
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
APPA: Australian Primary Principals’ Association
ACT: Australian Capital Territory
AEU: Australian Education Union
APF: Australian Principals Federation
COAG: Council of Australian Governments
CSF: Curriculum and Standards Framework
CSU: Charles Sturt University
CMG: Corporate Management Group
DEECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Education
DE&T: Department of Education and Training
DLP: District Liaison Principal
DSE: Directorate of School Education
ESL: English as a Second Language
HSC: Higher School Certificate
IBAC: Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission
ICT: Division of Information and Communication Technology
IVEC: IVEC was the government-supported high-performance computing national facility located in Perth, Western Australia. IVEC was renamed iVEC and later rebranded to the Pawsey Supercomputing Centre in December 2014. Website: www.pawsey.org.au
LAP: Learning Assessment Project
LEA: Local Education Authority
NAPLAN: National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED: Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PISA: Program for International Student Assessment
RD: Regional Director
RNL: Regional Network Leader
SOF: Schools of the Future
SOFWEB: Schools of the Future Website
SEO: Senior Education Officer
VCAA: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCEC: Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission
VELS: Victorian Essential Learning Standards
VGSA: Victorian Government Schools Agreement
VIT: Victorian Institute of Teaching
VSTA: Victorian Secondary Teachers’ Association
VTU: Victorian Teachers’ Union
P&D: Performance and Development Culture
Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purposes of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

Signature: Date: 16 May 2017
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Original documents held by the following organisations have been used in this thesis:

- State Archive Office, North Melbourne, Victoria
- Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Information Service State Library of Victoria – Mitchell Library
- Extensive Online Digital Library Service, Charles Sturt University, for access to journals, papers and other digital records.
  Annual Reports: Minister of Public Instruction; Minister for Education
  Commissions of Inquiry
  Education Acts
  Hansard
  Royal Commission: Minutes of Evidence and Reports: Pearson;
  Rogers/Templeton/ Fink Commissions

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Abstract
For 132 years inspectors had been the eyes and ears of the Victorian Department of Education. Inspectors, collectively known as the inspectorate, were the surveillance mechanism by which the central education bureaucracy could know and regulate what was actually happening in schools under their financial jurisdiction until it was discontinued after 1984. The inspectorate was a safekeeping mechanism, monitoring school performance and the implementation of Department policies and had been the means by which the Department had kept schools operationally accountable. The inspectorial system had been secure, familiar and reliable in that it had been accepted and kept intact over time.

The objective of the thesis is to analyse and interrogate the development of the inspectorate in government schools in Victoria from 1852 until inspection ended in 1984 and to identify the causes and effects that shaped the work of the inspectorate during this period. Systemic monitoring strategies that have been tried and/or implemented by successive state governments post-inspection (1984-2012) are scrutinised. Post 1984 the Victorian experience resulted in a move to a decentralised system of schools and introduced new accountability in the way schooling was managed and reported.

The emphasis underlying the research centres on the requirement of education administrators to maintain effective accountability performance procedures. This study investigates the theme of accountability in the administration of education in Victoria and begins by defining the difficulties that arose from querulous church/state mind sets to establish public schooling. The thesis provides a detailed insight into the emergence of the inspectorial system in Victoria and explores the roles played by a diverse range of groups and individuals including teachers, inspectors, Department of Education officials,
politicians and evidence and recommendations from three royal commissions on education between 1866 and 1901. The critical narrative used throughout provides a perspective not previously untaken on decision making and policy formation during the period covered by the research.

That inspection survived for so long said a great deal about reluctance on the part of the Department, even an inability, to change its accountability process to meet changing times. Eventually, change occurred in response to systemic growth and the diversity of community expectations of schooling. Using critical narrative methodology drawing upon the philosophy and methodologies of narrative historians, the thesis explores the interconnection between the Victorian Education Department and its inspectorate and the necessary role inspection played in the scrutiny of Department policy and regulations across schools.

The research is not a comparative universal examination of inspection but traces the evolution of the inspectorate in Victoria and its ultimate demise as a consequence of a decentralised system of schools post-inspection. The abolition of the regulatory inspectorial system was replaced by a network of self-managing schools. The effectiveness or otherwise of systemic accountability is reviewed in the Conclusion with a forecast for the future direction of decentralisation in schooling.
Chapter One

Take care whom you choose for inspectors; they are a class of men who ought to be searched for with a lantern in one’s hand.  

Van den Ende

The setting of this history is in the state of Victoria, Australia. The study traces the development of the Education Department and its school inspectorate from 1852 when the colony of Victoria officially separated from the administration of its affairs by New South Wales, through to 1984 when the inspectorate was disbanded in favour of a decentralised education administration. The study ends with an account of the evolution of a system of self-managing schools, post-inspection, from 1984 to 2012. The narrative deals with the following four themes in chronological order: The formation of National education in the early months of 1852 through to the passing of the 1872 Education Act by the Victorian Parliament; 1872 to the report of the Fink Royal Commission in 1901; 1901 to 1979/80 when decentralisation of the Education Department was imminent and 1984-2012 with the progression to self-managed schools post-inspection.

Setting the scene

The study begins with efforts in Victoria to establish a non-secular government school system that was based on the Irish experience, a National education system introduced in the British parliament by Lord Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland. This Irish system became the model for government schooling in Victoria during the formative years of the

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In 1831 Lord Stanley announced his plan to introduce a national system of education in Ireland. The plan was an attempt to unify the country behind a system of education free from proselytisation. With a history of subjugation of the Irish people (socially and economically) by the English, there was no common system of education acceptable to Irish Catholics. Bitter rivalry between Catholics and Protestants denied educational opportunity to generations of children in Ireland. In his address to the British parliament Stanley noted that:

The question of the education of the children of the poor, and the mode of carrying the object into effect, is, perhaps, more than any other calculated to excite the feelings of the Irish people…it is almost impossible to separate this subject from the religious opinions and prejudice of the different classes.  

The formation of the Irish National system (9 September 1831) meant the poorer classes in Ireland could receive an elementary education, which had previously been denied to them. Until Stanley’s plan was instigated, grants had been allocated by the British parliament by both direct and indirect means to various evangelising societies and other charities to administer education. The first Irish National Board of Education voted to adopt the successful features of one charity, the Kildare Place Society and its system of non-sectarian instruction in schools. The Society’s inspection method that had effectively monitored the progress of its schools was also embraced. The Society’s inspection model became the one utilised by both the New South Wales and Victorian National Boards. The social structure and church rivalry were not completely replicated in the new colonies. Nevertheless, it was of no surprise to the settlement, that the pattern of social relationships familiar to settlers in their homeland was of some benefit when no social framework to

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inform behaviour was already established. Possibilities for personal property were accessible in the new colony, which were free from the constraints of class structure that was entrenched in England.

With the arrival of the First Fleet\(^3\) on 26 January 1788 carrying its consignment of convicts, military personnel, artisans and provisions to set up the colony of New South Wales, the immediate priority was to erect tents, buildings and other amenities to house the colonists. It took a period of sixty years for a system of state-run schools to be implemented in New South Wales. Church schools in New South Wales received government funds and were administered by a Denominational Board whose membership was made up of representatives from the major religious denominations. The colonial government adopted the tenets of The Irish National System to govern schools in outlying areas of the colony, where populations did not facilitate the establishment of separate schools. A system of inspection was not properly introduced until 1854. The focus had been to promote the National system and to establish new schools.\(^4\)

The Irish National System was set up in Victoria in the early months of 1852 and again the focus was on establishing a bureaucracy in a climate where gold fever prevailed. The first inspector and agent, William Knowles Miller, was dispatched to the goldfields to plead with miners for financial support and to demonstrate commitment to the setting up of schools on the diggings. National schools operated in the colony until 1862, when the Boards of National and Denominational Schools were united under the umbrella of the Common Schools Board. With the successful passage of the *Education Act 1872* through

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\(^3\) The First Fleet was the name given to the eleven ships that left England on 13 May 1787 to found the penal colony of New South Wales, the first European settlement in Australia.

the Victorian legislature, education became free, secular and compulsory. The Department of Education was established, and a minister of the crown appointed with responsibility for the delivery of public instruction. The inspectorate headed by the Inspector-General was responsible for monitoring effective school management and operation. Across the decades, the Victorian Education Department settled into what seemed a predictable operational agenda, but growing discontent among teachers and their unions, particularly after the end of World War II, effected significant changes to the way schools were evaluated.

Increasingly, federal and state politicians directly intervened in the delivery of education in their respective states, resulting in significant changes to the way education Departments managed their activities. With rapid growth in the number of schools, increasing enrolments and the development of new technologies, the inspectorate simply was unable to cope.

**Creation of the Victorian inspectorate**

Denis Grundy has written that the principal educational theory underlying mass schooling was:

> ...that all children could grow in correct learning given an appropriately controlled environment, meant that any detail of the schooling process could be celebrated, with characteristic Victorian solemnity, as a mark of civilization.\(^5\)

To ensure learning growth for all children in a ‘controlled environment’ necessitated the setting up of an authority empowered to make and enforce education rules, and thus monitor systemic efficiency. The emergent authority to monitor efficiency was assigned to a schools inspectorate. The inspectorate was to work as an ‘…authority in authority whose

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civil powers of intervention in popular schooling were finally legitimized by the putative authority of the inspectors’ higher education, social status, professional experience and gender. School inspectors were empowered (and required) to (i) observe and report on school sites and buildings and the practice of education within. This included the necessity to record student learning against set standards and teacher performance and (ii) form qualitative appraisals of schools in a designated inspectorate or group of schools and collect and collate data with respect to enrolment and teacher salary. Judgement was the core of the activity. Questions with respect to the articulation of knowledge and execution of power were often raised. The presence of an inspector in a school was as an idiosyncratic type of agent who embodied inspectorial knowledge, judgement and considerable authority.

Although Van den Ende was writing about the status of education in Holland, his observation and cautionary remark was pertinent to the search for inspectors in the Victorian context.

As the influence of the inspectorate grew, it operated in a system dominated by concern for financial efficacy in the application of public funds for education growth and where the inspectorate was subservient to the administrative authority vested in senior Departmental officers. In this operational climate, it was not surprising that powers were mobilised to meet organisational requirements and expectations, consequently bringing the inspectorate into conflict with the assumed independence of the office. The inspectorate was not a free agent!

From colonial times, education in the Australian context has been under the control of state education departments, each headed by a career public servant - the Director General of Education, who has been responsible to each state’s elected Minister for Education.

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6 Grundy, *From Colony to Coloniser*, p.121.
Historically, a centralised system has been the dominant feature of the administration of public education. Reynold MacPherson has characterised this type of hierarchical structure as a command system in which ‘state Departments have, by and large, centrally financed and administered for all schools: staffing, curriculum, planning, buildings and maintenance.’ Whilst this style of management has provided for equity of approach for government school students, ‘it has also led to a uniformity of approach that has, perhaps counteracted the need for accountability typical of more diverse systems.’

In order to better manage the administration of education, Australian colonial parliaments brought all government funded schools under the control of centralised administrations. But as A. G. Austin asserted, ‘disappointment followed when this new power for education reform was wasted through ineptitude and philistinism of the state education departments, until they were reformed after the turn of the century.’ R.J.W. Selleck described the Education Department in Victoria late in the 19th century as an ‘intricate system of personal relationships, political, social and economic pressures, vested interests, customs, ideologies which, over the years, develop, support each other, conflict or fade.’ Both historians have provided a representative appraisal of state education across the early decades when the Department of Education was working its way through a minefield of legislative regulation and its own uncertainty about how best to move forward with confidence. Regulation and uncertainty aside, efficiency in schooling was imperative,

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8 Cuttance, Harman et.al., p.134.
promoted and measured by: the location and quality of school buildings, the appointment of qualified teachers, the provision of quality teaching materials and the requirement that children regularly attend school. These elements of efficiency needed to be assessed for their educative value.

For the entire 132-year period that the inspectorate operated in Victorian government schools, the inspectorate was the key monitoring mechanism relied upon by the Department to report teacher, student and school performance. The reliance on a system of payment by results, for example, (until 1901) in which part of a teacher’s salary was assessed based on an inspector’s assessment of student achievement, illustrated the power of the Department of Education to monitor and report to parliament on the performance of the school system and teacher effectiveness. Departmental directives with respect to teacher qualifications and training, for example, confirmed central control and authority.

In the controlled environment in which schools operated under the watchful eye of the inspectorate, accountability was clearly defined. Local school committees were utilised to gather knowledge about school management and routines as background for the inspector. Information gathered in this way was used to report on the performance of schools in an inspector’s district. Inspection reports were prepared and forwarded to central officials; the Minister of Public Instruction would aggregate material from the reports and present an annual report to parliament. Edited summaries of the annual reports were made available to be published in daily newspapers. In time, mass media outlets other than newspapers, such as radio, television, the Internet and later national testing of student achievement, meant that the scrutiny of public education became far more transparent.
Post-inspection (from 1984), in a climate of more liberalised school environments, cumulative accountability was assigned to schools to improve performance outcomes for students and overall school operation. Self-management (and self-government for a time in the late 1990s) evolved as a consequence of successive government moves to devolve administrative responsibility to schools. There have been robust initiatives to enable greater freedom to develop innovative teaching and learning opportunities across government schools. Consequently, administrative freedom in the school setting meant that greater accountability shifted on to school councils, principals and teachers, with principals, in a sense, becoming the self-styled ‘inspector’ in their schools. However, the prevailing reality has been one of continued policy domination on the major issues by central education bureaucrats and politicians. A significant development to influence change in the education bureaucracy has been the direct intervention in education policy control by both state and federal education ministers at the expense of senior bureaucrats, a phenomenon termed Ministerialisation.

The shifting of accountability on to schools through a process of decentralisation or devolution of authority following the demise of the inspectorial system in 1984, was a trend that had been occurring overseas. Would this be the panacea for change in Victoria? How would the Department react? Could change be left to those who had managed the system beforehand? History now shows that change would be driven from without, directed by politicians guided by the differing political ideologies of their parties. The repercussion for

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11 A school council is a legal entity, and its members are unpaid volunteers elected by the school community. Council members are elected for a two-year period. One of the key operations of the school council is to determine the policies which relate to the direction of the school.

schools was significant. Post 1984, the consequences of new, systematic accountability requirements for state education are evaluated in this study. At the time of writing, an investigation was being conducted in Victoria by the Independent Broad-Based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) into the conduct of senior officials in the Department regarding the mismanagement and misappropriation of taxpayer funds. Evidence provided in the transcripts of each day’s hearings presented material that is utilised in the concluding chapter as a means of drawing together the main issue of accountability in the administration of education in Victoria.

**Accountability in education**

**Historical context**

Historically, according to Melvin Dubnick, the origins of the contemporary concept of accountability can be traced to the reign of William I, in the decades after the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The concept is closely related to accounting; ‘it literally comes from bookkeeping.’ In 1085 William required all the property holders in his realm to render a count of what they possessed. Possessions were assessed and listed by royal agents in the Doomsday Books. This census was not held just for taxing purposes, it established the basis of royal governance. The Doomsday Books listed what was in the king’s realm; moreover, the king had all the landowners swear oaths of allegiance. In the early twelfth century this evolved into a highly centralized administrative kingship that was ruled through centralised auditing and semi-annual account giving.\(^ {13} \) In earlier periods sovereigns held their subjects to account, but with the passage of time the accounting link was reversed: it was the authorities themselves who were held accountable by the public. In

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Victoria the passing of the Education Act 1872 meant that the accountability process moved beyond mere bookkeeping, and gave the appearance of good governance, both in the public and private sectors.

**Defining accountability**

Accountability operates when those who have been given responsibilities present an account of their performance.\(^{14}\)

Catherine Farrell\(^{15}\) and Jennifer Law\(^{16}\) contend in an article published in 1999: ‘accountability in the public sector is particularly complex,’\(^{17}\) given the number of individuals and groups across distinct government departments. They acknowledge that whilst several models of accountability in education have been developed, four main models have emerged: (i) professional accountability, where the emphasis is placed on the accountability process, not whether certain results have been achieved but whether professional standards of integrity and practice have been adhered to; (ii) hierarchical accountability, in which accountability is sideways and involves upwards accountability. In this model accountability is exercised through the managerial hierarchy where emphasis is placed on the contractual relationship with the state; (iii) market accountability: where the consumer, normally a parent, selects a government school or an alternative private school, based on information (for example, examination results) thereby enabling informed choice when selecting a school to ‘buy into.’ In this model of accountability, market forces replace

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\(^{15}\) Catherine Farrell is Professor of Public Management at the University of South Wales. She has published widely on devolution and its impact on education and on public services.

\(^{16}\) Jennifer Law is a Principal Lecturer in the Faculty of Business and Society at the University of South Wales. She has published works in the areas of Public Sector Management, Local Government, Performance Measurement and Evaluation, Organisational Improvement

political control and (iv) public accountability that follows democratic processes with emphasis on parental and community participation in determining the purpose and process of education. Mutual accountability and partnership between politicians, professionals, parents and the community is a fundamental feature of this model.\(^\text{18}\)

The individual models highlight specific mechanisms but are not mutually exclusive. According to Farrell and Law, the dominant models have been professional and hierarchical. In Victoria, as elsewhere, marketplace accountabilities have evolved in recent times as evidenced during the Kennett Government period in the late 1990s. Present day school administrative teams have taken the opportunity, in a climate of devolved authority, to become entrepreneurial in the way they compete and market their schools for increased enrolments in order to gain a competitive advantage.

**Objective of this thesis**

The objective of the thesis is to analyse and interrogate the development of the inspectorate in government schools in Victoria from 1852 until inspection ended in 1984 and to identify the causes and effects that shaped the work of the inspectorate during this period. Systemic monitoring strategies that have been tried and/or implemented by successive state governments post-inspection (1984-2012) are scrutinised. The emphasis underlying the research centres on the requirement of education administrators to maintain effective accountability performance procedures.

Significance of this thesis

The focus of the thesis is on the interconnection between the Victorian Education Department and its inspectorate and the necessary role inspection played in the scrutiny of Department policy and regulations across schools. The thesis is not a comparative universal examination of inspection nor does it concentrate on individual inspectors and their work routines.

The significance of this thesis is the contribution the research makes to the concept of accountability in education in Victoria. Until 1984 educational programming and teacher assessment in schools was monitored by school inspectors (the inspectorate). The chronological investigation and analysis of the post-inspection period (1984-2012) details the progressive move to self-management in Victorian schools, research that significantly adds to the knowledge of accountability processes established in an education environment of self-managed schools. The strategic reporting of school effectiveness and improvement post-inspection are key accountability requirements. Concluding commentary focuses on the success or otherwise of the inspectorate and whether a decentralised system of self-managing schools offered superior accountability in reporting school efficiency and effectiveness.

The research provides an original, extensive and compelling account of school inspection in Victoria from 1852. On the subject of this thesis there has been an absence of other comprehensive and similarly extensive historical accounts of inspection in Victoria. The thesis occupies a significant area of research that was formerly neglected.
Principal questions

The principal questions addressed in this thesis are:

- What problems beset efforts to establish a state education system and its inspectorate in the two decades (1852-1872) prior to the passing of the 1872 Education Act in the Victorian Parliament? (Chapter Two)

- What were the implications for the future of the Victorian Education Department and the inspectorial system following the findings of three Royal Commissions on the condition of education in between 1872 and 1901? (Chapters Two and Three)

- To what extent was Frank Tate, the first Director of Education in Victoria (appointed in March 1902) able to reshape the functioning of both the Department and the inspectorate through to his retirement in 1928? (Chapter Four)

- What were the consequences for the Department and the inspectorate in the period post World War II (1945 -1979) when the birth rate in Victoria (and nationally) grew exponentially? (Chapter Four)

- What are the implications for the future of schooling arising from the devolution of authority to schools in the decentralised environment of the Victorian government school system post-inspection? (Chapter Five) Can the accuracy of aggregated school performance data and reporting strategies continue to meet public and government accountability expectations and scrutiny of school performance? (Chapter Six)
Methodology

The historiographical debate of the last third of the twentieth century has generated a truly enormous literature - in English alone, quite apart from other languages. For a single individual to master it all would require many years of concentrated study - if indeed such an aim was even practicable.\(^9\)

What is history?

British social historian, Professor Richard Evans,\(^\text{20}\) in his book, *In Defense of History*, ponders the nature of history itself. Noting that there have been many attempts to wrestle with the fundamental questions of ‘…how we study it, how we research and write about it and how we read it,’\(^\text{21}\) Evans contends that ‘…historians are being compelled to address these questions afresh.’\(^\text{22}\)

Evans cites the writings of British historians Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* and Sir Geoffrey Elton, *The Practice of History*, as epitomising contrary views about the study of history. Carr challenged and undermined the belief that history was simply a record of objective facts.\(^\text{23}\) He introduced the idea that ‘…history books, like the people who write them, are products of their own times, bringing particular ideas and ideologies to bear on the past.’\(^\text{24}\) Elton, on the other hand, mounted a defence of history as a search for truth.

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\(^\text{20}\) Evans’ historiographical method was influenced by the Annales School, a group of historians whose historiography was modelled on a style of writing social history developed by French historians. The Annales school of historians was named after the title of their journal, *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*, and established from the late 1920s particularly by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. The interest of the school is in the area of sociocultural history that embraces environmental and geographical determinants, demography, social structures and ways of behaving, thinking and seeing…a social scientific method of writing history. (Thompson, 2000, 12)


\(^\text{22}\) Evans, 2000, p.1.

\(^\text{23}\) Evans, 2000, p.1.

\(^\text{24}\) Evans, 2000, p.2.
about the past, declaring that historians should, above all ‘…focus on the documentary record left by the past, the ultimate arbiter of historical accuracy and truth...’

The German historian, Leopold von Ranke, writing in the eighteenth century, first formulated the ‘scientific’ approach to the study of history. Ranke attempted to put aside the prevailing theories and prejudices of his time and, by the scrupulous interrogation of primary sources, present an unvarnished picture of the facts. Australian historian Peter Rushbrook observed that Ranke’s principles of historical research underpin much of contemporary best practice in narrative history.

Karl Marx, the Prussian born philosopher, social scientist and historian, whilst not rejecting historical narrative per se, hypothesised that forces outside the control of individuals, no matter how prominent, shaped the course of human history. He declared that ‘…history was subject to the inexorable control of economic forces where the individual was the product of his or her own age and class and however talented and forceful was powerless to affect the course of history.’

English historian, Lawrence Stone, observed that the influential rise of social historians during the 1930s-1960s provided a serious setback to the use of narrative in history. Social historians have argued that historiography must be able to establish nomothetic explanations to account for patterns of social change in populations and communities if it wished to be considered ‘scientific.’ This precept left little room for an analysis of ideographic case studies.

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25 Evans, 2000, p.2.  
The central debates among historians today arise from the challenge of post-modernist theories. Postmodernism, notoriously difficult to define, challenges the very existence of historical truth and objectivity. British historian, Professor John Tosh, considers that postmodernist theories arose from the problematic aspects of previous historical explanations. These problems included: (i) the difficulty of grasping the inter-relatedness of every dimension of human experience at any given time; (ii) the difficulty of explaining historical change and whether major transitions in history display common characteristics and (iii) the difficulty of interpreting the destiny of mankind, its progress or lack thereof, by ascribing a meaning to history.

However, there has been considerable effort by some social scientists and theorists who embrace postmodernism, to reinforce the value of traditional or conventional historiography. Tosh, perhaps in an attempt to reconcile the history clashes, suggests that:

The effect of adopting some of the procedures of the social sciences has not been to place major issues of historical interpretation beyond dispute in our time; what it has done is to alert historians to new factors in history, and to make some of their descriptive statements about the past more precise and more comprehensive. 29

Professor Walter Bryce Gallie, a social and political theorist, observed that an historical narrative will usually succeed in making its subject matter more intelligible to its readers by ‘…showing its interconnections with other relevant evidences and results.’30

Contemporary writers who have continued to value the scholarship of narrative historiography have acknowledged, considered and drawn from the ideas of post modernism, and evolved a form of ‘critical realism’ in narrative history. Evans recognises that it is appropriate that post-modernist critics and theorists should force historians to

reflect upon and justify the manner in which they practise their discipline. He points out, however, that

… The truth about patterns and linkages of facts in history is in the end discovered, not invented, found, not made … making such patterns and linkages causal and otherwise, is by no means the only function of history, which also has a duty to establish the facts and re-create the past in the present … Objective history in the last analysis is history that is researched and written within the limits placed on the historical imagination by the facts of history and the sources that reveal them … [history] really happened, and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it did and reach some tenable conclusions about what it all meant.  

It is acknowledged in historical methodology that there is a debate between narrative history and stating overt theoretical positions. This thesis takes the former position and heeds Joan Burstyn’s advice that theories are notoriously subject to fashion.

Hence an historian is likely to be set aside quickly once the fashion for a particular theory has passed. On the other hand, an historian who tells good stories, whose narrative style is clear and lively, may well live on through his or her readers long after other interpretive material has passed from use.

Similarly, R C Peterson has written that “the rule of parsimony applies: the explanation should be minimal though sufficient. It is not necessary to wear your heart on your sleeve.” In this thesis too theory is treated with a light hand.; critical realism is included as a heuristic device to aid the structure of the traditional historical narrative employed.

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31 Evans, In Defense of History, pp.219-220.
33 Petersen, R.C., Historical research in education: what it is and how to do it, Occasional Paper No.18, Faculty of Education, University of Sydney, 1989, p.15.
According to Lawrence Stone, ‘…narrative is taken to mean the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story.’ The narrative in this thesis traces the evolution of the colonial and state inspectorial system within the Department of Education in Victoria, 1852-1983, with an account of strategies that followed the cessation of school inspection from 1984. As the narrative progresses, the conduct of significant players across schools, the inspectorate and the Department are examined, relative to the principal theme of accountability that informed classroom educational practices and interactions. The critical element of the methodology involves an ongoing process of analysis and reflection as the narrative unfolds. The methodology applied to the writing of this thesis is a narrative style of knowing, understanding, explaining and reconstructing the past. William Cronon, an environmental historian, has said that,

Like all historians, we configure the events of the past into causal sequences-stories-that order and simplify those events to give them new meanings…because narrative is the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality.

What matters most with respect to the writing of a narrative is that the conclusion is a credible account that makes a substantive contribution, a true account of the subject matter, an account that is true in its detail and true when considered as a whole. Consequently the writer should be accountable and the writing should provide a seamless, natural flow to the narrative so that the reader is engaged and informed.

In this thesis, the processes used in the analysis of primary materials and the writing of a critical realist narrative, focus particularly on the interactions of people and events in evolving and shaping outcomes. The narrative is able to illustrate that policies and procedures were often formed ‘on the run’ or in an ad hoc fashion, as a result of the peoples’ opinions shaping events and policies, leading to a change in direction of the narrative. Moreover, the focus is on attempting to identify all the educational stakeholders as they step onto the stage of events, whether they were public entities or almost anonymous figures in school communities.

Given that the research for this thesis traces the history of the Victorian state school inspectorial system from 1852 to 2012, critical historical narrative is the appropriate methodology. The subject matter builds on the critical narrative that I employed in my research Masters degree when investigating the work of National Board inspectors between 1852-1862 on the Victorian Goldfields. The ordering or sequencing of events in the development of the inspectorate is critical to an understanding of the eventual phasing out of inspection. This methodology facilitates continuity in completing the story of my particular interest in inspection as a means of accountability in state education over a period of 132 years. In work covering this extended period of time, it has been necessary to record events chronologically in order to track the development of the inspectorate and to critically examine social and political issues relative in time and place. The intention has been to provide a seamless, natural flow to the narrative to keep the reader engaged and informed.

It should be noted that issues such as gender, race and class are considered implicitly as part of the broad narrative. The research focus in this thesis explicitly relates to the state education system in Victoria. For example, the thesis acknowledges that in the main the
inspectorial system was dominated by men with patriarchal assumptions about the role of women in society. Similarly, these assumptions were further applied to the place of the working class in the educational system. These assumptions are revealed at various points in the narrative. For example, Arthur Orlebar’s reference to ‘inferiors’ – those of lesser status who should not take up inspectorships–his preference was for younger men, page 63, and William Collard Smith’s (Minister for Public Instruction) remark in the Victorian parliament where his expressed view was that men were preferred to hold inspectorships, (page 143).

At the time of writing, there has been no earlier precedent of interrogation and appraisal of the primary sources utilised for the subject of my research, particularly the evidence of inspectors and education officials given at the three royal commissions between 1866 and 1901 and the inspection reports within the annual reports of the Minister of Public Instruction. The Victorian parliamentary record of Votes and Proceedings in both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council, together with the minutes of evidence and reports of the royal commissions were closely interrogated. These primary sources provided a new window on the events and players that shaped education policy and accountability relative to the focus of the research in a manner that has not been previously addressed. Critical analysis of the likelihood of events being correct, the likely reasons for their taking place, and the possible impact and significance of these events are necessary characteristics of this narrative. The narrative provides a new window into an uncharted aspect of educational history in the evolution of state education in Victoria. It is understood that this research is not an end in itself and does not presume to be the final authority on the content.
**Writer’s position**

On entry to the Teaching Service with the Victorian Education Department, firstly as a trainee teacher on a Department Studentship (1971), then as a classroom teacher in primary schools (from 1974), my curiosity was aroused by the presence of the school inspector. My first teaching appointment was to a school in metropolitan Melbourne. The local district inspector, on his first visit to the school, made a point of making himself known to me and to wish me well in my future teaching career. As I was in my first year as a teacher, the inspector made a particular effort to introduce himself to my class and to show interest in the children and their interests. The primary purpose of the inspectors was to assess teacher performance. Teacher colleagues who had requested an assessment of their performance busily prepared their classrooms with up-to-date displays of children’s work, particularly handwriting, ensuring that workbooks had been marked and that test records and assessments of student achievement levels were properly written up. Records of Procedure (work planning document) and class timetables were readied for inspection. Blackboard presentation was all-important. It seemed that in classrooms where white chalk normally sufficed, lots of coloured chalk brightened the appeal for children of tasks for the school day. Some teachers with artistic flair had eye-catching illustrations to demonstrate their prowess with blackboard technique.

Before the inspector left the school, teachers who had participated in performance assessments were issued with ‘blue’ copies of the inspector’s brief report that denoted whether a promotable assessment had been achieved or not. For a first-year teacher in 1974, the office of inspector and his/her role was both perplexing, and a cause for some concern. The presence of the inspector in a school heightened the awareness of all staff of the need
to be on their very best professional behaviour. Even if a teacher had not sought an assessment, there might well be the chance that the inspector might drop by unannounced, for a ‘social’ visit. Hence there was a feeling of genuine urgency and anxiety amongst all staff of the need to be prepared! It seemed to me that given notice of an impending visit by the inspector, teachers were ‘motivated’ to display artificially high levels of pedagogical expertise that may have been unsustainable to incorporate in their day-to-day teaching careers. For some teachers, when the inspector left the school, heightened levels of intensive effort and energy appeared to dissipate.

With a view to add value to my primary teaching credentials, I made a successful application for study leave from the Education Department. I completed an Arts degree at Monash University in Melbourne majoring in History and Politics in 1978. Further study in a Bachelor of Education degree (completed part-time in 1981) working with Professor Richard (Dick) Selleck nurtured my interest in the history of education, particularly the history of schooling, the work of school inspectors and the inspectorate in general.

Interest in the origin of the inspectorate in Victoria led me to undertake research into the work of National Board inspectors on the Victorian goldfields, 1852-1862. At Monash University there were a number of academics with expertise in the field of the History of Education. Dr Martin Sullivan and Professor Richard Selleck were both eminent narrative historians. Working with them enabled me to appreciate the importance of historical narrative methodology. I graduated with a research Masters degree from Monash in 1986.

Given my background in teaching and research in the History of Education, I have no predisposing biases in the manner in which the work undertaken in this thesis has been interrogated. My determination has been to understand the history of the times covered by
this project and to use chronological evidence to track the work of inspectors and the accountability process that was a central systemic feature of the Department of Education until 1984. Experiences as a teacher and later the leadership position as a school principal for twenty years, have been motivating influences in the desire to complete the narrative begun in my Masters project. The intent has been to find out, know and learn from new research, and to share knowledge of this hitherto undocumented field in the manner in which this current research has been undertaken. As the narrative progresses, logical deduction, or the process of reasoning from one or more statements to reach a logical outcome, has been an intended characteristic of the writing style employed. The thesis concludes with a synopsis that offers an assessment of the value of school inspection as the original instrument of systemic accountability, with comparative conclusions advanced in the way school accountability operates post-inspection.

A necessary component in this research has been the extent to which I have read widely beyond the content of primary source material to gain an appreciation of inspection that evolved in northern Europe including Germany and Norway, the United States and the United Kingdom. An extensive search of journal and secondary source material has broadened my awareness of the commitment to inspection in those countries that still utilise inspection as the primary accountability framework. One specific example relevant in this context is the work of inspectors associated with the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED) across the school system in the United Kingdom. An exploration of perceptions about public accountability and how this might not translate to pedagogical value adding in developing a revised opinion upon the core theme of accountability in this thesis.
This project has centred on probing why a system of inspection was retained in Victoria before any real effort was made to change an entrenched accountability mechanism that seemed an untouchable! Was there an entrenched conviction that there was no need to change an inspection process that had served the requirements of the accountability of the public financing of the school system? Was no one prepared to bring a microscope to the effectiveness of monitoring school performance? Was it a matter of sticking to the maxim that ‘If it’s not broke, don’t fix it?’ Perhaps the school system met the needs of society despite economic downturns or upheavals and later, the impact of two world wars? When change did eventuate in the management of systemic performance, to what extent was it evolutionary, indeed inevitable? Did change bring a new set of problems that were unforeseen at the time? And of the future…what next? Response to these issues reflects my interrogation and analysis of historical evidence in an effort to bring an updated perspective on the transformation that occurred in the management of Victorian state education after the inspectorial system was abandoned. It is left to other writers on this subject to bring their individual perspectives, selection of documentary material and analyses on the subject of this thesis. Norman Denzin’s reflection on research method has been uppermost in my approach to writing when he said

…today there is no longer a God’s eye view, which guarantees absolute methodological certainty. All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer…The days of naïve realism and naïve positivism are over. In their place stand critical and historical realism, and various versions of relativism. The criteria for evaluating research are now relative.38

Sources and literature reviewed

As discussed in this chapter, the methodology underpinning the writing is one of historical narrative. The essential feature of the research is a focus on the extensive on-line resources available on the Victorian parliamentary website at http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/. Specifically, parliamentary papers, Votes and Proceedings of both the Legislative Assembly and Council, Hansard, annual reports of the Ministers of Public Instruction over time, royal commission minutes of evidence and reports, Education Acts and the Anti-corruption Commission Victoria. This website facilitated the decision taken to focus on the examination of education policy and the identification of major players in the narrative highlighted in the reports and parliamentary debates in Hansard. The extent of parliamentary records available to the research provided all necessary evidence necessary to complete the research. Documentary evidence utilised and selected enabled a consistent and coherent approach across the research. The annual reports of inspectors and the ministers of public instruction and later the ministers for education were readily accessible. These were legitimate and relevant resources that were necessary to develop an authoritative account of the evolution of education policy in state education in Victoria.

On-line access to the Charles Sturt University’s E-Library was most beneficial in accessing an extensive range of digitised journals relevant to the research. Data bases accessed: EBSCOhost(education); ERIC; Taylor and Francis Online: tandfonline-com.ezproxy.csu.edu.au; Wiley Online Library: Onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.csu.edu.au; Springer Online: Link-springer-com.ezproxy.csu.edu.au and JSTOR: jstor-org.ezproxu.csu.edu.au. Journals accessed through E-Library website include:
An oral history approach was not considered as the primary sources on the parliamentary website provided the necessary perspectives needed: cross referencing between the accuracy of Hansard reporting of parliamentary debates and the printed ministerial reports and those of the inspectors could be reliably validated.

Access on the parliamentary website to the minutes of evidence and reports relative to the royal commissions investigated: 1866; 1877-78 and 1899-1901 provided detailed accounts of evidence from key players such as department secretaries, inspectors and teachers with significant recommendations that formed crucial commission findings in reports to parliament. The examination and methodical interrogation of these primary sources provides a new lens on research in the history of education in Victoria that has not previously been undertaken.

Annual reports held in the Victorian State Archive Office in North Melbourne relevant to both the National and Common Schools Boards provided primary documents relative to the formation of early attempts to establish policy direction for department officers. Records of meetings held and instructions to inspectors were particularly useful. Specifically, Minute Books, Inwards Correspondence files, Letter Books and Special Case files were accessed. Archive Series numbers accessed were:
**Board of Education:** Special Case Files, VPRS: 892; Minute Bo; ok I, VPRS 894, 1862-1865; Minute Book II, VPRS 894,1865-1869; Minute Book III, VPRS 894; Inwards Correspondence Files, Series 903,1862-1872.


Post 1980, access to Victorian Education Department published documents and papers related to the emergence and development of leadership policies in a decentralised education system was essential in extending the ‘new’ accountability framework for education to 2012. *Ministerial Papers 1-6*,39 and *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession*,40 are two examples of policy statements accessed in this research.


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39 *Ministerial Papers 1-6*, issued by the Victorian Minister for Education for Public Information and Discussion, Victorian Government Printer, Melbourne, 1984

40 *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession*, Communications Division for Flagship Strategies Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, July 2012.


were important documents in examining the currency of education Department accountability policies to 2012.


Commonwealth government resources were accessed utilising internet resources available on government websites. Specifically, for content in both Chapter Six and the Conclusion these websites provided necessary government accountability policy: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008; the Australian Government Productivity Commission Draft Report, 2016; My School website at http://www.myschool.edu.au; the Performance and Accountability Bill, 2013; The Effectiveness of the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy, 2013; Review of Funding for Schooling, 2011 and the School Governance website at www.schoolgovernance.net.au

Access to digitised newspapers utilising the extensive online resource on the Australian National Library website ‘Trove’ provided rich commentary and reporting of education issues as they arose during the narrative and captured the spirit of the moment. Newspapers

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scrutinized included *The Argus*, *The Melbourne Age*, and the *Herald-Sun*. Articles sourced for this research often provided independent public commentary and observations about political activities of governments, political leaders and key players.

In defending the methodology used in this thesis, texts by Evans, *In Defense of History*; Doherty (Ed.) *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* and Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* together with selected readings from *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin and Lincoln) and *The History and Narrative Reader* (Roberts), were central resources for the analysis by means of narrative methodology used in this thesis. Richard Evans defends his narrative approach to historical knowledge by illustrating how meaning is extracted from the past. Evans elucidates the significance of using agreed rules of documentation which together with a researcher’s insights, may reconstruct a verifiable, usable construct of the past. He uses his methodology to address postmodernist criticisms that identify all judgments as subjective. John Tosh in *The Pursuit of History*, outlines how the past may be known and how such a construct may be applied to present need and hence exposed to appreciably changeable practices. Tosh traces the origins of historical study and the methodologies that have evolved over time. Tosh first discusses how historians ought to properly carry out their research and on how to write and interpret historical discoveries. Later, he adopts a more philosophical

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stance relative to questions regarding objectivity, accurate knowledge and the reliability of facts. He defends history’s viability and importance against those who attack it, including postmodernists, being careful not to dismiss all postmodernist contributions to the discussion. Perry Anderson in *The Origins of Postmodernity*\(^{50}\) gives a lucid account of the field of historical methodology that has been ‘plagued by methodological confusion and argumentative indecision.’\(^{51}\)

*The Politics of Accountability: Educative and International Perspectives*, edited by Reynold Macpherson,\(^{52}\) a collection of papers, by various education theorists was a valuable resource that specifically deals with the study of accountability in the United States, using case studies, and importantly, with the international politics of accountability. Chapter Ten of *The Politics of Accountability: Educative and International Perspectives* was of particular relevance to the theme of this thesis, as it dealt with the politics of accountability in Australian Education. Peter Cuttance, Reynold MacPherson, and Don Smart et al. wrote this paper. The chapter provided a synopsis of accountability in the Australian context, highlighting case studies in South Australia, New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania, and the contrary nature of the centralist and pluralist forces evident in state education Departments. The authors of the paper conclude from the four case studies that the ‘peculiar’ constellation of political circumstances surrounding state education systems that is ‘…state Departmental restructuring/devolution, financial cutbacks, pressures for greater school and system accountability, teachers threatened by

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rapid change and appraisal processes and increased ministerialisation of policy,\(^5^3\) has created a volatile and unstable policy environment particularly with respect to accountability policy.

A number of published papers dealt with accountability in both the public service and education. Those that were particularly helpful included: *No Child, No School, No State Left Behind: Schooling in the Age of Accountability* (Hopmann)\(^5^4\); *OFSTED: Inspecting Schools and Improvement Through Inspection* (Matthews and Smith); \(^5^5\) *Market Accountability in Schools: Policy Reforms in England, Germany, France and Italy* (Mattei).\(^5^6\)

An extensive literature search was undertaken, using a wide range of national and international search engines such as Google Scholar, Safari, and sources for research and secondary sources on the Charles Sturt Library and digital resources on the specific topic of the thesis, namely Inspection and Accountability in Colonial/State Government Schools: 1852 - 2012. Limited relevant research and/or secondary sources were indicative of the want of research on the subject of this thesis. Possible Australian and international influences that were identified within primary source materials, State records and the


\(^{54}\) Hopmann, S.T. (2008). No child, no school, no state left behind: schooling in the age of Accountability,’ in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Routledge, London, Vol. 40, No.4. DOI: 10.1080/00220270801989818 Link to this article: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220270801989818](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220270801989818) Taylor and Francis Group Online.


Victorian Department of Education, were also the subject of supplementary focused literature searches. These influences included searches related to the history of inspectorial systems in Britain, Northern Europe, the United States and New Zealand in the mid and late nineteenth century. Other potential influences were identified in educational legislation of other Australian colonies, particularly in the period 1850 through to the early years of the twentieth century. Social influences present in Victoria, such as the effect of the discovery of gold and its long-term impact on society and subsequent rapid economic growth and expansion of services in the state, the building of railway infrastructure and the consequences of the Depression during the 1890s, provided valuable insight into factors that impacted on Department service delivery.

Available published sources and unpublished theses relating to the history of education in Victoria, and initially viewed as potentially relevant to this thesis, do not answer the principal questions raised in this thesis. Any attention shown in such works to accountability in a government Department has not been given close analysis. Where secondary source material was located, the issue of accountability was not addressed in any focused way. General secondary sources dealing with school inspection in Victoria tend most often to offer a broad-brush approach, for example Alan Maclaine’s article, *An Evaluation of the System of Inspection in Australian State Schools* (1973)\(^{57}\). Maclaine provided a descriptive account of inspection and assessment of the inspectorial system as it was.

Changes that occurred post-inspection could not have been foreseen at that time.

Another article written in the same year by A.W. Jones, Director-General of Education in

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South Australia titled The Inspector at the Crossroads, re-examined the role of the inspector and, not surprisingly, suggested that inspectors are the ‘key’ men in the education system. Jones’ belief was that the role of an inspector should move from that of being ‘the eyes and ears’ of the education system to become the ‘system’s heart and soul.’

There is no insight into the issues of substantive change or any vision offered for an education Department’s future without inspection as its key system monitoring or surveillance too. Nonetheless, there was useful commentary regarding the need for a change in teacher/inspector professional discourse. Denis Grundy’s article “The Schools Inspectorate in Victoria 1856-1899: problems of power and authority” provided some insight into the interplay of power and authority between the Victorian inspectorate, the Boards of Education and the fledgling Department of Education. This article was relevant to the theme of this thesis.

The principal sources used in writing the major part of this thesis Chapters Two to Four that deal with inspection and the emergence of the Department of Education post 1872, utilise the original documents created by, or held within the records of the State Archive Office, Victorian parliamentary documents accessed online, such as the Minister for Public Instruction’s annual reports, annual reports of inspectors, evidence and minutes of three Royal Commission and parliamentary debates and Hansard were used extensively. For the

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work in chapters Three and Four, online records of primary documents have been of
immeasurable assistance. Other sources used in these chapters, such as published sources
from this period, are used to supplement these archival sources, principally to provide
context or further information as required and where available. This approach was adopted
because the online parliamentary records of this period are clearly the dominant, most
significant, and specific primary source material on the administration and efficiency or
otherwise of the Department of Education.

Royal Commission files available through the Victorian parliamentary website provided
vital material for analysis of evidence of key Department officers post 1872. It is
acknowledged that official documents have been accessed, and at times the creators of
these documents may have been subject to constraints and restrictions as to what could be
written. An example here is the ‘cleaning’ of inspectors’ reports by senior Department
personnel, so that any criticism of Department officials or policy, implied or otherwise, was
deleted before being published for the general public and parliament. (See the reference to
Inspectors’ Holland and Robertson in Chapter Three.) Generally, primary source material
overwhelmingly originates from male officials and other male authority figures typical of
the social period and time when the documents were written.

For the extensive period covered in Chapter Four, recommendations of the Fink
Commission in which Frank Tate set about implementing a major overhaul of the
Education Department were extremely valuable. As the narrative progresses, documents
relative to the 1931 Board of Inquiry are used to report outcomes of the inquiry. Late in the
chapter, as moves to decentralise Department operations gained momentum, certain
documents relevant to this period of the narrative became essential. The 1960 Report of the
Committee on State Education in Victoria;\textsuperscript{62} the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, May 1973, and the Victorian Government’s White Paper (1980);\textsuperscript{63} deal with strategies that moved the Education Department into a new era of decentralised schooling.

For the source material for Chapters Five and Six, I relied upon published Department of Education policy documents, government policy statements and public commentary garnered from metropolitan daily newspapers. Commonwealth government education policy accessed online included documents from the Commonwealth Department of Education and the Senate and Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) website.

Journal articles and texts identified in the searches were helpful in providing informed perspectives on a period of significant change in Victoria’s government school education system. An example is John Pardy and Lesley Preston’s paper “The Great Unraveling; Restructuring and Reorganising Education and Schooling in Victoria: 1980-1992.”\textsuperscript{64} Pardy and Preston provide a timeline for the events that led to structural change in the Department of Education, particularly during the Cain and Kirner years (1982-1992) in government, and the role the various education ministers played in moving the agenda for change forward. It was the Cain Labor Government that enacted the changes that were initiated in the latter years of the Hamer Liberal Government, through the work of their Ministers of Education including Lindsay Thompson, Ralph Hunt and Norman Lacey. Hedley Beare’s


article ‘The Structural Reform Movement in Australian Education During the 1980s and its Effect on Schools’ (1983) was another useful overview of the factors that were inherent in the restructuring process. These were (i) school-based decision-making; (ii) new administrative procedures; especially breaking down the ‘top down’ bureaucracy; (iii) regionalisation, where an autonomous school system and a region within a system are created and (iv) demographic change in school communities. These are issues that are addressed in Chapter Six. Beare’s perspectives were relevant to the accountability theme explored in the thesis.

Articles and books written by Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks with regard to self-management post-inspection and with recent work dealing with the self-transforming school were important references for this thesis. The ways in which Victorian governments, both Liberal and Labor, worked to establish self-management in schooling was based on Caldwell and Spinks. My knowledge and first-hand experience, together with access to Education Department policy statements, enabled me to write with some authority on the accountability strategies that were introduced from the time Schools of the Future (SOTF) was introduced late in 1992.


68 In October 1992 a conservative Liberal-National party Coalition government was elected to office in the Victorian State elections. The new government under Jeff Kennett moved quickly in a package of radical reform. Cuts in education led to the closure of fifty-five public schools, the declaration of four and a half thousand teachers ‘in excess of need’ of whom 2000 accepted voluntary, and the privatisation of school cleaning. In this ‘slash and burn’ approach to education reform the government unveiled its flagship education policy, ‘Schools of the Future’
The journal articles and primary source material represent the viewpoints of a cross section of the educational community. They give the perspectives of Department officers, regional directors, senior education officers, principals, teachers and school council members within local communities, who played, and continue to play, an official or quasi-official role in supporting school principals in the development and implementation of school policies and shared accountability for school finance matters. The views of such a wide range of stakeholders means that events can frequently be examined and analysed from more than one perspective and consequently, the differing objectives of each in the correspondence or records they created, can be considered against each other in seeking to establish what took place and why. In Victorian Parliamentary Papers, Hansard and Reports accessed for the subject of this thesis in the period 1852-1872 (reference here is to Chapters Two to Four in particular) the perspectives of women, children and ordinary residents are almost non-existent. The perspectives of Aboriginal peoples are entirely absent.

**Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters and a conclusion.

**Chapter One:** This chapter presents the context, purpose, goals, significance and methodological approach of this thesis. The chapter outlines the methodological approach employed in the systematic investigative examination of relevant archival sources to create a critical narrative of the history of the public school inspectorate and accountability in the Victorian Education Department. The inspectorate was used as an accountability mechanism to monitor the efficiency of schooling for over 130 years. Further, the thesis takes the reader into a period post-inspection to explore moves to decentralise the delivery
of education, creating and requiring new forms of accountabilities by means of which schools were to report school effectiveness and performance.

**Chapter Two** (1862-1872) examines the development of the inspectorate during the Common Schools period, in which the former National schools and the church-operated Denominational schools were united under one Board of Education from 1862 until the passing of the 1872 Education Act. Evidence and findings of the Higinbotham Royal Commission (1866) are particularly valuable, given the importance of those inspectors, especially the Inspector-General, called before the Commission to provide evidence.

**Chapter Three** spans the period 1872 through to 1900. The focus in this chapter follows the progress of the growth of a centralised Department of Education and the authoritarian role of the inspectorate. Three Royal Commissions: 1877 (Pearson); 1882-83 (Rogers-Templeton) and the 1899 Fink Commission are considered. Evidence presented at the Commissions by senior Department administrators and inspectors is discussed and interrogated. This is a new historical discussion about the performance of the central administration that has not previously been addressed. The impact of the Depression of the 1890s is also considered.

**Chapter Four** (1900-1979) examines efforts by the newly appointed Director of Education, Frank Tate, to bring about and introduce changes to an outmoded, outdated education system. Of particular relevance to the project is the approach Tate took to revitalise the Department, using his expertise and the recommendations of the Fink Commission’s final report. Due to serious teacher shortages, class sizes were increased especially in rural and remote schools. The strengthening of teacher unionism and the diminishing influence of the inspectorate are areas investigated. A reform agenda following
World War II stressed the importance of social and citizenship aspects of schooling. The Ramsay Report (1960) provided a significant examination of the organisation and administration of post-war education.

The Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (1973) set up by Prime Minister E.G. Whitlam is considered. The committee, with Peter Karmel as chairperson, was required to examine the position of government and non-government primary and secondary schools and to make recommendations on the immediate financial needs and priorities of schools. Teacher discontent was decisive in moves to radically force change to the central administration of education. The influence of the teacher union movement is an important consideration in this regard. Early moves to decentralise the management and organisation of schooling, and the influence of government ministers and politicians to substantially take control of the education agenda from Department officials, gained momentum and are considered late in this chapter.

**Chapter Five** (1983-2014) critically explores what occurred in Victoria upon the demise of the inspectorate in 1983. Steps taken to move accountability away from an outdated inspectorial system are considered. Moves to decentralise schooling gained momentum in this period, with the ways in which state and federal government ministers continuing to intervene in how education was delivered and monitored, being analysed. The influence of successive state governments in pursuing a program of devolved authority to schools became critically important.

**Chapter Six** outlines the new accountability procedures for a self-managed decentralised school system where school principals are delegated increased authority over the management and organisation of their schools. School funding concerns are explored,
as is the introduction of national testing of student achievement as a strategy to make
schools accountable for improved student learning outcomes.

**Reflections and future directions** reviews the implications of the decline of the
inspectorate as the key accountability strategy in assessing school and teacher performance
and aims to assess whether the strategies that replaced inspection have been effective.
Mismanagement and misconduct by senior officials in the Department in recent times has
revealed a significant breakdown in accountability procedures in the Department’s inner
sanctum. Ramifications of misconduct in the system are analysed. Consideration is also
given to the future. Are transforming schools, schools in which higher levels of autonomy
would be necessary and where schools are ‘unchained’ from the constraints of a
‘command-and-control and carrot-and-stick’ approach, the next stage or will there be a
return to the inspectorate in some revised form? Concluding remarks consider whether the
principal questions in Chapter One have been answered. Suggestions for further research
opportunities are presented.
Chapter Two

Establishing the Victorian school inspectorate 1852-1872

In our system here, every inspector is supposed to be born an inspector; he comes forth like Minerva, from the head of Jupiter; he is, shortly after his appointment, put into a district, and is supposed to understand his work.¹

Richard Hale Budd: Inspector-General

Background to the period

In the nineteenth century, British overseas colonies were centrally governed, a system deemed necessary by the sparseness of populations that were spread across vast geographic distances and by scant resources.² Such circumstances aptly described the situation in the Australian colonies and their government departments. Education in Victoria from the beginnings of public education in the early months of 1852 was built on centralised administration, with the fledgling National Schools Board in control. With the passing of the 1872 Education Act all those employed in the Department of Education worked under the statutes legislated in the 1872 Education Act with a Minister of Public Instruction being the minister responsible for education in the Victorian Parliament. It was the secretary of the Department who had administrative control over Department operations until 1979-80

¹  Richard Hale Budd, Inspector-General, Common Schools, Response to Question 1850 before the Higinbotham Royal Commission, Friday 19 October 1866, Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 2, in Sources in the History of Victorian Education No.2. (1978).
when moves to establish a decentralised education system were commenced with then ministers Alan Hunt and Norman Lacey.

The Victorian National Board of Education was hastily formed to manage those national schools already in existence and managed by the New South Wales colonial government. The first commissioners under the Act to incorporate the new board were: Hugh Childers, a former inspector with the Denominational Board; Charles Ebden, a pastoralist and former member of the New South Wales Legislative Council; Thomas Power, an auctioneer and Member of the Victorian Legislative Council; William Westgarth, Member of the Legislative Council and an early Victorian historian and James Palmer, the Speaker of the Legislative Council.\(^3\) Once incorporated the Victorian National Board adopted the rules of the New South Wales National Board, rules that were later modified to bring the Board’s operations closer to that of the Irish National Board. In its \textit{First Annual Report} the Victorian National Board’s commissioners recognised that inspection was one of the best means of rendering the efficiency of schools.\(^4\)

From 1 September 1862 the \textit{Common Schools Act} brought to an end the National and Denominational School Boards. The purpose of the \textit{Act} was to abolish the two former Boards and thus to form a single entity known as the Board of Education. Charles James Griffiths was appointed the first chairman of the new Board, but by the time of the meeting of the Board on 6 August 1863, Griffiths had died. One week later, 13 August 1863, the former chairman of the National Board, Sir James Palmer, was elected chairman. Palmer at that time held the position of President of the Victorian Legislative Council. Other

members of the Board were William Henry Archer, who was the Victorian Registrar-General, Matthew Hervey- Member of the Legislative Council, Theodotus Sumner and Isaac Hart. The Board of Education was required to frame new regulations and allot moneys granted by parliament for State-aided schools. In addition, the new Board was required to determine: where new schools were to be established; the inspection of schools; the examination and classification of teachers and setting up a course of non-secular study in all state-funded schools; establish a minimum number of pupils for the granting of aid; provide for a minimum of four hours secular instruction each day; prohibit the exclusion of pupils or grounds of religious persuasion and provide for the education of destitute children. The Act also provided for the appointment of local committees which were to be responsible to the Board.5

The Board was also responsible for the appointment of staff. Former National Schools Board secretary, Benjamin Kane, became the secretary of the Board of Education.6 The Inspectorate was formed from inspectors from both the former National and Denominational Boards. Arthur Bedford Orlebar was appointed Senior Inspector (National Board); George Wilson Brown, Henry Venables and Alexander Gilchrist (National Board inspectors) and J. Geary, Henry Sasse, John Sircom and T. Smith (Denominational Board inspectors).7 The Act provided for the appointment of an Inspector-General (Richard Hale Budd, appointed from the former Denominational Board);

From the early weeks of 1852, the centralisation of operations with the establishment of a properly constituted Board ensured that a uniform curriculum could be set, applicable to

all schools. Control over the building of new schools and early attempts to set up teacher assessment/teacher training were areas where centralised administration could be seen to manage the growth and effectiveness of schooling. From the early years of British colonisation, elementary schooling across Australia partially owed its existence to the work of reputable nineteenth century Australians. In the colonial setting, society was perceived to have been unstable, threatening and often unruly. ‘There was no aristocracy to give tone, no established church, no ancient halls of learning, the tried and proven methods of agriculture had been tried and failed’ and ‘…in the loose structure of colonial society the unlettered and the poor had an influence which they could not hope to attain in England.’

Administrators and teachers had an obligation to produce decent, orderly, law-abiding pupils who respected authority and did what they were told. The National Board stipulated twelve practical rules for teachers. Item 6 specified that teachers were to impress upon their pupils the great rule of regularity and order – “A time and a place for everything,” and everything in its proper time and place.” Teachers were also required to pay the strictest attention to the morals and general conduct of their pupils and to omit no opportunity of inculcating the principles of truth and honesty, the duty of respect to superiors and obedience to all persons placed in authority over them.

It took two decades of trial and error in Victoria to establish a school system wherein school attendance was reckoned to be obligatory by colonial governments.

This study, that investigates the theme of accountability in the administration of education in Victoria, begins by defining the difficulties that arose from querulous

9 Selleck, R.J.W., ‘Frank Tate: A Victorian Australian,’ p.59.
11 VPARL1854-55NoA30.pdf. Item 8, p.51
church/state mindsets to establish public schooling. Disparate views regarding the administration of education adversely affected the effective formation of a state education bureaucracy and the development of an efficient inspectorial system between 1852 and 1872, prior to the passing of the *Education Act 1872* in the Victorian Parliament.

From the inception of the administration of National schools in New South Wales and Victoria, accountability for the performance of schools and teachers was hierarchical, in the sense that control was ‘top down’, where those employed by the government were contracted and accountable to the state for their performance. In Victoria, the National Schools Board (1852-1862) and the Common Schools Board (1862-1872) and their administrators controlled policy and regulations. Inspectors, collectively known as the inspectorate, were the surveillance mechanism by which central authority could know and regulate what was actually happening in schools under their financial jurisdiction until it was discontinued after 1984. Regarding inspection, from 1852 the National Board Commissioners divided the Colony of Victoria into school districts as the number of schools were added to the National Board, with a view to carry out ‘effective inspection’. The number of inspectors and agents were to be appointed to each district ‘as may be necessary’. Initially only one inspector was considered necessary. William Knowles Miller was appointed in the latter half of 1852 and was dispatched to the Victorian goldfields to impress upon miners the virtue of sending children to National schools. As the number of inspectors were appointed to newly-established districts, so the formation of an inspectorate headed by a chief inspector and later an inspector-general evolved. Teachers were required to have a ‘Daily Report Book lying on their desks into which visitors to the

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12 VPARL1854-55NoA30.pdf., IV Inspection of Schools, Item 2, p.12
13 VPARL1854-55NoA30.pdf., IV Inspection of Schools, Item 2, p.12
school could enter remarks. Teachers were ‘by no means to alter or erase’ any remarks left in the book. The Commissioners stipulated that they, ‘or their officers, have a right to examine the schools, whenever they shall think fit’.14

As this chapter will demonstrate, professional accountability, where the emphasis is placed on the accountability process, and not whether certain results have been achieved, but whether professional standards of integrity and practice have been adhered to, was in its infancy. In the two decades 1852-1872, teachers were generally not qualified and/or lacked teaching experience. If they had limited qualifications, they often lacked any semblance of genuine teaching experience. Men and women were appointed to schools often with little or no professional support. While the early inspectors reported achievement levels of school pupils, the professional standards of the time were limited in what was essentially a primary or elementary system of schools. School attendance was not mandatory.

**Origins of Victorian national education**

The precedent for National schooling, adopted in New South Wales and then Victoria, followed the growth of non-secular, non-compulsory National schools in England and Ireland, aligned to those established by Lord Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland. As early as 1843, Irish National School Books were requested for use in the convict settlement in Hobart, Tasmania.15 The intention behind establishing National schools in Ireland was to bring together children of different religious persuasions ‘…for the purpose of instructing

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14 VPARL1853-54NoA2.pdf., IV Inspection of Schools, Item 4, p. 11
15 The Commissariat Office in Hobart Town, Tasmania placed an advertisement in the Colonial Times, Hobart on Tuesday 22 August 1843, (page 4) for the supply of 492 Irish National School Books for the convicr service at Tasman’s Peninsular. (Port Arthur Convict Prison) The request was for 180 copies of No.2 books, 120 copies of No. 3, 96 copies of No. 4 and 96 copies of No. 5. Source: [www.nla.news-article8753842_3.pdf](http://www.nla.news-article8753842_3.pdf). Retrieved: 15 February 2017.
them in the general subjects of moral and literary knowledge and where religious instruction was provided separately, because differences of creed disallowed mainstream instruction.¹⁶

In 1848, Richard Bourke, Governor of the colony of New South Wales, introduced the Irish National system because of the preference of colonists for schooling to be administered by civil rather than religious authorities. A board established and funded by the colonial government administered National schools. The National school curriculum was functional in that it centred on teaching the three R’s of reading, writing and arithmetic and was philosophically non-sectarian. The schools were expected to expand the access of families to schooling, especially in areas where private or denominational (church) schools were either non-existent or were considered unsatisfactory. The Church of England and Roman Catholic bishops and clergy were usually antagonistic towards any effort to set up National schools in their districts. It was argued by the clergy that education should be delegated solely to state-assisted denominational schools. In eastern Australia, colonial governments in New South Wales and Victoria funded both National and Denominational schools but a separate Denominational Schools Board administered Denominational schools. This dual approach to funding continued through to the passing, mainly from the early to mid 1870s, of the so-called ‘free, compulsory and secular’ education acts.¹⁷

¹⁷ Acts were passed in Victoria and other Australian states in the period 1872 through to 1908 that established education departments that were controlled by government ministers, with the intention that schooling was to be free, compulsory and secular.
The ever-present difficulty for the Victorian National Board centred on the compromise reached in the findings of the 1852 Report from the Select Committee on Education, which investigated the system of instruction then in operation in Victoria, a system of National (public schools) and Denominational schools (church schools) known as the Dual system. Specifically, the Select Committee had been directed to consider the propriety of abolishing these separate and rival schemes and substituting some other in their stead, which might appear to be better adapted to the wants and wishes of the community.

However, the Committee’s determination was that both systems were to be supported with funds allocated by the legislature, having ‘…good reason to believe that the mere amalgamation of the Boards would not be productive.’ Denominational schools had been operating in the Port Phillip District under the direction of a central office in Sydney since 1848. (The Port Phillip District was the former name for Melbourne and its surrounds prior to the establishment of the Colony of Victoria on 31 December 1851). In addition, there were seven National schools being administered from Sydney. The Dual system brought with it controversy and dissatisfaction for the National Board and Common School period which succeeded it, through to the passage of the Victorian Education Act 1872 and beyond. Sectarian issues during the period frequently broke out across communities with politicians and bureaucrats seemingly powerless to resolve disputes as they arose.

The Dual system was a practical compromise to accommodate the needs of both sectarian and non-sectarian interests. Supporters of sectarian or Denominational schools

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19 Report from the Select Committee on Education, 1852, p.(iii).
20 Report from the Select Committee on Education, 1852, Item 6, p.(iv).
21 Report from the Select Committee on Education, 1852, Item 8, p.(iv).
were adamant that they should have the higher authority in educating their collective flocks, fearing that funding for their schools would be reduced as a consequence of government schools being established. This circumstance did not eventuate, but funding for National schooling was always fragile. Those advancing the purpose of government or National schools were equally determined in their resolve that education should be for all, regardless of religious affiliation. George Rusden, a fervent supporter of National education in Victoria, asserted that ‘…it is the duty of the state to expand the public funds for a common purpose…’ believing that ‘…the education it bestows is given more generally, as well as more successfully.’ He regarded the Denominational system politically as a ‘prostitution of principle.’

Rusden’s strident opinion was indicative of the strength of views expressed by supporters of both systems.

In Victoria, the Irish system was eminently transferrable as a package deal. Schooling already provided by established churches excluded the poor. Schools supported from government coffers required a greater degree of public direction and scrutiny. Mutual antagonism between the supporters of church and state education interests was political in that each took up opposing ideological positions in the way popular education was promoted. The Select Committee (1852) reported the problems in terms of ‘opposing and deeply rooted prejudices and principles’, which arose from considering education from a purely religious perspective.

