴	6–10 years	English and History teacher	6–10 years	Government (comprehensive) secondary 7 to 12 school	Inner regional, Southwestern Sydney	Low, over 50% of students in the bottom quartile
Amanda – EXT	6–10 years	Head Teacher, English	3–5 years	Government (semi-selective) secondary 7 to 12 school	Major cities, Southwestern Sydney	Mid, over 50% of students in the middle quartiles with over 25% in the bottom quartile
Anna – ECT	0–2 years	English teacher	0–2 years	Government (comprehensive) secondary 7–10 school	Metropolitan, Western Sydney	Very low, over 75% of students in the bottom quartile
Kayla – EXT	16–20 years	Head Teacher, English	0–2 years	Government comprehensive high school	Inner regional, northern NSW	Very low, over 60% of students in the bottom quartile

⁴ The acronyms provided reflect career states – EXT identifies the experienced teachers and ECT identifies the early career teachers. This is used as part of the discussion of research findings in Chapter 4 and 5.

Pseudonym	teaching experience	Current role	Duration in current role	School type and sector	Geographical location	ICSEA and dominant SEA
Joanna – EXT	16–20 years	English teacher	3–5 years	Government (comprehensive) secondary 7 to 12 school	Major cities, southern NSW	Low, over 50% of students in the middle quarters with over 40% in the bottom quartile
Simone – EXT	26+ years	Head of Department – English	0–2 years	Non-government (Independent) religious girls' secondary 7 to 12 school	Major cities, Western Sydney	Mid, over 50% of students in the middle quartiles with over 30% in the bottom quartile
Penny – ECT	0–2 years	English and History teacher	0–2 years	Non-government (coeducational and secular) K–12 school	Major cities, Sydney	Very high, over 70% of students in the top quartile
Andrea – ECT	0–2 years	English teacher	0–2 years	Government (comprehensive) high school	Inner regional, northern NSW	Very low, with over 55% of students in the bottom quartile

Timeline and data collection

Two forms of data were collected, the demographic data of participants during recruitment (collected through Qualtrics and used to describe school context), and semi-structured interview data. The interviews occurred over three weeks in September and October 2024 and ran for 60 to 90 minutes. Participants negotiated a time and selected the location for the online interview. The interview structure was outlined to participants in the recruitment information (Appendix 2 – Participant Information Statement).

The semi-structured interview was identified as an appropriate method for data collection through a five-step process:

(1) identifying the prerequisites for using semi-structured interviews; (2) retrieving and using previous knowledge; (3) formulating the preliminary semi-structured interview guide; (4) pilot testing the guide; and (5) presenting the complete semi-structured interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2959).

Identifying the prerequisites

Firstly, the person-to-person semi-structured interview was chosen as the data collection tool because it is appropriate for studying perceptions, intentions, experiences, opinions and issues that were meaningful for the participants and their worldview (Kallio et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We cannot observe these things and so we must ask the participants how they have interpreted the world we are studying (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Opened-ended questions enabled the exploration of context-specific differences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Verma & Mallick, 1999) and allowed for a diversity of perspectives and experiences to be shared across participants. This supported the exploration and emergence of new concepts, and could be replicated across studies (Kallio et al., 2016).

Retrieving and using previous knowledge

Previous knowledge was explored and retrieved through the extensive literature review. Doেকে's (2002; 2017) research guided the nature of the draft and final questions. He demonstrated the importance of understanding the practice of English teachers in relation to their understanding of subject English and how they see themselves as English teachers.

Formulating the preliminary semi-structured interview guide

The interview schedule was developed in two stages (before and after the pilot) (Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule and Appendix 4 – Interview Script) and it contains the list of main theme questions and follow-up questions posed to the participants. The interview questions aligned with the overarching and contributing research questions, and follow-up questions were used to enable the exploration of context specific differences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Verma & Mallick, 1999). The questions were pre-designed to increase the consistency of the topics discussed in the interviews and to support data triangulation. The order of the questions was progressive and logical regarding the chronology of events being discussed (the stage in the curriculum reform and curriculum making journey).

Pilot testing

Field testing was used to pilot the interview guide (Chenail, 2016) and the interview platform. This confirmed that the questions provided rich data, and that the university supported platform Zoom was appropriate for conducting and transcribing the interview data (Archibald et al., 2019). The questions were effective because they were understood by participants (Roulston, 2010) and used the researcher's detailed understanding of the world being experienced by the participants. Descriptive answers were encouraged as *what* and *how* questions guided the discussion (Chenail, 2016), and the responses highlighted the site-specific arrangements that were impacting practice and the ways these sites of activity could be refined and improved to enhance future practice (Kemmis et al., 2014b). The platform was selected because of its robust privacy and security options. It is a relatively simple and user-friendly platform, and it provided convenient and cost-effective access to a geographically dispersed population (Archibald et al., 2019). Only one participant expressed difficulty using the software and indicated that they navigated this challenge the day before the interview.

Field testing involved two NSW secondary English teachers in different roles (one experienced classroom teacher and one experienced Head Teacher). This process confirmed the coverage and relevance of the data gained through the preliminary guide. This process identified areas for refinement and one question that needed reformulating (Kallio et al., 2016; Mikuska, 2017). The process also

highlighted the significance of the flexible use of the questions. This allowed the researcher to respond to the ideas being discussed, the new ideas on the topic and the participants' emerging worldviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This reinforced the importance of providing the option to expand on a point when further clarity or detail was required. This ensured the interviews would make effective use of the 'knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues' (Brinkman, 2018, p. 579). Verbal (asking clarifying questions) and non-verbal probing (remaining silent, nodding and contributing non-verbal conversational discourse markers) were used in the pilot and official interviews and provided time for participants to think aloud and express the complexities of their thoughts (Chenail, 2016; Kallio et al., 2016).

Completing the semi-structured interview guide

Pilot testing was a vital component in the refinement of the interview schedule and the expected timing of the interviews (Kallio et al., 2016; Mikuska, 2017). Appendix 4 – Interview Script contains the complete semi-structured interview guide as it was used in the interviews for all eight participants. There is a list of the main theme questions and the aligned potential follow-up questions. The questions align with the overarching and contributing research questions.

Data analysis

Organisation and interpretation of the data was guided by Braun and Clarke's six phases of reflexive thematic analysis because this nonlinear and recursive process enables interpretive engagement with the data and conceptualisation of the themes identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). This ensured adequate engagement with the data, internal validity, reliability, and external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Kemmis et al.'s (2014b) 'table of invention' is, as explained above, an interpretive tool that allowed for deeper interpretations of the practices identified. It was used for analysing practices and was an adaptation of the work of Kemmis et al. (2014b) and Gibbs and Cooke (2023). The 'table of invention' was used at key phases of reflexive thematic analysis to guide interpretation and the categorisation of the interactions taking place ('sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings'), and the identification of the practice architectures that enabled and constrained the interactions (the cultural-discursive material-economic and socio-political arrangements) that make the practices possible (Kemmis et al., 2014b).

The six phases of reflexive thematic analysis and the integration of the theory of practice architectures is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 – overview of the phases of data analysis

Phase	Process
<p>Phase 1 – Familiarisation with the data</p>	<p>Reading and re-reading the data, making brief notes about the ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ of each data item (participant transcript) and initial insights across the dataset.</p> <p>Member checking was used to ensure internal validity. Participants were provided the opportunity to review their transcripts and make corrections and adjustments to preserve anonymity, and ensure completeness and accuracy (Miles & Huberman, 1994).</p>
<p>Examples of Phase 1</p>	<p>The template of the ‘table of invention’ used for this process is provided in Appendix 5 – Table of Invention for analysing practices.</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Phase 1 familiarisation – Jane is an example of the notes and observations taken during Phase 1. These notes and the completion of the table of invention captured initial insights and informed the creation of a mind map that visualised the participants data. This is provided in Appendix 7 – Phase 1 data mind map and due to the size of the mind map, Appendix 8 – Phase 1 mind map labels levels 1–3 is provided for readability.</p>
<p>Phase 2 – Coding</p>	<p>The dataset was rigorously and systematically reviewed. Single, meaningful code labels were applied. They focused on the concepts, focus areas and the research questions. This provided an initial description of the explicit/semantic and implicit/latent meaning within the participants ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ and organised the dataset into enabling and constraining conditions.</p>

<p>Examples of Phase 2</p>	<p>An example of the Phase 2 coding is provided in Appendix 9 – Phase 2 Coding mind map. Due to the size of the mind map, Appendix 10 – Phase 2 mind map coding labels levels 1–3 is provided for readability.</p>
<p>Phase 3 – Generating initial themes</p>	<p>Shared patterned meaning across the entire dataset was identified through a process of coding each transcript. Codes were clustered through shared core concepts aligned with the research questions. Meaningful descriptions were provided and identified a series of enabling and constraining activities or arrangements identified across the dataset.</p>
<p>Examples of Phase 3</p>	<p>An example of the initial themes and the prevalence of each across the coded dataset is provided in Appendix 11 – Phase 3 initial NVIVO thematic descriptions – enabling and constraining arrangements.</p>
<p>Phase 4 – Developing and reviewing themes</p>	<p>Phase 4 was an iterative process. Initial themes were reviewed against all of the data and any of the codes clustered for each theme to assess their viability (Braun & Clarke, 2022). A brief synopsis of each theme was provided to frame the interpretation of the data and the alignment with the theme. The viability of the analysis was assessed in relation to the alignment with the central organising concept, alignment across the dataset, the research questions and Braun and Clarke’s (2022) recommendation to reduce initial coding and theme development to between two and six themes. Connections were made between the themes, the literature (Chapter Two) and existing knowledge and practice in the field.</p>
<p>Examples of Phase 4</p>	<p>An example of the refined themes and the prevalence of each across the coded dataset is provided in Appendix 12 – Phase 4 review NVIVO themes – enabling and constraining arrangements.</p>

<p>Phase 5 – Refining, defining and naming themes</p>	<p>Phase 5 was an iterative process involving analytic refinement, and it was blended with Phase 6. Using NVIVO, the definitions for themes were refined and at times they were combined or revised. A brief synopsis was crafted for each theme and its component sub-themes. This ensured a clear demarcation across themes, a clear alignment with the core concept and a description of the dispositions and practice traditions in the practice landscape.</p> <p>The themes were then reviewed and refined through a focus on the practice of curriculum making using the table of invention. This framed the narrative of the practice architectures and the enabling and constraining arrangements impacting the participants’ curriculum making during curriculum reform.</p>
<p>Examples of Phase 5</p>	<p>An example of theme refinement and naming is provided in Appendix 13 – Phase 5 – part 2 – refining, defining and naming themes. The mapping of the practice landscape through the table of invention is provided in Appendix 14 – Phase 5 – an extract of the ‘table of invention’ for curriculum making.</p>
<p>Phase 6 – Writing up</p>	<p>This thesis weaves together an analytic narrative. This contains compelling and vivid data extracts representing the practitioner and their practices within a particular site of practice (Braun & Clarke, 2022).</p>

Validity and reliability

Internal validity was aided by data triangulation. The eight interviews occurred across several sites of activity, which recorded multiple perspectives. This enhanced the ability to compare and cross-check the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This does, however, acknowledge that triangulation does not assume a fixed-point in the phenomenon under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The reality of curriculum making is multidimensional, ever-changing and is not a fixed object waiting to be discovered.

Reflexivity in the research process was supported by member checks at Phase 1 of data analysis (Roulston, 2010). Participants were provided the opportunity to review transcripts and make corrections and adjustments to preserve anonymity and ensure completeness and accuracy (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Four participants opted to review their transcripts and two requested changes or refinements.

Two sets of transcripts were created for each participant. An original verbatim transcript, created digitally through Zoom, was reviewed, revised and edited for formatting and content accuracy after listening to each interview several times (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The second transcript was anonymised. Any identifiable information, such as people's names or school-specific structures, were removed through the insertion of a generic description in square brackets (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Pseudonyms were applied to the anonymised transcript. They are recorded in Table 2 and were used to identify participants. Member-check adjustments were made in both transcripts, and a note recorded in the audit trail. Anonymised versions of each interview were used for analysis. School names and locations were indicated through general geographic and educational sector information. Interview location specified home or work and a general geographic location. This process was outlined to participants at the start of the interview and provided in writing when transcripts were returned to participants for review.

The audit trail was recorded in a research journal and detailed how the study was conducted and how the data was analysed, including: the data collection process; data coding and thematising; and explanation of how and why decisions were made (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The audit trail included field notes, annotations, memos and other records identifying what I did, saw, heard and thought in response to each participant and their interview. These notes described my position as a researcher in relation to the participants, both physically and within the context of the curriculum reform cycle. They also described what I was observing and learning, and my thoughts and questions.

Researcher reflexivity

Elements of the research included reflexive accounts, and as a researcher, I was conscious of my role as the participants' colleague experiencing curriculum reform at

the same time as participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I conducted this study and wrote this thesis, I was conscious that I did not fit the binary conception of the ‘outsider’ as researcher or the ‘insider’ as teacher because my professional role is outside the classroom as the English Coordinator 7 to 12 for the NSW Department of Education (DoE). I was honest about my role and provided this information in the recruitment information (Appendix 2). I acknowledge that my colleagues in my place of work play an influential role in designing and delivering the resources and professional learning support related to the Stage 4 and 5 components (NSW Department of Education, 2023b) of the new *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). While we lead and manage the resources and professional learning provided by the DoE, this can only be enacted by individual English teachers as they operate in their site-specific ecologies of practice.

My role may have caused social desirability bias and proximity bias as anonymity was removed (Neuman, 2003), however, it is this personal connection, open-ended questions, careful listening and careful prompting that enabled the research participants to tell their personal stories, own the responses, and allowed me the personal freedom and choice that led to detailed, contextually situated descriptions (Verma & Mallick, 1999).

Limitations

The study does not include proportional representation of the secondary English teaching profession, nor did it seek to. The small-scale qualitative design, self-selecting nature of participation and rigorous data analysis does, however, provide a series of valid, reliable, rich and trustworthy accounts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of teachers’ perspectives and experiences at a point-in-time during NSW curriculum reform. This can support further research in understanding the long-term effects of the curriculum reform on teachers’ curriculum making practices.

Ethical implications

Approval was gained from The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Project identifier: 2024/HE000609 – Appendix 1 – HREC Ethics Approval), based on requirements in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council

Australian Research Council and Universities Australia, 2023). A framework of ethical 'thinking' framed the study and informed all aspects of the project and informed responsibilities to the participants and the inherent power dynamics in the representation of voices and experiences which are shared during semi-structured interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This informed the reflexive approach to the research. The study itself was low risk with no foreseeable risk of harm.

Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without penalty. Recruitment information specified the purpose of the research, data collection methods, time/information sharing demands, risks and the potential benefits of the research for participants (Appendix 2 – Participant Information Statement). Participating teachers were provided with participant information statements outlining the project, the interview schedule, and information and consent forms. The consent forms were completed and returned to the researcher prior to the commencement of the interview. Consent was provided by each participant in writing, and verbally at the start of each interview.

The ethical principles of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were applied during the reporting stage and pseudonyms were used to identify participants. General demographic data was used to describe school context and contextual details so participants or schools could not be identified (Table 2). Participants will be provided a lay summary of the thesis and a hyperlink to the full thesis at the conclusion of the study.

As required, protocols for securely storing electronic files and destroying data after five years will be followed. These procedures were outlined in more detail in the *Data Management and Storage Plan* for The University of Sydney. All materials associated with the study were stored on university supported platforms.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research aims, theory, methods and processes employed in the study. It provided a rationale for the choice of both theory and methodology in addressing the research aims. The theory of practice architectures was presented through its application to contemporary education, a period of curriculum reform and this study. The value of the semi-structured interview and

reflective thematic analysis was highlighted in terms of their ability to collect and represent the enabling and constraining conditions English teachers face as they engage in the site-based practice of curriculum making. This has enabled the development and representation of a rich multilayered and multi-perspective dataset across different educational sites. Four major themes were identified through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These themes, and the light they shed on the perspectives and experiences of secondary English teachers as they engage in curriculum making during a period of curriculum reform, will be explored in detail over the next two chapters.

Chapter four – research findings

This chapter presents the key findings established from the analysis of the data. The chapter opens with an overview of the four research themes, a brief description of the participants' approach to curriculum reform and then introduces and explores each key theme. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and the 'table of invention' (Kemmis et al., 2014b) informed the interpretive engagement with the data (outlined in Chapter Three) and guided the active crafting of the themes. This approach was influenced by an understanding of the literature (Chapter Two), the researcher's theoretical orientation (Chapter Three) and personal connections with the phenomena under study as exemplified through researcher reflexivity (Chapter One and Chapter Five) (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The four themes identified were: the vital role of collaboration and ongoing professional learning in curriculum making; the personal significance of using the syllabus to construct student-centred learning experiences and English curriculum materials; the complexities of enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage; and the importance of trust-based professionalism.

Participants and an overview of their role in curriculum making

The participants provided extensive and detailed accounts of their practice as they responded to the interview questions. While word limit constraints have prevented the provision of examples from all participants across each theme, extended quotations have been included as illustrations of practice that reflect the experiences shared across the dataset. An explanatory note is provided when important differences of perspective or experience are included. The prevalence of each theme, including its breadth and depth, across the dataset is evident in the Phase 5 coding and theme development provided in Appendix 13 – Phase 5 – part 2 – refining, defining and naming themes. In the research findings, each participant is identified by the pseudonym and demographic details provided in Table 2 – participant overview. This is listed for each participant at the start of each theme.

Participants were involved in curriculum making with the new syllabus, including designing teaching and learning programs, units, lessons, assessments and resources for their classes. They were also adapting sample teaching and learning materials and contributing to the development of programs and

assessments that were used by other colleagues in 2024 and 2025. Three participants were leading and coordinating the development of these materials across their faculty. Most participants engaged in syllabus familiarisation in 2023, however, this varied according to personal circumstances. Two models of implementation were identified with six teachers using staggered implementation (teaching Year 7 and Year 9 the new syllabus in 2024), and two using full implementation (teaching Years 7 to 10 the new syllabus in 2024).

Theme 1 – Collaboration and ongoing professional learning

The theme of collaboration and ongoing professional learning in curriculum making included several key elements. Fostering and supporting the development of collaborative relationships was seen as vitally important to the development of curriculum materials, and the refinement of practice. It was also seen as a source of professional learning. Of similar importance was the teachers' ability to dedicate time and resources to engaging in a range of ongoing professional learning, especially when trying to address knowledge and skill gaps. Professional learning was identified as formal and informal including: coordinated professional learning sessions; reflective dialogue; and the exploration and adaptation of sample curriculum materials provided and shared by faculty leaders, colleagues, associations and institutions. Accessing and engaging in professional learning was most effective when this could be applied collaboratively.

Sharing resources and responsibilities for curriculum making

Participants valued the collaborative relationships within their faculties and across their networks. These were seen as enabling arrangements that supported knowledge and skill development, workload management and school-based curriculum development. While collaboration was usually within an English faculty, it also involved cross-school connections. This included multi-school or teacher curriculum networks and or engagement with professional associations or the NSW Department of Education (DoE).

Internal resource sharing and collaboration

Faculty dialogue was described as significant, as were the organisational approaches used by faculty leaders to maximise the time available to collaborate on

curriculum making. Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) captured the impact of collaboration on her knowledge and skill development:

in terms of a faculty level and head teacher level, I feel so supported. ... I think that like my growth and knowledge and understanding as a new teacher like I ... just can't believe how much I've learned in this ... short period because of my other colleagues. You know the conversations I'm having with them in the staff room about teaching and learning, because we're developing all these new ... resources. This is amazing.

The head teacher's approach also mitigated the potential impact of school disruptions on their funded planning days:

[We try] to get at least two, maybe three of us together, and instead of being on site at school, we went into the Head Office in town and booked a meeting room, and so we were able to kind of get away from the chaos of school and program together in that room and have a whole day just to sit and talk, and, you know, look at different texts and really, plan out our programs and ... that base scaffold with the phases together. And then allocate tasks and go off and do it. So, I think that ... time, just together to bounce off one another in the faculty has been really, really useful.

Anna (very low ICSEA, first-year ECT) also felt supported. She described her gratitude toward her colleges, "in my school, like everyone just so freely gives. ...it's really nice. Yeah, I feel really grateful". Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) also shared this feeling of gratitude, "from a school context. I feel quite supported, knowing that I have quite a collaborative team, and people who are really willing to sit down with me who are very experienced". This included her leader, who was "lovely and approachable" and supported the provision of time and resources for "planning, there are opportunities as well for time out of the classroom to devote to that curriculum ... programming which is really lucky".

The sharing of resources and collaborative development of materials was significant in capacity building and supporting both self and collective efficacy, particularly for early career teachers. This sharing extended beyond the school gate and is outlined next.

External resource sharing and collaboration

Networks and organisations were identified as sources of learning and networking for several participants. Exploring sample materials and sharing ideas were seen as key benefits. Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) described the networking and confidence-building opportunities

provided by the NSW English Teachers Association's annual conference. This reinforced her curriculum making and guided her refinement of materials:

I attended the ETA [annual conference in 2023] which was great because it was reinforcing ... we went through ... a program and some resources. I can remember, it was a Year 7 program ... and I thought, "Oh, wow! I've got all this in my program" so already prior to going there. But I think, to cut a long, short story short. It is going back making changes.

For ECTs like Andrea, the conferences provide a plethora of assistance:

Those conferences have been amazing ... [they] inspire so much joy ... talking about new [texts] and just being around other English teachers that are doing the same thing and bouncing ideas. And so those days have been super invigorating ... gathering and sharing resources not just within the actual presentations themselves but by sitting ... next to someone and talking. "Oh, here we do this here, let me share it", and I think that networking kind of capacity that those conferences allow is amazing.

Anna shared similar sentiments about the benefits of networking and hearing from experienced colleagues. She also appreciated the sharing of lesson ideas:

I got so many like fun lessons ... to integrate in my classroom. ... For example ... I didn't know what a micro story was until I went there. But micro stories are such a fun way to teach like plot twists, cliffhangers ... and ... like choosing the best word for the scenario or for the story you're trying to write about.

Local curriculum networks were also identified as a source of resource sharing and collaboration. Jane (low ICSEA, EXT) described the sharing and professional learning that was taking place in her network:

Our district gets together and we share resources. ... We do it once a year or two [sic] ... staff developments sometimes to share resources, share ideas, work collaboratively. So that's been beneficial too.

Penny described the collaboration between her university teacher-education peers as a type of network:

I feel quite lucky in that, my cohort was really close and we've stayed quite close ... or at least a portion of it. ... We still do share a lot of resources and bounce ideas off each other which is helpful ... then you're getting a heap of different perspectives again. Only from peers, but from potentially other colleagues that they're working with.

Network collaboration had intellectual and financial implications. Andrea described the financial impact of her team's involvement in their local English curriculum network, "we received some extra funding from the [name of the curriculum network] to have extra programming days".

Both the internal and external forms of resource sharing and collaboration demonstrated the participants motivation to collaborate, to experiment and to share as part of their curriculum making practice.

Shared curriculum making responsibilities

Curriculum making was described as a responsibility that is most effectively conducted when it is shared. Participants identified successful faculty and whole-school organisational structures and the site-specific constraining conditions that impacted collaborative curriculum making. Anna provided faculty specifics of this collaborative structure, “I’m the Year 7 coordinator in my faculty. So, I mark the Year 7 papers. ... write Year 7 exams. ... do Year 7 programming, so we all have our different roles.” Jane’s faculty also shared curriculum making responsibilities, “we have different people design the programmes.”

Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) described the value of collaboration across faculty leaders (the Head Teacher Teaching and Learning). The Head Teacher Teaching and Learning acted as a mentor who supported syllabus implementation across the school. This was seen as “joyful” and “an anchoring resource” that supported collective leadership:

Would I have had the same experience without the embedded instructional leadership expertise? I don't think so. The power, the collective power of that parallel leadership when I'm in a faculty and then I've got a teaching and learning expert on site to do that ... and I've looked at the work that we've produced, and I'm even impressed at how strong our materials are, and I believe that the magic is the embedded instructional leadership behind me.

Simone also described the joy and solidarity associated with working with colleagues who are eager to learn and share, “I did a lot of work last year with another school just for a term, and that was ... exciting, because we had four people who really, really wanted to learn. And we, you know, pulled together”.

Two reasons were identified for responsibilities not being shared or collaboration structures becoming ineffective: teachers opting out of faculty guidelines or processes (explored below) and the impact of new and out-of-field teachers (explored in Enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage). Joanna (mid ICSEA, EXT) described the increase in workload and creation of friction in the faculty when responsibilities were not shared in her context:

The load's gone on to me to do everything and we did divide it up really well within the faculty of creating the unit plans and the programs and assessments but it's caused a lot of tension. And it's caused a huge breakdown within our faculty [we] ... now have fragments of groups in the faculty. We're not cohesive at all anymore because we were told how to program and I followed what my head teacher said. So did one other person. There's 10 of us. ...

For example, with Year 9 they were doing a poetry unit, and the unit plan had about 3 lessons in it, and it was supposed to be 6 weeks. So, I had to rewrite that for my class.

While Andrea identified the workload created when teachers opt out collaborative structures:

I've spent a lot ... of my own time doing programming and I think ... some teachers kind of opted out. Once it got quite overwhelming in terms of keeping up with the programming before the new unit time rolled around ... I think the teachers within our faculty that had that ... drive, and like of programming ... a lot of the responsibility fell back on to a couple of us. ... the younger teachers, ... and I don't know whether that's just because we're a little bit more energised, and we haven't been in the job for so long. So, we're a bit more excited. ...

I think the time aspect is definitely the most difficult thing. And I completely understand why some teachers ... decide to opt out because it is so much extra work ... it takes us a whole day to map out 2 units.

The participants identified the benefits of shared curriculum making and the associated workload that is created when this load is not shared equitably.

Maintenance of shared curriculum making responsibilities relied on team members following agreed upon structures and faculty leaders supporting an equitable distribution of workload.

Collaborative professional learning – developing knowledge and skills

Participants identified the important role professional learning played in a teacher's ability to address knowledge and skill gaps created by a new syllabus. The desire for professional learning was deeply personal and an important resource for teachers to build confidence in a collaborative context. Faculty-based professional learning structures were identified as sources of valuable collaborative learning, as were system supports.

Faculty-based professional learning and their contribution to reflective dialogue

Faculty-based professional learning was identified as an important source of informal professional learning that guided and enabled reflective dialogue. In turn, this helped

refine curriculum making practice. Andrea valued the dedicated faculty time for discussing and reviewing resources while teaching the new syllabus:

We're talking about our teaching, and because everything is new, we're reflecting on our teaching with each other. So, we're talking about what worked, what didn't work. Our staff meetings are centering around how can we keep refining and improving the teaching and learning we're doing.

Jane lamented her school's reduction in faculty meetings. She considered these reflective discussions to be especially important for developing consistent teacher judgement:

We used to do faculty meetings once a fortnight so we could really make those, "this is what we think this looks like", but we don't do that anymore. ... we need to see and have those discussions so we know what an "explain" looks like at ... Stage 4 or whatever it is that we decide or what does a new outcome when they "understand ... the codes of conventions", what does an A in the codes and conventions content point look like ...

Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year Head Teacher) described the role faculty meetings were playing in ongoing professional learning, "I spend time during our faculty meetings ... to ... upskill them as we go along through the year". Later in the interview, Amanda described the meeting structure:

At least once [or] twice a term. If not more. I have either different staff themselves, or like within the faculty or different external experts present on different things that we then can then use within our faculty meetings like I was saying earlier, spend some time programming and things like that. So that's been a change, and I found that quite successful, because it meant that those meetings ... [are] more around developing curriculum again.