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Funding issues

Resistance from the clergy towards setting up government schools was ever-present. Religious disquiet with the concept of National education in Victoria adversely affected the progress to set up these schools in the colony. Unreliability of government grants through 1852-1862 for both the National and Denominational Boards limited the extent to which they could support the ever-increasing number of requests for the maintenance of existing schools and for aid to establish new schools.\textsuperscript{24} The frequency of cuts to travel expenses and accommodation meant that tours of inspection, especially in rural districts, had to be restricted and were even curtailed in some half years. Limitations placed on the National Board’s activities because of inadequate funding weighed heavily on the Commissioners. Early in the decade, grants were allocated in equal share regardless of the significant differences that existed between the National and Denominational Boards. Because of an arrangement reached in 1854, funds were allocated according to the relative need of each Board. This even handedness was considered a temporary measure, both Boards being required to meet only their existing liabilities and known commitments for school buildings.

\textsuperscript{24} The National Board reported in its \textit{Seventh Annual Report for the Year 1859} (5 December 1860) that the grant for the year had been £32,500, which was £10,000 less than was necessary to manage the schools in operation in 1858. The Denominational Board for the same year had been allocated £92,500. The Board was compelled to reign in expenditure to align with receipts. To balance the books the Training Establishment was closed; house rent for teachers in the Board’s Non-Vested schools was reduced by half; rent for school houses was struck off; a £5 reduction of teachers’ salaries and allowances was introduced and a reduction in the allowances paid to teachers in small schools was enforced and assistant teachers were abolished and replaced by pupil-teachers on inferior salaries.
With the formation of the Victoria Board of Education to administer Common Schools after 1862, following the dismantling of the National and Denominational Boards, there was no significant improvement in the allocation of government funds. Funding was simply insufficient to meet the budgetary commitments to operate schools.

In the meantime, the Victorian National and Common Schools Board annual reports became a means by which the Boards’ Commissioners openly expressed their mounting dissatisfaction with the restrictions that had been forced upon their ability to deliver education to all who were desirous of accessing it. In the Seventh Annual Report (1858), National Board Commissioners expressed their despair at the impact limited funding was having on the employment of teachers.

It is not within our province to advert to the political aspect of this question, but we may be permitted to state our strong conviction, that the first step to bring up the standard of popular education so as to correspond with the exigencies of the popular franchise, is the education and classification of teachers, which cannot be even attempted without a more liberal provision being made for this object, during the ensuing year.25

Action taken by National Board Commissioners in 1859 to reduce teachers’ salaries was unfortunate, but to have been put in a position of having to close the Training School in Melbourne was humiliating.

The Training School in Melbourne had operated since May 1856 and closed on 31 March 1858. During this period, six sessions, each of five months duration, had enabled one hundred and sixty-nine trainee teachers to pass through the classification program. Of this number, one hundred and thirty were classified, the Board being able to employ fifty-two

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teachers in their schools. The Commissioners reported in their Sixth Annual Report that ‘after anxious deliberation’ they had accepted the resignations of both the principal and superintendent of the female branch of the training school with regret.\textsuperscript{26} With the opening of new schools and the closure of the Training establishment, the consequent decrease in the availability of classified teachers was no surprise.\textsuperscript{27}

Reductions in salary (including travel expenses) also applied to inspectors. The Boards appreciated the responsibility the inspectors had in carrying out necessary inspections, but funding shortfalls were so severe at times that all they could expect of inspectors was that they do the best they could with the funding available. As a case in point, an inspector named Henry Venables (National Board inspector) requested an alteration to his tour of inspection in Gippsland in the summer of 1861, having received notice of a twenty per cent reduction in his expense allowance to inspect schools. His claim was that his reduced salary would not cover his costs and he asked for an amended tour. Chief Inspector Arthur Orlebar was directed by the Commissioners to inform all inspectors about the reduced funding and advised Venables that his tour could not be altered ‘without injuring the public service.’\textsuperscript{28}

As reduction of funds was a common occurrence, it is of little wonder that inspectors, already burdened by heavy workloads, frequently fell behind in their reports and were chastised for it by the Boards, despite the hardship imposed by the funding restrictions imposed by the legislature. National school inspectors Thomas Walker, James Glen, Robert

\textsuperscript{27} As at 31 December 1861, the Board’s 9\textsuperscript{th} Annual Report (29 August 1862) stated that of 245 teachers in service, 123 were classified. They reported the percentage of classified teachers during the last five years of operation as: 1857 (56%); 1858 (59%); 1859 (61%); 1860 (60%) and 1861 (47%).
\textsuperscript{28} National Board of Education, \textit{Inwards Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Unit 60, Report 20, Item 61/193, 7 February 1861.
Hopkins, Maxwell Miller, and Common school inspectors Elkington, O’Brien, Geary and Sasse were examples of this type of treatment. National Board inspectors were dismissed for not keeping up with reports or their tours of inspection. Geary and Sasse were investigated by the Board of Education (Common Schools) for their inability to keep to their schedules but managed to keep their positions. Bringing together the two former Dual system boards in 1863 meant that the new Board of Education had to maintain all the schools previously managed by both the National and Denomination systems. In its first report in 1863, the Common Schools Board of Education reported that numerous applications for aid to support new schools, for building grants and/or additional teachers were received but had to be refused because of inadequate funding. Two hundred and eighteen applications were held up, including sixty-five requests for new schools and seventy-eight applications for grants to repair existing schools, for rental commitments and to acquire school sites to erect new schools.²⁹

**Issues of teacher/inspector training**

Adding to the National Board’s financial woes was the difficulty and frustration resulting from the discovery of gold and how best to set up schools in response to the sudden increase in population. The Board relied on its inspectors to establish a mode of operation that would bring systemic order in the way schools operated. It was asking a great deal of inspectors who were untrained and unfamiliar with the Irish system, or indeed any system of education, to set up an effective working model and to carry out their responsibilities

confidently. Inspectors who were found to be ineffective either resigned or were dismissed. Teachers in the early years of National education were ill equipped to instruct pupils, being mostly untrained and therefore unqualified. Some aspirants were failed gold diggers who saw the prospect of working as teachers as a means of generating an income. However, as teachers they lacked the ability to keep good order in the conduct of their schools. They were selected and appointed by the local patrons of schools, but the National and Common School Boards managed the assessment and competency of appointees through their inspectors. The National Board set up protocols for the employment and classification of teachers during the first year of operation. It was expected that teachers would receive training prior to taking up positions as head teachers in schools. Teachers were not permanently employed until their training was complete or that they had been pronounced as properly qualified by an inspector. By establishing a system of pupil-teachers, the National Board recognised the extent to which they needed to have a competent teaching service. Pupil-teachers were apprenticed to competent schoolmasters, ultimately with a view to attending the training school to complete their education before taking charge of a school in their own right. A hierarchical ranking system classified teachers in three classes, with provision for probationary teachers, assistant teachers and mistresses of needlework. Teachers who sat for examination but did not pass were permitted to teach as probationers until they could reach the standard required for full employment.

Whilst inspectors raised concerns about the variance in the standard and quality of teachers, they were equally concerned about the poor physical conditions that teachers and children had to endure. Until funds became available to build substantial schoolhouses, tents were used, particularly on the gold fields during the rushes. Tents were cheap, readily
acquired, easily erected and required little maintenance. Earthen floors and wooden or mud fireplaces completed the spartan conditions of these dwellings, local stores or school. They were hot in summer and did not keep out the winter chill. They could be quickly dismantled and reassembled with minimum fuss. Situations arose in locations where tents were used where teachers had left the premises believing that fires had been extinguished, only to return the next morning to find the tent had been burnt to the ground overnight.

In areas where the population had settled, and townships grew, and where funds permitted, substantial schoolhouses were built. During the Common Schools period former disused Denominational schoolhouses added to the number of purpose-built classrooms that could at least be considered reasonable. Rental accommodation was provided for the teacher as an expedient way to establish a school if the rental property was suitable. Adequate provision of textbooks and other learning requisites was dependent upon availability, funding and delays in distribution. Inspectors did acknowledge and praise good teaching and schoolroom management where evident.

**Establishing the Victorian National Schools Board**

An important early priority for the Victorian parliament in the formation of the National system was the appointment of Commissioners and the selection of key office bearers. James Frederick Palmer was appointed to chair proceedings of the National Board. Palmer had a medical background, but he devoted himself to mercantile pursuits, becoming a successful wine and spirits merchant. He was elected to the Victorian Legislative Council, became its first president in 1851, and was knighted in the same year. Others to join Palmer were Hugh Childers, William Westgarth, Thomas Power (auctioneer and member of the Legislative Council), Charles Ebden

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(property owner and auditor general of the Victorian Legislature) and George Rusden. The Victorian National Board Commissioners held their first meeting in Melbourne on 26 January 1852 and subsequently placed an advertisement in both *The Argus* and *Herald* newspapers calling for applications for the positions of secretary and clerk. As an interim measure, Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe had appointed Charles Ridgway, Clerk and Reader in the Legislative Council, as secretary pro tem until the Board could determine its own office bearers.

Members of the Victorian National Board represented the landed and mercantile classes who held significant status in the colony and were well placed to chart the direction of the fledgling state education system. They were representative of English or Anglo-Irish educated gentlemen who were nearly all squatters,\(^{31}\) civil servants, professional men or gentlemen farmers, who saw themselves as a ‘colonial aristocracy completely untouched by the democratic sentiment of the age.’\(^{32}\) The appointment of members of parliament as Board members served the interests of the government, especially with James Palmer as chair, who served in this capacity for the entire period of National education. After the premature death of the first chair of the Common Schools Board, Palmer was appointed to this position in August 1863. Whilst there does not seem to be any question as to the competency of the Commissioners, the potential for political influence exercised in the proceedings of Board deliberations cannot be ignored. To have Palmer in a position to exert influence over Board decision-making ensured that government policy regarding public education had a staunch and strong-willed advocate. His service to education covered eighteen years, a period in which he devoted a large amount of his time to administering the

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\(^{31}\) In Australian history, a squatter was typically a man, either a free settler or ex-convict, who occupied a large tract of Crown land in order to graze livestock. Initially often having no legal rights to the land, they gained its usage by being the first (and often the only) Europeans in an area.

Department of Education with ‘superior ability and breadth of view’, Board members acknowledging the dignity and urbanity with which he presided at meetings.33

**Origin of inspection in England utilised in the east coast Australian colonies**

The inspectorial system established by the Victorian National Board of Education Commissioners had its precedent in the general missionary impulse of the Church in England in Britain. Over time, the Church of England hierarchy had developed administrative procedures that involved a series of visits at each level of religious endeavour. For example, a bishop could visit any locality in his territory and at the local level, the rural dean, appointed by the bishop, could visit (or inspect) clergy and people under his jurisdiction within a district in which he was incumbent.34 The intention was for Church officials to gain first-hand accounts about how priests were managing their responsibilities consistent with the edicts of the Church. Visitors were required to persuade, encourage and endorse good practice as a means of eliciting improvement, rather than use intimidating or threatening tactics.

Following the Reformation, ecclesiastic organisation broke down and the inspecting authority of the Church of England became almost non-existent. It was not until the eighteenth century that any nation-wide effort to offer schooling to the illiterate poor was established. The Charity School movement and kindred societies were set up by individuals and were largely dependent on unreliable financial aid. Support for these schools came from many country parsons who acted as unpaid teachers, organisers, examiners and inspectors in their local schools.

The growth of non-secular, non-compulsory National schools in London delivered education to all regardless of religious persuasion. In these schools, teachers could conduct general scripture readings outside nominated teaching periods but not teach religion. The Committee of Council on Education in England minuted in September 1839 that inspectors appointed by the Crown were required to visit schools that received public funds. However, inspectors were not to interfere with religious instruction, or discipline, or the management of any school. The purpose of inspection was to collect facts and information and to report the results of inspections to the Committee of the Council. The government was clear in its resolve not to cause offence to any denomination or sect. Inspectors were required to enforce this requirement vigilantly. These same provisions were replicated in Victoria.

**Role of inspectors in Victoria**

The 1852 Report from the Select Committee on Education required that the standard of excellence in the master of a school, and the consequent efficiency of the school, could only be ascertained ‘...by the vigilant and constant attention of the Inspectors, men of literary attainments, whose characters should form the guarantee for their fidelity and impartiality.’ The first appointee, William Knowles Miller had promised much. An article in Domestic Intelligence in *The Argus* noted that Miller was ‘a gentleman of considerable talent and attainment’ who had worked in the legal office of Ross and Clarke. When Miller absconded with the funds entrusted to his safekeeping, the Board resolved to examine future appointments more closely.

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The Board of Education established by the *Common Schools Act (1862)* had better success in the appointment of inspectors. There was the advantage of being able to select experienced personnel from both the National and Denominational systems. The new Board of Education appointed Richard Hale Budd as Inspector-General, Joseph Geary, Harry Sasse and John Sircom who were ex-Denominational Board inspectors, whilst Arthur Bedford Orlebar, Gilbert Wilson Brown, Henry Venables and Archibald Gilchrist were ex-National Board inspectors. Benjamin Kane, the former National Schools secretary, was appointed secretary to the Board of Education.\(^{38}\)

In developing their rules and regulations, National Board Commissioners provisionally adopted the rules of the New South Wales National Board, later modifying them to ‘…assimilate our proceedings to those which have been found to give such universal satisfaction to parents in Ireland.’\(^{39}\) Seven clauses in the regulations made it abundantly clear that the Board supported the government’s intention that the clergy and laity of religious denominations were expected to cooperate with one another in the conduct of National schools. Regulations were important to bring about unity in the new system but in practice they meant little to those determined to hinder the development of government schooling. Inspectors frequently reported the frustration they experienced in localities where denominational schools were operating. Writing subsequent to a tour of inspection through the western district of the colony, Inspector Maxwell Miller,\(^ {40}\) for example,

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\(^{40}\) National Board of Education, *Inwards Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 64, Letter 55/941, 24 July 1855. Maxwell Miller was the brother of William Knowles Miller. After he resigned his position with the Board in October 1854, he offered to repay the ‘deficiency’ of his brother.
reported the difficulties he experienced with the clergy and advocated the necessity of establishing one general system of education. He noted that when objections were raised about the duality of the education system, it was not suggested that the Denominational system was better. Rather, why interfere with schools that were already in existence? He recommended that, if one system had been in operation, the ministers of the various denominations would be forced to cooperate with inspectors, ‘…making this colony a perfect network of schools.’

Miller, as with subsequent inspectors, found it difficult to leave a strong impression about the cause of National education. Regardless of the level of interest shown by inhabitants, clergymen living ‘on the spot’ counterbalanced any interest in National schooling with opposing views. According to Miller, one approach to address this situation would be for inspectors to keep up ‘extensive’, unofficial correspondence with those who had pledged interest in a school in the hope that their interest would not weaken.

**Inspection was not for the faint-hearted**

An inspector’s life and work in Victoria was not an easy one. The mode of travel for an inspector was on horseback. Appointees who were not confident with riding a horse had the use of a horse and buggy. The ability to tend to the needs of their mounts was essential. The animals needed to be fed and watered and properly stabled when not in use. Livings conditions varied greatly as the inspectors moved about the colony. Accommodation was often in tents or rented accommodation in a dimly lit room in a hotel or inn. An inspector’s

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Although the amount ‘considerably exceeded’ £100, the Board could only substantiate an amount of £93.2.6.

41 National Board of Education, *Inwards Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 57, Maxwell Miller’s Report, 7 October 1854. No. 54/802.

42 Maxwell Miller’s Report, 7 October 1854. No. 54/802.
salary was not a sufficiently attractive amount to entice considerable interest from high quality applicants. For example, William Miller was employed at a salary of £500. A blacksmith in the early 1850s could earn £364 per annum or a salesman £312. Maps to assist in the location of schools, particularly in rural districts of the colony, were often not accurate. A good sense of direction was helpful, as travel was often on unfamiliar dusty tracks carved out of the bush. To meet the requirements of their itineraries, inspectors had to travel in all weather conditions come rain, hail or shine. They were often away from their place of residence for many days and weeks and on their return to Melbourne, were required to attend the central office to complete reports and meet with the secretary. The work was only for those who possessed energy and enthusiasm to carry out the arduous tasks of combining the inspection of schools and coping with travel difficulties with diligence and an enthusiastic spirit.

During 1853, the National Board Commissioners finalised their requirements for the conduct of inspections. Inspectors were directly accountable to the Board and were not to give direct orders on behalf of the Board regarding regulations. The Board’s intentions regarding any departure from the regulations or for committing any improprieties were clear; any issue should be referred to the local patrons of a school in the first instance and, if not rectified, must be directly reported to the Commissioners. This emphasis was to ensure that dealings with local authorities and teachers in schools were to be on the friendliest of terms. Inspectors were at all times to act in a conciliatory manner, consistent with their high levels of responsibility.

Commissioners exercised considerable authority in directing the government’s rationale for education, this being to ‘…promote the general intelligence and good conduct of all
classes in the colony and, at the same time, to admit as far as practicable the inculcation of religious truth. Inspectors understood that the textbooks used in schools provided a large amount of scriptural knowledge and moral precepts embodied in extracts from the testaments. Teaching from the textbooks using scriptural content was not considered sectarian instruction if teachers did not go beyond merely reading the passages. Inspectors were required to report on the correct use of textbook content and whether usage was consistent with regulations. Teachers were required to timetable two-hour teaching periods either side of the midday break. Teaching periods were to be free of religious instruction.

Rules governing the inspection of schools were designed to achieve procedural uniformity. Each inspector was given a list of schools to be visited. Visits were to be arranged in the order that seemed most convenient to each inspector. No advance notice was given regarding any visit, but when an inspection was to be public, the inspector was to facilitate the attendance of parents of children and any other interested party or parties concerned for the welfare of the school. At each inspection, local patrons of the school were given information concerning the general presentation of the school, advice with respect to any violations of rules or defects, if any, and suggestions made for any improvements that were deemed necessary.

Upon entering a school, the inspector was required to introduce himself to the master and then examine whether the regulations were being correctly observed. Where inconsistencies were identified, the inspector was to advise the master with a view to having them remedied. The teaching method used was observed with suggestions offered

where improvement could be made. In any discourse with teachers, the inspector was required to treat teachers with the most perfect kindness and respect, apprising them privately of any aspect he might perceive as defective, noting it to be reported to the Board. At no stage were teachers to be spoken to in an authorative manner or in the hearing of their pupils. The Commissioners required any observations written up by members of the public in either the Visitor’s Book or the Report Book and considered important by the inspector to be communicated to them. An inspector’s own notation in these records was to simply record the date and length of time of his visit without further comment. The inspector was to note the time that he commenced each visit and the specific time he left the school. He was also to note the number of pupils present at each inspection. The inspector was to accurately report on the class roll, register and daily report books with a view to assessing the actual number of children receiving instruction and the average daily attendance. The general appearance of the children, their cleanliness and the good order and tone of the school were noted, according to the two rules of Order, that is (i) a place for everything and everything in its place and (ii) a time for everything and everything in its time. With respect to the examination of pupils, he was to examine each class in succession and report on the different branches of study to determine the degree and efficiency of instruction. No school was to be omitted from each tour of inspection. However, this prescription could not always be guaranteed, as economies of scale and difficulties arising from poor travel conditions and the effects of ill health all influenced what any individual inspector in a tour could physically manage. Upon receiving any advice that a school had been closed or withdrawn
from its association with the Board, the inspector was to make every effort to determine the circumstances and relay his findings to the Board.  

As the Board’s agent, the inspector was required to assess the need for education in every neighbourhood he visited. The number and type of schools in the locality were noted and the interest of residents to receive education was reported. Where the desire of residents to establish a National school was evident, the inspector was to take steps to meet the wishes of the community and clergymen of the different denominations, either by attending a public meeting or in any other way that the prevailing circumstances allowed. Meetings set up in this way enabled the inspector to hear the views of all interested parties. Objections were to be noted and reported to the Commissioners. The apportioning of aid was a matter for the Board and dependent on funds available through government grants at the time. During each tour of inspection, inspectors were to report weekly to the Commissioners about their progress and maintain a diary as a record of proceedings. They were not authorised to decide upon any concerns relevant to a National school. The Board maintained tight control over each inspector’s duties and relied upon the chief inspector to manage the workload of each inspector.

**Inspector William Knowles Miller (appointed 26 July 1852)**

The urgency of appointing a full-time inspector was emphasised in the National Board’s first report in August 1853. The work of an inspector, acting as the Board’s agent or representative, required the inspector to represent the Board at meetings where there was

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the prospect of establishing a National school in a locality. The inspector was to be active in convincing colonists and miners of the importance of establishing a school and then collect contributions to support establishment costs. William Knowles Miller was appointed as the National Board’s first inspector and agent but after a mere five months working in the area of the Forest Creek goldfield in central Victoria, Miller absconded with an amount in excess of £100.46 The amount held by Miller was the result of contributions from miners who had been prepared to support the setting up of tent schools on the goldfield. As the Board had not received any response to appeals for Miller to return the funds in his possession to the Board’s bank account, he was dismissed from the Board’s employ in December 1852.47

Following Miller’s failure to carry out the Board’s instructions, nineteen-year-old Benjamin Kane, as secretary to the Board, also acted as the Board’s agent. He occupied this position until Arthur Bedford Orlebar’s appointment in June 1854. Without a qualified inspector, Kane was the Board’s only representative, moving about the goldfields setting up tent schools. He was not replaced in the office during this period, the Board noting, ‘We are fully alive to the necessity of having vigilant and frequent inspection of our schools, regarding it as we do, as one of the best means that can be employed to render our schools efficient.’48 It was prudent to send Kane, as it gave the Commissioners time to consider a new appointment.

46 National Board of Education, Letter from Miller to Benjamin Kane, VPRS 880,52/266, 21 November 1852.
47 Benjamin Kane, Memorandum of circumstances relating to the appointment and removal of Mr W. K. Miller, National Board of Education, VPRS 880, Box 61, 31 December 1852.
The desire for quality applicants and the experience of Miller’s lapse in integrity played heavily on their minds. The Board gave its reasons for delaying an appointment as the significant expense associated with travel throughout the colony, (stabling and feed for a horse, repairs to saddlery and hotel accommodation) and particularly, concerns regarding uncharted access to many remote communities. Uncertainty with regard to the allocation of government grants meant that the Board did not have the confidence to employ the necessary personnel to focus on inspection. Priority was given to establishing new schools. In comparison, the Denominational Board was better placed to manage its affairs. They had a nucleus of experienced inspectors, with no urgency to consider responding to requests for new schools to the extent that was expected of the Victorian National Board.

**Inspector Arthur Bedford Orlebar (appointed 9 June 1854)**

Orlebar’s qualities were in marked contrast to those of Miller. He was principled, industrious and well credentialled, with qualifications in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. Orlebar had been a member of the Mathematical Society at Oxford University and had been Professor of Mathematics at Elphinstone College, Bombay.49

After only eight months in the job traversing the colony in 1855, writing general reports about the situation on the goldfields and responding to requests for new schools, Orlebar formed the view that inspection ought to be the National Board’s primary consideration.50 His instructions were that he should focus on setting up new schools. His concern was that he could not visit schools with any consistency. With the growth of the National system, he was convinced that schools that were well

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49 National Board of Education, *Inwards Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 61, Item 54/270, 5 June 1854.
50 National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 20, 55/255, Orlebar’s 14th Report, 17 February 1855.
managed provided the best argument for supporting government schooling. To achieve this level of confidence in the system, regular inspections were necessary, but with only two inspectors, the task was simply impossible.

Orlebar reported in March 1855 that a Model Training School to be set up in Melbourne to improve the training of teachers was necessary to bring the standard of teaching to a level sufficient to advance education. With six month’s training, ‘…men of general acquirement but unskilled in the art and unacquainted with the science of teaching’ could be converted into good schoolmasters. Orlebar wanted to remedy what he saw as the number of unqualified teachers working in schools, who were carrying out their duties to the satisfaction of parents and local patrons, but who were inexperienced and whose methods were poor. By way of illustration, Herbert Packe, the teacher at Campbell’s Creek in the Castlemaine district, received a very poor assessment from Inspector Robert Hopkins in 1858. In a subsequent review of the teacher’s situation, Orlebar reported Packe’s deficiencies as ‘…his ignorance, first in the order of intellectual development and secondly in the organisation of a small school.’ To remedy the teacher’s deficiencies, Orlebar advised that Packe should re-enter the training establishment to work on the first deficiency and as for the second, he should spend time with an organising master to address management weaknesses. Orlebar’s final recommendation was that either Packe’s salary should be withdrawn or that Hopkins, on his next visit to Castlemaine, should remain at the

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51 National Board of Education, Inward Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Unit 20, 55/255.
52 National Board of Education, Inwards Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Unit 57, Report 55/367, 19 March 1855.
53 National Board of Education, Inwards Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Item 58/1243, 26 May 1858.
school for three weeks, acting as the organising master to ensure that the inspector’s advice was acted upon.\textsuperscript{54}

Orlebar’s concerns about poor teaching skills were replicated in reports by all inspectors. Pupils were simply not reaching expected learning standards.\textsuperscript{55} Inspectors reported instances of drunkenness in teachers and inattention to good order in classes. The unavoidable circumstance of changing teachers in schools because of dismissals and general dissatisfaction with performance also severely affected progress in pupil learning. Robert Hopkins stressed that this would not have been the case if all teachers had been trained in the principles of one uniform system. The early age at which pupils discontinued their regular attendance at school also made for limited progress. Children of twelve and thirteen years of age were withdrawn from schooling to assist parents in domestic, pastoral and agricultural endeavours at a critical time in their learning.\textsuperscript{56}

Orlebar was aware of the depth of sectarian/nonsectarian divisiveness in relation to education and sensitivities associated with the political climate with regard to education as he moved about the colony. He explained the difficulty in setting up permanent schools in a report he wrote in relation to the Forest Creek goldfield in the Castlemaine district north of Melbourne. Miners had generally shown lack of interest in supporting the establishment of schools, but as they gave up their migratory life, they married, and many took up areas as squatters on Crown land. In some localities where mining and agricultural interests were present, these areas were suitable to erect

\textsuperscript{54} National Board of Education, \textit{Inwards Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Item 58/1243.
\textsuperscript{55} National Board of Education, \textit{Inwards Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Unit 57, Report 55/367.
\textsuperscript{56} National Board of Education, \textit{Inwards Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Unit 58, Report 57/114, 10 January 1857.
National schools. However, many miners, having no long-term interest to settle in the colony, ‘…will do nothing towards the establishment of such schools whilst the agriculturalists will do their utmost.’\textsuperscript{57} Being mostly protestant, agriculturalists gave preference to the Denominational system where they could use the school as a church. National schools could not be used as churches.

As chief inspector, (appointed 1856) Orlebar provided assessments on the effectiveness with which new inspectors went about their work. He had recommended to the Board that those most suited to the role of inspector were fit, younger men of good bearing who were good horsemen. In offering this opinion to the Commissioners, he suggested that younger men would ‘…give heart to any good cause’, whereas a more elderly man would engage in new or revived quests ‘with far less energy.’\textsuperscript{58} Inspection was not considered women’s work, given the uncertainty and insecurity of travel and the privations caused from exposure to the vagaries of climate and the elements. Henry Venables, for example, was a pedestrian and walked throughout the colony to examine his schools. In one report, Orlebar advised that, at best, it was not possible for a pedestrian, constantly moving, to walk more than ten miles a day. On one day in September 1858, Venables had walked fifty-two miles, but he was an exception in this regard.\textsuperscript{59} These were not times where women, as a rule, were either well educated enough or considered suitable for public office. Orlebar considered, that given the energy required to respond to every opportunity to create National schools, a younger man was best able to cope with the rigours of travel. He ended

\textsuperscript{57} National Board of Education, \textit{Inward Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Unit 57, Report 56/2216, 26 November 1856.  
\textsuperscript{58} National Board of Education, \textit{Inward Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Orlebar’s Report Number 68, 25 June 1856.  
\textsuperscript{59} National Board of Education, \textit{Inward Correspondence Files}, VPRS 880, Unit 59, Item 58/2052, 13 September 1858.
his report by recommending that the character most desirable in a younger man was ‘…gentleness, but firmness and a kind of courteous bearing to all, especially inferiors.’

He added that a good classical and mathematical education provided a sound basis for an inspector to cope with the requirements of the work of inspection, rather than having any school experience. His reference to ‘inferiors’ seemingly implied that he considered an inspector to be above those of lesser status in the community, an attitude that surfaced in his altercation with Arthur Davitt, discussed later in this chapter. This perception of his own importance is in evidence in much of the correspondence he had with the Commissioners, when pressing a point of view. Nevertheless, Orlebar was highly articulate and gave the Commissioners confidence in his ability to represent the cause of National education with integrity. During the eight years Orlebar worked for the National Board, he established himself as a central figure in the development of the Victorian National system. He had been responsible for instructing new appointees to inspectorships about their duties and had provided clarification regarding the Board’s rules and regulations.

Physical limitations of an inspector’s duties

Near the end of his first year on the job, in what he described as ‘unremitted toil on and in some very difficult employment’, Orlebar expressed the need for time out from his duties. The Board responded by directing that his services were needed and turned down the request. By the winter of 1856, Orlebar reported that as his health had suffered so much from exposure, he was in a ‘debilitated condition’ and needed to

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60 National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Item 58/2052.
take leave.  

Similarly, Inspector James Glen tendered his resignation in December 1857 and resigned in February 1858, twenty months after his appointment, specifying that he felt that he was not equal to the requirements of his inspectorship. During Robert Hopkins’ short tenure with the Board he was unable to carry out his duties effectively as a consequence of very poor health, suffering as he did from periodic bouts of dysentery and a form of dyspepsia. He reported that worsening health was the result of severe overwork. Orlebar may well have held the belief that younger, fitter men were more suited and adapted to the role of inspector, but this view was certainly difficult to sustain given the appointments made in line with his recommendation. Both Glen and Hopkins were in their late twenties. Orlebar was a much older man (forty-four years of age on appointment in 1854) and seemed better able to cope with the difficulties associated with the role than those he preferred to promote. The requirements and expectations placed on inspectors added to the strains of the role.

Difficulties affecting regular inspections can be found in the annual reports of the inspectors. Inspector Robert Hopkins, in his annual report for 1857, noted that he had spent only fifty-nine days on the official inspection of schools in his district but had spent one

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63 National Board of Education, Inwards Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Unit 57, report 56/1134, 24 June 1856.
64 National Board of Education, Inwards Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Unit 58, Item 58/52, 31 December 1857. In his first tour of the Western District, a period of three and a half months, Glen had travelled 1272 miles and had inspected ten schools. Report 57/141, 15 January 1857.
65 25 June 1856 to 30 March 1859.
66 Medical Certificate issued by Dr Barry, South Yarra, 22 January 1859 attached to Hopkins Report 59/177, 22 January 1859. VPRS 880, Unit 58.
67 Orlebar was born in England in 1810.
hundred and twenty-five days travelling and assessing applications for new schools.\(^{68}\) Inspector James Glen pointed out that he had devoted fifty-five days to the inspection of schools.\(^{69}\) In his annual report for the same year, Orlebar noted that

…on very few occasions have I been able to visit a locality solely for the purpose of inspection. Some other object has generally led me to the school. I had hoped to visit each school in my district three times a year. The pressure of other duties however rendered this quite impossible; and further I have been compelled to send in my reports of inspection imperfectly filled up.\(^ {70}\)

In their eighth report, the Commissioners recorded that, out of one hundred and fifty-five schools in operation during 1860, one hundred and forty schools had been inspected: two were inspected three times; fifty-nine were inspected twice and seventy-nine were inspected on only one occasion during the year.\(^ {71}\) In 1861 the number of inspections fell far short of the preferred number Orlebar had recommended in 1857.

The effectiveness of the system and the time that could be realistically applied to inspection was itself compromised because of the expectations placed on what inspectors could achieve, the personnel available, financial constraints and the inspectors’ other duties. In March 1859, the Commissioners asked Orlebar for his opinion on the appointment of an organising master and whether he could recommend any teacher for appointment to the position. In his report, Orlebar advised that the colony could not be inspected in less than thirty-nine weeks, allowing one day for each school to be assessed. He proposed that two subinspectors should be appointed, in preference to the

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\(^{68}\) National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 59, Inspector Robert Hopkin’s Annual Report, 5 January, 1858.

\(^{69}\) National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 59, Inspector Glen’s Annual Report, 18 January 1858.

\(^{70}\) National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 59, 58/326, 22 January 1858.

\(^{71}\) Parliament of Victoria, *Eighth Report of the Commissioners of National Education for the Colony of Victoria, for the Year 1860-61*, 17 December 1861.
appointment of an organising master, one for the Eastern and the other for the Western half of the colony. The appointment of one sub-inspector with responsibility for both the Eastern and Western Districts would mean that no school could be inspected more than once a year. Disregarding Orlebar’s advice, the Commissioners opted for one position and appointed an organising master who was also to act as a sub-inspector when required. Orlebar could not envisage how the rate of inspection could be improved with the appointment of one additional inspector and an organising master who would be based in the central office. The Commissioners did appreciate Orlebar’s nomination of George Wilson Brown whom he had seen teaching in Geelong to the organising master’s position. Successful teaching was not mandated as a criterion for selection, although a small number of appointments were made of applicants having had prior teaching experience. Wilson Brown had held the position of First Master at the Flinders National School for sixteen months between 1858 and 1859. In recommending him for appointment, Orlebar praised Brown’s “great skill and energy” as a teacher. Despite Brown’s appointment, problems regarding the adequacy and frequency of inspections remained.

**Early challenge to central authority in education**

Political and religious interests were inextricably enmeshed in the administration of education in the colony. Two complications that arose during Orlebar’s time as chief

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72 National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 59, Report No.50, 14 March 1859.

73 In the Common School period, George Wilson Brown was appointed as an Organising Inspector with the Board of Education in October 1862. He became Secretary of the Department of Education in March 1878.

74 National Board of Education, *Inward Correspondence Files*, VPRS 880, Unit 59, Item 59/716, 2 April 1859.
inspector with the National Board illustrate the obstacles faced by inspectors in carrying out their onerous duties. In both instances Orlebar found his action and decision-making questioned by his employers. The first example is one in which an inspector’s report was challenged by a well-qualified teacher. In the second, a breach of Board regulations with regard to public officials acting in an official capacity in church activities highlight the religious sensitivities of the period. Underscoring the two issues is the ill feeling expressed by John Donaghy, a disgruntled Irish catholic teacher, towards perceived imperfections in National education as he viewed the situation in Victoria, and a determination to undermine an inspector of English heritage with no prior knowledge of National education and as a consequence, embarrass his employer.

**Inspection report challenged**

In the summer of 1857 John Donaghy, an Irishman and former assistant training master at the Model Training School, challenged Orlebar’s inspection report of the former head of the school, Arthur Davitt. Following a request from the National Board in Melbourne to the Irish National Board Commissioners in Ireland for a qualified teacher to head the Model Training School, Arthur Davitt was nominated to take up the position. Davitt held a bachelor’s degree and had experience teaching in colleges in Europe. In addition, he had experience in the Irish National system as an inspector for the District of Athy. Donaghy felt subservient during Orlebar’s inspection of the Model Training School. Orlebar had reported Davitt’s inattention to the proper examination and classification of

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teachers, although he believed Davitt capable of rectifying this lack of thoroughness.

Both Davitt and Donaghy took offence at the report.

The challenge to Orlebar’s report by Donaghy centred on both the offence taken to the contents of the inspector’s remarks in the assessment of the Training School and that the teachers were assessed by a person who had no first-hand knowledge of the system he was required to assess. In correspondence with the Commissioners, Orlebar explained that he had the highest regard for Davitt as a public servant and declared Davitt’s views on the subjects of school teaching as generally sound. But, Orlebar was concerned that Davitt considered inspection as predisposed to find defects, rather than to obtain information. Orlebar complained that Davitt ‘…was determined to insult me’ regarding the contents of the report, at which point Orlebar put Davitt ‘…at the distance of official courtesy’, behaviour Orlebar regretted ‘…as the public interest requires that the utmost cordiality should exist between your inspectors and the principal of the Model schools.’

Orlebar did concede to the Commissioners that his report had the potential to give greater prominence to the shortcomings of the Training School rather than to suggest where improvement was needed. Donaghy asserted that it was preposterous to entrust an English gentleman of very limited experience in educational affairs in Europe, who had never been in Ireland, with the responsibility of introducing and implementing an Irish

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system of education.79 Therein lay Davitt’s resentment and ill feeling on two counts towards Orlebar, and implicitly, the system.

Donaghy’s disenchantment with the National Board’s inability to properly implement inspection and the Irish National system generally in Victoria, also extended to what he saw as the ill treatment of teachers with Irish training and teaching experience. Donaghy believed that Irish teachers were being overlooked in appointments based on Orlebar’s reports,80 claims that were rejected by both the Board and Orlebar. Orlebar suggested that, while the report had raised Davitt’s ire, its purpose was to induce in Davitt greater determination to remedy the defects raised. Instead, Davitt questioned Orlebar’s honesty and fair-mindedness.81 The result of inspection was considered by Donaghy to be a personal slight, rather than a means of suggesting where further improvement could be made and, later, as a means of monitoring that improvement. The idea that a trainer of teachers could be made to feel inferior in the inspectorial process suggested an overbearing manner on the part of the assessor. If an inspector were to have credibility in the performance of his duties, a superior bearing would not bring about improvement in the teaching service. There is the sense that Davitt and Donaghy felt aggrieved that Orlebar had failed to acknowledge their proficiency and experience, giving rise to feelings of inadequacy.

Donaghy’s seemingly prejudiced concerns regarding National education in Victoria and its officers appear to have been centred on his Irish training and experience, and his perception that employees with Irish credentials were disadvantaged. His disaffection was

81 National Board of Education, Inwards Correspondence Files, VPRS 880, Unit 57, Report 57/1, 30 December 1856. (Letter: Orlebar to the Commissioners.)
declared at a time when the government was reviewing the status of education in the colony with a view to introducing a Common School system, disaffection which no doubt would have at least caused embarrassment for the government. Donaghy scoffed that the only resemblance to the system operating in Ireland was the name. He criticised the Board for what he believed was its ‘…systemic exclusion of Irishmen and Roman Catholics in making appointments and dismissals.’ Having worked in the Irish system in Ireland, he admonished the Board for appointing ‘…an Englishman of known antipathy to Ireland and the Irish system’ to the office of inspector, and later chief inspector, who had the authority to give schools their ‘…character and distinctive features and to shape them after any model he pleases.’ Donaghy had set out to illustrate how the National system in the colony was a mere shadow of the National education system in Ireland and the inconsistencies he saw in decisions made by the Board. Moreover, with regard to Orlebar’s behaviour, references to the inspector in the Melbourne Herald were written in a manner calculated to embarrass the inspector and undermine the integrity of the Commissioners. Donaghy challenged the administrative role of the Board in managing the conduct of its employees.

Central to the nature of inspection was its efficiency and effectiveness in monitoring the delivery of education in the colony. It was imperative for teachers working within the inspectorial system to understand the purpose of inspection, and how recommendations in inspectors’ reports were to be followed up, a raison d’être of inspection. Where challenge was made to an inspector’s assessment, the circumstances were reviewed but rarely were

82 The Herald, Melbourne, Wednesday 11 May 1859, p.7.
83 The Herald, Melbourne, Wednesday 11 May 1859, p.7.
84 The Herald, Melbourne, Wednesday 11 May 1859, p.7.
judgments overturned. By comparison with the qualifications of the inspectors, teachers were subordinate. Teachers were often intimidated by the manner in which an inspection was conducted as demonstrated with Donaghy’s behaviour.

In the period covered in this chapter, teachers were not organised in any professional sense, but they could appeal to the Boards in any dispute over classification or the results contained in an inspection report. Inspection was a subjective process, one in which a teacher’s career rested on an inspector’s judgement of performance. Generally, inspectors acted with impunity. Invariably, when reports were challenged, the Board usually endorsed inspectors’ reports.

**Public official ‘preaching’ in a church**

Another opportunity for Donaghy to further expose the inadequacies he saw with the delivery of National Education in Victoria and to further embarrass Orlebar arose during the autumn of 1859. The issue Donaghy raised on this occasion centred on objection to Orlebar, as a public official acting as a church deacon in his local parish church. Ironically, Orlebar, despite his experience, was apparently unable to foresee that his religious activities had the potential to compromise his integrity as an inspector.

Furthermore, the compromising position in which Orlebar found himself embodied the very issues that bedevilled and divided communities where attempts to establish government schools were being made. What appeared to him to be a matter of private, personal pursuit outside his hours of employment highlighted the extreme sensitivities of the period. Political and religious interests were inextricably enmeshed in the administration of education in the colony.
The National Board of Education in Melbourne was faced with a dilemma. What should be done about a public claim that the chief inspector of the National system had been acting as a minister in a dissenting congregation?\textsuperscript{85} There was no regulation stipulating that Board employees were to refrain from any official duties in a church. The Board’s minutes of a meeting held on 18 May show that members had not been aware of the nature of Orlebar’s involvement in his church.\textsuperscript{86} If they had been aware, and specific rules regarding the religious practices of officials were in force, they would have been negligent in not reprimanding a public official for transgressing their strict regulations. Orlebar would have been bound to uphold regulations carefully crafted to curb ill feeling in government efforts to establish a state education system. Rules and regulations that were prescribed referred to teachers and the minimalist role they had with respect to religious education in the classroom, but there was no reference to the conduct expected of public officials regarding individual religious activity. However, a general regulation stressed that the Board’s inspectors should refrain from involvement in religious and political matters. Donaghy’s disclosure necessitated Orlebar to reveal his involvement in his church, even though this involvement was in his own time and outside his official duties for the Board.

In his defence, Orlebar claimed that he had been ordained as a deacon in his church when he lived in London. His involvement was limited to reading the lesson during morning and afternoon services. In Victoria, during his connection with a branch of the English church in Prahran, he admitted to occasions where he sermonised, restricting himself to subjects that dealt with the righteous relationships between individuals. The

\textsuperscript{85} *The Herald*, Melbourne, Saturday 14 May 1859, p.6.
inspector claimed that he had not fully appreciated the position he had placed himself in with his employer and the government, even though his work in the church was voluntary, in his own time, and moreover, at the weekend.

The disquiet raised by this matter was resolved at a meeting some five weeks later when the National Board directed that employees of the Board could not preach in churches nor were schools to be used as places of public worship.\(^8^7\) The inspector tendered his resignation in an attempt to resolve what amounted to a serious conflict of interest. Nevertheless, Orlebar kept his position, following an assurance that he would discontinue officiating as a preacher while in the employ of the Board.

The exposure of Orlebar’s involvement in his church typifies the extreme sensitivity that was prevalent in Victoria in church/state relations. In order to gain the support of religious groups, the Victorian parliament required the incorporated boards of education to observe regulations that opened education to all, regardless of religious affiliation. There was to be no proselytising in schools, other than the practice of permitting the reading of scripture outside formal class instruction from the designated Irish National education textbooks then in use. Ministers of the various sects were permitted to observe schools in operation, but not preach. It had been an expectation of both the legislature and the boards of education that senior officials would not participate in any practice that could jeopardise positive church/state relations. To have had the chief inspector’s connection to his church brought into the open was a stark reminder for the Victorian National Board, and government, of the need to observe the non-sectarian principles enshrined in the National Board’s charter.

During the early formative period of a state education system in Victoria, rules and regulations were modified as issues highlighted arose requiring action by the National Board to tighten its control over its employees. At a time when the teaching service was so poorly qualified, a challenge such as those mounted by John Donaghy, served as a reminder to the National Board that professional propriety was required of inspectors in their dealings with teachers. They were to be wary also of the sensitivity of church/state relations as applicable to schools and their local communities. National Board members were inexperienced in setting up and administering their schools. These were uncertain and inflammatory times in which to begin the task of building a government school system that could be held in high regard by the Victorian public.

The Common School Board, which began operations in Victoria in 1862, resulted from the government’s effort to unite both the National and Denominational School Boards under one authority, thus ending the ten-year period in which the Dual system, between 1852-1862, operated. From the various experiences learned from the two Boards, the government surmised that an incentive payment system would improve both the standard and quality of teaching. Teachers in the service were still largely unqualified and school attendance was not compulsory.

Listed among the Common School Board’s regulations relative to the result system was a rule that stipulated that every male teacher of the first division of competency should receive a salary of £100 per annum, with an augmentation on his classification on a sliding scale, according to the average attendance at the school. The purpose of the regulation was to provide a stimulus for teachers, by the payment of a bonus over and above a fixed salary.
‘for every child who shall pass an examination according to a fixed standard.’

Unfortunately, the focus of inspection became not one of improving teacher capacity but one in which teachers could see an opportunity to maximise their incomes.

**The Common School Board 1862-1872 and payment by results**

The ability to pay teachers a bonus above their regular salaries for the level of success students reached in attaining prescribed performance standards was a model of teacher assessment that was created in England and adopted in Victoria by the Common Schools Board in March 1864. The result system, the term by which the strategy was more commonly known, dominated the work of inspectors whose task it was to regularly examine pupils so that teachers could maximise their incomes. Examination for payment by results pushed inspection aside as the prime focus of the Common School Board. The result system became the source of considerable teacher bitterness and dissatisfaction.

Bitterness and dissatisfaction with the introduced payment system raised the ire of teachers, particularly with the manner in which inspectors carried out performance assessments. One aggrieved correspondent wrote to the editor of The Argus in June 1865 expressing annoyance at the ‘caprice, indolence and temper’ of Common School inspectors, in the hope that by going public with this grievance, ‘…these literary officials might be induced to mend their ways.’ They might even take heed of the consequences. The correspondent revealed that he was associated with a local school and expressed dissatisfaction that an inspector, after having given notice that the school was to be inspected for results did not turn up, having kept the school waiting for two to three hours in

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expectation. On the rescheduled day for inspection, a messenger turned up with a note of apology from the inspector, showing that the inspector had been too busy to attend. Examination of the school and teacher mattered, as payment was dependent on the outcome of the inspector’s assessment. The correspondent expressed the view that inspectors had ‘so much arbitrary power’\(^90\) that they had the means to ruin a school through examinations and reports without the school’s infringing any regulations, leaving no option for a correspondent or teacher to report any neglect on the part of the inspector to the Board of Education ‘…unless they are prepared for all the certain consequences.’\(^91\)

Archival Special Case files\(^92\) attest to investigations conducted by inspectors where teachers had incorrectly graded pupils in order to receive higher payments in their salaries. It was usual in cases of incorrect grading by teachers, that pupils in a younger age group who were high performing in their grade level, were promoted to higher grades, so that the teacher’s performance looked more impressive. Conversely, it was also true that weaker students in higher grades were put back to lower levels where they could perform better. This method of cheating to gain better pay meant that each case that was reported to the Board had to be investigated, and there were many. Inspectors were at the centre of resolving these situations when they arose, often having to regrade pupils in order that true standards could be reliably conveyed in the Commissioners’ reports to parliament. Because schooling was not compulsory, teachers were not in a position to enforce regular attendance. Nevertheless, when an inspection was imminent, teachers made every effort to get those enrolled at their schools to attend so that they could receive their correct salary

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\(^90\) The Argus, Melbourne, Monday 12 June 1865, p.6.
\(^91\) The Argus, Melbourne, Monday 12 June 1865, p.6.
\(^92\) Special Case Files 1853-1946, VPRS 892. (These files hold the investigation into individuals by earlier Boards of Education and later the Department of Education.)
and to ensure that good students were present to attend the inspector’s examination. Thus, the inspectorial system that grew out of a once friendly visitation program of the Church in earlier times, became one of heightened surveillance strategies to regulate the delivery of education in the colony. There was also the requirement for inspectors to account for the proper disbursement of government grants.

An example of the attempt to misclassify students occurred at the Castlemaine Common School No. 119 in 1864. The Inspector-General (highest ranked inspector), Richard Hale Budd, was sent to investigate the examination of pupils and their teacher, William Main, the earlier assessment having been carried out by Inspector Archibald Gilchrist. Gilchrist complained that the teacher at an examination of the school on 13 October 1864 refused to present certain children for examination in the third standard, the standard at which the inspector considered that they ought to be examined and wished to present them for the second standard.93 Budd determined that Gilchrist had good reason for the opinion he had formed as to the standard at which the children should have been examined. Because of the teacher’s refusal to present students for examination, Gilchrist left the school and the examination incomplete. This was not the first occasion at the school where pupils had been misclassified. At an earlier examination at the school in April, Budd stipulated that no payment be made to Main for any child proved to have been classified lower than the expected standard. With regard to the teacher’s behaviour, Budd reported that the case had the appearance of an attempt to defraud the revenue by removing children to a lower class than they were in previously, so that a larger amount might be obtained from the result of examination when measured against the Common School regulations with respect to

93 Board of Education, *Inwards Correspondence Files*, VPRS 903, Item 64/10319.
published achievement levels for pupils. The Inspector-General also concluded that Gilchrist should have conducted the examination of pupils at the October visit to Castlemaine. He pointed out that in the Board’s regulations, there were no instructions given to inspectors to refuse to examine in cases where children were in their opinion, classified too low. If Main had prevented Gilchrist from examining the pupils, then the inspector was within his rights to leave the school unexamined. This not being the case, the teacher had no right to prevent Mr Gilchrist from examining in any standard he pleased. The teacher should have permitted Gilchrist to do so and should any objection have been made, then an appeal could have been sent to the Board afterwards. Budd did establish that Main had been obstructive and irritating towards the inspector.

The matter was finally resolved in May 1866, Budd signifying to the Board that the case had been too prolonged and the contest between the teacher and the inspector should have been finalised much earlier, with some decisive action being taken. Gilchrist had correctly reported the misclassification of pupils at the school, but the situation regarding the teacher’s behaviour in refusing to present some pupils was not clear in Gilchrist’s report. Budd concluded that refusal meant that the teacher refused his consent for the examination of his pupils and that Gilchrist should have ‘…proceeded without consent, until the teacher actually did something which stopped the examination.’ Obstruction was the probable reason for the teacher’s attitude to the inspector’s visit as the teacher was doubtless aware of his unacceptable attempt to maximise his salary.

94 Board of Education, Special Case Files, VPRS 892, No.9, Unit 11, Inspector-General’s Report regarding gross charges between the teacher, Mr William Main and Inspector Gilchrist in connection with the inspection of the Castlemaine Common School No. 119, 65/450, 11 January 1865.
95 Board of Education, Special Case Files, VPRS 892, No.9, Unit 11, 65/450.
By the time of the Royal Commission on Public Education, known as the Higinbotham Royal Commission was established in Victoria in September 1866, payment by results had been in operation for almost three years. It was argued before the Commission that children received better instruction from teachers under payment by results than had formerly been the case. Henry Venables, in his capacity as Examiner with the Board, stated in evidence that improvement had been most noticeable in schools managed by indifferent masters. In these schools, the effect of the result system induced a ‘…certain amount of system in schools where previously none existed.’

Supporters believed that teachers had shown increased energy in classrooms and that there had been improvement in the way schools were organised.

The general trend in improvement was attributed to the greater efficiency of the inspectorial system. However, evidence presented to the Commission showed that, while the majority of teachers opposed the system, opposition was directed against the detail rather than against the principle of it. There may well have been improvement in examination against standards. Payment by results policed by inspectors ensured that teachers put in considerable effort to certify that children attended school and that they were actually taught. Improved salary opportunities offered by the system provided incentive to improve, even if misguided and abused by teachers seeking to gain personal advantage. The Commissioners also considered allegations that the results of inspections made at the same school by different inspectors varied significantly and was therefore an

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injustice to teachers. Concern here was that the emphasis in inspection focused on the
determination of the level of payment for a teacher.

Payment by results served to encourage a mechanical teaching style rather than making
an assessment of the tone and discipline of a school, which were also important ratings of
efficiency. Objectors to the system believed it was injurious to the intellectual
development of children and discouraged teaching in the higher branches of knowledge.
The Commission affirmed that there was merit in each of the objections. Their
recommendation stipulated that the number of examinations of pupils against the standards
ought to be reduced to one each year and with due notice given to teachers. In addition,
the inspector was required to visit every public school at least once a year without notice
for the express purpose of assessing the general efficiency of the school and the situation
with regard to discipline. Inspectors had provided evidence that when visits were
unannounced, they found a very different state of affairs existed. Unscheduled visits gave
inspectors a better sense of normal routine in schools away from examination visits for
results only. It was possible to determine the correct attendance in class rolls, whether work
in a school was conducted with regularity, the degree of cleanliness and order in the school
and if pupils were well employed on tasks set by teachers.

An examination of evidence to the Royal Commission on Public Education by senior
administrators and inspectors regarding the operation of the inspectorate and the

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98 Payment by results remained as the chief assessment tool delegated to inspectors until the Fink
Royal Commission in its final report threw out the payment system in 1901.
99 Board of Education, Minute Book No. 2: 1865-1869, VPRS 894, Meeting 45/67, 8 December
1867, 323. The Board ordered that a rule, consistent with the recommendation of the Royal
Commission to be forward for insertion in the Government Gazette, providing for the
examination of schools under standards only once a year.
100 Board of Education, Minute Book No. 2: 1865-1869, VPRS 894, p.29.
101 Board of Education, Minute Book No. 2, p.29.
performance of the Board of Education generally, provides significant insight into the effectiveness and efficiency, and thus the accountability of education, from the inception of National/state education in Victoria up to 1866.

**Royal Commission on Public Education 1866 (Higinbotham Royal Commission)**

The Higinbotham Royal Commission was the first to recognise that the operation of the inspectorate had significant problems. The findings were not a revelation, but articulated the rumbling of concerns expressed by teachers and local patrons about inspectors, to which that the Board of Education had managed to turn a blind eye. The Commission considered that there were insufficient inspectors to manage the scheme of examination under standards and payment by results.

There had never been an adequate number of inspectors to assess schools with any degree of frequency. Apart from a limited amount of time observing a more experienced inspector in the conduct of his duties, there was no requirement for inspectors to receive formal training. Claims of inconsistency in reporting and arbitrary assessments were rife, with Boards of Education reluctant to overturn any assessment or report made by an inspector and having no option but to hold the line with inspectors, fearing a groundswell of complaints arising from any comparison over one inspection report with another. The

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102 George Higinbotham was of Irish Protestant and Trinity College background. After a goldfields stint, he became a journalist, precocious editor of *The Argus* at thirty, a barrister, then a politician, Attorney-General, Chair of a Royal Commission on Education in 1866 encouraging a secular education system, then a Supreme Court judge, and finally Chief Justice of Victoria. (Patrick Morgan: “The Progressive Liberal Strand in Victorian politics”, in *Quadrant Magazine*, 1 June 2011.)

103 Board of Education, *Minute Book No.1, 1862-1865*, VPRS 894, Meeting 6/62, 23, September 1862, p.15. (Inspectorate staff at the commencement of the Board of Education-Common Schools were: Inspector-General: R. Hale Budd; Senior Inspector: A. B. Orlebar; Inspector and Organizing Master: Joseph Geary and G.W. Brown; Inspector 1st Class: H.P. Venables; H.A. Sasse; John Sircom; Inspector 2nd Class: Archibald Gilchrist. The Board also indicated that an additional inspector would be required but that the office would be vacant for the present.)
Higinbotham Commission found that it was an unsatisfactory feature of the system that inspectors received no regular training and that they were not placed under the control of a professional officer under the direction of the Board. As a matter of convenience, the Board of Education had placed its inspectors on an equal footing with one another, without professional supervision and control, in contravention of the Common Schools Act, a circumstance the Commission found difficult to comprehend.104

Richard Hale Budd: Inspector-General 1862-1872

Richard Hale Budd was the Inspector-General of Education during the decade in which Common school operated in the colony and in this capacity, ought to have fulfilled the supervisory requirements of the Act, but this was never the case. Budd was kept at arm’s length from the innermost operation of education office in Melbourne. From the outset, he sought clarification from the Board of Education regarding his role in supervising the work of inspectors and, importantly, his place in the hierarchy. He saw his position as residing between the Board and the secretary. If Budd had held seniority over the position of secretary, he may well have been permitted to attend Board meetings to gain first-hand knowledge of Board decisions, placing him in a better position to carry out the Board’s wishes. The Board did not view Budd’s position in this way. They considered that the secretary was the 'mouthpiece' of the Board. In this capacity, the secretary had paramount responsibility over every officer in the Department. To have structured the Department in any other way was considered an obstacle to the free communication of the Board with its secretary. The Board reminded Budd that his first priority was with the general inspection of schools and in achieving this end, he was expected to acquaint himself through personal

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inspection with the method of examination of each inspector. He was required to provide the Board with weekly reports on his progress and, at the conclusion of his assessment, a general report on the results of his inspection was expected. It was Budd’s responsibility to report any situation that led to a lack of uniformity in the way inspectors worked. This included any discrepancies in the organisation of schools in one district, or in those of one district compared with those of another, and any inequalities in the conduct of examinations or the system generally.\textsuperscript{105} The emphasis on his role was in reporting and keeping a watchful eye on system operations, but he could not act with any independent action. There was no mention of professional training or supervision for inspectors.

In evidence before the Commission, Budd emphasized his frustration in feeling that his position had been devalued. ‘My powers amount to no more than making the reports that you see published.’\textsuperscript{106} Any of his suggestions that were presented to the Board amounted to nothing. He further lamented that he had no power to direct an inspector in a school. Any influence he may have had was dependent upon receiving endorsement from either the secretary or his closest adviser. When questioned about the Board’s negligence in not acting on the requirements of the Act with respect to his role, Budd responded that he had never been given any reason for failure. Some six to eight months after his appointment, he was asked by the Board to give his opinion as to what constituted his duties. He put the position that he should have had free communication with the Board members where he


could put his views with some frequency. His opinion was ignored.\textsuperscript{107} He did not have the power to procure uniformity in the work of inspectors. He could only make recommendations. He complained ‘I was employed as a district inspector, and I could stand it no longer.’\textsuperscript{108}

Budd must have relished the opportunity to present his evidence publicly before the Commission. He had at least twenty-four years’ experience in education in the colony that included experience as an inspector with the Denominational Board and later as secretary and chief inspector of that board. In responding to questions regarding the efficiency and uniformity of inspection, he revealed that there was a discrepancy of twenty-five per cent in the reports assessed by him of the different inspectors. After reassessment of inspector reports during the first six months of 1866, he found that there had been five per cent improvement, reducing the discrepancy to twenty per cent,\textsuperscript{109} a figure he still found to be too high. Budd was concerned that inspectors received no formal training, and that he did not have any authority to manage their performance.

In providing the information Budd declared that it was not his intention to impute fault, but to draw the Commission’s attention to the fact that uniformity had not been achieved anywhere across all reports on standards.\textsuperscript{110} Budd considered the efficiency of individual

\textsuperscript{109} Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 2, in Sources in the History of Victorian Education No.2, Cote, J. (Ed.), p.123. Evidence of Richard Hale Budd: Thursday 19 October 1866, p.118. (Response to Question 1761.)
\textsuperscript{110} Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 2, in Sources in the History of Victorian Education No.2, Cote, J. (Ed.), p.123. Evidence of Richard Hale Budd: Thursday 19 October 1866, 119. (Response to Question 1774.)
inspectors a ‘confidential professional matter’ but implied that there were various degrees of ability among the eight inspectors employed by the Board. Inspectors had not been trained in their duties, other than to spend a period of two to three months observing the work of a more experienced colleague, a standard Budd regarded as inadequate. The Board kept its most senior officers in Melbourne and sent junior inspectors into rural areas of the colony. Inspectors working in close proximity to Melbourne had the advantage of working in well-established districts with better quality teachers, where the need to set up new schools was not so great. However, the inspectors sent to country districts needed greater skills and training to respond to requests for new schools and to support poorly trained teachers who needed guidance in the art of teaching. The ability to inspect a school was learnt on the job, this lack of experience contributing greatly to discrepancies the Inspector-General referred to in his evidence. Budd observed with crushing irony that, ‘…in our system here every inspector is supposed to be born an inspector; he comes forth like Minerva, from the head of Jupiter; he is, shortly after his appointment, put into a district, and is supposed to understand his work.’

In the Commission’s efforts to understand the role of the Inspector-General, Board Secretary Benjamin Kane was questioned as to whether the Inspector-General had any authority over inspectors or power to issue instructions to them. Kane confirmed the situation regarding Budd’s role, which was consistent with the correspondence Budd had received from the Board three years earlier in reply to questions regarding his status. Kane told the Commission that all authority resided with the Board, not the Inspector-General.

111 Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 2, in Sources in the History of Victorian Education No.2, Cote, J. (Ed.), Evidence of Richard Hale Budd: Friday 19 October 19 October 1866, p.125. (Response to Question 1850.)
The Inspector-General could only make suggestions to the Board about what instructions should be issued in his name. He could investigate complaints and it was his responsibility to ensure that all examinations were conducted in a proper manner. A key element missing in Kane’s evidence was the fundamental grievance Budd had raised earlier that the secretary was the vetting authority for the Board. In evidence, Budd specified that all the inspectors’ diaries and reports, including his own, were screened by Kane and minuted for the Board. It seemed to Budd that in effect Kane was the Inspector-General. The Royal Commissioners recommended that the Board establish professional authority and supervision over the inspectorate as a matter of urgency.

Evidence at the hearings highlighted objections to the management of public education that had been placed in the hands of part-time, unpaid board members. The Commission’s report recommended placing education under the control of a Minister of the Crown, responsible to parliament, and that a Department of Public Instruction should be under the control of the Minister. The Commission concluded that public instruction could not be ‘…efficiently dealt with by a body of gentlemen who can only afford to devote a very small portion of time to the purpose.’

In the absence of any other governing authority, the Board of Education had adhered to the tenets of its Act of Incorporation. In developing its inspectorate, decisions of the Board isolated senior officers by not allowing them to have direct access to Board proceedings or decision-making. The Secretary to the Board, in effect the administrative figurehead, was

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considered the responsible officer through whom all actions were to be processed. Inspectors were needed as a key element in the accountability chain of command to ensure that public schooling and teacher performance were under surveillance at all times, or at least some of the time! As for inspectors’ efficiency, no effective structure had been put in place to develop competency and uniformity in making judgments about pupil, teacher or school management.

Budd felt that his skills had been under-utilised and his position merely that of a reporter looking in on the system without any authority to act. Inspectors who gave evidence to the Commission expressed similar feelings of being undervalued. In common, they expressed the concern that the focus of their work had been with the conduct of examinations rather than the inspection of schools, with no time to make suggestions for improvements in the art of teaching. There were few among their number anyway who had practical teaching skills and who could provide practical advice with any authority to achieve uniform improvement across schools. Two, John Main and John Sircom, had school-teaching experience; another, Archibald Gilchrist, had taught in a school before he attended university. The want of a professional officer to take responsibility for assigning their duties and to whom they should be accountable, was lacking in their employment. As Budd had pithily observed, it was as if ‘every inspector was supposed to be born an inspector.’

Inspectors did attend an Easter Conference each year where examination questions in each of the standards and teacher competency tasks were discussed, with recommendations ultimately being sent to the Board of Education for approval. The use of periodic conferences established by the Board to regulate inspection and assessment was a

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good strategy and one that met with the approval of the Commissioners. Securing consistency in forming judgments and effective operations ‘in the field’ was another matter.

George Wilson Brown, by the time of his appearance before the Commission, had been an inspector for seven and a half years. He held the position of Organising Inspector, an impressive title but without much professional clout. Brown explained that the role had nothing to do with organising schools. Rather, his duty was simply to report on the reports of district inspectors. In evidence, Brown stated that he did not feel competent to provide advice about those most suited for appointment to inspectorships, but suggested that selecting teachers for the role had advantages and disadvantages. Teachers ‘are apt to consider nothing good that does not exactly tally with their own views.’ In a related question, Brown was asked whether appointments could be made from ‘gentlemen’ who had not been teachers, and who would most likely have their own perspectives on teaching and expect others to follow it? Brown thought that such people would be more likely to form impartial opinions and that, ‘…they will have no obstinate notions of their own.’ Experience however, had shown that those appointed to inspectorships without teaching experience did form their own views and teachers were judged accordingly. For instance, Joseph Geary and Robert Hopkins were two inspectors found to have conducted inspections according to their own standards.