Joanna's description of professional learning and collaboration conflicted with the other participants. She felt there was more content to address, which caused "panic", and this was compounded by a lack of professional learning and collaboration with the faculty as part of syllabus familiarisation:

I think now, because there's so much more skills and content you have to teach everyone panics because you get halfway through the term and you're not ready for the assessment task because you've had to tick so many other boxes before that. ...

There's ... not enough time to teach yourself the skills as a teacher ... to get your head around it and if they were going to do this again, I think that they need the money to let the faculties work together and teach each other these skills that maybe some people have never taught before or were never taught at school ... most of the teachers in my generation were not taught grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and we weren't taught it at Uni. So, if you don't understand that then you should be given the time to be able to learn it yourself, practice it and then teach it to the kids.

Amanda echoed similar concerns about teachers' confidence, "some people sat there and admitted that this [literacy] was just not a focus for them. They haven't studied it since they were in school ... or they don't understand it". However, Amanda was supported by school leadership to develop and lead a series of ongoing professional learning events dedicated to syllabus familiarisation (a vital part of sense-making) and collaborative curriculum making:

My principal allowed me to do a day and a half conference last year to develop our curriculum ... I came up with our conference. So, I was upskilling all my stuff. And then we spent time actually programming and we collaboratively programmed. ...

I actually don't think I could have got through the 7 and 9 one last year without it. And same with this one like we, it means that it's cutting down our workload in terms of, you know, holiday prep and things like that because we do so much of it in those concentrated 2 days ... it's like ... 2 days of just straight programming. ... it's quite helpful.

Amanda saw a noticeable shift in teacher confidence, particularly in relation to the literacy requirements. She identified the programming template that mapped and planned the syllabus and pedagogical elements causing concern as key to team success:

The actual template that I built for them made sure that we have ... all those structures in place with the textual concepts and building the conceptual questions ... I've even put learning intentions in these programs [and] identifying the literacy activities to teach these skills and made these programs more skill based ...

12 months on ... You can see ... they haven't thought twice about formative, because it's all been highlighted where there's opportunities ... they haven't thought twice about those literacy things that they were so worried about 12 months ago because there's multiple opportunities explicitly written there for them.

Joanna's experience is a stark contrast and this shows the impact of teachers programming in isolation without adequate access to professional learning to address knowledge and skill gaps:

And because the funding was limited, we had people off one at a time doing programs by themselves ... and some people were googling and learning how to do things and then putting it in the program. And it just wasn't connecting. It feels really disconnected ... because some people don't know what they're doing ... [they] haven't been taught these skills ... and having to relearn them.

Joanna's personal frustration with a lack of equity across the faculty/school was clear in her account of the use of funding, "getting funding for our faculty distributed equitably is not happening and the expectation is because I'm an experienced teacher, so I don't need it. ... that's been really hard". Joanna referred to this again

later in the interview, “I've had no TPL [teacher professional learning] on the curriculum at all.”

Participants' descriptions highlighted the importance of enabling all teachers to access professional learning. This is particularly important when knowledge and skill gaps are identified in relation to the new curriculum.

DoE system supports – professional learning and sample teaching and learning materials

The professional learning and educative sample materials provided by the DoE's English Curriculum 7 to 12 team (English CT) were discussed by participants and described as a source of: content knowledge; pedagogical support; models of programming or assessment; planning or organisational support. These samples were key to professional learning for five participants.

Kayla described the difference between the department's previous sample materials and the supports provided for curriculum reform, “those units ... if you [used] them, that was like the cop-out. They were substandard ... You didn't have to put in any intellectual effort. ... That was the reputation”. This was contrasted to the new materials:

Whereas now ... there's an enormous amount of expertise in those units, like huge high-quality resources ... before we'd seen the material, we were having very different conversations to the ones we had once we'd seen it and we felt really comfortable that for us, we were going to go a full implementation. And one of the reasons for that was because it's a learning experience and to learn these new ways of doing things and how things are done.

Jane spoke to the benefits of the alignment between the sample materials and the online professional learning provided:

We more or less just took that word for word, just took that whole unit. And so people engage with the sessions [English statewide staffroom PL sessions delivered by the English CT] where they, you talk through the different elements of it so they can understand what [the] intention was and things like that. So I do feel like there has been a support in that and discussion on that.

This was also noted by Kayla:

I feel like I'm in a much more comfortable position and I can see it because I sit in professional learning now ... there's a huge connection between the professional learning being offered now and the units of work that have been released. So, when you go into professional learning now most that I've done, it's connected to those units of work.

Kayla also identified the challenges of this alignment for colleagues who are not engaging with the sample materials:

I've watched people's faces just completely zone out and go into total panic because there's a lot of understanding in the way those units are put together and it takes a lot of time. So, they're doing professional learning, but they've got these retrofitted units where they've taken what they've already got and they've got, they're totally freaking out. Phases is one thing that's generated panic, formative assessment has generated panic, all of these things. And I'm like, we're not panicked because, and so that is kind of my evidence of that we've made the right decision.

The Phases approach to conceptual programming is a framework developed by the DoE English CT that guides how English teachers could organise teaching and learning progression for a typical English program (NSW Department of Education, 2023d). The clearly defined sections align syllabus content to pedagogical strategies and identify the specific purpose of each section in the sample teaching programs. They align with learning processes and focus teacher and student attention on key learning dispositions.

Simone, a non-government teacher, also described the impact of the structure of the sample materials on her practice:

The sequencing of the learning, just the logic behind. ... I loved, and I spent more time reading that than looking at the activities, the rationale, the intention, what is this going to do, what is the purpose for? I spent probably about 60% of my time reading through all of that, and then trying to make the rest of it intelligible. ... some of the scopes [and] some of the assessments. I've looked at all of that and some of the programs as well. I drew a lot on those to write my own programs.

She made explicit reference to a sample Year 7 program provided by the NSW DoE, “the Year 7 programs ... I really, really liked. ... ‘Powerful Youth Voices’ I thought that was pretty good”. Amanda’s team also explored the samples and adapted parts to suit their context:

We looked at songlines, and how that informs First Nations culture. ... It was actually in one of the department texts. That's how I found it. *Welcome to Country* by Marcia Langton.

We used the excerpts from the department program to kind of embed, and then teach their informative writing about it and that has been really good.

Andrea was using the samples to enhance her pedagogical knowledge:

in terms of the programming we've been following ... the departmental resources ... those main 6 phases. ... And it is just working so well with our units, like the engage phase, we've been able to really connect the kids to like localising kind of the issues

in our units. And really focus on getting them hooked ... connecting personally ... that has really helped each learning ... sequence.

Andrea also identified the value of the ECT sample formative assessments, “we're trying to implement those core formative tasks. And I think that that is helping kids with their summative assessments. So really honing (sic) in on a few skills and focusing only on a couple of core concepts throughout”. This has helped increase assessment submission rates:

Having those core formative tasks structured into the programs and building those skills and components of the summative assessment task throughout the unit has just made the kids be a lot more confident. And they're completing assessment tasks like our completion rate has increased heaps.

Kayla concurred with this sentiment:

[What's] really rewarding is that ... lens on formative assessment that we've not really had before, the level of support and forward-facing assessment documentation is quite exciting. And while I know a lot of people would say ... that's a difficulty and that it's challenging because they feel restricted ... I see it the other way in that an implementation is time for us to really learn from the experience of the implementation. And I'm willing to adopt those approaches just for the education experience to see what I can learn from it.

She also reiterated the difference in the level of support being provided as part of NSW curriculum reform and previous syllabus changes:

We've never had that before. So much detail that's really, really cool. And even if I don't continue it on as a leader or there's bits of it that I decide that I'm not going to continue with, I really see that it's an opportunity to be a professional development experience for all of us, which is another reward ... The other ones didn't necessarily do that. It was like, “here's what we have to teach off you go”. Whereas this one, I feel like I'm really learning and improving my practice, but I suppose that's my learning disposition.

Engaging in ongoing professional learning was identified as essential for all participants. Time and resources needed to be provided so the participants could effectively use this knowledge and skill development. Applying learning collaboratively, especially as part of a team or network, led to the participants feeling empowered to refine their curriculum making practice.

Theme 2 – Using the syllabus to construct student-centred learning

The theme of using the syllabus to construct student-centred learning experiences and English curriculum materials consisted of several elements. This included the usability of the syllabus and the personal significance of using the “decluttered” and refined syllabus in the support of student-centred programming and assessment

practice. Supporting all students was central to discussions about the design and development of English curriculum materials. Participants largely enjoyed curriculum making with the syllabus and the ability to differentiate for student needs and support reading for enjoyment. They also described a syllabus-aligned increase in flexibility and freedom in the curriculum making process. However, they also identified the difficulties associated with addressing the literacy requirements.

The usability of the syllabus

Participants described the new syllabus in largely positive terms. The structure was a key feature in descriptions, as were the embedded resources. The prominence of the textual concepts was seen as a positive refocus on the essentials of the subject of English. The key challenge was addressing the literacy requirements in an engaging and meaningful way.

A refined and user-friendly syllabus

The new syllabus was described as refined, meaningful and user-friendly with the structure of the outcomes, the content groups, and the content points as key features. The syllabus was identified as feeling less crowded because of a reduction in outcomes and the refined approach to the Australian curriculum's cross-curriculum priorities, a mandatory element with the 2012 syllabus (Gates & Curwood, 2023). The participants also described how the syllabus was reshaping the subject and both teacher and student perspectives of the subject of English. Joanna, while largely unhappy with how curriculum making has taken place in her school, described the benefits of the reform for English, "the curriculum is ... working for some teachers and some kids in, it's just a fresh start. And I think that that's what English needed ... really an overhaul of how kids see the subject".

Jane (low ICSEA, EXT) stated "I like the fact that there is less content. I do appreciate that we get to narrow down overall like thematic ideas or concepts development-based programmes ... I like the structure. I like less outcomes." She connected less outcomes to the ability to support deep learning with students:

I think that it's more accessible ... and it's kind of that notion that they can go deeper, not more, it's deeper. ...

I think there's a clarity of content points ... I feel like there is more ambiguity ... like you have more options to do more things that fit to your context because it is broader

and it is more skill focused so you can fit the skill to the interest of the children in your context.

Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) also liked the syllabus “and the way that it's structured” and outcome content group headings was a key feature:

Those subheadings of the textual concepts makes it so easy to kind of navigate and program for and each content point is almost like could be a lesson. How they're written. I think that that has been really effective, whereas when dealing with the old syllabus ... the wording, I found, was probably a little bit more ambiguous a little bit harder to understand.

Anna (very low ICSEA, first-year ECT) was similarly positive about the structure of the syllabus:

The new syllabus is a lot better organised than the than the old one because it gives you sort of that literal shift between the different stages and how the different stages of English learners need to engage with text and like that's ... made the syllabus a lot more ... digestible.

Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year head teacher) described her developing appreciation of the syllabus:

Originally, I was very wary. But I think with more practical ... engagement with that. It's okay. I do like it. I think the simplicity of calming down with less outcomes ... I think that's really ... helpful. I think it's come back to more foundational, really clear. We read, we write, we engage, and you know, go from there. And those key core skills of English. And I think that's really, really, really helpful in terms of even telling the kids what we're doing and making their outcomes more relevant for them [it's] really clearly what we're doing.

Amanda also appreciated the inclusion of examples aligned to outcome content:

I think the way it was written this time with the examples, I think was really good too ... [providing] ways to use those content points and meet those outcomes. I think that was really helpful.

Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) also valued the inclusion of extra supports, such as the alignment to the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) National Literacy Learning Progressions (NLLP):

Amen to the literacy progressions ... all of these things being layered together. Finally, one holistic piece where ... everything that we've sort of been working on has come together. So, I think it's really great, [I] can see the progressions in there. So beautifully placed.

Some participants disagreed with these sentiments. Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) thought there was “additional content being added” while Joanna (mid ICSEA, EXT) considered the syllabus to be longer, less manageable and

overwhelming, especially because of its digital nature. She stated, “I would really like someone to just give me a copy and colour code it and have tabs and have a little statement that tells me in a summary what each thing means without overwhelming me with hundreds of pages of documents”. She also cited the problems her colleagues were having when using the website:

They can't manage that website along with writing a program. I think [NESA were] trying to be, you know, cost saving and inventive ... people need a physical copy that they can read ... not everybody learns the same ... they shouldn't expect teachers to learn the new syllabus all the same way. ... I find this website overwhelming, and it makes me panic.

This was compounded by ambiguous terminology and her desire for further support to interpret and use the outcome content:

But what I think is a complex text, is another teacher going to think that's a complex text, is my class going to think it's a complex text? ... I need to teach them with a complex text without sort of any suggestions of what they think a complex text is.

These are valid concerns. Despite the extensive references in the syllabus to the way text complexity may vary there is no definition or explanation for “complex texts” in either the syllabus or the NSW Education Authority’s (NESA) new glossary (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c, 2024b).

All but one participant described the syllabus as refined and user-friendly. The syllabus was also seen as a positive part of curriculum making, despite some reservations.

The enhanced presence of the textual concepts

The structure and the prominence of the textual concepts was identified as a positive feature of the syllabus by most participants. The outcome content groups featuring textual concepts were considered a usable feature across the stages. The textual concepts organise the content in three of the six mandated syllabus outcomes. The context for their inclusion was outlined in Chapter One and the complexities associated with this for teachers was identified in Chapter Two.

Andrea identified the way the textual concepts have refined her understanding of the subject of English and ongoing reflection of what she is doing in the classroom and its broader purpose:

Just recentring ... the purpose of English ... what are we teaching? Why are we teaching it? And I think again, those English concepts that focus on those textual

concepts is really streamlined, that in my brain, anyways about like, what is the content that I'm teaching? When I was in uni, that was without those concepts. It was pretty ambiguous.

This has helped create a clearer progression of learning across Stages 4 and 5 evident in the organisation of the textual concepts content:

I think just as a consensus with my whole faculty like we've really liked the ... conceptual focus of the English textual concepts. It just creates such a nice throughline from Stage 4 to Stage 5 ... like transitioning and connecting programs as kids go on, you can see that continuity throughout.

In turn, they have shaped the structure of learning in her programs. This is assisting students as they progress in their learning across the year:

For example, theme by having that as just a core concept and just focusing on that when we're teaching that just their clarity of understanding, I think has just improve so much, because by choosing just those two or three concepts to focus on throughout the unit. And you just keep coming like everything you do keeps linking back to that. And then you can see that transferable skill when you're doing the next unit, or you know, next year, and you're doing theme again. "Remember when we did this in this unit?"

Kayla valued the prominence of the textual concepts, "the concepts, it feels like everything's come together to one place, which has made it really, really easy", and "the textual concepts, that's been fantastic to see that really arrive and find its way all the way through".

Some experienced teachers were already familiar with the textual concepts and identified the role they play in their programming. Jane:

We had introduced [the textual concepts] in 2019, so we'd already started that process. So, for me ... it wasn't a huge shock to have to use those as a driving force because they were already being used for us. ... which was nice.

Amanda was also familiar, "We've always had the textual concepts as our focus. But just how we're using text itself has been a big change for us."

Joanna echoed this and identified the focus on literacy as the key change:

I always taught like that ... I've always taught through textual concepts and I've always found that kids connected with the text better ... So, I'm using the textual concepts intertwined with the literacy skills now. So, I think ... that's the thing that's changed.

The prominence of the textual concepts as outcome content was seen as an exciting and positive aspect of curriculum reform. Participants understood these as directly impacting approaches to programming and lesson design.

Addressing the refined literacy requirements

The most prominent challenge identified with the interpretation and use of the syllabus was the literacy requirements and how to address these in an engaging and meaningful way. Andrea has found the explicit focus on grammar instruction challenging because she did not feel prepared to explicitly teach the grammar the syllabus requires even though she felt equipped to write and communicate effectively herself:

I did not learn that in university, I didn't learn it at school ... we weren't taught those things. So, we're really having to kind of grapple with teaching something that has come to us so naturally. And we haven't really had to ... have that metacognition to think about what the processes behind writing are.

Andrea valued the requirement and was seeing the impact in her students' responses:

I can see the benefit ... from the kids ... I can really see an improvement in their writing just from, you know the start of last year to now you can see them benefiting from that. But it's has been really challenging to kind of self-teach the ... really explicit terms that are needed.

Kayla agreed with these challenges as both a leader and teacher:

We're teaching stuff that we not necessarily would've been taught to teach, and there's a great level of fear because this is our subject we're supposed to know. ... I feel like my leadership supported me to be self-reflective and say, "yep, I've got no idea. We need to learn that". But ... certainly in the younger teachers, they're a bit uncomfortable putting their hands up saying, "I don't really understand that". ... So that's a little bit of anxiety and it makes it challenging. ... I'm not saying we had no exposure to language, but sentence level language, definitely not. Lots of teachers are like, "we just didn't do that". ... that's a bit overwhelming.

Participants valued the refined focus on literacy especially in relation to student achievement. However, this was identified as a challenge and participants needed ongoing professional learning and support for their knowledge and skill development. The literacy goals cannot be achieved if the teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to enact such a change.

Curriculum making with the syllabus

Student-centred curriculum making was considered vitally important for student success. Teachers valued the time and creativity involved in designing engaging student-centred programming and assessment structures. Texts were identified as essential to English and the teacher's ability to foster a love of reading and

enjoyment in English. This was seen as a pivotal part of differentiation and catering to students' needs and interests. Time was the single most repeated word with site-specific decisions impacting the time available to engage in curriculum making.

Student-centred programming and assessment practices

Participants saw curriculum reform as an opportunity for a renewed focus on teaching content that students would find relevant and engaging and help them in life beyond the school gate. All participants valued and dedicated time and resources to the development of student-centred programming and assessment practices. The references made were usually positive, and the negative references aligned with feelings of guilt and worry that the teachers may not have been meeting students' needs or having the desired impact on learning or engagement.

The refined approach to the Australian curriculum's cross-curriculum priorities was identified as a broader system support that enabled teachers to design content that was anchored in the subject of English and its discourses. Jane described this as a positive removal of syllabus "fluff" that was causing "overcrowding":

Having to do an "Environmental unit" because it's in the syllabus ... That would be my example of the fluff ... if I'm talking to the old syllabus about sustainability, it was cross curriculum, it was content points and it was a requirement and that's ... been ... alleviated. So that was my example ... I think removing things to remove that overcrowding.

Previously, English teachers were required to address the General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities within the Australian Curriculum (Gates & Curwood, 2023). As part of the NSW curriculum reform, NESA provided explicit guidance for how schools are to address this aspect of the Australian curriculum:

Capabilities and priorities are developed through the relevant subject-specific content. The new approach ensures that the capabilities and priorities in the new syllabuses emerge authentically from the content and are not an additional layer on the curriculum.' (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2024a, "Implementation for K–2 from 2023 and 3–10 from 2024" section).

Several participants mentioned the '*environment*' or '*sustainability*' unit as ineffective and a source of disengagement by both teachers and students. This highlighted the relief from the perceived pressure to shoehorn potentially unsuitable cross-curriculum priorities into an English program.

Student-centred curriculum making was connected to helping students see the value of subject English to broader life. Anna described the importance of helping her students to see the knowledge skills they developed through English:

I want them to be able to understand that, ... wherever they go, knowing how to interpret things, knowing how to analyse things, ... knowing how to get meaning out of things, and on a deeper level, ... meaning out of their lives ... That's something that I want to be able to give to them that I think the new syllabus sort of unlocks for me. ... we're moving into ... understanding the text to expressing ... ideas about the text and from the text, and seeing ... how texts can give value to life and their lives.

Knowing her students was a key part of catering to their needs and creating interest and passion for learning:

The biggest thing influencing my process would be the students that I teach because it's been, you know, 3 pretty solid terms of understanding the way my class learns [and] what's best for them ... My lesson planning just derives from knowing the kids and knowing how well they'll interact with the materials.

Andrea also valued and prioritised creating student-centred programs and resources. She also described the significant material-economic resources this required:

It takes a lot of time ... particularly when we're trying to make it suitable for our kids ... I feel like our context is so unique like we've got a high, indigenous enrolment. We've got lots of EAL/D students ... we've just got so much diversity here ... we need to pick text that the EAL/D kids will understand. But also, we want to engage all of the students. So yeah, it's it is a bit of a challenge finding the time to do that ... we have the knowledge to do it. We know what to do. It's just ... the time to actually do it.

All participants identified the need for more time. They wanted material time to create and collaborate as well as intellectual and cognitive time to process and respond to the cognitive demands of site-specific curriculum making.

For some participants, the already complex intellectual work of curriculum making was being complicated by the increasing time demands associated with administrative paperwork, a phenomenon identified in recent research (e.g. Stacey et al., 2022). Jane described the demands associated with the paperwork associated with non-attendance, and the impact this had on her time to create resources for students:

Time having to do N warnings every two weeks. So you can't spend time making valuable resources. I mean if they haven't met 6% of the course, why am I still sending N warnings every two weeks? It makes no sense to me.

This institutional requirement was only identified by Jane; however, most participants described the impact of other school or institutional structures and the way they were reducing time available for curriculum making.

All participants described examples of increasing student engagement in English. This was not universal across all classes; however, many participants believed their programming, text selection and ability to differentiate was supporting this response. Anna described the way the structure of the syllabus enhanced her ability to differentiate:

When it comes to differentiation, too, because obviously the syllabus is provided as a guideline, but then we need to take it and then use it what we will in terms of the for the students and the diverse learners that we teach like being able to go through those steps a lot more slowly across like ... I've been finding that it's a lot more digestible in terms of going from, you know, reading, and then to understanding, and then to expressing and composing.

Anna shared a similar sentiment and appreciated the way the syllabus provided increased opportunities to support students' creation of texts:

Something rewarding that I'm finding is the opportunity in the new syllabus for students to create work. ... I really like the opportunity in the new syllabus for students to create work and the time in English to both understand text, appreciate text, analyse text, but also create text. ... [that's] really rewarding ... it's really inspiring to see how students interpret, you know, works that have been published by famous people and then seeing how they interpret it to create a work similar.

The clauses in the outcome content points were identified by Jane as a key support for experimentation and creativity. She stated, "it has that deeper element ... often [a] subordinate clause at the end to do something else or to engage something else". It was clear across all participants that they felt comfortable using most parts of the syllabus to create student-centred learning experiences.

Several participants also talked about their own experimentation in curriculum making and pedagogical practice in response to the syllabus. Anna was excited and felt "lucky" that she was at her current school where she was supported to experiment:

It's really nice to experiment in the classroom, and then it's extra nice because I'm teaching under the new syllabus. So, I do have to do that experimenting so I can figure out, you know to solidify my practice for the new outcomes and teachings, though like, that's a yeah big plus for me.

Andrea's school refined their programming approach using the DoE Phases approach to conceptual programming. She felt that the establishing conceptual knowledge early in the program, focusing on skill development and using the text as evidence was helping her students:

Their ... self confidence in English ... you can definitely see the increased engagement and confidence with the kids. ... I teach ... a supported Year 9 all boys class ... They were so disengaged, so disengaged with learning. ... their ... understanding of English it's improved so much. You can really really see the benefit and their engagement too. They don't, they're less resistant to working because they [see] a point to it. Because, yeah, you're teaching more the skill and that concept rather than the content.

This was a new approach for Andrea and her team. Amanda also refined parts of the curriculum and adjusted their approach to formative assessment in response to student need:

Those formative assessment moments that I've put in there have ... it meant that the summative assessments that the kids are producing are a lot more refined, not rushed, and evidence of their actual learning which has been really good ... you can see from Term 1 to Term 3 kids can actually write a thesis statement in Year 9 now. ... You can see the growth within the term and that's been really nice to actually see that they're learning something and writing something and engaging in that writing process. ... There's some really decent writing in there, and I think it really is from the fact that our programs are now slower in a sense of, we're building that skill throughout the term.

This focus on formative assessment enhanced the pedagogical practices of the teachers and supported increased student engagement. In turn, this saw an increase in the quality of students' writing. This practice reflects a focus on experimentation and the benefits of doing this through collaborative professionalism.

Penny described their approach to collaborative professionalism and iterative refinement as "trial and error" and through that process they realised they needed to scale back their focus and make "it more targeted". This team also integrated student voice into this '*trial and error*'. They conducted student surveys and used these results to evaluate and refine their curriculum:

We like to send out a survey to the students after each unit a Google form survey to get their perspectives and so that they feel like they're being heard in the creation of programs and resources. ... and they love to feel like their opinions are valued and heard particularly when informing learning.

All participants valued student perspectives and opinions. However, not all student feedback was positive, and the teachers felt the negative responses from students

deeply. The teachers felt guilty and saddened when their students were not enjoying the learning or experiencing success. Experimentation and reviewing and refining content in response to *'trial and error'* was vital and this needed to be supported by cultural-discursive and material-economic arrangements.

All participants showed a clear desire to use their creative autonomy in designing teaching and learning materials that would interest, engage and support individual students. Curriculum making was consistently focused on designing deep, meaningful learning that supported students' wellbeing, creativity, and knowledge and skill development.

Text selection and engagement in reading

Text selection was identified as a key part of supporting and increasing student engagement in English. Many participants appreciated the mandate to focus on reading for enjoyment and described experiences where students responded positively to the texts selected and their developing appreciation of reading. This is a fundamental motivator for English teachers, particularly early career teachers (Manuel & Carter, 2016). Andrea stated, "I really like the shift of reading for just reading ... it gives an opportunity for students to engage with text without that pressure of critical analysis or always having to respond." She described the way this was supporting English curriculum transition:

Particularly for our Year 7 students even. I think it makes that transition from primary school to high school a bit easier. I think my Year 7 class at the moment there, it's like a little comfort blanket for them when we're doing a reading lesson. ...

We have a timetabled reading lesson every fortnight and the library space has kind of become a little bit of a hub for Year 7 students. And I think it's become a little bit of a safe space, and they're engaging in reading.

Several participants described the way their schools were investing school-wide and faculty resources to support reading for enjoyment and increasing students' literacy skills. This included time, space and resources for the teacher librarian and the library. Teacher time was also dedicated to library and/or literacy lessons. English programs also demonstrated a refined focus on reading for enjoyment. Pedagogical practices guided students to respond personally to texts in a low-stakes environment. Andrea explained:

We're doing [our novel study] like a reading to write style for Year 7. And so they're just getting to read the book and read ... [and] do their own writing based on it. So

again, it's not critically analysing ... and you can see that genuine enjoyment, for even like some really reluctant readers in the classroom engaging in that book.

Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) was making similar changes to her programs. She felt the 2022 syllabus provided explicit support and permission to raise the profile of reading for enjoyment, “not having the scope previously to say, ‘Hey, you have to read, and you need to read for pleasure and enjoyment’”. She was in the process of evaluating and refining their programs to ensure adequate time and space for this type of reading:

What I'm doing right now is looking very carefully at areas for improvement even in those programs and I am trying very, very hard to encourage that passion for reading, reading, for entertainment, reading for pleasure. So that's a focus. And sometimes I'm going to say this.

It is very, very difficult, easier said than done ... But you know, I'm finding ways to encourage that reading for pleasure ...

Penny's school was also focused on providing these types of opportunities. However, they also used their funding to purchase a self-selected text for every Year 7 student. Students explored these texts in English and the faculty used low stakes approaches to reading and supporting students to respond:

We do little activities ... I think as soon as [they] feel like it's theirs ... it's special. It creates sort of motivation and also really interesting discussion, because they're all reading different texts that they can then draw upon within English when thinking about characterisation or settings ... It's like a big book club.

These dedicated material-economic structures were having a positive impact on the reading habits of students in several schools. Finding the time and resources to structure dedicated wide reading programs has been identified as a difficulty for many teachers (Manuel & Carter, 2015; Manuel & Carter, 2016). Funding and the freedom to select engaging and relevant texts was considered essential to student engagement for all the participants.

Joanna identified the structure of her programs and text selection as the reason for success with her Year 9 class:

Year 9s have responded really well to it. They are probably the class that has responded the best and I think it's because of how we've structured it. And the text that we have chosen. ...

One of the authors ... is a local Aboriginal poet from our area. So, when they're reading her poems and she's talking about the environment, she's talking about the landmarks. The kids can look out the window and they can see it. So, they engaged really well with that. ...

that poetry unit just floored me like they were so into it and they wrote sentences for me, and they engaged with the text, and they were talking about it, and they just really enjoyed [the texts]

The students made personal and contextual connections to the texts set for study and this increased their engagement in the learning. Amanda shared similar stories of success. She described the cultural backgrounds of some of her students and the importance of providing reading experiences that celebrated culture, “I really wanted it to look at celebrating culture and so we looked at song lines, and how that informs First Nations culture”. The approach taken by the team resulted in increased student engagement, higher quality student work and increased assessment submission rates.

The joys of teaching texts students can connect to, particularly Australian texts, was also shared by Andrea:

[We're] so lucky to have ... staff all on board with just teaching new [texts] lots and lots of Australian literature like I think most, most of our [texts are] Australian based authors.

She elaborated on this point by making connections to the use of Australian texts written by young people, “we've been like looking a lot at the like, *What Matters* writing pieces from like young students. So, we've been trying to really get texts that just relate to the kids' experiences”. Providing texts that speak to students and reading environments that foster a love of reading is a valuable priority. Manuel & Carter's (2015) study into the reading habits of Australian young people suggested that students are more likely to engage when teachers select texts that speak to the students. This was certainly the case for Joanna's Year 7 class, who had not experienced the same success with reading. The text selection was identified as the core problem:

The only reason it's successful is because we've got new texts ... For example, with Year 7, it's been really hard. They have really struggled ... We only bought one new text for them. Everything else we're using we've reused ... it's hard to do when the kids don't connect to the text.

However, as Joanna and several other participants identified, it is a significant material-economic investment to purchase new texts for every class and every text requirement across Years 7 to 10, especially when schools will also need to purchase new HSC prescribed texts very soon (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023a).

The text requirements were identified as another source of flexibility while posing material-economic challenges. Jane changed the texts selected for a collaboratively created Year 7 program to align with the students' interests and needs. She stated, "the kids actually really appreciated learning about [the selected texts] and it was actually probably a really successful task". The ability to "make that change" stemmed from a refinement of the text requirements which meant she:

Didn't have to tick that box per se in the exact same way as before because there is a larger scope and there's an acknowledgement that diversity comes in all different shapes and sizes. ... I think that's something that I've noticed I've been able to make more effective choices for what engages the students.

Jane could also use available material resources that were differentiated for the students, "I had resources that were more accessible for them". Jane was demonstrating a socially situated response to student needs and demonstrating her ability to use collaborative structures with adaptive agency, which in turn benefited her students.

There were also some concerns raised about addressing the text requirements. Penny identified drama texts as a concern:

We ... have difficulty with implementing drama texts that are not Shakespeare and at times it almost feels like it's a bit of a tokenistic add on in terms of what it gives the students. ... I don't think we've included it as well as we have other text types ... I think that that's probably a thing that we're having a bit of trouble with doing hitting those 2 texts for each stage.

Penny's language alluded to broader compliance requirements connected to enacting the syllabus and the organisational task of mapping syllabus requirements across each year and stage.

Participants spoke at length about the relationship between text selection and student engagement. The joys of engaging reluctant readers, inspiring creativity and fostering a love of reading was evident. The opportunity to refresh text selection was identified as positive and an essential element of the curriculum reform. However, the pressures associated with compliance and limited funding were also present and discussed in relation to curriculum making and trying to address the syllabus requirements.

Theme 3 – Enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage

The theme of enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage was clear in the participants' repeated references to the teacher shortage and the need for more time and resources to enact change. Participants identified several issues exacerbated by the shortage, including a high turnover in staff, an increase in inexperienced teachers, an increase in out-of-field teachers teaching English, and an incidental increase in workload. While this was a more common sentiment across the stories shared by experienced teachers, the ECTs also identified experiences and impacts associated with their curriculum making. This highlighted the complexities of enacting change during a teacher shortage.

Supporting inexperienced or out-of-field teachers

All the participants discussed the impact of Australia's significant teacher shortage. Whether the impact was direct and personal or indirect and collegial, it was clear that this was a problem impacting many English teachers. All three English faculty leaders described the challenges of leading syllabus change during a teacher shortage. Each described the personal impact and adaptive agency they were using to access or create mitigation measures to address the issues. Several participants described the challenges of guiding inexperienced or out-of-field teachers through their engagement with and understanding of the syllabus, especially in addressing the syllabus's language and literacy elements.

Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) described the workload that was created because her teachers were out-of-field, inexperienced and lacked familiarity with the syllabus:

We have a teaching staff ... it's a revolving door ... they've worked in other fields. Some of them have worked in education, but not at schools. Some of them are not English teachers. They are ready to learn, willing to learn, but not English teachers. So, coming back and implementing the changes and writing programs with a staff that is new, a staff who are not very knowledgeable. That was a major, major, challenge, and still is. Now, if I say to you, I've got potentially 3-4 in my department right now, the first time they saw the new syllabus is when I introduced them to it this year. Crazy?

This was complicated further when teachers needed to develop their personal literacy along with general pedagogical literacy and discipline-based pedagogical

literacy. Simone highlighted the complexities of the language and literacy focus in the syllabus for her team:

Firstly, I think with my team, it's unanimous in terms of it's great, the literacy focus. It's great bringing back the old school which should not have been taken away. ...

I have a teacher that I'm supporting, observing her in the classroom who is flawed in her literacy skills ... you know her spelling and her grammar, and so on ... It's hard because that teacher needs to learn as well. The heart is in the right place because they can see the value in the changes ... but the changes need to be in the teachers as well before we can sort of empower students with those skills.

Many of Simone's teachers needed to develop essential knowledge and skills. While this was described as a "work in progress" she was "very optimistic" that their team would make progress. However, this was reliant upon the teachers dedicating time and effort to their own professional learning and "needing to recognise that [was] very important" and likely to be ongoing. This is not a situation that is unique to the participants. It is a complex and long-standing problem that is difficult to address (Moon, 2014; Stephenson, 2018).

Designing programs that supported all teachers, and all students, was identified as a complex and time-consuming intellectual task. Simone was new to her role as Head of Department, English to her school in 2024. Despite using a staggered implementation structure, she was leading the enactment and thus reviewing, refining or rewriting, and mapping the content with and for the teachers across Stage 4 and 5. The team's disparate knowledge and skillsets added to an already challenging task:

It's not really a staggered start for me right now, because I'm having to rewrite everything. So that's been daunting ... And the mapping, you know, I tried to map across 7–10. That was a massive, massive task for me and sort of done. But you know, just making sure that I've addressed everything. And because I think what's important is, we can say 7 and 9 [is a] staggered start. And I've seen teachers at school just going right, "We've scoped for 7 and 9, all done." But I think you also have to have in mind 8 and 10. What am I doing with them to have that good flow? Right? And I think it's also important to have that ... holistic view ... so that was ... pretty onerous.

This created significant workload challenges as she was "tasked with 16 programs on [her] own" and trying to "implement the shifts" in programming and pedagogy on her own. This is an unsustainable situation and one that will require significant time and resources to address.

Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) also spoke to the broader teacher shortage and the impact on workload, “I don't think I'd be alone in the climate that we're in. We're just bleeding out all over the place in terms of staffing. So, it does make the implementation hard”. Kayla did not have a full team, and her team was comprised of teachers who were undergraduates, early career or out-of-field. This created a knowledge and skill gap for curriculum making. However, her school's use of the material-economic resource of the Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning supported collaborative programming. This was one way of mitigating some of these challenges:

I've had a Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning who was the head of department. And so that's helped sort of mitigate that challenge because we've had both of us sort of working in parallel, which is a blessing. But definitely a contextual challenge has been not really having a writing team and having to come up with really creative ways of getting the work done because there's an enormous amount of work to do.

Despite these challenges, her adaptive agency and broader school material-economic supports left her feeling “pretty spoiled [and] a bit of a utopian example”. These resources were identified as cancelling out some of the problems presented by “resource depletion because with positive psychological capital” she felt equipped to deal with her contextual challenges. She did not feel that the workload and intellectual challenges she was facing were being experienced by her team:

I'm acutely aware of my role as a middle manager ... even though it's a challenge for me because of the way I've been able to socialise that as an effective leader, I don't necessarily think it's been a challenge for my team. ... leadership [is] acutely aware of how they're socialising these demands and presenting them to teams in positive ways ... So, we're just doing the best we can and getting it done. But it is challenging.

This concerted focus on the responsibilities associated with being a middle leader were shared by all faculty leaders.

Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year Head Teacher) also exhibited adaptive agency as she navigated the staff shortages and described the, at times, daunting nature of middle leadership, especially when everyone is experiencing the change at the same time. She described the role her organisation of collaborative programming played in mitigating the impact of staff turnover:

The programming and things that we've done here. I wouldn't say it's prescriptive, but it's very, they've got a lot of different ways to approach those things, and it's pretty much there for them to then take, rather than having the onus on the individual

teacher. Which has been a saving grace with all my staff changes and everything like that, and also getting us all on the same board, like with so many of us here.

This professional collaboration can help teachers to avoid their tendency to “hunker down” and work in isolation when they are facing challenging times or are feeling overworked (Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018, p. 20).

While the leaders seemed to feel the brunt of the teacher shortage, the classroom teachers also described an associated increase in workload. A lack of time and intellectual capital were at the heart of their concerns. Joanna (mid ICSEA, EXT) described the complexity of writing sample programs and upskilling out-of-field teachers:

I think [the workload] increased for about 60% for me compared to the old curriculum, obviously because I had all of the stuff there. But then I think the challenging thing as well is, if you're an English teacher, and you're not strong in teaching and understanding grammar, sentence structure, etc it's now on people like me and the faculty to teach it to everybody else. So that's like an additional thing that you have to think about when you're programming the units.

Like Kayla and Simone, Joanna’s faculty was comprised of several out-of-field teachers “At my school we have four [of ten] teachers teaching English out of faculty”. This impacted the structure and content of curriculum making materials:

Our unit plans and programs are lesson by lesson, resource by resource. ... so that falls back onto people like me to write really specific programs in units and then have to teach that to them [out-of-field-teachers] on top of it before they can go in and teach it to the kids because their subject areas don't teach them how to teach sentences and paragraphs and write analytical responses ... And now there's more of it which is good for the kids, but a lot harder for us.

Based on the current teacher shortage and the growing phenomenon of teaching out-of-field (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021), Joanna’s experience is unlikely to be unique and will probably increase in severity and complexity as more syllabuses are released as part of the NSW curriculum reform (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023a).

Joanna did not feel like she had received sufficient material-economic support for curriculum making in general and this was complicated further with the impact of writing for out-of-field teachers. She also identified conflicts and tensions in her team’s ‘*relatings*’ and this left her feeling stressed and overwhelmed:

I think that ... the main thing is, is time ... there's not enough time. [There are] too many things you have to learn before you have to teach it. And then people are

getting overwhelmed, panicking, stressed, mental health days. People are taking a lot of mental health days because they just can't cope. We've had like ten teachers just quit. It's too hard. It's too stressful. They're not coping. They'd rather go be casual. So, I think there's just too much to learn in a short space of time before you have to deliver it. And I just think the most effective thing that should have been done is more time off for people to be able to implement it as a faculty and have a whole faculty approach.

Joanna's situation speaks to the consequences of teachers working in isolation, experiencing burnout and in crisis. In contrast, Amanda and Kayla seem to have used their adaptive agency to support collaborative professionalism through their roles as middle leaders.

Most participants described the creative approaches their schools were taking to provide material and cognitive time for curriculum making. Andrea described her school's flexible use of casual teachers' timetables:

When there's a casual that ... [has] spare two periods or something like that. We've been able to maybe get one of our classes covered and have ... one extra period to program.

They also used organisational structures to circumnavigate the impact of a teacher shortage and provide time for programming:

Even the days that were given to us ... particularly last year, when we were having collapsed classes. So, we're on minimal supervision, you know. For many days there were ... 3 classes were having to be collapsed together ... every period because we couldn't get enough teachers. ... I think we were made to almost feel guilty for taking those days given to us to program ... I think it was really difficult for us to get that time.

It is a concern, however, that teachers may be left feeling "guilty" for taking time to engage in curriculum making that has been forced upon them through a statewide curriculum review.

The social nature of English teaching and the way teachers share experiences across schools and sectors also informed perspectives towards the teacher shortage. Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) felt very lucky about her school's approach to collaborative professionalism, and she contrasted this to her teacher-friends' experiences:

It is super different, I think, to a lot of my friends' approaches at their schools where they're kind of just resourcing on their own and doing everything on their own. ...

I do feel lucky about that, because I know that that's not necessarily ... the case for all of my friends who are in environments where they they're just so short staffed that there isn't really anyone to be there to help.

The teacher shortage was identified as increasing workloads and the complexity of many teachers' curriculum making practice.

The teacher shortage was impacting practice landscapes and disrupting the practice traditions in most sites of curriculum making. It was creating complex cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political problems that needed to be solved by the participants. This was impacting the nature and the context of their work and the content of their discussions across networks. This is an example of a complex problem that is unlikely to be solved with technical solutions (Timperley & Twyford, 2022) and one that is unlikely to be addressed in the short term (Mills et al., 2024). English teachers begin curriculum making for the new Stage 6 English syllabuses in 2025 and they will likely need to continue mitigating the pressures created by a teacher shortage.

Theme 4 – Trust-based professionalism

The theme of trust-based professionalism consists of two sub-themes; a culture of trust; and the challenges of leading change. Participants connected the importance of trust-based professionalism to their ability to differentiate for students and revisit prior learning. Trust-based professionalism was described through an interesting dichotomy by faculty leaders. In one sense, they valued the faith their team members placed in them as knowledge holders and expert practitioners, while also feeling very daunted by the expectations and workload pressures associated with leading change.

A culture of trust

The participants usually described their faculties and schools as communities of professionals where they were trusted to do what was best for their students. Most participants felt empowered to make decisions and connected this to broader systems that were supporting their curriculum making practice. Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) described the benefits of the trust that was at the heart of her team's collaborative professionalism:

I think the trust that the school has, and my head of faculty has in [me] and my colleagues is the freedom to, particularly for collaborative studies to be selecting [texts] ... a little bit left of centre [and] that has been really fun to find ... texts that are very different and find those connections and be getting the students to be thinking deeply and creatively.

This trust connected to the decisions made by her head of faculty, her colleagues and their collective contribution to curriculum making:

In terms of resourcing. I am really lucky in my school's approach with breaking up topics and selecting different staff members to be ... acting as your coordinators with resourcing because it really helps ... a lot of my friends' approaches at their schools where they're kind of just resourcing on their own and doing everything on their own.

The fact that it is all collaborative and broken up and that your focus can really be on one new group is really helpful because I know that I can trust. It also creates [an] environment of trust, I think, which you're trusting in your colleagues to be putting in the same level of effort and detail into resources that you are.

The impact of collective intellectual input enhanced her ability to differentiate for her students. Shared curriculum making eased workload and provided space for the messy and complex cognitive and intellectual time required to design student-centred lesson materials:

It also means, I think, that if you are needing to differentiate lessons, you have more time to do that rather than creating all the resources for your lesson, and then having differentiation as an afterthought.

When colleagues are creating that base level of resources you can then work out the extension and the support work that may be supplementary. Or the way in which activities could be re-envisioned for your class environment.

All but one participant described the positive intellectual impact of collaborative professionalism.

Joanna did not feel like she was being supported by collaborative professionalism. Her statements contained implicit references to a culture of poor trust where colleagues had not met, or been supported to meet, the expected requirements of collaborative curriculum making:

A lot of people half wrote units ... So, it's a bit hard to prepare when someone hasn't finished the unit because they haven't had enough time to do it. ...

And I think that it's really hard to write a unit with a new curriculum and then also be teaching and marking and writing reports and doing end of year stuff for Year 12, camps, all those sorts of things like this. ... even with the funding that we did [get] ... it didn't work effectively because there's nowhere to hide to write units, and it's just not enough time. One day is not enough time.

While there were structures established to provide curriculum making time, the practice landscape appears to exhibit insufficient material-economic resources allocated to this significant task.

Anna (very low ICSEA, first-year ECT) described her curriculum making as largely “solo”. Despite this, she was grateful towards her colleagues because she had “a lot of guidance from [her] colleagues and ... superiors”. This left her feeling like the change “hasn’t been too difficult”. The reflection on the way Anna was using the syllabus to cater to student needs also speaks to a broader culture of trust where she could differentiate collaboratively created content to address student needs.

Anna stated:

In some instances, I can also go backwards right? Because learning is not linear. And I can, you know, if kids aren't really understanding the expressing part. Then I can go back to okay, how about we go back a step, and we can learn to understand and respond to the text first before we express our own ideas about it.

This was echoed by Jane (low ICSEA, EXT), who felt freed from some compliance pressures, “we are able to more effectively cater to students' skills and what they need improvement on ... because we aren't so content focused ... we are not driven by ticking off as many things” and “I think that's something that I've noticed I've been able to make more effective choices for what engages the students”. Addressing syllabus requirements and balancing this with creative and engaging pedagogy is a complex balancing act for English teachers (Gates & Curwood, 2023; Middleton & Curwood, 2020) and it is pleasing to see participants feeling like they have increased flexibility.

Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English head teacher) described the trust she has in the supports provided by the NSW Department of Education’s English curriculum 7 to 12 team, “I have an enormous amount of trust looking at the level of depth in the content trust in the people driving the process”. This influenced her feeling about the sample materials and her perspective towards using the team.

Jane (low ICSEA, EXT) identified that she feels less stressed “about how we get to the end goal or when we get to the end goal just as long as we get to it”. This shift was connected to several areas, including the broader political changes:

I think that there's been a shift obviously with the Labor government that we are professionals and that we can make those decisions based on what we see in class and what kids tell us and what we prompt them to respond to and not just what is written in Week 9 on a page.

Jane described the new faculty programs as supporting her ability to make student-centred decisions because they are “decluttered”, they are “less pages, there's more freedom. And I find that really effective”. She referred to her adaptations of a Year 7 program as an example:

we can decide what that text looks like. There's more choice for us. ... you could do anything you wanted ... As long as you have that skill and you're meeting those points, it doesn't matter how you do it anymore ... you can direct that back to what students are more interested in ... both classes would do something different to get to that end point.

This has enabled Jane to revisit essential content with her students, especially knowledge or skills that students will require in future years of schooling.

I don't think that I have the same fear of not completing ... if there's something that their discursive pieces weren't very good and I need to go back from Term 2, then I will in Term 4 and I'll just do it through the concept that we're exploring next term.

Other reasons were also identified: “maybe it's 10 years' experience”, “maybe that's a syllabus shift too though, or a NESAs directive or assessment shift. I don't know”. NESAs assessment advice was also identified as an influence on whole-school processes:

The school has changed, obviously taking the directives from NESAs that assessment is to go, is to be through multiple different means. But I feel like with less outcomes to hit, you can revisit. If there's less outcomes, then why can't you just go back to an outcome that perhaps they didn't meet ... with further prompting and refinement ... you can do that if there's only six outcomes.

This reflects a broader shift toward trust in teacher judgement and the permission to grade students based on a wide range of evidence beyond formal assessment. The reduction in outcomes and the structure of the syllabus was identified again as an example of support for this trust-based professionalism:

I think that with the syllabus that aligns with that notion because there has been a drop in outcomes and things have their points and there's a clearer subheading and a clearer direction of what that subheading represents or what the purpose of that subheading is within all the content points ... I feel like you have, I don't know, maybe a little bit more power back power to do that and I would be interested to see if other people feel the same way.

Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) contrasted the high level of faculty support and trust with poorer whole-school support. This may reflect feelings of inequity because teachers across the school did not have access to the time needed for reform work:

On a wider school level. I don't think that it's as supported. I think that people get their feathers ruffled a little bit with time allocated for us to program ... even though like funding and things might be coming from other places. I think that people get ... a little bit upset when it doesn't seem to be equitable and fair and maybe probably don't get the full scope of how much we're reprogramming for this new syllabus, and I think that that's probably not been addressed at a whole-school level ... maybe a little bit more awareness about the change that's happening for other people and other faculties probably would help with a little bit more support. ... my head teacher has had to really, really fight for the days.

Anna captured a different perspective toward trust and connected this to feeling prepared to manage change. This was framed through a reflection from university when she heard about the release of the new syllabus:

I remember ... my tutor announced that. "Oh, yeah. By the way, there's going to be a new syllabus like. Unfortunately, when all of you have graduated and started teaching full time, like you won't be doing it under the syllabus you're currently ... studying". And yeah, my first thought was like, "oh no, like, this is just going to make the job so much harder".

This worry was countered by a personal observation of the way her study and practicum experience helped her feel prepared for change:

Studying, teaching, it equips you to interpret information and data quickly, like I feel like I've been blessed with that skill to be honest. So being able to sort of go through the new syllabus and sort of see the way it's shifted.

Amanda also described the impact of a trusting and supportive principal. Despite leading curriculum change for the first time, she felt supported and confident to distribute responsibility and collaborate with her team:

I ... talked about how supportive my principal is ... really [making] sure that we can kind of give our best selves to this curriculum reform. ... my team's quite supportive in terms of following along with this curriculum reform ... they've taken on different leadership roles within that. Yeah, we're quite collaborative in terms of putting it all together. So that's been really good. Like, it's not just on one person.

Cultures of trust were important to the participants, extending beyond the faculty and the school gate. Perspectives toward trust were influenced by several sites of curriculum making and impacted teachers' curriculum making as well as their perspectives toward their practice and colleagues.

The challenges of leading change

Trust-based professionalism was a complex aspect associated with leading and supporting change. Faculty leaders valued the trust placed in them by their team members, however, they also felt daunted by the expectations and workload

pressures associated with leading change. Several participants identified the pressures and structural requirements associated with policy and registration requirements. Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year Head Teacher) described the frustrations created by the difference in syllabus release timelines with Stage 6 English published two years after K to 10. She wanted to “backward [map] from Stage 6 down”. Upon its release, the team refined a Year 7 assessment removing the multimodal presentation requirement because this was removed from the 2024 English syllabus assessment requirements “in light of that release and the confirmation of a few things, I’ve just changed ... the assessment [and] made that big change. I didn't feel like we needed to assess those skills formally anymore”. The worry about the release of Stage 6 was also described by Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) who felt the pressure to meet requirements such as HSC text prescriptions. She also described the personal pressure associated with trying to map and monitor the way syllabus requirements were addressed:

What was a big deal for me, was the balancing ... the balancing of the content ... ensuring you know that I am indeed addressing all the outcomes in a way that should be addressed, and ... it requires a lot of critical thinking on your part.

While Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) was not leading a faculty, she described the way she was mapping and monitoring syllabus requirements. Her role as a key figure in faculty programming came about because she was “keen” and others had “opted out”. The requirement to map and monitor syllabus enactment was evident in the team’s use of the English CT’s outcome tracker:

We've been using the outcome tracking document a lot. So we have an excel spreadsheet for Year for Stage 5 and Stage 4. I think it was a departmental resource as well. ... it's got the concepts on the first page, and then each outcome in a separate sheet, and we're able to just tick box, you know, for each unit what content points we're hitting and where. And I find that that structure of those subheadings and the fact that it is divided kind of up into those skills as well has been super accessible and easy to use, particularly with programming.

Amanda was also experiencing staffing changes and shared the pressures associated with mapping and monitoring syllabus requirements. This included mapping knowledge and skill development across stages:

But now my challenge is ... [making] sure that there's flow ... a connection between each term and then each year, and then the stage. And so that for me is my challenge of kind of mapping all of that. ...

I built a couple of things to help me check that all the requirements that you've got all of those ... text types and text experiences ... [and] where have you got the textual concepts and things like that? ... I've been given the opportunity to kind of sit there and work on my own to kind of figure some of these challenges out, whereas I think other people have kind of being thrown in.

This type of curriculum work is complex and intellectually exhausting. It is iterative and generative and requires the support of material and cognitive time.

Trust-based professionalism created an interesting dichotomy for faculty leaders. In one sense, they are responsible for leading change and are looked to for guidance while simultaneously learning the changes alongside their teams. The participants who were faculty leaders valued the faith and respect exhibited by their teams. They were treated as knowledge holders and expert practitioners. However, this also left them feeling very daunted and pressured. They all wanted to make a positive impact on their teams and students, and this created complex workload pressures considering the teacher shortage.

Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) captured the complexities of teaching new texts and her team's desire to teach texts that were familiar. When Kayla opted to adopt all the DoE samples, because of the learning opportunity this provided for staff and students, this included exploring new texts. This was a contentious point in the faculty. However, Kayla saw new texts as a key feature of change and learning:

Something I've noticed characteristic in English teachers ... one of the reasons why they [teach] is because they love the text. ... So, we are struggling with that a bit. ... What you would've done in the other pathway is that you would've allowed the teachers [to] swap ... They would've kept all their text choices that they've always taught for 10,000 years and the ones they love ...and what we might've got as a consequence of that is a backwards, upside-down retrofitting. I'm not entirely sure. I know text is a popular aspect, but I'm not entirely sure it's the most salient element of the discussion.

It is highly likely that this tension is being experienced in many faculties where leaders are using institutionally created sample materials, or teachers are creating content that their colleagues will use. Introducing new texts is complex especially as English teachers are often deeply attached to the texts they select to teach. They may reflect and connect to personal and professional identifies, and are likely reflections of their beliefs about the value of reading literature (Manuel & Carter, 2016; McLean Davies et al., 2020). Jane provided an interesting alternative when

she described the way her head teacher had approached collaborative curriculum making. Their programming template enabled teachers to either select suggested texts or choose alternatives that aligned with parameters. Teachers could make these choices based on student need.

Collaborative professionalism was also seen as important for faculty leaders. Unlike Kayla, Simone did not have a leadership critical friend. Her faculty consisted of new and out-of-field teachers, and this knowledge gap had a significant impact on her workload as the leader. The reality, however, was that leaders were also learning the new syllabus at the same time as their team members. This becomes a much more complex problem when teams do not have the necessary qualifications or experience:

everyone's gravitating back to me. "So, [Simone], what do you think?" And I ... thought at that stage, "Oh, my gosh! I'm also new to this, and I'm finding my way. And I think this is the right way. And then you were sharing that". So, what's missing is that good, healthy, productive collaboration.

Simone felt that a leadership critical friend could have mitigated some of these pressures:

But when you're sitting with ... staff where it's "we don't know. Fill us up. Just keep pouring the knowledge". It's not good for you as well, because you want someone to challenge you. You want someone to, you know, sort of have a second look and tell you, "Okay, this is great. This is not", you know, that kind of thing.