**Teacher voice before the Higinbotham Royal Commission**

A meeting of head teachers in Common schools was convened on Saturday 10 November 1866 for the purpose of documenting complaints and passing recommendations for change

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they saw arising from teaching under the Common Schools Act. Forums such as these enabled teachers to have a public voice and for their views to be widely reported. The meeting elected Alexander Millie as spokesperson to present their views at the Commission. Millie had been the headmaster of a Common school in Bacchus Marsh, formed because of an amalgamation between two former National schools. Invitations to attend the Melbourne meeting were generally sent to all teachers in Melbourne and its environs. Seventy respondents confirmed their intention to attend the meeting. At previous meetings, a committee had been formed with Millie as its secretary to report on the existing system and the general working of the Education Act 1872. The November meeting was called to receive the report, which had been compiled from replies to questions the committee had distributed to teachers to gain feedback regarding the system. Respondents signified that they had been dissatisfied with the uncertainty of their employment and working conditions. They were particularly aggrieved that their ongoing employment was at the whim of local committees whose members often did not have a working knowledge of the system and whose membership and attendance at meetings was often random and unreliable. Their preference was for a central board, accountable to parliament under the direction of a Minister for Education, giving teachers the right to communicate directly with a new central authority on all matters related to their work.

For some time, a teacher could be dismissed on recommendations made to the Board of Education without being informed of the precise reason for his or her dismissal. The change teachers sought was that local patrons should be obligated to bring distinct charges to the Board, with teachers having the right of reply. It was the practice that membership of Local Patron committees consisted of interested local community members and included
representatives of denominations in each district. Those nominated required the approval of the Board before meeting as a registered group. To regulate the operation of these committees, teachers preferred that members should be elected so that only those who had a genuine interest in representing the interests of their districts occupied places on the committee. The meeting of head teachers endorsed a Committee recommendation that in all future appointments of inspectors, ‘teachers of sufficient attainments’\(^{116}\) should be preferred over those applicants not possessing teaching qualifications, ensuring that only professionals with an intimate knowledge of effective classroom practice conducted inspection. Concerns that teachers experienced in relation to the Result system were reflected in the recommendation requiring modification to the examinations at standards to better reflect the efforts of a teacher in developing the intellectual prowess of pupils in addition to imparting knowledge. A General Conference of Teachers later the same day, attended by teachers from both country and metropolitan districts, added an amendment condemning the Result system as unsatisfactory. This meeting resolved that religious instruction should be left to the voluntary efforts of clergymen and schoolmasters and others approved by parents. A further resolution stipulated that local committees should be restrained from interference in religious instruction, other than to set the time of day that it should be given.\(^{117}\)

In evidence to the Higinbotham Commission, Millie stated that any comments he made were representative of those who attended the Melbourne meeting of head teachers. No minutes were taken, but he presented the Commission with a written report of proceedings.


\(^{117}\) The Argus, Melbourne, Monday 12 November 1866.
When questioned about the Result system, Millie illustrated the extent to which the system was abused and the inspectorate’s apparent inability to rectify the situation. The system lent itself to student cramming by many teachers, taking ‘cognizance only of what has been done in communicating information’, a mechanical approach to learning, rather than developing the intellectual powers of learners. Millie explained that in his experience with examination for results at his school, inspectors generally asked questions of pupils within a core of subjects, arithmetic for example, where cramming occurred, but stressed that this was not possible in reading. The inspector merely expected mechanical reading, where pupils were not required to offer any understanding of what they read. On the first occasion that his school had been examined for results, the inspector asked several questions about the subject matter of the lesson. On subsequent visits by the same inspector, no questions were asked, indicating a lack of consistency and rigour in teacher appraisal.

The concerns of teachers and Millie’s experience of systemic assessment practiced by inspectors highlighted the unreliability of examination results and of inconsistencies in the way assessments were carried out. Whilst individual inspectors such as Geary gave testimony that there was uniformity in the way they went about their work, there was a sense that this was an erroneous perception on Geary’s part and possibly a view that inspectors wanted to believe and portray that they were working with unity of purpose. The Result system may well have induced greater effort on the part of teachers to keep pupils at

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school and have brought about greater effort by less able teachers. Millie agreed with the Commissioners that there had been improvement in reading, spelling and arithmetic, areas of the curriculum that were amenable to teaching by cramming, but that other areas had been deplorably deficient. Millie suggested that while he felt the system was worthy for bringing dishonest teachers to a sense of their duty, it should be ‘destroyed or done away with’\textsuperscript{120} if it could not be modified. Millie asserted that:

\begin{quote}
...there are a great many inefficient teachers in the colony, because they are appointed by local authorities who are not competent to judge of their qualifications, but if it were left to the central board a better class of teachers would be appointed...they could be made to do better.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

Alexander Millie’s doubts about the virtue of payment by results did not offer unqualified support to achieve uniformity in the desired level of improvement across schools in the colony. True merit in the capacity of the result system to improve the quality of teaching and teachers remained questionable.

**Recommendations of the Higinbotham Royal Commission**

The Royal Commission on Public Education (1866), with George Higinbotham as chairman, had a membership of eight additional commissioners. The Commission was appointed to enquire into and report on the system of Common Schools Education in Victoria “with as little delay as possible.”\textsuperscript{122} The Commission sat for five months from 4 September 1866 and in that time held fifty-two meetings. The Commission recommended the continuation of the results system that had been in operation for three years at the time


the Commission completed its report. The system had been introduced after a ‘careful and protracted enquiry’, in June 1863. The Commission acknowledged that there were substantial objections to the system but felt that properly administered, objections would be gradually removed. It was a recommendation that: (i) the assessment of teachers for results payment would be conducted by inspectors once a year with advance notice being given to teachers of the impending visit by an inspector. Another visit by an inspector was to be without advanced notice for the purpose of ascertaining the general efficiency of the school;\textsuperscript{123} (ii) that the number of inspectors was inadequate ‘…for the just and efficient administration of the scheme of examination under standards and payment by results.’\textsuperscript{124}

The Commission declared that it was an unsatisfactory feature of the education system that inspectors were not required to pass any special examination, nor did they receive any regular training to equip them to carry out their duties. The Commission report stated that there had been a lack of general superintendence of inspectors, the Board of Education having placed all inspectors on an equal footing. The recommendation stipulated that an inspector, in addition to special qualifications, ideally should hold credentials associated with practical teaching skills. These attributes were considered to be obligatory. The recommendation included the expectation that a proportion of appointees to the position of inspector should come from among the highest classified teachers.\textsuperscript{125} The resumption of conferences of inspectors was a further recommendation.

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The Commission recommended that (iii) a Minister of Public Instruction, responsible to parliament be appointed to manage the general affairs of education in Victoria. The Commissioners expressed their concern that education in the colony was in the hands of five unpaid, voluntary Board members. The Board had not been in a position to deal with ‘well-founded causes of complaint against the present system.’ According to the Commission it was ‘completely irresponsible’ that the administration of large sums of government grant funds should be left in the control by a Board who could only devote a small amount of their time to efficiently deal with the administration of education.

With respect to religious and secular instruction, the Commission asserted that the claims of the clergy of the various denominations ‘to direct or superintend’ religious instruction in schools had contributed, ‘…more than any other causes combined, to disturb opinion, and to raise practical obstructions in the way of public instruction.’ The recommendation from the Commission on this matter was clear: Sectarian or dogmatic teaching in public schools should ‘…be prohibited by express management, and power of enforcing the prohibition should be given to the central authority.’ Religious instruction was to be left in the hands of local school committees who could determine the time of day and the period of instruction that was to take place in their respective government schools. This suggested action by the Commission was designed to relieve the administrative office in Melbourne of the ‘difficult and invidious task of selecting and prescribing’ the general nature of religious instruction in government schools. The Commission recommended that there should be separate administration of schools vested in the Board of Education and

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other schools held in trust for education in association with religious denominations.\textsuperscript{130} It was anticipated by the Commission that the recommendation to deal with the religious question would encourage the clerical and lay elements of the various denominations to ‘…cooperate in the work of education.’\textsuperscript{131}

**Case study: Inspector Geary**

The following account of the performance of Inspector Joseph Geary is an example of an inspector who did not conform to the requirements of his office. His non-compliant attitude towards the confidentiality of the content of meetings of inspectors was in contravention of the Board of Education’s ruling that meetings of inspectors were to be regarded as private. The case study illustrates the extent to which the Board of Education exerted its central authority over inspectors and the inspectorate generally and demonstrates that the inspectorate was not an independent free agent within the administration of education.

Prior to the *Common Schools Act 1862* and the formation of the Board of Education, Joseph Geary had been employed as an inspector with the Denominational Schools Board. Upon the passing of the *Common Schools Act* Geary along with other former inspectors, gained a new inspectorship with the Board. Uniformity in the way in which inspectors were to go about their responsibilities mattered greatly to the new Board of Education. Complaints referred to the Board about teacher misconduct were taken seriously in an effort to establish uniformity in the way in which teachers performed their duties. No less was expected of the inspectors. It may well have been in Geary’s own best interests to suggest that there was uniformity and effectiveness in the manner in which inspectors

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carried out their responsibilities, because he was a public officer who did not conform to agreed protocols. Doubt about Geary’s performance first came to the attention of the Board of Education in February 1863. An article published in the Melbourne Herald, under the pseudonym ‘Aristides’, disclosed the contents of a meeting of inspectors convened to consider the rules of the Board of Education. Budd, who was present at the meeting, was asked to track down the source of leaked information from the meeting. Suspicion fell upon Geary, who admitted to having spoken to a teacher about the proposed changes to the rules. However, he stated that he did not discuss the voting that took place at the meeting and that he did not know the author of the letter. Geary was censured for breaching confidentiality, the Board ruling ‘that the meetings of the inspectors should be considered as private’, and expected ‘that in future the proceedings should not be made public.’ Geary had a habit of speaking out when things did not go his way and was often cautioned about giving information on educational matters to anyone without the permission of the Board. Board Chairman, Sir James Palmer, after reading Geary’s annual report for 1867, recommended that the inspector should be dismissed, or at least suspended for twelve months. Geary, in Palmer’s judgment, had constituted himself a censor of the Board in a manner that was frivolous and unjustified. For whatever reason, Geary chose this report to condemn and further damage the credibility of the Board. He arraigned the whole system of administration, objecting to the methods of classification and inspection of children and the

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examination of teachers. Geary maintained that a successful system of public instruction could well do without the support of any imposing official staff, complexity and formality.

The Board did not publish Geary’s report, but forwarded it to the Chief Secretary for further action. An irate Palmer insisted that it was not possible for any public Department to be effectively administered ‘…if officers of that Department are allowed to assail it in such contumelious terms.’\textsuperscript{134} Board Secretary, Benjamin Kane noted in his annual report for 1867 that Geary’s 1867 report was not published because it was the Board’s opinion that the report ‘is calculated to subserve the interests of education.’\textsuperscript{135} The Board recommended Geary’s dismissal to the Chief Secretary. Despite this recommendation, the Board opted for a twelve-month suspension from duty, by virtue of the fact that they had employed Geary for eleven years.\textsuperscript{136}

Whatever the reasoning, the Board lacked the nerve to follow through with the dismissal. Mystifying as this decision was, why was it that such a disloyal official could continue working with the Board, especially given the contempt he displayed for the system and its officials? Was it simply the case that the Board had no one else to fall back on, so it was expedient to cut their losses and persist with him?

Complaints continued, including a claim that Geary hurried over country schools during examinations, yet that there was undue delay inspecting town schools as a consequence of improperly organising his time.\textsuperscript{137} The teacher at Wooragee School in December 1872, for

\textsuperscript{134} Board of Education, \textit{Minute Book II: 1865-1869}, VPRS 894, Meeting 60/68, 1 April 1868, p.369.
\textsuperscript{136} Board of Education, \textit{Minute Book II, 1865-1869}, VPRS 894, Meeting 60/68.
\textsuperscript{137} Board of Education, \textit{Minute Book II, 1865-1869}, VPRS 894, Meeting 45/67, 8 December 1867, pp.319-320.
example, complained that Geary gave notice of examination for results for Monday 18 December 1871, but pointed out that Geary actually arrived at 10am on the preceding Friday. She pleaded with Geary to allow her time to collect children together for examination. On that day, only twenty-nine children were present but with proper notice, the teacher could have assembled forty-four children. The teacher claimed that Geary had said that he did not have the time to wait for the teacher to do so. As Geary arrived on a day on which no notice had been given, the teacher’s potential to receive her salary entitlement would have been in jeopardy because of poor pupil attendance.

Among the many concerns the Board had with Geary’s inspections was that he applied his own idiosyncratic standards. Geary modified his standards, according to Budd, to suit the district in which he happened to be, rather than report performance with reference to a fixed standard. ‘I am aware that every inspector has his own standard of excellence’, said the Inspector-General, this being dependent upon the experience and opportunities for observing good schools. There really was no excuse for Geary’s District, the Western District, to be judged differently from that of other districts in the colony. Claims by Geary that performance was uniformly assessed against common benchmarks were not valid, when Geary’s own behaviour was shown to be inept, unreliable, and lacking rigour.

Clearly, Joseph Geary misrepresented the status of inspection to the Royal Commission in 1866 by asserting that it was uniform, while concealing his own inefficiency. Efficiency and effectiveness depended so much on the effort, conscientiousness and competency of

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138 Board of Education, *Special Case Files*, VPRS 892, Number 458, Unit 28, 9 August 1872. Benjamin Kane’s letter to Geary on behalf of the Board, requiring explanations to a list of complaints.
139 Inspector-General’s Report to the Board of Education, *Special Case Files*, VPRS 892, 71/15871, 23 August 1871, p.3.
individual inspectors. The Board could not claim to have had uniform, consistent outcomes from the efforts of their inspectors.

In November 1874, the Minister for Public Instruction gave Geary the opportunity to resign his position within the week, out of consideration for his long-time service in education in the colony. He tendered his resignation two days later. Quite simply, the government had had enough of the ‘frequent and serious irregularities’\(^{140}\) by Geary in the performance of his duties as a public officer.

At the Higinbotham Commission, comments by Dr Perry, The Lord Bishop of Melbourne, demonstrated his disapproval of the operation of the inspectorate. He spoke about the purpose of inspection and pointed out that the character of schools should not be dependent upon the qualifications of both teachers and inspectors. As he saw it, the system could not claim to have an efficient body of inspectors unless their qualifications were subjected to scrutiny in a different manner. It simply was not good enough, he argued, to appoint those who had no idea about what happened in a school, with no experience of teaching, other than that they had attended a school some time ago and had been employed in some kind of business activity.

Perry suggested that he was aware that some appointments were made from this category of unsuitable applicants. Of most concern was that potential applicants, upon arrival in the colony, having in the first instance not been successful in finding work for which they were trained, turned their attention to submitting applications in other areas, one being inspectorship vacancies. Perry surmised that many may have had innate intelligence

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\(^{140}\) Secretary Handfield’s Letter to Geary on behalf of the Minister for Public Instruction, 30 November 1874, *Special Case Files*, VPRS 892, Number 458, Unit 28, Item 74/17975 Dismissal of Inspector Joseph Geary.
and experience who turned out to be ‘ultimately valuable’, but in order to maintain a thoroughly good system of schools, a good system of inspection was necessary. In his view, no one should be appointed unless someone competent to pass judgement on ability had examined him. There was no value in judging qualifications on general testimonials alone. He declared that appointments had been made from among applicants who were ‘utterly unqualified for the office; who could not themselves have taught a school; utterly ignorant of organization and order, not knowing wherein a good school consists.’ Teachers had to pass an examination for competency, so why exclude inspectors from similar appraisal? The Commission’s recommendation was that an inspector ‘ought to possess, in addition to special qualifications, the qualifications of a practical teacher.’ If brought into force, this recommendation alone would provide an avenue for promotion of teachers to the highest classification, bringing with it the prospect of greater respect and credibility from teachers for the inspectorate in general.

**Conclusion**

The question to be addressed in this, and the following chapter is: What were the implications for the future of the Victorian Education Department and the inspectorate following the findings of three Royal Commissions on the condition of education in the colony between 1866 and 1901? The first of these, The Higinbotham Royal Commission 1866, was considered in this chapter.

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On 31 December 1851 the Port Phillip District, the former name of Melbourne, separated from New South Wales and became the colony of Victoria, responsible for its own administration of all aspects of government.

In respect of education, at this time, there were seven National schools in existence in the new colony, apart from Denominational schools. The new colony set up the National Board (1852-1862) to administer the seven National schools and to provide for the education needs of the vast numbers of children who had accompanied parents on the gold fields of the colony. Denominational schools continued to operate under their own existing system of administration. Thus, this decade of schooling came to be known as the Dual system. The Dual system was regarded with intense antipathy by the Victorian colony’s clerics and religious groups.

The administration of education was beset with periodic, arbitrary and autocratic decision-making from part-time, unpaid Board members; it was a top down system of control that was not directly held accountable to the legislature other than by providing annual reports to parliament on the operation of the system in any year. Although parliament had to approve rules and regulations, the National and Common School Boards were arbitrating organisations on all matters, responsible for and ensuring that their senior officers understood that they were accountable to these Boards.

The Common School Act 1862 attempted to combine the National and Denominational schools under one administrative body. From the outset, this Board was bedevilled by conflicts and tensions between the advocates of National and Denominational schools, each group taking up opposing ideological positions in the way public education was promoted.

As well, the Common Schools Board was plagued with administrative and operational
difficulties with regard to the quality of its inspectorial system; the general failure of inspectors to foster professional collegiate relations with teachers and general resentment by teachers of the unpopular payment by results system. The first of these investigations, known as the Higinbotham Royal Commission, 1866, made three major recommendations that have been relevant to this chapter:

(i) that teacher payment by results should be retained, despite widespread dissatisfaction with the system;\textsuperscript{144}

(ii) that inspectors should be better qualified, including holding credentials associated with practical teaching skills and that conferences of inspectors should continue\textsuperscript{145} and

(iii) that a Minister of Public Instruction, responsible to parliament should be appointed, replacing the five voluntary members of the Board of Education who could devote so little of their time to the allocation and the administration of large sums of government grant funds.\textsuperscript{146}

Among other recommendations was one intended to assuage the antipathy that had festered over religious issues in connection with efforts to establish government schools in the colony. On this matter the Commission recommended that: (i) there should be separate administration of schools vested in the Board of Education and other schools held in trust for education in association with religious denominations; (ii) responsibility for overseeing religious instruction in government schools was to be left in the hands of local school

\textsuperscript{144} Report of the Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 1, Second Recommendation, p.44.
\textsuperscript{145} Report of the Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 1, p.33.
\textsuperscript{146} Report of the Royal Commission on Public Education 1867, Volume 1, Sixth Recommendation, p.44.
committees and (iii) sectarian or dogmatic teaching was to be prohibited in government schools. The expectation of the Commissioners was that these measures would encourage the clerical and lay elements of the various denominations to ‘…cooperate in the work of education.’

In summary, the system of instruction established by the Common Schools Act 1862 did not produce any “proportionate improvement in the extension of the benefits of instruction aided by the State.”147 Advocates of state education pinned their hopes on the recommendations of the Higinbotham Royal Commission, which strongly recommended the creation of a Department of Education, headed by a Minister of the Crown, who would be accountable to parliament.

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Chapter Three (1872–1901)

A new broom sweeps clean- or does it?

The systematic organisation of public education…required an authority empowered to make and enforce educational rules—a normal authority as it was sometimes called. That office emerged in the form of a schools inspectorate.¹

Denis Grundy

Problems that beset the establishment of a state education system, examined in the previous chapter, revealed the difficulties encountered by inexperienced administrators and inspectors to act with consistency in applying the rules and regulations of both the National and Common Schools Boards. Government schooling evolved built upon the experience of endeavouring to provide a quality non-secular education. Inspectors were accountable to their boards for the performance of their arduous duties. Limitations were placed on the extent to which inspectors were able to carry out regular inspections of schools for which they were responsible. Financial constraints imposed by successive governments and inadequate inspectorate staffing levels meant that it was not possible to meet two visitations at each school in any one year. An inspector’s workload was prohibitive. Divisiveness between the proponents of denominational schools and those who advocated the benefits of non-secular schooling remained troublesome for the Victorian Government. The introduction of payment by results during the Common schools period (1862-72) brought with it teacher resentment of a system that was meant to elicit improvement in the way

teachers taught. However, teaching simply became a mechanical exercise. Classroom stacking of high achieving students gave rise to a mercenary approach by teachers to their craft. Inspection was reduced to assessing the level of percentage increase in salary above standard rates of teacher salaries.

This chapter examines change in the inspectorate’s accountability function and responsibilities during the period 1872-1901. The Education Act of 1872 significantly increased the spread of education in the colony. Arrangements made to examine school and teacher performance by the Department of Education were updated to meet demands placed on the new administration as a consequence of social change. The chapter also examines the impact that major events such as the Depression of the 1890s had on Department of Education operations and the obligations of its inspectors. The focus in this chapter is on evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the new Victorian Department of Education and its inspectorate, as identified in evidence given by senior Departmental officers across three royal Commissions held during the period covered in this chapter. Concluding remarks draw together the major elements discussed in the chapter, including the nascent influence of the State School Teachers Association in the mid 1880s.

Three Royal Commissions on Public Education were conducted in the next three decades: 1877-1878 (Pearson), 1881-1882 (Rogers-Templeton) and the Fink Commission in 1899-1901. Each Commission considered the nature of a centralised, ideal education authority. The Commissions regretted the continued weakened status of the Inspector-General that arose from the confused understanding of what comprised the officer’s duties in the higher reaches of the bureaucracy. But, bound by the characteristic assumption that educational planning had only commenced properly with the Education Act 1872
settlement of the church-state conflict, the Commissioners did not know where to look for the real sources of the Department’s administrative confusion. The administrative difficulties were rooted in conflicts over the power and the authority of the inspectorate as far back as the 1850s when Arthur Orlebar was Chief Inspector, during the 1860s, and in the unhappy career of the Denominational Schools Board’s onetime Normal Inspector Richard Hale Budd who later became the Inspector-General during the Common Schools period.

**Setting**

By 1870, 37 per cent of Australia's population lived in cities, the majority of whom were Australian-born. It was a time when Australia became increasingly urbanised. Selection Acts had opened up land to small farmers. With the passage of time, many moved back to the cities in search of work. The gold rushes of the previous decades had brought a measure of wealth for many and increased the population. Consequently, there was growing awareness of the need for improvement in the quality of public schooling. New schools were built, teacher-training colleges were established and teachers' salaries were paid by a new Department of Education. In 1872, after two decades of acrimony and intolerance, funding of non-government schools ceased.

The land boom of the 1880s led to risky speculative behaviour with respect to land acquisition and investment, as workers and investors took their money and placed it in high-return building societies, investment companies and new banking institutions. Thus investment returns, profits and wages became higher and higher. State Governments shared in the wealth and ploughed money into urban infrastructure, particularly railways.
Accumulated riches were built on speculation. English banks lent freely to colonial speculators in Victoria, adding to the mountain of debt on which the boom of the decade was built. Migrants came to the colonies in the hope of making a fortune, whether from digging for gold or in new business ventures. People flocked to the cities in search of work, creating a newly available labour force. New manufacturing industries blossomed. The society that evolved in this decade was characterised by greater open-mindedness such as women's suffrage and the development of the trade union movement.

Throughout the period of the 1870s and 1880s schooling was, in general, highly regarded. As Bob Bessant wrote,

The public appreciation of elementary schools, in which no fees were demanded, grew with the years [after 1872] and state schools became the pride and boast of the colony. \(^2\)

The most tangible sign of confidence was evident in the Department of Education budget. The Victorian Governments of the 1870s and 1880s increased funding for schools so that by 1885 there were 755 new schools, an increase of 72 per cent since 1872.\(^3\) While schooling seemed beyond criticism within the context of a growing economy, initially large increases in educational expenditure did not cause serious concern. However, the boom times were about to implode. The Depression of the 1890s had a severe impact on the Education Department’s former largesse. Population growth stagnated. Labour intensive and capital-hungry enterprises like schools became subject to new budgetary constraints which were also applied to other sectors of the public service. The repercussion of fiscal


government cost cutting was particularly severe on formal schooling.\textsuperscript{4} Attitudes towards institutionalized education changed dramatically as Victoria fell into Depression.

By the 1880s speculation was rife in urban real estate. Australian financial intermediaries such as trading banks raised funds domestically and in Britain, and leant money ‘with gay abandon.’\textsuperscript{5} Specialist intermediaries such as building societies and pastoral finance companies borrowed funds from trading banks, and then directed credit into building and the pastoral industry. By the late 1880s the prosperity of earlier times had run its course. Falling asset prices, compounded by shrinking commodity prices, increased pressure on borrowers whose defaults undermined the stability of lending institutions.

The Commercial Bank of Australia, the largest bank in the colony of Victoria, whose capital Melbourne was the epicentre of the speculative building boom, shut on April 5, 1893. Within six weeks, thirteen of Australia’s twenty-two trading banks had suspended operations.\textsuperscript{6}

Economic decline brought with it a re-evaluation of government budgeting. Government revenue that had previously been available to build state infrastructure virtually dried up. Government expenditure was questioned across all Departments and accountability protocols were reviewed.

The Depression of the 1890s brought to an end a period of economic good fortune that resulted in a market collapse that tore at the social fabric and fractured the unity of colonial society. According to N. G. Butlin and others, the Depression was not a sudden event but

resulted from a slow development of economic difficulties. Prior to the 1890s the Victorian public and private sectors carried with them high interest repayments. Vast debts were incurred, a factor that contributed to economic instability. Money was poured into the pastoral and building industries and railway construction, with a lack of balanced investment in the economy as a whole. Retrenchments across government workplaces during the 1890s resulted in severe disruption to forward planning. The Government Treasury was cash-strapped. The effect on the Department of Education meant that teachers and public officials had to be cut from the service. Available funds could at least ensure that schooling continued to operate, but within extremely limited means. Progress in the Victorian education system during this period stalled.

Richard Baker, the Minister for Public Instruction, gave his assessment on how the Depression had affected the work of the Department in his annual report for 1892-93. There had been a contraction of business and enterprise that extended its influence within the range of the Education Department's labours. As a consequence of legislative decisions made in the parliament, many teachers were placed in excess. By way of reducing this excess, all sexagenarians were called upon to retire.

Cost cutting was not simply a matter of retiring teachers in the sixty to seventy years age bracket. Legislative changes to the Public Service Act were introduced to reduce the overall cost of public instruction, forcing savings on the Department as a result of

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diminished funds for education. The number of assistant teachers was reduced but the number of pupil-teachers was increased. There were clearly cost savings to be made against the salaries of the more expensive assistant teachers. Pupil-teachers cost less, and were poorly paid anyway. Singing, drawing, drill and gymnastic teachers were struck off the employment register. However, Baker reassured parliament that the course of instruction for pupils had been left untouched, so that the great privilege of getting a good and free education was still the heritage of children of the poorest citizens.¹¹

**Compulsory education**

Between 1872 and 1893, a series of Education Acts throughout Australia introduced provisions for the establishment of public schooling that was ‘free, compulsory and secular.’ Colonial governments in Australia had observed how each had proceeded to establish public education systems in their respective colonies. In the process of setting up public education, each colonial government took steps to take direct responsibility for education from the churches, local groups and private providers.¹² Until then, these private organisations had supplemented an inadequate public schools system. Although colonial governments took cognizance of the provisions of the English *Education Act 1870*, its provisions were considered to be unsuited to the Australian context.¹³ One condition in the Act stipulated that parents had to pay for their children’s education unless they could not afford to pay. This was not a condition enshrined in the Australian Education Acts of the

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¹² Central Department of Education bureaucracies headed by a minister for education were established in the colonies as follows: Victoria (1872); South Australia and Queensland (1875); New South Wales (1880); Tasmania (1885); Western Australia (1893). Campbell and Proctor, pp. 73-74.
period. Perhaps it was with a sense of sarcasm that an Argus editorial was quick to advise the paper’s readership that the ‘…death of the old system was coincidental with the death of the then secretary, Benjamin Kane.’\textsuperscript{14} In Victoria in 1872, the reforms of the new Act were passed in a single piece of legislation. In some other colonies, reforms were introduced in stages, sometimes over several decades.

Central to these changes was recognition by the legislature that the state was responsible for overseeing education by establishing education bureaucracies. With ministerial control, state bureaucracies administered the requirements within the legislation, thereby regulating education so that funds were evenly distributed within each colony. The Education Acts in the Australian states produced significant controversy, as the appropriate role of the state in education was debated at length, in both parliamentary and public forums.

Three other characteristics of the Australian public school systems that established by the Education Acts were: (i) the establishment of government Departments of public instruction or education in each Australian colony. Instead of schools being governed by boards and councils of education, government ministers controlled the new Departments; (ii) the abolition of state aid or government funding to denominational (church) schools, and (iii) significant controls by local authorities over the management of local schools were usurped by centralised administration. Centralised inspectorates were created to oversee the new public school systems.\textsuperscript{15} The Act that came closest to establishing all three of these conditions at the same time was the Victorian Education Act 1872.

\textsuperscript{14} The Argus, Melbourne, 27 April 1878, p.6. \url{http://trove.nla.gov.au}

The Victorian Education Act 1872

The Victorian Education Act 1872 repealed previous arrangements for the provision of education in the colony. Under the new Act, education was to be free, compulsory and secular. After two decades of education in the colony, the immediate effect of the Act was to make education a mandated priority for all children. Schooling became compulsory and children were required to attend school because literacy and numeracy were a way to the common good, and because educated citizens were a prerequisite for maintenance of successful self-government. Education was free, because it served the public interest.

The Victorian Education Act 1872 established the basis for a uniquely centralised model of school education, unlike education systems in Britain, the United States or Canada. This Act and subsequent Education Acts created large centralised education Departments that had close control over classroom practice. The needs of the state took precedence over the interests of parents. Public schools drilled their students with expected social behaviours, knowledge and skills that would equip students to become responsible citizens. In Australia (and Ireland) the concern was with the provision of a basic primary school education for the development of loyal citizens to serve the political and economic needs of the day.16

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In this context Laadan Fletcher\(^7\) suggested that the work of colonial school inspectors

\[\ldots\text{was seminal in the organization of structures designed to disseminate the culture of the colonisers amongst the colonised and that they held a deep faith in the value and efficacy of the educational packages which they purveyed and in the social patterns within which they had been reared.}\(^8\)

Perhaps, as Fletcher postulates, the inspectors were patriotic towards the imperial system and consequently, were willing entrepreneurs of British culture.

According to Peter Meadmore,\(^9\) there were two significant influences in the push for compulsory education during the 1870s. First was the belief that ignorance and crime were closely related. By reference to criminal records, advocates for compulsory education demonstrated that there was a significant connection between a lack of education and criminal behaviour. According to Meadmore it was believed that the introduction of compulsory schooling would produce ‘good citizens’ who would respect authority and contribute to the promotion of a well-ordered society. Second, an emerging link was made between education and national prosperity. Concern had arisen that England’s industrial and trading supremacy was being overtaken by Germany and other European nations, leading to comparisons between the education systems in these countries and Australia. It was concluded that industrial progress was closely linked to the quality of education provided by the state for its workers.

As loyal members of the British Empire, Australian legislators felt the responsibility of

\(^7\) Dr Laadan Fletcher has written and edited works on the history of education in Western Australia and Britain; one-time lecturer in the Department of Education, University of Western Australia.


\(^9\) Meadmore is a lecturer in the School of Cultural and Language Studies within the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia. He teaches sociology of education. His research interests include education policy, in particular the effects of devolution on public education, and the history of education.
ensuring that Australians were ready to meet the challenge being made by England’s competitors by way of making education compulsory.\textsuperscript{20}

However compulsory school attendance placed significant stress on both the government and the fledgling Department. An immediate consequence of the Victorian \textit{Education Act 1872} was the transfer of many hundreds of old schools to the Department, which subsequently forced the government to advance significant funds to open many others.\textsuperscript{21} Amendments to the \textit{1869 Land Act} in late autumn of 1873 triggered the scattering of people into country areas where land could be readily acquired. Consequently, new settlements were created and requests for schools came flooding in.\textsuperscript{22} The Act brought more children into the public system than had previously been educated by the state and the denominational schools combined. Growth in the average attendance rates in schools moved from 66,439 (December 1872) to 99,783 by the end of March 1873. The total enrolment by the end of March of the same year was 144,049.\textsuperscript{23} Inspector John Elkington (North-Eastern District) ended his 1873 report noting that


\textsuperscript{21} The \textit{Education Act 1872} was implemented across the Victorian colony on 1 January 1873 with 453 schools held in buildings formerly vested in the Board of Education. These schools became State Schools under the new Act. A further 590 schools were held in buildings that were the property of various denominations or of private individuals.


It need hardly be told that the year was one of disturbance; a year of organizing and re-organizing. Old schools had upon a sudden to be fitted to new wants; and the continuous demand for new schools in small and outlying centres of population had to be met as it arose. In these latter cases appearances were often sacrificed to promptitude, and the school started in a rough bark hut pending the putting-up of a more comfortable building.24

Further stress arose from the necessity to quickly establish the structure of the new bureaucracy. Overarching responsibility for education was entrusted through a hierarchy. The Minister of Public Instruction, James Wilberforce Stephen, was the responsible Minister of the Crown accountable to parliament; the Secretary, Henry Venables, headed the operational functions of the Department and an Inspector-General, Gilbert Wilson Brown headed the inspectorate comprised of inspectors, teachers, and other officers considered necessary for the effective provision of education throughout the colony. Brown and Venables had successful, wide-ranging experience with both the former Board of Education (Common Schools: 1862-1872) and previous inspectorial duties with the Board of National Education (1852-1862). Venables had been a sub-inspector from March 185725 and Wilson Brown an Organising Master from May 1859.26 The Governor in Council was responsible for both the appointment and removal of those employed in the Department.27 On Black Wednesday: 8 January 1878, the Berry Ministry dismissed Venables and 137 other senior public servants as a consequence of public brawling involving then Premier Graham Berry and Collard Smith, Minister of Public Instruction. Venables did not regain his

position after the political crisis subsided. However, overall accountability for the operation of the government/public school system resided with the Minister for Public Instruction, the Department of Education and the Inspectorate, with restricted authority delegated to local Boards of Advice.

**Launching the Victorian Department of Education**

The formation of the Victorian Department of Education was beset by teething problems. Immediate priorities required the Department’s attention to be focused on (i) the acquisition and erection of acceptable school buildings; (ii) teacher training and working conditions; (iii) the need to develop relevant curriculum materials; (iv) setting up the central bureaucracy and (v) elections for membership of local Boards of Advice. These priorities would be addressed over time but the allocation of funds to operate the new Department was imperative. Funding for new offices and for alterations and additions to existing offices in use at the time had been approved, but no immediate action was taken, as the necessary funds to carry out the alterations were not available. Temporary headquarters had to be set up in the old Model School building in Spring Street.\(^{28}\) The appointment of central administrative staff to manage school operations was an absolute imperative.

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\(^{28}\) More adequate and appropriate accommodation was provided in 1878.
Figure 1: View along Spring Street shows the Model School in about 1870\textsuperscript{29}

Figure 2: The Model School about 1880\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} Image downloaded from the State Library of Victoria on 10 April 2017. Image: H88.22/3

\textsuperscript{30} Image downloaded from the State Library of Victoria on 10 April 2017. Image: H201.20/360
Henry Venables, the former Examining Inspector with the Common Schools Board of Education, was appointed secretary and chief administrator of the Department and Gilbert Wilson Brown became the Inspector-General. Even at this early stage, it was considered desirable that appointees to the position of Secretary should have ‘...both academic qualifications and experience in schools as a teacher or inspector.'\(^{31}\) (Later with subsequent appointments to the Secretary’s post, those occupying the role of Inspector-General were considered to have served an apprenticeship and thus best placed to be promoted to the position of Secretary). James Wilberforce Stephen was appointed the first Minister for Public Instruction on 2 January 1873.

In his first report to both houses of parliament, Minister Stephen emphasised that the most pressing need for the Department was to avoid ‘...thousands of children being thrown out of their course of education by schools being closed or becoming disorganized as a consequence of the sudden and extensive changes introduced by the Act.'\(^{32}\) The Minister acknowledged that there were difficulties for committees of Denominational and non-vested schools in the transition to the new regulations enshrined in the Act. That these schools were kept open deserved ‘grateful acknowledgement’ from the government.\(^{33}\)

The early reports of inspectors emphasised difficulties for the government and schools following the introduction of compulsory schooling. For example, Inspector John Sircom, (Metropolitan District 2) in his annual report for 1873, commented that he attributed the great influx of enrolments to government schools to the


\(^{32}\) Parliament of Victoria, *Report of the Minister for Public Instruction for the Year 1873*, p.i.

\(^{33}\) Parliament of Victoria, *Report of the Minister for Public Instruction for the Year 1873*, p.i.
…emptying of attendance at private schools and that while the influx of children from poorer classes was not considerable, there was an undue proportion of infants fitted rather for their mothers’ arms than for school.34

**Impact of irregular attendance on teacher salaries**

Irregularity of attendance loomed as a considerable problem for the Department. Sircom observed that whilst the numbers on the daily rolls had shown significant increases, the general average attendance when compared with previous years was poor. Sircom attributed this occurrence to the ‘…carelessness of the parents, and the little value they set on that which costs them nothing.’35 The increase of inequitably taught children added to the difficulty and reliability of grading achievement levels, particularly for older children. The range of abilities in classes resulted in a reduction in the percentage of passes at any level. Sircom intimated that the reduction in percentages was to be expected and had little hesitation in his view that once school attendances stabilised, and with better school buildings, ‘superior results’ would be achieved. An impediment to achieving improved learning standards rested on the fact that unfit teachers had been appointed to teach in government schools, a practice he believed should have been discontinued.36

Sircom illustrated his remark by declaring that instruction in country or outlying schools was left to inexperienced monitors or was ‘cursorily performed by teachers.’37 He had received complaints regarding the difficulty teachers experienced in assembling all students likely to be examined at the time of inspection, and the subsequent loss to

teachers’ salaries as a consequence of the reduction of pass results and poor student attendance. Inspectors were required to give advance notice of their visits to schools. Sircom’s suggestion to remedy the problem for teachers was that no advance notice of an inspector’s visit be given. Such action would ensure that those in attendance on the day of the visit would more readily represent the test number. He believed that this approach would also alleviate the problem of teachers sending away children less likely to pass their assessments who would be likely to reduce the payment a teacher received by way of results if they had attended.

**Boards of Advice**

School districts containing one or more schools were formed and a Board of Advice managed each school within a district. Membership of each board comprised no less than five or more than seven members. Members served without payment or other incentive. Ratepayers, defined as residents recorded on a ratepayers’ electoral roll in a school district, elected the members of each Board. Clause 15 of the *Education Act 1872* specified the duties required of the Boards of Advice. Those duties were to: (i) stipulate the use that could be made of school buildings after children were dismissed at the end of the school day or on days when no school was in session, and suspend any school teacher for misconduct and report the cause of such suspension to the Minister; (ii) report on the condition of the schools with respect to the premises and their condition and whether new schools were required; (iii) visit schools from time to time, and record the number of children present, and offer an opinion as to the general condition, and management of the school/s and (iv) use every endeavour to induce parents to send their children regularly to
school, to compare the attendance of children at school with the roll for the school district, and to report the names of parents who failed or refused to educate their children or to send them to school. Once appointed, Boards dutifully carried out their responsibilities in the high expectation that they were working in the best interests of schooling in their districts.

Successful implementation of the Education Act 1872 depended on harmonious working relationships between the Department and the Boards of Advice. Initially, these relationships were for the most part cordial and agreeable. However, difficulties arose when the aspirations of some of the boards could not be met without making concessions inconsistent with the Act, or when, through the pressure of other claims on the Department it had been impossible to keep pace with their eagerness to address the needs of their districts. The Department acknowledged that local knowledge and the representative standing of each Board was necessary to the maintenance of effective accountability across the public school system, if only to monitor the state of school buildings and the attendance records of students. The Department recognised that local Boards, by keeping a watchful eye over the schools in their districts and reporting their observations when occasion requires, were a great help in promoting the success of education throughout the colony. However, the Department kept central control at all times, choosing to take advice from local Boards or not as it saw fit. Boards of Advice were disbanded following the recommendations arising from the Fink Royal Commission in 1901. School committees replaced Local Boards.

38 Education Act 1872/ No.447, 17 December 1872, p.4.
The inspectorate from 1872

As the state education bureaucracy evolved in the new Victorian Department of Education, the inspectorate operated in a climate dominated by concern for financial efficiency in the way in which public funds were expended. Inspection ‘…worked as detectives and auditors, exercising bureaucratic powers with little educational authority and a bogus professionalism.’

From the time the National Schools Board was set up in Victoria early in 1852, school funding persisted as a contentious issue. Periodic cutbacks to resources which affected the erection of new school buildings, support for teacher training and salaries, staffing levels and sufficient numbers of inspectorate staff to effectively monitor the delivery of education, worked against systemic operational growth in education. Throughout the period 1852-1872 the inspectorate had progressively lost any semblance of independence as a consequence of the administrative control of education exerted by the former National Schools Board and the Common Schools Board. The inspectorate became rule-bound and subordinated to controls used to enforce its proficiency as a public utility. The authority of the Inspector-General as head of the inspectorate was tied to the financial responsibilities of the Department’s secretary.

Alexander Stewart, the new appointee to the role of Inspector-General in the Department of Education, stated that the duties of inspectors comprised

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the inspection and examination of schools; examination of pupil-teachers in ‘art of teaching’; reporting upon applications for new schools and proposed closing and amalgamation of schools; holding inquiries into charges against teachers; and preparing annual reports upon the schools and state of education in their districts.41

No doubt Stewart was aware of the difficulties Budd experienced in Budd’s attempts to shore up the status of the Inspector-General’s role during the Common Schools period. Stewart’s statement regarding the role of inspectors before the Royal Commission on Technical Education (The Fink Commission) was also descriptive of his position as Inspector-General. However, Stewart’s own performance came to be questioned as will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Victorian Education Act 1872 did not significantly change the call on the public purse for adequate funds to administer the school system. Accordingly, inspectorial responsibilities were arranged to address the administrative requirements of the central office. Inspectors became strategic players in the organisation of the Department of Education and held manifest influence over teachers. They were used to ensure that the policies of the Department were implemented and that standards of instruction were maintained. Inspectors assessed teachers and their assessments were critical in determining eligibility for promotion in the teaching service. There was little interest in the Department to facilitate the development of an independent inspectorate. As discussed in the previous chapter, wrangling between Richard Hale Budd as Inspector-General and Secretary Benjamin Kane over Budd’s demand to have his status properly recognised illustrated the

subordinate position of the Inspector-General’s authority. This structure remained unchanged throughout 1862-1872.

The priority for those inspectors moving into the new arrangement with the Department centred on assisting with 284 applications for new schools and applications from non-vested schools\(^{42}\) to be accepted as State schools. Work continued apace on teacher assessment for results with inspectors commenting on the standard of education in their district schools. With the growth in the number of schools across each inspectorial district, the workload on existing inspectors became insurmountable. Venables and Wilson-Brown welcomed the fact that most of their former Board of Education inspectorial colleagues had signified their willingness to continue working in the new administration.\(^{43}\) Their experience and knowledge was of immediate benefit to the new Department.

The 1874 school year commenced with the Department having divided the colony into fourteen school districts. The number of inspectors had earlier been augmented to enable the Department to place an inspector in each of these districts.\(^{44}\) It was expected that by

\(^{42}\) A Non-vested school premises remained the property of an independent owner/proprietor, and were not paid for by the National Board. However, the Board provided the books, the teacher’s salary and the school followed the National curriculum programme. Outside of school hours the proprietors were free to use school premises for other purposes, such as religious services. This was not permitted in vested schools. The maintenance of Vested schools was fully funded by the Board.


\(^{44}\) Inspectors appointed in the new Education Department: From 1873

- John Sircom Metropolitan District No; 2:
- Harry Augustus Sasse: Metropolitan District No. 1
- Archibald Gilchrist: Metropolitan District No. 3
- John Main: Geelong District
- John Simeon Elkington: North-Eastern District
- Thomas Bolam: North-Western District
- Thomas Brodribb: Western District
- Joseph Baldwin: Accompanied H. Sasse in Metropolitan District 1 with a view to taking up a district in his own right at a later date.
- Robert Craig: assisted the Board of Examiners and John Sircom in his district.
establishing inspectorial districts, more frequent and punctual inspections would be undertaken and that applications for new schools would be responded to in a timely manner. 45

Angus Mackay assumed responsibility for education following the retirement of James Stephen. Mackay explained in the annual report for 1873 that as a consequence of the

…great demands made upon the time of inspectors by the duty of inquiring into the numerous applications for new schools, and for providing additional accommodation to meet the heavy calls upon the resources of existing ones, it had not been possible to carry on the work of actual inspection with the same frequency as heretofore or as is desirable.**

The shortcomings with respect to the efficiency of inspection were acknowledged. The projected solution was the employment of additional inspectorial staff to work towards a target of achieving half-yearly inspections of every school.

**Teacher training, employment and working conditions**

The emergence of a modern teaching service developed across four decades in the period 1860 – 1900. By 1890, teacher employment came under the Public Service Act. Most teachers became salaried employees. Progressively, teachers took steps to join associations and on 24 April 1886 the State School Teachers’ Union was formerly established,

federating some twenty branch associations that were located across the colony, with a total

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James Holland: assisted the Board of Examiners from 1 January. At the end of February 1873 was appointed to take charge of the Ararat District.
Captain L. Herbert Noyes: from March 1873. Responsible for the Castlemaine District, which covered the towns of Castlemaine, Kyneton, Daylesford and Maldon.
Richard Philp: Ballarat District

of about 1800 members. Associations of teachers were formed in Geelong and Ballarat during the 1850s. Emergent unions formed in Melbourne in the mid-1870s but were short-lived. With the rapid expansion of state primary education after 1872, new groups of Melbourne-based teachers, divided by gender, were formed in the early 1880s, and came together to create one central union.

The early associations have been described as ‘…ephemeral or mutual improvement societies that had been imposed on teachers, and then essentially ignored by them.’ The hope was that eventually every teacher in the colony would take up membership. The objectives of the union were to (i) watch over and advance the interests of the profession, (ii) to discuss matters relative to education generally, particularly the curriculum of state schools and (iii) to put before the Minister for Education the results of its deliberations and, if possible to render the administration of the Public Service and Education Acts equally satisfactory to the Department and the teachers. Over time, teacher unions would carry considerable influence with governments and Departments to improve teacher working conditions and career opportunities.

Regulations outlining teacher working conditions and salaries in State schools necessitated prompt attention by the Department. Teachers in the larger centres of population in the colony received a better income than those teachers working in smaller schools without adequate means of support. New regulations concerning salaries were intended to bring about a measure of uniformity in the salary structure, while offering the

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inducement of high salaries to teachers in high achieving schools. The concern was how best to generate a respectable maintenance for all teachers employed by the Department. Until 30 June 1873, teachers’ salaries remained at Board of Education rates plus allowances for results, plus nine-tenths of the amount received in the last six months of 1872 for fees paid by parents. From the commencement of the 1873-74 financial year, new regulations that were gazetted on 17 January 1873 came into effect from 13 July 1875.

Regulations under the Victorian Education Act 1875 stipulated the course of free instruction, which covered six classes and fixed the base salaries of teachers. However, bonuses based on the report of an inspector following examination under the payment by results system could be added to a teacher’s salary.\(^49\) The maximum payment any teacher could obtain by way payment by results was an amount equal to one-half of his fixed salary.\(^50\) No person could be employed as a head teacher or assistant teacher in a state school unless that person held a certificate of competency or licence to teach, or, on an inspector’s recommendation, had the Minister’s permission to teach in a temporary capacity. No unlicensed teacher was to absent themselves when directed to attend an examination unless sufficient cause was forthcoming. Unlicensed teachers were to present for examination at the earliest opportunity. A Pupil-Teacher category was instituted during the Common Schools period of the 1860s and was deemed to be a step towards better teacher training. Pupil-teachers worked as trainees subject to the supervision and instruction of more experienced teachers/head teachers. In reality ‘…the truth was more often


exploitation and drudgery, as they took responsibility for large classes. They had little education beyond their own schooling.  

Section 5 of the 1875 Regulations detailed the conditions under which teacher licences were to be issued: 1. (i) to candidates upon examination; (ii) to pupil-teachers who have completed their course; (iii) to teachers classified in the second division of competency under the Act; (iv) to teachers employed under the former National or Denominational Boards previous to the 1st October 1857, on their passing the examination in the Art of Teaching; (v) to persons employed as head teachers or assistants on, and continuously during the three years prior to 31 December 1872 whom an inspector may report to be, on account of their age, at a disadvantage in an examination, and who may satisfy the requirements for a licence in Art of Teaching; 2. Certificates of competency to teach in any State school were to be granted to candidates upon examination, and to those classified in the first division of competency under the Act, and 3. Trained teachers, and those classified in honours, were to have their additional qualifications entered upon their certificates. The regulations represented a concerted effort to improve the quality and status of teachers employed in the teaching service of the Department.

Apart from salaries and working conditions, significance in the selection of teachers was placed on an assessment of moral character in order to maintain high moral tone in the teaching service. Previous administrations and inspectors had primarily focused at selection on intellectual capacity and facility in the art of teaching, with little or no care given to the moral conduct of teachers. The Rogers-Templeton Commissioners addressed this aspect of

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teacher suitability in their final report.\textsuperscript{53}

These new regulations aimed at improving the working conditions and classification of teachers were imperative and had long been sought after by many teachers. Inspection had focused on judgments that affected teacher salaries and based on a curriculum that was reliant on Irish National Education publications. Linked to the passing of the Victorian Education Act 1872 was an expectation that better access for teachers to improved training opportunities to enhance teaching capacity and the potential for higher income was required. The relevance of curriculum materials with appropriate Australian content also became a high priority for the Department of Education if inspectors were to properly assess the art of teaching, as earlier espoused by Alexander Stewart.

**Improved teacher-training options: 1874**

New regulations regarding the training of teachers became effective and operational from 1 July 1874. Fourteen training schools were linked to the central Training College in Melbourne to enable trainees to gain practical experience in teaching and school management. The training schools were set up as follows: two were established in Melbourne, and one in each of the following districts: Emerald Hill, Fitzroy, Hotham, Williamstown, Geelong, Ballarat, Sandhurst (Bendigo), Castlemaine, Clunes, Daylesford, Beechworth and Sale.\textsuperscript{54} Students spent the first year of their training in these schools and, on passing the prescribed examination, were admitted to the central training college in

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Melbourne to complete their studies towards achieving a certificate of competency.

The prescribed course of study for teachers comprised a selection of subjects nominated from four of the following areas: (i) English Language and Literature; (ii) History of England and Australia; (iii) Euclid (three books) and Algebra (to Quadratic Equations); (iv) Physical Geography and Popular Astronomy; (v) Elementary Physiology and Zoology; (vi) Elementary Physics and (vii) Latin or French. The first two subjects were compulsory for female students and the first three were compulsory for male students. The art of teaching was central to the training program with lectures given by the superintendent of the Training College. Every student was required to spend one day each week on practical teaching. Instruction was also given in Music, Drawing, Military Drill, and Gymnastics.

Attention was also paid to improving the content of reading materials used in government schools. Interest in developing appropriate curriculum materials relevant to the uniqueness of the colony’s flora and fauna had been raised as far back as 1854. However, as curriculum material accessed from the Irish National Board had not given widespread offence, usage of the materials continued. Teachers were well disposed to continue to use the books, as the content was ‘free from all possible objection.’ However there were those who were dissatisfied with the readers. Inspector Arthur Orlebar (1854) was one. He noted that much of the content was not suited to the colony. References to climate and native flora and fauna were common and applied only to the northern hemisphere. In 1869, Commissioners of the Common Schools Board observed that the textbooks were unsuited to Australian schools and recommended that materials suited to Australian readers be

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developed. In 1875, Robert Ramsay, the Minister for Public Instruction, initiated change by introducing one compulsory reading series for all elementary years. Nelson’s Royal Readers were introduced in 1876. In 1877, revised versions of the readers for years three to six were issued. They incorporated references to Australian history, particularly the study of explorers. Charles Pearson, Minister for Public Instruction and Speaker in the Legislative Assembly, noted that the change to the Nelson Readers had been generally welcomed, adding that

…the Irish series, excellent in its day, is not as good as several now in use, contains many passages that are antiquated in style, and many that a child could scarcely understand, and devotes a disproportionate part of its space to Irish subjects.

1884 conference of inspectors

Before 1872 it was customary for the Common Schools Board to call inspectors together once a year to review all aspects in the provision of elementary education. After 1872, Department administrators continued the same arrangement of calling inspectors together, but this arrangement was short-lived.Inspectors had made numerous procedural objections in their annual reports; teachers complained about the rigid character of the Department’s rules and regulations; Boards of Advice and parents made suggestions that were not followed up by the Department because, it was claimed, some regulations would not allow procedural changes to be made. ‘Generally, things were at an unsatisfactory standstill.’ The necessity for change became so apparent that a resumption of the conferences was inevitable. The Department had not been able to control the disparate views of its critics.

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By the early 1880s it was clear that the system was not all that it was purported to be. With mounting calls for change, judicious consultations by the Department and the Minister were vital. The recommencement of conferences began on 30 January 1884. Senior Inspector Charles Topp was appointed as the presiding officer.

Everything connected with the work of both pupils and teachers in schools subsidised by the state was up for review. The list of important agenda items reflected the appeals for change that both the Minister and Department had received. Agenda items considered by the inspectors encompassed (i) the course of instruction followed in state schools; (ii) the requirements necessary to pass through the various grades of pupil-teachership, or in obtaining a licence or a certificate to teach; (iii) the course of instruction in training institutions, and (iv) the way all examinations were to be conducted. Other matters for consideration covered the inclusion of general lessons on morals and manners, history, mental arithmetic, booking keeping in the curriculum and the selection of an appropriate geography textbook that dealt with the Australian landscape. A ban on the application of corporal punishment to girls and how this might impact on the general discipline of schools was a necessary agenda item. Considerable concern had emerged over male teachers and assistants inappropriately administering corporal punishment to girls. The Minister also requested recommendations regarding confidential instructions to inspectors and improvements pertaining to inspection generally, and the collection of school census data statistics. Conference recommendations demonstrated that inspectors had responded enthusiastically to the calls for change. Inspectors embraced the opportunity to be heard in a unified forum.

Resolutions passed by the conference recommended that there should be a focus on
mental arithmetic that had been neglected in classrooms. Periodic lessons on morals and manners were to be given by teachers. Future teachers were to be employed from the pupil-teacher class. Consequently the course of instruction for pupil-teachers was to be raised to a higher level. Pupil-teachers would have to pass examination in all subjects in the fifth class. A majority of conference participants (72 of 81 attendees) recommended that only a female head teacher or a female assistant authorised by the head teacher should be permitted to inflict corporal punishment on girls. According to the inspectors, better and more reliable census data could be obtained when parents and guardians registered all children under fifteen years of age at the nearest state school in the January of each year, naming the school the children were to attend. The conference recommended that at the end of each quarter it would be necessary for head teachers to supply details to the Department about the number of pupils who attended school and the number of days each pupil attended school during the quarter. Head teachers would be required to inform the Board of Advice of the number of children of school age who failed to attend school for the required number of days in the quarter. This information would form the basis of a report prepared for the Department. With the proposed recommendations for change, the inspectors considered that it was best to wait on the decision of the Minister before making any change to the confidential instructions to inspectors. However, in relation to change regarding examination for payment by results, it was unanimously decided that part of the result allowance should depend on the discipline, behaviour, neatness and cleanliness of the children, the neatness of their work and on the knowledge shown of the moral lessons and of general lessons. The conference also recommended that teachers should not suffer as a result of the unavoidable absence of children who either had moved from the district or
through accident or ill health or were unable to attend on the day of examination due to the impassable state of roads.\textsuperscript{60}

Earlier decisions taken by the Department to foreclose the holding of the annual conferences of inspectors was a control measure to silence a group that had an intimate knowledge in their districts of the way in which the education system was operating. Suspension of the conferences enabled the Department to quash any adverse opinion/s considered unhelpful to the cause of public education. As will be seen later in this chapter, the Department actively sought to veto or amend inspectors’ reports so that parliament and the general public only heard the good news about state education.\textsuperscript{61} The conference ended on 13 February 1884 with meetings having been held on thirteen occasions. One hundred and forty resolutions had been considered with one hundred and twelve of those agreed.

**Royal Commissions on education**

During the period 1872 and 1901 three royal Commissions were set up to assess the performance and progress of the Department of Education following the implementation of the *Education Act 1872*. The Royal Commissions afforded the government the opportunity to closely examine efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in service delivery. What follows is an examination of evidence given by a representative group of Department officers.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to closely examine the pros and cons of payment by results, but the system introduced across a number of Australian colonies based upon the English schooling experience had ramifications for the effective management of education

\textsuperscript{60} *The Argus*, Melbourne, Friday 22 February 1884, p.7. \url{http://trove.nla.gov.au}

\textsuperscript{61} Refer to Charles Pearson’s statement in the Victorian Parliament on 29 March 1890. See page 166.
in Victoria until the close of the nineteenth century. As the system was used as a systemic control function or regulator, it is necessary to consider the merits or otherwise of the strategy. The Department of Education used payment by results as a means to establish and lift teaching standards in the absence of any other regulatory mechanism across a variously skilled teaching service. Consequently, the work of inspectors to adhere to regulations of the Department with respect to teacher assessment was a significant accountability requirement. The extent to which inspectors were both efficient and effective in the way in which they went about their duties were important attributes in meeting the requirements of their position.

What follows is an investigation of evidence given to the three Royal Commissions that were ordered by the Victorian parliament to review both the effective delivery of education and the extent to which senior administrators in the Department and inspectorate were accountable for the performance of their duties post 1872. The Royal Commissions were The Pearson Royal Commission 1877-78, The Rogers-Templeton Royal Commission 1882-1884 and the Fink Royal Commission 1899-1901. The significance of the investigation for this thesis are the revelations about poor performance of both the Department and the inspectorial system.

**Report of the State of Public Education in Victoria and the suggestions as to the best means of improving it, 1877-78 (The Pearson Royal Commission)**

Five years after the passing of the Victorian *Education Act 1872*, Charles Henry Pearson received a Commission from the Governor, Sir George Bowen, (25 June 1877) to investigate, report and make recommendations on improvements to bring about increased efficiency in education in Victoria. In the early years of the Department of Education, there
were concerns about how the Department had responded to the requirements of the Victorian Education Act 1872. The disorganisation and inefficiency in the Department’s head office in Melbourne was questioned. The concern was that the Department had become over-centralised and that the inspectorate was poorly organised and administered.

Pearson was charged with reporting on: (i) the best and most economic mode of constituting entirely free education in Victoria; (ii) the state and condition of the present machinery for public instruction; (iii) the status, remuneration, and general efficiency of the teachers; (iv) the mode and extent of instruction in the State schools, and the system best fitted to expand the operations of those schools; (v) the formation or extension of training institutes, technological and night schools and (vi) generally to enquire and report as to any improvement which may be calculated to increase the efficiency of education in the colony of Victoria. Essentialy Pearson was required to report on the disorganisation within the Department. Pearson began his investigations in July 1877 and presented his final report to parliament in March 1878.

A Londoner by birth, Charles Pearson had held various teaching and academic posts in England, including a professorship of modern history at King’s College, London (1855 - 1864) and in Cambridge (1869-1871). Upon arrival in Victoria in 1873, he accepted a position at the University of Melbourne where he supervised classes in history and political

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economy. At the time, Pearson was regarded as a ‘coloniser’ of new ideas, an outspoken advocate for completely free education and was considered to be the outstanding intellectual of the Australian colonies.

To acquaint himself with the condition and status of education in the colony, Pearson visited seventy-two primary schools and examined some of the chief officers of the Department of Education on the routines of office work. He discussed possible reforms which had been suggested at various times, or which had occurred to him, with leading schoolmasters, with district inspectors, and with the late secretary of the Department Henry Venables. Acting Secretary Archibald Gilchrist was also questioned. During the course of his investigations, he consulted with a number of Boards of Advice and others interested in the cause of education.

In his comprehensive report, Pearson expressed his conviction that the state had been faithfully served by officials in the Department: ‘The work many of these gentlemen perform is laborious and repulsive in the extreme, and the manner in which they discharge it beyond all praise.’ He specifically pointed to successes with the erection of new schools, the growth in the teaching workforce and to attendance records that exceeded attendance data prior to the implementation of the Education Act 1872. None of this was

64 Venables lost his position as secretary with the political turmoil that enveloped the Berry Government as the government dealt with the necessity of financial belt-tightening. By way of justifying Pearson’s appointment to head the Commission, Venables dismissal was a casualty, a consequence of the lack of a natural sense of justice, an instance of ‘ingratitude.’ No praiseworthy comment was offfered to recognise Venables’ work to introduce the new system. The Argus, Melbourne editorial on 27 April 1878, p.6, noted that Venables was unjustly treated, cited at: http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5930262, Retrieved 15 February 2016.
65 Pearson, Charles H., Report on the State of Public Education in Victoria...1877-1878, p.3.
surprising given the compulsory attendance clause in the Act. Department officials were simply responding to the expectations of the new Department of Education. However, Pearson was critical that the Department had ‘never received proper organisation.’ He predicted that as increased demand for service was placed on the Department, the system would breakdown altogether unless its organisational structure was reviewed.66

Pearson’s concern was that the Department had become over-centralised during the previous five years, claiming that the framers of the Victorian Education Act 1872 had been tentative about some of the provisions of the Act. Particular reference was made to a lost opportunity whereby local Boards of Advice could have been delegated responsibilities devolved from the central office in Melbourne. The Department had been ‘over-trustful in itself’,67 and doubtful of the zeal and intelligence of those who held seats on local Boards of Advice. The consequence was that many Boards were discouraged, and many able members had withdrawn their support while the Department, according to Pearson, was breaking down under self-imposed undertakings which it was ill-equipped to carry out. The Department at its inception had sketched an “admirable” outline for the future administration of education.68 However it remained just an outline. Supervision from Melbourne persisted as the main guiding principle of administration, rather than the nurturing of effective local co-operation.

To illustrate his point regarding the Department’s worrying degree of centralist behaviour, Pearson referred to the conduct of the 1877 school census. Where possible, information was garnered from official sources, but the Department had no means for

66 Pearson, Charles H., Report on the State of Public Education in Victoria...1877-1878, p.3.
collecting the information it required, nor did the Minister request assistance from parliament. The work had to be contracted outside the Department. Reliability of the information collected was doubtful, given the mobility of families across the colony, particularly those families that had moved into Melbourne from agricultural areas. It was Pearson’s contention that a carefully conducted school census of the colony would have to be undertaken for the results obtained to be of any value at all. He advocated that a more reliable result could be achieved if parents were compelled to register children in rolls kept at each school that could then be checked by the local school board - a cheaper and more efficient method of collecting the necessary information.\(^69\) The Department was averse to giving consideration to any process in which the reliance on information was given to outside sources. Although well intentioned, Pearson failed to fully acknowledge in his report that many of the constraints placed upon the Department’s organisational actions were enshrined in the Victorian *Education Act 1872*.