These pressures were echoed by Amanda whose faculty "were very much like, 'well, you just kind of guide us and we got this' and they just kind of went along for the ride". This was a daunting experience, and she captured the complex duality of engaging with professional learning as a learner and then bringing this back to the team as a leader:

I know, there's a lot out there. But, as someone that was new to this and leading this it was very daunting when it was released ... I obviously tuned into what I could in terms of like the department PL [NSW Department of Education's professional learning] but in terms of bringing that back into a faculty that was the most daunting for me and learning how to then pitch it to other people. Flip it, be the expert, and teach others within that short period of time and ... the structures that were here weren't very conducive to that. ... I spent a lot of a lot of time developing things that would work here on the ground. ... It was daunting.

Kayla's description of her school's use of the Head Teacher, Teaching and Learning role as "embedded instructional leadership", and a key leader of whole-school curriculum reform, may be one-way schools could avoid faculty heads leading in

isolation. Despite the challenges Amanda described, she still felt quite “lucky” in comparison to the experiences of others:

I feel pretty confident and lucky, like, obviously, you hear from other people around ... the traps. And that's not ... the case everywhere. ... I feel quite, ... confident and quite happy with where we're at with the curriculum reform.

This focus on feeling lucky, being grateful in contrast to the experiences of peers, and the difficulties of leading change was present in several interviews. This demonstrated the cultural-discursive connections between English teachers across the profession and the way this can spread ideas and narratives of experience.

Leading curriculum change was represented as joyful and very challenging. School and system structures that support leaders were vitally important in managing workloads and maximising the opportunities associated with curriculum reform.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key findings from the study and introduced the four themes that emerged from the data analysis. In my accounts of the teachers' practices I have sought to represent their understandings and approaches to content knowledge, and pedagogical processes and strategies, alongside descriptions of the internal and external contextual factors informing their worlds of work. This chapter is used as a framework to establish the discussion and analysis of the arrangements that have enabled and constrained the curriculum making practices of NSW English teachers during a period of curriculum reform. Chapter Five applies the theory of practice architectures to this study and demonstrates how the English teachers' practice was enabled and constrained by cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political dimensions and arrangements present at and interconnected across sites (Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017).

Chapter five – discussion

In Chapter Four I reported on the perspectives and experiences of eight secondary English teachers as they engaged in the practice of curriculum making with the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus* during the NSW curriculum reform (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2018c, 2022c). This chapter seeks to consider the nature of curriculum making during curriculum reform more holistically using the theoretical framework of practice architectures to structure a discussion of the enabling and constraining arrangements present across various sites of curriculum making. This will enable a consideration of the role and significance of each of the themes through the application of the theory of practice architectures ‘table of invention’ — an adaptation of the work of Kemmis et al. (2014b) and Gibbs and Cooke (2023). The preceding chapter has offered four distinct conditions which have shaped the practices of secondary English teachers and the contexts in which their practice is enacted. The four key conditions were: collaboration and ongoing professional learning in curriculum making; using the syllabus to construct student-centred learning experiences and English curriculum materials; enacting curriculum change during a teacher shortage; and trust-based professionalism.

The practice architectures of curriculum making in English

As established in Chapter Three, the purpose of this research has been to develop a contextualised understanding of the site and context-specific arrangements impacting the curriculum making practice of secondary English teachers as they navigate the complex phenomenon of curriculum reform. The English teachers’ practice of curriculum making with the *English K–10 Syllabus* is encapsulated through their experiences and represented in their ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ at each site. The ‘sayings’, ‘doings’ and ‘relatings’ categories in this chapter are derived from the common conditions presented in Chapter Four and are discussed in relation to how they were enabled and constrained by the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political practice architectures at each site. The ‘table of invention’ was a key interpretive tool used to view the data and consider the practices and the site-specific arrangements that make the practices possible. The discussion highlights the interrelated nature of the categories and is inclusive of:

- *Sayings*: the teachers' knowledge and confidence using the language of the syllabus and NSW curriculum.
 - *Cultural-discursive arrangements*: shared, common and accessible language guiding curriculum and pedagogy within the subject of English.
- *Doings*: collaboratively designing, evaluating and refining curriculum and pedagogical practice.
 - *Material-economic arrangements*: compliance structures and requirements; and funding to access time, texts and professional learning to model and guide experimentation and reflection of curriculum making.
- *Relatings*: trust-based professionalism, collaborative partnerships, initiation into practice and adaptive agency in response to contextual factors.
 - *Social-political arrangements*: cultures of trust intertwined with collaborative evaluation and refinement of curriculum making and pedagogical practice.

While these are categorised as separate entities, this does not imply that there are clear delineations between these elements of practice. As Kemmis et al. (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 31) illustrate, the *sayings*, *doings* and *relatings* and the *cultural-discursive*, *material-economic* and *social-political arrangements* are “galvanised into action in more or less coherent ways in relation to one another”. These practices are socially established cooperative human activities that *hang together* in a project and are guided by practice traditions and arrangements. Initiation is a key element of these practice traditions as people learn and practice they become ‘*enmeshed*’ in practice architectures and learn how to inhabit the site as “a site for a particular kind of practice” (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 38). Drawing on Priestley et al.’s. (2021) sites of curriculum making heuristic (introduced in Chapter 1 and explained in Table 1), the interconnections of practice may be demonstrated through a brief overview of the way the *English K–10 Syllabus* was described by the participants as influencing the individual and collective ‘*sayings*’, ‘*doings*’ and ‘*relatings*’ of curriculum making thus demonstrating the way it crosses boundaries and is a significant material-economic, cultural-discursive and social-political arrangement ‘*stirring*’ the teachers into site-specific curriculum making practice.

As a cultural-discursive influence, the language of the syllabus is shaped by and shaping models of the subject of English and the specialist discourses English teachers use in their 'micro' (school and curriculum networks) and 'nano' (classroom) practice. The teachers were sometimes confident and sometimes uncertain in their use of the academic language of the subject of English and the syllabus. This was enabled and constrained by prefigured knowledge and evident in their cognitive understanding of the syllabus. The syllabus language, especially the textual concepts and the literacy requirements, created specific knowledge and skill requirements. More broadly, the syllabus and curriculum language were impacted by the complex and rich history of the subject.

As a material-economic influence, the syllabus was created through 'macro' level (the NSW state government) funding with directives to a 'meso' level education authority (the NSW Education Standards Authority). Complex (multi-site) financial arrangements impacted the funds available to teachers when using the syllabus and accessing texts or professional learning to enhance and inform this use. As a resource, it is used by English teachers at the 'micro' level (the school) and the 'nano' level (the classroom), relying on a complex array of professional knowledge and skills. It informs the content and knowledge of their curriculum making and pedagogical practice.

The syllabus also functions as a social-political influence, and in the context of the NSW curriculum reform, it is a symbolic representation of 'supra' level influences on education (transnational curricular discourse and policy borrowing). The syllabus was created and distributed in the context of curriculum reform. In turn, it shapes the 'meso' and 'micro' level interactions and connections between teachers and their educational communities. Teaching is relational, and the release of the syllabus as part of curriculum reform led to the creation and disruption of social solidarities, as teachers engaged in or became distanced from communities of English curriculum practice. The syllabus as part of reform, also impacted the relationships, emotions and feelings the teachers had about their work and teaching. The syllabus shaped the 'nano' level interactions, dialogues and discourses in the classroom impacting the interactions and interconnections between the teacher and their students.

The use of the *English K–10 Syllabus* as an example of a material-economic, cultural-discursive and social-political arrangement highlights the way that understanding practice comes with uncovering, exploring and discovering the connections, diverse influences and potentially conflicting or contradictory relationships between individuals and their surroundings in each site. In this study, the participants' stories demonstrated webs of connection and interconnection across the various 'sites of curriculum making' thus demonstrating the "interconnection and interdependence of practices on one another" (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 47).

The cultural-discursive arrangements of English teachers' curriculum making

The cultural-discursive arrangements are the resources and conditions that prefigure, make possible and shape the 'sayings' in a practice (Gibbs & Cooke, 2023; Mahon et al., 2017). They are realised in semantic space, in the medium of language, as we encounter one another as "interlocutors" through the "languages and discourses used in and about a practice" (Mahon et al., 2017, pp. 1, 9). In the context of this study, this relates to the discourses associated with the teaching and learning in English as it is represented in the language of the *English K–10 Syllabus* and engagement with NSW curriculum materials. For the participants, we can map the cultural-discursive arrangements of their practice through the language they used to describe the content and structure of their curriculum making practice in response to the syllabus. This was demonstrated through their interpretations and reflections. It was clear that these reflections were shaped by and are shaping models of the subject of English and the specialist discourses English teachers use in and about their curriculum making. The way in which these cultural-discursive arrangements 'hang together' in each site helped account for the interconnections and differences in language across the eight teachers.

The 'sayings' of English teachers' curriculum making

The participants held strong beliefs about their ability to understand and use the language of *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c) and broader elements of the NSW curriculum in their design and delivery of engaging, relevant and meaningful learning experiences for their students. The

syllabus was a dominant discursive frame directing the participants' *'sayings'* about their curriculum making practice. The language of subject English is complex with abstractions and several *'models'* underpinning the subject and the syllabus which creates complexities for teachers and students (Dixon, 1969; Doecke, 2017; Goodwyn, 2016b; Manuel, 2002; Manuel & Carter, 2019). The language of the syllabus outcomes, the content groups and the content points were identified as a powerful contributor to teacher-to-teacher and teacher-to-student talk. The syllabus was identified as an enabling arrangement because it was "decluttered", "clearer", with a "clarity of content points", that also created a type of "ambiguity" that provided "more options to do the things that fit to [their] context". Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) captured this consensus when she described liking the syllabus "and the way that it's structured" because the outcome content group headings and the "subheadings of the textual concepts" eased navigation and programming. The structure and detail shaped the design of lessons and were "really effective", especially in contrast to the language of the 2012 syllabus which was "more ambiguous a little bit harder to understand". The syllabus language informed the teachers' discourse and influenced the language and structure of the English teachers' programming and resource development. The representation of the collective dialogues taking place in faculties and across networks indicated that many English teachers concurred with these sentiments.

It is important to note that the teachers did identify certain terminology as a barrier that caused or could lead to confusion and inconsistencies in understanding. Certain terminology also highlighted gaps in the teachers' knowledge and skills, and this was clear through the teachers' reflections and their descriptions of the need to be provided further material-economic supports such as access to definitions and examples for all key terminology in the syllabus. The connections between discourses around knowledge development and resources or professional learning highlighted an established cultural-discursive arrangement where teachers verbally represented their thinking and concerns to initiate access to support to address identified needs. This was particularly important for out-of-field teachers and the teachers and leaders supporting out-of-field teachers. This is elaborated on in the section of this chapter focused on material-economic arrangements titled 'Curriculum making for out-of-field teachers'.

A key enabling arrangement supporting understanding of the language of the syllabus was the creation of intellectual climates that nurtured substantive dialogue between teachers. This enabled critical reflection of curriculum making practice especially when comparing the language and requirements of the 2012 syllabus and the 2022 syllabus. Teachers described feeling confused, unsure and restricted because of the “length” of the syllabus and the “ambiguous” and “unclear” language in parts of the 2012 syllabus. The participants identified the “requirement” to address and map all aspects of the syllabus outcomes and described this process as becoming “unmanageable”. The key issue with the outcomes seemed to be the layered complexity of many of the content points in the outcomes. It is important to note that when one compares the 2012 and 2022 syllabuses it is clear that many of the 2012 syllabus points are longer and contain numerous ideas, and pieces of knowledge or skills in the one sentence (content point). In saying that, not all content points are “created equal” as one participant identified, and this highlighted the need to interrogate and “map” the knowledge, understanding and skills required of each outcome content point across a program, year and stage to ensure the requirements were being addressed effectively and helped programs “be compliant”. However, addressing and mapping the outcomes in the 2012 syllabus was repeatedly described as “unmanageable”. This ambiguity led to the teachers questioning the “accuracy” of their interpretations. These reflections were contrasted with increased feelings of “freedom”, “power” and “support” associated with the new syllabus. Participants felt the new syllabus better equipped them to create classroom cultures that enable students to respond personally. The language of the syllabus also shaped broader discussions about the purpose and value of learning in English. This was described as a type of recentering where English was being brought back to a focus on providing opportunities to “create”, “share” and “connect” and the teachers feeling empowered to make student-centred decisions. This is a significant enabler that nods to the potential return of the flexibility traditionally associated with English teaching. The power of this discourse around “freedom” and flexibility are not to be underestimated. They are considered vital components of what gives the subject value to students and teachers (Carrington, 2017; Middleton & Curwood, 2020).

The language of the textual concepts in the English syllabus

The difficulties associated with making textual knowledge accessible to students, and transforming it into language they understand and can use to expand their thinking about the world, are recognised and understood by English teachers and researchers (Doecke & Mead, 2018; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). Reflections and representations of collaborative and reflective dialogue highlighted the role the outcome content, particularly the “textual concepts” were playing as an enabler to the formation of the ‘big ideas’ that the teachers were exploring and discussing with their students. The reflections and descriptions of the enactment of the syllabus consistently connected to the language of the “textual concepts”. On a semantic level, this language aligns with the language of the text *The English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes – Early Stage 1 to Stage 6* (ECT) (English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017) and informs the content groups found in the “Understanding and responding to texts” focus area of the syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). This is evident in the naming of content groups, the description of content points, and it is acknowledged in the syllabus bibliography (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022b, 2022c). It is important to identify this convergence of cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements as it demonstrates the ongoing value English teachers place on the language and structure of the resources that were developed by “trusted” subject-area specialists.

The English textual concepts resources were designed to provide a metalanguage that structured teacher and student discussions, and their explorations of how meaning is made in and through a diverse range of texts, especially those texts that do not fit traditional definitions of ‘literature’ (Gold & Greene, 2016). Providing a cultural-discursive structure that guides the understandings and language of textuality is particularly important in an era of textual hybridity. Traditional knowledge structures may no longer suit the subject as a twenty-first century discipline (English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017; Gold & Greene, 2016; Macken-Horarik et al., 2019).

The teachers’ ‘sayings’ demonstrated the usefulness of the metalanguage of ‘textual concepts’. They offered the English teachers a form of supportive discourse

enabling them to share, reflect on and explain their practice. The language of the textual concepts through the syllabus was identified as a type of “recentering” in relation to the “purpose of English” for Andrea (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT). The language guided refinement and reflection on the reason for making certain decisions “what are we teaching? Why are we teaching it? ... those textual concepts ... really streamline that in my brain ... about ... what is the content that I'm teaching? When I was in uni ... without those concepts. It was pretty ambiguous”. Joanna (mid ICSEA, EXT) echoed these sentiments while also highlighting the existing role of the textual concepts in her practice, “I always taught like that ... I've always taught through textual concepts, and I've always found that kids connected with the text better”. This may be a contemporary example of Shulman's (1986) description of ‘content knowledge’ as it highlights the significance of this type of language in creating a shared discourse that impacts curriculum practice.

In a sea of ‘models’ of English (Dixon, 1969; Doecke, 2017; Goodwyn, 2016b; Manuel & Carter, 2019) the metalanguage of the textual concepts and the diversity of engagement and experience by teachers may also allude to the impact of the different ‘models’ of the subject on teacher practice. The refinement of the syllabus language helped teachers to understand, discuss and explore how knowledge and experience are mediated by language. This is particularly important when teachers are guiding students through thought-provoking and stimulating texts (Doecke & Mead, 2018). This is an important finding from the research, however, understanding the role of the textual concepts as a knowledge structure in English needs further research (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019).

The language of text requirements and text complexity in the English syllabus

Text selection for compulsory reading has a significant impact on classroom learning cultures and the teachers’ perspectives on their practice (Manuel & Carter, 2015). English has long been a subject that has valued exploring literature in its various forms, particularly fiction (Howie, 2010, 2021; Sawyer & Howie, 2011) and this has continued, as is evident in the “text requirements” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c). The participants ‘sayings’ demonstrated a renewed opportunity to support students to read for pleasure. This was described by Andrea as “reading for

just reading”, and Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) as having the “scope” to focus on encouraging the “passion for reading ... reading for entertainment, reading for pleasure”. This opportunity was enabled by the text requirements mandate to create learning experiences involving “texts chosen by students for personal interest and enjoyment”, with content points across the syllabus requiring students to “describe the pleasures, challenges and successes experienced in the processes of understanding and composing texts” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c).

Engaging in “wide reading” was a feature of the 2012 syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2019, pp. 73, 129, 139, 147), however, its inclusion in the text requirements for the 2022 syllabus symbolises the pressures and freedoms mandates can create. The ‘permission’ to focus on reading for pleasure, discussing texts, and reflecting on the joys of reading with students, was celebrated by participants and signified a key discursive shift in the way they described their approaches to supporting reading. This type of requirement may reflect a concerted effort to raise the profile of classroom reading cultures and it was certainly viewed as an enabler to creating this type of culture and contributing to discourses that championed personal responses to texts. Reading for pleasure is a contributor to academic success and student-selected material is recognised as an important part of effective reading programs (Jerrim & Moss, 2019; Manuel & Carter, 2015).

The terminology in parts of the syllabus was identified as a constraining arrangement. The language of text complexity was considered challenging to enact at a programming and pedagogical level. Joanna captured this complexity and the role of the syllabus in cultural-discursive structures:

But what I think is a complex text, is another teacher going to think that's a complex text, is my class going to think it's a complex text? ... I need to teach them with a complex text without sort of any suggestions of what [NESA] think a complex text is.

Moon (2014) highlighted the validity of concerns such as these when he explained how specialised discourses used in academic disciplines are made more efficient through the standardising of key terms. ‘Complex text’, given its role in several syllabus outcomes and content points, could be considered a key term. Despite the references in the syllabus to the way text complexity may vary there is no definition or explanation for ‘*complex texts*’, ‘*increasingly complex texts*’ or ‘*increasingly*

complex language forms, features or structures' in either the syllabus or the NSW Education Authority's (NESA) new glossary (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c, 2024b). The language here presents a key cultural-discursive constraint. However, this could be addressed through the provision of material-economic supports such as a comprehensive glossary and professional learning materials that guide teachers through an understanding of text complexity. The lack of supporting material to guide sense-making for the syllabus vocabulary was described as constraining the '*sayings*' and collaborative dialogues of some English teachers, particularly those who were new to the profession or trying to support out-of-field-teachers. Teachers need sufficient and ongoing support if they are to develop a shared understanding of their specialised discourses. This has not been provided for all the key changes to syllabus terminology, and it may be impacting the broader English teaching community.

The cultural-discursive arrangements that prefigured and shaped the teachers' curriculum making practices do so in complex ways. The participants '*sayings*' reflect broader discourses of the subject of English, and this was reflected in the value they placed on many of the refinements made to the language of the *English K–10 Syllabus*. The connections in the '*sayings*' across the participants demonstrates the importance of shared specialised discourses that are enabled by cultural-discursive arrangements such as refined syllabus language that provided a clarity of purpose for the subject. This has created an important shift increasing the flexibility in curriculum making. This is a positive change and something that has been under threat for many years (Goodwyn, 2019).

The material-economic arrangements of English teachers' curriculum making

Material-economic arrangements are the resources, material conditions and aspects of the physical environment at each site that impact and make possible the '*doings*' of a practice as shown through the medium of activity and work (Gibbs & Cooke, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014b). They are realised as we encounter one another as "embodied beings" in the dimension of physical space-time and this affects "what, when, how, and by whom something can be done" (Mahon et al., 2017, pp. 1, 10). In the context of this study, this relates to the material resources available to the

participants as they engaged in curriculum making. This included the physical resources such as the syllabus, texts, sample teaching and learning materials, faculty guidelines and structures, and professional learning materials. It also included financial structures that enabled the space-time to act. This included funding for curriculum making time, access to casual cover, funding for professional learning and the purchasing of new texts.

The relationship between the material-economic arrangements across the English teachers' sites of curriculum making was complex. As this research makes clear, curriculum making occurs in every classroom, however, how that is realised and the impact this has on a teacher's stress levels and workload is deeply dependent on the resourcing, funding, and the system, school and faculty structures teachers are provided. The *English K–10 Syllabus* and funding for time were the two key material-economic enablers of curriculum making practice. They were used as resources by the English teachers at a network, school, faculty and classroom level to inform the content of teaching practice. This was enabled and constrained by financial and funding arrangements. Funding for space-time directly impacted the teachers' ability to respond to the release of the syllabus and build the requisite knowledge and skills needed to complete the human labour associated with curriculum making.

The 'doings' of English teachers' curriculum making

As much as the subject of English is shaped by complex contextual forces it is also informed by the "mundane reality of available resources" (Wells & Moon, 2021). This is a significant part of an English teacher's curriculum making experience and it directly impacts their classroom practice. School leaders were instrumental in providing access to time and the physical space to work on the new curriculum. This was key to addressing the requirements created by the new curriculum. While these material-economic arrangements were controlled by school and faculty leaders they were also constrained by broader forces in the education complex such as the teacher shortage and funding cuts.

The participants described the powerful impact of faculty and school leaders who used adaptive agency to mitigate the impact of the constraints they faced. Many leaders managed to provide time and funding for collaborative curriculum making,

access to professional learning and the purchasing of new texts. Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) captured the significance of this support from her colleagues and faculty leader, who she described as “lovely and approachable”. This leader enabled “a collaborative team” and provided time and space for the other experienced teachers, who were “really willing”, to sit down and devote time and energy to curriculum making. This was a vital support for agency particularly in a time of curriculum reform when everyone is learning together. This helped the teachers develop a shared understanding and approach to enacting centralised policy in their context (Alford et al., 2022). This also eased the burdens associated with resource selection (sourcing), and the design and development of teaching and learning materials. Without this support, curriculum making was considered disorganised and of poor quality.

Using the syllabus as part of curriculum making

Many of the positive elements of the *English K–10 Syllabus* were outlined in the cultural-discursive arrangements section of this chapter. This related to the powerful impact of the refined syllabus on English teachers’ discourse. However, the syllabus and its digital nature also impacted the ‘doings’ of the curriculum making process creating both opportunity and challenge.

All English teachers must have the capacity to link curricular content to the forms of language and literacy associated with this specialist knowledge. The participants felt confident in their personal literacy and most expressed their confidence or growing confidence in their general pedagogical literacy and discipline-based pedagogical literacy. However, the literacy requirements of the syllabus were identified as an area of concern and one that needed considerable material-economic support to address. English teachers must understand the unique challenges posed by the discourses of English. Secondary teachers need a combination of personal literacy, general pedagogical literacy and discipline-based pedagogical literacy (Moon, 2014). Discipline-based pedagogical literacy is the ability to “link curricular content to the forms of language and literacy associated with a particular discipline ... understanding intimately the way specialist knowledge is encoded in the language and literacy practices of a given learning area” (Moon,

2014, p. 114). This goes beyond general pedagogical literacy, which Moon describes as:

The capacity to model Standard Australian English to students, and to provide appropriate instruction and correction in the classroom. This dimension of literacy manifests itself in the teacher's ability to spell words correctly when writing on the board, to produce class notes that are clear and correct, to mark out errors and offer corrections when responding to student work, and to teach complex literacy skills, such as essay writing and bibliographic citation ... literacy as it gets caught up in the act of teaching (Moon, 2014, p. 113).

Despite valuing the refinement and the explicit focus on elements of literacy, participants identified that they, or their colleagues, had not been taught pedagogical literacy or discipline-based pedagogical literacy. Many participants expressed the need for support to teach the language of literacy in effective and engaging ways.

The need for more support was particularly urgent when it came to supporting out-of-field teachers and/or meeting the needs of students performing below Stage in their literacy. Simone epitomised the complexities of the language and literacy focus when she described the value her team placed on the explicit focus, "with my team, it's unanimous ... it's great, the literacy focus". However, they were simultaneously constrained because they were out-of-field or inexperienced and needed explicit support to develop their knowledge and confidence to effectively teach this content:

I have a teacher that I'm supporting ... [she] is flawed in her literacy skills ... It's hard because that teacher needs to learn as well. The heart is in the right place because they can see the value in the changes ... but the changes need to be in the teachers as well before we can sort of empower students with those skills.

Many of the teachers, and their colleagues, identified the need to develop essential knowledge and skills to address the student's literacy needs, especially for students performing who needed extensive and ongoing support. This is also reflected in the research with many teachers having fragmented knowledge, lacking the confidence to use their knowledge of language and literacy, and/or having limited pedagogical literacy (Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Harper & Rennie, 2009; Moon, 2014; Stephenson, 2018). The literature suggests that teacher confidence in their disciplined-based pedagogical literacy is a significant and complex area of need, that is also in need of further research, support and development (Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Harper & Rennie, 2009; Loudon & Rohl, 2006; Moon, 2014; Stephenson, 2018). Extensive material-economic resources will be required to address this area of need to ensure all secondary teachers are equipped to link their curriculum content knowledge with

the forms of language and literacy associated with their disciplines. Feeling confident and having agency helps teachers support students in their areas of need. It is essential that this support is provided by the educational authorities expecting change to take place.

Developing teachers' curriculum knowledge and skills is a complex task and one that requires adaptive agency. Some participants experienced success in their ongoing development. This was guided by purpose-built material-economic arrangements such as programming scaffolds, modelled literacy lessons and activities that teachers could use in their programming and teaching. These structures created different kinds of intersubjective spaces that were enabling and constraining what teachers could *say* and *do* and how they could relate to each other and the resources around them. An example of this was the programming template Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year Head Teacher) created for her team. This template, accompanied by ongoing professional learning during faculty meetings and dedicated professional learning and collaborative programming days, contributed to a noticeable shift in teacher confidence and competence. The template provided a model for how the textual concepts, conceptual programming questions and learning intentions could be represented while also "identifying the literacy activities to teach [the] skills", and "12 months on ... they haven't thought twice about formative ... literacy ... that they were so worried about 12 months ago because there's multiple opportunities explicitly written there for them". In this example, the physical space-time and material resources were provided for collaborative planning and understanding. This helped the team to understand the ways they could enact the literacy requirements which oriented and initiated many of the teachers into literacy focused teaching and learning structures. These prefigured but did not predetermine what the teachers could do in their classrooms, and they were identified as assisting the teachers to develop confidence and competence in this area.

Several participants described the positive impact of their focus on literacy on their students' learning. Participants described increases in assessment submission rates and improvements in the quality of written work. Despite not having been taught how to explicitly explore grammar in context or the metacognition behind writing for example, the teachers were dedicating time and effort to overcoming

these challenges through “self” teaching this knowledge. Many were seeing “the benefit ... from the kids” and observed “improvement in their writing”. They described improvement as being connected to increased engagement in writing tasks, increased submission rates for formal and formative tasks and an increase in the cohesion and complexity of the content represented in student writing. Faculty structures that provided time, space and structures for this type of intellectual work were essential enablers of effective learning about language and literacy. In several instances, this mitigated the “fear” and “overwhelming” nature of this work. Louden and Rohl’s (2006) study highlighted that secondary teachers want to become more prepared to teach language and literacy and know that this filters through to students’ confidence and competence but they need ongoing support. The teachers in this study demonstrated similar commitment and an understanding that quality support for language and literacy benefits students beyond schooling.

A constraining element associated with the curriculum reform syllabuses related to the platform as a digital curriculum. As a material-economic arrangement it was described as “overwhelming”, causing “panic”, and it was large and difficult to navigate. This impacted the teachers’ ability to find parts of the syllabus quickly and easily. In response to learning from home during COVID-19, many teachers experienced a rapid and significant development of their digital competencies. Teachers showed incredible resilience and agility (Dindar et al., 2021; Fray et al., 2023; Townsend et al., 2022; Yager, 2020). However, many teachers need ongoing support to develop the digital competencies required to navigate and use new technology, such as a new curriculum platform which has required teachers to partake in a significant and rapid change in practice. The research suggests that changes like these need to be gradual with individuals provided the time and resources to develop their digital skills (Alford et al., 2022; Dindar et al., 2021). Workload and stress are likely to increase if this is not provided and this was evident in the participants’ reflections. This organisational practice reflects a broader and problematic assumption that all teachers will automatically know where and how to find content on this site. Teachers may be unable to address the academic problems they face because they do not have the necessary support to develop their confidence in using this type of digital tool (Dindar et al., 2021). This significant and

complex material-economic arrangement will impact every teacher in NSW by the end of NSW curriculum reform.

The impact of accountability requirements

The English teachers exhibited adaptive agency despite being constrained by complex material-economic influences. This was essential in the face of complex accountability and performativity requirements (Gavin & Stacey, 2022; Mockler & Stacey, 2021; Stacey et al., 2022). ‘Pointless paperwork’ and certain school structures were identified as impacting teachers’ (Stacey et al., 2022) ‘precious’ curriculum making time. Participants described their experiences, and the workload associated, with “mapping” and “ticking off” the syllabus requirements as they were addressed, and the “mapping” action aligned to sector and school compliance requirements (NSW Department of Education, 2023a; NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e). The teachers needed to access or create material-economic resources to support the management of these requirements.

The impact of compliance requirements was reflected in implicit and explicit ways. The explicit language of ‘ticking’ and ‘mapping’ was aligned with the complex intellectual work of the subject of English while also being emblematic of the internalisation of broader cultures of performative accountability in education (Mockler & Stacey, 2021). An interesting example of this was the use of the outcome tracker developed by the NSW Department of Education’s (DoE) English curriculum 7 to 12 team (English CT). Teachers were using this to “map” where and how they were addressing broader syllabus requirements, which reflected broader institutional and registration requirements. As a material resource, it was “designed to assist teachers in mapping and monitoring the delivery of outcomes and content” as a support to teachers as they “plan within and across stages of learning” (NSW Department of Education, 2024). This document became an interesting example of the dynamic two-way relationship between institutions and teachers’ enactment and accountability practices. This is symbolic of the support structures certain parts of an institution are expected to create to help teachers as they try to navigate broader institutional registration requirements.

Despite the impacts of accountability structures, the participants spent their time and intellectual energy designing flexible programs. Several participants

described the reduction in syllabus mandates as the cause of this flexibility. As an illustration, Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) spoke about the importance of supporting her team to go beyond “ticking the boxes” and making sure their curriculum materials support students to develop deep knowledge and understanding. Classroom practice was also described as “slowing down”, with an emphasis on supporting students to “slowly” develop their knowledge and skills through recursive writing. This was supported by an increased emphasis on designing formative assessment structures. In turn, this was identified as a key counter to the “panic” that formal assessment can cause students. These examples may indicate a positive path away from some of the destructive impacts of accountability requirements on curriculum making. This small group of teachers were certainly thinking deeply about their professional knowledges. This may reflect their move toward engagement with nuanced and rich sources of evidence to guide professional reflections (Mockler & Stacey, 2021). It may also be a positive sign of a transition to a type of ‘intelligent accountability’ (O’Neill, 2002, 2013) as teachers shift their focus away from ‘pointless paperwork’ toward creating quality curriculum for their students.

Time and the practice of curriculum making

Curriculum making is scholarly, creative, intellectual and productive work (Alford et al., 2022). For English teachers in particular, this is enhanced through adaptive agency and an ability to remain resilient in constraining times (Goodwyn, 2019). Before the NSW curriculum reform, teachers’ workloads were already described as increasing in size and changing in nature (Stacey et al., 2022). Processes such as marking have changed and increased in complexity and this is identified as an ongoing, negative contributor to workload for secondary teachers (Alford et al., 2022; Jerrim & Sims, 2021). In this context, it was not a surprise that participants repeatedly referred to the need for more time and resources to enact change.

The participants represented time in two ways which reflected the literature (Mockler, 2024). Time was a precious material-economic resource that was requested, cajoled and sometimes squabbled over. It framed creative work, research, and engagement in ongoing professional learning. Time was also presented as ongoing with the participants seeing experimentation, reflection and the

pleasures of personal growth as a complex and evolving element of teacher life. An interesting example of this two-way thinking about time was captured by Amanda (mid ICSEA, EXT and third-year Head Teacher). She described the role her faculty meetings were playing in ongoing professional learning. This was precious space-time because the faculty meetings became dedicated to upskilling the team as they went “along through the year”. This time also provided cognitive and intellectual space for sharing and learning as a collective through the focus on professional learning where “different staff ... within the faculty or different external experts” were presenting on different topics or issues. This information or material was explored in the faculty meetings and applied in practice through time spent on programming. This meant these meetings became focused on “developing curriculum again” (a type of collective sense-making). When time and space were provided, adequate sense-making enabled the English teachers to develop, refine and evaluate influential factors such as their subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. The powerful impact of this type of sense-making is evident in several studies (Grossman & Shulman, 1994; Manuel, 2002; Shulman, 1986).

The negative impact created by insufficient time and professional learning varied. However, disorganised curriculum making was a consistent result. Several participants described their first round of curriculum enactment as ongoing, delayed, partially complete, or being rewritten. This was attributed to a lack of time as well as their developing adaptive expertise. Adaptive expertise relies on time for sense-making, and this time for sense-making is its own form of professional learning. It is an essential ingredient in the successful enactment of large-scale curriculum reform projects, and it is often overlooked and undervalued (Marangio & Heyting, 2023; Priestley et al., 2021). The provision of time and physical spaces was a vital component of shared understanding and evaluation of curriculum making practice, especially when grappling with the enactment of new content.

Curriculum making for out-of-field teachers

Teacher shortages are increasing (Mockler, 2024) and this is more complex in areas that are hard-to-staff. Consequently, teaching out-of-field is a growing phenomenon that sees teachers assigned to teach subjects for which they are not qualified and

have inadequate training (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021; Mockler, 2024). Joanna (mid ICSEA, EXT) provided an interesting representation of the site-specific complexities of this broader material-economic situation. Budget cuts, limited access to time, and an inappropriate physical space for curriculum making were already impacting her programming. The complexity of the curriculum making workload increased because of the need to program for out-of-field teachers. She was unable to use the sample materials provided by the NSW Department of Education (DoE) because the programs needed to be “lesson by lesson, resource by resource”. It is often the experienced teachers who are tasked with programming with/for out-of-field teachers and then teaching them how to teach subject-specific content, such as the “analysis of texts” and “writing analytical responses”. This situation speaks to the lack of specialist expertise and experience faced by out-of-field teachers (Mockler, 2024), which is often compounded by site-specific factors (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021).

The increase in out-of-field teachers becomes more problematic in periods of curriculum reform where all teachers, even the most experienced, are learning and refining their curriculum making and pedagogical practice. The experienced teachers described the “daunting” nature of learning content that they would then need to lead with their teams and teach to their out-of-field colleagues. Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024) captured the workload and significant challenges of these situations, “coming back and implementing the changes and writing programs with a staff ... who are not very knowledgeable. That was a major, major, challenge, and still is”. Hobbs and Porsch (2021) have highlighted that it is not just the out-of-field teachers who experience an increase in workload but also their colleagues and their leaders.

In small and remote secondary schools, it is not always possible to allocate qualified teachers to all of “classes needed”, and in these instances, the teacher’s timetable and workload becomes reflective of what individual teachers are *capable of* and *willing* to teach as opposed to what they are *qualified* and *experienced* to teach (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021, p. 601). Hobbs and Porsch (2021) captured the intellectual, moral and workload complexity of these types of situations and the problems when this is normalised as part of ‘what teachers do’. The ability to teach the specialised language of a subject is fundamental to teaching the subject itself, particularly in

secondary schooling (Moon, 2014). If the teacher does not possess this knowledge, it then needs to be provided by someone else, or poor teaching is likely to ensue and have a negative impact on students (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). This situation is complicated further because there is little training provided for the leaders who are supporting out-of-field teachers and their enactment of curriculum (Hobbs & Porsch, 2021). This means that many teachers are working excessive hours trying to support their colleagues or trying to upskill themselves. This was a situation echoed by several participants and suggests that teaching out-of-field poses a challenge to the profession and the integrity of a subject.

Using resources and structures

Wells and Moon (2021) highlight that sample teaching and learning materials created by external agencies can extend a teacher's content repertoire and instructional strategies, help a teacher to translate a new curriculum, save time, and potentially plug knowledge or skill gaps faced by teachers. Harris and Hoffer (2011) suggest that sample materials often provide suggested structures and planning routines that may afford teachers more time and space to respond to their classrooms' situated and contextualised nature. This research aligns with the participants' descriptions of the ways they were using the sample materials they accessed. Penny (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) provided an interesting representation of the connection between collective intellectual input and her enhanced ability to differentiate for her students. She explained:

if you are needing to differentiate lessons, you have more time to do that rather than creating all the resources for your lesson, and then having differentiation as an afterthought. When colleagues are creating that base level of resources you can then work out the extension and the support work that may be supplementary. Or the way in which activities could be re-envisioned for your class environment.

While Penny is referring to the materials developed by her faculty colleagues, many participants shared similar sentiments about the support materials and professional learning provided by NESAs, the DoE's English curriculum team (English CT) and the English Teachers Association.

The participants described several key enabling features associated with the material-economic resources released by the DoE English CT. They included the Phases approach to conceptual programming, the conceptual programming

questions, the core formative tasks, and the planning documents that were provided on the public-facing Planning, programming and assessing English 7–10 webpage (NSW Department of Education, 2023b). Participants described their use of these resources in their '*doings*' of curriculum making. The resources were informing and shaping collaborative dialogues and the design of programming and assessment practices. These material-economic resources operated in a dialectical way reflecting the two-way dynamic between the institutions informing curriculum reform and those enacting changes in a local context (Priestley et al., 2021).

Engaging with the supports provided by the DoE English CT were described as a generative process by many. Despite the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' curriculum making context of curriculum reform, participants enjoyed the intellectual and professional learning experiences associated with exploring the new curriculum materials. As models, they enabled individual teachers and faculties to see a translation and interpretation of curriculum policy and suggestions for the ways this could be transformed into day-to-day, classroom-specific learning experiences for students. The participants' reflections highlighted that the materials require teachers to have both confidence and competence in their subject and engaging with the samples requires "intellectual effort". Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) captured the significance of this situation when contrasting the sample materials released previously and those supporting curriculum reform, "there's an enormous amount of expertise in those units, like huge high-quality resources ... it's a learning experience and to learn these new ways of doing things". Jane (low ICSEA, EXT) spoke to the benefits of the alignment between the sample materials and the online professional learning provided by the department. The English CT helped teachers understand the "intention" behind the content. Kayla and Amanda both found the alignment between professional learning and supporting materials comforting and a useful resource. This informed the critical lens through which they used their adaptive expertise to engage in the creative and intellectual work involved in refining the sample materials for their context (Timperley & Twyford, 2022).

The potential for influence through sample materials is significant (Wells & Moon, 2021) and it is important their provision does not reproduce problematic

notions such as lack of fidelity of implementation (Ball et al., 2012; Priestley et al., 2021). Some literature suggests that curated resources can detract from the 'thinking work' of curriculum making (Cairns et al., 2024). However, this may depend on the content in the samples, who is producing the resources and the motivations behind such a process (Mockler & Stacey, 2024). English teachers have long valued the sample and support materials provided by trusted organisations such as professional associations, and curriculum networks that support collaboration and sharing with colleagues. They site these as being a mediating defence against the speed and relentlessness of centralised curriculum change (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019; Manuel, 2002; Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2005, 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). This study continued this tradition, while also raising the profile of the material-economic resources provided by other institutions such as the NSW Department of Education's ECT. Participants described deeply personal 'thinking work' as associated with actively engaging in the curriculum making process by experimenting, evaluating and refining their approaches in response to their students.

In some instances, using sample curriculum materials was considered its own type of risk-taking as it forced teachers out of their comfort zones. This was captured by Kayla and her description of the challenges her team faced when they were required to teach new programs and new texts:

They would've kept all their text choices that they've always taught for 10,000 years and the ones they love ...and what we might've got ... [was] upside-down retrofitting. I'm not entirely sure. I know text is a popular aspect, but I'm not entirely sure it's the most salient element of the discussion.

For English teachers, curriculum making is a key part of their creative and intellectual work and it can be supported by institutional material-economic arrangements. However, this must be fully resourced, changes such as NESA's move away from printed syllabus materials to a digital curriculum must be easy to access and navigate. These types of significant changes must be designed and resourced in such a way as to enable and support teachers' intellectual and pedagogical creativity. The institutional support provided is in its early stages in the broader scheme of NSW curriculum reform. The level of support was identified as unprecedented and at times a little overwhelming because of the quantity of content to navigate. This may also reflect a broader proliferation of online curriculum

resources (Cairns et al., 2024). It was also evident through the teachers' descriptions of their *'doings'*, and the connections they made to school or sector policy, that these resources were developed within the context of reform with the goal of whole-system improvement (NSW Government, 2020). This type of system-level change is a very difficult task (Gouédard et al., 2020).

We may be witnessing an interesting dichotomy in the curriculum making space. Increased agency on the one hand as teachers are able and supported to select texts, curriculum and pedagogy that reflects their “educational milieu ... [and] can affect and influence school life” (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Brown et al., 2021, p. 278). English teachers as a collective continue to demonstrate their willingness and eagerness to help each other and support their colleagues so they can become stronger as a collective. This is despite other challenges they are facing such as unmanageable workloads, complexities associated with teacher shortages and insufficient time and physical space to engage in curriculum making. Effective leadership, at all sites of curriculum making, is pivotal to enabling teachers to maximise the benefits of the curriculum for their students (Priestley et al., 2021). This includes ensuring that all teachers have access to adequate time and resources to assist their sense-making and their curriculum making.

The social-political arrangements of English teachers' curriculum making

The social-political arrangements are the resources that prefigure and shape how people relate and connect to people and objects in social relationships and make possible the *'relatings'* in a practice (Gibbs & Cooke, 2023; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). They are realised as we encounter one another as social and political beings in social spaces through the “medium of *power* and *solidarity*” (Kemmis et al., 2014b, p. 32). For the teachers in this study, the social-political dimension of their practice encompassed their relationships with their colleagues (in their schools and across networks), their position in their school, their relationship with their students and their broader position as teachers within a complex education system.

The relational task of English teaching was described most frequently through reflections on the faculty and classroom level interactions. The dialogues and

discourses that were taking place in each faculty and classroom were shaping and being shaped by relationships between teachers and their students. As was established in Chapter Four, the teacher's relationships with their students and their colleagues were a key driver of their curriculum making practice and their desire to continue evaluating, refining and improving their practice. This learning and development process is recognised as a social endeavour (Moon, 2014) and brought to life in the learning environments as the curriculum is enacted with students.

The 'relatings' of the English teachers

Participants connected the importance of relational trust to trust-based professionalism. Most teachers felt supported and empowered to experiment while making student-centred decisions. This was supported through the provision of relational structures such as dedicated faculty meetings or curriculum collaboration time. Mutual recognition and agency were key features of the cultures of trust described by the participants. Participants also considered their trust in their colleagues and their curriculum making as a central feature of a high-functioning collaborative culture.

Faculty structures that provided time and space for intellectual creativity were essential enablers of effective collaboration. This also helped create environments of trust and solidarity. This environment guided interpretation and collective use of the syllabus as the teams designed and experimented in their curriculum making. In some cases, adaptive agency was critical and considered emancipatory as it helped the teachers, and their colleagues, respond to site-specific social-political challenges. When trust was absent or had been eroded, curriculum making practice was negatively impacted. Teams became fractured, lacked cohesion and this impacted teacher agency. The negative consequences of such social-political arrangements are significant and contribute to stress, insecurity and many teachers leaving the profession (Alford et al., 2022; Goodwyn, 2019; Gordon et al., 2023).

The importance of trust and collaboration

Empowering teachers and ensuring they engage in the decision-making processes that impact on their classroom practice is vital (Manuel & Carter, 2016). Trust, effective collaboration and collective action are all signs of strong social connections,

which can help create effective networks in schools (Fullan, 2021). The teachers in this study were being initiated or conducting the initiation into the collective practice of curriculum making in their contexts. Faculty cultures that valued collective intellectual creativity were essential enablers of effective curriculum making. Leaders were the conduits who created time and space for ongoing learning and collaborative practice. The benefits of trust were psychological and intellectual, and Penny's (very high ICSEA, first-year ECT) reflections provide an interesting example of the hierarchical nature of this trust. She described trust coming from the "the school", the "head of faculty" and across and between colleagues. This created a type of intellectual "freedom" to design programs and select texts that may be "a little bit left of centre". This appeared to be a psychologically safe space for experimentation as was shown through the references to the risk-taking, the work described as "fun" and the dedicated focus on supporting students to think "deeply and creatively". These layers of trust were vital to effective collaboration at the school, faculty and network level.

Effective relational structures such as processes for engaging in collaborative professional learning and clearly established roles and responsibilities enabled teams to develop professionally and supported critical and personal reflection. This was particularly important when engaging in collaborative sense-making, experimenting with enactment and addressing gaps in the teachers' knowledge and/or skills. Andrea's reflections (very low ICSEA, second-year ECT) on her head teacher and the dedication to supporting the '*relatings*' of her team provided a symbolic example. The norms of collaborative curriculum making meant that everyone engaged in programming and shared sense-making while developing resources. This had profound benefits, "the conversations I'm having ... in the staff room about teaching and learning, because we're developing all these new ... resources. This is amazing". This was pivotal for Andrea and others who felt "supported", were amazed at their professional "growth" and "knowledge and understanding" because of their colleague's willingness to share and collaborate. Heads of faculty were identified as essential conduits for trust and collaboration. They needed to use their positions within their schools' power structures to secure the enabling arrangements such as material-economic time and space, which enabled the teachers to connect and build affiliations. This was, however, grounded

in clear roles and responsibilities across the teams which fostered largely harmonious professional relationships. In turn, this enhanced collaborative curriculum making practice.

School and faculty structures that were centred on trust enabled teachers and faculty leaders to act with adaptive agency. This reflects Goodwyn's (2019) perspective that English teachers are able to use adaptive agency even in the face of emotional strains and intellectual tensions (2019). This was particularly important as the participants navigated the complexities created by the teacher shortage. The teachers were actively committed to their teams and to their students despite contextual challenges. Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) is an interesting example of this dichotomy. She described the broader teacher shortage as "bleeding out all over the place in terms of staffing" then juxtaposed this with the sense of empowerment she experienced due to the "joyful" solidarity created through the collaboration with the Head Teacher Teaching and Learning. This "anchoring resource" provided a type of "embedded instructional leadership" that fuelled the collective power of "parallel leadership". This reflects the broader solidarity the English teachers felt for and with many of their colleagues, especially fellow middle leaders who may have the same leadership struggles.

The participants' stories also highlighted the need to support middle leaders as a collective. They need support to engage in collaborative sense-making and reflection (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020). This type of effective collaborative professionalism needs:

specific designs, protocols, structures, and processes to guide conversations so that peers can improve their practice without jeopardizing existing relationships. It needs solid expertise about curriculum, teaching, and learning, too (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018, p. 21).

When collaboration between leaders took place, they felt supported, reinvigorated and proud of what they had achieved. Kayla (very low ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed English Head Teacher) described the pride she felt about the materials created, and she believed this was enabled by "embedded instructional leadership" established through her school's organisational structures. This is an interesting example of effective collaboration and a type of mentoring that enhanced leading from the middle. This was enabled by the principal and the curriculum reform roles

and responsibilities they allocated to non-key learning area middle leaders, such as the Head Teacher Teaching and Learning. As middle leaders, Kayla and her colleague were developing their teams and each other. This was occurring as they were undertaking improvement and innovation (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020) in a relationship of solidarity and trust. Simone (mid ICSEA, EXT and newly appointed Head of Department, English in 2024), however, made an interesting contrast to Kayla. She desperately wanted consistent collaboration and a critical friend to help her reflect and evaluate her practice. She sought these experiences externally through network events including the English Teachers Association annual conferences. This highlights the importance of providing middle leaders an opportunity to collaborate. Collaboration with other leaders provides a type of personal gratitude and inspiration, and it can enhance enjoyment, job satisfaction, personal success, and feelings of value toward the subject of English and colleagues (Goodwyn, 2019; Manuel & Carter, 2016).

The social-political landscape of text selection

Text selection in English reflects a complex social-political landscape that often champions voices and perspectives from the 'canon' (usually English or American) while sidelining the perspectives and experiences of others, including Indigenous peoples (Thomson, 2024). There is an ongoing reticence about teaching the works of Australian creatives and this can create complications for students when they are encouraged to respond personally to texts (Jones & Dowsett, 2023; Scarcella & Burgess, 2019; Thomson, 2024; Truman et al., 2022). Text selection can have a significant impact on students' affective positioning and all students' understanding of history and the world in which we live (Thomson, 2024). The change in the *English K–10 Syllabus* text requirements to explore texts “by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples” as opposed to texts that give “insight into Aboriginal experiences” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2019, p. 24; 2022c) is a significant social-political enabler. The word “by” may be a response by NESA to the evidence that:

the inclusion of Aboriginal experiences, cultures and perspectives is tenuous. ... the curriculum tends to include Aboriginal experiences, cultures and perspectives in a way that places low cognitive demand on the students, producing content which is tokenistic and devoid of critical reception (Scarcella & Burgess, 2019).

The participants' descriptions of interactions with students when exploring texts 'by' Aboriginal composers reflected communities of solidarity, pride and connection. The teachers' '*relatings*' with students as they explored these texts were positive and resulted in increased engagement, an improvement in the quality of student work and an increase in assessment submissions. The teacher's emphasis on celebrating culture and making local connections may have helped them avoid teaching texts with tokenism that often reinforces negative stereotypes (Scarcella & Burgess, 2019).

The participants' descriptions of the selected texts reflected a clear value for diversity and their students were responding positively to many of these texts. This may signify a move away from "maintaining the dominance of white, canonical, hetero-masculine literary works" and a 'parochial canon' (Jones & Dowsett, 2023, p. 247; Manuel, 2002; Truman et al., 2022). However, enacting changes in text requirements is enabled and constrained by other practice arrangements. Teachers must have the social-political understanding of their local area and material-economic support to access and resource the use of new texts. The way the participants embraced the text requirements may be a positive sign of a changing social-political practice landscape. This may, however, differ from the experiences of the broader English teaching population based on the literature around text selection in NSW schools. Several studies highlight that there has been ongoing anxiety for non-Indigenous teachers and their confidence and willingness to teach Indigenous texts (Scarcella & Burgess, 2019), and the selection of single texts across stages to meet requirements may not lead to the desired changes (Truman et al., 2022).

The research participants demonstrated the relational nature of English teaching and the fundamental connection between curriculum making practices and the human beings impacted by this practice. The relationships between teachers, their students and the broader community were impacting the content selected and the pedagogical practices being brought to life in the learning environments as the syllabus was enacted. At the heart of each English teacher's perspectives and experiences was the desire to provide engaging and supportive learning environments for their students, especially the type that would help students see the value of the subject beyond school life.

Conclusion

This chapter has represented the enabling and constraining cultural-discursive (the language of the syllabus), material-economic (time and resources) and social-political (trust and collaboration) arrangements impacting the eight participants and their curriculum making practices. This curriculum making was taking place during the first year of syllabus enactment in a broader context of curriculum reform. The scholarly and intellectual work of curriculum making was bundled together in the project of curriculum enactment. This discussion highlighted that curriculum making is most effective when supported by adequate time and resources that enable this practice to be a cooperative human activity. Teachers must be able to grow and learn, and address knowledge and skill gaps through solidarity and support as individuals and with their colleagues. When this is enabled by sufficient support in the practice landscape, especially when practice traditions need to be refined, the teachers' dispositions reflect perspectives of hope, excitement and optimism. In the final chapter, I draw conclusions based on the teachers' experiences and perspectives, discuss implications from this study and offer recommendations for future research.

Chapter six – conclusion

In this thesis, I report on an investigation into the perspectives and experiences of secondary English teachers as they engaged in curriculum making in the context of curriculum reform. The participants shared their personal opinions of the *English K–10 Syllabus* and stories of curriculum enactment. They described the arrangements that informed, enhanced and at times limited or constrained their sense-making and curriculum making practices as they engaged in this rich intellectual project. In this chapter I provide further insight into the understandings developed from the participants and the perspectives and experiences they shared. I begin by revisiting the aims of the research and the context in which it occurred. This frames the connection to the role played by the theory of practice architectures (TPA) (Kemmis, 2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; Mahon et al., 2017). I conclude by revisiting the research questions to summarise the overall findings, outline the implications and suggest possible future research in relation to English teachers' curriculum making during periods of curriculum reform.

Revisiting the aims of the research

The primary aim of this small-scale qualitative study was to investigate the conditions enabling and constraining secondary English teachers' curriculum making as they enacted the *English K–10 Syllabus* for the first time as part of the 'once in a generation' NSW curriculum reform (The Educator, 2023). It was motivated by a personal desire to understand what English teachers thought about their practice and how they understood and responded to complex change that would likely be further complicated by the current challenges facing teachers, as described in detail in Chapter Two. Taking an interpretivist approach, the research provided a point-in-time snapshot and an opportunity to record and represent the participants' experiences, and illustrate the relationships, resources and broader structures informing and shaping their practice in site-specific contexts.

Through my exploration of the stories and lived experiences of three early career teachers, two experienced teachers and three experienced teachers who were also faculty leaders, I deepened my understanding of the interconnection and interdependence of curriculum making and pedagogical practices. This group of English teachers demonstrated complex webs of connection and interconnection

across practice landscapes that were influenced by and influenced practice traditions.

Framing the discussion through the research questions

I return to the research questions to frame the conclusions drawn from the analysis and the findings. This supports broader consideration of the way this research has contributed to our understanding of what enables and constrains teachers' curriculum making practices during a period of curriculum reform. As established in Chapter Three, one central overarching question was supported by three contributing questions:

What factors have enabled and constrained the curriculum making practices of NSW high school English teachers as they plan and program for the enactment of the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022b)?

- What are high school English teachers' perspectives on the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?
- What support do high school English teachers require during curriculum reform?
- How do high school English teachers design teaching and learning programs in response to the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus*?

I present the conclusions in this section by beginning with a response to my overarching question and integrating the contributing questions where appropriate. The findings highlight a greater dominance in discussions focusing on the enabling conditions that guided and enhanced curriculum making as alternatives and processes for mediating or addressing those that constrained this practice. This highlights the significance of Goodwyn's (2019) research as he proposed that English teachers exhibit adaptive agency that enables them to find ways to thrive despite, and sometimes in spite of, constraining times. This was a vital resource for the English teachers as they navigated and mediated each site's enabling and constraining arrangements.

This study demonstrates that teachers' experiences with curriculum making is both site-specific and interconnected across educational sites. Their curriculum making practice reflects a push and pull of enabling and constraining conditions and arrangements that shape, mediate and inform their practices and experiences. The research suggests that time and space (both physical and cognitive) work as

significant enablers of teachers' curriculum work, and the teachers within this study reported that these in turn were supported by school and faculty structures that enabled teachers to work both individually and collaboratively. When teachers were provided access to resources and professional learning, reflective of their areas of need, they felt more confident and competent to cater to their students' needs as they enacted the curriculum. This may require significant and targeted financial investment.