**Inspection and the inspectorate**

Pearson identified three conditions to achieve efficient teaching in the colony: (i) the maintenance of a good supply of pupil-teachers; (ii) an improved training college and (iii) a thorough organization of the inspectorial staff. In his final report to parliament, Pearson declared ‘…the use of inspectors is to make the teaching efficient and fairly uniform, and to guard the teacher against an ignorant or prejudiced public feeling.’\(^70\) A school, he argued, should not be put to a disadvantage because a teacher adopted outmoded or outdated teaching methods and who was not prepared to use the best available texts or did not adopt

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improved organisation methods. He advised that such a teacher would respond best to a trained, qualified person, an inspector, rather than a Board of Advice or the correspondents of a local newspaper.⁷¹

Efficiency and uniformity in the education system supported by a well-organised inspectorate was uppermost in his recommendations for improvement. The Commissioner signposted that in North Germany local inspectors, who were often members of the clergy, conducted inspection in a voluntary capacity where the object was to ‘…enlist the spiritual influence of men whom the people respected on the side of education.’⁷² In the American setting, a superintendent, elected annually by the school committee, often held the position of head master and it was he who conducted inspections, not an inspector. Pearson advocated that inspection as implemented in both Holland and Great Britain, where the inspectorial staffs were highly organised, was more appropriate to the Victorian education system.⁷³

To achieve greater uniformity across teaching and the schooling system generally, the inspectors should visit schools more frequently than was the case and be required to closely assess ‘intelligent teaching.’⁷⁴ At the time of the Pearson Commission hearings there were eighteen inspectors, sixteen of whom were assigned to visit schools cyclically.⁷⁵ On average each inspector had one hundred schools to examine, scattered over an area of 5,250 miles and with an average school population of 9,000 children of school age. Pearson stated


Of the 18 inspectors there was one Inspector-General; 10 inspectors of whom one was employed in the central office and two were designated as examiners. There were seven assistant inspectors. Of the total number of inspectors four senior inspectors spent several months of the year examining candidates for licences.
that the number of inspectors employed at the time of writing his report was ‘altogether inadequate’\textsuperscript{76} for the work they were to perform. By way of comparison with inspection in England and Scotland, Pearson noted that in 1875, an English inspector had an allocation of seventy schools to examine in a district covering 300 square miles and with about 8,000 children on the school rolls. In Scotland, each inspector had seventy-four schools to visit with 10,000 children on the rolls in a district of 750 miles.\textsuperscript{77} Victorian inspectors had to travel over bush tracks, usually on horseback or horse and buggy whereas in England, better roads and railways reduced travel time. Recommendations to reallocate extraneous work away from inspectors to other employees in the Department would bring about better efficiency and systemic accountability. Assessment in the art of teaching was to remain the responsibility of senior inspectorial staff. With regard to the office of Inspector-General, Pearson’s assertion was that this officer should have been relieved of his subservience to the over-worked Secretary where

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He, and only he, can show what requires to be amended in our school system, how the teachers’ education is adequate or faulty, or whether we are gaining or losing ground in the war against ignorance. It cannot be right …that such an officer should be second to anyone in the Department except its political chief.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Pearson’s final report was not well received nor the outcome unexpected. A recommendation with respect to reducing state expenditure on education was made by a ‘ruthless cutting down’ of teacher salaries and other “infinitesimal amounts”, action that was never likely to be carried out, given the impact that such a draconian measure would

have had on teacher morale and the best interests of the education system generally.

Pearson was, as *The Argus* reported, that ‘trusty and well-beloved servant’\(^7\) of the
government whose final report, the paper argued, could have been summarised in sixteen
pages rather than 176 pages, a report that could well have been better written up by those
officers in the Department with real knowledge of schools and the operation of the
system.\(^8\) Although Pearson’s report was never formally debated in parliament, the Minister
for Public Instruction, William Collard Smith,\(^9\) addressed aspects of the report that were
linked to political decisions of the Berry Government, particularly the dismissal of
inspectors as a consequence of cost cutting in the Department. (See further comment at the
end of this section.)

In an address to the Victorian parliamentary Committee of Supply on 16 October 1878,
Smith pointed out that following an expenditure review of government Departments, he had
expected to find wastage and an over-staffed head office. However, he found the reverse to
be true. He ‘…found the Department undermanned and the officers overworked.’\(^10\) No
doubt if Smith had read Pearson’s unfriendly assessment of the Department’s organisation,
he would have expected to find the management shortfalls as Pearson outlined in his report.
Whilst Smith suggested that he did not want to bring about wholesale cuts across the


\(^9\) Commonly called ‘The Major’, he was a captain in the Ballarat Rifle Rangers in 1861, major in
1872 and retired in 1884 as an honorary lieutenant colonel. ([Weston Bate, ‘Smith, William Collard
(1830–1894)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian
National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-william-collard-4619/text7605,

\(^10\) Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Assembly. (1878). *Parliamentary debates (Hansard)*.
Melbourne, Australia, Session 1878, Vol.29, September-December 1878,
(26 September-22 October). p.1386. Retrieved from at:
Department, he conceded that the work required of Department officers had grown
enormously and that the bulk of the work had been carried out by supernumerary staff, a
large number of whom had been in the Melbourne office exercising their present functions
for a considerable period of time. This was an area where savings could be made without
unduly affecting Department operations.

Government budgetary shortfall had threatened to cut deep into Department operations.
Smith stated that while it was an expectation of government that budgetary expenditure had
to be reined in, careful and earnest consideration was given to the number of inspectorial
staff. It was his assessment that

…if the (education) system is to be carried out as it ought to be carried out, the end can only
be accomplished by means of a highly efficient plan of inspection. 83

To this end he emphasised that the best men should be selected to take up inspectorships.
(Note men, not women; women were not considered for appointment to senior positions in
what was essentially a patriarchal society.) In his remarks to the committee, Smith had been
somewhat two-faced. He expressed support for the calibre of those selected to become
inspectors whilst holding the view that simultaneously their number could be safely cut
from the service. His mindset had placed them in the supernumerary category of
employment. In effect, they were expendable!

However, Robert Ramsay, a parliamentarian who had previously spent eighteen months
as the Minister for Public Instruction, noted in parliament that Smith had discovered that
‘…the Department could get on without inspectors, and the whole of the inspectors were

Melbourne, Australia. Session 1878, Vol.29, September-December 1878, 26 September-22 October,
p.1387.
sent about their business, the Secretary also being dismissed. Following the shock dismissal of the inspectors there was such a public outcry in response to the Minister’s action that it was only a short time later that all inspectors were reinstated. As Ramsay observed ‘…their re-appointment is about the only recommendation…which has really been carried into effect.’\(^\text{85}\) (The reference here was to the Pearson Royal Commission’s final report in 1878.)

Ramsay declared that in his experience, adverse statements made regarding the performance of the Department were manifestly untrue and that the work of the Department could not be carried out without an efficient staff of inspectors. Ramsay’s concern was that the great danger of the educational system was that officers of a government Department were capable of working only to the ‘Government stroke.’\(^\text{86}\) He continued…

> There is an almost inherent tendency in the working of such a Department as the Education Department to crush individualism out of the teachers-to get them to go in a certain groove, and to do a certain amount of work and no more.\(^\text{87}\)

Whilst haggling over fiscal belt-tightening across government Departments continued in the parliament, senior officers in the Department of Education were not exempt from dismissal in the downsizing exercise. Henry Venables, the first secretary of the Department, was one who was singled out. Venables was one senior officer in the Department who was a casualty of Victorian premier Graham Berry’s cost cutting exercise


\(^{86}\) The deliberately slow pace of work supposed to be typical of government workers.

that occurred on 9 January 1878, a day that became known as Black Wednesday. The dismissals were motivated by a desire to reform an intransigent public service, compromised by a culture of patronage. Education was not invulnerable in Berry’s action.

**Henry Venables expunged**

If the best men were to be selected for inspectorships, the dismissal of Henry Pares Venables, the first secretary of the Department who had overseen the difficulties associated with the implementation of the *Education Act 1872*, but was ‘…suddenly dismissed after years of faithful service’[^88] was something of a shock.

Prior to his appointment as secretary, Venables worked tirelessly as an inspector for many years and had demonstrated genuine commitment to the work of education in the colony. In March 1858, Venables attained the position of sub-inspector under the National Board of Education, and in October 1860, was promoted to the rank of inspector. In September 1862, he became first-class inspector of schools for the Western District and was based in Warrnambool with the Common Schools Board. His appointment as Examiner under the Board in April 1866 made Venables directly accountable to the Secretary, Benjamin Kane. As Examiner Venables was to deal with the professional work of the office. After Kane's death in December 1872, Venables became Secretary in the new Department. However, along with many other public servants, he was dismissed on Black Wednesday January 1878. He was not reinstated, when positions in the education office were reviewed.

It was Ramsay’s contention that Venables had been ‘…jockeyed out of a position, which he had deservedly earned in this colony.’ In his response to the Minister’s address, Angus Mackay, the Member for Sandhurst, stated that the action in dispensing with the services of Mr Venables was ‘…somewhat strong, not to say violent, and I think he [the Minister] might fairly extend some generosity to such an old and valued public servant.’ Mackay was seeking to ensure that Venables was compensated for the manner in which he was dismissed. Perhaps Venables’ age, forty-eight years, was a factor in his dismissal and non-reappointment. Perhaps he was not suited to the position of secretary. *The Age* claimed that Venables could not cope with an enlarged Department and argued that he should not have been appointed in the first place. Pearson’s claimed, ‘I never said a single thing against Mr Venables.’ A more likely scenario might be that Venables was the scapegoat for the perceived inadequacies of Department inefficiencies.

**Black Wednesday**

Pearson’s report was obscured by the political crisis of 1879-81. On 9 January 1878 Graham Berry’s Liberal ministry cut through the upper echelons of the colony's civil service, dismissing judges of the county courts, courts of mines and insolvency courts, police magistrates and wardens of goldfields, coroners and deputy-coroners, some Crown prosecutors, and a number of senior Education Department officers. A second round of dismissals on 24 January brought the total number of officials who were retrenched to

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92 *The Age*, Melbourne, Monday 29 April 1878, p.2.
nearly 400, although many officers were subsequently reinstated.

Black Wednesday, as the actions of the government became known, was a thorn in a broader struggle between the Berry ministry and the Victorian Legislative Council that shook Victoria between 1877 and 1881. The tussle began in December 1877 when the Council deferred Supply, withholding funds ostensibly because it refused to be coerced into sanctioning an expenditure item for the payment of members of parliament that was appended to the Appropriation Bill. Although the action of the Ministry to dismiss members of the public service was justified at the time on the grounds of financial exigency, the dismissals were motivated by a desire to reform an intransigent public service compromised by a culture of patronage that had pervaded government and public service ranks from the time the colony separated from New South Wales in December 1851.93 Would the Rogers-Templeton Commission that followed in 1882 succeed in bringing about substantive reorganisation of the Department where Pearson had not?

Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and Report upon the Administration, Organisation and General Condition of the Existing System of Public Instruction 1882-84 (Rogers-Templeton Royal Commission)

Four years after Charles Pearson presented his final report to the Victorian parliament, a report that had not been debated in parliament as a consequence of government cost-cutting and the retrenchment of public officials by the Berry Government, a further Royal Commission was authorized. Pearson had stressed in his final report that the Department of Education had become over-centralised, and to ensure that efficiency and uniformity prevailed in education, a well-organised inspectorate was essential. This time the new

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Commission was to enquire into the general condition of education in Victoria and to have as its focus the administration and organisation of public instruction.

John Warrington Rogers QC was appointed by the colonial governor to head the Royal Commission, a Commission that had a membership of thirteen. Rogers was appointed Chairman of the Commission and acted in the position from December 1881-February 1884. However, he resigned before the submission of the final report, having accepted an appointment as a judge in the Supreme Court of Hobart. John Templeton replaced Rogers. The investigation became known as the Rogers-Templeton Royal Commission. The objectives of the enquiry were to (i) ascertain any deficiencies within the Department of Education, (ii) consider any recommendations for improvement/s to its functionality and (iii) while retaining its efficiency, provide the most economic mode for further development of its operation.94

Hearings of the Rogers-Templeton Royal Commission began in Melbourne on 8 February 1882. George Wilson-Brown, Department of Education Secretary, was called to give evidence on the first morning of Commission hearings. Brown explained that he had been appointed as secretary, the permanent head of the Department, in March 1878.

**Gilbert Wilson Brown: Education Department Secretary**

Gilbert Wilson Brown, Secretary of the Education Department, was an Englishman and Cambridge University graduate who had distinguished himself as a teacher in Victoria. Chief Inspector Orlebar had assessed Brown in January 1858 when the then twenty-six-

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year-old was Head of Geelong National Grammar School. Orlebar declared he had

…seen great skill and energy in his teaching. He is a young man who has shown great

prudence and good temper…his manners are such as would command both the respect and

affection of the teachers.95

Brown was closely examined by the Commissioners on every aspect of Department

operation. He gave evidence on each day of hearings through to 9 March 1882. The

Commissioners were keen to gain an insight from Brown into the structure and the growth

of the Department with respect to enrolments, the provision of school buildings, the

appointment and promotion of teachers, questions relevant to inspection particularly the

role of the Inspector-General, the discipline of schools and the interpretation of the

Department’s rules and regulations.96

Brown informed the Commissioners that the Department had thirty-six permanent

office staff, including the secretary, chief clerk, an accountant and clerks. Other support

staff included two messengers, a caretaker and a housekeeper. Brown stated that the

Department employed thirty-one temporary clerical staff, a messenger and three female

office-cleaners. Inspectorial staff comprised the Inspector-General, two inspectors acting as

examiners to process teacher certification and eighteen inspectors who were engaged in the

work of school inspection. Secretary Brown stated that organisation of the Department had

been distributed across four branches: the examiner's branch, the accountant's branch, the

architect's branch, and the chief clerk's branch, the latter branch being divided into several

95 National Board of Education, Inward Correspondence Files, VPRS 880,59/716, 2 April 1859.
96 Parliament of Victoria First Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and

Report Upon the Administration, Organization and General Condition of the Existing System of

Public Instruction, Victoria, 1882. Evidence of George Wilson Brown, Secretary of the

Department. Response to Question 10, 8 February 1882, p.1,

sub-branches. Brown informed the Commissioners that to the best of the Department’s ability to establish the enrolment of students in government schools, 187,210 were enrolled in day schools in 1880. Brown was unable to give updated figures because the method used to obtain accurate enrolment figures was unreliable. (Conduct of the census is a discussion point later in the chapter.) He explained that the gross figure of 229,000 was reduced because of the number of students who had been enrolled at more than one school.

Tracking reliable information about student movement and the reasons for multiple enrolments at schools proved difficult for the central office in Melbourne. It was reported by Department Secretary Gilbert Wilson Brown that families enrolled students in other government schools and did not move children into private schooling.98

Brown responded to questions regarding the action taken by the Department to build new schools and the process undertaken to deal with school maintenance needs. The governor had raised concern that the Department had an Architect’s Branch within its management structure; Rogers was directed to investigate this branch as no other public facility had such privilege. The Commissioner’s recommendation was that the Architect’s Branch be moved to the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department, where better attention would be given to the inspection and supervision of all State buildings. It was the Commission’s assessment that by moving the Architect’s Branch to Public Works, greater economy would be achieved without any loss of efficiency. The Department was loath to give up responsibility for school architecture. Brown asserted that moving the

97 The architect's branch employed 13 staff in the central office, three inspectors of buildings, nine clerks of works, and one messenger. There were also twenty-five truant officers.
Architect’s Branch to Public Works would not bring about ‘any saving at all.’ However, Brown admitted that by removing the distraction of Department officials giving time to planning and erecting new schools, attending to maintenance issues, removing others and involving inspectors in these processes effectively freed the Department to focus on education, effective management of its salaried officers and the progressive development of curriculum and student welfare policy.

As Brown explained, the architect’s branch within the Department had been a distraction, especially for the inspectorate. Whilst every effort had been made to ensure that all schools received two visits from an inspector, it had not been possible to achieve this goal. Brown outlined that only one inspectorial visit a year at a fixed time could be achieved. ‘I estimate,’ said Brown, ‘an inspector cannot pay two visits to every school in his district if he has more than about ninety schools to attend to’ adding that in nine of seventeen districts, the number of schools exceeded one hundred. Two visits by inspectors to all schools in a district had been a Department performance expectation from the earliest days of non-secular education in Victoria, but this objective remained beyond reach. At the time of the 1882-84 Royal Commission, in more than half

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99 Parliament of Victoria First Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and Report Upon the Administration, Organization and General Condition of the Existing System of Public Instruction, Victoria, 1882. Evidence of George Wilson Brown. Response to Question 43, p.3. Brown explained that the Architect’s office was established as a result of a decision taken by a former Minister for Education (Stephens) to establish an architect’s office within the Department.

the districts, an inspector could not make two visits.\textsuperscript{101} Pearson had recommended that the number of inspectors needed to be increased. Whilst there had been some change in the number of inspectors following the Black Wednesday dismissal of public officials, Brown reported that ‘still more’ were needed\textsuperscript{102} if there was any prospect of inspectors being able to visit schools twice annually. If uniformity and efficiency in the Department were to be achieved, then the inability of the inspectorate to fully monitor the education system as earlier recommended by Pearson remained a pressing issue to be properly addressed. The Commissioners cited the evidence of an experienced teacher who reported that, ‘…there is virtually no co-operation between the Department and the teachers of schools.’\textsuperscript{103} In the heavily centralist system, inspectors were effectively used as auditors who exercised bureaucratic authority across schools with varying levels of educational clout and independent thought. As detailed above, the Department had continued to grow in size and scope but the inspectorate struggled to cope. Reliable systemic accountability remained a steadfast objective.

\textbf{Thomas Bolam, Inspector-General: selection and qualities of inspectors}

Following Gilbert Wilson Brown’s pointed questioning before the Commission, the Inspector-General of Education, Thomas Bolam, appeared at the Commission on Wednesday 15 March


\textsuperscript{103} Parliament of Victoria, \textit{Report of the Chairman of the Commissioners; Third and Final Report of the Commissioners; Memorandum by the Acting Chairman; and Memorandum by those Commissioners who have not signed the Report, 1884}, cited at: \url{www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1884No47.pdf}, p.10.
1882. He explained that he had acted as secretary during the absence of Gilbert Wilson Brown and had extensive experience as an inspector.

With reference to the effectiveness of inspection, Brown informed the Commission that there had been a significant shortfall in achieving an acceptable level of surveillance across schools by the inspectorate. Bolam took the matter further, asserting that schools ought to have been inspected once each year but that even this level of scrutiny had not been achieved. As Brown had asserted in his evidence, Bolam also stated that a shortage of inspectorate staff was given as the reason for the inability of the Department to arrange annual inspections of all schools. He was unable to provide information about the largest number of inspections conducted in a year but stated that for inspection to be efficient and accurate, one inspection for results and one inspection without notice to report on the general organisation of schools should be conducted annually. He added:

I think it is very desirable that our inspectors should be able to increase the number of their incidental visits to a school, because I look upon those as being of the utmost value.\(^{104}\)

Some schools had not been visited for two years. Experience had shown that with the rapid growth of the Department since 1872, and political disruption and interference, it was a physical impossibility for the inspectorate to get anywhere near the level of coverage advocated by Bolam.

During evidence, Bolam provided an account of the qualities required by the Department of those considered for appointment as inspectors. For some time, selection had been limited to applicants who had the highest credentials from a university. Successful schoolmasters of high character had been appointed as inspectors but a priority had been to appoint younger men as

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assistant inspectors, on graduating from university, who had no experience in the school
system. These appointments had been made over teachers of long-standing and high status.
Bolam added that experienced teachers did not take up assistant inspectorships as the pay
offered at that level was less than that of a schoolmaster. Bolam agreed with the Commission
that this had been an anomaly in the management structure of the Department.

Having informed the Commission that credentialed applicants were preferred for
appointment as inspectors, Bolam was asked whether these applicants were qualified to teach in
a school in addition to having a thorough knowledge of school operations. His response did not
address an applicant’s teaching prowess but focused on the training that was offered to would-
be inspectors. Bolam explained that following selection, the new officer was placed under the
supervision of a senior inspector with whom he visited schools.
A period of three to four months was considered to have been the average time taken before a
new officer was appointed to a district. Under supervision the officer examined schools,
compiled reports and when the senior inspector was completely satisfied that the officer could
be trusted with the work of inspection, a district was allocated to him. Bolam stated that if a
new inspector was found to lack the capacity to carry out his work with due diligence the
inspector would not be dismissed unless there had been a gross neglect of duty. In terms of
accountability Bolam, as Inspector-General, had the obligation to inspect the inspectors. This
assessment was done by periodically visiting inspectors in their districts to observe their
assessment methods and to ensure uniformity both in their mode of operation and quality of
their reports.

However, the duties of the Inspector-General meant that this officer was often desk-bound,

105 Parliament of Victoria First Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and
Report upon the Administration, Organisation, and General Condition of the Existing System of
Public Instruction, 1882. Evidence of Thomas Bolam, 15 March 1882, Question 1447, p.63.
reading and preparing reports for both the secretary and the minister. It was the Commission’s view that the most important duty of the Inspector-General was to direct and control the staff of inspectors, systematically visiting schools to view the procedural requirements of inspection. Such visits would acquaint the Inspector-General with the quality of the professional relationship that grew between inspectors and teachers. To establish a superior status for the Inspector-General, the Commission recommended that he should be relieved of the greater part of the paperwork enforced upon him.106

The process Bolam outlined regarding the training of inspectors had been the protocol used from the early days of the National Schools Board. (1852-1862). When questioned about the suitability of young university graduates who lacked knowledge of actual school work, compared to the knowledge and experience of teachers who, it was suggested, would be more appropriate to carry out the work of inspection, Bolam stated that the Department relied on an assessment of natural ability.107 It was Bolam’s view that a man who lacked knowledge of the art of teaching could learn the principles of the art ‘if he were an intelligent man.’

From Bolam’s evidence, it was clear that there was a preference for young graduates who could be trained up to become inspectors, and who were young enough to cope with the rigours of travel across significant distances in outlying districts, either on horseback or with the use of a horse and buggy. Bolam held the view that experienced teachers and schoolmasters who had homes and families that might take on the role of an inspector would find the time away from home a disincentive. When questioned about filling vacancies among inspectors, Bolam stated

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that advertisements were placed at the university. The Department did not offer other means of notifying vacancies because there were more applicants from the university than positions available. Regarding the use of patronage in making appointments, Bolam stated that there had been interference from the Minister with appointments made by direct Ministerial order. Although there were other applicants recommended by the Department, Bolam confirmed that the Minister had made an appointment without consultation with the Department.\textsuperscript{108} Bolam’s testimony revealed that the Department did not always act autonomously in making senior appointments and that political patronage was still practised.

In its final report, the Commissioners agreed with Bolam’s contention that inspectors should be appointed from those with high academic credentials but added that it was also necessary that they ‘…possess a practical acquaintance with school management.’\textsuperscript{109} According to the Commission, successful appointees to the position of inspector who had prior experience in the management of schools should not be placed on probation in the new position. However, for those younger men appointed straight out of university, the Commission recommended that a probationary period of six months was necessary to enable them to gain practical experience in the management of schools. ‘This would get rid of the numerous complaints…that some of the inspectors, although they may find fault with the teacher’s method, fail to point out any remedy.’\textsuperscript{110} The implication arising from this


\textsuperscript{109} Parliament of Victoria \textit{Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and Report upon the Administration, Organisation, and General Condition of the Existing System of Public Instruction, 1882}, Third and Final Report of the Commissioners, 1884, p.27.

assessment was that some inspectors were not confident, as a consequence of limited or no pedagogical experience, to offer improvement measures. The Commission noted that the selection of inspectors should not be limited to teachers, but where there was a choice between two applicants of equal academic ability and attainment, for example, a state schoolteacher and another who had never been employed in a school, then the state schoolteacher should be preferred.\textsuperscript{111}

\textbf{An undermined report}

While the Commission’s final report had much to say about inadequate Department performance and concerns with inspection, it was undermined by the re-emergence of sectarian issues and the question of how the government would deal with religious education matters. The Rogers-Templeton Commission was discredited from the time it was formed by the sectarian politics associated with its appointment that existed amongst parliamentarians and religious groups and later with Rogers distancing himself from the report and then ultimately, the failure of the Commissioners to agree to sign the report.

In a separate report Rogers, an Anglican,\textsuperscript{112} stated that he could not give his assent to the final report because of alterations the Commissioners had made in reference to religion relative to education. Rogers considered that defects existed in the Education Act 1872 regarding religious teaching. According to Rogers, the issue had not been sufficiently dealt

\textsuperscript{111}Parliament of Victoria, \textit{Royal Commission Appointed to Enquire into and Report upon the Administration, Organisation, and General Condition of the Existing System of Public Instruction, 1882}, Third and Final Report of the Commissioners, 1884, p.27.

with in the report, nor had the grievance claims from Roman Catholics been fully considered, given the evidence presented during the hearings from denominational representatives. Rogers’ robust conviction was that the Education Act 1872 failed to properly address the place and ‘authority of God.’ He acknowledged that the final report ‘wisely and properly enunciated’ the proposition that ‘…the education of the young, without the inculcation of moral principles based upon the authority of God, is defective and imperfect.’\(^{113}\) His claim was that the weight of evidence tended to establish the likelihood that, should no effort be made to address the religious issue in schooling, the result would be a community deficient in the distinctive moral and religious character that belongs to a Christian people.

Despite Rogers’ displeasure with the tampering of his version by the Commissioners, the final report was completed with John Montgomery Templeton\(^ {114}\) as acting chairman. In his letter to the governor, Templeton expressed the annoyance of the Commissioners that Rogers had taken it upon himself to forward a separate report before the Commission had presented its report. In a letter of 3 July 1884, Templeton stipulated that the addition of new clauses was necessary to address matters the Commissioners considered had been entirely overlooked by Rogers in the preparation of his draft.

There was a lengthy delay before the final report was tabled in parliament. Rogers had been presented with the draft in sufficient time before the report was to be tabled in parliament to enable him to add comment. He chose not to respond with any sense of


\(^{114}\) Templeton was a Scot, with protestant values, arrived in Melbourne with his parents in December 1852. For a time he was employed by the National Schools Board, later qualifying as an accountant and actuary. Templeton was appointed as the first chairman of the Public Service Board in 1883, a position he held until his resignation in February 1889.
urgency. The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 9 July 1884, at a time when the allocations of grant estimates were being hotly debated. The Department had not provided the annual report for the previous twelve months. During the debate James Mirams, the Member for Collingwood, remarked that ‘…it appeared little less than a farce to ask the committee to vote nearly 600,000 pounds for the purpose of the Education Department,’\(^\text{115}\) when absolutely no information had been received as to the progress or otherwise that the Department had made during 1883-84. Parliament had not been asked to consider the recommendations in the report and as Miram noted,

\[\ldots\text{apart from what was called the Catholic claim, or the denominational difficulty…the Commission had arrived at certain practical resolutions in relation to the working of the Education Department and the government might fairly have had the courtesy to ask parliament to consider those proposals.}\(^\text{116}\)

The impasse for the government was how to manage the religious education issue yet again and the questions raised by the Commission. As William Walker, the Member for Boroondara noted, any alteration that involved religious teaching in state schools by teachers would imply either the persecution of certain sections of the community or the giving of a separate grant to separate denominations. Walker declared, ‘Parliament would


never sanction such a proposal.” Grants to private schools were terminated as a consequence of the *Education Act 1872*.

With the lack of interest in the Victorian parliament to debate the recommendations stemming from the Commission’s report, the report was effectively mothballed. Cuts to education and inefficient expenditure across public institutions generally forced the Berry government to downsize staffing levels in an effort to lift efficiency and accountability in the public service. The government’s cost-cutting measures were not popular. While some fiscal improvement had been achieved, there had been no significant shift in policy development, especially with regard to education.

During the stressed state of the Victorian economy in the 1890s, public scrutiny of schools was sharply divided. (i) Reactive criticism considered that the causes of the state’s financial problems were linked with seriously extravagant and wasteful expenditure in the 1880s on public institutions. These critics demanded cuts in the education budget. (ii) Formative criticism tended to be more expansionary. These critics regarded educational institutions as instruments for economic recovery and called for a redevelopment of public instruction. Formative appraisals of the period revealed renewed faith in schooling, particularly of the practical kind, while features of institutionalised education considered to be outdated came under attack.118

As Victoria emerged from the financial Depression of the 1880s, Theodore Fink was

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commissioned by the government to chair a Royal Commission on Technical Education. While the main purpose of the Commission was to investigate the status of technical education in Victoria, Fink and his fellow commissioners turned a forensic eye on the status of the public education system in general.

**Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901**

(Th**e Fink Royal Commission**)

Theodore Fink was a solicitor who had entered the Victorian parliament in February 1883 and served until 1 May 1904.

In 1899 Fink was appointed Chairman of the Royal Commission on Technical Education, a commission that was ostensibly set up to investigate technical education, but one that mutated into inquiring into the Education Department’s ‘dark and neglected corners.’ The Commission's findings led to two bills (February 1900 and December 1901), which instigated basic reforms, including an extension of the period of compulsory schooling and notably the freeing of the Department from public service control.

Throughout the Commission’s hearings Fink assumed a liberal and professional stance. He had interpreted the terms of reference for the commission ‘very comprehensively’. His questioning of witnesses demonstrated his no-nonsense approach on the matters upon which he arbitrated.

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Alexander Stewart, Inspector-General: evidence before the commission

The Education Department’s Inspector-General, Alexander Stewart, was the first person called to give evidence.

Alexander Stewart was appointed Head Teacher of Creswick State School No. 122. The school opened in October 1874. Stewart took over the new school that was built to replace the former National school and the Wesleyan school in the township that closed on 1 July 1873. A short time later, Stewart moved to Clunes North State School where he established a training school that was connected to the training institute in Melbourne. In April 1878, Stewart was appointed to the position of school inspector. By 1897 he achieved the appointment of Assistant Inspector-General and Examiner with the Department, later becoming Inspector-General.122

Stewart had not been a popular appointee to the position. He did not possess a university degree ‘…and one of the parliamentarians whom Stewart had taught was the Minister of Public Instruction who appointed him.’123 There was a suggestion, most likely unfounded, though damaging, of nepotism and personal animosity on the part of Fink as he interrogated Stewart’s evidence. Stewart claimed in evidence that he had been appointed to the position of Inspector-General two years earlier, after having served for a time as an inspector in the field and subsequently as Acting Inspector-General. He had been employed as a teacher for sixteen years before his promotion to school inspector in 1878. He avowed that he had served three years as a pupil-teacher and three years as the headmaster of a first class training school. For a period of twelve years he worked in the central office as an

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examiner, prior to his appointment as Inspector-General. He stated that he had also travelled to other colonies to investigate education systems, particularly New South Wales and South Australia. With respect to the appointment of inspectors, Stewart informed the Commission that during his time as Inspector-General, no new appointments were made. However he was aware that ‘…inspectors were appointed from teachers with degrees, taken from the classified roll and appointed according to merit…according to their record as teachers.’ It was the responsibility of the Public Service Board to make the appointments following the passing of the Public Service Act of 1884.

During questioning on the first morning of the Commission, Fink raised the question with respect to the process Stewart adopted to review education in the Department to ascertain whether the system needed reform. Fink asked: ‘Is there any system of examining your work and testing whether it is deficient or progressive?’ Stewart’s reply: ‘Of course we are constantly supplied with the latest reports of work throughout the world.’ The question was endeavouring to establish whether there had been any accounting mechanism to review performance, not just of the work of the Inspector-General but of the Department as a whole. Stewart did not directly answer the question, preferring to express in general terms that reports from around the world were considered. Stewart stipulated that he read the reports but could not say whether the Secretary had read them. Evidently no one was

126 It had been the prerogative of the Department to appointment inspectors prior to the Public Service Act 1884. In turn both the Common Schools Board and the National Schools Board had similarly made inspectorial appointments.
assigned to read the reports but Stewart added, ‘From conversation we are always in touch with the gentlemen who are travelling on educational matters who visit the Education office.’¹²⁸

From Stewart’s responses to questions, it was evident that there was inadequate accountable behaviour within the Department. If accountability practices were in place then the Inspector-General was unaware of them. In answer to a further question that pursued the issue of whether there was any suitable systematic attempt by the Department to keep in touch with educational improvement, Stewart responded by saying that ‘…we know in effect what is being done; to know from reading is one thing; to know it practically is a different thing.’¹²⁹ Clearly there was no reassurance offered in his response.

The Commission recorded its disapproval of Stewart in his capacity as Inspector-General as one who was ‘…not fitted to vigorously and efficiently carry out the duties of Inspector-General of a great progressive system of primary education.’¹³⁰ The Commission noted that Stewart had not been thoroughly in touch with the movements of educational pedagogy and seemed unaware that the efficiency of the State school system had been in any way affected by the policies that had been pursued. ‘He lacked the active temperament, will, and character necessary to efficiently control and actively direct the educational work’¹³¹ of the Department. With regard to Stewart’s evidence and demeanour on the two

occasions that he was examined before the Commissioners, his attendance was
‘…characterized by an indefiniteness, an absence of grasp, and an apparent incapacity to
express himself coherently on many important points.’\textsuperscript{132} The Commission’s was hardly a
glowing report card on the Department’s Inspector-General, a report that reflected poorly
on the efficiency and accountability of the system generally. The Commission stressed that
no reform in educational matters was possible until the role of the Inspector-General of
schools was correctly recognised with an occupant endowed with sufficient authority and
an ‘educationalist of high standing and undoubted ability.’\textsuperscript{133}

While Stewart did not have knowledge of whole-of-Department accountability, he did
point out that there was a procedure in which both he and his fellow inspectors discussed
questions of reform and change to keep the system updated. The procedure he outlined
centred on an inspectors’ conference that had been held early in 1900. Annual conferences
for the inspectorate were a feature of times past but such meetings had lapsed. Stewart had
called a conference in January 1901 to discuss the Department’s Regulation One that dealt
with free instruction. In addition, he had requested a copy of an Irish Commission
education report in order to keep abreast of the changes that were being considered in that
report. The possibility of including instructions in mining, agriculture and cookery into the
scope of public instruction which had been suggested by the various inspectors, had never
been meaningfully appraised. The deferment of annual conferences severely inhibited the
ability of the inspectorate to self-regulate and to provide collective, independent advice to
the central office.

\textsuperscript{132} Parliament of Victoria, \textit{Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901}, Second Progress
\textsuperscript{133} Parliament of Victoria, \textit{Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901}, Second Progress
With cutbacks to the teaching service and central office positions during the 1890s, the paucity of on-the-ground reporting meant that ready information was not accessible to remedy any concerns that arose as a consequence of poor instruction in schools. One inspector, James Holland, noted in his annual report for 1897 that there had been an absolute necessity on the part of the Department to retrench staff to reign in expenditure. Subsequently ‘…the number of assistants in proportion to the number of pupil-teachers had to be reduced, the number of pupil-teachers was greatly increased, and monitors were appointed.’\textsuperscript{134} As far as Holland was concerned, the reduction in staffing had been accomplished with the minimum possible amount of loss to schools but he then added:

\begin{quote}
With returning prosperity, however, the question of increasing the proportion of assistants to pupil-teachers is being brought forward. I trust that the decision in this matter will to a very great extent result in doing away with what has been well characterized by an eminent English authority as "that most extravagant form of economy, child labour in schools."\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

As employees of the Department, inspectors were not permitted to make outspoken comment on matters outside their districts. While ostensibly setting out to support reductions in staff, Holland was not convinced. Veiled criticism in his final comment would have been, to some extent, unsettling for his employers.

**Cleansing of inspectors’ reports**

The infrequency of inspectors’ reports concerned the Commission. Further questioning of Stewart centred on how inspectors’ reports were considered once Stewart received them. Stewart stated that he read the reports and any recommendations arising from the reports

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that he considered practicable and desirable were placed before the Minister and adopted. The Commission expressed concern that there appeared to be no systematic consideration of all reports and suggested that if a more systematic approach were adopted, the Department would be in a better position to review the efficiency and progress of its operational responsibility. Stewart stated that reports were prepared biennially, with half the number of inspectors preparing reports each year, a change that had been instituted some years earlier as a consequence of retrenchments within the service. The Commission queried the policy of biennial reporting and suggested that ‘it was a very bad system’ where reports were not at least written up annually. Stewart offered no opinion.¹³⁶

Not satisfied with Stewart’s responses to the way inspectors’ reports were handled within the Department, the Commissioners recalled him for further questioning. The Commissioners cited Charles Pearson’s comment in parliament on 29 March 1890:

Parliament and the country had a right to know from the inspectors, as experts, whether the system was doing good work, and if the Department once adopted the practice of suppressing unfavourable reports, or unfavourable passages in them, and printed only their favourable reports, the consequences would be most deplorable.¹³⁷

The Commission took the view that parliament and the public had been lulled into assuming that the system was operating successfully, but that it may well have been ‘bristling with points that the inspectors condemn”¹³⁸ as a consequence of editing out unfavourable comments to suppress the most severe attacks upon the system by men who knew most about the Department’s performance. When this sequence of questions was put

to Stewart, he agreed that within reasonable bounds, an inspector should be allowed
discretion, provided that he was not airing some particular opinion of his own, and not
exceeding the limits of decency and propriety.

The Department may have been spared embarrassment over such matters if it had not
cultivated the idea that criticism was permitted. The publication of inspectors’ reports gave
the impression that the inspectors were an impartial group within the central administration
and free to speak on any aspect of their work. Free criticism was far from being the reality.
A report in the Melbourne The Age newspaper of Stewart’s reappearance before the
Commission headlined that it had been ‘a bad half hour’ for the Inspector-General with
Fink asserting that Stewart had ‘maundered on’ with inconclusive responses to
questioning. Stewart’s evidence highlighted the uncertainty about what constituted policy
with respect to the editing of inspectors’ reports, a circumstance that had the potential to be
open to abuse.

Historian Richard Selleck, in his study ‘The Strange Case of Inspector Robertson’, investigated another instance of censured reports and the maltreatment of Inspector
Robertson as a consequence. Robertson’s reports between 1888-1899 often contained
criticism. His report of 1887 is of particular significance. Robertson’s views on the content
and method of teaching in the schools that he visited reflected considerable annoyance with
what he observed.

Arithmetic is taught on principles safe for results . . . much useless bookwork is done under

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139 The reference here was to the way in which Stewart wandered aimlessly with his replies. The Age, Melbourne, Saturday 9 September 1899, p.14. http://trove.nla.gov.au
the name of grammar, while geography has often added to its ancient topographical weariness occasional somewhat windy and unimpressive lecturettes under the name of physical and descriptive geography. . . . Science is learning facts or laws which may or may not be understood by the teachers; History is mere dry bones served up with more or less misleading comments according to the culture, bias and fearfulness or rashness of the teacher; Health instruction is on a par with Science; Morals, except in so far as they enforce the great moral precepts, are fit only to bring up Pharisees and time-servers, not a people of robust moral nature.  

In his general assessment of the educational standards in schools, he declared:

I do not say that there is no good work done in the schools, but I do say that the ratio that the really good work done bears to the bad work is a very small one indeed. The great evil educationally is the lignification, ossification or petrification of intellect going on in them instead of a process of noble development.

A year earlier (1886) Robertson was scathing about the ‘chief demerits’ of instruction in schools in his district.

Most of the instruction is given on the low educational plane of rote and repetition, as if the mind were a thing to be filled; some is given on the higher plane of mechanical thought, as if the mind were a thing to go machine-wise with more or less clank in its working; the highest kind of teaching which may be called intellectual culture, given in the light of the idea that the mind is a living and growing thing is, so far as I see, quite unknown in our schools—the modern spirit has not breathed on our teachers.

Robertson directed his attention to issues in schooling that concerned him at a time when others did not seem unduly concerned, and as Selleck surmised, ‘. . . his report may be accepted as a valuable criticism of Victorian education, though allowance should be made for the possibility that the vehemence of the language and the tendency to overstate his case detracted somewhat from its value.’ Robertson’s remarks about inspection would also have raised the indignation of his superiors when he wrote:

From what I have seen (to omit hearsay) of the life of the Victorian Inspector, it is not, 

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144 Selleck, ‘The Strange Case of Inspector Robertson,’ p.83.
under present arrangements, favourable to the prosecution of scholarship. I think this must be a disastrous thing in the long run for the Inspector and all who have to do with him. Slowness of promotion prevents vigour and ability from entering the State service. \footnote{145 Report of Acting Inspector John Robertson, Metropolitan South District, 1886, cited at: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1887No81p101-215.pdf, p.160.}

Having read Robertson’s reports, Secretary John Main considered that it was ‘one long sneer at our system of instruction’, the report being ‘unworthy of a gentleman holding the position of an Inspector of schools.’ \footnote{146 Minute on Robertson’s letter, submitting an amended report for 1887 (88/296680), Special Case Files, VPRS 892, 1853-1946, No.1008.} Robertson’s report was not printed and he was subsequently stood down.

There was no reference by Charles Pearson, the Minister of Public Instruction, in his annual report for 1887, that Robertson had been dismissed. Pearson offered seemingly veiled acknowledgement that there were shortcomings across the system when he wrote ‘In so complex a system, and among so many teachers, it would be unreasonable to expect that defects and shortcomings should not exist.’ \footnote{147 Parliament of Victoria, Annual Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1887-1888, cited at https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1888No99pi-100.pdf, p.(xiv).} Clearly, informed but subjective criticism of the Department by one of its own inspectors was unpalatable. As the Chair of his Royal Commission in 1877-1878, Pearson and his fellow Commissioners had a free hand to admonish the Department on many aspects of its operations. As the Minister of Public Instruction, he was politically circumspect in the way he reported the workings of his Department. The Fink Royal Commission would later comment that the practice of vetting reports revealed a
… Department submissive to the political necessities of the hour, without power to express an opinion or to utter a warning for the guidance of the public or Parliament as to the effect of any proposed change in the system or attack on its efficiency.\textsuperscript{148}

Alexander Stewart’s imprecise responses to questioning in his area of responsibility demonstrated that he was not overseeing his duties in a manner that engendered confidence in his ability to run the inspectorate and demonstrated that his office was not independent of the central administration of the Department.

Too often during his evidence, Stewart was unsure of the necessity for rigour in his accounting of performance, highlighting a lack of initiative in carrying out his duties. It was not a convincing appearance before the Commission. Given his seniority in the Department and the constraints he would have felt about speaking out of turn, his faltering explanations said as much about his ineffectiveness as they did about uncertainty in his leadership capacity. When pressed for definitive responses, Stewart was obligated to give specific answers. Perhaps the Commission had formed the view that the Inspector-General could have been more pro-active in his support and encouragement of inspectors to speak out in the public interest rather than meekly follow the limitations imposed on his status by those more senior to him. A stronger, more able person would perhaps have been prepared to exert greater influence in highlighting areas where improvement in the delivery of education was necessary, but there were no ground rules to facilitate the voice of a truly independent inspectorate. William Gurr, Minister of Public Instruction, noted when Stewart retired that he had given the state ‘…42 years of hard and faithful service.’ Gurr added that ‘…it was to be regretted that the exceedingly arduous and responsible character of his duties during the recently unsettled years has so seriously impaired his health as to

necessitate his severing his connexion with the service.”

When the annual conferences of inspectors had been convened they had proved to be useful forums to consider informed opinions with respect to teaching and the curriculum. Inspectors were able to provide useful feedback with regard to curriculum materials and teacher performance in their districts. A united conference voice did underscore systemic concerns. However, at the whim of the Department, they could be suspended at any time. At the time of the Fink Commission hearings, conferences of inspectors had not been held over the preceding six-year period. Prior to the Fink Commission there had been ‘a scramble’ to get the Minister to receive deputations from inspectors. The State School Teachers’ Union enabled the views of teachers to be brought to the attention of the government and the Department, though any requests made to the Department were not always favourably considered.

Payment by results: How effective was it?

The system of payment by results that had its origin in Great Britain eventually fell into disfavour and was abolished. The English and Victorian governments were the only two governments in the world to have clung to a system of managing state schools on the commercial principle of payment by results. In the Australian context, Victoria was the only colony that persisted with the system. Dissatisfaction with the system was evident among teachers from the time it was introduced some thirty years earlier during the Common Schools period. In his 1891-1892 annual report to parliament, the Minister for Public Instruction, Alexander Peacock, stated that teachers had generally condemned the

system declaring that payment by results ‘dwarfed intellectual teaching.’ Peacock added that the system had been unpopular with experts whose considered opinion had been that it put a premium on cramming. At the time of Peacock’s report, a Bill to abolish the system was still being considered by the Legislative Assembly.

While acknowledging the displeasure felt by teachers and others regarding the results system, Peacock and the Department clung to the system’s use, partly because it was already established and because it…

…afforded a ready, if imperfect way of gauging the work of schools; while assuredly one of its good results was that it forced teachers to bestow much attention on the dull and backward pupils who naturally need more help.

Reference here to support the payments system enabled teachers to spend more time on those ‘dull and backward’ pupils was misguided. Teachers were ‘forced’ to give additional time to underachieving pupils. Their percentage payments above their fixed salaries was dependent upon gaining the maximum number of passes at examinations held by an inspector. However, it was often the case that not enough time was given to underachieving students to get them through an examination. Despite a teacher’s extra effort to help weaker pupils, knowledge imparted to these students was not often retained at the time of an inspector’s visit. Consequently any financial gain for the teacher was diminished.

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Teacher viewpoints at the commission

James Bartlett appeared before the Fink Commission on 8 August 1899. Bartlett was Head Master of the Armadale and Toorak State Schools and member of the Male Teachers’ Association. Bartlett was questioned in relation to the effect, and purpose, that payment by results had across the school system. He was asked, ‘Is the system of payment by results connected with the method of inspection and examination?’ His response left the Commissioners in no doubt as to Bartlett’s assessment of the system. ‘Yes, our method of examination intensifies the evils of the result system.’¹⁵⁴ In support of his answer he stressed that the purpose of the examination was not to find out what the children knew, but to find out what they could be failed in, and what they didn’t know.

It was Bartlett’s contention that the system of payment by results was a ‘misnomer.’ He intimated that there was no payment to teachers as a result of their work, ‘That is, to a teacher as a result of his individual work.’¹⁵⁵ His point was that it was difficult to assess how much a teacher had been successful in teaching a child. In any class, there were pupils who readily took in the knowledge put before them whilst others, no matter how much effort was put in by a teacher, children still struggled to retain what was taught. A teacher under the results system would invariably lose salary as a consequence of under-achieving children not reaching the standard required, despite the additional effort of the teacher given to this group in the classroom. Hence, he argued, it was impossible to estimate, during an inspector’s assessment of a teacher, the value of work done. It was Bartlett’s

opinion that the over-riding effect of the system limited the field of study and as a consequence, made the teacher’s work ‘mechanical to a very great extent.’\footnote{Parliament of Victoria, Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901. Evidence of James Bartlett. Response to Questions 1730-1731, p.83.} When asked about the views held by the teachers’ union regarding the system, he thought that 95% of teachers would vote to abolish the system altogether, and the remaining 5% would agree but were concerned to know what would replace the system.

When asked to suggest an alternative to replace the system, Bartlett cited the situation in England where ultimately the result system was abolished with no lessening of efficiency. Local boards had the direct responsibility for motivating the work of teachers and seeing that teachers worked efficiently in order to comply with an inspector’s or examiner’s standard. Although churches or local boards operated schools in England, in Victorian schools, teachers were employed, and their salaries paid, by the state. Bartlett saw no reason to believe that standards and the efficiency of teachers would fall if assessments were centred on inspection and local reports on teachers. It was Bartlett’s contention that no amount allocated to salary had anything to do with the efficiency of schools. Fixing teacher salaries, he contended, would enable teachers to focus on the real work of teaching and not compete with one another for a higher percentage in salary. In his capacity as a head master, he affirmed that without the result system there would be sufficient measures to detect bad and inefficient teaching.\footnote{Parliament of Victoria, Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901, 8 August 1899, Evidence of James Bartlett. Response to Questions 1736-1745, p.84.}

\textbf{Edgar Robert Davey}\footnote{Parliament of Victoria, Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901,} was a well-credentialled assistant teacher at the South Yarra
State School. At the time of his appearance before the Commission he had been teaching for ten years and was a member of the Male Teachers’ Association. He expressed the view that his association was unanimously in favour of the abolition of the result system. Like so many others, he pointed to cramming as the teaching strategy adopted in response to the system, adding that the system suppressed the bright and intelligent youth while on the other hand ‘…you have to force on the weak child to get him through the examination.’

Davey explained that seventy per cent of promotions were expected each year and of that percentage, fifteen to twenty per cent were forced into classes for which their natural ability hardly met their needs,

…so for the year they have to work on the same unnatural level as their smarter companions, and the teachers have to teach the dunces to the sacrifice of the equally more deserving intelligent youth.

The impact on the teacher was the necessity to bring up the achievement level of the few whom, without additional support, would otherwise bring down the teacher’s salary or result percentage.

The significance of Davey’s comment was that examinations for results ‘…stunted a man’s work’ but he added that the inspectors were generally fair in making their assessment of a teacher’s worth. Davey agreed with the Commissioners that inspection should remain the key measure when assessing a teacher’s capacity to teach effectively.

Rather than have an inspector focus on right and wrong answers given by children to assess

teacher performance, Davey suggested that the

…inspection of methods, the mode of handling a class and the general intelligence of that class as indicated, not by their knowledge of mere parrot facts, but by their skill in attacking new problems."162

He cited the situation that existed with inspection in both New South Wales and South Australia, where the assessment of teachers focused on the ‘whole’ and where the concentration was not on exact facts, but on the ‘causes and relationship of one thing to another.’163

Many teachers called before the Commission affirmed their belief that the result system was the key instrument in assessing teacher capacity. However Bartlett and Davey’s evidence illustrated the pressing need for change in how the curriculum was delivered and the overall nature of how teachers worked. By maintaining a system of payment by results that had progressively been abandoned in the Australian colonies and overseas in England the Department had clung to an outmoded system. The Department thought that payment by results was effective as a centrally controlled system where the Department could prescribe, for example, the number of children to be promoted annually, direct teacher and school compliance and instruct the inspectorate about how it should go about its work. There was reluctance, even a fear, of losing control even at this stage in the evolution of the education system in the colony. It was a safer prospect to keep everything central rather than risk disparagement from the community for poor performance.

James Bagge, Department of Education Secretary

James Bagge was a public service clerk and accountant who had risen through the ranks during his twenty-five years’ service in the Education Department to become the Department Secretary. Although the position of Secretary was ostensibly open to outside competition, the government narrowed the field of applicants to those already belonging to the public service.\textsuperscript{164} Successive government ministers had regarded Bagge as a strong and capable officer, particularly during his time as head of the Accountancy Branch in the Department of Education.

James Bagge was called to give evidence on 3 July 1899. Opening questions of the Department’s senior administrator focused on the concern that inspectors’ reports were altered or suppressed before the reports went to press. Bagge explained that there had been instances where reports had been returned because content drifted from simply reporting on the work in school districts to the inclusion of his opinions. The Commission queried the striking out of comment that did not focus on the provision of education in an inspector’s district. It was suggested by the Commission that the treatment of reports in this manner denied the parliament and the general public information for assessing the effective administration of the \textit{Education Act} 1872.

Specific questioning centred on Senior Inspector James Holland’s 1897 report as an example of a report that had been edited because Holland had presumed to speak out about

\textsuperscript{164} \textit{The Age}, Melbourne, Thursday 16 January 1902, 5. \url{http://trove.nla.gov.au} Bagge’s tenure as secretary ended during the early weeks of January 1902. He had accepted the offer by then premier Sir George Turner and the state’s Executive Council to become the state’s Auditor-General, a position he held until his death, the result of heart failure on 17 October 1902 aged 49. As a public officer Bagge had given long, valuable and varied experience. \textit{The Sydney Morning Herald}, Saturday 18 October 1902, 9.
concerns other than those expressed in relation to his district. Bagge referred to the first paragraph that had been struck out of Holland’s report as the inspector commented on his workload and that his district was too large. In evidence Bagge stated that Holland’s criticism of payment by results in the report was simply ‘struck out’.

Further comment made by Holland focused on complaints from teachers regarding the lack of uniformity adopted by inspectors in the examination system. Some inspectors had carried out the examination during school visits in writing whilst others conducted their assessments orally. Accordingly, Bagge sought written feedback in relation to the complaint from the inspectors. The majority of inspectors opted for individual assessments of students.

Holland’s remarks were struck out. Bagge agreed with the Commission that the purpose of publishing inspectors’ reports was to give the public information regarding the effectiveness of the way in which the Education Act 1872 was administered.

Before ending his general report for 1896-97, Minister Peacock commented that the general reports of inspectors of schools should clearly and fully disclose the actual state of primary education in their districts and thus provided valuable practical advice to all interested in education. However, he added this proviso:

It should be understood that while inspectors have full freedom to express their opinions as to the condition of the schools and character of the work in their districts during the year the Department, in publishing these (annual) reports, does not hold itself responsible for all the opinions that are expressed therein.

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Both the Minister and the Secretary made definitive statements regarding the central authority of the bureaucracy and in these particular instances ensured that the inspectorate understood the limits to its authority and the necessity to abide by central office instructions, a critical element in establishing central control and regulating the work of inspectors. In other words, inspectors were not free agents. They could, within limits, express opinions but should any expressed opinion suggest criticism of either government or Department policy, such comment could, and was, vetted by either the Secretary or the Minister and therefore not published. Inspectors were required to adhere to their brief of reporting on the condition and operation of schools and the assessment of student and teacher performance, and little else. Accountability was steadfastly a control function of central administration in Melbourne.

Frank Tate: school inspector. (later, Director of Education)

Frank Tate, born in a tent on the Castlemaine goldfields in 1864, was a complete product of the state system. He had been a state school pupil, pupil-teacher at the age of thirteen, trainee teacher, fully-qualified teacher, college lecturer, inspector from 1895, teacher’s college principal and ultimately, Director of Education at the age of thirty-eight in 1902.¹⁶⁸

Tate’s district office was located in Charlton, some one hundred and forty miles distant from Melbourne. His duties were to set and correct the payment by result examinations which affected a teacher’s annual salary, report teacher performance to the Department, examine pupil-teachers, check school records, investigate complaints against teachers and

advise the central office with respect to the opening of new schools or the closing of older schools.

Tate appeared before the Commission on 31 July 1899. He declared that he had been a member of the inspectorial staff for ten and a half years, six of those years having been spent at the training institution. His district was one of the largest in the colony with one hundred and thirty-six schools, spread across an area covering 5,400 square miles. Tate’s preferred method of travel was with horse and buggy as he found that railways were of little use to him in his district. Tate explained that schools were inspected twice each year, once for methods of teaching, the other for the examination of results. Inspectors were required to visit two schools each school day, and as Tate outlined, the time taken up with travel amounted to two fifths of his full-time workload. He spent well over fifty hours each week on work related matters, which included time given to reporting after each school visit.

Tate’s evidence highlighted a constant cause of complaint among inspectors, that of insufficient time to reflect upon their work which arose as a direct consequence of the size of districts to be traversed and the volume of work output expected of inspectorate staff. Little time was left ‘…for keeping up with the march of education.’ Tate contended that the Department was aware that inspectors had too much to do and that once the stresses associated with the retrenchment of Black Wednesday in 1878 had receded, there was expectation among senior officials that the number of inspectors would be increased. 

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169 Parliament of Victoria, Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901, 31 July 1899. Evidence of Frank Tate, Inspector of Schools, Response to Questions 976-979, p.49.
171 Before staff retrenchments became necessary due mainly to the Depression of the 1890s, there had been twenty-seven inspectors. At the time of the Royal Commission, the inspectorate numbered twenty staff.
Tate noted that at the end of each of his general reports he had recommended action on issues in his district that needed attention. When asked what action the Department had taken, if any, to address the concerns he raised Tate indicated that little or nothing was done. Tate considered that improvement was vital for the welfare of his district in three areas: (i) the inadequacy of training for teachers in small schools; (ii) the training of teachers who had every intention to teach well, but because of the lack of previous training, or a lack of natural ability, were not able to reach a satisfactory level of performance and (iii) insufficient time available to allow inspectors to keep abreast of educational progress.\textsuperscript{172} Tate’s concerns were echoed across the reports of inspectors as they reflected on the requirements of schools in their own districts.

Tate understood the predicament that teachers and inspectors faced when teachers were asked to take classes having inadequate or no training:

\begin{quote}
An inspector feels very often that it is not right to blame a man for not doing what he has not the power to do, and I thought the Department might take some means to provide for the training of those teachers by allowing them to visit the better schools near them occasionally. I do not know that the Department has in contemplation any effort to carry that out.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

Tate’s remarks concerning inaction by the Department to follow through on the concerns of inspectors were shrewdly expressed, but were no less profound.

**James Holland: Senior Inspector**

Holland was called to give evidence to the Commission on 18 August 1899. Holland had been appointed as an inspector in 1873 at the inception of the *Education Act 1872*. By the


time of the hearings of the Fink Commission he had accumulated twenty-six years’ experience in the role. However, his service had been interrupted in 1878 when many inspectors were stood down, a consequence of retrenchments that occurred in the Department, during the political upheaval known as ‘Black Wednesday.’ Holland was later reinstated. Holland explained that he had been overlooked for appointment to the position of Inspector-General, although it had been the usual practice that the occupant of the Senior Inspector’s position was appointed to the higher position. When the position of Inspector-General became vacant, Holland and Alexander Stewart were both applicants. Stewart, some five years junior to Holland was appointed.

Holland was asked to offer an explanation as to the process by which the vacancy had been filled. Holland stated that the Public Service Board administered the selection process as an independent arbiter in an effort to rid political patronage from government appointments. Holland agreed with the Commissioners that the Public Service Board was influenced by advice obtained from the heads of Departments when making appointments. When questioned about the steps taken by the Department to appoint officers with educational qualifications to the top positions, Holland did not offer comment. However, Holland was far more forthright when he answered a question relative to how the Public Service Board conducted its inquiries when appointing the head of the Department, particularly with respect to personal information, intellectual qualifications and/or academic

174 Black Wednesday was a financial and political crisis in Melbourne on 9 January 1878 when the Victorian Government headed by Premier Sir Graham Berry (11th Premier of Victoria) dismissed around 300 public servants, including Department heads, judges and senior officials, after the Legislative Council had failed to approve the government supply bill. Further sackings on 24 January brought the total number of people dismissed to nearly 400. Payments were eventually approved in March 1879, and most of those who were dismissed, were subsequently reinstated. Berry was determined to break the power of the Victorian Legislative Council, a stronghold of the landowning class.
work. Holland was not aware of any efforts to properly ascertain this information but did comment that Stewart’s appointment had been the first time that an Inspector-General had been appointed from amongst the examiners.

As a rule the course of seniority is fixed. A man works up to the Board of Examiners and after filling the position as chairman of that Board he becomes Assistant Inspector-General, then Inspector-General and then Secretary.175

When asked to give his overall assessment on the quality of the inspectorate he agreed with the Commission that in Australia, as in England, inspectors were the most important part of the education system. A good system, according to the Commission, relied upon an effective staff of inspectors. Nonetheless, it was Holland’s assessment that in the Victorian context, the staff was ‘neither sufficient nor efficient.’176 At the very least, Holland was prepared to speak candidly about the quality of work provided by the inspectorate. Whether it was an accurate assessment or not his opinion would have turned heads!

Being overlooked for the position, seemingly without explanation, would have been a bitter pill. He could give the Commission no reason for being overlooked other than some internal manoeuvring of staff within the Department. For a period of time, he had acted as Inspector-General and ‘no fault was found.’177 As Senior Inspector he was passed over. The fixed seniority rule, as he outlined, was not applied. Remarks made in his 1897 annual report referred to earlier would not have pleased his employers. His carefully edited report

was cleansed before publication.\textsuperscript{178} Perhaps it was that there were those in the Department who were not prepared to take a risk with Holland, given his propensity for outspokenness. Citing a quotation that insinuated the employment of inexperienced pupil-teachers was an extravagant form of economy or child labour would not have impressed those responsible for appointing the next Inspector-General.

**Inspector Frederick Eddy**

Inspector Frederick Eddy, in his evidence before the Commission, also addressed the issue of the onus of responsibility as it affected inspectorate staff. He was invited to comment on the result system. He outlined that inspectors had the power to recommend the withholding of increments of teachers where poor performance was identified and also had the authority to recommend that teachers be paid on a salary less than his/her classification by reason of poor work practice. Eddy supported a modified result system and proposed that if the result system was abolished, inspectors would not accept the responsibility to assess teacher performance based on their own individual assessments. The result system served to provide a prop for inspectors to justify any decision/s enacted by them.

Adding to his remark about the reluctance of inspectors to assess teachers with the result system, Eddy said:

\begin{quote}
Since 1889, I believe there has been one case only where an inspector has taken that responsibility, and only half a dozen cases where less salary has been paid. In view of these facts, is there any guarantee then that the inspectors would take the responsibility of gauging the work properly if the present system were abolished?\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{178} James Bagge, Secretary for Education. Evidence before the Commission 3 July 1899. Response to Questions 159-160 stating that in Holland’s report for 1897 the first paragraph had been removed in addition to Holland’s criticism of payment by results. These references were ‘struck out’. \url{www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1901No36pi-100pdf}, p.8.

Eddy agreed with the Commission’s assessment that the system of payment by results was introduced to raise the standard of teaching, as there had been an accumulation of too many insufficiently trained teachers. He informed the Commissioners that performance standards had improved under the system and added that if the system were to be abolished, teachers would uniformly have to be paid one hundred per cent of their salary or a uniform standard established whereby good teachers would have their salary reduced and the salary of poor teachers raised.\(^\text{180}\) If all teachers were subjected to a general examination of efficiency, it was his belief that the system would be redundant. However, as Inspector Colin Campbell had reported, there was widespread belief across the community that teachers were so restricted that they were unable to teach effectively. There were teachers, he said, who could conduct their schools proficiently if left ‘without restraint.’\(^\text{181}\) However, as the Department had to supervise two thousand schools,

\[\ldots\text{it becomes evident that some uniformity in the programme must be enforced, and that there must be a uniform system of examination for testing the actual and relative efficiency of the schools throughout the colony.}\]


Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been a response to the principal question: What were the implications for the future of the Victorian Education Department and the inspectorial system following the findings of three Royal Commissions on the condition of education in between 1872 and 1901?

**The Pearson Royal Commission 1877-1878** condemned the failings of the new state school administration. The Department clung to the Architect’s Branch, the management of which was extremely time consuming. In particular, inspectors who were directed to follow up on all new applications for schools and report on maintenance issues had much of their time diverted from the real work of inspection. Because of the administrative work attached to their duties and related work attached to the Architect’s Branch, inspectors were unable to meet the requirement of two annual visits to each school in their districts. Moreover, there were simply not enough inspectors to carry out the required work.

Pearson had warned that without a streamlined and reorganised central administration that kept pace with societal changes and needs, the system would ‘break down’, largely because the central office in Melbourne was ‘over-trustful of itself.’ Unfortunately Pearson’s report fell into obscurity, overshadowed by the political and financial drama of ‘Black Wednesday’ 9 January 1878, when the government led by Premier Graham Berry summarily dismissed department heads, judges and senior officials.

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The Rogers-Templeton Royal Commission 1882-1884 was tainted from the outset by the sectarian conflict associated with its formation and the lack of unity that brought about Rogers’ late withdrawal from the Commission before the final report was released. However, this did not mean the report was not without significance.

The first section of the Rogers-Templeton Commission’s report addressed the inadequacies of the Department’s administration. Apart from stipulating whom the senior officers were, regulations under the Education Act 1872 did not specify the functions, duties or responsibilities of its officers. The Commission considered that the failure to specify duties led to an absence of harmony between teachers and other officers of the Department. Instead of being a resource to whom a teacher could turn for advice and encouragement, the inspector was perceived as being more like a detective. The failure to develop positive interpersonal relationships with teachers in order to create a successful, united education system was a significant weakness. Too much attention was given to matters of routine rather than on devoting time to effect necessary change.

The steady subordination of the inspectorate’s educational authority in the administration formed part of a continuing conflict over the social purposes of public schooling.

During the period 1872-1901, the Department continued to evolve with a somewhat uncertain leadership profile while strengthening its central authority over inspectors, teachers and schools.

The Fink Royal Commission 1899-1901 found that a person appointed to the position of Secretary had reached the pinnacle of administration having followed a clerical vocation.

The creation of the position followed the nineteenth century development of public

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186 Grundy, ”The Schools Inspectorate in Victoria 1856-1899…,” p.137.
education, begun in the 1850s under the financial management constraints and was brought about by the political struggles of the National and Denominational systems. The centralist management style was further refined in the 1860s when the Common Schools Board implemented the payment by results system used in England and elsewhere. Despite being educationally unsound, the results system was used as an efficient fiscal resource management scheme ‘…even making a virtue of its aversion to the potential power of an Inspector-General’s professional authority.’

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Fink Commission’s report delivered a damning indictment of the Department’s management and the ineptness of its senior managers, notably the Inspector-General. A good system, according to the Commission, relied upon a proper staff of inspectors. Holland, an inspector with forty years of service in the system, declared that the inspectorial staff was neither sufficient nor efficient. The system had gone from bad to worse as a consequence of the hard times of the Depression from 1893-1899. The Department, he said, was quite simply starved of funds.

The mandate, not so much from the Minister or the Permanent Head, as from the general public was ‘to cut to the bone’ and we cut. We had to obey orders, and make the best of it.

Recommendations stemming from the findings of the Fink Commission were released at a time when the political climate was conducive to reform. The colony was moving out of the severe constraints imposed as a consequence of the 1890s Depression. The public was

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looking to government to reshape the way Departments operated in order to meet societal change, particularly with respect to economic development and social improvement.

In framing its recommendations, the Fink Commission retained the conventional view of the times that reform necessarily came from leadership. With respect to the Department, the educational head or Secretary ‘…must be a man of vigorous mind.’\(^1\) The position is ‘the intellectual centre of the system’\(^2\) for without it, ‘the system becomes inert.’\(^3\) Most who had been appointed to the post, for example Kane, Gilchrist, Wilson Brown and Venables, and others, all experienced working as inspectors in both the National and Common School eras in systems that were hierarchical in nature, centrally managed and with considerable political interference both with appointments and with the allocation of limited funds. Appointments such as that of Alexander Stewart were often made without the intellectual rigour stipulated in the Commission’s recommendation.

Close supervision by the Secretary of the Inspector-General had continued beyond 1872, thus preventing the inspectorate from having an independent role. Conferences of Inspectors resumed for a time during the mid 1880s following a period of suspension, a period when no informed collective educational voice was heard from the very personnel empowered to oversee Department policy system-wide. The dismissal of inspectors during the Black Wednesday sacking of government officials demonstrated a lack of understanding about the true worth and necessity of inspectors as regulators of the system.


Not only was the collective voice of the inspectorate controlled, but also reports were rejected when an inspector included opinion on any sensitive matter outside reporting on teacher and pupil competencies in their districts.

Despite the difficulties faced by the Department, Walter Gurr, the Minister for Public Instruction, endeavoured in his annual report for 1900 to put a positive spin on the successes of the Department from the time the Education Act 1872 was passed. Gurr noted, for example, that truant officers had taken up positions in country districts to enforce the compulsory attendance requirements stipulated in the Act and that additional inspectors had been appointed, thereby turning a blind eye to the more discouraging findings of the Fink Commission.

Gurr reported that uncertainty about the future of the payment by results system meant that achievement levels had fallen below previous assessments in many cases. The Minister stressed that the strength of the Department rested on the capabilities of the teaching staff ‘…and if this is uncultured and narrow, real educational progress is impossible.’ It was evident that the whole system of the supply and training of teachers needed to be reorganised. Progress in this regard would be achieved when every pupil-teacher who wished to advance in his profession was required to attend the training institute. The clear goal of the government was to establish a professional teaching service.

The emergence of a unified voice for teachers with the establishment of a State School Teachers Union in the early months of 1886 was a necessary step to support and resource

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the interests of teacher professionalism. Political interference, dissension in the ranks and a somewhat lack-lustre inspectorate diminished claims that the Department of Education was professional. There had been high expectation with the passage of the Education Act 1872 that a strong administrative management would be set up to unite in a common cause the disparate forces that had worked against greater unity in the previous two decades. As evidence highlighted in Royal Commission reports covered in this chapter has shown, a weakened educational authority emerged amid uncertainties and misinterpretations associated with the Education Act 1872 and the uncertainty and overlapping responsibilities within the central bureaucracy.

Efforts to establish power and authority in the Melbourne central office of the Department formed the cornerstone upon which the system grew.\textsuperscript{195} However there was marked uncertainty and nervousness about how best to achieve a consistent approach. Who really had the power and who spoke with authority? The system was not accountable, efficient and fully functioning at all levels. Despite the best efforts of Royal Commissions in the period 1872-1901, the new broom still had much sweeping to do.

\textsuperscript{195} Statistics for the period 1872-1900 is useful to gain an appreciation of the rate of growth of Department operations. In 1872 the Department was responsible for 1049 government day and night schools. By the close of the century 1948 schools were operating. Enrolments had risen from 136,055 in 1872 to 243,667 in 1900, the total enrolment having risen by 78 per cent. Allowing for duplicate enrolments, it was calculated that the number of individual children under instruction had increased from 118,228 to 217,032.
Chapter Four
The inspectorate at the crossroads 1901-1979

A large and complex government Department, established with certain goals and a structure for their attainment, finds itself, as time passes, called upon to perform tasks for which the original structure is unsuitable. Pressure groups from within and outside a Department, themselves trapped by the past, force administrators to adopt positions, which otherwise they might reject...an Education Department is an intricate system of personal relationships, political, social and economic pressures, vested interests, customs, ideologies which, over the years, develop, support each other, conflict or fade.¹

R.J.W. Selleck

Three Royal Commissions held to report on the general condition of public education in Victoria were held from the time that the Education Act 1872 was passed in parliament. Each of the three Commission reports highlighted inefficiencies and the lack of effective accountability that operated in the administration of government education. The governments of the day were uninterested in debating the recommendations of the Pearson and Rogers-Templeton Commissions, let alone introducing change. It was the recommendations highlighted in the final report of the Fink Royal Commission on Technical Education in Victoria 1899-1901 that impelled the government to enact significant change to the administration and accountability of public education. As an inspector Frank Tate’s evidence before the Fink Commission had so impressed the commissioners and the government that he was appointed the Department’s first Director of Education. His visionary approach for the delivery of a better education system gained wide-spread support of politicians and teachers alike. His significant change agenda for

education is evaluated in this chapter.

The significance of the narrative in this chapter is to profile the changes in the administration of education in Victoria that occurred in the period 1901-1979, changes that ultimately led to a decentralised Department of Education and the demise of inspection. The narrative in this chapter provides background knowledge for chapters Five and Six that follow, which document the new accountability strategies that were put in place by a decentralised education system position. This chapter begins with the reorganisation of the Department that was aligned to the Fink Commission’s recommendations discussed in the previous chapter, and the influential effort that Frank Tate, the new Director of Education, appointed 26 February 1902, assiduously applied to his work in reshaping education in Victoria. As the narrative progresses, the influence on education of both the 1929-1933 Depression and the aftermath of World War II is considered. ‘By the 1930s school inspections, the setting of syllabi and examinations, teacher training, evaluation and promotion, all controlled by centralised bureaucracies had become irksome to teachers.’

The 1960 Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria was a critical document that provided an internal account of the problems faced by the Department of Education post World War II. A trial to test whether a decentralised administration would be a viable alternative to the over-centralised system that had evolved in state education was a major recommendation in the report. An initial move to establish a decentralised education Department gained traction from the report, and with the intervention of the

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Commonwealth government in education, the issue of decentralisation was predestined.

The Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901
(The Fink Royal Commission)

The Commission issued five progress reports during the period of its tenure. The fifth and final report included summaries of the earlier progress reports and ended with a series of recommendations directed towards improving identified defects in the educational machinery of the state. The recommendations identified the extent of reform necessary to raise living standards apart from mere considerations of monetary return to individuals. Concluding remarks stressed that the work of schools needed to focus on developing in children, the capacity to have ‘clear minds and noble characters, with trained faculties, with capacity to appreciate the intellectual, social and moral conditions surrounding the individual, and able to resist deteriorating influences.”

Not until education is viewed as a whole, and its national aims of developing faculty of mind and body and forming and strengthening character are perceived, can we be said to be on the right path.

The language used in the reports was a far cry from the pedestrian language of previous Royal Commissions. The Pearson and Rogers-Templeton reports did identify the fundamental weaknesses in the Education Act 1872 and the manner in which the Department adhered closely to the stringent regulations that accompanied the Act.

However, little change was effected. There was simply no fervour or commitment to risk

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changing the status quo. Now keen to move on from the grip of the 1890s Depression, the Victorian Government came to terms with the robust and consistent message for change clearly conveyed in the Fink reports.

Debate in the Victorian parliament about the need to reorganise education had been a recurrent argument from the time Victoria separated from New South Wales at the end of 1851 until the commencement of the Royal Commission on Technical Education in 1899. There had been no real incentive to change the existing order. Effective leadership within the National and Common School Boards and the Department of Education to the end of the nineteenth century had been shown in every Royal Commission report to be limited. This is not to say that those appointed to senior positions did not give of their best effort in the circumstances that prevailed during their tenure. Rather, there was no motivation to embrace active participation from sources outside the inner bureaucracy. The administrative inner sanctum of the Department post 1872 was a ‘closed shop,’ supported by governments that hesitated to stray too far from the administrative parameters enshrined in the Education Act 1872. Therein lay a pervasive weakness – an unwillingness to countenance anything but the maintenance of central control of the system. Authority was vested in the prevailing minister of public instruction and the secretary of the Department, while authority of the Inspector-General was overshadowed.

The far-reaching report of the Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901, with its recommendations to restructure the Department and reshape the learning and teaching environment in schools, fell upon a receptive audience and pressured, even embarrassed government to respond to the final report in the following manner. The appointment of Frank Tate as the first Director of the Department of Education in February
1902 was a manifest demonstration by the government that finally the recommendations handed to parliament by the Fink Commission would be taken seriously and enacted.

**Admission of past mistakes**

Introducing the second reading of the *Education Act Amendment Bill* to the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 29 October 1901, the Minister of Public Instruction, William Gurr, admitted that the Victorian education system had lost prestige and proceeded to identify reasons for the lack of progress. His appraisal was consistent with the conclusions reached by the Fink Commission about the status of the Department.

Gurr attributed the loss of prestige in Victorian education to the discredited system of payment by results that had lingered for so long to the detriment of allowing teachers to demonstrate their true talents. Other contributing factors identified by Gurr included the great mistake during the 1890s Depression of the wholesale dismissal of a large number of the best teachers on ‘Black Wednesday’, 9 January 1878, and the reduction of salaries and career opportunities for those who remained in the service. The closure of the Teacher Training College in Melbourne and the subsequent employment of untrained pupil-teachers at low salaries was a management error that further diminished efficiency within the Department.

Gurr conceded that the business side of the Department had been the priority, not the professional advancement of the educational program. Gurr emphasised that the government was now committed to making

… education reform a prominent feature in its legislative programme, because there is

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evidence from all sides that our education system has not given that result in efficiency that
we have a right to expect from it.\textsuperscript{7}

At the very least the government resolved that the state could not afford to neglect a single
child in the educative process: ‘We should look forward to an educational system so perfect
and so coordinated that all our agencies from the primary school, through the secondary
and technical schools, up to the University, should be all pulling in the same way.’\textsuperscript{8} This
all-encompassing assessment by the government renewed conviction about the real purpose
of education. Where previously there had been piecemeal attention given to
recommendations of the two previous Royal Commissions, the political will following the
final report of the Fink Royal Commission to effect substantive change across the education
system was genuine.

Gurr recognised that there had been a distinct severance between the professional
officers of the Department, who inspected schools under real conditions and the
administrative officers who worked entirely within the walls of the education office. ‘The
result has been a disinclination to advance, and a separation of the office from the actual
work of schools.’\textsuperscript{9} In further criticism Gurr asserted, ‘The history of the past has been one
of stagnation and drift, with occasional spasms of unorganized activity.’\textsuperscript{10} He informed
parliament that no personal responsibility had been assumed in the Department ‘but
committees bound down by Acts have administered the system in a wooden manner,

\textsuperscript{7} Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Assembly. \textit{Parliamentary debates (Hansard)},
\textsuperscript{8} Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Assembly. \textit{Parliamentary debates (Hansard)},
\textsuperscript{9} Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Assembly. \textit{Parliamentary debates (Hansard)},
\textsuperscript{10} Parliament of Victoria. Legislative Assembly. \textit{Parliamentary debates (Hansard)},
making progress impossible.¹¹

**The appointment of a permanent head of the department**

In almost five decades from the formation of the National Schools Board in Victoria, leadership in the administration of education had been left in the hands of various Secretaries whose appointments had never been regarded as permanent. The necessity of appointing a permanent head of the Department had become imperative. The appointee should be a person of high educational standing and administrative acumen, who could deal effectively with complex problems and efficiently introduce necessary reforms to keep pace with the changing conditions of a progressive system of public instruction. To achieve this outcome, the Fink Royal Commission recommended a role reversal of the previous hierarchy. Whereas the position of Inspector-General had been subordinate to the position of Secretary, the permanent head should be the Inspector-General with the Secretary transferred to the control of another Department. In this remodelling process the chief clerk would assume responsibility for all clerical duties.¹² According to the Commission, the reorganisation would improve the management and efficiency of the system.

The provisions of the *Education Act 1901*¹³ completely restructured the Victorian Education Department. The newly minted position of Director was to become the permanent head of the professional division of the public service. The Secretary was to be appointed from the administrative/clerical division. The office of the Inspector-General was abolished and all powers and duties, statutory or otherwise, were transferred to the Director.

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The first person appointed to the position of Director of Education was Frank Tate on the 26 February 1902.

**Frank Tate: Director of Education 1902–1928**

Frank Tate began his distinguished career in the Victorian Education Department as a pupil-teacher in 1877 at the Old Model School in Spring Street, Melbourne. His first teaching appointment was at the Panton Hill State School in 1884. Subsequent appointments were in schools on the outskirts of Melbourne. He was adept at successfully meeting the requirements of the payment by results system, albeit a system that he vigorously opposed. Tate had an ‘overwhelming determination to succeed.’

Through part-time study at the University of Melbourne, Tate completed a Bachelor of Arts (1888) and a Master of Arts (1894). He advanced through the ranks of the teaching service to become an Inspector at Charlton in 1895. Tate variously held the positions of head of the Melbourne Training College, re-opened in 1900, and was a member of the University of Melbourne council.

Tate came under notice for his impressive and forthright evidence to the Fink Commission. By contrast with some senior Department officials whom Fink had pitilessly confronted for conservatism and incompetence, Tate appeared as an enthusiast for reform. He was outspoken on education issues in his inspectorial district and in many public forums, including and expressed indignation at the general neglect of country schoolteachers, and the closing of the Training College in Melbourne in 1893 as part of the

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savage retrenchment measures brought about by the Depression. Tate had become exasperated with Departmental bureaucracy and with the miserable attitudes of governments towards teachers’ salaries.\textsuperscript{15} Close monitoring of inspectors’ reports and public comment made by them had been the normal practice exercised by Department officials, so it was an extraordinary step for an inspector to use his annual report to attack educational practice and policy. However, Tate feared no reprisal for his actions. His reports were not the well-ordered record of routine inconsequentialities that had been dutifully compiled and served up to governments. Tate’s reports spoke ‘…with an individual voice directly, fluently and confidently.’\textsuperscript{16} In his Inspectorate of Mallee, the local press was ‘…grateful to have an inspector who made news’\textsuperscript{17} and followed him around the district, reporting on his talks at teacher meetings convened by the enthusiastic inspector.

Following his appointment Tate was anxious to initiate the changes that he had envisioned for education, but expressed his frustration that parliament had not acted quickly enough to legislate the authority for him to act immediately. Tate was under no illusion about the nature of the task ahead to rebuild education. After one hundred days as Director, in somewhat of a contemplative mood, \textit{The Age} reported Tate as saying, ‘I am convinced that my work in reorganising the system in Victoria is going to be a difficult one.’\textsuperscript{18} His first report was an exposé of the failings of the administration of education and previous

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\textsuperscript{15} Selleck, R.J.W., ‘Tate, Frank (1864–1939),’ \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography}, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, \url{http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tate-frank-8748/text15325}.

\textsuperscript{16} Selleck, R.J.W.,(1976). ‘Frank Tate: A Victorian Australian,’ \textit{History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society}, Vo.5, No.1, p.64. DOI:10.1080/0046760760050106 Link to this article: \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0046760760050106}. Downloaded by Charles Sturt University on 15 March 2015 from Taylor and Francis online.

\textsuperscript{17} Selleck, R.J.W., ‘Frank Tate: A Victorian Australian,’ p.64.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Age}, Melbourne, Thursday 15 May 1902, p.6. \url{http://trove.nla.gov.au}
\end{flushleft}
government inaction and inattentiveness to address changes that were so desperately needed for the future good of the colony. Tate declared that education in Victoria was sadly lacking in efficient organisation and while it remained in such a disorganised state ‘…educational waste, educational inefficiency and educational wrongdoing’ would continue.

However, in his annual report for 1902-03, Tate expressed frustration and regret that the expectation he had of being in a position to effect necessary educational reforms had not been realised, noting, ‘…the evils which are retarding the progress of Victorian education can be remedied only by legislation. In this latter respect the year has produced nothing.’ Despite having been in the position of Director for a little over two years, Tate found himself hamstrung by mandatory conditions embedded in the parliamentary Acts; they imposed the ‘minutest’ details of procedure on the Department, militating against efforts to produce an efficient, loyal and contented teaching service.

Tate and ‘New’ education

At the turn of the century there was a growing concern in Australia that state education systems lagged behind overseas systems, and had failed to keep abreast of new approaches to education. ‘New’ Education became the catch cry to describe new ideas about teaching and learning.

John Oscar Anchen, writing on the subject of New Education noted that from the second half of the nineteenth century developments were taking place in Central Europe,
which, by the close of the century, developments were to have a revolutionary effect on the
theory and practice of education. The movement to reconstruct educational thought
centred on the work of Johann Pestalozzi, a Swiss social reformer and educator and that
of German kindergarten educator Friedrich Froebel, both pioneers in child study and
activity methods. Their ideas heralded a radical change in educational aims and methods
adopted in all English-speaking countries at the turn of the century. Their approach to
learning was child-centred rather than teacher-centred, the methodology being grounded on
active participation rather than passive participation in the learning experience. Tate’s
progressive views about teaching and learning were very much aligned with the ideas of
Pestalozzi and Froebel.

In response to a question directed to Tate, then an inspector during a hearing of the Fink
Commission regarding the ability of children to study for themselves, Tate responded, ‘We
need to give the knowledge that is power, rather than make children animated phonographs,
capable of giving back only what has been spoken to them.’ In response to a subsequent
question, Tate said, ‘…the very last ideal in the mind of the teacher should be the imparting
of facts.’

Frank Tate was committed to a holistic view of education. He told the Fink
Commission that:

Research, Melbourne, p.78.
25 Anchen, J.O., *Frank Tate and His Work for Education*, p.78.
4 August 1899. Evidence of Inspector Frank Tate. Response to Question 1276, p.64.
The changes in the programme are all in the direction of changing unreality and dead formalism into the reality and association with some life need. This cannot be done readily and effectively if the apparatus of teacher and child is confined to a blackboard and a slate.\(^{29}\)

Central to Tate’s philosophy was the development of the mind, rather than a focus on the mere cramming of facts. He believed that pupils should be taught to listen and understand, to read and comprehend, to think and reason. Physical Education should develop the body.

Tate had an appreciation of the impact of the learning environment and believed in the building of attractive schools and the beautification of school rooms. He initiated the Schools’ Endowment Plantation Scheme, in which pupils were encourage to plant waste areas with trees. His holistic philosophy aimed to link the education of children with their life interest and the needs and values of their community.

**Tate and the status of teachers**

Tate’s primary concern in the overhaul of the education system was directed towards improving pupil learning and the status of teachers. For Tate, the efficiency of schools and their responsibility as socialising agents was contingent upon the teacher. Tate realised that a teacher must be a learner too and initiated summer schools that were held during the Christmas vacation at the University of Melbourne. At these forums, teachers met together to improve their knowledge and pedagogical skill sets. In an effort to safeguard community respect for schools and ensure that staff were properly qualified to teach, the Schools Registration Board was created in 1905.

The matter of establishing a method of regulating the teaching profession in Victoria had been discussed in the years prior to the work of the Fink Commission. In its

recommendation to set up teacher registration, the Commission referred to developments in England in 1860, where the focus had been to register secondary teachers. In England, registration was considered to be the starting point for the organisation of secondary education and the registration of secondary teachers. By March 1894 in England, a Royal Commission on Secondary Education was set up to consider the best means of establishing a well-organised system of secondary education. The paramount aim of registration was to exclude or discourage incompetent individuals from entering the teaching service, thereby raising the qualifications and tone of the profession. In the English setting, the Commission pointed out that there had been a struggle between primary and secondary teachers over proposals for registration.

In the Victorian context, the Fink Commission was adamant that registration was to embrace all three branches of the teaching profession, that is, primary, secondary and technical teachers alike. There was to be no exemption from the registration process for any teacher. The Fink Commission was determined in its resolve to raise teaching standards by establishing a transparent, accountable process by which the general public could be assured of the capability of individuals employed as teachers in the Victorian public service. Tate was never satisfied with teachers having the minimum prescribed qualification. He encouraged teachers to improve their academic as well as their professional knowledge. Teachers were provided with opportunities to enter the University to take a two-year course for the Diploma of Education.\(^{30}\)

Recommendations for advancing the professional status of teachers through a regulatory system of registration and improvement to the outmoded organisation of the

Department were made. Changes to the development of school curricula and the necessity of forming a group of individuals into a council of education to guarantee the progressive delivery of education (discussion to follow) were critical. Strategies were also needed to improve teaching, learning, administrative efficiency and the overall accountability of the state system. With the abolition of payment by results in 1901, the Fink Commission recommended the introduction of fixed salaries combined with a thorough method of inspection to replace individual examinations in all schools where a fair degree of efficiency had been maintained. Tate outlined his vision for a new method of inspection:

We are determined that our inspectors shall be more than examining machines, and we will lay great stress that in their inspections the methods employed by teachers shall be the principal objective. Our inspectors will frequently work together, so that in large schools four or five inspectors will probably be employed during an examination.31

Tate revealed that where pupil-teachers had been employed in the belief that good teachers came from experience in the classroom, the practice had been universally condemned. He had always been an advocate to abolish the system and was now in a position to change the way teachers were trained. Tate believed that Victoria’s past practice in utilising pupil-teachers had not been a means of training, but rather a means of ‘economy in administration’ in its worst form.32 In his report for the year 1902-03 (31 March 1904) Tate stated that no country that considered itself to be “educationally efficient” employed the pupil-teacher system. He noted that the “…whole of Europe except Britain, and some of the poorer villages in Russia”33 had rejected the model. Tate emphasised that it had been folly to employ poorly educated, immature apprentices to teach large numbers of students.

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Tate’s assessment was that young teachers in this position developed ‘…an entirely wrong attitude towards work.’\textsuperscript{34} Even where it had worked fairly well, the pupil-teacher system stood universally condemned by educationalists as a means of supplying a good type of teacher.\textsuperscript{35} Following a recommendation from the Fink Commission Tate abolished, the system.

In pursuing his agenda to reorganise and shape a new direction for education in Victoria, Tate acknowledged that for some teachers and inspectors trained under the mechanical system of payment by results, it would be hard for them to adopt, let alone appreciate, the more liberal view of education he introduced. Tate wrote that his progressive approach

…aims at unity of effect by correlation of subject with subject, an adaptation to the stages of the pupil's development, and at close relationship with the facts of his out-of-school life. It makes much of the principle of interest and tries to secure the active co-operation of the child by first stimulating him to thought about what interests him, and then giving him opportunity for the development of the various modes of expression of thought possible in a school education.\textsuperscript{36}

In effect, Tate’s philosophy sanctioned freedom for the teacher, and consequently, the inspector, to bring child-centred relevance to the curriculum and teaching that stimulated and developed an inquiring mind in students. In earlier times, such an approach to pedagogy had not been possible in a system, where everything taught in classrooms had been ‘prescribed and definite, and where the grand objective was a severely conditioned examination.’\textsuperscript{37}

Accountability

The work of the inspector between 1852 and 1901 in Victoria largely became one of mechanical examining. Typically reports followed a standard formula based on statistical analysis of results, the quality of instruction in each inspector’s district and the quality of teaching in the schools visited. Inspectors were required to report the number of schools visited. The frequency of visits was noted, often with excuses given when inspectors failed to reach the expected number of visits.

In the period 1852-1901, there were insufficient inspectors to cover the number of schools in any kind of regular pattern. Report writing, and time spent in the central Melbourne office on duties related to the Board of Examiners, whilst important, continued to be a distraction from the real work of inspection. The time taken to continually assess teachers for payment by results was the constant of an inspector’s lot. Inspectors pointed out that during school visits, there was insufficient time to mentor teachers.

The emphasis placed by the Department on employing young university graduates as inspectors discussed in the previous chapter, meant that those inspectors earned little respect from teachers when it was known that they had no prior teaching experience. These appointees were considered to have had no pedagogical skills to draw on to advise teachers about improving the quality of their teaching. New graduates did not have any practical working knowledge of schools, nor were they a resource to give advice on pedagogical issues.  

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Frank Tate was an exception as an inspector. He would hold public meetings to discuss the merits of public education and periodically held meetings of teachers in his district, creating forums where teachers could share their experiences in the classroom and hear of Tate’s progressive approach to teaching. The recommendations from the Fink Royal Commission had given Tate the green light to bring about the substantive changes he envisaged to be necessary to reposition previously ingrained attitudes into a new vibrancy across the education community.

The system of payment by results meant that the prospects of promotion for teachers were tied to the results their pupils gained in the standard proficiency test set by the inspectors. Teachers were obliged to practise mechanical teaching methods, with rote learning in the three Rs (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) being the fundamental teaching strategy utilised. As historian Alan Barcan noted, the system was acknowledged to have achieved ‘…the encouragement (of) …memorization rather than reasoning, to formal, mechanical teaching methods, and…keeping the curriculum narrow.’\(^39\) Turney, another historian writing in 1969, considered that teachers were defeated by the stringent, uninspiring method required of them if they were to gain added value to their base salaries. Teachers were bound by prescribed texts used in the classroom and the inspectors’ reports upon which any increase in salary was dependent.

The schoolmasters who would fain teach in a more rational manner, are afraid to displease their inspectors, whom they suppose to be strongly in favour of this kind of [mechanical] teaching.\(^40\)

Thus, teachers were literally impoverished by the system. The reduction of salaries and retrenchments that occurred during the 1890s Depression had resulted in low teacher


morale and resentment towards the education system that employed them.

Accountability and efficiency within the Education Department were essential elements to maintain public faith in the system. However, a way to improve teacher capacity and morale in a professional workforce with the freedom to engage students in progressive learning pedagogies also needed to be found. Teacher registration was a necessary first step. In 1911, a General Council of Public Education was established to further the cause.

**General Council of Public Education established 1911**

As a consequence of the Fink Commission’s recommendation, a General Council of Public Education was established to safeguard and maintain the progress of education in the state of Victoria. The formality of setting up the Council was enshrined in the *Education Act 1910* (4 January 1911). Tate was designated as the President of the Council.41 The Council size was fixed at twenty-one members. (The fields from which members were specified is detailed in Footnote 364 below.) Tenure of appointment was fixed at three years, in order to increase accountability by encouraging applicants who would be active and work with initiative, and discourage applicants interested in the status of the role.42

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42 Council membership comprised: The Inspector-General of Schools; The Director of Technical Education; Two members representing the University of Melbourne Council; Two members representing the teaching staff of the University; Two members representing teachers of Secondary and Private Primary Schools; Two members representing Technical Instruction Committees; Two members representing Directors and Instructors of Technical schools; Two members representing the State school teachers; Seven members, including persons selected with due regard to the representation of agriculture, mining, manufacture, and industry. As far as possible, the whole of these members should be chosen by reason of their qualifications to deal with educational subjects, or by reason of their interest and experience in educational matters.

The Council’s duties were directed to be: (i) the continuous study of all aspects of the education system, from primary school to university, and to report on the reforms introduced in other countries in all areas of instruction; (ii) to report on any educational matters referred to the council by the Minister; (iii) to prepare an annual report and (v) to administer the Registration of Schools and Teachers Act. It was expected that the formation of the Council would stimulate sufficient general interest in education to secure continuous effective criticism, considered an essential ingredient of potency. The Commission reasoned that without a supervisory body, such as the General Council of Education, there would be little inducement for the public to show interest in the development and maintenance of a progressive and coordinated education system. However, despite the high expectations placed on the responsibilities of the Council by the Fink Commission, ‘…its activity was restricted to preparing valuable reports, some of which were pigeon-holed, and arriving at findings it was unable to enforce.’

**Inspection**

With the abolition of the system of payment by results, greater expectation was placed on the development of an efficient and effective inspectorial staff, and not on a mechanical examination system to determine teacher effectiveness. In his address to parliament in 1901 William Gurr, the Minister for Education, stressed that inspectorate staff had to be led by a competent organising head with full authority to assign the work of inspectors. There had been inspectors who had ‘not kept up to the times owing to the exacting nature of their

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43 Anchen, J.O., *Frank Tate and His Work for Education*, p.120.
work in the past.'  

This lack of efficiency occurred as a result of the absence of genuine professional direction from the head, and reliance on red tape and over valuation of seniority, without thought of special fitness in making appointments to school and Department positions.  

Samuel Ware, in his capacity as a relieving inspector, reported in 1901-02 that the transitional stage of school/teacher assessment had not been sufficiently thorough to fully assess the progress of either schools or children. With the abolition of the result system, school visits during the transition to new inspection arrangements were centred on assessment for Standard and Merit certificates only, with the ‘…bulk of the school left untouched.’ Ware reported that in most schools the head teacher had administered progress examinations during the year and as a consequence, was in a fairly good position to know the attainment levels of children in the school. However, as Ware noted, ‘…these do not give such a stimulus to the work of the school as the inspector’s examination does.’  

Whether Ware’s comment reflected a measure of self-importance assigned to an inspector’s rank or whether the comment was a genuine statement about Department accountability is debatable. However, Ware added that a district inspector could get a better understanding of the condition of a school and the efficiency of the teachers when he

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48 Report of Inspector Samuel Ware, 1901-02, 4 September 1902, p.44.

49 Report of Inspector Samuel Ware, 1901-02, 4 September 1902, p.44.
examined the school himself. As to the examination, he favoured an individual test in all essential subjects, specifically spelling, composition and arithmetic but saw no long-term benefit in examining minor subjects ‘as these are not every-day necessities…and quickly fade out of mind once the young leave school.’

Inspector William Hamilton (Castlemaine District) wrote along similar lines to the views expressed by Inspector Ware, when he confided that the need for examination remained central to monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of school operations. The transition to the new system over the previous eighteen months when there had been no formal assessments of schools, convinced him of the need to return to the formality of inspection. Hamilton wrote that an inspector could not ascertain the state of a school, nor a teacher of his class, without examination, that is, not merely the examination which goes on unconsciously from day to day, but a set periodical test.

The aim of the teacher’s examination should be to ascertain what the child does not know, with a view to remedying defects. The aim of the inspector’s examination should be to ascertain what the child does know.

According to Hamilton, the need for more inspectors was necessary to administer the individual, class and observation tests in order to reliably assess the correct implementation of the new programme. He asserted that it would be undesirable and false economy to have the work of teachers assessed by ‘hurried, overworked, and jaded inspectors.’ However, he noted that there were signs of an educational awakening among teachers, thanks to the stimulus provided by lectures and lessons at the Summer Schools held during January, and

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50 Report of Inspector Samuel Ware, 1901-02, 4 September 1902, p.44.
52 Report of Inspector William Hamilton, 16 October 1902, p.44.
by the visits of the Director. Conferences of teachers and inspectors and the dissemination
of educational literature on the latest studies on pedagogical method, suggested to Hamilton
that there was ‘…good ground for hope that the next few years will be years of educational
progress.’

Following Tate’s appointment, there was a refreshing new trend in inspectors’ reports.
Inspectors were encouraged, even liberated, to report in a progressive unencumbered
manner, consistent with Tate’s philosophy of untethered broadening of pedagogy in
teaching and learning. By way of illustration, Henry Rix, the inspector responsible for 112
schools in the Seymour District, outlined that the main purpose of the new programme was
not to prescribe new work, but rather ‘…to bring about a broader,
more rational and more elastic treatment of old-time subjects.’ To achieve this objective,
Rix stated that it would require teachers to rearrange and graduate the work and to ‘beget
power.’ Rix explained this meant developing

…the power to think, the power to act-and to put that power to immediate use, making the
tongue and the hand the ready instruments of the brain. Skill in thinking and doing are to be
put to practical use at each stage of progress.

Inspectors were now empowered to express their views openly on a range of subjects.
Moreover, inspectors’ reports were no longer permitted to be ‘cleaned’ before publication.
Inspector Alfred Jackson, referred to comments that he had made in earlier reports for 1890
and 1899 where he had protested against centralisation. Jackson’s concern, shared with

53 Report of Inspector William Hamilton, 16 October 1902, p.44.
54 Parliament of Victoria. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1901-02, Report
of Inspector Henry F Rix, 30 September 1902, cited at:
55 Report of Inspector Henry F Rix, 30 September 1902, p.45.
other colleagues, was the need to engender an ‘educational conscience’ in Victoria. According to Jackson, it was necessary to establish this culture if parents were to interest themselves in educational questions. He wrote: ‘We cannot expect local interest in scholastic matters until there is more local control.’

Jackson cited the circumstance that prevailed in New Zealand, where he declared that ‘…everybody is interested in education because everybody shares in its management.’ Jackson cited a report that the Chief Inspector in Otago (Mr P. Goyen) had prepared following his visit to three Australian States. Goyen’s assessment was that the Australian Departments of Education had pursued a policy that was highly detrimental to the intellectual life of the States, and that strangled local interest, whether in educational or other affairs, and was doomed to failure.

Jackson was strident in his desire to see a decentralised administration of education away from one central office in Melbourne. In his estimation, to continue with a highly centralised system, in time, would be “anomalous, cumbersome and unworkable”. He declared that:

There should be ten or twenty Education Departments in Victoria, the central one to have only such control as is exercised by the Education Department in England. The provincial Departments would vie with each other in having everything up to date, and a greater fillip would be given to education than it has ever yet received.

Serious action on the subject was never given any credence by parliament, or for that matter by Tate. That Jackson’s views were published unedited at all was a sign of the

changed climate in which greater freedom of expression was tolerated among the elite of education power brokers, and of course Tate himself. Just as the new approach to curriculum programming strongly advocated by the likes of Pestalozzi and Froebel and others in Europe encouraged teachers to free themselves from the shackles of the past, it would have been inconsistent to muzzle inspectors from expressing their views as Jackson had so freely done without penalty. Jackson was ahead of his time with his views about decentralising education administration. It would take a little over six decades more to realise the ideas that Jackson had expressed in 1902. With the benefit of hindsight, his views were prescient for the period and futuristic.

**Revised inspection guidelines 1904**

To support the revision of the programme of instruction, a revised system of inspection and examination was published at the beginning of 1904. The earlier Confidential Instructions to Inspectors was replaced by Instructions to Inspectors and Teachers. By definition, the new instructions were an open recognition of the importance placed on developing positive teacher/inspector relations, rather than the “secretive” and “confidential” instructions previously given to inspectors alone. The greater freedom of the subject choice and pedagogical treatment of lesson content given to teachers obviously necessitated a more liberal system of inspection. Under the revised guidelines an inspector was not merely to assess the work of the teacher for Departmental purposes but rather to ‘…use the opportunities which his visit affords to assist, direct and stimulate the teachers, and to
influence for good the work and character of the pupils."\(^{61}\)

Whilst greater freedom was given to inspectors in the way examinations were conducted, all tests nevertheless were to be as thorough and searching as possible. In his annual report for 1902-1903, Education Minister Arthur Sachse emphasised that with the available staff of inspectors and the large number of schools to be visited, exemptions to approved schools would be permitted if assessments were to be efficient and effective. Sachse clarified that exemptions would be considered for approved schools and the substitution of examination of the divisions of a class for a whole class in particular subjects at the discretion of an inspector. Other changes included (i) the right of the teacher to select, within limits, the subject matter of his lessons in subjects such as history, science, and geography. The responsibility of an inspector in this situation was to examine the notes presented by the teacher with the proviso that the inspector had approved the nominated amount of material put forward by the teacher and the method of development of subject content; (ii) in a general sense, the new examination system targeted the teaching methods used by teachers in as equal measure as the actual acquirements of the assessment of pupils and (iii) the system of individual passes and school percentages was abolished in favour of a system of class marks based upon marks gained at individual examinations or by the oral examination of groups or classes.\(^{62}\)

The revised arrangements placed greater demands on the skills and energies of teachers. With the focus on the quality of teaching, teaching notes and methodology, teachers were required to demonstrate that pupils reached higher levels of engagement in the content of


lessons. Teachers now had to expend greater energy and application to ensure that what was taught had purpose and relevance to learners. Sachse conveyed in his report that teachers who had adapted well to the new approach had blossomed whilst those teachers who had been successful in the narrower results system had fallen behind.

Inspector Arthur Burgess declared that he had seen greater freedom in teaching and a gratifying readiness exhibited by teachers to put into practice approved educational methods as a result of the new program. Noting that ‘…the right arm of the teacher is no longer paralysed by the prospect of pecuniary penalties,’ Inspector W Cavanagh found that instead of being passive recipients, pupils became active learners: ‘Intelligence is drawn out; facts are not stuffed in.’

Whilst the Department demonstrated renewed effort to raise the quality of teachers employed in the teaching service, the Minister reminded parliament that the Department of Education was

…a great employer of labour, aiming at supplying a high quality of education, and a teacher is to be valued not so much by his scholastic attainments as by his power to bring these to bear upon his teaching work.

After a period of lengthy negotiations with the University of Melbourne Council, Sachse had been pleased with the link that the Department had reached to enable teachers to study at the University by attending evening lectures without fee. However, the prime object of the Department’s Training College in Melbourne was to develop in trainees the

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ability to teach with breadth, skill and success. Sachse’s sobering comment served as a reminder to both the Government and the Department that while younger teachers might well be swept up by the allure of gaining a university degree, university study should not obscure the real work of the Training College to instil in its graduates the power to teach and the desire to do so. During a time of transition, according to Inspector Henry Rix,

…there is always a continual conflict between old ideals and the new ideals, and, when the endeavour is made to carry out both the old and the new, the consequence is confusion in the work and loss of health in the zealous worker.66

With this observation, Rix encapsulated the conundrum facing many teachers and inspectors as they adapted to the requirements of the new instructional program. On the one hand, the old approach/expectation had been that teachers had little to do but teach and that inspectors had little to do but examine. However, with the new arrangement the requirement was that inspectors became teachers of teachers, and that each teacher became an efficient examiner.67 Rix intimated that to ask an inspector to exhaustively examine every pupil and record individual results ‘…now that the work is broader and deeper’68 was in every practical sense impossible. For Rix, Department inspectors should make an adequate test of the work of each class to determine the standard of efficiency that had been reached, then to establish the respective merits of teachers with a view to promotion on merit. To achieve greater frequency and reliability with inspectorial visits, Rix advocated that more inspectors were needed and that each district should be made smaller: ‘In no other service of the State is the proportion of the higher officers to the rank and file so

small, even where supervision is close and constant.’69 Appeals to increase inspectorial staff were not new. Over time there had been additions to the number of inspectors but never to the level advocated by Rix that would secure a higher rate of school visitation.

**Inspection reconsidered to meet changing times**

By 1915, arrangements for inspection had matured along the lines advocated by Rix and other fellow inspectors. Inspectors were required to complete two circuits of their districts annually, but the visit for examination was less rigid. Freed from the necessity of examining every pupil in every subject, inspectors were able to assign more time to test the general school organisation, the quality of class supervision, methods of teaching and their results as noted by them in the ordinary school routine. Inspectors were left free to adapt their methods of examination to the needs of schools. They could use their own judgment to determine whether a school was to receive a full, detailed examination. The inspector was required to enter into the Examination Register the marks gained by individual pupils in each subject of the Course of Study. In schools where an inspector was familiar with the calibre and capacity of the work of teachers and the overall organisation and arrangements for learning, ‘...he may examine only so far as may be necessary to enable him to gauge the worth of the instruction and the progress of the pupils.’70 On each and every occasion it was Department policy that the inspector’s objective was ‘...to discover the real life and conduct of the school and its worth to the community.’71

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**Continuing schools and secondary education established 1910**

Among the recommendations of the Fink Commission was the necessity to set up a system of continuing schools. A proactive stance was taken to set up post elementary schooling to ensure that future citizens were well prepared to meet the societal demands of a rapidly changing technological world. The realisation that Departments of Education needed to set up curricula in schools to keep abreast of what was occurring beyond state and national borders was becoming an imperative.

Directors, Tate stipulated before the Fink Commission (1899-1901), should not delay in forming a system of higher elementary or continuing education. There was no provision in the primary school curriculum to offer teaching in specialized, ‘hands on’ practical or trade subjects for boys between the completion of primary schooling and technical education and domestic science programs for girls. Tate’s priority was to develop curricula content that had relevance for the future wage-earning capacities of boys, as was provided for a general curriculum in secondary education. Working in conjunction with Alfred Williams, Director of Education in South Australia in 1907, Tate gathered information about public schooling in North America, Europe and Britain with a view to setting up government post-elementary/primary or high schools in their respective state Departments. Public high schools had been operating in the north east of North America from the 1820s and had the support of the urban middle class.

For the thirty-year period following the passage of the *Education Act 1872*, the Education Department had focused on the development of elementary education, generally

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known throughout Australia as primary education. Although there had been opposition to
the establishment of secondary education, an antagonism between those who supported
secondary or high schools and those who wanted courses of a more practical nature, the
need for post-primary education was inevitable. Tate penned:

…this antagonism has produced an unhealthy rivalry, overlapping of effort and consequent
waste of public money. What is needed is a greater infusion of humane and liberal subjects
in the technical school course and in the high schools, a more direct connection between the
work of the classroom and the practical problems of the outside world.74

The Victorian Education Act 9101 was passed to create a state secondary education
system,75 generally known throughout Australia at that time as ‘high’ schools. This Act
facilitated the decentralisation of secondary education. As a consequence, eighteen higher
elementary schools and six district high schools were established. At the beginning of the
financial year 1911-12, four district high schools and eight agricultural high schools were
operating in regional Victoria with courses that encompassed general academic,
commercial and domestic science. Apart from one higher elementary school, all of these
schools were set up in country centres to provide higher educational opportunities that had
previously been beyond the reach of those communities.76 The development of higher
elementary schools in Melbourne and the larger townships of Ballarat, Geelong and
Bendigo were established to bridge the gap that was evident between the work of
elementary schools on the one hand and high schools and technical schools on the other.
The course of study in these schools would, of necessity, be different in type from those
that had been set up in rural communities.

p.489.
75 Campbell and Proctor, p.114.
Courses in higher elementary and district high schools in country areas were designed so that students might acquire knowledge of the basic principles of agriculture. It was the government’s assumption that pupils could take up some form of industrial occupation, their studies being directly related to vocations that would be followed in adult life. The Minister stated that specialised courses in the high schools, would ‘…supply a steady stream of pupils for the technical schools and for industrial and commercial life generally.’ Historians Campbell and Proctor suggested that increased anxiety throughout the British Empire about German technological and industrial advances, together with the imminent threat of war, meant that the Empire could not afford to fall behind German ingenuity. The potential for government-controlled secondary schools to make a productive contribution to enable the Empire to “keep up” was not lost on politicians.

Alfred Billson, Minister of Public Instruction, noted that ‘…the foundation of the power and prosperity of all countries depends on the technical pursuits of its people,’ adding that nations, which had established technical education, made ‘rapid and phenomenal commercial and industrial progress.’ Billson cited Germany and Japan as examples of countries in which boys particularly were required to attend higher technical education before becoming wage earners. Billson was outlining the direction that the government needed to take to ensure that a very large proportion of young people became industrial workers and producers.

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77 Report of the Minister of Public instruction, Alfred Arthur Billson, for the Year 1911-12, p.35.
78 Campbell and Proctor, p.114.
80 Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, Alfred Arthur Billson, for the Year 1911-12, p.42.
Boards of Advice abolished 4 January 1911

With the passage of the *Education Act 1910*, Boards of Advice were abolished (4 January 1911), and the Governor in Council was empowered to appoint for each state school a committee of not more than seven members to be called the School Committee.

Membership of each school committee was determined at meetings called to receive nominations of interested parents willing to serve on the Committee. Nominations once approved were submitted to the Governor in Council for appointment. Shortly after the governor’s decree approximately 2,000 school committees comprising about 14,000 members had been established to hold office till the end of February 1914. Thereafter school committees were appointed for periods of three years.

New school committees could (i) exercise a general oversight over school buildings and grounds, and report to the Minister on the condition of buildings as required; (ii) carry out any work referred to the Committee in connection with the maintenance or repair of/or additions to the buildings, the teacher's residence or the school grounds; (iii) promote the beautifying and improvement of the school grounds, the establishment and maintenance of school gardens and agricultural plots, the decoration of the school rooms, and the formation of a school library and museum; (iv) provide for the necessary cleaning and for the sanitary services of the school; (v) visit the school from time to time, and to record the opinion of the Committee as to the general condition of the school and its efficient management; (vi) use every endeavour to induce parents to send their children regularly to school; (vii) arrange, where necessary, for suitable board and lodging, at reasonable rates, for the accommodation of teachers (especially women teachers) appointed to the school, and carry
out any other duties prescribed by the regulations and generally to promote interest in the school. Early feedback to the Department about the committees was positive. Alfred Billson, Minister of Public Instruction, offered a favourable response in his report noting that

…such active and supportive interest has already been manifested by the school committees as to justify the belief that the influence of these committees in connexion with the local educational requirements generally will be of great value. 82

The experience of parent involvement had a long history prior to the Education Act 1910 but the rebirth of active parent participation on Tate’s watch strengthened the commitment to shore up and value the contributions parents could make to the learning environment in schools. The Committees did not have the accountability function that developed much later (see Chapter Six) but there was an obligation placed on the Committees to take an active role in supporting a healthy school tone.

Frank Tate: His contribution to Victorian education

After twenty-five years as the first Director of Education in Victoria, Frank Tate retired in July 1928. No fewer than 128 higher elementary schools and thirty-six high schools had been established in Victoria during his term as Director and there had been an increase of fifty per cent in the number of technical schools. In his distinguished career, Tate had been a member of three Imperial Conferences on Education that dealt with educational policy affecting the whole British Empire. Delegates who attended these conferences were drawn from

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82 Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1910-11, p.29.
British Dominions, colonies and the Indian Empire including teachers, or administrators from every quarter of the globe all assembled to consider the education of children, adults of different colour language and of every stage of civilization and culture.\textsuperscript{83}

Tate had travelled overseas studying education systems in Europe and the United States and even in Fiji. In a preliminary report following his trip to Europe and America in 1907 Tate proclaimed,

\begin{quote}
What we need today is that those who lead public thought shall throw away conventional and illiberal notions as to the scope and end of popular education, notions which other peoples have long outgrown and cast aside, and shall front facts fairly and squarely in an endeavour to build in Australia an education system worthy of a potentially great people.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

During his trip Tate understood with great clarity that world trends in education were confidently moving in positive new directions and

\begin{quote}
…we in our little back-water here must make up our minds to rest in a foolish content, or make a great effort to join the great current and advance.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

After his retirement in 1928 Tate became a member of the 1929 Southern Rhodesian Education Commission.\textsuperscript{86} He utilised knowledge gained from his travels to reshape the administration of the Department of Education and gain support for his endeavour to establish state secondary schooling, in his belief ‘…the educational benefits it conferred on individuals and on Australia’s needs for a skilled and educated workforce if it were to


\textsuperscript{85} Preliminary Report of the Director of Education upon observations made during an official visit to Europe and America in 1907, p.4.

\textsuperscript{86} Glotzer, The Influence of Carnegie Corporation..., p.104.
become a modern industrial society.\textsuperscript{87} Tate realised the importance of education programming that centred on child development and the closer links that connected family, community and the school. Consistent with the concept of New Education that had emerged overseas in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Tate separated subject content in the curriculum from pedagogical practice. He had worked to establish local control of schools. With the abolition of Boards of Advice during Tate’s tenure as Director, school committees were empowered with greater input in local school community affairs.

Under his directorship Tate had managed single-handedly to set up a restructured Department that stayed strategically centralist in its outlook. With the support of the Victorian Parliament and particularly the Ministers of Public Instruction, Tate was able to set up a bureaucracy that was pyramidal in structure, with the Director Tate as its permanent head. He was able to free up an old-styled English curriculum model and replace it with a new program in which teachers were encouraged to develop in pupils the power to think, and to develop teaching content that facilitated this approach. The inspectorate too had new guidelines that enabled inspectors to examine a teacher individually and reward teacher capacity on merit, the inspector being seen as a mentor rather than an odious intruder who entered classrooms to assess teachers for purely pecuniary advantage. However, the new guidelines for inspectors placed them merely in a rejigged role, wherein assessment of teachers remained the means of testing the efficiency and effectiveness not only of the teaching service but also the system as a whole. Whilst Tate’s views were

\textsuperscript{87} R. J. W. Selleck, 'Tate, Frank (1864–1939)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, \url{http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tate-frank-8748/text15325} published first in hardcopy 1990, Retrieved online 23 February 2017. This article was first published in hardcopy in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 12, (MUP), 1990.
progressive for the times, he held firm control from the central administration in Melbourne. The inspectorate was firmly entrenched and regulated in the new system, with even greater authority and for the longer term.

Minister of Public Instruction Henry Cohen, in his annual report for 1927-28, stated that the former director ‘…will always be remembered as an outstanding figure in the history of education in Victoria by reason of his many notable achievements.’ Cohen listed the establishment and development of secondary education, the greatly improved status and professional training of teachers and the cooperation between teachers and parents with the establishment of school committees in each school. Tate had also been given Commission by the New Zealand Government to inquire into the university system and the secondary education in the Dominion. A similar Commission of inquiry was conducted in Fiji at the request of the British Government. After retirement Tate was commissioned to inquire into education in Rhodesia. Between 1930 and 1939 Tate was appointed president of the Australian Council for Educational Research. (A.C.E.R.)

Tate’s successor (June 1928 – December 1932)

Martin Peter Hansen succeeded Tate as the new director on 25 June 1928. After gaining his Trained Teacher’s Certificate, Hansen was appointed as head teacher at Cochranes Creek,

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89 Anchen, Frank Tate and His Work for Education, p.174. (The council was established in 1930 following the efforts of Tate and his supporters, who in 1928, at the suggestion of visiting Dean Emeritus of Columbia University Dr James Russell, applied to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for financial assistance to set up an organisation to sponsor and conduct research into educational problems, provide library, information and consulting services to students and research workers in education and related fields. The Carnegie Corporation applied a caveat that in financing that such a body the organisation “should be independent of control by any university, state system of education or political party.” Since 1946 the Australian and state governments have provided financial support to ACER.)
near Bealba, in July 1893. Following his resignation in February 1895 he spent two years teaching at University High School. He re-joined the Education Department in December 1896 as assistant teacher at Warrnambool. Later moves saw Hansen teaching in Gippsland and at schools on the Bellarine Peninsular. While teaching in the country Hansen embarked on university studies graduating in 1898 with an Arts degree, a Law degree in 1899 and a Master of Arts degree in 1900. In 1900 he again resigned from the Department to take up an appointment at Wesley College.

Hansen re-joined the Department again on 10 February 1909 as inspector of registered teachers and schools. By 8 August 1909 he became Chief Inspector and Chairman of Classifiers of secondary schools. Hansen was Assistant Director of Education from 1925 and Acting Director from 1927. His appointment was short-lived. Hansen died on 11 December 1932, aged fifty-eight.

The funeral notice in *The Argus* on Tuesday 13 December 1932 reported that it was unfortunate that Hansen’s appointment as director ‘…almost synchronised with the early period of the economic Depression,’ and its many associated problems ‘no doubt have been instrumental in impairing Mr Hansen’s health.’ Having to manage the Department in straightened times and his term of office tainted by a bitter ideological conflict with Donald Clark, chief inspector of technical schools, his opposition to the appointment of

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92 The Argus, Melbourne, 13 December 1932, p.9.
Julia Flynn as Chief Inspector of secondary schools, and growing disharmony with his minister were disconcerting.93

**Impact of the Great Depression on Department efficiency**

The Great Depression of 1929-1933 and World War II in 1939-45 unsympathetically impacted world economies. Monetary constriction brought about by the two world events relegated spending on public schools to a low priority.94 During the first two decades of the twentieth century the prime concern in Victoria, as well as other Australian states, had been the focus on rebuilding education departments, establishing public secondary schooling and building the quality and expertise of teachers with new training facilities and enhanced working conditions. In the mid-1920s there was optimism in Australia, and elsewhere, that a new phase of economic expansion was looming. However, by 1929 any thought that people had of positive economic good times were globally crushed as a consequence of the severity of economic downturn. In Australia the 1933 Census showed that only 338,788 Australians, less than ten per cent of the population had incomes of over £5.95 Cuts in wages, pensions and public works in 1931 intensified the Depression so that by 1933 many Australians were living in tents and shanty towns, tramping the countryside in search of employment. The unemployed had to rely on sustenance payments or rations to survive.96 3,522,109 Australians had no work or income at all. As late as 1939, ten years after the

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93 L. J. Blake, 'Hansen, Martin Peter (1874–1932), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.
95 *The Maritime Worker*, Melbourne, Saturday 20 December 1952, p.2.
96 In 1931, the Arbitration Court had imposed a 20% cut in the wages of all workers. (Broomhill, R. (1978). *Unemployed Workers- A Social History of the Great Depression in Adelaide*, University of Queensland Press, p.1.)
initial 1929 financial slump one quarter of a million Australians were on unemployment benefits.\textsuperscript{97}

In order to reduce the cost of administering the Department of Education in Victoria, the Minister set up an investigation of the value and efficiency of every phase of the Department’s work. John Lemmon, Minister of Public Instruction, announced that a ‘special Board’ had been appointed to inquire into the financial aspects of administration and to report on the comparative values of different systems of organisation.\textsuperscript{98} The central administration of the Department, inspection and the staffing of schools and the relations of primary, secondary and technical education were also to be reviewed. Until the report of the Board of Inquiry had completed its work, all progressive work that would normally have been undertaken was put on hold.

Lemmon outlined in his annual report for the year ended 30 June 1931 steps the Department had taken to work constructively through challenging times. Lemmon acknowledged that although the consequences for education, were disheartening and harmful to progress, there had been the opportunity for reparation with increased attention given to internal efficiency. The Minister was somewhat upbeat in announcing that “new and unexpected situations” that had arisen from abnormal conditions had to be addressed and, in all cases, ‘there have been compensating advantages to education.”\textsuperscript{99}

Among advantages raised by the Minister was the improvement to school staffing levels, a difficulty that had confronted the Department for several years. Lemmon

\textsuperscript{97} The Maritime Worker, 20 December 1952, p.2.
suggested that the prospect to appoint highly qualified young applicants to replace
temporary staff and those of limited potential would in time bring credit to the teaching
service. The opportunity to make personality, along with literary qualifications, a deciding
factor in the selection of new teachers had arisen as a consequence of the Depression.
Consequently, the standard of literary attainments and the standard of teaching affected by
literary attainments had been ‘appreciably raised.’ Another positive for the Department
was that for senior pupils who had completed their course of study and had then been
unable to secure employment were able to remain at school for a longer period. Lemmon
praised the work of inspectors who had carried out their responsibilities ‘vigorously and
efficiently.’ Conferences of Inspectors were held three times during the reporting period
with the result that each inspector was able to disseminate information in his district with
regard to improvements in administration and in teaching and organising.

In his annual report for 1931, James McRae, Chief Inspector of Elementary Education
paid tribute to teachers for the ‘splendid’ manner in which they kept up their enthusiasm
and maintained standards of efficiency despite the drastic retrenchments that had occurred.

Our teachers have shown that nothing in the way of personal disappointment or deprivation
can affect the quality of their work…they have carried out their regular school duties with
unabated zeal.

He reported that inspectors had attested to the soundness of the general organisation of
schoolwork adding that ‘nothing is more keenly welcomed by inspecting officers than
evidence of the exercise of initiative and originality.’ E. P. Eltham, Chief Inspector of

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100 Parliament of Victoria. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction, for the Year 1930-31, p.3.
102 Parliament of Victoria. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for the Year 1930-31,
Technical Education, commented that due to the severity of the industrial and financial depression the restriction in funds available to further develop technical education were non-existent. Therefore, the focus of activity was directed towards maintaining existing facilities efficiently with minimum expenditure. As McRae had noted, extensive unemployment as a consequence of the great reduction in activity in most branches of secondary industries meant that boys returned to school for another year. Eltham advocated that during periods of economic downturn resulting in extensive unemployment of all types of workers, the facilities available in technical schools should be utilised to maximum effect, at least temporarily, to carry out essential training where industry could not. Eltham also expressed concern that with the decline in attendances in many subjects during 1931 and the subsequent necessity to reorganise classes would result in further considerable reductions in expenditure during the 1931-32 financial year.

1931 Board of Inquiry

Among twenty-seven recommendations listed by the State Finance Committee tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 24 September 1930 was Recommendation 9. The recommendation stipulated that a special inquiry into the administration of the Education Department should be established to ensure that ‘unnecessary expenditure is not incurred by duplication and overlapping.’ Premier and Treasurer Edmond Hogan announced on 25 September 1930 that he would appoint a committee to follow up the recommendation of

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the Finance Committee.

By an order in Council dated 6 May 1931 the governor appointed a Board of Inquiry to report on matters concerning the general administration of the Education Department. The Board was required to report on the system of organisation of the various branches of the Department and whether “reasonable” coordination consistent with efficiency existed between the various types of schools and classes. Department expenditure and the economical use of school buildings were also matters to be considered. The Board with C.S. McPherson as Chairman held its first meeting on 21 May 1931. The Board examined seventy-five witnesses and visited thirty metropolitan schools before presenting an Interim Report on 15 September 1931 and its Final Report on 14 December 1931.106

The Board’s report did not recommend any significant change to the structure of the Department but expressed the concern that the Education Department with its significant levels of expenditure, a large staffing component and ever-increasing activities was too extensive a concern for one person to effectively control.107 The Board concluded that adequate consideration had not been given to the Department’s financial management. The Board noted that ‘with a staff of 10,500 persons carrying on the work in 2,787 schools’108 the Department should be administered by a Board with a membership of three members, one member being the Director of Education as Chairman, a second member from the State treasury and a third member, not necessarily in the service, elected on account of special

In proposing the formation of such a supervisory group to head the Department, the proposed Board should have full control of staff in much the same way that other government instrumentalities such as the Water Supply Commission, the Country Roads Board, and the Forests Commission operated. The sole purpose behind the recommendation was to reign in what the Board of Inquiry determined was a waste of effort and money involved in the duplication of costs and services, that evidence presented to the Board had shown existed throughout the various types of schools and classes. The provision of inspectorate staff came under review in the cost saving, belt tightening undertaken by the Board of Inquiry. To avoid overlapping that the Board considered arose as a consequence of maintaining the three inspectorial staffs in primary, secondary and technical schools, each under the supervision of a chief inspector, the Board recommended amalgamation into one inspectorate. The Board’s position in relation to the inspectorate was that ‘...economy would be effected by the avoidance of unnecessary travelling and duplication of effort without impairing the efficiency of the service.’ The Department did not enact this recommendation.

Of the thirty recommendations listed in the report, twenty referred to cost cutting measures to facilitate significant savings that included school closures, and the sale of land purchased for schools that were no longer required, and the disposal of unused and unnecessary school buildings. Apart from the recommendation to establish a Board to

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control the Education Department with some recommendations to address teacher
registration and the staffing of schools, the exercise was one of financial audit of
Departmental expenditure. The Board stated that

…the large increase in the cost of the Education system renders it imperative that greater
consideration be given to the financial side and also raises the question whether control of
this large spending Department should not be reviewed.\(^\text{112}\)

In essence, the Board of Inquiry focused on ways in which the government could save
money during the depressed economic circumstances in the midst of the 1929-1933 global
Depression, in what was perceived as a Department with burgeoning operational costs. In
his annual report for 1931-32, Minister of Public Instruction, John Lemmon, reported that
since 1929 the Department had been able to reduce building costs by £383,909 and the cost
of secondary and technical education and of teacher training had been severely reduced.
‘No effort had been spared to effect further reductions in cost without undue loss of
efficiency.’\(^\text{113}\) Care had been taken to keep expenditure within the limits required by the
government.

The annual report for 1932-33 continued to acknowledge the steps taken to frugally
manage the Department in difficult times. Lemmon reported that increased efficiency had
been maintained in large measure to the ‘splendid response of teachers to the many
demands upon their loyalty and spirit of self-sacrifice,’\(^\text{114}\) adding that although they had


Retrieved 20 August 2016.

Retrieved 20 August 2016.
suffered materially in loss of salary and promotion, ‘their devotion to the needs of children has remained unaffected.’ Despite the harsh reality of the consequences of the Depression Minister Lemmon was keen to reassure the public and the Victorian Parliament that there had been no diminution of teacher commitment to service. However, as with other areas of government enterprise, reduced funding to meet restrictions brought on by the Depression would mean demands for funds when the financial climate improved would gather renewed momentum. The Australian Government commitment to participation in World War II placed further financial constraint on the states in managing their affairs. Funds were needed to support the war effort.

**Difficult times for the Department of Education**

With the nation at war (1939-1945) employment in all areas fell significantly. Men and women enlisted to support the war effort in significant numbers. In Victoria the Minister, Albert Lind, flagged that despite the absence of more than 1500 male teachers in the armed forces, all schools with an enrolment of five pupils were staffed. The shortage of teachers was to some extent managed by the number of student teachers who had completed their rural training being available to take responsibility for the smaller remote schools across the state. Teacher shortage was also helped by a decision to defer the call-up of male student teachers until the age of nineteen. Support from qualified married women and female student teachers assisted the Department to fill teacher vacancies, but the Minister reported that the Department was faced with grave difficulties in staffing schools for the 1944 school year.

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As a result of the call-up of 650 male teachers in Victoria at the beginning of 1942, the Education Department, of necessity, imposed certain restrictions relative to the age of entry for new pupils in some schools. At the beginning of the second school term in 1943 the restrictions were modified to allow entry of pupils over five years of age at the beginning of each term. Lind noted that it ‘…would be too much to claim that the standards of efficiency have not been adversely affected by the withdrawal of so many keen and skilful male teachers for military duties’ but reported that the temporary teachers ‘in almost all cases’ had given faithful and effective service. He praised the work of young student teachers in rural school settings.

During the period 1940 through to 1948 there had been no re-organisation in the Department. However the post-World War II period provided new challenges with a rapid increase in birth rates and the subsequent enrolment pressure on schools. The need for new schools grew exponentially for primary schools in the metropolitan areas of Melbourne and later in the secondary school sector. But as The Age reported on the first school day of 1950, ‘the Education Department is to be congratulated upon having been able to accommodate about 250,000 pupils in primary and sub-primary grades’, despite the reality that there had been an increase of about 16,000 enrolments. With a sense of premonition about future difficulties The Age added: ‘a prodigious amount of work remains to be done before the State education system can be brought up to the standard desired in a

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modern enlightened community.’119 The reference here was the need for new schools to be built, necessary building extensions to others, curriculum revision and a new push for further enhancement to pedagogy.

Almost three years later under a headline that read “Education Now in a Grave Crisis” *The Age* reported comments made by Melbourne University’s Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor George Stephenson Browne, that ‘Education in Victoria, grossly overburdened and completely out of control, encompassed so many evils that it had become a crisis of the gravest concern.’120 Browne had been speaking at a public meeting called by the high schools branch of the Victorian Teachers’ Union, to protest against overcrowding in post-primary schools. The evils Browne referred to were building shortages and hence the Department was not in a position to cope with the increased demand for enrolments (the last high school had been built before the war); the ‘gross’ oversize of classes (1000 classes with more than 45 pupils); the lack of well-trained secondary teachers and the promise of a select committee to draw up a blueprint of advancement had not been realised.121

There had been agitation in the Victorian Legislative Assembly for a Royal Commission to address growing concerns of parliamentarians regarding problems with the delivery of education. Leonard Reid, (Liberal Party) Member for Box Hill, was one who spoke openly about his concerns and asserted that the general control of the Education Department appeared to have ‘declined lamentably.’ He expressed the view that all was not well in the Department and that the government was in ‘grave danger’ of

120 *The Age*, Melbourne, Thursday 20 November 1952, p.3.
121 *The Age*, Melbourne, Thursday 20 November 1952, p.3.
becoming too complacent about the situation. Reid stated that in a report published in *The Age* on 15 April 1952 the Premier implied that he had grown tired of repeated requests to appoint a Royal Commission. No Royal Commission was on the government’s agenda, but advice with respect to the creation of a select committee to investigate the administration of education remained a viable option for the government to address the groundswell of concerns about Department inefficiency.