Knowledge and understanding of the syllabus

Subject matter expertise shows itself through an interplay of curriculum and pedagogy as teachers engage in curriculum making and design content and pedagogical structures for their students. Individual teachers are pivotal to enacting a new syllabus and their confidence and competence in its use directly impacts their students' learning experiences. How the English teachers felt about the syllabus and their understanding and ability to use it directly impacted their construction of student-centred learning materials.

All participants appreciated the refined and decluttered nature of the outcomes and content. They felt it was easier to understand and use. They valued the presence of the textual concepts, and this informed their programming and assessment practices. In large part, they appreciated the interconnections between the syllabus and other resources such as examples and the tagging to the National Literacy Learning progressions (NLLP). As was suggested in Loudon and Rohl's (2006) study, these secondary teachers valued the refined place of specific literacy teaching knowledge, and expressed their desire to be more prepared to teach language and literacy. They also expressed their eagerness to experiment in their curriculum making in response to the new syllabus.

Despite this optimism and excitement, the participants described increases in workload associated with the reform. They identified the cognitive load associated with exploring new texts, albeit also connected to excitement. Most participants also spoke to the looming presence of the curriculum making associated with the reformed Stage 6 English syllabuses. This push and pull of excitement and feelings of stress or worry reflect the existing field of research. Many studies highlight that English teachers are experiencing change fatigue and innovation overload (English

Teachers' Association NSW, 2022; Manuel et al., 2018; O'Sullivan, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021; Stacey et al., 2022).

This informed my answer to the first contributing research question, “What are high school English teachers’ perspectives on the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus?*”. While the participants were using the language of many parts of syllabus, they were relying on the language of the ‘textual concepts’. This is a reflection of the ongoing impact of the text *English Textual Concepts and Learning Processes – Early Stage 1 to Stage 6* (ECT) (English Teachers Association NSW & NSW Department of Education, 2017). This suggests that this knowledge structure was considered appropriate and suitable in the context of English teaching in the twenty-first century. However, it does create an interesting representation of the ongoing value of the English textual concepts resource and the difficulty in shifting thinking and language to that of a syllabus change when there is existing familiarity and confidence. This persisting nomenclature may speak to the potential impact of sample materials and the way they can shape and re-shape curriculum thinking and practice (Wells & Moon, 2021).

The need to support students in developing their understanding of textuality and its associated conceptual knowledge was considered an exciting and engaging opportunity. The majority of the participants’ students responded positively. However, as Macken-Horarik et al. (2019) highlighted, developing confidence and competence in this area needs extensive resourcing and professional learning support. The NSW Department of Education’s (DoE) sample materials and professional learning were identified as one such support highlighting the role that ‘top-down’ curriculum reform structures can play in supporting ‘bottom-up’ adaptive expertise. These supporting materials may have been embraced because they did not present a technical solution to a complex problem (Timperley & Twyford, 2022). While this study provides an insight into this area, further research is required especially in understanding what ‘good’ support looks like for teachers as they design teaching and learning programs through the textual concepts (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). This is particularly important given the central role that this knowledge structure takes in the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c).

With this new syllabus also came the need to develop new knowledge and skills, particularly in relation to general pedagogical literacy, and discipline-based pedagogical literacy. This was an area of concern for all the participants, and they identified knowledge and skill gaps. They needed and desired further and ongoing support to address this issue. It is important to note that the participant's confidence varied, with some feeling confident in both areas but needing support to help others. The situation was most dire for those supporting out-of-field teachers. This was more difficult due to poor confidence or competence with the syllabus and their general and discipline-based pedagogical literacy. Unfortunately, teacher shortages are increasing (McPherson et al., 2024; Mills et al., 2024; Weldon, 2018) in turn creating an increase in out-of-field teachers. Many teachers do not feel equipped to address both language and literacy and this problem is difficult to address, as is reflected in many studies (Cremin & Oliver, 2017; Harper & Rennie, 2009; Loudon & Rohl, 2006; Moon, 2014; Stephenson, 2018). The impact of the refined focus on language and literacy would also benefit from further research.

The final enabling and constraining element associated with knowledge and understanding of the syllabus was the digital nature of the curriculum. The NSW Education Authority's (NESA) introduced a digital curriculum as part of their support for NSW curriculum reform. Participants identified that this caused them some challenges and that they felt it had been released without significant support. The research landscape is rich and demonstrates the extensive resources needed to enhance the digital capacities of all teachers (Ageel Mutlaq Alswilem, 2019; Albuloushi, 2019; Alford et al., 2022; Dindar et al., 2021; Harris & Hofer, 2011; Kajder, 2005; Ranellucci et al., 2020). It is highly unlikely that these teachers will be the only ones who are having difficulty. It would be valuable to understand how teachers are navigating and responding to this complex change.

Resources and support to enable student-centred curriculum making

The curriculum making practice of the English teachers were enabled by leaders, school cultures and networks that provided access to adequate resourcing and professional learning. This supported and guided student-centred curriculum making. This is not a surprise and is already supported by extensive research (Barton et al., 2014; Biesta, 2015; Fullan, 2001; Gannon, 2012; Hargreaves et al., 2009; Kemmis,

2019; Kemmis et al., 2014b; O'Sullivan et al., 2008; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020; Priestley, 2011a; Priestley et al., 2021). However, this study reiterated the need for teachers to have ongoing and systematic support through professional learning and resourcing. This helps expand and refine the teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. This is a vital part of site-specific curriculum making practice.

My answer to the second contributing research question, "What support do high school English teachers require during curriculum reform?", was directly informed by the teacher's identification of specific resources and support structures. While the technical form of the syllabus has ramifications for the teachers' practice (Alford et al., 2022), most of the participants were able to mitigate some of these challenges because of the time and space their leaders provided for collaborative sense-making. The provision of time (both material and cognitive) enabled teachers to collaborate during curriculum making. This was an essential ingredient for generating shared understanding and helped develop consistency in interpreting new content. Without this, teachers felt isolated and worried they would 'misinterpret' or make 'errors' that could have been avoided.

Key constraining elements included the impact of the teacher shortage. This included the increases in workload associated with writing curriculum materials for out-of-field teachers. The limited supply of casual relief teachers seemed to reduce the time and space to collaboratively engage in professional learning and curriculum making. What is particularly interesting about the impact of the teacher shortage is the connection to social justice that was often at the heart of the teacher's curriculum making practices. This is an interesting insight in light of Mills et al.'s (2024) study that highlighted the potential impact of seeing education through a social justice lens as a way of addressing the growing teacher shortage. They identified that it may help build and enhance student-teacher relationships (Mills et al., 2024).

Many of the teachers were already navigating the complexities of unmanageable workloads (Jerrim & Sims, 2021; Manuel et al., 2018; Stacey et al., 2022) and expressed the desire for more time and resources to engage in collaborative evaluation and refinement of curriculum materials. Essential resources also included human resources. It was important that teams were comprised of

qualified English teachers. The growing crisis of recruitment and retention (Day, 2017; Mills et al., 2024) does not bode well for English teachers especially as they navigate the complex landscape of the Stage 6 components of NSW curriculum reform (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2023a). The impact of the teacher shortage on the enactment of the Stage 6 syllabuses would also benefit from further study. This space is complicated further by the pressures associated with the senior school high-stakes examinations.

Despite the challenges the teachers were facing, they did not indicate that they felt unprepared to enact the requirements of the curriculum. They did feel underprepared in some areas, but they did not appear to be engaging in strategic compliance. They were trying to genuinely, thoroughly and rigorously engage with the new curriculum and design materials that would engage and support their students. Several studies have highlighted that strategic compliance is often a consequence of feeling underprepared (Priestley, 2011a; Woods et al., 2011). The focus on authentic curriculum making, despite feeling underprepared at times, may once again be a sign of their adaptive agency. This does seem to imply that English teachers are steadfastly retaining autonomy and trying to take advantage of the fluidity and flexibility that characterises the subject of English. This is despite the contextual pressures they are facing, and this is reflected through the findings of several studies (Anson, 2016; Gannon, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2008; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020, p. 229; O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2021).

Structures and spaces for trust-based collaboration

Participants identified consistent types of structures, spaces and resources for collaboration to be effective and supportive of trust-based collaborative professionalism. These arrangements enabled English teachers to engage in collegial dialogue to share knowledge and resources, and this fostered trust-based professionalism. A valuable part of these structures was the provision of time (material and cognitive) and space for ongoing evaluation and refinement of curriculum materials. Effective collaboration reflected interconnected webs of solidarity and power. This occurred internally within a faculty and across English school and teacher networks. These collegial connections shaped how teachers acted, felt and responded to this complex change.

The participants stories did, however, highlight that education is still in many ways a solo experience. This is not surprising given that it has largely arisen from individualistic traditions (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020). While collaboration has increased, for it to be truly effective in transforming education for praxis-oriented action, it must be based on strong social intelligence that becomes part of the culture of schools and networks (Day, 2017). Hargreaves and O'Conner (2018) refer to this as collaborative professionalism. This was evident in the practice landscapes of several participants, and when it was absent, it had a destructive and isolating impact, which led to feelings of hopelessness and anger.

The emphasis and exploration of structures that supported effective collaboration directly informed my answer to my final contributing research question, "How do high school English teachers design teaching and learning programs in response to the Stage 4 and 5 components of the *English K–10 Syllabus?*". Participants described their curriculum making as a complex, intellectually stimulating, challenging and reinvigorating practice that involved bowerbird like tendencies to source, select, adapt and share curriculum materials. This was most intellectually rewarding when it took place collaboratively and teachers had the time to plan out their programs, lesson sequence by lesson sequence, developing a clear and detailed outline of the learner journey before they embarked on activity design. This was most effective when completed through shared frameworks such as templates or approaches to programming.

The mapping of the syllabus requirements was an interesting aspect of programming. It supported shared interpretation and sense-making while symbolising subject knowledge frameworks and accountability pressures. This may be a type of internalised response to accountability and performativity pressures (Datnow, 2011; Mockler, 2023b; Mockler & Stacey, 2021; Priestley et al., 2021; Sachs & Mockler, 2012). It would be useful to explore the impact of the requirements associated with mapping and monitoring syllabus requirements in this era of accountability and performativity. This is particularly interesting in a subject like English as it is the only compulsory course in NSW schools across K to 12. This means that this types of collaborative accountability impacts the time and intellectual space of the teachers who support every secondary student in the state.

Collaborative professionalism became strained when the materials developed by colleagues or produced by institutions did not align with the teachers' personal needs or expectations. This also became more complex when new texts were introduced. English teachers are often deeply attached to the texts they teach, and all English teachers are expected to address the text requirements. However, extensive support, collective exploration and resources need to be provided to support English teachers as they explore new texts. Without it, text selection is likely to continue entrenched practices and traditions (Manuel & Carter, 2016; McLean Davies et al., 2020; Scarcella & Burgess, 2019; Thomson, 2024).

This research suggests that confidence and competence in the use of a new syllabus is enabled by cultures of solidarity and trust, where ongoing access to and use of physical collaborative spaces and resources are structured, purposeful and personal. Environments of trust, respect and collaborative professionalism appear to enhance the intellectual rigour and quality of teachers' curriculum making practice. Environments that support experimentation, ongoing evaluation, and ongoing refinement also appear to foster teacher agency, which can enable teachers to feel more equipped to cater to student needs.

Limitations and recommendations

This study was not designed to be representative of a broader population or provide generalisable results. The nature of this study prevents a deeper understanding of the perspective to practice reality. Further study may shed light on whether the current climate is creating a conflict between teacher perspectives and their practice as it is experienced by their students. It is unclear whether, as several studies suggest, there may be contradictory consequences in terms of what is taught and learned (Fullan, 2021; Gilbert, 2010; Sahlberg, 2023).

While this study provides an insight into the type of support teachers may find useful as they engage in curriculum making during a period of curriculum reform, further research is required to understand what 'good' support looks like for teachers and their students. It would be interesting to see whether the approaches to professional learning described by the participants would be considered "professional learning as praxis development" (Mockler, 2024, p. 589) and how schools and institutions can refine and improve the professional learning support

they provided with and for teachers. This is particularly important in relation to the refined focus on language and literacy. It is unlikely that this group of teachers is the only one with difficulty developing and/or refining their general pedagogical literacy and/or discipline-based pedagogical literacy (Moon, 2014).

Understanding the role of the textual concepts as a knowledge structure in English is an area that would also benefit from further research (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). This is important for secondary English teachers as they are designing teaching and learning programs through a new knowledge framework (Macken-Horarik et al., 2019). However, it is important for all English teachers given the centrality of this knowledge structure across the *English K–10 Syllabus* (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022c).

The social-political landscape of curriculum reform is complex and the impact of the teacher shortage on the enactment of the remaining new syllabuses is likely to pose ongoing challenges for teachers and their schools. For secondary English teachers, enacting the new Stage 6 syllabuses, is complicated further by the pressures associated with the senior school high-stakes examinations. The digital curriculum also creates additional challenges. This is a significant and complex change that, by the end of NSW curriculum reform, will impact every teacher in NSW. Understanding the impact of the teacher shortage, the digital curriculum, and the pressures of high stakes testing on curriculum making and pedagogical practice, that is enacted during curriculum reform, also needs further research. Understanding how school leaders and teachers navigate and respond to this complex context could help inform and refine the macro, meso, micro and nano level responses to these changes and mitigate the impact of issues in future.

Concluding remarks

Exploring the perspectives and experiences of a diverse range of English teachers from across NSW revealed the interconnected nature of their curriculum making. This study draws on an ontologically oriented theory of practices that sees practice treated in relation to specific content and conduct, as it is taking place in a specific space and time. This practice is enabled, constrained and transformed by arrangements that are in and brought to the sites of practice (Mahon et al., 2017). The study's findings are represented as they were '*situated*' in a particular time and a

particular space unfolding in specific *'site ontologies'*. The study was designed to capture the experiences of a few English teachers and to shed light on the arrangements that were enabling and constraining curriculum making practice during the complex phenomenon of curriculum reform. Exploring the enactment of the English 7–10 outcomes as part of the complex context of the 'once in a generation' NSW curriculum reform provided a unique opportunity to understand curriculum and pedagogical practice in a volatile period.

This study is an important account of human experience and will contribute to a growing body of literature about site-specific arrangements that support teachers as they respond to change (Brown et al., 2021; Diamond & Bulfin, 2021; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). It also informs the ongoing debate about the contextual nature of policy implementation. The results suggest evidence of a paradigm shift where some of the negative impacts of 'top-down' education reform (Ball, 2015a; Ball et al., 2012; Hargreaves et al., 2009) may be mediated through a growing trend toward autonomy-centred approaches where some of the ideal flexibility for enactment is supported by necessary structures and system-wide resources for teachers (Fullan, 2021; Gouëdard et al., 2020). However, while this positive shift is glimpsed across the participants' stories, the resources to support this change are still lacking. Schools and education systems need to invest more extensively in the structures and resources present at each site to enable praxis-oriented curriculum making (Mockler & Stacey, 2024). English teachers, and their colleagues, are experiencing an interesting and challenging dichotomy. They feel supported in ways they have never experienced before while simultaneously remaining reliant upon their adaptive agency to navigate the complexities of site and institutional arrangements.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – HREC Ethics Approval



RESEARCH INTEGRITY
& ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

The University of Sydney confirms that this project meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Project identifier:	2024/HE000609
Project title:	Curriculum making in high school English : teacher perspectives and practice in a time of curriculum reform
Application version:	1.01
Chief Investigator:	Professor Nicole Mockler
Project team:	Dr Debbie Brosseuk Mrs Jacqueline McWilliam
Project start date:	19 Aug 2024
Project end date:	18 Aug 2028
Date of issue:	Friday, 30 August, 2024

Note:

- Proviso 1 is missing, please update the project name in the title of PCF.
- Please include a version number and date in the footer of all public documents and revise these each time changes are made to the documents.

Project summary

This small-scale qualitative study will explore the perspectives and experiences of six secondary English teachers in NSW, Australia, as they teach the English K–10 syllabus for the first time. Semi-structured interviews, conducted via Zoom, and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) will enable 'thick description' (Geertz, 2010) of the practice architectures that enable and constrain English teachers' curriculum making practices (Mahon et al., 2017) as they enact the NSW state government's curriculum reform agenda (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022b; NSW Government, 2020).

Summary of amendments

Approval letter requested three minor changes: a sentence has been modified in the project description and the participant consent form about the future use of data; the participant information statement, advertisements, participant consent form and project description all include the HREC project identifier and the approval date; the project description and recruitment survey include a welcome statement.

Documents approved

Document type	File name	Document version	Application version
Interview or focus group plan	Interview Schedule.docx	1	0.02
Participant Consent Form (PCF)	attachment-4-participant-consent-form-j-mcwilliam-27-05-24.docx	1	0.01
Participant Information Statement (PIS)	attachment-3-participant-information-statement-j-mcwilliam-27-05-24.docx	1	0.01

Participant Information Statement (PIS)	Tracked-changes-2024HE000609-v-0-2-attachment-3-participant-information-statement.docx	1	1.01
Project description / Protocol	tracked-changes-2024HE000609-v-0-2-project-description-J-McWilliam.docx	1	1.01
Application Attachment	project-description-J-McWilliam-27-05-24.docx	1	0.01
Survey or questionnaire	Recruitment Survey.docx	1	0.02
Recruitment or advertising material	attachment-1-advertisement-1-j-mcwilliam-27-05-24.docx	1	0.01
Recruitment or advertising material	attachment-2-advertisement-2-j-mcwilliam-27-05-24.docx	1	0.01
Recruitment or advertising material	tracked-changes-2024HE000609-v-0-2-attachment-2-teachers-association-advertisement-2.docx	1	1.01
Recruitment or advertising material	tracked-changes-2024HE000609-v-0-2-attachment-1-social-media-advertisement-1.docx	1	1.01

Conditions of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted on or before the anniversary of approval and a final report 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.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
- Researchers working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training, and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to the project team must be reported and approved.
- Researchers must disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Research data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with 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.
- If your research project is a clinical trial and is being sponsored by the University or is to be conducted on a University of Sydney site, you must comply with additional University governance requirements prior to commencing your Clinical Trial.
- The University 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.

Ethics Committee Representative

Chair

On behalf of the University of Sydney

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (NHMRC). All personnel named on the project should be acquainted with these documents.

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Research Portfolio
Level 3, Michael Spence Building (F23)
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

T +61 2 9036 9161
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ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00026A

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Statement



Participant Information Statement

Research study: Curriculum making in high school English : teacher perspectives and practice in a time of curriculum reform

- Professor Nicole Mockler, Chief investigator, Professor of Education, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9351 3793
- Dr Deb Brosseuk, Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, debbie.brosseuk@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9114 2199
- Jacquie McWilliam (jmcw9444@uni.sydney.edu.au) is conducting this study as a basis for a Master of Education (Research) at the University of Sydney.

1. What is this study about?

We are conducting a research study about the perspectives and experiences of high school English teachers in New South Wales, Australia, as they teach the English K–10 (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022) syllabus for the first time in 2024. Taking part in this study is voluntary.

Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

2. Who is running this study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Ms Jacquie McWilliam is conducting this study as a basis for a Master of Education (Research) at the University of Sydney, under the supervision of:
 - Professor Nicole Mockler, Chief investigator, Professor of Education, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9351 3793; and
 - Dr Deb Brosseuk, Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, debbie.brosseuk@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9114 2199

3. Who can take part in the study?

We are seeking six secondary English teachers in NSW, Australia, as they teach the *English K–10* syllabus for the first time. Participants will be from two distinct career stages. Three early career teachers in their first three years and three teachers with more than five years teaching experience. Essential inclusion criteria: (a) qualified to teach high school English and (b) teaching English 7-10 at the point of recruitment.

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are currently teaching the *English K–10* syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022) and you will be able to share your perspectives and experiences of: the NSW curriculum reform the *English K–10* syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022); the impact of the syllabus on your curriculum making

practice; and the support and/or resources you have used during the NSW curriculum reform.

4. What will the study involve for me?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one 60 to 90 minute semi-structured interview where you will be asked questions about your perspectives and experiences of: the NSW curriculum reform; the English K–10 syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022); the impact of the syllabus on your practice; and the support or resources provided during the NSW curriculum reform. If you take part in an interview you may decline to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. The interview will take place in Term 2 or Term 3, 2024. Interviews will take place outside school hours and at a time negotiated between you as a participant and the researcher. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed using the university-supported platform Zoom. Interview data will be housed and analysed using university supported platforms. You will be provided the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and provide feedback. Data will be reported through pseudonyms and data will be deidentified at the conclusion of the study.

5. Can I withdraw once I have started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part.

Your decision will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at The University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind, you can withdraw by emailing the lead researcher prior to the report on the study being finalised.

If you take part in an interview you may refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

If you choose to withdraw, we will stop collecting information from you. If you don't want the information already collected to be in the study results, please tell us at the time you withdraw.

6. Are there any risks or costs?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with participating in this study.

Elements of this research will include reflexive accounts. The student researcher has a personal connection and understanding of the sites of curriculum making activity that operate within the NSW Department of Education. She has taught and supervised English curriculum in NSW Department of Education high schools for 16 years. She is currently acting in a leadership capacity for Curriculum Secondary Learners, Curriculum and Reform

Directorate within the NSW Department of Education as the English Coordinator 7-12. She is conscious of her role as the participants' colleague who has experienced and will be experiencing this curriculum reform at the same time as participants.

7. Are there any benefits?

You won't get anything for taking part, but you will be helping us to do our study, which aims to contribute to long-term improvements in the experiences of teachers and students in NSW.

8. What will happen to information that is collected?

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting information from or about you for the purposes of this study.

Any identifiable information you provide us will be stored securely and will only be disclosed with your permission unless we are required by law to release information.

We plan to publish the study findings. You will not be individually identifiable in these publications.

The following data will be collected:

- general demographic data will be collected during recruitment
- interviews responses will be recorded, transcribed.

The data collected will be used for: the identification of schools and participants, analysis purposes, and in publications and presentations.

We will use Zoom to transcribe interviews. This will involve sharing your information with Zoom. We will not share this information with anyone else without your consent unless we are required to do so by law. We will store this information and dispose of it securely following our **Recordkeeping Policy 2017**. Zoom is owned by Zoom Video Communications, inc. and is located in San Jose, California, US. For more information about how your information will be handled, please see the University's **privacy webpage**.

Data will be analysed using the university support Office 365 suite of tools and stored on the university supported OneDrive app. The data must be stored for a minimum of 5 years and after the research is published the data will be archived. The data will be de-identified and archived, remaining on the university supported platform.

9. Will I be told the results of the study?

You have the right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You will be provided with the opportunity to review your interview transcript and make corrections and adjustments to preserve anonymity and ensure completeness and accuracy. You will be provided a lay summary of thesis and a link to the published thesis at the conclusion of the study.

10. What if I would like more information?

When you have read this information, the following researcher(s) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have:

- Jacquie McWilliam jmcw9444@uni.sydney.edu.au) is conducting this study as a basis for a Master of Education (Research) at the University of Sydney.
- Professor Nicole Mockler, Chief investigator, Professor of Education, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, nicole.mockler@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9351 3793
- Dr Deb Brosseuk, Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, debbie.brosseuk@sydney.edu.au, +61 2 9114 2199

11. What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Sydney ethics reference: 2024/HE000609 according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

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:

Human Ethics Manager
human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
+61 2 8627 8176

This information sheet is for you to keep

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule



Interview Schedule

Interview questions

1. Thank you for joining today, please start by telling me a little about yourself and your experiences and background as an English teacher.
2. Can we start by talking about your perspectives toward the new *English K–10 Syllabus*? What are you finding rewarding and/or challenging about the new syllabus and why?

Possible supplementary questions

- What shifts do you see from the 2012 syllabus to the 2022 syllabus?
- What do you like/dislike about the new English 7-10 syllabus components and why?
- How has it impacted your perspective toward subject English?

Interview question

3. Please share with me an overview of your experiences of the curriculum reform journey so far, feel free to explore anything that comes to mind since the release of the syllabus at the end of 2022? How well do you feel supported in the process of change, and can you explain why?

Possible supplementary questions

- How do you feel about the way you have engaged with and enacted the syllabus so far, what strategies have helped or hindered you?
- What is your role in making decisions about accessing resources or professional learning? Are there any limitations on your choices?
- What resources, structures or professional learning have helped or hindered your journey?

Interview question

4. Now you've begun enacting the new syllabus, what has influenced your lesson design and programming?
5. What have you enjoyed and or found challenging when designing programs and resources and what or who helped or hindered you in this process?

Possible supplementary questions

- What are you teaching at the moment and how has the new syllabus impacted your practice (O'Sullivan, 2005)? Are there similarities or differences to the content you have taught previously? How are students responding to the program?
- How does the syllabus direct your practice (outcomes, content groups or content points) and what are the similarities and differences in the content you need to teach for this syllabus compared to the last syllabus, for example: types of texts, approaches to teaching reading or writing, or the use of the textual concepts?
- Are there other areas of change in your practice beyond the classroom?

Appendix 4 – Interview Script



Interview Script

Before we start, let's confirm we have the signed consent form and you are happy to confirm that that:

- The details of my involvement have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written Participant Information Statement to keep.
- I understand the purpose of the study is to investigate the perspectives and experiences of secondary English teachers in NSW, Australia, as they teach the English K–10 syllabus for the first time.
- I acknowledge that the risks and benefits of participating in this study have been explained to me to my satisfaction.
- I understand that in this study I will:
 - participate in one semi-structured interview
 - share my perspectives and experiences of:
 - the NSW curriculum reform
 - the English K–10 syllabus (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2022)
 - the impact of the syllabus on your practice
 - the support or resources provided during the NSW curriculum reform.
 - have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview.
- I understand that participation involves sharing personal perspectives and experiences through one 60 to 90 minute semi-structured interview. The interview will be conducted via the university supported platform, Zoom, and audio recorded and transcribed.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary.
- I am assured that my decision to participate will not have any impact on my relationship with the research team or the University of Sydney.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and that I can choose to withdraw any information I have already provided (unless the data has already been de-identified or published).
- I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be protected and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information identifying me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

Interview questions

1. Thank you for joining today, please start by telling me a little about yourself and your experiences and background as an English teacher.
2. Can we start by talking about your perspectives toward the new *English K–10 Syllabus*? What are you finding rewarding and/or challenging about the new syllabus and why?

Possible supplementary questions

- What shifts do you see from the 2012 syllabus to the 2022 syllabus?

- What do you like/dislike about the new English 7-10 syllabus components and why?
- How has it impacted your perspective toward subject English?

Interview question

3. Please share with me an overview of your experiences of the curriculum reform journey so far, feel free to explore anything that comes to mind since the release of the syllabus at the end of 2022? How well do you feel supported in the process of change, and can you explain why?

Possible supplementary questions

- How do you feel about the way you have engaged with and enacted the syllabus so far, what strategies have helped or hindered you?
- What is your role in making decisions about accessing resources or professional learning? Are there any limitations on your choices?
- What resources, structures or professional learning have helped or hindered your journey?

Interview question

4. Now you've begun enacting the new syllabus, what has influenced your lesson design and programming?
5. What have you enjoyed and or found challenging when designing programs and resources and what or who helped or hindered you in this process?