Frustration among parliamentarians with government inaction to address concerns with an over-sized centralised Department was unrelenting. In the 39th Victorian Parliamentary Session 7, September-21 September 1955 Keith Sutton, Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Member for Albert Park in the Legislative Assembly remarked that eminent American educationist Professor R. Freeman Butts had spent time in Victoria, and among his observations, critically referred to bureaucratic control and over-centralisation of education, and to the generally unsatisfactory teacher-pupil relationships in state schools. Sutton also noted in his address that Mr C. F. Walker, the head master of Box Hill Grammar School, had similar concerns about the over-centralised bureaucracy that had evolved in the Department. Sutton quoted Walker who had returned from an extended study of education in England as having said

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If there is one thing above all else that strikes the visitor from Australia to England it is the marvellous amount that has been developed in the national system of education.\textsuperscript{124}

It was Sutton’s contention that it was “incontestable” that the education system was “minutely bureaucratized”.\textsuperscript{125} He favoured a series of county councils functioning as education authorities based on the English model of a decentralised system outlined by Walker and others. Sutton and his ALP colleagues were unyielding in their determination to pursue the government for what they perceived as the Liberal Government’s obstinate behaviour regarding inefficiency in the administration of education. The government did not seriously consider Sutton’s approach to decentralisation and continued to quibble on the matter.

Butts had presented his observations of the Victorian education system in a lecture at the University of Melbourne on 12 November 1954. It was his belief that a ‘public system of education in a democracy should be administered in such a way as to give all those concerned an appropriate share in the control of education.’\textsuperscript{126} Butts was sceptical of a bureaucracy where centralised decision-making was left in the hands of relative few people. He acknowledged that the practice of relying on the judgments of a permanent professional staff of public servants had merit in providing continuity and stability in which the politically appointed Minister often changed following elections. However,

…a partisan-minded Minister with political, economic or religious motives may not have his way with a Department, but he certainly can thwart or block a forward-looking Department. A sluggish Department can likewise hold back a Minister of vision and energy.  

Butts was mindful that the theory of ministerial responsibility was embedded in the parliamentary system of government and as a consequence could not easily be transformed. For Butts the fundamental problem in a centralised system was whether the channels of communication with the public were kept open and whether decision makers were actively responsive to the people to whom they were responsible. The Department, he said, felt this responsibility through its relations with the Minister, 'but I do not gain the impression that Departments (Australia-wide) held the same responsibility to the grass roots of public opinion.' Butts had formed the opinion that there was a basic lack of confidence in local community life. He was satisfied that there was a belief that it was a safer bet to work in an environment where uniformity could be controlled rather than in an environment where it was assumed that decentralisation would lead to deterioration in the quality, standards and indifference to education.

The possibility of lack of local interest and therefore of decline in education or inequality of provisions for education seem to make the certainty of uniformity more desirable than the uncertainties of decentralisation.

The government had snubbed calls for a *White Paper* on education particularly from the Victorian State Schools Committees’ Association and others to examine all aspects of the education system as it dealt with building shortages, overcrowded classrooms and teacher shortages. But by the mid-winter of 1957 John Bloomfield (Minister) announced that all aspects of Victoria’s education system were to be studied by a select committee.

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Recommendations that stemmed from the report would, according to the Minister, provide a blueprint for education in Victoria.\textsuperscript{130} Having insisted that the Department needed an overhaul, Sutton stated that the task had been long deferred ‘and will be no sinecure, but the personnel of the committee offers a guarantee that it will be done efficiently, courageously and with no want of vision.’\textsuperscript{131} Perhaps it was, as Sutton postulated, the Minister and his colleagues ultimately accepted that it was better to escape from an exasperated situation with some measure of self-respect and public unity, a situation in which pressure from colleagues and from educated groups outside the parliament had threatened to make intolerable.

\textbf{Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria 1960: The Ramsay Report}

On 12 February 1960 the report of this committee was presented to the Minister for Education John Stoughton Bloomfield. The report was an internal accounting of the operation of the Department with an exposé of the problems facing the system. The introductory comment in the report advised that the plan enshrined in terms of reference was to provide

\ldots an understanding of the reasons for the present system of centralized administration, affecting schools, teachers and education generally, and the means by which the Education Department carried out its responsibilities under the terms of the Education Act.\textsuperscript{132}

The Committee outlined the tiered, centralised structure of administration in the

\textsuperscript{130} The Age, Melbourne, 20 July 1957. http://trove.nla.gov.au
Department.\textsuperscript{133} The Department was built on ‘the delegation and acceptance of responsibility, which passes down finally to the class teacher, who must carry out the essential task for which the whole administration exists.’\textsuperscript{134} Administration of the Department had been reorganised under the Minister and Director into three divisions: Primary, Secondary and Technical so that teachers throughout the state and in their respective divisions could work as individuals and as members of a team. A Chief Inspector and Assistant Chief Inspectors together with inspectorate staff in each of the divisions were responsible to the Director. Communication between the administration and schools was maintained by regular and incidental visits of inspectorate staff and by direct correspondence from schools to the central office. Management of individual branches within the head office (accounts, buildings, teachers) was the responsibility of senior officers all of whom were coordinated by the Secretary who was ultimately responsible. The Secretary was accountable to the Director. At the time of the report 250 officers, all members of the Public Service were responsible for enacting decisions and regulations that affected the performance of schools and teachers.\textsuperscript{135}

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\textsuperscript{133} See page 245 for a copy of the Department’s Administrative Plan.\\
\textsuperscript{134} Ramsay, A. H., \textit{Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria}, Item 129, p.53.\\
\end{flushleft}
Figure 3: General Plan of Administration of the Education Department, 1960

Committee membership

The committee, set up during 1957, had as its members: the Director of Education (Major-General) Alan Ramsay; the Assistant Director Mr A McDonell; Chief Inspectors Mr O.C. Phillips (Primary), Mr O.E. Nilsson (Technical); Dr W.C. Radford, Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research and Mr J.G. Baker. In addition to written responses to the terms of reference the committee conducted hearings during March and April 1959. The committee considered fourteen oral submissions from representative groups such as the Victorian Teachers’ Union, the Technical Schools Association, the Teachers’ Tribunal and the Victorian Institute of Educational Research. Forty-two individual and group written submissions were received. Input from interest groups with a vested interest in state education included the Victorian Secondary Teachers’ Association,

the State School Committees and Councils Association of Victoria and the Kindergarten Teachers’ Association of Victoria. Of relevance to this thesis is the consideration by the Committee on matters of administration of the Department, inspection and early discussion concerning decentralisation. This discussion follows.

The need for change

The Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria (1960) avowed that the education system had to play its part educating children in a “rapidly changing world”.

New inventions and methods have changed the pattern of life from a national to an international concept. Each child and adult, with increasing leisure, higher living standards, increased life expectancy, has to adapt himself to a new way of living. No one can now divorce himself from the surrounding political and social changes.

In the formality of this report there was a clear statement that political and social issues had to be addressed in the manner in which the Department, and government, had to respond to the reality of change being a constant for policy makers at all levels. The committee pointed to the significant social changes that had arisen in Victoria and in particular the changing pattern of employment. The decade (1950 – 1960) had evinced significant growth in industrialisation with a consequential increase in the numbers employed in industry when comparison was made with those working in agricultural and rural activities. This growth resulted in a critical shortage of skilled workers. Thus, the Committee emphasised that in planning for the types of schools and courses offered in both metropolitan and country areas ‘educators must consider courses of study most suited to the area and the population being served.’ In an era in which school responsibility for the development of curriculum content was emerging, the Committee was in no doubt as to the

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role schools had to play.

Whilst we may be opposed to continual change of content and standard as being an undesirable compromise to the most vocal outside pressures, it is certain that schools must accept responsibility for reviewing their aims and objectives with the changing pattern of knowledge. The curriculum must be examined to ensure that it is realistic, free from inert or redundant fact, theory or method, and suited to the children and teachers who deal with it.\textsuperscript{140}

This was an unequivocal statement of purpose with regard to an expectation that the system had to make significant changes to meet societal change, particularly at the administrative level. Reorganisation within the Department was inevitable. For a time, this view of curriculum change conveyed authority in the manner in which school curriculums were to be developed, the pinnacle of this approach being the development of Curriculum Frameworks\textsuperscript{141} of the mid 1980s. (Discussed below)

\textbf{Decentralisation}

Early moves to promote the merits of a decentralised education system sprouted in the United States during the 1920s. Richard Glotzer, referring to the influence of the Carnegie Corporation and Teachers College, Columbia, highlighted the financial support that these institutions gave to innovative education research not only in the United States but also in Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. Of particular interest to the evolution of decentralisation in education was the early work of Francois Cillie, a Carnegie fellow in 1937-38, who had worked on the faculty of Pretoria Technical College in South Africa, before taking up his appointment at Teachers College, Columbia. During 1937-38 Cillie and Paul Mort, an authority on the financing of public education, conducted research to

\textsuperscript{140} Ramsay, A. H., \textit{Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria}, Item 280, p.95.

\textsuperscript{141} Note: Efforts to establish a National Curriculum would take hold to bring all Australian states into a common prescribed curriculum accord, a unifying move away from the separate curriculums offered at state level.
compare centralised New York Public Schools with decentralised outlying school districts. At the conclusion of their study both men jointly hypothesized that specific types of innovations and adaptations prospered best in decentralised systems, others in centralised systems, while others prospered independently of administrative configuration.\textsuperscript{142} Mort and Cillie’s research design showed that decentralisation and democratisation were not necessarily synonymous. According to Cillie, who summarised his assessment of responses to 176 items deemed ‘desirable educational practices’ from Mort’s \textit{A Guide for Self-Appraisal of School Systems (1937)}, decentralisation

\begin{quotation}
...better coped with particular circumstances of schools, teachers and students especially at the elementary level. Individualizing instruction, classroom freedom, and using student records for diagnostic and planning purposes, developing civic consciousness, and revitalizing the teaching of traditional subjects, also fared better under decentralization.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quotation}

However, the notion that decentralised authorities served communities best required further investigation.

The Report of the Committee on State Education (1960) gave consideration to the issue of a decentralised administration but held to a view that it was improvident to duplicate administration services. For the immediate future, the Committee held to the belief in a system that was to a centralised administrative one, whilst it was acknowledged that it was time to review a system that could not carry the burden of a state-wide system of education with the administrative procedures in place at the time of the committee’s review.\textsuperscript{144} The Department had proposed some ten years earlier (1949/50) for consideration to be given to decentralisation but this was in the form of setting up regional subdivisions centred on existing inspectorates at the time of the proposal. However, at that time no further action to

\textsuperscript{142} Glotzer, \textit{The Influence of Carnegie...}, p.108.
\textsuperscript{143} Glotzer, \textit{The Influence of Carnegie...}, p.109.
decentralise was considered because of the “small” size of the state, the size of school populations and the numbers of schools. To decentralise at that time ‘would merely add a further link to the system of communication between schools and the administration.’\textsuperscript{145}

No significant action with respect to decentralisation followed as a consequence of this report. Queensland had divided its central administration into five decentralised regions in 1948, each with its own administrative centre. A similar decentralised arrangement in the same year had occurred in New South Wales. The central office there managed Sydney and the Broken Hill inspectorate. The rest of the state was divided into seven areas each with its own director, offices and inspectorates.\textsuperscript{146} Nowhere in the report was there any suggestion that decentralisation had any application to individual schools. Rather the emphasis was only with respect to setting up regional areas or divisions. However, in response to interest from respondents the Committee did recommend that inspectors of primary schools ought to have the authority to determine priorities in their inspectorates for building and maintenance works, and to be empowered to spend funds on minor or urgent works without further referral to the Department. This was a piecemeal move to test the waters, so to speak, regarding the practicability about how decentralisation might work. The control was still within the confines of senior Department officers. The Committee did acknowledge that the size and population density of the state did not warrant complete decentralisation of all facilities. But with continued growth in the scope of Department operations it was considered that the issue of decentralisation be revisited and that an experimental trial be

set up in a particular area with results arising from the trial objectively assessed. In his annual report for 1960-61 the Minister for Education John Bloomfield may have taken to heart what the Committee had to say in reference to decentralisation when he advised parliament that

…we must make further efforts toward decentralization of administration or division of function. It appears to me that before long the Department will have so grown that the most senior officers at headquarters will no longer be able to give personal attention to the great number of minor matters with which they now have to deal. It seems that a time must come when matters such as minor deviations to bus routes cannot be regularly dealt with at the most senior level without endangering the effectiveness of over-all planning and control.

The Minister was clearly referring to internal administrative work pressures and saw decentralisation as a way to lighten the workload. Decentralisation did not mean that schools would take on devolved management tasks. It was far too early for any thought or serious consideration that schools could manage their own administrative responsibility for local budgets, staff appointments, staff welfare and principal selection. Inspectors were still an administrative necessity in the centralised system.

**Inspection provisionally retained 1960–1982**

The remodelling and dismantling of the inspectorate was a dramatic manifestation of the reorganisation of educational administration, not only in Victoria, but Australia-wide. During the period 1960–1982, reorganisation entailed the move away from the emphasis on instruction to a holistic view of education. During this period inspection and inspectors

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remained the quality controllers of the system, keeping the central administration informed on the state of education in the area or subject for which they were responsible.

The Ramsay Committee on State Education in Victoria (1960) acknowledged that in Victoria inspection had continued to be regarded as a process in which the inspector combined the function of inspecting the educational and material standard of schools and coincidentally the work of individual teachers.\textsuperscript{149} Although the Committee had received evidence of the level of support for an inspector to serve as an adviser, inspection and the assessment of teacher performance was considered a fundamental aspect of an inspector’s responsibilities. The Committee reported that most teachers in the Victorian Education Department preferred an annual inspection by Departmental inspectors and that it remained difficult to combine inspection and assessment for promotion with a preference for an inspector to act as an adviser to teachers and schools on professional matters. The potential for conflict existed where a teacher shared concerns with an inspector to then be assessed for promotion. The question inherent in this process remained one of: Could an inspector be both an adviser and assessor to a teacher without an individual teacher jeopardizing his/her chance of achieving a promotable assessment by disclosing any weakness to an inspector? Teacher scepticism and careful preparation during an inspector’s visit would appear to have been a reasonable attitude to adopt.

**Post World War II population growth in Victoria**

With the growth of population following the Second World War, school enrolments had

\textsuperscript{149} Ramsay, A. H., *Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria*, 120, Item 360.
risen significantly with a proportionate growth in the number of teachers in Victoria.\textsuperscript{150} This had necessitated a reduction in the size of inspectorates and the need for an increase in the number of inspectors in the Primary Division. The Committee reported that these changes had resulted in a much closer connection between teachers and inspectors and even more so when an inspector was able to give advanced notice of a visit. As Victorian inspectors were representatives of the Director and the Minister and could be called upon at any time for advice on a range of subjects such as buildings, sites, cooperation with local authorities and school problems, interruptions to inspection schedules made any set plan of school inspection impossible.

Similarly, secondary and technical school inspections were also beset with visitation concerns despite an increase in the number of inspectors allocated to each of these divisions. Post World War II the rapid increase in numbers entering secondary and technical education presented administrative problems for the inspectorate. The Committee reported that ‘the present system of annual inspection by a team of inspectors …is not able to deal effectively with the number of schools and inspections and the associated problems.’\textsuperscript{151} At best a secondary or technical teacher could expect no more than a few minutes visit from an inspector once each year. Contact with schools and teachers was considered to have been ‘both impersonal and fleeting.’\textsuperscript{152} The committee noted that once inspectors had returned to the central office, they were overwhelmed with queries and administrative work following school visits. The necessity for secondary and technical

\textsuperscript{150} Total Victorian school enrolments by 1950 had reached 235,791 (August Census enrolment figures). In 1960 the enrolment estimate was 423,814 and the predicted 1970 enrolment was 593,309. These figures were taken from Table 7, p.168 of the Ramsay Report.


inspectors to be subject specialists and the need for inspectors to travel on intra-state school visits made it difficult to recruit outstanding teachers prepared ‘to undertake the very arduous and exacting work of travelling to inspect schools.’\textsuperscript{153} The Committee noted that the problems could not be remedied by increasing the number of inspectors ‘threefold.’\textsuperscript{154} In all three divisions inspectors were unable to carry out their work due to the demands of administrative responsibilities and professional tasks.

From the early days of the inspectorate in Victoria the difficulties of scheduling inspectorial visits remained a contentious issue. Increasing the number of school visits in a year, together with central office administrative tasks, kept the inspectors from focusing on the reliability and uniformity of their work assessing systemic efficiency. Funding cuts and staff reductions had added to the problems faced by the inspectorate. As the public education system grew the demands placed on the inspectorate grew accordingly. With only thirty-four weeks available in the school year to conduct inspections the problems of regular school visits grew exponentially. The solution recommended by the Committee was to reduce the frequency of full inspections and reports on schools, with greater responsibility placed on school principals and for inspectors to adopt an advisory role. The Committee maintained that for inspectors to be in a position to adopt an advisory role during school visits had been impossible to effectively address, inspection would remain the significant accountability strategy until the method of teacher classification and promotion changed.\textsuperscript{155} No consideration had been given to any alternative method of school and teacher evaluation. Why bother to look elsewhere for alternatives when teachers had

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\textsuperscript{153} Ramsay, A. H., \textit{Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria}, Item 362, p.122.  \\
\textsuperscript{154} Ramsay, A. H., \textit{Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria}, Item 362, p.122.  \\
\end{flushleft}
shown their support for continuing with the status quo!

The burden on inspectors continued to be considerable. In an effort to relieve some of the pressure placed on inspectors, a system of triennial revision of inspectorial districts in the Primary Division began in late 1960. District boundaries were changed, raising the number of inspectorates from forty to forty-six. The new districts were located in the metropolitan area. Six additional inspectors were appointed. In late 1962 a further four inspectors were appointed to act as a pool of relievers who could be dispatched when and where needed and/or support was required. At the secondary school level appointments to the Secondary Board of Inspectors were made at a rate of about two each year. The Technical Inspection Board also had an increase of inspectorial staff in 1961, bringing the number of inspectors in the division to fifteen.\(^{156}\)

The Ramsay Committee on State Education in Victoria (1960)\(^{157}\) acknowledged that immigration had added to the rapid growth in the state’s and school populations. New suburbs had arisen in Melbourne and rural township populations had increased. Consequently, during the period 1955-1962, the difficulty of providing enough schools and staff to meet increased school enrolments added to the problems faced by the Department in Victoria and other Australian states. It was the Committee’s belief that the efficiency and orderly functioning of the Department was impaired by the lack of improved accommodation and insufficient staff to effectively support schools. To cope with expansion, the Committee recommended that at least a 100 per cent increase in office accommodation and staff in all sections of the Department was necessary. During 1961

additional space was allocated in the existing facilities but not to the level recommended by the Committee. Within the recommendations articulated by the Committee were portents of what was to come. For its time and place the report of Ramsay Committee on State Education in Victoria (1960) was influential in bringing attention to the reality and impact of a changing global economic and political scene, and as a consequence change was needed in the delivery of education for the future of citizens in a robust democracy.

**Troubled times for Victorian education: mid 1960s-late 1980s**

In Australia teacher unrest occurred when education resources of the states were stretched. Up until the 1960s teacher associations had been regarded as a moderate, dedicated and conservative section of the workforce.\(^{158}\) However during the 1960s, along with other white-collar workers such as bank officials, pilots and nurses, teachers in Australia became one of the new industrial dissenting groups and a leader in this group that resorted to strike action to place their demands for improvement in working conditions, salaries and secondary teacher qualifications before governments. In Victoria, as elsewhere, teachers and parents registered their concerns about the deficiencies of the education system. They did so by targeting concerns over crowded schools and large classes, unqualified teachers, and inadequate teacher training, inspection and the shortcomings of Departmental administration.

Debate in the Victorian parliament reflected the difficulties teachers and the Department were experiencing with respect to ever-increasing enrolments in government schools. Delays in building new schools and the shortage of secondary teachers to take up

appointments in both the metropolitan and outer metropolitan suburbs was of particular concern. In a speech to the Legislative Assembly on 6 May 1969 John Tripovitch (Member for Doutta Galla) explained that in 1962 there were 303 secondary schools in Victoria. In 1963 the number was 313 and by 1966 the number of secondary schools was 335. The rate at which the Education Department could erect new secondary schools was limited to the funds made available to it by the government. The backlog, he said, was ‘caused by the increased birth rate following the war, and particularly migration’ and it was these factors that had created difficulties in planning the development of high schools.

Enrolments in secondary and technical schools had risen from 57,037 in 1952 to 185,000 in 1966, a growth increase of 229 per cent. He illustrated the depth of the problem by referring to the situation in his electorate where he claimed that an additional state school was required each year and an additional High school every four years… ‘the government cannot cope with the needs of education today.’ Five years earlier he had been told in answer to a question put to the Government that sufficient money to meet the financial challenge of education in the state was available. Clearly this was not the case. His assertion was that the government had deliberately misled the Opposition and the

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people in the earlier response to his question.\textsuperscript{163}

Tripovich was speaking in support of a Bill introduced into parliament by the Minister for Education, Lindsay Thompson, to appoint three Assistant Directors-General. The Bill, as Ian Cathie (South Eastern Province, MLC), explained attempted to restructure the top administrative functions of the Department. Two new officers were to take responsibility for buildings and finance, planning, statistics and research, and the third was to assume responsibility for staffing. The move was considered by the Government to relieve the Director-General from being bogged down with day-to-day planning so that the officer could focus on coordinating the many activities of the Department. For the Member for South Eastern Province it was ‘the frequently repeated story of too little-too late.’\textsuperscript{164} Change to the upper echelon of the Department at the time was considered to be minor and was not intended to be either a reshuffle of senior positions or a major overhaul. The Bill was a measure for providing an increase in support for the Director-General without addressing the core grievances of teacher unions. Cathie argued that the proposed changes simply exposed the failures of the government in the past ‘by its procrastinations and delays to tackle a crisis which seems to be without end.’\textsuperscript{165}

Cathie went further. He emphasized that the necessity for the Bill revealed the lack of overall planning in education that had beset government policies. The Bill was a

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…desperate attempt to meet a desperate situation which is choking our schools, and rather than formulate far-reaching reforms, the Minister prefers to threaten teachers and to expose
\end{quote}

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\end{flushright}
what seem to me to be quite ridiculous charges of a criminal conspiracy to affect a public mischief.166

The Minister denied that he had used such threatening language directed at teachers through their unions, but Cathie suggested that he knew that Thompson had sent a letter to the Victorian Secondary Teachers’ Association in which the phrase had been used.

Thompson’s response was that what had been written was the opinion of senior Crown law officers. Nevertheless, it was Cathie’s assertion that the Minister had lent his name to the threatening letter. The President of the Legislative Council (Upper House in the Victorian Parliament) reminded Cathie that what he had said was not relevant to the Bill in question.

But Cathie insisted that the Bill to appoint three new Assistant Directors-General would achieve nothing other than to add to an already top-heavy Department without the provision of a flexible and adequate organisational support. The government was struggling to cope with vociferous antagonism from teacher unions and the parliamentary Opposition party.

Both factions were pressing the Government for change to working conditions in a teaching service that had grown in its determination to be considered as a professional workforce.

The tenacious stance adopted by the factions was to bring about substantive change in the Department.167

The foregoing puts a spotlight on the troubled times both the government and Department had to confront. Teacher and public dissatisfaction with the lack of direction by

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disruption across schools, particularly in the secondary sector.

Building programs for new schools, teacher supply and demand and calls by teacher unions for the Teachers Tribunal that had been established in 1946 to be disbanded all added to the complexity of problems the Government and Department faced.

The Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) employed the tactics of state-wide strike action, stop-work meetings, and short and long stoppages in selected schools as weapons to force changes the VSTA considered were imperative for the future progress of the teaching service and education generally. Most of the activity was centred on reform of the Teachers Tribunal, the abolition of inspection and the right of the VSTA to benchmark minimum qualifications required for state secondary teachers. The Victorian Teachers Union (VTU) was formed as a breakaway group when disagreement arose over changes foreseen by the VSTA as fundamental to the way in which the Tribunal should operate. The membership of the Tribunal was a sticking point. Instead of a three-person body made up of a chairman, a government representative (government appointments) and an elected teacher representative (who had always been a primary teacher), the VSTA’s position was that each of the four divisions (Primary, Secondary, Technical and Professional) should be represented on the Tribunal, with one chairman and one government representative assisting the four divisional members. Of greatest concern to the VSTA was that Tribunal procedures had been

…almost secret from the inception, reasons for decisions were seldom given and voting of individual members not revealed. No transcript of proceedings was kept and serious doubt was cast on the ‘independence’ of the chairman who was appointed by the government.\textsuperscript{168}

It was thought by the VSTA that reform of the Tribunal would lead to improvements in

conditions and salaries, the attraction of qualified staff to secondary teaching, reduction in class sizes, the abolition of clerical duties and the reform of the classification and promotion system then in place.\footnote{169}{The Age, Melbourne, 29 March 1966.}

Reform of the Teachers’ Tribunal was not the only target for the VSTA. Inspection by government school inspectors was considered by the VSTA as a significant impediment to teaching becoming a profession. The Association’s position was that it was wrong for professional secondary teachers (and other teachers employed by the Department) to be dependent for advancement on an assessment system devised and administered solely by the employer.

The VSTA raised its concerns regarding inspection in 1964. Its claims were that the inspectorial system produced a ‘soul destroying conformity which did not encourage initiative, and forced teachers to adapt to the whims of the inspector.’\footnote{170}{Bessant and Spaull, Teachers in Conflict, 58. (This quote was taken from the Secondary Teacher, No. 139, 1968, p.8.)} In 1968, the VSTA declared that the inspection system was ‘a major barrier to teaching becoming a profession.’\footnote{171}{Bessant and Spaull, p.58.} The VSTA’s position was that for professional secondary teachers to rely on a system of assessment to gain advancement devised and administered solely by their employers for advancement was wrong.\footnote{172}{Bessant and Spaull, p.58.}

It had been the role of the Board of Secondary Inspectors to ensure that uniform standards of teaching and efficiency in secondary schools were maintained. This principle had been an underlying requirement of the inspectorate in each of the three teacher divisions (Primary, Secondary and Technical) and had evolved over time and had served
the accountability requirements of the Department well. This is not to say that it was at all times an efficient or impartial means of measuring either efficiency or effectiveness, but the inspectorate did to a large extent achieve a certain level of uniformity across school operations. The VSTA questioned whether the assessments handed out to teachers by inspectors necessarily identified the best teachers for promotion. The Department’s reliance on the word of an inspector to be the sole judge of overall teacher ability and effectiveness came under increased scrutiny. Often to receive a promotable assessment a teacher was cautious while working in front of an inspector, rather than show initiative and individuality. The approach was very much one of playing into the hands of the assessor to gain promotion. In this sense uniformity and rigidity was inherent in assessment. Secondary teachers particularly resented the entry of an inspector into a classroom where a teacher was diligently going about his or her professional responsibilities.

It was not until 1967 that the issue of inspection became the basis for conflict between the VSTA and the Education Department. As Bessant and Spaull tell it, R.O. Desailly, the teachers’ representative on the Committee of Secondary Classifiers, questioned the legality of relying on inspectorial assessments as the solitary measure of a teacher’s suitability for promotion. Desailly declared that as a classifier, he wanted the right to make an independent examination of an applicant’s aptitude for promotion—the inspector’s assessment should not be the only factor in reaching a judgment of performance.173 The VSTA proposed that teachers should ‘proceed automatically up an incremental scale with appointments to promotable positions determined by the classifiers based on principals’

173 Bessant and Spaull, Teachers in Conflict, p.59.
Continued attacks by the VSTA on inspection and insufficient numbers of inspectors to assess the significant increase in the number of secondary teachers in schools weakened the influence of inspectors in the system. Inspectors over time had led somewhat of a charmed life in that they had achieved a privileged position in the Department, had their own separate professional roll, received much higher salaries than school principals and as a collective held considerable status within the Education Department and the general public. 

At the annual meeting of the VSTA in 1969 a unanimous decision was taken that from the beginning of 1970 teachers were to refuse assessment for promotion. Procedures were drawn up and issued to teachers that outlined measures to deal with inspectors if they entered schools. Measures included enforcing a policy of refusal to cooperate with inspectors if they entered a classroom, and if an inspector entered a classroom the instruction was that the teacher should simply supervise students and not engage in teaching. Opposition to the abolition of assessment remained a steadfast policy of the Association. It was clear that with this level of continued resistance and non-compliance, inspection as a regulatory process was doomed. It became increasingly evident that inspection would not survive the strong demands for structural change in the Department and no amount of intimidation by the Minister would improve the situation.

The Commonwealth’s role in education

The Australian Constitution stipulated that education is primarily the responsibility of the various state governments but there were areas in which the Commonwealth held sole authority, for example in the Australian Capital Territory and other assigned territories.

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The Commonwealth Education Act inaugurated the Commonwealth Office of Education on 11 October 1945. Its core responsibilities included support for the Minister of Post-War Reconstruction with advice on matters related to education, undertake educational research and advise the Minister with regard to grants of financial assistance to the states and to other authorities for educational purposes. Increasingly in the area of Commonwealth financial support for state government education programming, the Commonwealth would stipulate how the states were to use grant monies.

During period 1939–1948 Commonwealth interest in education was extended to sponsor research either directly or indirectly by making grants to appropriate groups or individuals and had established or was contributing to certain chairs or Departments in universities. Other Commonwealth interest in education was extended to include support for the effective rehabilitation of men and women who had served in the forces with Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (1944), also the establishment of the Australian National University (1946), financial support and commitment to UNESCO as a member nation (1946-47) and the development of educational programing for immigrants (1948). Their introduction to the Australian way of life necessitated special arrangements to be legislated in the national parliament. It established the Australian National Film Board in May 1945 whose purpose was to produce, distribute and procure films of an educational or cultural nature.

In 1960 state governments acting in concert with one another tendered claims to the Commonwealth for specific funding assistance with respect to education. Six state


Ministers of Education who together embodied The Australian Education Council agreed at a meeting in Hobart in February 1960 to compile a comprehensive report covering the requirements of education for the whole of the Commonwealth. The report established that education was ‘a national problem and that there was an increasing gap between the needs and demands of the community for education and what state governments could provide.’\textsuperscript{177}

From the mid 1960s the commonwealth government increasingly took control of education matters that had traditionally been the prerogative of the states. The states became dependent on the Commonwealth for a significant proportion of their income, having abandoned their independence in borrowing funds. The Department of Education and Science was established in 1966 with no specific or direct power other than to control the purse strings and the allocation of funds to the states. By controlling financial allocations, the Commonwealth was (and is) able to influence, both directly and indirectly the policies of state governments. Dependence on the Commonwealth for funds by the states, particularly with respect to education inevitably has led to an uneasy relationship.\textsuperscript{178}

Charles Cutler, the Minister for Education in the New South Wales government in 1967, stated that

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I have no doubt whatever in my mind that the commonwealth is increasingly using its financial control to force its way into the functions of the states…One of the outstanding fields into which the commonwealth has intruded is education…we have officers of federal Departments visiting the offices of the state Department and asking for details to be supplied…I cannot allow this sort of intervention by financial controls to go on without raising protest.\textsuperscript{179}
\end{quote}

Cutler may well have objected to the intrusion by the Commonwealth into state education affairs but as far as the Commonwealth was concerned there would be no turning back. Education was (and remains) funded from consolidated revenue of the Commonwealth government as reimbursements from tax revenue. The states needed additional funding from Canberra to cope with the rapid expansion of secondary education, the rising costs associated with the unforeseen demand for post-secondary study (at all levels of university study and the need for diversification in the provision of technical education from trade instruction to full-time post-diploma courses) and the significant increasing interest exhibited by parents in schooling. Thus, it was to be expected that the Commonwealth was obliged to demand a greater say in how states utilised the funds equitably and resourcefully.

The Karmel Report 1973

On 12 December 1972 the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, appointed an Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission to (i) examine the position of both government and non-government primary and secondary schools in all states and territories and (ii) make recommendations to the Minister for Education and Science regarding the immediate needs for schools, priorities within those needs and appropriate measures to assist in meeting those needs. Included in the Terms of Reference was the consideration of grants from the Commonwealth to the States and territories in regard to both government and non-government schools and the conditions under which the grants were to be made available. The Committee was required to work towards establishing acceptable standards.

for those schools (government and non-government) which fell short of the standards and to promote the economic use of resources. Other criteria considered were the diversity of curricula to meet the differing aptitudes and interests of students and to take into account as necessary, both the expansion of existing schools and the establishment of new ones. The Committee had less than six months to complete a survey of 9,500 schools across Australia and the systems in which the majority of them operated. The Committee held its first meeting on 21 December 1972.

During the period of its deliberations the Committee was mindful that it was to work in a climate of educational ‘uncertainty and ferment’ and that it was required to make recommendations in terms of structures that existed at the time and over which it had no authority or power to modify. However, as revealed above, the Committee stated that its recommendations ‘will have clear implications for the future and will influence the direction of developments.’ A further critical announcement by the Committee asserted that there should be less centralised control over the operations of schools. ‘Responsibility,’ it declared,

should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach, and at senior levels, with the students themselves.

The assertion that there ought to be less centralised control in schooling was formulated

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183 Karmel, P., Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Item 2.4, p.11.
on the belief that a grassroots approach to the control of schools reflected the conviction that responsibility was most effectively discharged where people, entrusted with making decisions, were also the people responsible to carry any decisions into effect.\textsuperscript{184} There was no indication in the report that the Commonwealth, being further removed from schools, would usurp State responsibility for education. However, it was stipulated that the overall planning of the scale and distribution of resources was essential within a devolved system in case gross inequalities of provision between regions occurred. (States or smaller rural communities) The delivery of certain services would need to be centrally organised to ensure equity and equality and to minimise any potential for disadvantage to arise. The Committee noted that as responsibility moved downward, ‘the professionals in schools must expect to share planning and control with parents and interested citizens, safeguarded by limitations where professional expertise is involved.’\textsuperscript{185} Thus with the revelations inherent in the Karmel report regarding the devolution of authority in school systems the “die was cast!”

**Decentralisation becomes a serious consideration 1980**

During 1980 a *White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools*\textsuperscript{186} was released. The paper was a statement of government policy regarding new administrative arrangements for schools in Victoria. Its purpose set out management and organisational structures necessary to achieve established aims and

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{184} Karmel, P., *Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission*, Item 2.4, p.11.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} Karmel, P., *Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission*, Item 2.6, p.11.
\end{itemize}
objectives for education.

Shortly after their appointment in May 1979, the Minister and Assistant Minister for Education announced a review of education policies designed to ‘identify clearly the aims and objectives of education in Victoria and to determine the strategies, structures and objectives.’ A Green Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victoria was tabled in parliament on 8 May 1980. This paper outlined recommendations to be adopted to enable the Department to achieve its aims and objectives. The Green Paper emphasised the theme of devolution of responsibility but therein was confirmation that no firm decisions regarding devolved authority had been made. The paper merely provided a starting point to facilitate further discussion on the future of education.

However, among the stated objectives of the Department in the subsequent White Paper was this clause

…to decentralize the administration of education wherever appropriate to allow local communities as far as is possible to share the responsibility and accountability for local educational policy and for decision-making in local schools.\(^{188}\)

The statement was premised on one of the central objectives of education, that in each individual it was important to (i) develop the intellectual, practical, social and emotional skills required to understand our society and to live, work and function within it; (ii) develop a more co-operative, caring and democratic community concerned with the welfare and optimum growth of all its members and (iii) to encourage increased community participation in consideration of educational issues, educational decision-making and the life of schools.\(^{189}\) As with any large organisation the administration of the Department had

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grown increasingly complex so administrative arrangements were modified. A divisional structure had earlier been established to cope with the development and expansion of state secondary and technical schools. During the 1970s further administrative change resulted in the creation of the Office of Director-General and five service directorates (Council Services, Equal Opportunity, Integration, Policy and Planning, Audit and Review) in an effort to provide more efficient management and service to schools. Criticism of the high level of administrative centralisation and associated costs had been significant with the outcome in 1975 that school councils gained greater powers. Increased professional responsibility was delegated to schools and teachers to develop meaningful curriculum content. Change in the Department was slow and developed over time.

The rationale for change presented in the *White Paper* stressed that substantive change could not be achieved without firm government resolve and action. ‘The consolidation of past developments in a rational way and stripping of unnecessary structures…can only be achieved by government decision.’ Consultation and consensus, it was argued, ‘however desirable on questions of objectives will seldom produce positive action for administrative reform.’

The Victorian government was firm in its resolve to bring about a decentralised system, a system where the functions performed in the central office would become the responsibility of schools and regions. The Government’s view was that increased devolution and decentralisation were both desirable and necessary goals. Enshrined in the Westminster system is the obligation that governments are accountable to the people for

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the spending of public funds and that every Department that expends them is in turn accountable through the Minister to parliament. Devolution and decentralisation of authority could only proceed according to broad policies acceptable to government: ‘where decision-making is decentralised, measures to ensure accountability and observance of constraints must safeguard the ultimate responsibility of government.’

At the local level the *White Paper* stressed that added administrative responsibility would not be forced on schools or school councils that considered themselves to be unable or unwilling to accept additional responsibilities. The clear intention of the government was to empower schools and school councils to assume new responsibilities with support and advice to meet the new challenges that decentralisation would bring and acknowledgement that schools were community-based organisations.

The importance in the *White Paper* recognised that Victorian society had become more complex and multifaceted, and that changed systemic management structures were needed to serve the best interests of all students and not on structures that had primarily been established to serve the interests of administration and administrators. The new organisational provisions included (i) a corporate management approach at the senior administrative level and the establishment of a corporate Policy and Planning Unit (ii) devolution and decentralization of functions and responsibility wherever practicable at regional and school levels, with particular emphasis given to strengthening regional offices as administrative units; (iii) continued emphasis on school responsibility in curriculum development, within the context of state-wide core curriculum framework and guidelines; (iv)development of appropriate school review policies and procedures; (v) adoption of a

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teacher promotion system based predominantly on merit, with the provision of additional promotion opportunities in schools and (vi) opportunity for some school level involvement in staff appointments. The establishment of the Corporate Management Group required a move away from a traditional and hierarchical style of Departmental policy and decision-making towards corporate management techniques of successful boards and Commissions. The concept introduced a team approach to policy formulation and review while making provision for greater accountability. The Policy and Planning Unit existence was to support the needs of the Ministers and Corporate Management Group.

Increased responsibility was legislated to enable school councils to develop educational policy and curriculum, and in consultation and agreement with the school council, principals were required to prepare a school policy in consultation with teachers. School councils were given the option to be involved in the selection and appointment of principal class officers. Principals had the opportunity to influence the selection of senior teaching staff in their schools. It was a requirement that schools developed ‘acceptable’ methods of ensuring accountability both at the local level and relative to other levels within the Education Department and government. Essential to meeting accountability requirements was the publication and clear articulation of school policy and programming. A key element in assessing school performance and accountability was through school evaluation and review. School evaluation was to be supervised by the principal with professional support staff provided by the regions. Evaluation was to be a continuous process to monitor

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194 White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools, 20, Clause 5.2
195 White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools, 30, Clauses 5.25 and 5.26
196 White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools, 23, Clause 5.6
the extent to which objectives were achieved, to ascertain and facilitate remediation of any deficiencies, and to provide feedback for curriculum decision-making and review of objectives, with annual reports being made available to the school council and the regional office.\textsuperscript{197}

The principal as the educational leader and administrator was in a strong position to influence the course of education and its effectiveness. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that educational leadership should take precedence over seniority when selecting principals. As school councils had the option to become involved with principal selection, once appointed, the government position was that principals quite rightly should be able to have input into staff selection. The Government maintained a policy of making central appointments to schools, but this position would change later as further inroads were made into devolving staff selection to school principals.

While the changes at the school level as a consequence of decentralisation and some devolution of authority were profound, changes in the central administration also reflected government decentralist policy. Within the new structure the Director-General held the title as Chief Executive Officer and for a time continued to be the senior adviser to Ministers. The Director-General was responsible for broad policy development and forward planning. An Executive Director was to head each of four functional Divisions: Curriculum and Services, Personnel, Building and Administration and Finance, in addition to their policy role within the Corporate Management Group. The Deputy Director’s-General responsibility was to provide coordination across the four divisions and school operations. The role was also to monitor operations at regional and school levels with

\textsuperscript{197}White Paper on Strategies and Structures for Education in Victorian Government Schools, Clause 5.6, p.23.
particular responsibility for school evaluation and reviews.198

The Teachers Tribunal had long been a contentious group within the teaching service. Doubt had existed as to whether the Education Department or the Tribunal was the employer of teachers. The *White Paper* clarified the issue. The Education Department had some of the characteristics and functions attributed to an employer and in order to firm up the Department as the employer, the Teachers Tribunal was to be remodelled through a process of negotiation and conciliation prior to any adjudication settling the matter. Major change was considered to have been urgent.199

Where did the inspectorate and inspectors fit into the decentralised Department? The inspectorate was effectively snubbed. The title of inspector was to disappear from Department communication and literature with the release and implementation of the major initiatives that stemmed from the *White Paper*. There was no place in the new administrative schema of the Department for the long-held position that endured until this point in time for 128 years in various forms. It was acknowledged that inspectors had been engaged in a multiplicity of roles advising, supporting and encouraging teachers and principals and assessing the effectiveness of teachers and schools. Senior Education Officers were to assume responsibility for these tasks and would work as part of teams at regional level, teams that were made up of liaison officers and curriculum and special assistance consultants.200

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An assessment of two decades of an unsettled Education Department 1960s-1980s

Bill Connell has written that this period in Australian education ‘experienced a change more sweeping and significant’\(^{201}\) than at any other time in Australian history. Four major trends materialised that influenced the conduct, administration and commitment of education. Connell points out that the economics of education was a serious area of study overseas during the 1950s ‘principally in assessing the importance of education for the economic future of developing nations.’\(^{202}\) In Australia too, the focus on economics influenced education policy decisions during the period. During the 1970s economic factors increasingly took precedence in the minds of politicians and state administrators of education who made strident efforts to assess what contribution education could make towards advancing economic productivity. This thinking was a key factor in decisions taken to decentralise and downsize education Departments and moves to establish the self-managed school discussed in the chapters that follow.

An awareness of the significance of the ‘…sociology of knowledge in schooling, the concept that whatever counts as knowledge in the curriculum could be treated as a social product,’\(^{203}\) was an emergent trend in the 1960s. In much the same way as Frank Tate had led the initiative to move away from the teaching of facts in his New Education, a determination to pursue meaning beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge was a feature in curriculum development during the period.

The creation of Curriculum Frameworks during the 1980s was a manifest illustration that schools were given the opportunity to develop meaningful and pertinent curricula that


\(^{203}\) Connell, p.3.
had not been specifically predetermined by a central office. Guidelines about how to produce local curriculum content, covering the key learning areas, was presented in the Framework documents but it was left to schools to shape sequenced learning content. Ownership of curricula at the school level placed significant responsibility on teachers and schools to ensure that learning areas were properly developed and resourced. Emphasis on the teaching of social science was a core feature of curriculum planning in schools and required teachers to impart to students an intelligent understanding of contemporary social customs and behaviours. Teaching in the classroom required increased effort and commitment by teachers, as had been the case in Tate’s time as director.

A further trend placed emphasis on the educational process, the how and why of learning, rather than instructional teaching, or the transfer of facts. Characteristically, the instructional process involved the transfer of information to students from the teacher, reliance on textbooks and uniformity of method. Instructional teaching necessitated an ordered, formal classroom where the teacher shaped and directed the learning. In the educational process approach, there was a quantum shift from a focus on structured learning to a focus on meaning, the notion of inquiry learning where students became active participants in their learning. The process encouraged students to discover, seek meaning and express themselves confidently and evaluate and reflect on the information and ideas that they encountered. The educational process emphasised the quality of learning experiences and placed greater responsibility on a student’s active participation in their learning and for teachers to guide, advise and support the learner. The process begun during

204 Connell, p.7.
this period was in its infancy but grew to become Challenged-Based Learning\textsuperscript{205} much later.

Participative decision-making was a trend that had been slow to develop but by the 1980s, participation in the educative process by the whole community was encouraged in all Australian states.\textsuperscript{206} Active participation in decision-making came to mean more than attending committee meanings to plan fund-raising events. Rather, parents were encouraged to take an active interest in the school and promote its benefits to the wider local community, whilst paying due regard to the maintenance of school buildings and school gardens.

Connell cites two educational events that denoted efforts to introduce wider participation in Australian public education (i) the establishment in 1966 of a curriculum committee in Victoria which encouraged the development of school-based curricula and (ii) the Freedom and Authority declaration in 1970 by the Director-General of Education in South Australia which enabled school principals to act with greater freedom from central control than had previously been the case. As a consequence of these two actions moves to raise the level of participation in school affairs increased.\textsuperscript{207} School councils became major players in developing school policies, teacher unions contributed to educational policy development at the state level, the supervisory powers of the inspectorate declined and as

\textsuperscript{205} Challenge-Based learning (CBL) is an initiative introduced by Apple originally for use in K–12 Education but now used in higher education as well. It is a structured model for course content with a foundation in earlier strategies, such as collaborative problem-based learning. CBL offers general concepts from which students derive the challenges they will address. In addition, CBL encourages the use of web and mobile technologies, such as collaborative tools and wikis that are available to students but not often used in coursework. Challenge-based learning has had considerable success, hailed by the New Media Consortium as early as 2009 as one solution to the problem of a troubled public education system. Source: https://library.educause.edu/~/media/files/library/2012/1/eli7080.pdf.pdf

\textsuperscript{206} Connell, p.7.

interest in school-based curricula spread, the momentum for change grew. Administrative reform was inevitable as educational policy and administration was progressively subordinate to the dictates of politicians. This trend is developed in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

Questions to be answered in the narrative of this chapter have been twofold:

- To what extent was Frank Tate, the first Director of Education in Victoria (appointed in March 1902) able to reshape the functioning of both the Department and the inspectorate through to his retirement in 1928?

- What were the consequences for the Department and the inspectorate in the period post World War II (1945 -1979) when the birth rate in Victoria grew exponentially?

The purpose of the chapter has been to investigate the outcome of inquiries and reports that shaped the administration of the Education Department through the decades from 1872 to the early 1960s. The intention has not been simply to focus on inspectors and inspection. However, the future of inspection was inextricably linked to the cut and thrust of change in Department operations. The narrative of the chapter first tracked the work of Frank Tate in reshaping the Department and its administrative functions and his approach to teaching and learning, informed by both his own teaching experiences, his role as an inspector and later as Director of the Victorian Department of Education. His travels overseas to gain further knowledge of important developments and trends in education also informed his administrative style.

Frank Tate’s efforts to implement the recommendations of the Fink Royal Commission on Technical Education 1899-1901 were considerable. Tate single-handedly directed
change in an Education Department that had previously met the educational needs of colonial society to the turn of the century but was not in a healthy position to fulfil changing community attitudes and expectations that were emergent during the 1880s and 1890s.

In terms of thematic development of the narrative, it was necessary to set the context upon which the following chapters address the issues of decentralisation and devolved administrative authority to schools. The Report of the Committee on State Education in Victoria 1960 was a significant report in that it addressed administrative changes across all aspects of Education Department operations. However, the Committee acknowledged that decentralisation would be trialled, in a limited way, so that an appraisal of the viability of the concept to meet the requirements of effective administration in the Department of Education in an expanding, post-war education system could be assessed. The Department would still control the rudder; inspection would remain a necessary link between schools and the administration. However, responsibility for curriculum development at the local level was mandated and principals could provide input to teacher performance appraisal by the late 1970s-early 1980s. Regions would take up responsibility for some central functions such as managing financial matters and the delivery of some specialist services.

The post-war population boom, followed by a wave of immigration, necessitated the building of new schools, particularly in the metropolitan area, and a more highly qualified teaching service. Teacher unions were motivated to achieve better outcomes for both teachers and students, especially making demands for smaller class sizes. Criticism of a seemingly lack-lustre response from the Education Department and Government to the issues that mattered to teachers and the wider community on the part of the VSTA,
aggravated an already shaky relationship between teachers and their employer. Inspection was targeted with the demand for the abolition of a weakened and outdated and regulatory inspectorate.

Commonwealth government involvement in education increased late in the period covered by this chapter, particularly with respect to funding and grants to state education systems. The Karmel Report released in 1973 made it abundantly clear that whilst the Commonwealth would not intrude into how states ran their education Departments, future funding would be dependent on changes to the way states accounted for increased funding. New compliance rules regarding funding and the delivery of education to schools and students required state authorisation to commit to decentralisation and the devolution of responsibility to schools. The process to establish a decentralised Department of Education and the accountability strategies that were needed, post-inspection, are examined in the following two chapters.
Figure 4: Education Department restructure 1980

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Chapter Five

The changing of the guard: accountability post-inspectors

Time may well show…that the silent majority will require that schools be controlled by those with genuine claims to educational authority. The inspectors believe that it is only a matter of time before the public demands their reinstatement.¹

Ron Ikin, President of the Association of Inspectors of Primary Schools.

The centralist administrative structure of the Victorian Department of Education was progressively unable to respond to demands for change to the administration of education and the discontinuation of what had become an outmoded inspectorial system. Moves for change in education that were pursued by teachers, their unions, the public and subsequently Victorian parliamentarians had originated in a process that began in the 1960s. As a precursor to a new accountability, strategies were put in place for a decentralised, self-managed school system, discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter and Chapter Six trace the major restructure of the Victorian Education Department from 1980 through to 2012. The discussion examines how the restructuring of the Department resulted in a quantum shift from a heavily centralised bureaucracy to a decentralised administrative arrangement in which regions (Regionalisation) were set up across the state. Lindsay Thompson, the Minister for Education (May 1967-May 1979) had overseen the introduction of Regions from 1971. This chapter examines how successive state governments, Labor and Liberal, contributed to the devolution of decision making to schools during the period 1979-2012, refinements that were made by the political parties to

embed decentralised policies in the evolution of self-managed schools in the state education system and questions whether the concept of completely self-governing schools was perhaps a step too far.

For 132 years, inspectors had been the eyes and ears of the Victorian Department of Education. Inspectors had been the means by which the Department had kept schools operationally accountable. In essence, the inspectorate was a safekeeping mechanism, monitoring school performance and the implementation of Department policies. The Department had used inspectors to collect enrolment information, provide details with respect to curriculum delivery and to prepare reports following each inspection. Inspectors were the link between the Department and all schools in each inspector’s district. The inspectorate was secure and familiar to schools and teachers in that it had been accepted and kept intact over time.

Nevertheless, as Ikin noted, inspectors had often been controversial figures, particularly when their presence intruded into what teachers saw as their own professional domain. As the role of the inspector assumed increased authority, inspectors provided a link in the official accountability chain between schools and the Minister for Education. Inspectors were strategic players in the disciplining of teachers. This power gave them an aura of authority. When the role also included that of the assessment of teachers for promotion purposes, the very future of teachers was seen to be in their hands.2 Problems had arisen with the growth of the number of schools and teachers, particularly following the period of rapid growth after the Second World War with no corresponding increase in the number of inspectors. Increasing the number of inspectors may have improved the number of school

visitation in any year but at the time this was not considered to be a priority for the Department.

In a decentralised administrative environment, many previously centralised administrative responsibilities were handed to regional directors in their designated regions. These regional directors were to oversee new accountability measures that had been devolved to school principals and school councils in the void that was eventually left by the dismantling of the inspectorial system. As Pardy and Preston noted, ‘…centralised administration became inconsistent with the geographically dispersed interests of Victorians.’

Victoria’s population had boomed in the decades following the Second World War. The Department of Education had become top-heavy and was slow to respond to the ever-changing needs of society and schooling. The old administrative model was simply outdated. In this new paradigm, principals were appointed by local school selection panels. Panels were set up to include school council representatives, teachers, principals, teacher union representatives and an officer appointed by the regional office. In the decentralised model, the principal assumed greater authority for decision-making in all aspects of school operations and in this sense, assumed many of the duties of former inspectors.

By the time fifty-five inspectors, and thirty retired ‘old timers’ met for the last time as a formal association on 26 November 1982, the movement away from the inspectorial system had been an evolutionary process beset by uncertainty. That the inspectorial system had survived for as long as it did, reflected the resistance and inertia to change inherent in the

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heavily centralised bureaucracy that characterised the Victorian Department of Education.

Clearly change was needed. Shifting accountability on to schools through a process of decentralisation, or devolution of authority, was a trend that had been occurring overseas. Would this be the panacea for change in Victoria? Could change be left to those who had managed the system as it was? Ultimately, change would be driven from outside the Department, directed by politicians guided by the differing political ideologies of their parties. Decentralisation involved control away from the central bureaucracy in Melbourne, to nine Regional Offices. However, new, systemic accountability requirements evolved along with progress in decentralisation and self-management. The critical question of this chapter concerns the effectiveness of the new accountability measures. Would Ikin’s prediction that it would be ‘…only a matter of time before the public demands their [the inspectors] return’⁴ prove to be correct?

**Decentralisation and self-managed schools in Victoria**

Decentralisation in education describes the process of delegating or devolving authority to local schools for the distribution and use of resources provided by the government and Department of Education. Key issues to consider in the degree to which the many aspects of bureaucracy could be decentralised included administration, finance and curriculum planning.⁵ The need to strike an effective balance between the central authority of the Department of Education and decentralised schools would be paramount for achieving effective system accountability. In the Victorian state government school system, indeed, nationwide, few significant decisions had ever been made at the school level. Teachers

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were assigned to schools on a formula based on average class sizes. There was no selection of principals or teachers at the local level. All non-staffing resources were also allocated by formula, whether the school needed them or not. The curriculum was centrally determined and there was a regime of inspection. There was little involvement of the community in substantive local decision-making issues. No funds of any kind were decentralised from the central administration in Melbourne to schools, and any cash at the school level was raised locally by the voluntary efforts of parents. Following the trend of change in education systems overseas, Victoria and other Australian states were set to make fundamental changes to the operational administration of the Department of Education and the accountability framework in schooling.

Josef Zajda, Associate Professor of Education at the Australian Catholic University, and David Gamage, Professor of Education, University of Newcastle, observe that decentralisation of schools had been practised in North America for some considerable time. In fact, in Massachusetts in 1647, the General Court Act required each town to establish a school. School districts had become operational in British colonies in North America from the mid-seventeenth century, but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that districts were given the legal right to operate schools and levy school taxes. In the process, the individual school district became the ‘national norm.’ Much later, school-based management systems were established in England, Wales and New Zealand. In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), in the mid-1960s, stakeholders were successful in bringing about the governance of schools by devolving authority to representatives of

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6 Zajda, Josef and Gamage, David., Decentralisation and School Based Management and Quality, p.(xv).
7 Zajda, Josef and Gamage, David., Decentralisation and School Based Management and Quality, p.(xvii).
teachers, parents and the community who were to serve on school boards or school committees. These school boards were finally established in all ACT schools in 1974.

Other countries that embraced a self-managing system included Spain (1976), Taiwan (1987) and Hong Kong (1991). Some Canadian provinces such as Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta set up school-based management in the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, South Africa and some former Soviet Bloc countries followed the trend to introduce some form of self-management through decentralisation, although in those countries a fair degree of central control remained.

By 1976, moves to begin decentralisation in both Victoria and South Australia had occurred with both states having established mandatory, corporate governing bodies in their schools. Thus, not long before the demise of the inspectorial system, major changes to the education system were in the wind. Strong moves towards decentralisation began in 1979 under the Hamer Liberal Government. The process accelerated under the Cain Labor Government from 1983 and reached its zenith with the election of the Kennett Liberal Government in late 1992. By 1998, all of the eight Australian states had established their own school-based management systems with parliamentary legislative support.

The Hamer Liberal Government 1979-1982

In the late autumn of 1979, Alan Hunt, as the newly appointed Minister for Education in the re-elected Hamer Liberal Government and the Assistant Minister Norman Lacey, initiated a policy review of education. Hunt’s resolve was to rationalise the organisation of the

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8 Zajda, Joseph and Gamage, *David; Decentralisation and School Based Management and Quality*, pp.(xviii-xix).
Education Department. He aimed to ‘…establish enhanced lines of communication’\(^9\) between the Ministry and schools, so that the Department became ‘…more responsive to community needs and inputs.’\(^{10}\) Hunt found that there were a multitude of committees. Consequently, ‘replication existed on a grand scale.’\(^{11}\) A consultative committee made up of public, commercial and industrial representatives was established. Submissions were invited from the public to assist in the formulation of a *White Paper*, the purpose being to outline the aims and objectives for education in the state. The *White Paper* was presented to the Victorian parliament in December 1980. Questions arose concerning the release of the document so close to Christmas, which prevented proper scrutiny by the parliament. Whether the timing of the release of the paper was a strategic ploy by the Minister is uncertain, but the lack of time did not allow educational administrators to fully come to terms with role clarity and the educational ideology outlined in the document. At best, the paper was considered to be an ambiguous report on the state of affairs that existed at the time. The review had been instigated at ministerial level and not by officers in the Education Department. Therefore, according to Professor Reynold Macpherson, education policy making had been moved out of the control of the Department. Macpherson, whose research interests include accountability, institutional policy and educative leadership, declared that Dr Lawrence Shears, Director General of Education at the time, ‘…had lost


agenda-setting control …the Ministers were systematically seeking the counsel and service of others.’

When the Department’s response to the *White Paper*, ‘Statement of Options’ was released, the recommendations in the paper were considered by the Minister to have lacked public input. According to Macpherson, what emerged from participation by the public in the review was no more than:

> an exercise in symbolic politics …to preclude from debate ideas about a change in the power structure. Arrangements, which might become issues of potential conflict, are submerged in the rhetoric of efficiency, responsibility, accountability and involvement.¹⁴

Thus, the intervention in education reform by both Hunt and Lacey effectively usurped the authority of Department officials, by replacing past practice with political, managerial concepts by the government appointed minister (*Ministerialisation*). The Premier, Rupert Hamer, redefined the role of the Minister for Education to become that of an executive director, in an active managerial role. Allied with this move was the recruitment of senior managers of high calibre. Ministers of government Departments reallocated power to key individuals in order to implement government policy. With the political relegation or demotion of existing senior officers in the Department of Education, the potential for conflict simmered.¹⁵

Reforms to the operation of the Education Department were finalised early in the spring of 1981 and the process of reorganising the Department began. The first casualty was the Director-General of Education, Dr Lawrence (Laurie) Shears. His position was replaced by

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the newly created title of Coordinator General of Education. A Corporate Management Group (CMG), made up from leading educational administrators of the time was formed, and given responsibility for the overall strategic direction of the Department.

The Corporate Management Group (CMG) had its origins in the organisations of large corporations in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century. The essential feature of corporate management entails the principle that all staff and clients should be able to see the organisation as a corporate whole and understand how each person’s role in the organisation fits into its overall aims, objectives and operational performance. In other words it is concerned with ‘…optimising outputs and improving performance.’16 As sociologist, Professor Michael Pusey argues, ‘What governments want most is less complexity and more governability, i.e. control of a more generalized kind, or in other words, a mind of guaranteed obedience in advance of particular commands.’17 In the Victorian education context of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Hunt’s management group (CMG) was responsible for the implementation of Department policies, objectives and the allocation of resources to implement its plans to achieve stated objectives. Executive directorates were created to manage the areas of administration and finance, personnel, buildings and curriculum development. A policy and planning division was set up to support the work of the CMG and the ministers. However, as Macpherson asserted, the group did not have the final say with respect to policy design. Rather, it became a reference

group for politicians.\textsuperscript{18}

In an even more radical move, the government legislated, at the end of 1981, to disband the teaching divisions (Primary, Secondary and Technical) and to remove the statutory bodies (The Committee of Classifiers and the Teachers’ Tribunal).\textsuperscript{19} Hunt and Lacy sought and obtained the support of the Labor opposition. Although there were proposals to give considerable power to school councils, opposition from teacher unions and central administrators meant that little happened in this regard. It proved remarkably difficult to reduce the power and influence of the central office of the Department in Melbourne.

The lead-up to the demise of school inspectors also went hand-in-hand with this substantial restructuring of the Department. Decentralising the operation of the Department with the formation of twelve administrative regions across the state was a key element in this demise. Responsibility for the surveillance of schools was devolved in these regions, each with their own decentralised bureaucracy. The motivation to establish a decentralised education system centred on a desire to

\ldots improve overall service delivery, customer satisfaction, citizen participation and democratisation, and accountability—and with all that, the belief was that decentralization could help to improve the overall quality of education.\textsuperscript{20}

By mid-January 1982, the twelve regional directors to head the regions were finalised. The appointments were made by the Governor-in-Council, with the approval of Cabinet, rather than the Public Service Board. These appointments were a break with precedent

and further evidence of political intervention in shaping education, aligned to government objectives.²¹

By this stage, there were many displaced salaried and tenured former inspectors. Some of these had retired, but those who remained were required to submit to a selection process in which there were fewer positions than people available to fill them. Selection panels set up in each of the regions were responsible for the selection of senior education officers. The difficulty was how to select the best applicants, mindful of the need to place former inspectors in the new regime. Moreover, adapting to the new role proved difficult for some appointees. Senior Education Officers (SEOs) did not have the same authority or influence that inspectors once enjoyed. Where conflict arose in the selection process of SEOs within the selection processes adopted by each of the Regional selection panels, disputes were referred to the central office of the Department in Melbourne for resolution.

One example that illustrates differences in the role of SEOs and inspectors was with teacher assessment. Whereas inspectors carried significant authority in the conduct of their duties, SEOs understood that it was the principal who was the responsible officer on all matters pertaining to the school. When a request was made by a teacher for a performance assessment, it was the principal’s responsibility to form the interview panel and invite the local SEO to join the assessment panel. Principals convened all aspects of the interview and assessment process. Many former inspectors, if appointed as an SEO, had difficulty adjusting to their changed circumstances.

²¹ Bob Lingard in Reforming Education in Hard Times (1992) noted that in addition to the processes of decentralisation and devolution, processes of centralisation and recentralisation were also at work. And, in the name of decentralisation the centre asserts or retains control over the setting of broad policy objectives such as the determination of curriculum, the allocation of resources to individual schools and the auditing of schools to ensure that central objectives are carried out efficiently and effectively.
By the time of the Victorian state election on 3 April 1982, the politically driven motivation for change in the Department had succeeded to the extent that there had been a restructuring and repositioning of the functioning of the Department. In effect, a ‘new’ centralism replaced former versions of central control. Macpherson declared that Victoria had ‘…entered a new phase of re-centralisation and symbolic localism.’

Although overt strategies were put in place to change ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the operation of the Department, efforts to devolve authority away from the centre amounted to little more than tokenism. According to Macpherson, Alan Hunt, and later Robert Fordham in the Cain Government, had allocated tasks to the regions which were impossible to achieve - tasks that included management and control responsibilities in an education system where teachers, during the previous decade, had united to dismantle such procedures.

Furthermore, regional office staff were expected to take up extensive responsibilities in schools, while at the same time resources were cut from regional infrastructure, severely limiting the effectiveness of devolved responsibilities. Authority rested with the Ministers, and not with Department administrators.

Despite a token approach taken by government to decentralise education in the three years leading up to the state election of 1982, Alan Hunt had almost single-handedly transformed the management of Victoria’s school system. Hunt had been given the education portfolio by the government to bring about reforms that Lindsay Thompson, the former Minister, was unable to realise. All of the Education Department’s top administrators had lost their jobs, some to be appointed later to positions in the Regional offices. Many senior bureaucrats simply vacated their posts, not to be re-hired or heard of.

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again in the reshaped administration. In response to the requirements of his portfolio, Hunt had robustly set about the task of reforming the Department, to cut extravagance and confusion in the manner in which the central office had managed its affairs, particularly with respect to central staffing levels and policy development. The impact of Hunt’s reform of the Department was felt by schools across the state and no doubt contributed to the defeat of the Liberal Government in April 1982. However, the foundation stone upon which to build the next phase of devolved systemic accountability had been put firmly in position.

The Cain and Kirner Labor Governments 1982-1992

In March 1982, a Labor Government led by John Cain was elected, promising to replace the 'token' devolutionary reforms of its predecessors with a thoroughly decentralised system. There was to be much stronger emphasis on the regions and school councils. A State Board of Education was established to provide a strong alternative non-Departmental source of advice to the Minister and thus counter the influence of central administrators in Melbourne. The function of regional boards was to be reversed so that, rather than being instruments of the central office in Melbourne conveying centrally determined programs and services closer to schools, the boards were to become much more ‘…responsive to the needs of the schools, with their major role being that of servicing and assisting schools.’

Within a framework of central regulations, school councils were given major new powers. Legislation in 1984 gave them the authority to take up a pivotal role in determining and implementing school policy to: (i) develop school improvement plans; (ii) determine curriculum objectives and the use of school resources and (iii) appoint the school principal.