Possible supplementary questions

- What are you teaching at the moment and how has the new syllabus impacted your practice (O'Sullivan, 2005)? Are there similarities or differences to the content you have taught previously? How are students responding to the program?
- How does the syllabus direct your practice (outcomes, content groups or content points) and what are the similarities and differences in the content you need to teach for this syllabus compared to the last syllabus, for example: types of texts, approaches to teaching reading or writing, or the use of the textual concepts?
- Are there other areas of change in your practice beyond the classroom?

Appendix 5 – Table of Invention for analysing practices

Analysis guide

In the analysis, identify at least the most significant proximal arrangements that shape the *sayings doings* and *relatings* observed (things present in the site), and, where relevant more distal conditions (like more widespread languages of policy or theory, more extensive material layouts, or wider sets of social relationships or beyond organisation) that are significantly enmeshed in the practices under study. Together, the cells on the left describe the *practice* in terms of what is said and done and how people relate in it; together, the cells on the right describe the ***practice architectures*** that form the ***niche*** (on the model of an ecological niche) that permits the practice to survive in the site.

Table 4 – Table of invention

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<p><i>Project</i></p> <p>In this cell, describe the <i>Project</i> under study based on the evidence available. When a participant sincerely answers the question “What are you doing?”, they describe the <i>project</i> of the practice (from their perspective).</p>	<p><i>Practice landscape</i></p> <p>In this cell, describe how people and objects are differently enmeshed in the interactions (that is, in the activity-timespace) of the practice being studied. Different people and objects may be involved at different stages or in different episodes or in different aspects of the practice, and they may participate in different roles or from different perspectives. Some objects not apparently relevant to the activities may in fact play a role in enabling or constraining the practice and in this way be enmeshed in the activity-timespace of the practice.</p>
<p><i>Sayings</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>sayings</i> (thinking evidence in cognition) that compose</p>	<p><i>Cultural-discursive arrangements</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>cultural-discursive arrangements</i> that are resources that</p>

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
and 'hang together' in the practices under study. The forms of understanding.	make possible (prefigure) the <i>sayings</i> observed. The knowledge, language and specialist discourses of different kinds found in or brought to the site.
<p><i>Doings</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>doings</i> (psychomotor evident in skills and capabilities) that compose and 'hang together' in the practices under study. The modes of action.</p>	<p><i>Material-economic arrangements</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>material-economic arrangements</i> that are resources that make possible (prefigure) the <i>doings</i> observed. The time periods, units of work, school structures and different material objects in the form of people/roles, resources, materials, tools and equipment/facilities found in or brought to the site.</p>
<p><i>Relatings</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>relatings</i> (the affective evident in the kinds of relationships between participants and others and their emotions, feelings, moods and desires) that compose and 'hang together' in the practices under study. The ways participants relate to each other and the world.</p>	<p><i>Social-political arrangements</i></p> <p>Identify the principal <i>social-political arrangements</i> that are resources that make possible (prefigure) the <i>relatings</i> observed: including the lifeworld connections/affiliations and system roles and responsibilities together with the norms and conventions that affectively attune the practice in a site.</p>
<p><i>Dispositions (habitus)</i></p> <p>In this cell, describe the most significant <i>dispositions</i> (or <i>habitus</i>) called on or developed in the principal participants as they participate in the practice.</p> <p><i>Habitus</i> is a set of dispositions developed by a participant enacting a practice in cultural, material and social fields (for example); these dispositions</p>	<p><i>Practice traditions</i></p> <p>In this part of the table, comment on the <i>practice traditions</i> that appear to be in play, reproduced, or transformed in the practice. This sets the interactions that compose the practice against a longer history of practice, including at least the history of practice in the local site (for example, in terms of how the</p>

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<p>are what give the participant the 'feel for the game' that makes it possible for them to act appropriately in the field. Dispositions include knowledge, skills and values. Knowledge relates chiefly to the <i>sayings</i> and cultural-discursive resources (in language, in semantic space) present in or brought to the site; <i>skills</i> relate chiefly to the <i>doings</i> and material-economic resources (in activity and work, in physical space-time) at the site; and values relate chiefly to the <i>relatings</i> and social-political resources (in power and solidarity, in social space) at the site.</p>	<p>participants have acted and interacted as part of the practice in the site over previous days, months or years). Where relevant, we also comment on the practice interpreted against a broader history of this kind of practice (for example, how practice in a particular classroom might be an expression of a practice tradition like progressive education or a particular approach to literacy education).</p>

Appendix 6 – Phase 1 familiarisation – Jane

Initial observations

- Regional comprehensive high school – a hard-to-staff school.
- English and History load – 3 terms into teaching Year 7 and Year 9 (does not teach Year 9) – staggered implementation.
- Part time teacher – 10 years at this school.
- Complex student needs – below stage literacy – complex behaviours.
- Likes the syllabus and enjoying using it for programming and assessment design.

Table 5 – Phase 1 data familiarisation – Jane’s curriculum making during curriculum reform

Elements of practice	Practice architectures in the site
<p>Project – curriculum enactment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and designing programs and assessments for Year 7 and 9 as part of a staggered implementation. • Curriculum making occurs in the school site and in the teachers home (part-time teacher). • Planning and programming for Year 8 and 10. Mapping from Stage 6. • New programs for Year 8 and 10 will be taught in 2025 and Year 11 of Stage 6 in 2026. • Promoting children’s development of voice and helping them feel empowered to succeed. 	<p>Practice landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and state policy and legislation guiding practice including the syllabus which is central to curriculum making practice. • Role: experienced classroom teacher collaborating with colleagues. • The head teacher is leading the faculty through the collaborative design of programs and assessments. The response to curriculum reform is supported at a school and systems level. • Backward design – supporting assessment success through careful programming – this is not evident in all programs – hoping

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
	the evaluative cycle addresses this issue.
<p><i>Sayings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change takes time – usually a 3-year cycle • Enjoying using the new syllabus it feels decluttered – “I like less outcomes.” = narrower and deeper exploration of the content and hopeful for knowledge “Rather than, oh, if I go, okay, ‘so we are doing a feature article, what is a feature article?’ And they can go, ‘oh, it’s when we talk about our idea’, I’m like, ‘yes, that’s right’. ‘So what do we have to put in to the start?’ And they can be like, ‘oh, you need to have a what it’s about who it’s about when it happened’. And they’ll be able to recall that based off less prompting than relearning, If that makes sense. I’m hopeful.” • Feeling rushed “I still feel rushed. I feel like no matter what I do, I’ll feel rushed.” while also not feeling rushed as there is the opportunity to revisit essential knowledge. • Clearer content to support achievement “I like that it is more 	<p><i>Cultural-discursive arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty discussions reflect a culture of trust in the use and engagement with the new syllabus as part of programming. • Using the language of the syllabus – the structure, the outcomes (values the outcome refinement), the clearer subheadings/content groups, the role/prominence of the textual concepts as it supports more purposeful content. • Using the language of movement synopsis with students – helping them value the study of canonical texts with the refinement in content delivery – Students and their Shakespeare task:-“Is it this easy and now I just need to talk about why my images relate to the theme and the quotes I’ve chosen?” • Using the language of the Common Grade Scale (NESA) for marking and NESA’s assessment advice to guide school assessment practices. • Practice is guided by ongoing professional learning and

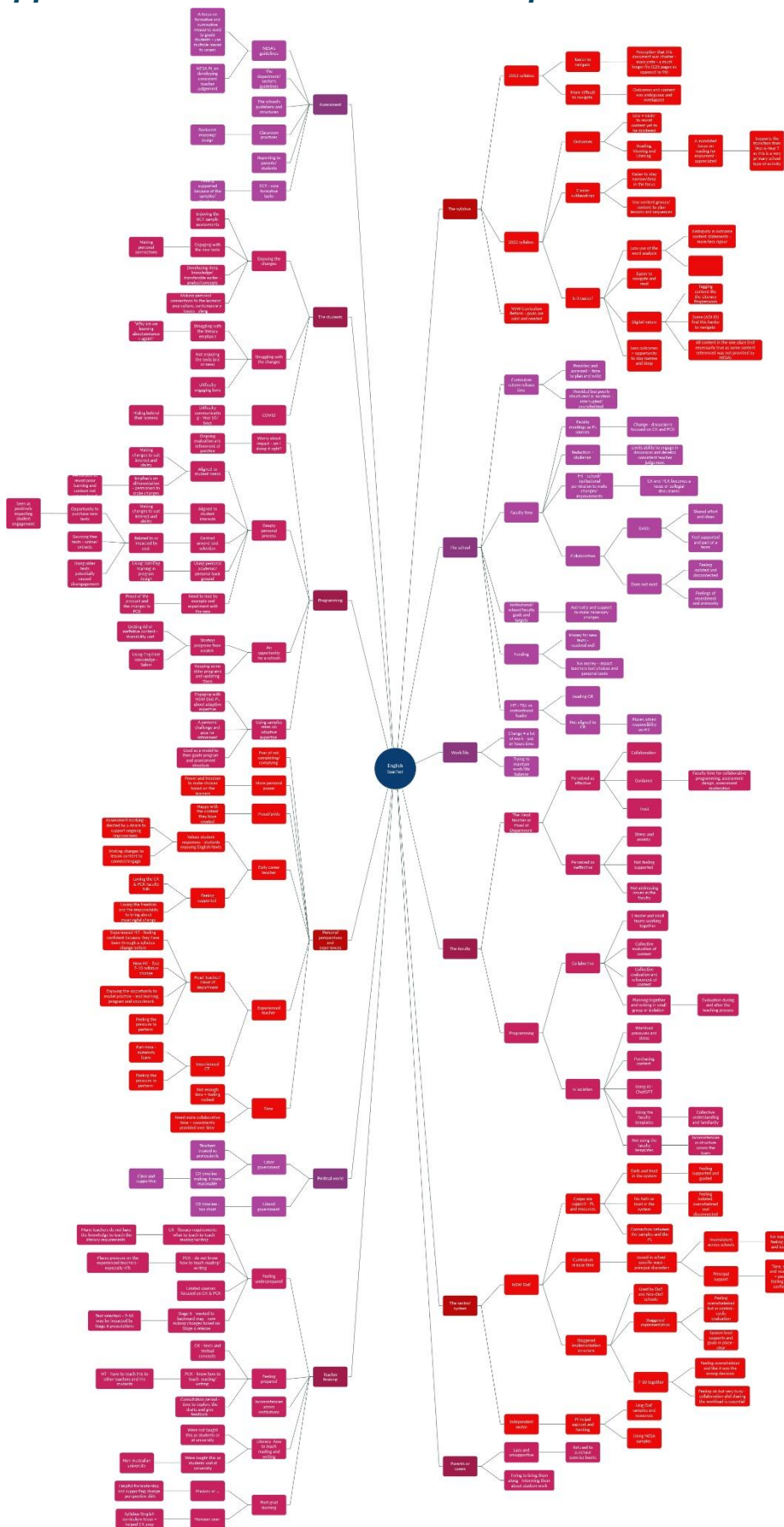
<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<p>achievable for students to receive a Sound in regards to content points and outcomes”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desire to track and explore the longitudinal data to see whether the changes are helping kids improve. • There are disconnects between the content/structure of Stage 3 and Stage 4 and flaws in the continuity. • Belief that the focus on literacy and the textual concepts should support transition from Year 6 into Year 7. 	<p>collaboration. Ongoing desire to refine the approach to the teaching of reading and writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum reform assumption that students will improve. • NESAsyllabuses are developed by different teams (primary syllabus components were developed by different people to the secondary content). • Already using the textual concepts – HT introduced in 2019.
<p><i>Doings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team are using the Outcome content groups and the textual concepts to guide programming. • Accessing PL and samples provided: SWS, school network events, NESAsyllabuses on assessment and NESAsyllabuses resources • Sharing learning and resources with colleagues. • Using different texts – expanding ideas about text selection – the notion of “diversity” has been extended to individuals who are uncommon in their field – for example, their nationality and gender. 	<p><i>Material-economic arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PL, sample materials and resources are being provided and shared by the school, the sector/DoE, NESAsyllabuses and teachers association. • Engaged in PL secondment with sector. • Contributing to the team’s development of new programs and the refinement/updating of elements of old practice. • Formally, there is professional learning time for collaboration and informally there are collegial conversations and sharing of

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in a scholarship project and is using this knowledge to support students to engage deeply with the forms/features of texts. • Differentiating faculty programs to meet for students' needs. • Engaging in ongoing programming for the next unit (Term 4). • “I think that's something that I've noticed I've been able to make more effective choices for what engages the students”. 	<p>content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using NESAs' English syllabus and its text requirements in planning and programming. • Funding and permission to select and access texts based on students' needs. • Accessing and engaging with a professional and student learning scholarship. • A reframed approach to cross-curricular content = less peripheral knowledge to cover, a narrower focus for the program design as a whole and moving away from non-Englishy programs like the 'Sustainability' program.
<p><i>Relatings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty accessing time for programming with colleagues. • Frustrated by the workload and dealing with student non-attendance and policies (6% attendance) – “It makes no sense to me.” • Students responding positively to texts selected • Communicating evaluations and plans for improvement with colleagues at faculty meetings. 	<p><i>Social-political arrangements</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hard-to-staff school. • Educated at a time when literacy education was not taught explicitly. Part of a cohort needing to refine their approach to the teaching of reading and writing. • NESAs/school process/policies – N-Warnings are time consuming. • HT pressure to leave programs as they are until they have been

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<p>Would like more faculty meetings to develop consistent teacher judgement for new outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing and engaging with colleagues in the NSW DoE statewide staffrooms. • Secondment – exploring draft syllabus documents released by NESAs, samples provided by the DoE and using this collaboration to deepen understanding the syllabus/support structures. • Respects the HT and values faculty programming structures. • Feels less fearful of not complying – freedom to revisit prior learning/content to support students. • Students feeling more empowered and are more engaged. • Students are below Stage in literacy and they have more extensive needs. Supporting these literacy requirements causes students/teachers challenges. • Feelings of guilt when decisions didn't pan out as expected and decisions have not been as supportive as possible for the kids. 	<p>taught twice – teacher's desire is to make changes sooner, so the next iteration is stronger.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged in NESAs Have your say consultation – valued the provision of two drafts and longer consultation periods. • Deeper knowledge of the syllabus and the support materials due to sector secondment. • Feeling empowered to make student-centred decisions “I think that's something that I've noticed I've been able to make more effective choices for what engages the students.” • Values and uses the faculty and network collaboration structures and would like more of them. • Feeling empowered, trusted and supported at a school and state level to do the right things for the learners – “I think there's mechanisms in place to support teachers on a whole like on a state level and then head teacher leading those. As an experienced teacher, I don't feel like I need guidance in what to do. I feel like

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of a tradition of English teachers helping students to find and use their voices. 	<p>it's something that I can do. So I don't feel I personally need a guided support in that regard.”</p>
<p><i>Dispositions (habitus)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge: in depth knowledge of new syllabus, dual qualifications, professional knowledge as an experienced teacher, professional judgement, knowledge of her students, dedicated to ongoing learning. Skills: programming, assessment design, collaboration, intentional teaching, communication, critical reflection, programming as a personal endeavour and a meaning-making exercise, engaging in personal reflection. Values: empathy, advocate, high expectations, aligned to sector’s values, reliable and committed to lifelong learning. 	<p><i>Practice traditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum making practice is guided by sector, school and NESAs governance/policy structures. Comprehensive knowledge of English content knowledge and pedagogy and technical aspects of programming and formal assessment. Cultura-discursive positioning of a commitment to supporting low-SES communities and managing change despite a teacher shortage. Engaging in literacy education. Engenders the values of public education and supporting equity and excellence for student learning outcomes.

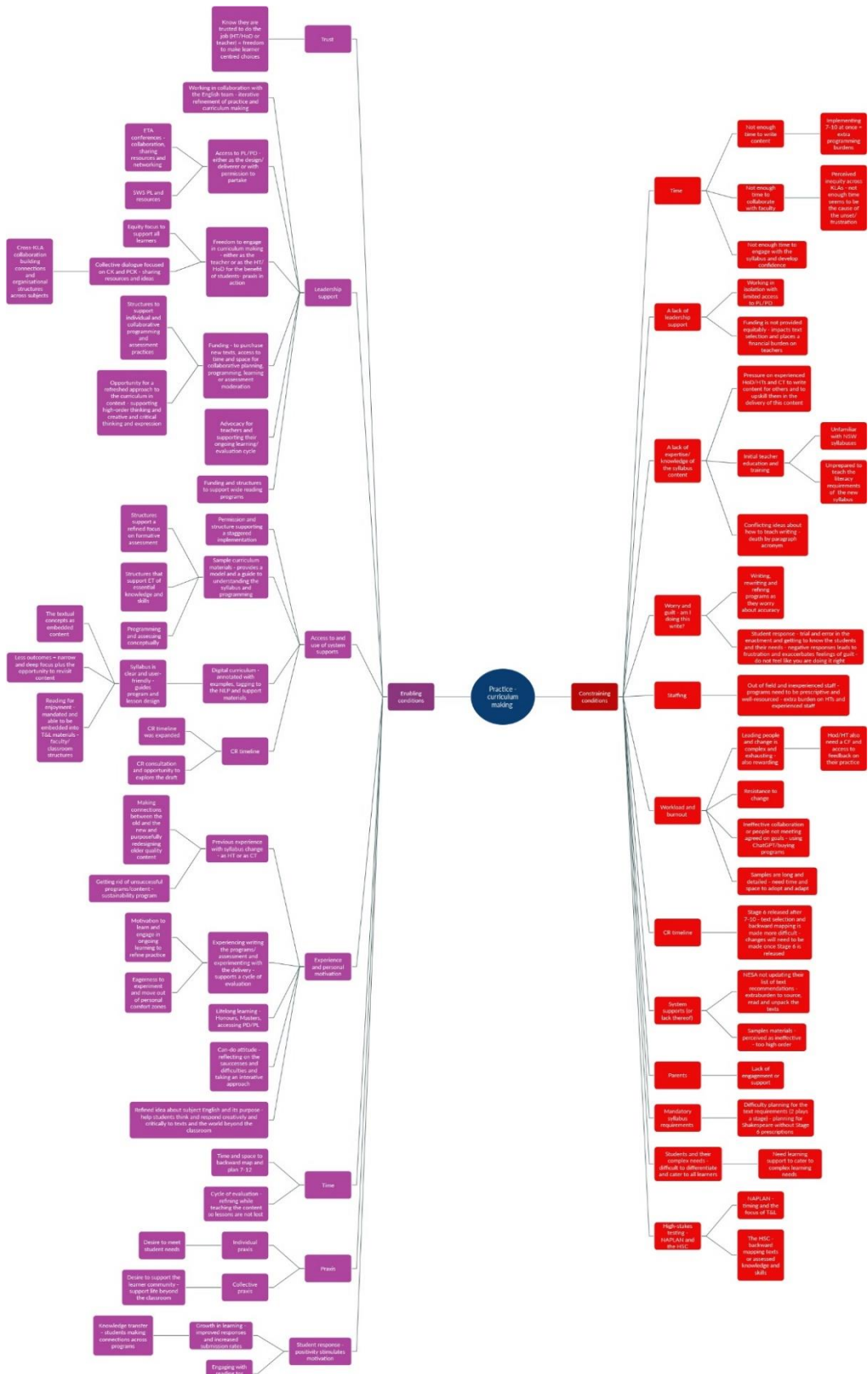
Appendix 7 – Phase 1 data mind map



Appendix 8 – Phase 1 mind map labels levels 1–3

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	A
							1 Name
-							2 English teacher
	-						3 Assessment
		+					4 Classroom practices
		+					6 ECT - core formative tasks
		+					8 NESA's guidelines
		.					11 Reporting to parents~students
		.					12 The department~sector's guidelines
		.					13 The school's guideliens and structures
	-						14 Personal perspectives and experiences
		+					15 Early career teacher
		+					22 Experienced teacher
		.					31 Fear of not completing~complying
		+					32 More personal power
		+					34 Proud~pride
		+					36 Time
	-						39 Programming
		+					40 An opportunity for a refresh
		+					45 Deeply personal process
		+					62 Using samples relies on adaptive expertise
		+					66 Worry about impact - am I doing it right~
	-						68 The faculty
		+					69 Programming
		+					84 The Head teacher or Head of Department
	-						94 The school
		+					95 Curriculum reform release time
		+					98 Faculty time
		+					112 Funding
		+					115 HT - T&L as instructional leader
		+					119 Institutional~school~faculty goals and targets
	-						121 The students
		+					122 COVID
		+					125 Enjoying the changes
		+					131 Struggling with the changes
	-						136 The syllabus
		+					137 2012 syllabus
		+					142 2022 syllabus
		.					161 NSW Curriculum Reform - goals are valid and needed
	-						162 Work~life
		.					163 Change = a lot of work - out of hours time
		.					164 Trying to maintain work~life balance

Appendix 9 – Phase 2 Coding mind map



Appendix 10 – Phase 2 mind map coding labels levels 1–3

1	Name
2	Practice - curriculum making
3	Constraining conditions
4	A lack of expertise~knowledge of the syllabus content
5	Conflicting ideas about how to teach writing - death by paragraph acronym
6	Initial teacher education and training
9	Pressure on experienced HoD~HTs and CT to write content for others and to upskill them in the delivery of this content
10	A lack of leadership support
11	Funding is not provided equitably - impacts text selection and places a financial burden on teachers
12	Working in isolation with limited access to PL~PD
13	CR timeline
14	Stage 6 released after 7-10 - text selection and backward mapping is made more difficult - changes will need to be made once Stage 6 is released
15	High-stakes testing - NAPLAN and the HSC
16	NAPLAN - timing and the focus of T&L
17	The HSC - backward mapping texts or assessed knowledge and skills
18	Mandatory syllabus requirements
19	Difficulty planning for the text requirements (2 plays a stage) - planning for Shakespeare without Stage 6 prescriptions
20	Parents
21	Lack of engagement or support
22	Staffing
23	Out of field and inexperienced staff - programs need to be prescriptive and well-resourced - extra burden on HTs and experienced staff
24	Students and their complex needs - difficult to differentiate and cater to all learners
25	Need learning support to cater to complex learning needs
26	System supports (or lack thereof)
27	NESA not updating their list of text recommendations - extraburden to source, read and unpack the texts
28	Samples materials - perceived as ineffective - too high order
29	Time
30	Not enough time to collaborate with faculty
32	Not enough time to engage with the syllabus and develop confidence
33	Not enough time to write content
35	Workload and burnout
36	Ineffective collaboration or people not meeting agreed on goals - using ChatGPT~buying programs
37	Leading people and change is complex and exhausting - also rewarding
39	Resistance to change
40	Samples are long and detailed - need time and space to adopt and adapt
41	Worry and guilt - am I doing this write~
42	Student response - trial and error in the enactment and getting to know the students and their needs - negative responses leads to frustration and exacerbates feelings of guilt - do not feel like you are doing it right

1	Name
2	Practice - curriculum making
3	Constraining conditions
44	Enabling conditions
45	Access to and use of system supports
46	CR timeline
49	Digital curriculum - annotated with examples, tagging to the NLP and support materials
54	Permission and structure supporting a staggered implementation
55	Sample curriculum materials - provides a model and a guide to understanding the syllabus and programming
59	Experience and personal motivation
60	Can-do attitude - reflecting on the successes and difficulties and taking an iterative approach
61	Experiencing writing the programs~assessment and experimenting with the delivery - supports a cycle of evaluation
64	Lifelong learning - Honours, Masters, accessing PD~PL
65	Previous experience with syllabus change - as HT or as CT
68	Refined idea about subject English and its purpose - help students think and respond creatively and critically to texts and the world beyond the classroom
69	Leadership support
70	Access to PL~PD - either as the design~deliverer or with permission to partake
73	Advocacy for teachers and supporting their ongoing learning~evaluation cycle
74	Freedom to engage in curriculum making - either as the teacher or as the HT~HoD for the benefit of students- praxis in action
78	Funding - to purchase new texts, access to time and space for collaborative planning, programming, learning or assessment moderation
81	Funding and structures to support wide reading programs
82	Working in collaboration with the English team - iterative refinement of practice and curriculum making
83	Praxis
84	Collective praxis
86	Individual praxis
88	Student response - positivity stimulates motivation
89	Engaging with reading for enjoyment
90	Growth in learning - improved responses and increased submission rates
92	Time
93	Cycle of evaluation - refining while teaching the content so lessons are not lost
94	Time and space to backward map and plan 7-12
95	Trust
96	Know they are trusted to do the job (HT~HoD or teacher) = freedom to make learner centred choices

Appendix 11 – Phase 3 initial NVIVO thematic descriptions

Identifying the enabling and constraining arrangements.

Phase 3 - generating initial themes		Search Project	
Name	Files	References	
Practice - Phase 3 - curriculum making	0	0	
Constraining conditions	0	0	
Am I doing this right - difficulty catering to student needs and interests	8	41	
Difficulty enacting the syllabus	5	18	
Difficulties addressing the literacy requirements	7	30	
Inconsistencies or inadequacies of initial teacher education and training	3	8	
Lack of expertise with NSW syllabuses	5	21	
Syllabus inconsistencies	2	6	
High-stakes testing - NAPLAN and the HSC	1	6	
Ineffective leadership	3	19	
Ineffective programming-evaluation of old content	1	2	
Working in isolation with limited access to PL~PD	2	9	
Insufficient staffing	7	16	
N-Warnings - impact of poor student attendance	1	1	
NESA not updating their list of text recommendations - extraburden to source, read and unpack the texts	1	1	
Not enough time	7	35	
Depth and complexity of the samples - need time for adaptation	5	16	
Implementing 7-10 at once = extra programming burdens	2	7	
Not enough time to engage with the syllabus and develop confidence	4	10	
Parents - a lack of engagement or support	2	8	
Workload and burnout	3	18	
Ineffective collaboration or people not meeting agreed on goals - using ChatGPT~buying programs	2	2	
Leading people and change is complex and exhausting - also rewarding	2	10	
Pressure on HT - writing content & delivering PL - need CF & feedback on practice	3	9	
Resistance to change	4	14	

Phase 3 - generating initial themes

Search Project

Name	Files	Refere
Enabling conditions	0	0
Access to and use of system supports	4	10
CR timeline - staggered implementation - Time and space to backward map and plan 7-12	7	22
Structures support a refined focus on formative assessment	4	6
Trust in the sample curriculum materials	5	23
Digital curriculum - annotated with examples, tagging to the NLP and support materials	2	6
Reading for enjoyment - mandated and able to be embedded into T&L materials - faculty~classroom structures	4	5
Syllabus refinement - necessary - supportive - less outcomes - deep learning - revisit prior	7	33
Syllabus supports higher-order thinking and experimentation - clear transition from Stage 4-5	4	17
Text selection - refined prescriptive in some ways opening up choices	7	11
The textual concepts as embedded content	6	11
Experience and personal motivation - passion for subject English	7	36
Collective efficacy - praxis - Refreshing while learning from the old.	7	44
Lifelong learning - Honours, Masters, accessing PD~PL	7	10
Previous experience with syllabus change - as HT or as CT	4	6
Programming through a cycle of evaluation - Eagerness to experiment and learn	8	62
Refined idea about subject English and its purpose - help students think and respond creatively and critically to texts and the world beyond the classroom	8	17
Leadership support - personal and collective	7	21
Access to PL-PD - network-school-sectors-association	7	25
Advocacy and trust for teachers	7	27
Funding - to lead CR and to purchase new texts, access to time and space for collaborative planning, programming, learning or assessment moderation	7	12
Structures to support student-centred programming and assessment practices	8	64
Whole-school programs and structures that support curriculum	4	14
Student response - praxis - desire to meet student needs	8	39
Engaging with reading for enjoyment	3	5
Growth in learning - Knowledge transfer and increased submission rates	5	14

Appendix 12 – Phase 4 reviewed NVIVO themes

Refining the enabling and constraining arrangements.