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23 Ministerial Papers 1-6, Issued by the Victorian Minister for Education, for Public Information and Discussion, Number 5: Regional Boards, 1984.
In the hype of the early months of the Victorian Labor Government, the Minister for Education and the minister responsible for restructuring the Department Robert Fordham, outlined the government’s resolve in moving accountability to local school communities, declaring:

The Government is confident that school councils, principals and teachers will see this change as providing an historic opportunity for enhanced professional effectiveness; providing shorter lines of communication; real local responsibility and accountability; and greater educational effectiveness through parent and community support, both psychological and material, for agreed policies.\footnote{Ministerial Papers 1-6, Issued by the Victorian Minister for Education, for Public Information and Discussion, Number 3: The State Board of Education, 1983.}

The election of a new government also provided the opportunity for the three teacher unions to have direct access to the new Minister. The Labor Party’s pre-election campaign had targeted teachers and their unions in order to win government. Representatives from each of the unions were automatically allocated positions on all consultative and policy-making working parties and committees. From the earliest days as Minister for Education, Robert Fordham announced that a review of industrial relations in the education sector would be instigated and reforms resulting from the review would be implemented. Meanwhile, new procedures were put in place, aligned with union calls for change and promises made before the election.

Following the review, reforms included the introduction of needs-based staffing and budget allocations to accelerate cyclic maintenance in government schools. With the release of six Ministerial discussion papers, the Labor Government brought in changes to the selection and appointment of school principals, the selection criteria for teachers and other more general provisions that dealt with community engagement and consultation, as well as school council responsibilities. The Ministerial papers provided ‘…condensed statements of
democratic symbolism and promises about the future in Victorian state education, and were intended to redirect and manage knowledge about decentralisation and education administration. The language used in the papers was consistent with Labor social democratic values and, as Macpherson noted, the result was that Liberal ideology of the Hunt period was ‘…smothered by the rhetoric of the left.’

Of significance during the Cain years and the Kirner Government, which followed, was the release in March 1985 of the Ministerial Review of Post-compulsory Schooling, chaired by Jean Blackburn. Blackburn was an advocate of the critical importance of good quality teaching and resources in shaping children’s’ lives. She had a strong commitment to public values and was able ‘to express significant ideas in a lucid and inspiring way’…a profound feminist thinker of her time. She was a secondary teacher and in 1969 she was appointed as a consultant to the Committee of Enquiry into South Australian Education. The 1985 Ministerial Review of Post-compulsory Schooling was more commonly referred to as The Blackburn Report. In the two-volume report forty-five recommendations were made. Foremost among the recommendations was the plan to establish the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), a two-year certificate marking the completion of secondary education. The report presented the case for a radical restructuring of secondary schooling. The curricula and structure of the Victorian Certificate of Education were designed to promote an increase in the number of students staying on to Year 12 and provide a broad education that catered for all students, whether they moved on to higher education or not. The report

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28 The VCE was introduced in 1987 and became operational from 1990.
highlighted the fact that significant numbers of young people who did not remain at school, endured prolonged unemployment after leaving school at the end of the compulsory years of schooling -Year 10 or at the age of sixteen. Later, the lack of educational prerequisites hindered the attempt of mature age students to enter post-school education or training programs.

The Blackburn Report argued that the Higher School Certificate (HSC), the forerunner to the VCE, had offered limited curriculum options for students, hence the need for change. The HSC, previously offered at Years 11 and 12, was deemed to have been largely irrelevant for those not proceeding to higher or tertiary education. The report advanced the notion that the post-compulsory curricula should necessarily be responsive to the voluntary nature of student participation. As a consequence, the VCE should make provision for a wider range of study options, rather than be restricted to options that had been modelled on the general curriculum of the compulsory years\(^{29}\) (Years 7-10). The release of the report and the introduction of its major findings also brought about the abolition of the distinction between technical and secondary schools. The Victorian Secondary Teachers’ Association (VSTA) membership, who were to be affected by the ramifications of the *Blackburn Report*, described the report to its members as ‘…everything you didn’t want and more.’\(^{30}\)

The Blackburn Report was somewhat controversial for its time. The Education Department embarked on a new order of curriculum development away from the traditional structure of curriculum content. Instead, a Social Education framework, was developed which placed emphasis on the learning process, rather than the teaching of specific subject


content. The framework provided schools with recommendations to develop comprehensive programming and drew upon social studies, social science, history, geography, politics, psychology and the humanities in general.\textsuperscript{31} The freeing up of the traditional focus on curricula content, towards curricula where the focus was on the learner and his/her needs, was perceived by some as an abrogation of the conventional approach to the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

The Labor Government’s policy platform in pressing on with a changed social formula was clearly evident in Ministerial Paper No. 6 -\textit{Curriculum Development and Planning in Victoria (1984)}, the release of \textit{Curriculum Frameworks P-12} in 1986 (discussed in Chapter Six) and the Ministerial Blackburn Review. The radical overhaul of curricula was in line with the decentralisation policy and would not be reversed by governments that followed.\textsuperscript{32}

Throughout their reforms, Labor’s determination was to establish a responsive bureaucracy that focused on service and assistance to schools. Regional offices, that had been established while Alan Hunt was Minister in a Liberal government, had essentially become intermediaries between the central office and local school communities. Fordham and his Labor colleagues increased autonomy and accountability in the management of school affairs to schools themselves. The restricted authority of the regions was further weakened during the years Labor was in office. Fordham, like Hunt, cut resources to the Regions, inhibiting their ability to effectively support schools, while appreciating the need to maintain the regional office structures across the state.

\textsuperscript{31} The teaching of history and geography to primary school children was stressed in curriculum documents in 1901-02 and again in 1933. In 1954 social studies courses moved away from the teaching of one or two subjects to the exploration of themes. This type of planning and thinking gave rise to the social studies program Society in View in the early 1980s.

Alan Hunt and Robert Fordham were similar in their views regarding administrative change, in that they both worked to prescribe the administrative arrangements as key components in their Ministerial portfolios. Where they differed was with respect to the tactics used to achieve the changes they sought. On the one hand, Hunt, with the support of Norman Lacy, had utilised ministerial authority to force change in what had become an inefficient and ineffective Department. Fordham, on the other hand, supported the need for reform while in Opposition, but when in government, he set up a Ministerial Review Committee, made up entirely of teacher union and parent representatives to make recommendations for reform. Fordham’s approach was more consultative, or at least it was intended to appear so.

John Cain resigned as premier in August 1990 following the collapse in his political support. Joan Kirner, Cain’s deputy, was elected premier. Kirner held the office of Premier until the Labor Government’s defeat at the state election in October 1992. Her time as premier was fraught with financial difficulties. State finances were on the threshold of insolvency with a state budget deficit unsustainably high, and the business community and public morale at very low ebb. However, Kirner held to the government’s education policies. As Minister for Education, Kirner directed the phased introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), a reduction in class sizes and significant increases in school retention rates. John Cain and Joan Kirner began education reform initiatives that were taken up and extended by Kennett, and for which Kennett would
eventually receive credit. Kirner spent the greater part of her two years as premier working to stabilise her unpopular government.\textsuperscript{33}

**The Kennett Liberal Government and self-managing schools 1993-1999**

The next major change in education came with a landslide election result for the Liberal Party led by Jeffrey Gibb Kennett on 3 October 1992. This election victory ended a decade of Labor rule. With State coffers in a parlous situation as a consequence of recession during the two years that Joan Kirner was Premier of Victoria (1990-1992), Kennett and his Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, embarked on a reform agenda that had severe cost-cutting on the one hand as its modus operandi. On the other hand, it was associated with major reforms in health, transport, industrial relations, local government and education. Kennett’s ministry was ‘…fast on action, but notoriously secretive and contemptuous when challenged.’\textsuperscript{34} Don Hayward was appointed Minister for Education.

Hayward began a determined campaign to impose his own educational philosophy on the Victorian public school system. His outlook was based on such ideologically resonant catchphrases as ‘accountability’, 'quality' and 'individuality'\textsuperscript{35} and was implemented by a ‘crash, or crash through’ policy of great force. Within months of coming to office,
...Hayward was to earn a reputation amongst his critics as a ruthless and regressive Minister determined to wipe out all vestiges of liberal-socialist practice in an education system which, by and large, had felt very comfortable with the Cain-Kirner regime. 36

Hayward's bold ideology with respect to education reform arose from personal factors in his own life and career. He had a strong sense of the importance of inspirational teaching and the merit of first-class schooling, a view that was shaped out of his experiences as a child during the 1929-1932 Depression. 37 Hayward's background in corporate management (he was a former senior executive for General Motors) produced in the Minister

...contempt for the entrenched powers of the union movement, a disregard for featherbedded bureaucrats and an uncharacteristic (for a politician) desire to get the job done quickly, firmly and without fuss. 38

In the early months of 1993, the Kennett Government moved to close schools that were considered to be financially unviable as one of its first priorities was to control the escalating costs associated with the education budget. Years of systemic neglect by successive governments, Liberal and Labor, had resulted in school buildings that were either substandard or in need of significant refurbishment. Many of these schools had been built after the end of the Second World War. The baby boom that followed caused the need for housing beyond metropolitan Melbourne and schools had to be erected quickly. These school buildings were built either using light timber, weatherboards, or Besser concrete blocks and were considered at the time to be only temporary. The buildings were not meant to last for an indefinite period of time. Substantial brick buildings that had been erected in the nineteenth century were also in need of significant maintenance. School closures,

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37 Gough, J and Taylor, T., ‘Crashing through…’, p.70.
38 Gough, J and Taylor, T., ‘Crashing through…’, p.70.
school amalgamations and funding to upgrade schools were strategies the Kennett Government embarked upon to address systemic accommodation difficulties. The government declared that there were a number of schools where enrolments were too small to sustain a program suited to the needs of society in the late twentieth century. In an attempt to review the viability of these smaller schools, and to rein in expenditure in education, a decision was taken to close or merge 300 schools reducing the total number to 1700.\textsuperscript{39} As a consequence of severe budget cuts between 1992 and 1995, $400 million dollars was cut from the education budget.

Linked to the decision to close schools action was taken to downsize teacher numbers. A series of ‘departure packages’ were offered as incentives for teachers and administrative staff to retire early. These one-off payments were designed to attract sufficient incentive for employees to leave the teaching service. This initiative reduced the workforce by some 11,000 Department employees across the state. Whilst downsizing teacher numbers, the position of Senior Education Officer (SEO) was also reassessed. District Liaison Principals (DLPs) replaced SEOS. The role of those appointed to the newly created positions was to support clusters or groups of schools moving to self-management. Some officers appointed to DLP positions had been former SEOS. Others were appointed on the basis of successful school leadership experience, or from among those moving out of senior central office positions when staffing in the central office of the Department was trimmed. These were turbulent times in education as well as in other government departments.

Whilst decisions were taken to address greater efficiency in public education and manage the crisis in state finances, a package of reforms to restructure the education

system, yet again, was initiated in late 1992 and early 1993. The program, known as
Schools of the Future, was launched by Minister Hayward. A new Directorate of School
Education (DSE) was headed by Geoff Spring, an education administrator, who had been
contracted to join the directorate from the Northern Territory Education Department. This
program of reform was launched at the same time as the new government introduced
measures to balance the budget and reduce state debt.

A key policy element that underpinned the restructure in education (and in the broader
development of economic policy in Canberra) during the Kennett years, was the application
of neo-liberal economic conventions. This philosophy was evident in the drive to self-
managing/self-governing schools in Victoria, and Australia, as had occurred in the United
Kingdom, New Zealand, and charter schools in the United States and Canada. Whilst there
were significant differences in how structural adjustment policies were adopted, adapted,
and even named (Economic Rationalism in Australia, New Public Administration in New
Zealand and the United Kingdom), the common theme was the privatisation of the public
sector. In particular: (i) a reduction in government’s role in public service provisions
(outsourcing through tenders); (ii) downsizing and decentralising of the public sector; (iii)
the imposition of the strongest feasible framework of competition and accountability in
public sector activity; (iv) explicit standards and measures of performance and clear
definition of goals, targets or indicators of success, preferably in quantitative forms; (v)
greater emphasis on output controls with a stress on results, not processes;

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40 Neoliberalism is a policy model of social studies and economics that transfers control of
economic factors to the private sector from the public sector. Neoliberalism Definition | Investopedia http://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/neoliberalism.asp#ixzz48mi9dpN5/
(vi) reduction in the self-regulating powers of the professions and (vii) on new forms of corporate governance.41

The *Schools of the Future* represented a most radical move towards devolution and competition in areas previously governed through public control of education, occurring in Victoria, in the period 1993-1999.42

The inflexibility of the Education Department’s structures had made it unresponsive to the relative needs of students and teachers. In this climate principals had been working in a highly centralised system with what had been a stable and centrally controlled curriculum. By 1990 moves to decentralised the administration of education had progressively moved to a point where successive governments had legislated for greater participation and input into how schools were managed. It was expected by governments, and the Education Department that consensus in decision-making was to be the way forward in determining the future of education. Key stake-holders, such as teachers, principals and teacher unions were to be consulted. Previously there had been little opportunity at the school level to influence the way resources were allocated to schools and within each school. There had been little need for principals to plan ahead. Professional development for school leaders had not been considered a high priority by the Education Department. 43By 1990 schools were working in a highly decentralised setting: hierarchical decision-making was

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Continuous change at all levels of the education system became the norm. The agenda for change was moving at what seemed break-neck speed with little time to consolidate the changes that were being implemented by the government. Strategic planning and a capacity to take charge of the changing education climate seemed to many schools overwhelming, both within the state and at the federal level. Teacher unions had come to accept the changing education climate and had been participants in establishing new management styles and teacher welfare and working conditions. However, with the election of the Kennett Government little time had been allocated for consultation. Rather, the change agenda for education and the wider public service was enforced by government. *Schools of the Future* was evidence of strong government determination to implement change.

Entry into the self-management program of the *Schools of the Future* in the Kennett era was coordinated by the Department of Education. To expect that all schools were ready to enter the program and to take on new accountability protocols at the same time, was unrealistic. Initially, not all schools were at an adequate enough operational level to deal with such fundamental changes such as controlling all grant monies, staff selection and the employment of ancillary staff. Schools were placed in Intake groups until all schools were familiarised with the new administrative procedures. Placing schools in manageable sized Intake groups enabled Department staff to comprehensively train principals and office staff. The program covered both computer-based financial software packages and administrative software training for principals.

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The *Schools of the Future* initiative had four key elements: (i) a Curriculum and Standards Framework introduced for all year levels from Preparatory to Year 12, developed by the then Board of Studies; (ii) about ninety per cent of the school education budget distributed to the coalface, so that each school had a global budget from which to manage all areas of recurrent expenditure, including the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff; (iii) downsizing of regional and central offices; and (iv) the local selection of teachers.

A particular characteristic of *Schools of the Future* was the way in which the initiative moved quickly through structural reform to address issues related to teaching and learning. From early 1993, data aggregated from Department software programs installed on secure school servers, enabled administrative data, personnel files and student learning outcomes to be forwarded back to the Department at predetermined periods across the school year. Confirmed school enrolment data was required by the last school day in February each year (census day). Once school enrolments were confirmed, the Department could determine the size of a school’s annual grant. Data was also required before the close of each school year and at other times when requested. Annual teacher judgments about student learning were aggregated by class and year level. Student achievement levels, tracked over time, enabled learning trend data to be collected and used by schools and the Department to assess the quality of teaching and whether student skill levels were reaching targeted milestones.

Through the school review process, detailed below, areas of achievement were acknowledged but curriculum issues, requiring closer attention, were identified and used by each school as the focus for improvement. Agreed strategies to address concerns were formulated from recommendations arising from the school review and then written up in the school charter, later known as the school strategic plan. Efforts to bring heightened
autonomy to school operations and the government’s efforts to rein in expenditure were endorsed by the electorate with the re-election of the Kennett Government. For the period of successive Kennett Governments, there was an absence of teacher union unrest.

**Self-governing schools—where angels fear to tread! 19 May 1998**

Whilst decentralised self-management of schools was well received and successful, the concept of self-governance was quite another. The concept of self-governance is underpinned by the assumption that greater autonomy will lead to improved educational outcomes, with responsibilities devolved to governing bodies comprising the representatives of relevant stakeholders in schools while operational management is devolved to the principal. As Tony Bush (University of Leicester, UK) and David Gamage (University of Newcastle, Australia) stated, ‘…the final decade of the twentieth century saw a major shift to self-governance for schools in many countries…England, Wales, New Zealand and parts of the USA, Canada and Spain.’

The Kennett Government’s attempt to introduce the notion of educational privatisation was a controversial one. The concept proved to be divisive in the public education system. The decision taken by the Department for all schools to become self-managing was ultimately an inclusive process of ‘one in, all in,’ although it did not start out that way. Traditionally, the provision of state education had been premised on the need to provide a common and equitable experience to prepare all learners for their later economic, political and social responsibilities in a democratic society, and was funded primarily by

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Privatisation in the education context is based on the market provision of education in which families can shop around for the school that best meets the individual needs of their children. Privatisation in education fosters competition between schools, rather than the broader public goals for social and democratic participation in society. Full-scale privatisation for some schools judged to be ready to participate in the self-governing initiative, was divisive from the outset and raised the indignation of principals, teachers, parents and teacher unions.

Late in the second and final term of the Kennett Government, 1996-1999, and consistent with the government’s economic rationalist philosophies, a program of self-governing schools was legislated in the Victorian Parliament on 19 May 1998, presented as the logical end product of the Schools of the Future program. Government efforts to deregulate the public school system, tantamount to dismantling it, had been signposted early in the government’s second term in office when the government announced its program of establishing self-governing schools.

Schools that elected to join the self-governing schools program were required to submit an application to the Department for consideration to join the initiative. If selected, schools could establish school councils with representatives from local businesses, who had agreed to sponsor the school, in addition to representation from parents, teachers and the school principal. The school council of a self-governing school had the power to hire and

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46 Economic rationalism has been applied to education with the claim that schools will become more efficient and profitable. Economic rationalism in education has been subject to extreme controversy and debate, particularly during the Kennett era.
48 Only 50 of about 1600 schools agreed to enter the program.
fire a principal, teachers and other staff.\textsuperscript{49} Staffing levels in a self-governing school, and the level of qualification of teachers employed, were determined by the amount of sponsorship and other funds that could be raised by a school council to supplement the government grant allocated to each school. Salaries paid to principals and high-performing teachers could be paid at levels above state awards, providing the school had sufficient funds to do so. Schools in the program could also establish themselves as specialist centres, or centres of excellence, in curriculum areas such as science or music where a particular specialty was apparent. In effect, these schools would opt out of the state school system. By borrowing funds, raising parental fees, hiring out teachers to other schools, and buying and selling school premises, wealthier schools would gain significant financial and capital growth at the expense of their poorer counterparts.

Placing increased accountability onto schools through self-governance was met with considerable outcry from parents, teachers, professional associations and principals. Apart from the few schools that expressed interest in self-government, most school principals and school councils stipulated that they wanted no additional responsibilities. Opposition to the creation of specialist centres, and misgivings about the potential for inadequate funding from the state, as a consequence of business interest in self-governed schools, added to concerns about inequality in education. The program created a divisive ‘them and us’ competitive environment in which the lack of equity was a significant concern.\textsuperscript{50}

Decentralising accountability necessitated principals assuming responsibility for

\textsuperscript{49} Education (Self Governing Schools) Act 1998, Clause 15T, p.4.  
\textsuperscript{50} During 1999 Blackburn High School and Sandringham Secondary College were schools where significant teacher strike action and parent unrest was unleashed against the decisions taken by the respective school councils to join the Self-Governing Schools program. Further reading can be found at the World Socialist Website: \textsf{http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1999/06/educ-j26.html}
budgeting, curriculum development and staff management in their schools. During the Kennett years, the Department focused its attention on building administrative leadership capacity among principals, with less attention given to curriculum content and development. During the Kennett government, structural reform of the Department was paramount and, as a consequence, achieved recognition for world-leading levels of school autonomy, now embedded in the educational culture of the Victorian state system.

School closures, staff transfers, downsizing the teaching service and administrative staff levels, changes in employment conditions, and the rapid movement towards Schools of the Future consumed teachers' energies in a manner that was unprecedented. Public sector teacher unions had been supportive of the Cain Labor administration and had exercised considerable influence on government education policies. However, in Kennett's Victoria, teacher unions never wielded the same level of influence. The Kennett Government was ideologically opposed to union influence and was a government that owed the unions no favours.

**The Bracks and Brumby Labor years 2000-2010**

Steve Bracks led the Labor Party to a narrow victory at the November 1999 Victorian state election, bringing an end to the Kennett years in government. One of the incoming government’s promises to the electorate during the election campaign was to end the self-governing schools legislation. On 7 April 2000, the Bracks Labor Government introduced a Bill to repeal the Self-Governing Schools Act. School councils that had joined the program were allowed to complete their contracts with the government, but no new schools could
participate. Self-government in schooling simply was not a good fit within the state-funded public education system. Whereas the Kennett Government had focused on shifting many administrative procedures from the central office to principals in their self-managed schools, it was left to the Bracks Government to build leadership capacity in all principals and to place a much higher priority on building teacher professionalism. To achieve this end, Lynne Kosky, as Minister for Education and Training, convened a review to establish the government’s plans for the future of education.

The review process set up by Minister Kosky was extensive and garnered input from representatives from the Department, the regions, professional associations, school councils and the Australian Education Union. Roundtable discussion groups considered school improvement, curriculum reforms, professional and workforce development, information and communication technology, and excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. Membership within the groups included Meetings were held at the central office and within the regions between April and September 2003. Following input from the work groups, the Minister released a *Blueprint for Government Schools* in November 2003. The central message underscored throughout the *Blueprint* was the importance the government placed on maintaining and enhancing teacher quality and principal leadership to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of schooling. The Minister’s statement acknowledged that:

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51 *Education Acts (Amendment) 2000 Bill* can be viewed at: [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/bill/eab2000233/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/bill/eab2000233/). The Bill set out the authority to amend the Education Act 1958 and the Teaching Service Act 1981 to revoke special functions and powers given to certain school councils, to provide for the transfer of staff employed by those councils and to make transitional provisions for other agreements and arrangements entered into by those school councils and for other purposes.
The capacities and commitment of teachers and principals are vital to the quality of educational outcomes and the Victorian government education system is fortunate to have high quality teachers and leaders working in its schools.52

*The Blueprint* was designed to reflect the government’s belief that every student was entitled to a quality education, and that it was the responsibility of government to establish the framework and settings which would best deliver these priorities for schooling across the state school sector. The initiatives in the 2003 *Blueprint* focused attention on three areas needing improvement across the school system: (i) poor academic outcomes in some schools and some regions; (ii) the high variations of outcomes within schools, which highlighted the importance of the teaching–learning relationship; and (iii) the variation in outcomes between schools with similar student populations.53 While acknowledging that there were many government schools whose students had achieved exceptional results, the government did not want to settle for a school system with only a few excellent schools. Rather, the vision was for a system that delivered improved outcomes for all students.

*The 2003 Blueprint* stipulated that government schools were to be administered according to the ‘philosophy and mechanisms’54 of self-managing schools and boasted that Victoria had one of the most devolved school management systems among the OECD nations. However, the Bracks Government claimed that the former Kennett Government’s approach encouraged schools to compete with each other to attract students as a means of improving their performance, an attitude the Bracks Government could not accept. Bracks set out to remove what his government perceived as the worst excesses of the Kennett self-


managing, self-governing models. The Bracks Government focus was on inclusiveness, where management of the system continued to adhere to the principle of self-management, but matched this aspect with concern for the differing needs of learners and the expectation that schools would work together to meet the needs of all students in their communities.

In an effort to better regulate school performance and student achievement levels, school and principal accountability was tightened in the *2003 Blueprint*. The School Systems Development Division, within the Department of Education and Training, (DE&T) developed a new principal accountability framework known as the Effective Schools Model. The Labor concept of Effective Schools established transparent and rigorous systems of accountability, by which school and student performance was evaluated. With continued effort to refine the responsibilities of principals in self-managed schools, it was necessary to embrace a broad range of consistent performance measures that reflected the multiple responsibilities of the principal’s role, supported by targeted professional development. The *2003 Blueprint* documented initiatives to develop and support the learning and capacity of school leaders. These initiatives included a range of professional learning programs, an improved principal selection process and a new Principal Class Performance and Development process. Principals were expected to (i) utilise high-order, strategic-thinking skills; (ii) develop a deep understanding of their own leadership strengths and weaknesses; (iii) commit to professional learning and (iv)

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55 The focus of the Effective Schools Model was primarily on teaching and learning and used student learning data to inform planning and instruction. This focus was intended to guide the construction of rigorous and relevant learning for every student. Other key elements of the model included: high expectations of learners; professional leadership; purposeful teaching; shared vision and Goal setting, and the provision of a stimulating and secure learning environment. Further detail about the model can be viewed at [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/curriculum/pages/effmodel.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/curriculum/pages/effmodel.aspx)
demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively with others to bring about school and system improvement.\textsuperscript{56}

Clearly, the rhetoric of the Labor Government had changed from that championed by Kennett. The Labor Government’s language in Department literature stressed the importance of partnerships in education, where local schools, community agencies and local industries placed schools at the centre of a learning community. School councils, for example, were given increased authority to manage school policy development and the future direction and vision for their schools.

If the system is to ensure that students are provided with authentic and real-life learning and teaching experiences, community involvement will be essential.\textsuperscript{57}

In 2005, the Department released its\textit{ School Accountability and Improvement Framework}. Departmental literature produced to explain the framework stated that the elements therein were not discrete or independent tasks. The various aspects were in keeping ‘…with the intent and principles of good governance, and are part of a coherent planning and reporting process for organizing school improvement efforts.’\textsuperscript{58} The framework was built upon four main components: (i) self-evaluation and external review; (ii) planning for improvement utilising school strategic and annual improvement plans; (iii) use of the school’s annual report to communicate progress to school communities and to manage risk and (iv) compliance with legislation and Departmental policies using a school compliance checklist.

\textsuperscript{56} Guidelines for Principal Class Performance and Development, 2005, School Systems Development Division, Department of Education and Training, Melbourne, November, p.8.
\textsuperscript{57} Blueprint for Government Schools, 2003, p.10.
\textsuperscript{58} Accountability and Improvement Framework for Victorian Government Schools 2010, School Improvement Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne, October, p.3.
The resolve behind the framework was to strengthen the confidence of parents and the community by building effective transparency, accountability, openness and community engagement ‘…to ensure high quality data is used and shared to monitor and drive improvement’ across the school system, to include the building of leadership and teacher capacity, and community support to deliver high quality teaching and learning.\textsuperscript{59}

John Brumby became Premier following the unforeseen resignation of Steve Bracks on 27 July 2007. Under his leadership, the importance of continuing the principle of unity of purpose through effective partnerships in education was strengthened. This position was manifest in the renaming of the Department of Education and Training (DE&T), as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). Renaming the Department reflected the government’s view that learning started from ‘day one’, and that an investment in education from the early years had a direct impact on the future wellbeing of children. The renaming of the Department brought together early childhood services and school education under the one umbrella.

In the third term of the Labor Government, Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education, released an updated \textit{Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development} in September 2008.\textsuperscript{60} This 2008 version of the \textit{Blueprint} reaffirmed that the aim of the government was to ‘…ensure a high-quality and coherent birth-to-adulthood learning and development system to build the capability of every young Victorian.’\textsuperscript{61} The document proclaimed that it was the first time that shared goals for all Victorian children and young people were articulated as a basis for collaboration between families, schools, early

\textsuperscript{59} Accountability and Improvement Framework for Victorian Government Schools 2010, p.3.
\textsuperscript{60} Blue Print for Education and Early Childhood Development 2008, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2 Treasury Place Melbourne, September, p.11.
\textsuperscript{61} Blue Print for Education and Early Childhood Development …2008, p.11.
childhood services and the broader community. The need to promote workable partnerships between schools in both the government and non-government sector was highlighted, as was the importance placed on engaging parents and communities as the first and most enduring influence on a child’s development.

The creation of a partnership-oriented learning and development system, and the pursuit of a stronger systemic approach to school improvement that focused on quality at all levels, was championed in the *2008 Blueprint*. Workforce reform meant attracting the best people to teaching, establishing high-performing schools with a culture of strong leadership and professional learning, and the delivery of early childhood services that were of high quality and readily accessible across the system. Unequivocal statements about steps to be taken to establish quality teaching and learning were made, but always with jargon about the need to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students in all sectors.

Rhetoric in the *2008 Blueprint* was far reaching in that the language usage, as well as the planned strategies to achieve improved learning outcomes, linked pre-school, primary and secondary schooling, rather than viewing the elements of schooling as separate entities in themselves. Schooling was presented as a continuous pathway from Kindergarten through to Year 12, in which students acquired knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and later, employment in a global economy. One manifest way in which the pathway was reinforced was demonstrated at regional level. Early childhood educators and medical staff were brought into regional offices, rather than in separate locations and outposts across the state. The name change to the ‘Department of Education

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62 *Blue Print for Education and Early Childhood Development ...2008*, p.12.
and Early Childhood Development’ (DEECD) further emphasised the government’s commitment to the continuity of learning,

**The Baillieu/Napthine Governments 2010-2014**

In November 2010, the Victorian state election again returned a Liberal/National Party Coalition Government with Ted Baillieu at the helm. In terms of accountability in education, the Baillieu Government strengthened the authority of principals on the one hand, whilst attempting to tighten teacher performance on the other. However, Baillieu’s Government was beset with teacher strike action over divisive proposals to better regulate teacher salaries and to reward high performing teachers and principals. Cuts to the education budget added to the outrage felt by school communities across the state.

The Baillieu Government came to power with the grand promise that teachers in Victoria would become the highest paid teachers in the nation. However, it seemed this promise would not be implemented for all teachers. In the package of reforms, teachers would be required to work longer hours, have fewer chances to move up the pay scale and would be rewarded on merit rather than just years of service. Under the plan, all teachers would be offered annual wage rises of 2.5 per cent, far less than the Australian Education Union's demand for thirty per cent over three years. But seven out of ten teachers would also receive performance pay, ranging from 1.4 per cent to ten per cent of their annual wage, if they could meet targets that lifted classroom standards. In its attempt to settle a wages and conditions agreement with the union, the government declared that under a merit-based pay proposal, ten per cent of teachers would be eligible for a bonus equal to ten

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per cent of their pay; twenty per cent of teachers would gain a six per cent bonus and forty per cent would achieve a 1.4 per cent bonus.\textsuperscript{64} Industrial action taken by teachers ultimately forced the government to withdraw the proposal provisionally. Nevertheless, the performance pay trial instigated in the later stages of the Brumby government to drive improvement in teaching and learning, and subsequently taken up by Baillieu and Napthine, was clearly still under active consideration.

Negotiation with teachers and principals over working conditions in order to establish significantly higher performance standards in the decentralised school system, was consistent with documentation outlining the government’s resolve to build a strong, unified education community throughout the state. In 2012, the government released two major education reform policies entitled, \textit{From New Directions to Action: World Class Teaching and School Leadership} and the \textit{Towards Victoria as a Learning Community}. Together, the statements outlined the government’s aspiration to build ‘…a global top tier learning community in Victoria.’\textsuperscript{65} Obviously, to reach a global ‘top tier’ of performance, considerable effort was required. The quality of teaching in Victoria’s schools was considered to be of paramount significance in achieving the goal. Clearly, the government expected to raise the bar in its determination to see a significant shift in school performance and achievement levels. The excellence of school leadership was placed at the centre of the reform effort. Martin Dixon, Minister for Education, affirmed that in the decentralised school environment, it was the principal who had the power to improve the quality of teaching by: (i) establishing the standards that were expected of the teachers who were hired; (ii) ensuring that quality professional development occurred in their schools and (iii)

\textsuperscript{64} Tomazin, F, ‘Baillieu wants longer hours and merit based pay for teachers.’

\textsuperscript{65} Premier of Victoria website at: \url{www.premier.vic.gov.au}
accelerating the development of great teachers and (iv) effectively managing and supporting the development of teachers who were perceived to be under performing.66

Denis Napthine became Premier on 6 March 2013 following the unexpected resignation of Ted Baillieu. By November of the same year, the Napthine Government released new arrangements for school-based accountability. Napthine’s goal was to work towards achieving one common objective: that of seeing Victorian students reach the very highest levels of learning within ten years.67 Gone was the language that centred on achieving a global top tier performance.

Key features of the new approach were designed to engage principals in a cycle of feedback that included performance planning, self-evaluation, review, and reporting. School accountability was upgraded with much closer scrutiny upon the school review process. Schools were required to self-evaluate their performance each year. School reviews were to be conducted at least every four years as before, but with just two options, either a Peer Review or a Priority Review. Principals who opted to become Peer reviewers were trained by the Department in the methodology to be used in a Peer Review when validating evidence provided by a principal for his/her performance assessment. A Priority Review of a school’s performance required the support of an independent review team who conducted a four-day intensive analysis of school performance. Independent reviewers were selected from a panel of former, experienced principals. Training of the reviewers was at Department expense. In the latter case, intervention and support would be initiated, based

66 Dixon, M, New Directions for School Leaders and the Teaching Profession 2012, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne, June p.3.
67 Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning 2013, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Treasury Place, Melbourne, November, p.15.
on the assessed areas of need of the school.

**Conclusion**

The primary function of the Victorian Department of Education inspectorial system was to maintain accountability for the expenditure of government funding and educational standards.

The essential question posed in the chapter was to examine the contribution made by successive Victorian governments in the years 1984-2012 in developing a decentralised policy of self-managing schools. As political parties extended the scope of responsibilities devolved to schools from the early 1990s, the accountability requirements necessary to demonstrate improved student learning also expanded. Labor and Liberal governments made refinements to decentralised policy for education during the period 1984-2012 essentially adding party political preferences in the way the concept of self-management was delivered across schools. The Kennett Government’s determination to move administrative accountability away from the central office in Melbourne to school principals was a major initiative in reshaping the concept of accountability in the education system. The task of successive governments following the defeat of the Kennett Government in 1999 to further embed a system of self-managed schools was made easier because radical action had been taken by Kennett to establish new accountability strategies. The zenith of Kennett’s drive to decentralised education came with the effort to set up a system of select self-governing schools. However, this initiative met with considerable disquiet with teacher unions and the wider education community. Self-management had been taken to the outer limits of what was in the best interests of a unified, egalitarian
system of decentralised schools.

In November 2013, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of the Napthine Liberal Government summarised its expectations in the school performance template that was published in *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning*. The document emphasised a common approach to the measurement of school achievement and was built on previous education reforms that highlighted the value of a structured cycle of planning self-evaluation, review, and reporting.

Professional performance development was to be correlated against the performance of the school as a whole so that all stakeholders in the school community could see how to improve standards and achieve strong learning outcomes. The school performance framework, implemented across schools in 2014, required all schools to document their strategic learning goals and progress towards achieving improved performance outcomes. How the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development set up systemic accountability requirements in the self-managing school environment follows.

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*Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning 2013, p.5.*
Chapter Six

Accountability in Victorian schools post-inspection

The devolution of accountability from the centrally administered inspectorial system to self-managed schools did not mean that schools were suddenly separated from the control of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (DEECD)

From the outset, successive state governments provided and refined the frameworks on all aspects of fiscal and school management with which schools were expected to comply. Within each school region, a Director and staff played an important support role in advising and training school personnel in the new accountability requirements. This chapter addresses the question: Can the accuracy of aggregated school performance data and reporting strategies continue to meet public and government accountability expectations and scrutiny of school performance?

The chapter examines the new accountability structures that were introduced in a decentralised Education Department post-inspection. Specifically, the essential focus is with the new accountability strategies that were required of school councils, principal/teacher performance reviews and accountability requirements of school networks following the work of Richard Elmore of Harvard University who was brought to Victoria by the Department to extend accountability to groups or networks of schools across the state. In 2010 the Brumby government established the Bastow Institute to build a stronger leadership capacity in all school principals in the decentralised education system. Other
strategies too were implemented to assess school performance and student achievement levels. The introduction and ramifications of the national student testing program, NAPLAN, and the associated My School website (national school aggregated performance data) are examined, as are the implications of the new funding of schools program, developed by David Gonski, Chancellor of the University of New South Wales. The outcome of work done by the Australian Government’s Productivity Commission, an independent research and advisory body on economic, social and environment issues affecting the welfare of Australians with respect to education in a decentralised environment are considered.

**Accountability: administrative and performance**

School accountability changed most dramatically during the period of the Kennett Government. Consistent with the push for structural reform, Regions were supported to move quickly into digitally-based technologies to achieve greater operational efficiency. Progressively from 1993, the Department increased its efforts to provide the self-managed school system with Internet access and software that enabled principals to monitor their own school’s management procedures.

The *Schools of the Future* project was the vehicle through which digital technologies were installed in school offices. With this major investment in new infrastructure, the Department provided schools with technology that facilitated the systematic management of their administrative responsibilities. Aggregated school data was forwarded to the Department via the Internet in a timely manner, and as often as requested. Considerable
funds were outlaid to connect all schools to the Department’s Internet infrastructure.\(^1\) A Division of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was established early in the Kennett Government’s tenure to enable the Department to streamline its own internal processes and engage and transact with the performance information reported to schools. The reporting of school performance became Internet based, with secure software servers and Internet sites established in the Department’s central offices in Melbourne. During the early years of the first Kennett Government, 1993-1995, the Department developed teacher and school curriculum resource sites such as SOFWEB (Schools of the Future Website) and developed an eLearning support group based in the central administration.\(^2\) SOFWeb provided material that assisted teachers to improve student learning. It also provided access for students and parents to high quality educational materials, and opportunities to join collaborative, Internet-based activities such as networked learning projects and professional interaction networks.

\(^1\)To enable teachers to access Department curriculum resources on the SOFWEB site, and other Internet resources sites, a Notebook for Teachers and Principals lease program was negotiated. This policy applied to teachers, principals, paraprofessionals and executive class employees who worked in a Victorian government school and whose salaries were paid for from the central payroll. The policy can be viewed at: https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/infoman/NTPP_Policy_Online.pdf

\(^2\)White, Gerald K., ‘ICT Trends in Education,’ (2008). http://research.acer.edu.au/digital_learning/2.  Note: Web-based Internet services had its beginnings, internationally, with the work of Vinton Cerf in 1973, an American Internet pioneer and co-designer of the TCP/IP protocols. The TCP/IP protocol enabled files to be transferred quite simply. Information could be posted for public perusal leading to the emergence of email and news services. By 1977 computers as personal devices began to appear through hardware and software developed by Apple, Tandy and Commodore. The initial stages of the World Wide Web from 1990 to 2001 facilitated the capacity for an information highway, through global web-site development by governments and their agencies, business and commerce and in education by schools, colleges and universities.
The school performance review

The key accountability instrument developed to evaluate and report on the performance of self-managed schools was the School Review. These reviews were scheduled at four-yearly intervals. Schools were required to self-assess, using a systematic, continuous and comprehensive process that focused on student achievement levels and progress. The process involved gathering and analysing quantitative data and other qualitative evidence, such as teacher assessments on which to base judgments about the standard of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes and operations. In other words, schools were required to self-assess that resulted in verifiable judgments about student achievement.

Although subsequently modified over time to reflect changing needs that arose from national testing and the quest for continuous systemic improvement, self-assessment through review was seen as fundamental to establishing an effective, continuous school improvement cycle. While principals were accountable to the Department of Education for the performance of their school through the review process, school self-assessment was a collaborative effort.

Consultation necessary to shape the self-assessment report involved representatives from parent groups and school council members, usually the council president. Essential contributions were made by staff, leadership team members and curriculum leaders. The school principal coordinated the compilation of the self-assessment report. An independent school reviewer (not an employee of the Department), was selected from an approved panel of trained reviewers, and appointed to conduct the review process. The completed review
report outlined the school’s strengths and areas for improvement. From the report, schools developed strategies to address further improvement. Goals and targets for further attention by the school were documented and became the focus of the school’s core purpose during the course of the next review period.

Four categories of school review were devised by the Department to reflect particular school situations: (i) a Negotiated Review, in which a school was able to appoint a ‘critical friend’ to examine a specific area or areas for improvement, identified from the school’s self-assessment. A critical friend was defined as a professional educator known to the principal but completely independent from the school. A review of this type was used where a school had student achievements and other key performance indicators above expected levels. A school’s capacity to manage its own review was a key determinant when a Negotiated Review was prescribed; (ii) a Continuous Improvement Review, which involved a pre-visit from a Department appointed reviewer and a daylong review panel meeting with school personnel that included student input. Schools were allocated this type of review where there had been satisfactory student achievement levels and other key indicators but there was scope for further improvement; (iii) a Diagnostic Review was scheduled for schools where some student outcomes and other key indicators fell below, or well below expected levels, or where complex situational issues were apparent. For example, where there were multi-sited campuses, Prep–Year 12 schools, schools with a large number of students with disabilities or where schools had been recently amalgamated and (iv) an Extended Diagnostic Review, similar in structure to a Diagnostic Review, but providing four fieldwork days to facilitate a greater depth of inquiry and communication
with the school community.

**Principal accountability**

The change in the responsibilities of school principals was profound. All political parties acknowledged that principals required ongoing and continuous development of their leadership capacity. The Department considered that the extent to which schools could effectively carry out their devolved responsibilities was dependent upon the readiness of schools to take up the new challenges inherent in self-management, but particularly upon the ability and expertise of the principal. Department and regional offices directed staff to support principals in the transition to self-management. From 1993, schools entering the *Schools of the Future* program did so in cluster groups. Cluster or group entry meant that facilitators and trainers in software technology could work with principals and office administrative staff to ensure that Internet-based procedures were understood and that school personnel could work reliably with the technology.

Typically, principals were now employed on five-year contracts. The roles and responsibilities for each principal appointee were tailored to the needs and expectations of the school community and for compliance with regulatory, legislative and Departmental requirements. Contracts also stipulated that principals were required to deliver a comprehensive, high quality education program for students; implement school council decisions; establish and manage financial systems; contribute to system-wide activities that included policy, planning and development; consult with staff, students and the community about school policies, programs and operations; and report to the Department and school community on school achievements. Mentors and coaches were made available to support
principals in carrying out these time-consuming responsibilities. Given the range and intensive nature of the new responsibilities required of principals, the qualities and skills of those appointed to lead school communities became of paramount importance to both the government and the Department.

In order to select the best possible candidates to lead school communities, greater emphasis was placed on establishing improved principal selection processes. Best practice in contemporary recruitment practices were introduced in the selection process. Representation on selection panels of other principals was mandatory. Selection criteria were shaped to reflect the differing needs and characteristics of schools, including key goals and targets, as well as the expectations and requirements of the Department. From 2004, the Bracks Government implemented an accelerated development program for potential leaders. This initiative catered for teachers with at least five years experience who aspired to become principals. Participants benefited from exposure to leadership responsibilities, tailored professional development and mentoring. It was anticipated that this program would help address future leadership supply issues, improve succession management and promote mobility and learning across the system.

Assessing principal performance

Between 1995 and 1999, peer-to-peer audits were used in assessing a principal’s performance. This was a flawed, early attempt to assess principal performance against targets set in their performance plans. Principals who had received peer audit training reviewed evidence provided by a principal colleague, demonstrating achievement of set goals within the individual performance plan. Evidence presented during an audit meeting between the principal and an auditor often contained photographs, colourful tables of
aggregated data, newsletter/bulletin reports, with some analysis of success in reaching
targets that had been formulated around school priorities itemised in the school charter.
Audits enabled school leaders to gain additional remuneration above their contracted
salaries. If successful, a percentage-based annual bonus was paid. Unfortunately, however,
bonuses were sometimes paid on rather dubious grounds and anything but verifiable
student learning statistics.\(^3\)

Too often the evidence presented to prove principal effectiveness was limited. The
process left peer auditors in a quandary about how to deal with under-achievement, given
that they were rating other principals known to them. Peer-to-Peer principal performance
reviews could be deemed neither rigorous nor uniform, with outcomes often becoming a
matter of rubber-stamping the evidence presented. Later, with the Bracks/Brumby
governments in power, the reinstated Senior Education Officers\(^4\) were directed to review
principal evidence. Assessment was then conducted with improved scrutiny. Student
learning achievement levels were evaluated and negotiated improvement targets were
agreed upon for the assessment cycle. The achievement of agreed improvement or
‘milestone’ targets was used to determine whether a principal had successfully met planned
improvement indicators. No bonuses were paid, but salary increments, where justified,
were paid within prescribed principal salary bands.

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\(^3\) Peer auditors signed off on items in principal performance plans that may have included, for
example, school ground beautification works, new playground equipment, a new entrance gate to a
school rather than student improvement learning gains in Mathematics or Reading. Auditors were
expected to approve bonus payments on evidence in the plans that could be verified.

\(^4\) The position of Senior Education Officer (SEO) had been established during the period of the Cain
Labor government (1983–1992). The position was abolished upon the election of the Kennett
Government in late 1992, SEOs being replaced by District Liaison Principals (DLPs). The position
of SEO was reintroduced by the Bracks Government following the defeat of the Kennett
Government.
In 2005, the Department of Education formulated its Principal Class Performance and Development program to bring greater rigour and transparency to the assessment of principal leadership capacity. A similar program was implemented for teachers. Principal assessment was developed from the theories of leadership domains championed by Thomas Sergiovanni\(^5\) to capture the scope of the principal and school leader roles, and the leadership qualities and capabilities required to grow the capacity of principals to become effective leaders.

The leadership domains against which principal performance was measured included:

(i) technical- sound management skills; (ii) human- the ability to harness the school’s social and interpersonal potential; (iii) educational- expert knowledge about learning and maximizing school capability; (iv) symbolic- the capacity to model important goals and behaviours to the school, network and community; and (v) cultural- community demonstration of leadership by defining, strengthening and articulating the values and beliefs that give the school its unique identity over time.\(^6\) Every year, principals were required to respond to each of the domains, highlighting what they needed to further develop or improve, and identifying which evidence would be used to monitor personal growth and development. Principal selection guidelines prepared by the Human Resources Division of the Department in 2009 declared that effective leaders must understand the core purpose of schools and have the capacity to develop and shape a compelling vision that sets

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Thomas Sergiovanni was Professor of Education at Trinity University, San Antonio for 25 years and an advocate of ideas-based leadership and the development of a community of responsibility in which leadership is shared. His ideas were practical – he rejected simple models or theories of leadership, arguing that they take no account of the ‘messy’ world of education.

\(^6\) Principal Class Performance and Development Plan Proforma 2006, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne.
the direction for their organisation and guides their practice. Essentially, this meant that principals ‘develop people.’

**Richard Elmore and school networks**

The increased responsibilities of principals depended for success upon their ability in human resource management and interactive people skills. During the period 2004-2007, the Department enlisted the services of Richard Elmore, Research Professor of Educational Leadership in the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Elmore was hand-picked by the Brumby Government given his demonstrated expertise in establishing effective school network theory in the United States. Elmore set up local school Networks, based on local government boundaries, to assume responsibility for the achievement levels of every student in a Network. (These Networks operated simultaneously with the continuation of professional and school performance assessments.) It was expected that with collegiate responsibility and planning, improved learning and school performance would be achieved. Initially, Region officials appointed Network leaders/facilitators who coordinated the work of Network principals through an advisory or governance group within each Network. A Network Memorandum of Understanding outlined goals and objectives, governance structure, reporting protocols and the provision made for the review and evaluation of Network objectives. However, from the commencement of Term 3, 2012, Networks and Network activity became the responsibility of principals without the involvement of an externally appointed Network leader. The Network model in the self-managed environment was intended

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7 *Principal Selection Guideline 2009*, Human Resources Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne, p.2.
…to provide the opportunity for schools to work more flexibly with Network design and activities to best meet the particular needs of students, Networked schools and other stakeholders.8

On a regular annual basis, Elmore spent time in Victoria, working with teachers and administrators, visiting classrooms and engaging in extended conversation with leadership personnel with regard to this ambitious educational improvement strategy at state, regional and local levels. As an erudite outsider looking in on the Victorian education system, Elmore was impressed that what distinguished Victoria regarding educational reform was the presence of a strategic vision of school improvement. For Elmore, the distinctive feature of the Victorian strategic model was the central focus on human capital. ‘Schools improve by investing thoughtfully and coherently in the knowledge and skill of educators. Everything else is instrumental to this purpose.’9

Elmore reported that accountability measures were necessary to the development of human capital. In other systems, such as the United States national policy of ‘No Child Left Behind’, for example, accountability for performance was considered to be the leading instrument of policy, and human investment the collateral responsibility of states and local authorities. For Elmore, this approach in the United States led to a disastrous gap between capacity and performance. The states and the federal government exerted increasing pressure on schools to perform, and as a consequence, defaulted on their responsibility for human investment. The pressure to perform resulted in an increasingly large number of

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low-performing schools that continued to operate at low capacity.\textsuperscript{10} Elmore noted that another distinguishing feature in Victoria was the leadership strategy, which was essentially the leading instrument in the cultural transformation of the education system. Elmore observed that

\begin{quotation}
...the state sponsors a specific model of leadership, and orchestrates its leadership development activities around that model, focusing on Sergiovanni’s five dimensions of leadership: technical, human, cultural, educational and symbolic, and creating a common language for analyzing and discussing the leadership function in school improvement.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quotation}

Elmore applauded the use of individual principal development plans, the language and expectations of Sergiovanni’s leadership model, and its use as an instrument of school improvement that was explicit in accountability relationships.\textsuperscript{12}

In 2007, a school compliance checklist was developed by the Education Department to assist principals in meeting obligatory Departmental accountability requirements. Principals became responsible for reviewing and approving the reported compliance status of their school on all items, and for verifying that items on the checklist had been finalised at the end of each school term. Items on the checklist covered facilities, financial and human resource management, governance, risk management and student learning, engagement and wellbeing. Checklist data was also used to demonstrate compliance with Commonwealth government funding requirements for the nation’s schools. The checklist enabled policy, legislative and regulatory requirements to be managed and monitored, providing the foundation for school effectiveness.\textsuperscript{13} It became part of the Department’s commitment to

\begin{itemize}
\item [\textsuperscript{10}] Elmore, Richard, ‘Educational Improvement in Victoria, p.2.
\item [\textsuperscript{11}] Elmore, Richard, ‘Educational Improvement in Victoria,’ p.3.
\item [\textsuperscript{12}] Elmore, Richard, ‘Educational Improvement in Victoria,’ p.3.
\end{itemize}
streamline the school planning and accountability processes. Information obtained from schools through the checklist enabled central and regional offices to set priorities and allocate resources to enhance support for schools.

In mid 2010, the Brumby Labor Government established the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership to further promote and support effective leadership in schools. The government was responsible for funding the operation and effectiveness of the institute. Leadership of the institute has comprised highly credential school principals who have been selected on the basis of their success in establishing high performing schools. In announcing the initiative, Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education, said that the Institute would ‘…be a school of excellence for Victoria’s education leaders, helping create school leaders of the future to give Victorian children every chance to succeed.’\textsuperscript{14} The Institute’s mission was to develop capable and confident educational leaders, extend leadership capability, and promote continuous personal growth in dynamic leadership roles.\textsuperscript{15} Courses run by the Institute would cover programs for change management, developing visionary principles for effective school leadership and the development of skills for effective collaboration with school community stakeholders.

\textbf{School Council accountability}

In Victoria, there had been a history of local community involvement in schools from the earliest days of setting up a government school system.


The formation of local school community committees was a clause written into the *Education Act 1872* as part of the arrangements for administering schools. From that time, governments advanced funds to school committees, enabling them, for example, to maintain school property in good order. In December 1975, the *Education School Councils Act 1975*, was passed in the Victorian parliament. The Act enabled the Minister for Education to establish school councils as legal entities, which represented the Crown. School councils had the authority to (i) advise the principal on the general educational policy of the school within guidelines issued by the Minister; (ii) the capacity to employ ancillary staff and some special categories of teachers; (iii) enter into contracts for building works; (iv) maintain and develop school grounds and facilities; (v) operate canteens; (vi) actively participate in financial planning and oversee the use of school funds.

New accountabilities in the role of school councils went beyond attending simply to the maintenance of school property and school canteen management. Among the new responsibilities for school councils was the scrutiny of school finances, with the expectation that school priorities documented in strategic plans were properly funded from school revenue sources. Government, through the Minister, mandated school council participation in the school self-assessment and review process along with the subsequent development of school charters and strategic planning. Councils were also required to oversee the annual implementation of strategies to achieve agreed targets set out in charters, and later, school strategic plans. In 1985 school councils were given the authority to select school principals, with support and training provided by the Department of Education.

In the self-managed school environment, school councils became responsible for
providing vision, direction and strategic leadership. The Department had placed its trust in the ability of school councils to work with principals to improve performance in their schools, because of the contextual knowledge and proximity to the challenges within their schools. In the Department’s 2013 statement, *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning*, the Department emphasised that the quality of governance in each school ‘…can be a major contributor to the achievement of improved student outcomes through strategic leadership and direction, scrutiny of performance and ensuring public accountability.’

Effective school councils became an essential feature within the self-managed accountability framework. The increased authority devolved to school councils raised the level of expectation that school improvement would follow. A strong culture of internal accountability was directly linked with a school’s capacity to respond to the demands and pressures of change, considered to be critically important in creating a self-improving system. School council effectiveness is assessed through the results achieved by their schools during the school review process. School audits conducted by Department appointed auditors review school financial health at intervals specified by the Department.

**Teacher accountability**

To improve the accountability of teacher performance, standards of entry to the profession were mandated. In self-managing schools, principals were responsible for all human resource management issues, particularly annual teacher performance appraisals. Teachers were directly accountable to the school principal for the manner in which they carried out

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16 *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning* 2013, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Treasury Place, Melbourne, November, p.10.
their professional responsibilities. From the earliest days of the *Schools of the Future* (1992-1993) initiative, principals were required to make all pre-employment checks concerning a teacher’s qualifications and ability to teach, but the task proved to be an onerous one. Concerns were raised by the Department that checks made at the school level were sometimes not as thorough as they should have been. Consequently, an independent regulatory authority was necessary to ensure uniformity in employment standards.

In December 2002, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT),\(^{17}\) was established by the Bracks Labor government as the independent regulatory authority that ensured that all teachers in Victorian schools were properly registered, and that registration remained current in any year. Full registration for a teacher was dependent upon a satisfactory police criminal records clearance. Emphasizing the important work of the Institute, the Minister, Bronwyn Pike, declared that

> …children deserve an education system that values and practices excellence at every level, while preparing them to successfully meet the challenges of an increasingly global and networked world. Developing teachers and school leaders, and attracting the best people into our education system, are key strategies of the Government.\(^{18}\)

In 2008, five years after the Institute began, FJ and JM King and Associates, a corporate advisory body, conducted a performance review of the Institute.\(^{19}\) The review found that the Institute had effectively undertaken its regulatory role and had established policies, processes and operating procedures to ensure that the organisation’s functions were efficiently carried out. A common registration system for Victorian teachers had been

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\(^{17}\) The Victorian Institute of Teaching commenced operations on 1 July 2003.


\(^{19}\) FJ and JM King provide policy and strategic advice to corporations working with the public sector.
implemented. Standards of professional practice and a code of ethics and code of conduct had been negotiated. A comprehensive guide to assist provisionally registered teachers to achieve full registration, and an independent disciplinary system and complaints procedure, had also been established.20

The Department of Education recognised that an independent regulatory authority of this type had been necessary to administer the profession, removed from the direct influence of government and union interests. The creation of the Institute provided the means by which both the government and the general public were assured of the integrity and legitimacy of teachers employed in government schools. Over time, as teachers accepted the integrity of the Institute’s procedures, a much higher profile for the teaching profession was achieved. Respect for teachers and the work they do, whilst raising standards across the profession, had been a necessary element in effectively monitoring professional practice and behaviour. The institute is not responsible for regulating teacher training, its operational focus being to ensure that teachers are correctly registered in Victoria and that their registration remains current at all times. It exists to maintain the uniform compliance of all teachers and principals in Victoria to performance regulations set by the Institute. Matters related to unsatisfactory performance by either teachers or principals are resolved through hearings established at the Institute.

In their schools, teachers were required to have individual performance and development plans negotiated with the principal, against which they could demonstrate that professional standards and student learning goals were being met.

To support teachers in delivering successful learning outcomes for their students, Curriculum Frameworks documents were released in 1985 but were superseded by the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) in 1995. An updated CSF 2 was distributed to schools in 2000. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) developed further refinement in curriculum support material for teachers with the release of The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) in March 2005. VELS provided a structured approach to the organisation of the curricula in schools. The new standards defined what it was that students were expected to know and to be able to successfully carry out at six designated levels: Prep and Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. In effect the standards were outcomes against which student achievement was assessed and reported on. Valuable information about student progress across the levels was obtained and used by teachers and schools as the basis for further teaching and intervention programming. Teacher judgments formed about individual student learning were aggregated to meet school reporting requirements to the Department.

A satisfactory annual performance assessment for a teacher often resulted in the teacher being entitled to a salary increment if this was applicable. Historically, salary increments were automatic. A discussion paper released by the Department of Education in July 2012, declared that, ‘…over 99 per cent (of teachers) progress to the next pay scale each year.’

This statistic raised questions as to the rigour of the assessment and appraisal approach in

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22 New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession 2012, Communications Division for Flagship Strategies Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, July, p.17.
schools, the implication being that the current system was poorly managed and based ‘…predominantly on time served rather than a rigorous assessment of performance.’

In May 2014, the Department released its updated *Performance and Development Guidelines for Teachers* in which the Department stated that, ‘…consistent with the *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2013* (VGSA 2013), salary progression is not automatic. Salary progression is subject to a successful performance and development assessment.’ For an eligible teacher to achieve salary progression, the teacher ‘…must demonstrate that they have achieved an overall performance and development outcome that ‘Exceeds or Fully Meets Requirements [sic], after weightings have been applied.’ The document stressed that the performance and development goals of every teacher and principal class employee were expected to be aligned with school priorities detailed in both the annual improvement plan and the strategic plan. The Department’s own accountability process requires that it reports annually on its performance to the Victorian public through its annual report and to the responsible Minister for Education.

A crucial requirement in the new accountability guidelines was the significance placed on the need for teachers to provide ‘quality’ evidence that clearly demonstrated improved learning for all students in their care. It was emphasised that teachers should select evidence that illustrated progress towards the goals agreed to with the principal (or nominee) in their plans. ‘Selecting quality evidence and being able to demonstrate impact on student outcomes, professional knowledge, practice and engagement is integral to

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23 *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession 2012*, p.17.
effective performance and development.'

26 There was an expectation that teachers would have access to both formal and informal feedback regarding their performance to support continual reflection and improvement. Rigour in the appraisal process and commitment to developing the professional capacity of every teacher employed by the state was at the core of the 2014 guidelines.

The application of rigour was applied to salary and performance standards and was seen to be uniformly applied across all schools. With ever-increasing accountability imposed on schools to improve performance, often with fewer funds, and in a climate where teachers and principals were required to provide documented proof that they had carried out their responsibilities to the best of their abilities, the prospect that they might not be paid a performance salary increase was daunting and demoralising.

However, the standards of accountability imposed upon principals and teachers by the Victorian Department of Education (DEECD) did not apply to their own staff. Farrah Tomazin, state political reporter for the Sunday Age, disclosed data obtained under the Freedom-of-Information laws on 10 August 2014. 27 She divulged that between 2011-2013, performance bonuses amounting to $2.1 million dollars were paid to Department officers. In addition, $2.9 million dollars were spent on international and domestic travel, meals and accommodation, overseas expenses and offshore marketing and deputations. 28 At the same time, educational programs were being cut and with hundreds of jobs lost across the Department. Tomazin added that ‘…teachers and principals feel increasingly abandoned

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27 The Sunday Age, Melbourne, 10 August 2014, p.16.
following cuts to the regions, vocational programs and literacy and numeracy coaches in recent years.'

Chris Cotching, Australian Principals Federation (APF) president was quoted in the same article as saying, ‘It’s a bit hard to swallow when principals are under incredible strain and we’ve got a system where schools feel they have been abandoned and isolated.’

**Towards school improvement 2004-2014**

In 2004, the Bracks Government introduced an accreditation program known as the Performance and Development Culture (P&D Culture) initiative. The objective was to focus on performance and development in order to create an environment of continuous improvement in schools. The independent assessment of each school was used to demonstrate that each school had, for example, a mentoring program for new teachers to the teaching service, that a strong professional learning culture for all staff members existed in each school and that professional learning for all teachers demonstrated improving capacity and capabilities and that individual teachers had set up their own, specific professional development plans. It was essentially a verification process. Schools that did not achieve accreditation through the process were required to improve areas where criteria were not fully met, and then to submit a new application for accreditation once under-performing areas were addressed. Reviewers were not Department employees but were selected by the Department from external human resource management organisations.

The accreditation process involved seeking multiple sources of feedback for teachers, including feedback from parents and students, on the quality of the teaching and learning relationship in the classroom. The development of teacher plans focused on teacher

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29 *The Sunday Age*, 10 August 2014, p.16.
30 *The Sunday Age*, 10 August 2014, p.16.
professional development growth. Schools were required to set up induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers. The process was to be managed in schools with results being authenticated by external verifiers. The Department of Education invested considerable time and effort to have all schools achieve an accredited P&D Culture, as a means of demonstrating that schools had established a long-term commitment to the improvement of school performance at the centre of their work.

From 2005 to 2009, ninety-eight per cent of government schools successfully participated in the accreditation process, which seemed to proclaim that those schools had a strong focus on improving school and teacher performance. All government schools were expected to participate in the accreditation process. The remaining two per cent were required to continue with the process until accreditation was achieved. A benefit stemming from the process was the way in which school teams worked collaboratively to review school performance data and to prepare a final report written in response to set criteria. However, the over-arching criticism of the process was that it did not produce ‘…the type of robust, systematic performance management required to lift teaching effectiveness.’

**Inducement to achieve improvement in teaching and learning**

Strategies for measuring and monitoring teacher effectiveness through performance appraisal and school accreditation have not resulted in the improvement levels for which successive governments and the Department of Education hoped.

The next strategy established by the Brumby Government was a trial program in 2010 to acknowledge high-performing teachers, and schools, with bonus payments based on evidence of classroom excellence. The intention was to test the effectiveness of a system

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31 *The Sunday Age*, Melbourne, 10 August 2014, p.16.
giving teachers more money for merit and excellence, rather than increments based on years of service. A two-year trial was piloted in seventy-five schools, with two forms of rewards - one for individual teachers, and the other for entire schools that could demonstrate ongoing improvement. Under the teacher rewards model, a leadership panel assessed teachers and endorsed bonuses for those who displayed exceptional classroom practice, leadership skill and improved student results. The school model rewarded schools that showed the greatest improvement on a range of measures, such as student learning, pathways into further education or training, and student engagement and wellbeing.

The first round of bonus payments was distributed prior to the state election in 2010. The government did not disclose the names of the schools involved, but the trial had mixed results. The Australian Education Union (AEU) warned that it was an insidious plan to introduce performance pay in schools that would divide the teaching profession and would never be accepted by staff. Mary Bluett, state President of the AEU, protested that performance pay was a cheap attempt to avoid paying all teachers a higher rate of pay.

The Baillieu Liberal Government was elected in November 2010. As part of his pre-election campaign, Ted Baillieu had proclaimed that it was his intention to see Victorian teachers become the highest paid in the nation, with at least some in the highest teacher salary range. After the election, performance-based pay was included in a package of conditions to improve teacher pay and conditions. However, the AEU declared that teachers would never accept a model that divided the profession. There followed a protracted period of negotiation and industrial action in the form of full-day and rolling half-day work

stoppages across the state. Ultimately, the impasse between the AEU and the government was resolved when the government backed down from its position and dropped its performance pay proposal.

Having failed to implement performance pay, the government and the Department of Education adopted a different approach to teacher remuneration in 2013, flagging greater rigour in teacher salary assessment. Principals were expected to implement a change by not automatically approving teacher salary increments. This new approach was triggered by the very high rate of teacher progression up salary scales. The Department declared that it was looking to establish a differentiated performance and development assessment for principals, teachers and support staff. The key feature of this approach was to prevent automatic progression up the salary scale. Peter Hall, Minister Responsible for the Teaching Profession, announced that only sixty to eighty per cent of teachers were to receive successful performance assessments. By implication, this meant that potentially, up to forty per cent of teachers would fail to progress up the salary scale. Principals were to fare no better. Between twenty-five and thirty-five per cent could fail their annual performance reviews and, as a consequence, would not be eligible for their annual increment.