1	Name	Files	References
2	Practice - curriculum making	0	0
3	Constraining conditions	0	0
4	Am I doing this right	8	42
5	Depth and complexity of the samples - well supported but a lot to read and understand	5	16
6	Difficulty enacting the syllabus	5	18
7	Difficulties addressing the literacy requirements	7	30
8	Inconsistencies or inadequacies of initial teacher education and training	5	14
9	Lack of expertise with NSW syllabuses	6	29
10	External high-stakes testing - ever present pressures	4	16
11	It is exhausting to manage and cope with change	5	40
12	Ineffective leadership	4	23
13	Not enough time	7	34
14	Staffing - a revolving door	7	16
15	Enabling conditions	0	0
16	A refined, meaningful and user-friendly syllabus	8	74
17	Praxis - a can-do attitude and a deep desire to meet student needs through a love of English	8	59
18	A dedication to lifelong learning	8	39
19	Previous experience with syllabus change - as HT or as CT	4	6
20	Programming through a cycle of experimentation and evaluation	8	62
21	Refined idea about subject English and its purpose - help students think and respond creatively and critically to texts and the world beyond the classroom	8	17
22	Refreshing while learning from the old.	7	17
23	Structures to support student-centred programming and assessment practices	8	98
24	Advocacy and trust for teachers	7	43
25	Whole-school programs and structures that support curriculum	4	14
26	Student response - positivity stimulates motivation	7	31
27	Trust in the parts of the system supports	7	53

Appendix 13 – Phase 5 – part 2 – refining, defining and naming themes

1	2	3	4	A	B	C
				1 Name	Files	References
-				2 Reform features - Practice - curriculum making	0	0
	-			3 Trust-based professionalism that supports self and collective efficacy	7	43
				4 Whole-school programs and structures that support curriculum	4	14
				5 Trust in the parts of the system supports	7	53
				6 Staffing - a revolving door	7	16
				7 Praxis - a can-do attitude and a deep desire to meet student needs through a love of English	8	59
				8 Ineffective leadership	4	23
	-			9 Structures to support student-centred programming and assessment practices	8	98
				10 Student response - positivity stimulates motivation	7	31
				11 Refreshing while learning from the old.	7	17
				12 Refined idea about subject English and its purpose - help students think and respond creatively and critically to texts and the world beyond the classroom	8	17
				13 Programming through a cycle of experimentation and evaluation	8	62
				14 External high-stakes testing - ever present pressures	4	16
				15 Complexity of system supports and samples	5	16
				16 A refined, meaningful and user-friendly syllabus	8	74
	-			17 Need more time and resources - teacher shortage	7	34
				18 Lack of expertise with NSW syllabuses	6	29
				19 Difficulty enacting the syllabus	5	18
				20 Change is exhausting - managing and coping with change	5	40
				21 Am I doing this right?	8	42
	-			22 Collaboration, networking and ongoing professional learning and refinement in practice	8	39
				23 Previous experience with syllabus change - as HT or as CT	4	6
				24 Inconsistencies or inadequacies of initial teacher education and training	5	14
				25 Difficulties addressing the literacy requirements	7	30

Appendix 14 – Phase 5 – an extract of the ‘table of invention’

An extract of the table of invention for curriculum making.

<i>Elements of practice</i>	<i>Practice architectures in the site</i>
<p><i>Project</i></p> <p>The project – curriculum enactment through the practice of classroom curriculum making in response to NSW curriculum reform.</p> <p>The practice – involves individual teachers translating, interpreting, and transforming curriculum policy into day-to-day, classroom-specific learning experiences for their students.</p> <p>Participants are designing teaching and learning programs, resources and activities and assessment structures that they enact and then formatively and formally assess.</p> <p>Exploring and selecting texts that engage students and support their learning needs.</p> <p>Core to this is promoting the development of voice and helping students feel empowered to succeed.</p> <p>Planning and programming for Years 7–10 involves mapping across the stage and planning for Stage 6.</p>	<p><i>Practice landscape</i></p> <p>Federal and state policy and legislation guide inform curriculum. The syllabus is central to curriculum making practice.</p> <p>Initial planning for CM occurs with the team and is led by the head teacher/head of department (HT HoD). HTs and HoDs liaise with school executive to support access to time/funding.</p> <p>Planning occurs in the school site, formally in faculty collaboration sessions and informally through teacher’s dialogue and in the teachers’ homes. Understanding is informed by personal qualifications and experience, informal/formal professional learning, collaborative dialogue, collaboration and experimentation.</p> <p>Teachers assume responsibility for CM for their classes and rely on the materials created by others (in-school and institutional).</p> <p>Programming and assessment – using school-designed and system-designed templates and structures (NESA, DoE, the schools).</p> <p>Grading and marking – using NESA and school-specific guidelines.</p>

Sayings

Speaking the language of the NSW curriculum

Anna ECT – refers to the Australian curriculum and its cross-curriculum priorities.

when we were speaking about the cross-curriculum priority areas and you know, integrating them meaningfully in English programming and English teaching. That's been a big step of support for me, because we have so many like texts and films available for us from a variety of different, like from Aboriginal and Australian voices, from Asian-Australian voices, from like the environmental perspective. So, like honestly, the school I work at is so well resourced like that has been a great a great thing to step into, because I haven't, I haven't had to find things from scratch or like, as they say at uni, like, reinvent the wheel.

Jane EXT – values the inclusion of writing genres especially those that may be formally assessed in the HSC

I found that one really positive. I think that it was a really good unit to teach children introduction to discursive and informative text types.

Jane EXT – values the changes in the NSW syllabus text requirements as this has expanded text options

I was able to make that change. I didn't have to go with like, oh well now I need someone of this background because the wording's changed to diversity and I could pick a diverse variety of people. ...

Cultural-discursive arrangements

NSW curriculum

The language of the NSW curriculum sits alongside but separate to the Australian curriculum and this creates cross-over and confusion in the specialist curriculum discourses across the two. ECTs show a disconnect in understanding between the curriculum documents using the language of the Australian curriculum and its cross-curriculum priorities. These a no longer mandated in the NSW curriculum and have instead been embedded into each syllabus “as appropriate”. Shared knowledge of NSW curriculum language is essential to internal CM practice.

Shared knowledge of DoE CM language is internal to the sector in terms of PL as wrap-around support. However, the educative samples are housed on the DoE public-facing website.

The DoE ECT structures provide a specialist discourse for programming, and this has informed the teachers' thinking and enhanced collaborative discussions and planning as part of individual and collaborative CM. These structures and the language has been brought to individual school sites by teachers or HTs/HoDs who have accessed the materials online or

<p>there is a larger scope and there's an acknowledgement that diversity comes in all different shapes and sizes.</p> <p>Jane EXT – the reduction in outcomes has changed their thinking and approach to CM</p> <p>I think by removing some of the outcomes and content points, it's meant that there's a streamline to our programmes.</p> <p>we create resources for the programmes and of course you follow them or you don't, and we outline what students should be doing. ...</p> <p>Then we've found that we are putting in the programme like students will compose an imaginative text and then we'll just put across some of those content points from that outcome and we can decide what that text looks like.</p> <p>There's more choice for us to go, okay, so if imaginative text 'I'm going to do for this,</p> <p>Joanna EXT – backward mapping knowledge and skills from Stage 6</p> <p>I feel like I am and I feel like if those Year 7 kids are coming through by the time they get to Year 11 and 12, when we're looking at more in-depth, indigenous poets I won't have to teach them the context behind it, because they'll already have it. Whereas with Year 12, I'm teaching the context behind it before I can teach the text to them, because they don't understand the connection to country and the connection to land.</p> <p>But if we're doing that all the way through those Year 7 kids, that's a</p>	<p>engaged in PL provided by the ECT this material-economic arrangement is informing and enabling the '<i>sayings</i>' and '<i>doings</i>' of CM. It is also influencing the '<i>relatings</i>' between teachers as it supports sharing of practice.</p> <p>The language of the ECT Phases approach to conceptual programming, the conceptual programming questions and the core formative tasks have provided an enabling framework for the '<i>doings</i>' and '<i>relatings</i>' of CM.</p> <p>The language of text selection and assessment often aligned to Stage 6 requirements. Faculty goals and strategy was aligned to backward mapping and highlighted the pressures associated with high-stakes external testing regimes like the HSC. The '<i>sayings</i>' associated with carefully planning knowledge and skill development across 7 to 12 often reflected broader social-political pressures and impacted the '<i>doings</i>' of CM in Stages 4 and 5. Examples – of backward mapping through activities such as teaching the context of an HSC text in Stage 5, or teaching the style of a text assessed in the HSC (discursive) in Stages 4 and 5, or alternatively removing a formal assessment of multimodal presentations from Stage 4</p>
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huge chunk of like 3 weeks of Year 12 stuff that we won't have to teach.
Kayla EXT HT – considers the DoE conceptual programming supports to be transformative and key to knowledge transfer

So content wise, I think it's definitely the Conceptual questions and the transferability of skill and that leads to sort of the gold standard, which is backwards mapping.

... there's an enormous transferability now because we have those Guiding questions [NSW Department of Education English curriculum 7 to 12 team's Phases approach to conceptual programming and scope and sequence design includes Guiding Questions] and then we can teach those things in a holistic way and teach the concepts sooner.

... I've had to change lesson design or obviously we never programmed according to Phases either. So we've had to.

Kayla EXT HT – considers the textual concepts to be transformative and key to knowledge transfer

And if we've got these conceptual driving questions and the textual concepts, then we're teaching our Stage 6 students from day one of Year 7. You know what I mean? And I just think that's really exciting because if we're teaching Stage 6 students in theory, then if it's that well mapped and that well organised and the skills are that highly transferable, then I guess the possibilities of what we can get when we actually get to Stage 6. If the gold standard is backwards mapping, and that seems to be the highest leverage strategy that everybody talks about, and that's how we get our kids there. ...

because it will no longer be assessed in the HSC.

Discussions about writing genres especially those that are examined in the external HSC examinations reflect the pressures associated with high-stakes testing. This pressure is then mapped from Stage 6 into Stages 4 and 5 reflect broader English discourses and performativity pressures. The textual concepts were identified as a key feature of the specialist discourse of subject English and an important part of knowledge transfer across stages.

Participants shared feelings of freedom associated with reduced compliance pressures because of the flexibility provided in refined and expanded (more ambiguous) requirements. This pressure stems from '*relatings*' to sector registration requirements and sector policies (NESA and the DoE).

The structure of the new syllabus reflects the broader material-economic structures of CR and the strategic plans and timelines created by NESA and the DoE. The role of the ETC in the outcomes and the refined literacy requirements reflect the goals of the Masters review and the government's

Amanda EXT HT – making changes to Year 7 assessments based on Stage 6 CR

Year 7 ... it was a big change for us, not just in terms of the curriculum, but just our approach with text. ... We've always had the textual concepts as our focus. But just how we're using text itself has been a big change for us. So in terms of Year 7 getting rid of some of the complexity in terms of their assessment tasks or the ways actually, in which we use multimodal was probably the biggest review change.

... in light of the new syllabus with Stage 6.

We obviously still including multimodal and those sort of skills within the day to day but ditching it out of our assessments.

I didn't feel like we needed to assess those skills formally anymore and more focus on some of those foundational skills in terms of their writing and focus on that for their formal assessment instead.

[condensed version]

response and commitment to these by the education sectors.

The increased emphasis on the ETC and literacy has shaped CM dialogue and thinking about programming and assessment.

Descriptions of programming reflected this changing understanding and attitude toward the focus and purpose of subject English. Discussion of the three focus areas of the syllabus reflect the way teachers are owning the change and acting with self-efficacy.

“I feel quite supported”

Attitude toward support structures

Andrea ECT – feels supported by her HT sharing and representing faculty needs to the senior executive

My ... head teacher has been so supportive and always on the lookout for PL for us, for the new syllabus and sends out an email anytime she comes across something for us to like, register our interest to her. And then I think she take like she she's involved in taking

Change is coordinated and organised

Cultural-discursive arrangements are encouraged and supported through clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities across faculty teams, schools and at a system level. Teachers must know the role they play and what is expected of them. This needs to be supported and reinforced by school leaders.

Professional learning is considered an essential resource and equity across

<p>that to the exec or senior exec for that to be approved.</p> <p>Anna ECT – described her role as an ECT and the way her faculty provided support</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I did enter a faculty that was very well-equipped with programs and you know, I, the colleagues I work with are fantastic. They have been so supportive because I'm a beginning teacher. They have been so supportive with you know, lesson ideas and materials to teach under the new syllabus.</p> <p>Anna ECT – described her CM as a process involving a shift in thinking from the old syllabus to the new syllabus</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">to being on my own and teaching the syllabus even though you know, from all of my university life I was preparing materials for the old syllabus, and even at all my practicum schools when I did my English teaching as a prac student like, even though I was preparing it under the old syllabus. I still had like a lot of teacher support. But nowadays, because I'm doing everything usually like individually and solo even though I have a lot of guidance from my colleagues and my superiors. Yeah, it hasn't. I don't, it hasn't been too difficult.</p> <p>Jane EXT HT – confident in her choice to use the sample materials</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">we're not panicked because, and so that is kind of my evidence of that we've made the right decision.</p> <p>[condensed version]</p>	<p>teams is important. Professional learning must align with the needs of the individual as perceived by them. The knowledge and skills developed through professional learning informs faculty discourse and CM.</p> <p>Teachers want to be supported in their learning and value leaders who advocate for them and want to share/understand progress. Discussing and coordinating PL as a team contributes to collegial dialogue connected to curriculum and pedagogy. Change is expected, understood and discussed in largely positive terms within teams despite the constraining site-specific conditions.</p>
<p>“Not enough time”</p> <p>Difficulties associated with securing CM time</p>	<p>Discourses of teacher shortages and budget cuts</p> <p>Identify the principal <i>cultural-discursive arrangements</i> that are resources that</p>

<p>Amanda EXT HT – values time together to collaboratively develop materials:</p> <p>we obviously don't get a lot of time. And if I do have time where I can give, you know, 3 or 4 staff members the time to sit there and program. I do that. But in terms of getting us all into a room together that just doesn't happen.</p> <p>And obviously all of us teach juniors every single one of us. So, I find it really ... important for the team and for the students themselves to have all of us there.</p> <p>Andrea values the time but there isn't enough of it:</p> <p>the allocation from the department, which I I can't even remember what it was. It wasn't much, it was I think it was equivalent to a day, a term, or something like that.</p> <p>Jane EXT – identified the need for time in future to refine content</p> <p>I think time and then obviously time to, I think hopefully we get given time. <u>I'm hoping that on a school-based level, we get time to sit down and review and reflect and rewrite where needs be. Yeah, we'll see. ...</u></p> <p>maybe they'll be provided that time. I dunno, it'd be his decision to request that time. But they also got a lot of time last year.</p> <p>Jane EXT – inferential reference to the teacher shortage</p> <p>No. Probably a casual pool issue I would say.</p>	<p>make possible (prefigure) the <i>sayings</i> observed. The knowledge, language and specialist discourses of different kinds found in or brought to the site. Reflections about accessing the time and resources to support change reflect broader discourses of teacher shortages and funding cuts. Funding was, at times identified as inadequate, however, the broader concern was the impact of the teacher shortage. A lack of casual availability reduces the time available to engage in sense-making and CM (individually or as a collective). Sector language of “Curriculum reform release time” was largely absent from discussions despite the structures established by the DoE. Assumption that schools may not provide time in future. There is supposed to be 'curriculum release time'.</p>
<p>Doings</p> <p>Creative approaches to a lack of funding and time/casual relief</p> <p>Andrea's team stays back after school to program</p>	<p>Material-economic arrangements</p> <p>Structures that mitigate the lack of funding, casual teachers and collaborative time</p>

<p>We have been doing kind of like afternoon every fortnight a little opt in stay back at school and talk and give each other updates of where we're up to and how we're going, which has been really handy.</p> <p>Andrea's HT liaise with leaders to allocate classes to casuals for programming time</p> <p>we've yeah tried to like when there's a casual that does has this spare two periods or something like that. We've been able to maybe get one of our classes covered and have a like, have one extra period to programming.</p> <p>Andrea participates in collaborative off-site CM</p> <p>So we use that by trying to get at least two, maybe three of us together, and instead of being on site at school, we went into the Head Office in town and booked a meeting room, and so we were able to kind of get away from the chaos of school and program together in that room and have a whole day just to sit and talk, and, you know, look at different texts and really, plan out our programs and give kind of that base scaffold with the phases together. And then allocate tasks and go off and do it.</p> <p>[condensed version]</p>	<p>Constraining material economic arrangements include the inadequate provision of time and space to engage in CM. Teams make creative use of the time and resources they have available to mitigate the impact of inadequate time or funding. This includes the use of time after school for collaboration.</p> <p>When available, allocating individual classes to a casual teacher and using this time to program. Mass-supervision of classes and collaborative or individual programming.</p> <p>Programming on school-development days and in the holidays.</p> <p>Costs for purchasing texts are being mitigated with public-facing texts (social media and DoE licenced texts).</p>
<p>Using funding to support CR</p> <p>“English budget was increased a bit”</p> <p>Andrea is using the new texts that she requested</p> <p>English budget was increased a bit for us to buy new texts as well, and I've been able to, you know. I asked my head teacher. I wanted to teach</p>	<p>Allocation of funds</p> <p>Funding and resources to support CM, accessing time and purchasing new texts</p> <p>School-based funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing new texts for English

<p>a novel called [name of novel] My Year, 7 class this year, and she said, 'Yeah, I'll buy you a full class set'. So, in terms of resourcing and things like that, I think that been super supported ...</p> <p>So, we've been able to include so many different texts from different modes, different like authorship background.</p> <p>Andrea – funding and physical space provided to enable faculty dialogue and planning. HT using organisational approach to maximise the time available to collaborate and mitigate the impact of school disruptions:</p> <p>the days that we were given ... to program ... we use that by trying to get at least two, maybe three of us together, and instead of being on site at school, we went into the Head Office in town ...</p> <p>the allocation from the department, which I I can't even remember what it was. It wasn't much, it was I think it was equivalent to a day, a term, or something like that</p> <p>[condensed version]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing time using casual cover • Paying for professional learning opportunities <p>Network funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing time using casual cover <p>System funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing the licence agreements for new texts to be embedded into the sample materials • Increasing the size of corporate support teams to develop the sample materials and deliver the professional learning • Funding and guidelines provided by the sector. <p>Educational organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Shakespeare scholarship
<p>“I ... had to jump straight into really unpacking the outcomes and content myself”</p> <p>Collaborative and solo sense-making, understanding the syllabus, and experimentation and evaluation during CM</p> <p>I kind of just had to jump straight into really unpacking the outcomes and content myself because I was in charge of programming. You know certain units.</p>	<p>Platforms and spaces to access resources and knowledge</p> <p>Online public-facing resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the public-facing digital syllabus, its examples, tagging to the NLLP, sample programs and scope and sequences provided by NESA • DoE website and using the – outcome tracking tool, the planning and programming structures, sample programs, sample assessments, sample scope and sequences, programming guides (Phases

<p>Andrea – experimenting with using the syllabus outcomes in assessment design</p> <p>I think that one thing that I'm trying to grapple with at the moment is how we can make our summative assessment tasks, not always focusing on those final 2 groups of content point.</p> <p>Andrea – using the resources shared by others in her CM</p> <p>I feel very supported with resources, with embedding, you know, different ideas and voices in my teaching. Jane EXT HT – engaging in an</p> <p>Strategic planning of knowledge and skill development across programs through texts</p> <p>I think we're really trying to think about how we can be strategic with the selection of texts and units in different parts of the scope and sequence from 7 to 10 to ensure that ideas are being built upon, and that they're not just briefly covered.</p> <p>Anna ECT – excited to be experimenting while using the new syllabus:</p> <p>it's really nice to experiment in the classroom, and then it's extra nice because I'm teaching under the new syllabus. So, I do have to do that experimenting so I can figure out, you know to solidify my practice for the new outcomes and teachings, though like, that's a yeah big plus for me.</p>	<p>approach to conceptual programming) Online DoE only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide staffrooms (online collaborative spaces run over Microsoft Teams) for PL and resource sharing <p>Online members only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ETA Facebook page <p>Platforms and spaces to share and access resources provided by colleagues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using resources, sample programs, activity ideas, texts and strategies shared by colleagues when CM (internally and across networks) The planning and programming structures provided by the DoE
<p>Relatings</p> <p>“I feel quite supported”</p>	<p>Social-political arrangements</p> <p>Clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities with the principal as the funding gatekeeper.</p>

<p>System, school and faculty structures that support the collective during CR</p> <p>Andrea ECT – the HT and principal support off-site CM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">So we use that by trying to get at least two, maybe three of us together, and instead of being on site at school, we went into the Head Office in town and booked a meeting room,</p> <p>Andrea EXT – the HT supports her and the team providing PL advice and engaging with the executive</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">My again head teacher has been so supportive and always on the lookout for PL for us, for the new syllabus and sends out an email anytime she comes across something for us to like, register our interest to her. And then I think she take like she she's involved in taking that to the exec or senior exec for that to be approved.</p> <p>Jane EXT – team approach to CM</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We have different people design the programmes. I think by removing some of the outcomes and content points, it's meant that there's a streamline to our programmes.</p>	<p>Head teacher as the conduit between the senior executive and teachers.</p> <p>Head teacher as an advocate for the teachers.</p> <p>System-structures support teams through access to corporate offices. The norm established here is that this space is accessible to teachers.</p>
<p>Feeling supported by the structures that are guiding CM</p> <p>Jane EXT – understands the collaborative CM structures</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We have different people design the programmes. I think by removing some of the outcomes and content points, it's meant that there's a streamline to our programmes. ...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">we create resources for the programmes and of course you follow them or you don't, and we</p>	<p>Decision making in the hierarchy</p> <p>Collaboration time is needed to recognise and maximise the opportunities provided by established roles, responsibilities and relationships.</p> <p>When the teachers perceived they were part of a supportive structure they were more likely to exhibit psychological security and positivity toward change</p>

<p>outline what students should be doing.</p> <p>Kayla EXT HT – values the principal’s organisation of leadership coaches and the collaboration with the HT T&L</p> <p>we are really spoiled. We do have another investment, which is educational leadership development. So, we work with leadership coaches as well. And that's a discretionary investment that our principal has made that again, pays huge dividends for me in every aspect. ...</p> <p>has my journey been met with all of the things like resistance? Yes, anxiety? Yes. Confusion, yes. Work harassment in so far as resources depleting while the demand to do the work is increasing. Yes. Staffing shortages, like I mentioned, yes. But I suppose with the leadership coaching, it's like psychological capital to bolster all of those efforts. And if I've got the access to the psychological capital resources and I've got instructional leadership ... I'm a bit of a utopian example of I'm well resourced, probably could be even over resourced. But that in a way is so good because other schools can see the possibilities of what can happen and hopefully they learn. It's just so sad that we don't have all the money to do all the things.</p> <p>But yeah, the leadership coaching has been an enormous support.</p> <p>Penny ECT – feels supported by her mentor, HT and colleagues</p> <p>I feel quite supported, knowing that I have quite a collaborative team, and people who are really willing to sit down with me who are very experienced.</p>	<p>and consider themselves able to manage the complex and unpredictable nature of their work. Social-political arrangements that enabled positive '<i>relatings</i>' included fostering relationships that enhanced collaboration and helped teachers see that they were not working in isolation and that support was available and actively invested in by school leaders and sectors.</p> <p>Formal facilitation of coaching and mentoring relationships are seen as valuable contribution to CM and psychological safety.</p> <p>perspectives toward whole-school literacy focus and the impact on Year 7s – reducing the number of formal assessments</p>
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I have a mentor for [duration], who is very committed to ensuring that I am being supported and that if there's anything that he can help with and sit down and discuss he will do, which is fantastic and I have a really lovely and approachable head of department, who's also very supportive

Kayla EXT HT – perspectives

toward whole-school literacy focus

But the other part of lesson design that we've had to deal with is a contextually relevant one just for our school, because we have a literacy priority where that's a whole school thing, and we've needed to marry the demands of that with our lessons. And so we've got basically a five minute instructional phase for literacy, the beginning of every lesson, aligning with some whole school priorities. So, we had to sort of redesign some things.

Managing these changes has informed the team's thinking and adaptability to change

... creating the understanding that there's no expectation. Sometimes a sequence of learning can go outside of the one-hour period. And just sort of changing our view of that in terms of what is a lesson, it doesn't necessarily have to confine to the period.

Penny ECT – values the faculty structures for CM and the way this eases workload and supports personal and collective growth

I think because I've been working quite closely on the Year 10 program in resourcing alongside a colleague who I'm teaching Year 11 English with. ... It's been very interesting to see the strategy side of it. We're thinking about how we

can maximize the development of skills that are going to benefit students in different points in Year 11 and Year 12 and beyond that and thinking about texts that are also going to connect to some of the concepts that examining in history of geography. ...

In terms of the influence of programming, so my main programming, as I mentioned, is for Year 10. I have colleagues who are resourcing and programming the other years, which I feel really grateful for because it makes it a lot easier to navigate. And I think better things are created when you're able to really focus in on one area
Penny ECT – feeling trusted

equals feeling joy

I think a huge enjoyment. And this definitely is associated with the school as well. And I think the trust that the school has, and my head of faculty has in my and my colleagues is the freedom to, particularly for collaborative studies to be selecting text sort, a little bit left of center that has been really fun to find thing to texts that are very different and find those connections and be getting the students to be thinking deeply and creatively.

Penny ECT – feeling trust and

respect toward colleagues

in terms of resourcing. I am really lucky in my school's approach with breaking up topics and selecting different staff members to be kind of acting as your coordinators with resourcing because it really helps, ... it is all collaborative and broken up and that your focus can really be on one new group is really helpful because I know that I can trust. It also creates a environment of trust, I think, which you're trusting in your colleagues to be putting in the same level of effort and detail into resources that you are.

<i>Dispositions (habitus)</i>	<i>Practice traditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge: in depth and/or growing knowledge of new syllabus, qualifications, ongoing knowledge development, professional knowledge as new/experienced teachers/heads of faculty, professional judgement in CM and marking, knowledge of their students, dedicated to differentiation and meetings requirements. - Skills: programming, assessment design, collaboration, intentional teaching, communication, critical reflection, programming as a personal endeavour and a meaning-making exercise, engaging in personal reflection, developing skills in teaching language and literacy. - Values: empathy, advocacy, high expectations, collaboration, trust, reliability and commitment to supporting all students, lifelong learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum making practice is deeply personal. • Curriculum making is guided by sector, school and NESA governance/policy structures. • Comprehensive and/or developing knowledge of English content knowledge and pedagogy and technical aspects of programming and formal assessment. • Cultural-discursive positioning of a commitment to supporting all students. • Adaptive agency in the face of a teacher shortage and site-specific challenges. • Engaging in literacy education. • Engendered the values of public education supporting equity and excellence for student learning outcomes.