33. Minister Peter Hall was the first Victorian Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession. The Minister’s responsibilities include teacher registration (through the Victorian Institute of Teaching), teaching and workforce supply, workforce industrial relations issues, and supporting and promoting the teaching profession. The Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, had responsibility for student curriculum and learning programs, school capital and maintenance, school registration, policy and governance.

Principals attended Departmental briefings following the announcement of the proposal and, subsequently, were required to inform staff of the change. Following the briefings, Gabrielle Leigh, President of the Victorian Primary Principals Association, commented that ‘…Principals I’ve had to counsel after the briefing came away horrified, incredulous and say they are losing professional trust in the system.’

The government expected the ‘new model’ to be ready for the next assessment cycle that commenced in May 2014. The announcement was controversial, with both principals and teachers expressing concern about the divisive impact the initiative would have in their schools when principals were compelled to comply with Department instructions. A spokesperson for the Department was reported in The Age newspaper as saying

The Victorian government is committed to school autonomy and accountability and places its full trust in school principals to make professional judgments about the development and performance of their teachers, and determine the appropriateness of progression on a case-by-case basis.

The model was probably close to the payment by results system abandoned by the Fink Commission in 1901. If the decision to reduce the number of teachers progressing up the pay scale had been enacted using the Baillieu model, mistrust and animosity in schools would have been a high price to pay by principals and teachers, for what appeared to be a politically motivated, cost-saving measure in the state teaching budget.

There was an assumption in schools that someone, either the Minister for Education, or the Department, had decreed that up to forty per cent of teachers were performing at

unsatisfactory levels. The outcry that followed the announcement from teachers and their unions was predictable. A settlement in the teacher dispute with the Department over the inflammatory issue was temporary. The Department agreed not to introduce any change to performance assessment in 2013-2014. There were no other guarantees.38

Inducements and competitive strategies to gain improved teaching outcomes have been unsuccessful. As a former teacher of forty years, the last twenty of which were as the principal of a high-performing school, it is my considered opinion that teachers work best in teams where teaching and learning strategies are shared in constructive dialogue and where collegiate support is valued. On the one hand, singling individuals out for reward works against teamwork and the sharing of ideas. On the other, a culture in schools where teachers are appreciated for the work they do, and where professional acknowledgement is part of the work environment, improves work outcomes.

**Federal government initiatives to lift school improvement**

Concerns with inconsistency in national school performance data before 2008, spurred federal politicians of both major parties to develop national programs to lift student performance levels across all states and territories. The Australian Constitution stipulates that the responsibility for education resides in the various state departments of education. However, the financial authority vested in Australian federal governments has enabled direct participation, with the states, to both shape and fund key education policy initiatives. Federal governments have progressively imposed caveats on how allocated components of state and territory education budgets are to be disbursed.

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Two strategic federal accountability initiatives linked to federal education funding have focused on national assessment. The first initiative established the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the My School website. NAPLAN testing of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 commenced in 2008. Since 2008, NAPLAN tests have been conducted in May each year, with results being available to schools and parents in September.

The second initiative established by the federal government, on 8 December 2008, was an Act to set up the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). ACARA became operational in May 2009. The authority is responsible for developing and administering a national school curriculum including (i) content of the curriculum and achievement standards; (ii) development and administration of national assessments and (iii) the collection, management and analysis of student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance. ACARA also provides curriculum and educational research services and publishes information relating to school education.39

As a consequence of these federal initiatives, ongoing disquiet had developed across the education community. Self-management had come to mean more than simply shifting administrative responsibilities to schools. By the time the NAPLAN was introduced, there had been a quantum shift in the designated duties of school principals to ensure that schools reached expected outcomes in education. At the national level, federal intervention meant that the nation was expected to be among the higher performing countries at some time in

the ‘near’ future. Despite state initiatives to lift school performance in Victoria and elsewhere, school and student aggregated achievement levels had declined. In a Victorian Department of Education policy statement, *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* delivered in 2012, Martin Dixon, Minister for Education, declared that:

> There are clear signs that our education system’s performance is lagging behind top tier jurisdictions. Victorian performance has fallen behind global competitors and is not improving. Assessment programs such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) show us that Victoria’s performance has not generally improved in the past decade, despite significant reform and growth in investment.\(^{40}\)

Performance across Victorian schools in the NAPLAN Reading components, according to PISA assessment, had slipped below that of NSW, Australia nationally, New Zealand and well below top tier countries such as Korea, Finland, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Following testing in 2012, Australian secondary school students were ranked nineteenth in Mathematics, sixteenth in Science and equal thirteenth in Reading according to PISA assessment. Further, the performance of Australian students in Mathematics dropped by the equivalent of half a year of schooling, between 2003 and 2012.\(^{41}\) The then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, publicly proclaimed in April 2013 that she wanted Australian schools back in the top five schooling systems in the world by 2025\(^{42}\)

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\(^{40}\) *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* 2012, Communications Division for Flagship Strategies Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne, November, p.3.


when measured against PISA data.\textsuperscript{43}

At the time her comment was made, Gillard provided detail about her government’s model for school funding, which was based on recommendations in the Gonski Review of School Funding, (discussion follows below) and paid for in part by significant funding cuts in tertiary education. At this stage, there was a definite push by the federal Labor Government to boost the performance of Australian schools by overhauling the way primary and secondary schools were funded.

With the focus at the federal level on raising performance in the nation’s schools, a new funding model was critical in order to direct funds to those schools with the greatest need. It was anticipated that NAPLAN data would aid federal decision-making with respect to individual state funding needs.

National Assessment Program–Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

The concept of testing student achievement is not new, although the current approach to testing in Australia may be said to have its genesis in the educational policy of both the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These are focused around ‘…systems of high stakes, standardized testing – that is, systems that use the results of standardised tests to publicly report on the achievement of students and schools.’\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} OECD conducted research on the 65 countries that make up 90 per cent of the world’s economies. The OECD Directorate for Education found that student achievement in math and science were sound indicators for future economic health. Nations or cities with good schools could expect a healthy economy, whereas a nation or city with suffering schools could expect negative consequences to its economy. PISA tests critical thinking in math, science, and reading to 15-year olds. The test questions do not measure memorization of facts, but rather demand that students draw on knowledge and real-world problem solving skills.

\textsuperscript{44} Polesel, J; Dulfer, N and Turnbull, M. (2012). ‘The Experience of Education: The impacts of High Stakes Testing on School Students and their Families,’ Whitlam Institute, University of Western Sydney, January, p.6.
Without nationally comparable data about student performance, states and territories have only limited information about the achievement of students in relation to their peers Australia-wide. To date federal governments believe that NAPLAN data that enhances the capacity for evidence-based decision making about policy, resourcing and systemic practices. Public reporting and public accountability are central to the issue of national assessment. However, acceptance across the education community of national testing has been troubled at best. The background of, and issues related to, NAPLAN as an accountability strategy are discussed below.

Literacy and Numeracy testing had been conducted at state level for a number of years before NAPLAN was introduced. In Victoria, during the Kennett period in government, a Learning Assessment Project (LAP) was introduced at primary school level with all students being tested in Literacy, Mathematics, and Science at Years 3 and 5. New South Wales commenced testing in 1989 with other states and territories following suit throughout the 1990s. Early attempts were made to assess and aggregate the results from each state to provide a national perspective. This approach lasted until mid-2000 when ministers from the states and territories, together with the federal government, agreed to establish a one test system, the NAPLAN. Data stemming from testing is used to establish whether students are performing either ‘Above, At or Below’ national minimum standards in the areas of reading, language conventions, writing and numeracy skills for their particular year level.

A significant benefit arising from NAPLAN testing has been that schools have been able to track student learning growth. Cohort, or year level, data recorded in one year, for

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45 The Learning Assessment Project (LAP) was a forerunner to the national NAPLAN initiative.
example, at Year 3, can be compared against the same cohort or group in Year 5 two years later, and so on. Comparative NAPLAN data in a school makes it possible to demonstrate how much improvement a student has made, for example, in reading or numeracy between Year 3 and Year 5. Aggregated reports for appropriate year levels are used by schools and teachers to address any areas of concern identified in the results. Individual test scores can be accessed by teachers to identify specific areas of ongoing learning need for students whose learning progress is at risk. NAPLAN tests are not diagnostic assessment tools that provide information about how students learn. Rather, results are ‘one-time’ numerical measures or scores achieved at one point during the school year. This information, previously unavailable or accessible, has provided an external, independent barometer of student learning achievement. It is a requirement of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA, that all eligible students take the tests, but there is provision for a parent, or principal to exclude a student from a test or testing provided that specific exemption criteria is met. In order to thwart efforts to exclude students from the tests, ACARA introduced random audits in 2010 of school participation levels, to ensure compliance with the program.

Critically, ACARA stressed that NAPLAN data alone cannot bring about improvement outcomes to students, but data has provided valuable information for schools and education instrumentalities. ‘It is not the tests that will improve students’ literacy and numeracy skills, but the way students’ results are used by teachers, schools and system in teaching practices and programs.’46

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Validity issues linger, related to attributing student test scores to school performance and teaching effectiveness. However, the presumption exists that all students, when tested, will be at the same level of instruction so as to be able to successfully attempt test items. This is especially applicable with numeracy testing. There is also the assumption that tests are culturally and linguistically accessible by all students. This is not the case for English as Second Language (ESL) students or indigenous students.

Further disquiet that has arisen from national testing has been ‘teaching to the test.’ A front-page leading article in The Age newspaper on Friday 5 February 2010 screamed at readers, ‘Teach for Tests, Teachers Told.’ An Age education journalist cited a ‘leaked’ memo from the Victorian Department of Education in which teachers were told to explicitly teach for NAPLAN, to focus on literacy and numeracy, and give students a daily NAPLAN item. Evidently the memo was sent to all principals in the Loddon-Mallee region of Victoria two days before the launch of the My School website. The memo further stipulated that principals ‘…privilege the testing as an event of significance’ to facilitate extra assistance for students who were capable of making significant improvement in the tests. One principal in the region was quoted as suggesting that the Department was forcing schools to narrow the curriculum offered to students.

Clearly, the Department of Education was aiming to achieve better scores that would enhance the status of teaching and learning in Victoria when results were posted on the My School website. It was also widely known that some schools and teachers ran NAPLAN classes after school hours to better prepare students for the tests. The principal of

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48 The Age, Melbourne, Friday 5 February 2010, p.1.
Melbourne High School, for example, a Year 9-12 school, asserted that My School’s claim that it could fairly and meaningfully compare schools was untenable. He noted that students and communities of every school had unique characteristics that ‘…blunt indices, such that those published on the website cannot hope to quantify.’

Whilst there is concern about the relevance of meaningful comparative data, the focus on targeted testing has impacted on the delivery of a broader curriculum. The cost to administer the program has also raised concern. In 2012 more than one hundred and forty academics signed a letter calling for the end of NAPLAN, claiming that the pressure on teachers and children to perform well was narrowing the curriculum and eroding time for quality teaching and learning. They were appalled at the way in which the federal government had moved to a ‘high-stakes’ testing regime, despite international evidence that such approaches do not improve a child’s learning outcomes. The cost to run the testing program was conservatively put at $100 million dollars, funding which the academics felt could better be used to meet the needs of children experiencing learning difficulties.

Expectation by both federal and state governments of improved teacher performance capacity has resulted in high anxiety amongst teachers and school principals alike. Stress levels have risen across the teaching profession as school leaders search for strategies that will place their schools higher up the ‘league table’ of schools. A report in the Melbourne Herald Sun newspaper on Friday 14 June 2013 drew attention to action being taken by teachers at Spensley Street Primary School in Clifton Hill (Melbourne), to resist teaching

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Years 3 and 5 classes to avoid stress associated with NAPLAN testing.  

The emphasis by federal and state governments on lifting school performance has sometimes resulted in desperate measures being adopted at the school level. One illustration of this is of a principal in a Melbourne metropolitan secondary school who adopted a ‘like-achievement’ model, grouping students of similar ability/achievement in a class. The strategy involved separating the school’s best and worst performing students into streamed classes; the best students were placed with the best teachers and other high achieving students; students who achieved below expectation were placed in classes accordingly. Teachers allocated to low-achieving classes claimed that they had suffered stress, anxiety and depression. Consequently, four former teachers took stress leave claiming that ‘…their classrooms were full of uncontrollable and disengaged students who encouraged each other’s bad behaviour.’ Two teachers took their respective grievances to the Victorian Supreme Court to pursue compensation from the Department of Education for the situation in which they had been placed. In response, the principal stated that the system he had introduced resulted in significant improvement in the school’s overall performance.

From the earliest days of implementation, controversy has beset the NAPLAN program. Issues have arisen from schools about the timing of the tests, the real purpose behind the program and the relevance of test content, given that each state has its own curriculum. As

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52 Toscano, N, ‘Teachers Burnt Out by Streaming School,’ in The Age, Melbourne, Wednesday October 30, 2013, p.4. (The reference here is in relation to circumstances that existed at Werribee Secondary College. Werribee Secondary College is a single-campus, co-educational Year 7 to 12 College, with an enrolment of approximately 1400 students in 2012.)
53 NAPLAN testing is conducted nationally in the second week of May each year, but schools do not receive the results until September.
Helen Wildy, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Australia noted, ‘…the real value of assessment data has no meaning if people don’t understand what is to be read.’\textsuperscript{54} She continued, ‘Adding more and more information to a website does not mean it is either more transparent or more meaningful. It simply means there is more information for the reader to process.’\textsuperscript{55}

National testing is still in its infancy. Performance data does not remain static, varying from one year to the next. It takes quite some time to observe trends in data and then reliably assess whether school performance has moved up or down or remained the same. Perhaps, given time and improved knowledge about how to use NAPLAN data, issues that have affected national assessment will not be so prevalent. The value of the assessment as a tool remains dubious and contentious at the time of writing.

\textit{My School website}

Since 2010, annual NAPLAN results of each school’s student performance data has been published on the \textit{My School} website, with results being compared to similar schools and aggregated to display national average results. Data about school performance on the \textit{My School} website is administered by ACARA. Development of the website arose out of an agreement reached by Australian state education ministers during the 2008 Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The agreement was part of a broader policy statement known as the \textit{Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians}. The policy statement outlined a number of objectives for Australian schooling for a ten-year

Many modifications have been made to My School since its release in 2010. At the time of writing the introductory message on an earlier version of the front page of the website by the former Chair of ACARA, Professor Barry McGaw, stated that there was up-to-date quality data on the performance and resources available to more than 9,500 Australian schools. This data facilitated comparisons between similar schools across the nation.

Further, Professor McGaw declared that

My School can be used to view how each year group in a particular school performed in the most recent NAPLAN tests, and to compare this with statistically similar schools. Many people also use it to compare things like how much funding is spent per student in different schools, to see a gender enrolment break-down, attendance rates or teacher numbers. All of this functionality makes My School an extremely valuable tool for school leaders, school staff and members of school communities as well as policy-makers. As the site enters its fourth year, it is more widely accepted and is now routinely used to inform both policy discussions and public debates.

The language of the opening remarks highlights the emphasis on statistical data or the qualitative, numeric measures that can be used to make comparisons between schools. As Hardy and Boyle in their critique of the website contended, the focus on scores does not enable teachers or their schools to establish the aims of any inquiry into educational practice. Since school data being uploaded to the website began in 2010, the inclination by schools and the general public has been to focus on the numbers, numbers which

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57 Website address is http://www.myschool.edu.au.
58 Website address is http://www.myschool.edu.au.
struggle to ‘…capture the potentially educational nature of specific schooling practices.’

There is little doubt that the data on the website is used to aid education policy discussions and public debate, but whether My School is widely accepted is a moot point.

It can be argued that the My School website has increased the transparency of school performance data, adding new parameters of accountability in schooling. However, information provided on the website has led to the perception, on the part of some, of the creation of ‘league teams’ tables that indicate where schools have been ranked. The means by which results have been uploaded and published, and the competitive environment created by the site, have contributed to the inappropriate manipulation of data. Although this eventuality was never envisaged, it was not a surprising development.

Feedback from school principals about the value of the website was sought via a survey conducted in New South Wales by the Australian Primary Principals’ Association (APPA) in 2010. The Association received eight hundred responses which were overwhelmingly negative, although there were some respondents who gave a positive assessment of the website. Positive responses centred on the value of good quality data and the importance of transparency and accountability. However,

67% of principals described the My School website as ‘a “time bomb” potentially damaging to a broad primary curriculum’, while 77% saw it as a ‘political exercise with little benefit to schools or communities.’

Among the list of negative responses, principals signposted that there were significant issues in the way schools and data were grouped on the site, and that the rankings did not accurately reflect the true demographic of school communities. As a result, any accuracy

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of the data in making reliable ‘between-school’ comparisons tended to be distorted. A correspondent in *The Age* wrote that ‘…the My School website should be overhauled so the performance of schools cannot be easily compared and converted into league tables.’

NAPLAN and the use of the *My School* website as accountability measures seems to have sent an unintended message about school performance and achievement outcomes. The consequence of these measures appears to be that greater value is given to test results over the long-term educational wellbeing of students. When metropolitan daily newspapers publish lift out supplements listing the nation’s ‘Top 100’ primary and secondary schools, along with listings for the ‘Top 50’ schools nationally in reading writing and numeracy, it is little wonder that cynicism and scepticism shroud the value of national testing.

School league tables may tell parents that some school is ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than some other (local) school as measured by the performance indicators: but they don’t even aim to show that school is a good school, let alone a good school for a particular child. As anybody can see, position in a league table is a comparative measure; in some cases it will be administratively useful, but by itself it does not guarantee quality-or lack of quality.

Despite strong support by federal and state governments for national testing, its value as an effective and reliable accountability strategy in education remains problematic. National testing was never meant to become a definitive measure of performance. For vastly

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differing reasons, politicians, the media and the general public have latched on to the importance of aggregated school data as a transparent accountability measure to assess and rate school performance.

There is no suggestion here that there should not be a focus on the importance of literacy and numeracy in the curriculum. It is the narrowing of curriculum in schools, brought about directly as a consequence of national testing, that diminishes the significance of diversity of a curriculum that includes, for example, science and the arts. Concern that standards and achievement levels have fallen in schools, or that Australia has not performed as well as its OECD partners, seems to remain of prime importance compared, with the quality of teaching and learning. It is of no surprise that, at the time of writing, efforts by the state and federal governments to refocus their energies on enhancing teacher quality, and the importance of effective leadership in schools, are considered by governments to be the best way to improve teaching and learning and student achievement levels.

The Gonski Review of school funding

In 2010, the federal Labor Government initiated a review led by David Gonski, Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, of the way in which schools were to be funded.\textsuperscript{66} The focus of the review was to investigate what strategies were required to effectively establish needs-based funding. Deeper questioning around the nature of learning and

\textsuperscript{66} On 15 April 2010, former Minister for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, announced that a comprehensive review of school funding arrangements would commence in 2010 and conclude in December 2011. A panel of eminent Australians was led by chairman David Gonski AC, an eminent businessman and philanthropist, who at that time was the Chancellor of the University of NSW and chairman of the Australian Securities Exchange, Coca-Cola Amatil and Investec Bank. The panel for the Review of Funding for Schooling delivered its final report to the Minister for School Education, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP in December 2011. The review panel received more than 7000 submissions, visited 39 schools and consulted 71 key education groups across Australia.
current practices in schooling did not form part of the review.

The high priority given by the federal government to achieving a ‘Top 5’ ranking as the central undertaking of educational ambition appears to have been incompatible with Gonski’s view that ‘…an excessive focus on what is testable, measurable and publicly reportable carries the risk of an imbalance in the school curriculum.’ The review recommended strengthening regulation and accountability across school systems and stressed the significance of transparency as essential for public accountability to ‘…build community confidence in the robustness and adequacy of funding, as well as the capacity of schools to demonstrate continuous improvement and achieve excellent outcomes for their students.’

The Gonski review emphasised that the Australian government relied on the states and territories to operate effective school systems, and, that the states were best placed to continue responsibility for the administration of all schools within their respective jurisdictions. The review stipulated that ‘…a funding system must ensure that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income power or possessions.’ While advocating the need for increased funding for the nation’s schools, Gonski recommended that a more robust national data collection, consistent with the proposed new funding framework was necessary, allowing for a profound understanding of

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70 Gonski, David, Jean Blackburn Oration: Address at the Public Forum with respect to the School Funding Review, p.13.
schooling outcomes. States had similar arrangements for collecting data on school performance but, as the report emphasised, data collected by ACARA should be expanded to include a broader range of nationally comparable educational and financial measures, from sources such as the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs and the National Resourcing Body.

Recommendation 16 in the review’s final report stated that ‘…Australian governments should fully publicly fund the recurrent costs of schooling for government schools as measured by the resource standard per student amounts and loadings,’ notwithstanding that any private contribution towards a school added to its available resources. According to the review, the schooling resource standard ‘…provides a starting point for a new coherent, national funding model which recognises that schools with similar student cohorts and other characteristics, regardless of sector, require the same total resources.’ The review stipulated that for the future of Australian schooling the government sector must continue to ‘…perform the role of a universal provider of high-quality education which is potentially open to all.’

From the time the Gonski review was released, the recommendations were the subject of fierce debate. Writing in the *Weekend Australian*, Justine Ferrari, the newspaper’s national education correspondent, reported that an analysis of school funding showed that

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funding for education nationally had doubled in real terms since 1995 to about $40 billion dollars a year, ‘…yet student results in international and national literacy and numeracy tests have flat-lined or fallen in that time.’ Dr Jennifer Buckingham, research fellow at The Centre for Independent Studies, (a leading Australian independent public policy research institute) in The Australian on 30 April 2014, declared that

the absence of a relationship between funding and achievement is a persistent and robust finding internationally, yet government spending on schools is conservatively projected to double again to reach $90 billion (3.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product) in 2024-25.78

The Gillard/Rudd Labor Governments between 2007 and 2013 did all they could to ‘lock’ all states and territories into the Gonski funding arrangement, working feverishly to have states signed up before the Federal Election in November 2013. State premiers competed with each other to gain a greater slice of the funding, endlessly arguing to ensure that their states did not lose out on any new deal. By the time of the election, states had either accepted Gonski’s funding model or had been coerced into participating.

During the pre-election campaign Education Minister aspirant Christopher Pyne announced that should the Opposition party win the election, an incoming Liberal government would not be obliged to honour Labor’s pledges on funding. ‘What one government does another government can undo,’ Pyne proclaimed.79 Such was the level of outrage from schools and the electorate, that the new Liberal Government was forced into a modified retention of the Gonski model, agreeing only to fund the first four years of the

77 The Centre for Independent Studies website: https://www.cis.org.au/about/
six-year plan. This concession appeased the critics somewhat. However, by agreeing to
fund the first four years, the Liberal Government was well aware that the greater proportion
of funds was to be disbursed to schools in the last two years of the six-year funding plan.

Many hoped that funding according to the Gonski criteria would at last be the panacea
for achieving improved performance outcomes in schools. Previous assumptions about
improving school outcomes had emphasised such factors as professional development,
curriculum relevance and learning environments. The Gonski criteria, on the other hand,
focused on needs-based funding.

Speaking at a public forum in Melbourne on 21 May 2014, David Gonski, under the
auspices of the Australian College of Educators80, pointed out that he regretted ever having
announced the dollar value of his proposed needs-based system recommended in his
review. That the media, federal and state politicians and the general public had focused on
the dollar value, rather than the merits of the educational argument to embrace the
importance of school education, was a ‘disadvantage.’81 Indications in the 2014 Federal
Budget were that from 2018, 30 billion dollars would be cut from federal education funding
to the states and territories. David Gonski feared a return to the historical inadequacies of
resource-based funding.

All too often, inadequate funding had been made available, or even withdrawn. At the
time of writing, federal government needs-based funding was continuing, determined on
the basis of parent occupation levels and the residential postcodes of school communities.

80 The Australian College of Educators (ACE) is an Australian national professional association for
educators. The College advocates for its members in seeking improvements in the status of the
education profession. Website: https://www.austcolled.com.au
81 Gonski, David, Address at the Public Forum with respect to the School Funding Review, Wilson
Hall, Melbourne University, Wednesday 21 May 2014.
Schools with a high proportion of parents with professional occupations received somewhat less in their budget allocations than schools where there was a higher level of disadvantage in this respect. In schools where students were under-achieving in relation to national standards, the expectation of those schools has been that additional funds would be earmarked for literacy and numeracy to give principals increased flexibility to hire support staff and resources to improve achievement levels. The Gonski Review offered hope that much needed funds would be forthcoming.

In 2016, Henrietta Cook, the Melbourne education editor writing in *The Age* newspaper reported that investing ever increasing amounts of money into the school system nationally had not resulted in significant advances in student achievement levels. Performance based on national testing data had flat lined, even stagnated.

A draft report of the Productivity Commission reiterates what the federal government had repeatedly believed that ‘…despite a 14 per cent increase in spending per student over the past decade our performance in national and international assessments has barely improved.’ Whilst a considerable amount of data is collected on student and school performance, ‘…there is no proper way of evaluating what works in Australian classrooms.’ In its report, the Productivity Commission established that competition between schools, performance benchmarking and monitoring student outcomes through national assessment such as NAPLAN were ‘…insufficient to achieve gains in education.

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82 The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government’s independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. The Productivity Commission was created as an independent authority by an Act of Parliament in 1988 to replace the Industry Commission, Bureau of Industry Economics and the Economic Planning Advisory Commission, Canberra.
83 *The Age*, Melbourne, Tuesday 16 September 2016, p.6.
84 *The Age*, Melbourne, Tuesday 16 September 2016, p.6.
outcomes. By way of response, Simon Birmingham, the federal Minister for Education, called for a focus on evidenced-based measures that would yield enhanced student achievement levels. PISA performance results in Mathematics, Literacy and Reading across all schools had dropped by 29 and 16 points between 2000 and 2013. According to the report, these performance levels placed Australia fourteenth behind Poland, Germany and Vietnam.

Properly resourced schools are fundamental in creating a learning environment that facilitates equality of opportunity for all students. However, the issue of how best to achieve reliable data across learning domains that reflects and sustains progressive learning improvements still remains. The Productivity Commission’s draft report called for all state and territory governments to fashion a new Education Agreement. The report recommended that research should be commissioned to evaluate what good schools were doing and to then replicate their successful methodology and pedagogy across all schools.

Systemic school performance achievement levels have fluctuated post-inspection, despite moves to decentralise and devolve increasing responsibility to schools. In the self-managed school environment, academic performances between schools and how they are administered vary significantly, despite efforts by the Departments in each state to train principals to be better leaders and administrators. All schools and their communities are not the same and efforts to achieve uniformity have not resulted in collective success. The inspectorial system did not achieve consistency in establishing system uniformity either. Inspection was a subjective process that was dependent upon the ability of individual inspectors to execute their responsibilities. Success levels achieved in one school and

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85 The Age, Melbourne, Tuesday 16 September 2016, p.6.
86 The Age, Melbourne, Tuesday 16 September 2016, p.6.
community cannot be readily replicated across another with any degree of certainty.

Demands placed on taxpayer dollars for increased spending in education to lift student achievement levels, without convincing evidence that funding is achieving those outcomes, are irresponsible. As the Productivity Commission’s draft report noted

…an effective national education base is more than a simple accumulation of data in a single collection or data warehouse…The overarching policy objective is to improve education outcomes in a cost-effective manner.\(^87\)

This viewpoint is consistent with economic rationalist political thought, with its emphasis on measurable improved outcomes to justify funding levels in a cost-effective environment. The Productivity Commission draft report expressed the view that a national evidence base should drive improved student achievement through four interconnected processes: (i) monitoring of performance; (ii) evaluation of what works best, (iii) dissemination of evidence and application of that evidence by educators and policy makers and (iv) generation of benefits in excess of the costs incurred in collecting and processing data and in creating, sharing and using evidence.\(^88\)

Importantly the Commission’s draft report declared that top-down monitoring and benchmarking alone were insufficient to effect improvements in education outcomes.

Measuring and monitoring performance does not automatically lead to insights as to what policy and practice can do to help students to learn better, teachers to teach better and schools to operate more effectively.\(^89\)

The draft report cited evidence from research that showed that almost twenty per cent of variation in individual student outcomes was explained by differences between schools. The majority of difference, about eighty per cent, was explained by differences between


\(^{88}\) Productivity Commission’s Draft Report, 6 September 2016, p.5.

\(^{89}\) Productivity Commission’s Draft Report, 6 September 2016, p.6.
students within schools. Evaluation and assessment strategies in the self-managed environment in schools has played, and continues to play, a fundamental role in identifying which teaching practices and school programs are the most effective and according to the Commission’s report ‘…offer the best value for money in terms of improving outcomes.’

The search for the most reliable indicators of school performance and student achievement continues. To date, no evaluation method based on national testing has provided certainty with regard to improving school and teaching performances. Additional measures identified in the report include the assessment of students in Year 1, which might facilitate value-added analysis and shed light on the impact of early achievement on later outcomes; measures of students’ non-cognitive capabilities and wellbeing, which might reveal progress in the development of students’ social and emotional skills, and appropriate measures of outcomes for students with a disability. In this latter circumstance there is no specific assessment to determine learning outcomes other than the NAPLAN assessment regime. In addition, the Commission advocated the necessity of improved workforce data to support workforce planning and assessment.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, accountability strategies that were introduced post-inspection, were investigated in response to the principal question regarding the future implications of schooling arising from the devolution of authority to schools in a decentralised Victorian government school system. Consideration was given to the reliability, accuracy and purpose of aggregated school performance data and reporting strategies that were

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introduced to meet public and new state and federal government accountability requirements and the overall scrutiny of school performance post-inspection. As the chapter demonstrates, greater accountability has been placed, and expected, on school personnel in the decentralised environment. Federal government intervention to establish new accountabilities upon schools through national testing and needs-based funding has placed high expectation in the wider community that standards in schooling will reach consistently better performance results. However, there is no certainty that by continuing to increase financial assistance to schools that better results will be attained. Data available to parents and school communities through the My School website has added a new dimension to accountability that was never possible in the authoritative framework in the top-down management system in the former inspectorate environment. Previously, aggregated performance data was quite simply never available for public scrutiny as has been the circumstance post-inspection. Further fine-tuning of the accountability strategies outlined in this chapter will inevitably follow.

Will there be a return to the inspectorate? This is unlikely. Government and non-government systems have changed to meet twenty-first century expectations and living standards, particularly across the developed world. Transparency within Department operating procedures and across the system has been open to public scrutiny with advances in Internet usage and other advanced technologies. The collection and aggregation of data via the Internet and associated software packaging has facilitated performance data availability at the press of a button on a computer keyboard.

Technology available to schools in the twenty-first century has become, and will increasingly become, even more sophisticated. It would not be possible for a remodelled
inspectorate in Victoria to acquire data from schools to generate the raft of reports required for use by government agencies at all levels. Inspectors would not be in a position, nor have the time, to conduct annual reviews of teachers and principals in the present assessment framework in a timely manner. Overseeing the school review process and strategic plan development alone would be unmanageable. Intrusion in the now devolved self-managed school environment would not be possible, nor would teacher unions agree to any return of a system wherein authority was invested in someone who made infrequent visits to schools and who had little real knowledge of how a teacher or principal managed wide-ranging commitments beyond the classroom or school office. During the inspectorial periods, visits to schools were irregular at best. An inspector working in a district would not be in a position to readily adapt to the complexity of a decentralised school system with a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness. After the dismantling of the inspectorial system, accountability was decentralised and gradually devolved upon schools until they eventually became self-managing. However, it was not feasible that schools could become completely severed from the source of funding itself, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Therefore, contrary to Ikin’s assertion that he believed that it would only be a matter of time before the public demanded the return of inspectors, decentralisation, the devolution of authority and the accountability framework now well established, will not be revoked.
Conclusion: Reflections and future directions

Encapsulating the major theme in this thesis of accountability and governance in state education are remarks made by Michel Foucault, French philosopher, social theorist and historian of ideas who stated that

…to govern a state will therefore mean to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods.¹

Foucault’s commentary that the head of a family exercises control over his household and goods as a means of surveillance and control correlates well with the issues of surveillance and control practiced by the administrators of education and governments over time. These themes are demonstrated by the evolution of control mechanisms that emerged in state education in the period covered by this research. State, and the legal and non-legal institutions formulate and implement laws, policies, standards and norms to be followed by individual citizens for the achievement of political and economic goals. These organisations and institutions within the State have their own interests to protect or ideals to promote. They formulate their own techniques or tactics to achieve their aims or objects.² Christian Bustamante³ observed that Foucault did not analyse the State from the point of view of

³ Christian Bryan Bustamante is Dean, College of the Arts and Sciences, San Beda College, Manila. He has published articles on political and social philosophy using the ideas of Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas.
institutions. Foucault’s perspective was from the position of regarding the State as the
interplay of the different practices and strategies of power.⁴

Governments therefore create public organisations and corporations to implement the
provisions of their constitutions and the achievement of their principles. A central platform
in Foucault’s treatise is the emphasis placed on harmony in the State. In order to achieve
harmony, the various political and social institutions need to be in accord on the
administration of regulation and discipline. Without this harmony Foucault, believed the
State would be in disarray and the consequence would be the failure to achieve political and
economic goals.

In the context of the theme in this thesis, Foucault’s views on the strategies and
practices of power and authority are significant. Institutions and agencies set up by
governments to support ‘its family’ (its citizens) are created to fulfil the social, cultural and
political aspirations of all and for government to achieve its goals. Surveillance and control
in Foucault’s terminology is ‘…as that of the head of a family over his household and
goods’,⁵ the metaphor describing control by government to the hierarchical structure of its
affairs.

Government establishment of departments and agencies of the State as a means of
surveillance and control is consistent with Foucault’s theory. The case study in this thesis
by historical narrative is the fledgling colony of Victoria, as the young government
embarked upon the social, cultural and political objectives of educating its citizens to
become active, participating members of a democratic state. A bureaucracy was

⁴ Bustamante, C.B.S. (2014). ‘Foucault: Rethinking the Notions of State and Government,’ in The
⁵ Foucault, M., ‘Governmentality,’ p.92.
indispensable to administer education, and surveillance strategies were obligatory to
monitor progress and the proper accounting of public funds. The model adopted in Victoria
was one adapted from the English National Education scheme that had been proven
successful in Ireland.

We are all creatures of our past; old habits and inherited procedures are difficult to change
and have a strong tendency to continue long after their usefulness and the need
that called them in to being cease to exist.6

This observation underlines the need that always exists in education, as in other fields, for
‘…critical historical analysis because of the certainty that solutions adequate or appropriate
to pioneering days will become unsuitable for later stages of development.’7 Historian
Richard Selleck was also of a similar mindset when he declared

A large and complex government Department, established with certain goals and a structure
for their attainment, finds itself, as time passes, called upon to perform tasks for which the
original structure is unsuitable. Pressure groups from within and outside a Department,
themselves trapped by the past, force administrators to adopt positions, which otherwise
they might reject…an Education Department is an intricate system of personal
relationships, political, social and economic pressures, vested interests, customs, ideologies
which, over the years, develop, support each other, conflict or fade.8

How the principal questions were addressed

The narrative for this thesis has as its focus a history of inspection in colonial/state
government schools in Victoria from 1852 through to 2012. The narrative begins with the
eyear attempt to establish National schools in the colony of Victoria, then traces the
development of the Education Department and its school inspectorate from February 1852,
when the colony of Victoria officially separated from New South Wales, through to 1984

6 D. G. Ball, K.S. Cunningham and W.C. Radford. (1961). *Supervision and Inspection of Primary
Schools*, Melbourne, p.109.
7 Ball et.al. p.(xi).
the History of Education,’ in *Journal of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education
when the inspectorate was disbanded in favour of a decentralised education administration. The study culminates with the evolution of a system of self-managing schools post-inspection from 1984 to 2012. The narrative deals chronologically with an examination of over four distinct periods: the formation of National education in the early months of 1852 through to the passing of the *Education Act 1872* by the Victorian Parliament; 1872 to the report of the Fink Royal Commission in 1901; 1901 to 1979/80 when decentralisation of the Education Department was imminent, and 1984-2012 and the progression to self-managed schools post-inspection.

**Chapter One** establishes the methodology of historical narrative as the basis for this study.

**Chapter Two** addresses the problems that beset efforts to establish the requisite government agencies to administer a state education system and its inspectorate in the two decades 1852-1872 prior to the passing of the *Education Act 1872* in the Victorian Parliament. These problems included: antipathy towards the setting up of non-sectarian government schools from the Victorian colony’s clerics and other religious groups; the difficulties faced by both the National Board 1852-1862 and the Common Schools Board 1862-1872 to establish central control over their respective operations; the emergence of the inspectorate and problems in establishing genial collegiate relations with teachers; the resentment experienced by teachers towards the unpopular payment by results system during the Common School period, and finally, the significance of evidence before the Royal Commission of Public Instruction 1866 known as the Higginbotham Commission concerning the deficiencies of the inspectorial system and the Melbourne office-based administration of education in effectively managing the delivery of education across the
colony of Victoria.

Chapter Three traces the findings of three Royal Commission between 1872-1901 and the implications of those findings for the future of the Victorian Education Department. The progress of the growth of a centralised Department of Education and the authoritarian role of the inspectorate is chartered. Evidence presented by senior personnel and inspectors to the Commissions progressively highlighted the difficulties and struggles that administrators had in keeping the Department to at least a reasonable level of efficiency through difficult times. Difficulties included the struggle for sufficient funding to manage the education system with the constancy of having to work with financial constraint, and later, the catastrophic impact of the 1890s Depression. Recommendations by the Fink Royal Commission on Technical Education for changing the structure of the Department were effective in reshaping the bureaucracy of the Department well into the twentieth century. Frank Tate’s appointment as Director of Education ensured that real change was enacted.

Chapter Four covers the years 1900-1979 and examines efforts by the new Director of Education, Frank Tate, to introduce and implement changes to an outmoded, outdated administrative system and to revitalise pedagogical practices with his enthusiasm for the theory of ‘New’ Education. During the Great Depression and World War II, there were serious teacher shortages. As a consequence, class sizes were increased in order to maintain adequate staffing, especially in rural and remote schools. A reform agenda following World War II stressed the importance of social and citizenship aspects of schooling. The Ramsay Report (1960) was a significant examination of the organisation and administration of education post-war. Teacher discontent was decisive in moves to radically force change to the central administration of education. The teacher union movement grew in size and
influence, and the influence of the inspectorial role diminished. Early moves to decentralise the management and organisation of schooling, and the influence of government ministers and politicians to substantially take control of the education agenda from Department officials, gained momentum.

The narrative in **Chapter Five** covers the period 1983-2014 and critically explores what occurred in Victoria with the demise of the inspectorate in 1983. Steps taken to move accountability away from the outdated inspectorial system and to decentralise schooling gained momentum in this period, during which state and federal government ministers increasingly intervened on all matters that dealt with education and how it was to be delivered and monitored.

**Chapter Six** outlines the new accountability procedures for a decentralised system, of self-managed schools. School principals were given increased authority over the management and organisation of their schools, essentially becoming ‘inspectors’ in their own schools, in the sense that they were responsible for the performance assessment of their teachers and school operation. School funding concerns are again explored, as is the introduction of national testing of student achievement as a device to make schools accountable for improved student learning outcomes.

From the earliest days of the pioneering work done by those officers and Commissioners of National Education following the discovery of gold in the colony, through to the far-reaching restructure of the Department through the 1970s and early 1980s, education administrators clung to an administrative structure and inspectorial system inherited from Britain. Peter Musgrave has written that ideas and practices brought from overseas, chiefly the mother country, were accepted uncritically as better than anything that
could have been created in Australia: ‘…imports were applied without any adaptation to local circumstances.’\(^9\) There was reluctance to change a centrally controlled surveillance system of scrutiny using the inspectorate, whose role was primarily aimed at ensuring that public funds were properly administered. Also, that teachers were teaching according to Department regulations and that pupils were learning and meeting prescribed standards. Until the Fink Commission in 1901 recommended the abolition of teacher performance assessment using the British payment by results system, inspectors were the field officers the Department relied upon to keep the expanding system of schools in check. With the arrival of Frank Tate as a progressive permanent director, central administration was tightened but in a refreshingly new approach to curriculum design. Rather than simply being considered as evaluators, inspectors acted at varying levels of capability as mentors and professional counsellors to the teaching service. Thus inspectors gained significant power and influence over teachers. By their presence in schools, they were the enforcers for upholding uniform standards of instruction. They were the agencies for assessing and rating teacher performance, and therefore the only measure by which teachers were deemed suitable for promotion in the teaching service.

With the passage of time, old habits and inherited procedures outlived their usefulness. No longer could an inspectorate struggling to keep up with change meet the diverse demands of a large system of schools. The 1980s and 1990s were a period of unprecedented levels of structural and cultural change in schools, after decades of relative stability and the building of a seemingly monolithic bureaucracy. Since 1987, federal and state policy

initiatives have allied education more closely and instrumentally to the economy, reduced educational expenditure, devolved greater responsibility to schools, and sought to make education more 'consumer friendly' and accountable.

Chapter Five of this thesis was prefaced with a declaration by Ron Ikin, President of the Association of Inspectors of Primary Schools, just prior to the dismantling of the inspectorial system, that it would only be a matter of time before the public demanded the reinstatement of inspectors.

The inability of an inspectorate to cope in a changed school environment is best illustrated with reference to the inspectorate that still exists in Britain. Prior to 1992, inspectors employed by each Local Education Authority (LEA) inspected schools. However, this system fell into disrepute because of inconsistent standards across the country and concerns about the independence of inspectors. In April 2011, the House of Commons Education Select Committee for OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills)\(^\text{10}\) reported that a single inspectorate was too big to function effectively. Therefore, greater elements of specialisation were needed to raise the quality of inspections and restore confidence in schools and the education system generally. OFSTED is an independent, non-ministerial government Department responsible for inspecting and regulating education and training for learners of all ages and for inspecting and regulating those services that care for children and young people. For much of the time OFSTED has

\(^{10}\) [http://www.politics.co.uk/reference/ofsted/](http://www.politics.co.uk/reference/ofsted/)

Note: Politics.co.uk is the UK’s leading political news website among MPs and members of the public. Politics.co.uk's team of journalists produce their stories from deep within the corridors of power in Westminster, where they were the first digital journalists to gain access to the lobby. Politics.co.uk is an impartial political website with no political affiliation, which prides itself on standing out as an independent voice.
been in operation, it has existed in a state of high tension with schools and other educational institutions, chiefly because of an inherent willingness to criticise and find fault.

Technology available to schools in the twenty-first century has become, and will increasingly become, ever more sophisticated. It would not be possible for a remoulded inspectorate in Victoria to acquire data from schools to generate the raft of reports required for use by government instrumentalities at all levels. Inspectors would not be in a position, nor have the time, to conduct annual reviews of teachers and principals in the present assessment framework in a timely manner. Overseeing the school review process and strategic plan development alone would be unmanageable. Intrusion into the devolved self-managed school environment would not be possible. Nor would teacher unions agree to any return of a system wherein authority was invested in someone who made infrequent visits to schools and who had little real knowledge of how a teacher or principal managed wide-ranging commitments beyond the classroom or school office. During the inspectorial periods, visits to schools were irregular at best. An inspector working in a district would not be in a position to adapt readily to the complexity of a decentralised school system with anywhere near the high degree of efficiency or effectiveness needed.

**Into the unknown**

The final question listed among those relevant to the thesis was consideration of the nature of future growth in education, arising from this research.

Education, as training, has become the central policy focus for the re-skilling of Australia at a time when education policy has been, to a large extent, taken out of the hands
of professional educators. The Ministerialisation of policy has reduced the influence of bureaucrats and professionals. The stimulus has been to up-skill workers with the expectation of improving productivity, giving Australia a more competitive edge internationally. To achieve this outcome the school system needed to change. The system had become moribund. Greater efficiencies and flexibility in the education system by devolving responsibility for decision-making to schools within a policy framework, balanced by strong feedback mechanisms, was needed before the inspectorate could be replaced without fear of the new system imploding. Accountability measures evolved that put the onus on schools to collect and analyse data their school performance and to report outcomes to the central office and school communities.

The *Schools of the Future* initiative of the Kennett Government overseen by then Minister for Education (1992-1996) Don Haywood embedded the self-managing schools concept in Department organisation post-inspection. During his time as Minister for Education 8000 teachers resigned or took redundancy packages and some 350 schools were closed. Central bureaucracies like the Department of Education had to be transformed to meet changed conditions, generated by the advance of new competitive global economic conditions. The thinking behind the need for change centred on economic rationalism, resulting in the privatisation and commercialisation of public sector utilities. For education, this meant that school principals were encouraged and supported by the Department to be more entrepreneurial in the way their schools were managed. The initiative aroused the ire of the community. Haywood devised strategies to take on the initial resistance of teacher unions and entrenched public servants.

Whilst self-management was ultimately quite readily achieved, self-government of
schools was a more difficult concept to successfully implement. The pinnacle of the economic rationalist approach applied to education was reached with the failed attempt championed by the Kennett Government in 1998 to set up self-governing schools. Schools selected into the program within policy guidelines were free to explore and develop independence from mainstream schooling regulations. School councils were given greater freedom to hire and dismiss teaching staff, set higher rates of pay and offer incentives to attract better teachers, determine higher salary levels for principals, and seek corporate sponsorship as a means of raising higher revenue for their schools. Schools in the program were able to set themselves up as specialist schools in, for example, the performing arts, science, mathematics and technology. Whilst self-governing schools were required to follow the state-wide curriculum, they could detach themselves from the Department. In effect self-governance facilitated the appearance of a private school model but within the umbrella of the state.

Whether self-governance would have produced higher levels of student achievement was not tested. It may well have transpired that with the ability to select high performing teachers and principals with higher salaries as an incentive, school performance benchmarks could also have been lifted. However, with the return of the Labor government in November 1999, the experiment was abolished. Schools already in the program were allowed to complete their contractual agreements with the Department but they were not renewed. Simon Marginson, with his interest in the history of Australian education and International and Comparative education, has said that economic rationalism ‘…has shown itself able to transform the forms of human relationship in education, and to reduce the role
of non-economic behaviour…but it should be assigned to a more modest place.'

Perhaps it was that the cautionary tone expressed by Marginson, was brought to bear by those in power to curtail the murkier characteristics of economic rationalism, that had the potential to set up a ‘them and us’ divisiveness across schools.

The model of the self-managing school was built upon the notion that schools should be more diverse, autonomous, flexible and community oriented, in order to meet individual student, community and ultimately, national needs. Schools assumed responsibility, within state-wide guidelines, for managing their own destinies to some extent. Decentralisation in the Victorian context did not mean overall autonomy. Brian Caldwell defined the self-managing school as

…a school in a system of education where there has been significant and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. This decentralization is administrative rather than political, with decisions at the school level being made within a framework of local, state or national policies and guidelines. The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated.

Further enhancement in accountability and central office strategic direction in the self-managing school system was evident in 2009, with the emergence of District Networks of schools overseen by Regional Network Leaders (RNLs). The drive to improve school achievement levels was given as the motivation for yet another tier in the accountability platform that evolved under the self-managing schools program. Principals were already responsible for accounting for overall school performance, but the Network initiative

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Link to this article: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508489209556245](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508489209556245).

required them to be responsible for improved learning outcomes for all students in the Network. The idea of placing schools in a Network was based on the Harvard University Model of Network-based responsibility, in which every principal was accountable for the learning needs of every student in every school in a Network. The concept was based on the United States systemic approach to schooling on the notion of ‘Every Child, Every Day.’ Networks were required to develop Network strategic plans with milestones that indicted how improvement was to be measured and reported.

With the development of Networks, systemic performance data was not confined to an individual school but incorporated in the amassed systemic data of the entire Network. The Department and its Regions were also required to provide performance data similar to that provided by schools and Networks. Never before had such an array of systemic performance data been available and accessible to both federal and state parliaments, and education authorities, with aggregated data available to the general public and the media via the Internet. In past decades, the education information highway, such as it was, was held in the precincts of Department of Education offices and the annual reports of successive education ministers. Metropolitan daily newspapers were able to publish material gleaned from ministerial reports. Inspectors’ reports pre-1900 were edited so that no comment deemed inappropriate by the Secretary or the Minister was ever widely broadcast.

Inspection as an accountability strategy was not without its faults or its detractors. Inspection was a subjective process and relied upon positive interaction between all stakeholders in education. Inspectors did not always practice effective interpersonal skills. Mistakes were made at the stage of employment selection with the result that some
ineffective officers were appointed. In the nineteenth century, colonial inspectors were appointed having just arrived in the colony from the mother country and thus proceeded to assess early schooling and teaching with a home country perspective. Senior administrators were often appointed with similar heritage credentials and in possession of letters of introduction brought from employers and sponsors overseas. Appointments and employment opportunities in government instrumentalities such as education were all too often patriarchal. This was not surprising for the times given the immigrant composition of towns and later larger cities. Later the focus on appointing young, recent university graduates with no experience in education was a mistake. With improvements to the training of teachers, together with university qualifications and appointments made on merit, the calibre of those appointed as inspectors was significantly enhanced.

However, patronage and patriarchal practices were endemic in the early years when appointments were made. Women were never seriously considered, nor were they encouraged to apply for senior appointments until later in the twentieth century. As the quality of trained teachers in the service improved, teachers and their unions became more vocal, expressing their dissatisfaction with inspection. As a consequence, inspectors became obsolete.

**Lack of accountability in the Victorian Education Department 2007-2014**

Recently, the Australian Government Productivity Commission, an independent research group that provides advice to governments on economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians,\(^1\) stated that

Accountability is achieved when decision makers are assigned functions and held

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\(^{1}\) Statement on the Commission’s website at [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au)
On 31 August 2014, the Victorian government released the final report of an inquiry into school devolution and accountability conducted by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC), *Making the Grade: Autonomy and Accountability in Victorian Schools*. Kim Wells, the Victorian Treasurer, established the Commission to inquire into and report on how much autonomy schools in Victoria had and how this affected students, teachers and schools. The Commission was required to identify areas and circumstances ‘…where more autonomy could improve how much and how fast students learn at school, or improve the efficiency of schools.’ The context for the inquiry had been the acknowledgement that during the 1990s, schools had been given increased self-management and decision-making opportunities. Consequently, government principals had more scope to make educational, financial and management decisions that affected their students. The terms of reference included the statement that it becomes even more important to have

…the right mechanisms to hold principals accountable for how much and how fast their students learn and to have the right governance and administration arrangements to support more autonomous schools.

Among the list of issues to be considered by the Commission were (i) an examination

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of the split of responsibilities between the central education bureaucracy including regional offices and government schools across all areas, including governance, funding, infrastructure, workforce, operational model, curricula and assessment; (ii) the identification of principles of good governance in a highly autonomous government school system, including the role and accountability of school councils; (iii) examine the current arrangements for oversight of government schools, by assessing the clarity and effectiveness of existing governance structures within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, including the Regional Directorate model and (iv) identify the capabilities required of the central education bureaucracy, its regional offices, school councils and principals, in a highly autonomous school system and deficiencies with current capabilities.¹⁷

As a result of the inquiry, the Commission found that government schools were deficient in four areas: (i) There had been insufficient emphasis placed in the governance structure of framing accountabilities around the primary role of schools, namely improving student outcomes. (ii) Not all accountabilities and authorities resided at the right level of the system and (iii) Despite considerable monitoring of, and reporting on, school performance, principals did not appear to have been well or even routinely held accountable for their performances, particularly for the educational progress made by their students. The Commission added that (iv) the capacity to hold principals and others in the school system accountable was further diminished by capability gaps in school councils and the Department. Although identifying serious performance problems was relatively

straightforward, ‘…there is seemingly scope for more subtle capability and performance problems to slip under the Department’s radar.’\textsuperscript{18}

In the self-managed school system, effective and efficient systemic performance is heavily reliant on effective principal leadership. School data collection and analysis, and regular school performance reviews have not, according to the Commission report, accounted for personal indiscretions and inadequate school leadership. Previously, an inspector had a Department presence in each school, a professional who could see at first-hand what was really occurring in schools in his district and where deficiencies were evident.

To improve school accountability, the Commission specified that the capacities of a school council to provide effective governance could be improved. By enabling legislation and guidance to increase a council’s ability to monitor and provide feedback, principals’ abilities and the achievement of school objectives, could be ascertained. Input to councils from outside experts with a diverse range of experience would also be beneficial. The Commission endorsed peer review arrangements suggested by the government; however, peer reviews would complement and not be a substitute for the performance appraisal system already in place.\textsuperscript{19} The Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, responded to the Commission’s report by signifying that it had begun a review of effective governance arrangements that were foreshadowed in the Minister’s November 2012 statement, \\

\textit{Towards Victoria as a Learning Community}. This paper proposed that enhancements


would occur to governance arrangements so as to underpin and support continued improvements in student learning. Measures outlined in the statement gave a commitment to embed the strategic role of school councils; reform school council membership; build school council capacity and strengthen their accountability.  

Improving principal accountability would be a transparent process, but what potential existed for performance problems within the Department’s hierarchy to slip under the radar? In 2013, Victoria’s Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) instigated *Operation Ord* to examine allegations of serious corruption in the Department of Education and Training (DE&T). As part of the investigation, public interrogations were held between April and June 2015. The investigation identified substantial weaknesses where misconduct and corrupt conduct were able to flourish. The Commission investigated allegations that included: (i) the involvement of current and former DE&T staff in the establishment of so called banker schools. These schools were allocated funds for ‘safe keeping’ by an inner sanctum of senior Department officials to provide goods and services for personal gain; (ii) whether DE&T staff or their associates and school principals and business managers, received financial or other benefits as a result; (iii) the collusion of family and business connections between current and former DE&T staff or their associates, school principals and business managers, and the suppliers of goods and services and (iv) flaws in DE&T systems and practices around procurement, financial management and allocation of funding and the awarding of contracts.  

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The investigation revealed how a core group of senior education Department officials siphoned off vital public funds intended for school education for their own benefit. Between 2007 and 2014, it was estimated that an amount in excess of $6 million dollars had been misappropriated. In an effort to crack down on a culture of entitlement and lack of accountability that it was claimed had plagued sections of the education bureaucracy for years, the Andrews Labor Government planned to establish a ‘strike team’ of integrity watchdogs to curb corruption in the Department. Part of the strategy involved setting up a whistleblower service to encourage people to speak out anonymously in order to rebuild trust within the community.\(^{22}\)

In December 2015, IBAC announced that the Commission would investigate corruption and misuse of Department funds associated with the failed Ultranet schools information technology project. Hearings began on 15 February 2016. Issues of concern for the Commission were (i) the Ultranet tender process; (ii) personal and business connections between the successful tenderer and members of the DE&T, such as the purchasing of shares in the Darwin-based company, CSG, before and after the contract was awarded; (iii) the way in which DE&T employees managed confidential information; (iv) whether DE&T employees attempted to influence procurement processes; (v) whether DE&T employees received payments, gifts, travel, employment opportunities or other benefits due to their involvement in the Ultranet tender; and (vi) DE&T procurement and conflict of interest processes. The Ultranet was envisaged as an Intranet for Victorian government schools promised in 2006 by the then Labor Government. The government specified that the project to connect students, parents, teachers and administrators to classrooms would cost $60.5

\(^{22}\) Farrah, T., Education Strike Team Unleashed,’ in The Sunday Age, Melbourne, 25 October 2015, p.3.
Ultranet trials began at Glen Waverley Secondary College in 2004 under the auspices of the then Labor Government, using software accessed from the United States based ‘Oracle’ company. In the same year, the principal of the college joined the Department as one of a group of Deputy Secretaries. By December 2012, the Auditor General found that there were serious probity issues with the tendering process for the project.\(^{23}\) It was revealed at the inquiry that Education Department senior officials bought shares in the Darwin-based company CSG shortly before and after the company won the tender for the botched project. No official declared any conflict of interest. The unravelling of the Ultranet tender process before IBAC, revealed that conflicts of interest and other governance breaches affected the Department’s decision-making process. The project was given to a company that was incapable of delivering the work.\(^{24}\) The Napthine Liberal Government abandoned the project from the start of 2014 as costs for the project blew out to $240 million dollars, far above the projected budget of $60.5 million dollars and had very few users.

These investigations into corrupt practices within the Department of Education reveal significant breaches of accountability protocols by senior officers who had used their positions for personal gain. Concerned whistleblowers within the Department had taken their concerns, in confidence, to IBAC setting off the investigation that followed. The same officers had set up guidelines for principals and schools to follow but had themselves presumed that they were above reproach in the management of public funds and outside the

scrutiny of their peers and the Minister for Education. Given the new accountability methodology post-inspection applied to schools in the more autonomous self-managed system, the Department must be accountable for its performance with greater transparency. The significant changes in the Department’s central administration required ever-closer scrutiny and effective accountability. The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission’s report acknowledged that while the Department will continue to supervise the performance of schools, its more specific role will be less on day-to-day management of the school system and more on a focus providing guidance, support and last-resort intervention in cases of serious underperformance. The Commission noted ‘…it could be difficult for DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) to shift from its longstanding service provision role to a support role.’25 It would be a mistake, should this circumstance be enacted, to shift greater responsibilities to schools without providing additional ongoing resources, or interim support.

Self-transforming schools

The process to establish self-management in schools has been an evolutionary one, a process that has had difficulties arising from the transition to more autonomous schools environments. Will the next strategic move in the Department be, as Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks have suggested, to a system self-transforming schools? In their most recent writings, Caldwell and Spinks (co-authors of *The Self-Managing School*, 1988) look ahead to the major forces for change if Australia is to be, as both federal and state politicians have advocated, a ‘top tier’ nation in school education. They have proposed that for schools to be

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self-transforming, higher levels of autonomy would be necessary, ‘unchained’ from the constraints of a ‘command-and-control and carrot-and-stick’ approach. A school would need to be unchained to be able to choose the support needed from sources of its own choosing and unchained from the need to wait for and adopt best practices, and thus be able to choose innovations that best met local needs. Many unsustainable short-term conditional grants, linked to school global budgets, entail lengthy submissions that are centrally managed within the Department. Needs-based recurrent funding as outlined in the Gonski Report (discussed in Chapter Six) would also need to be cast aside. \(^{26}\)

When the Department instigated self-management of schools it was widely regarded as a contentious step and was met with considerable scepticism. Self-management is now fully integrated across all schools. If self-transforming schools eventuate, it is not inconceivable that similar antipathy towards yet another change could occur, but the step up from self-management would actually not be as radical a move as self-management had been? However, would the government and DE&T be genuine in any challenge to unchain the shackles that so closely control and steer the public education system?

The restructuring of education in Victoria post-inspection occurred as a response to global economic restructuring in the face of deregulation, competitiveness and international control of market economies, particularly in Western democracies such as Britain, the United States, Europe and New Zealand. The push by nation-states to sign up to competitive international trade agreements has put pressure on governments to move school systems away from traditional approaches to schooling to a more flexible, inclusive network of self-managed schools. Devolution and decentralisation was considered to be the

administrative solution to empower schools to be consumer oriented. However, empowerment of school communities through community owned ‘government’ occurred at the local level without DE&T relinquishing overall central administrative control. The imbedded message was that fairness would be delivered more efficiently and effectively by facilitating individual choice and the recognition of diverse needs in school communities.

While policy and regulations has been driven from the central offices in Melbourne, strategic management at the school level has become more collaborative and team-oriented with shared responsibility for outcomes between teachers and their local communities. In this climate, it was envisaged that genuine leadership would emerge as principals were given the ‘tools’ to make decisions in the very best interests of staff cohesiveness, effective communication with parents and improved student learning outcomes. Self-management has enabled principals together with school councils to manage schools with reasonable discretionary authority to allocate regulated funds to meet the needs and priorities in their schools. New technologies to support school management, financial planning and data collection for assessment and accountability purposes, were necessary to manage and track burgeoning statistical and accountability requirements set by the Department.

The administrative burden on principals post-inspection has continued to be arduous, stressful, and occupy ever-increasing amounts of time each week of the school year. Studies conducted in Edmonton, Canada, revealed that principals had less discretionary power than expected after devolution, and were constrained by reduced funds, central
demands and the intensification of labour.\textsuperscript{27} As early as the mid-1990s, Brian Caldwell reported that similar trends were emerging in Victoria’s schools.\textsuperscript{28}

Decentralisation has been viewed as an efficient administrative solution to solve wider political, social and economic problems. In reality, the ramification in the system of self-managing schools has been to construct new sets of relationships which are often indifferent to long held values in public education. Bowe, Ball and Gewitz, writing on education in England, noted that the autonomy of schools is more apparent than real:

There may be no real contradiction [between centralising and decentralising tendencies] after all. The use of performativity and target-related funding as a form of control, linked to the localised, productive and capillary power of the ‘manager’, presents a solution to the problems of ‘ungovernability’; that is, government overload which allows the state to retain considerable ‘steerage’ over the goals and processes of the education system (while appearing not to do so). Indeed, the market form offers a powerful response to a whole lot of technical, managerial and ideological problems.\textsuperscript{29}

Although Bowe’s thoughts were a reflection on conditions in English schools in 1992, his views could equally be applied to the situation with self-managing schools to the present day in Victoria. As Chapters Five and Six in this thesis illustrate, successive governments have tinkered with self-management according to their beliefs about how a self-managing school system should operate. Since 1982, every change of government has brought modification to the mindsets of their predecessors, to which have been added new variations in accountability, all the while maintaining a firm centralist approach to ‘steerage’ over goals and processes. Recent misconduct at the highest levels of Department

administration has shown negligence and ineptitude in applying a uniform accountability code. The loss of trust within the school system and in the wider community has been profound. Onora O’Neill\textsuperscript{30} has written that there can be no form of accountability without some form of trust. Once trust is ‘dissipated’, the only way to achieve cooperative behaviour is ‘…by imposing formal systems of accountability …trust-free accountability is a mirage.’\textsuperscript{31} If principals and school communities are to have renewed confidence in the system, then the current internal review of management controls will need to have transparent outcomes with a far greater commitment to rigour in applying accountability measures.

Inspection and the inspectorate ensured that there was a Departmental presence in schools, the ideal number of visits being at least twice a year. There were ‘all seeing eyes’ in all schools across the system all year round. Inspection did have its detractors, faults and inconsistencies and was very much dependent on the quality and calibre of those appointed to the inspectorate. By its very nature, inspection was a subjective process. Teachers’ careers and their future in the teaching service were dependent upon attaining promotable assessments and advancing up the subsequent listing on classified rolls. Historically, inspection was relevant in its time and in the absence of any other method of judging Department efficiency. For the Department, it was a safe accountability strategy that was accepted by teachers for over one hundred and thirty years. Teachers, for better or worse,

\textsuperscript{30} Onora O’Neill has held the position of chair of the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission and is a cross-bench peer in the House of Lords. She was Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge from 1992 to 2006 and holds the title of Honorary Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus, University of Cambridge. She has written extensively on ethics, trust and justice throughout her academic career and is highly regarded as a specialist on political philosophy.


Link to this article: \url{http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2013.764761}
knew the inspector. For the greater part of its existence inspection contributed to the maintenance of the Department and the reliability of its service to schools and the general public. The demise of the inspectorate in Victoria and other Australian states was inevitable, as a consequence of changes to the composition of social and economic conditions and the growing diversity and community expectations of education and training globally.

**Accountability in a knowledge society**

Test-based accountability systems to hold schools accountable for predetermined knowledge standards has become common practice globally in efforts to bring about educational change and improve the performance of educational systems. In Australia, this standard testing is known as NAPLAN. Pasi Sahlberg, a Finnish educator, author and scholar, suggests, ‘…increased competition and individualism are not necessarily beneficial to creating social capital in schools and their communities.’ However, accountability policy making, based on the evidence of uniform test-based evidence, is highly controversial in Australia. Standardised knowledge tests, are ‘…not a necessary condition for much needed educational improvement.’ Sahlberg’s contention is that ‘increased high-stakes testing is restricting students’ conceptual learning engaging in creative action and understanding innovation, all of which are essential elements of contemporary schooling in a knowledge society.’

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34 Sahlberg, ‘Rethinking Accountability in a Knowledge Society,’ 2010, p.45.
By way of illustration, Sahlberg cites recent educational reform principles in Finland since the early 1990s, when public sector administration was decentralised. Use of the term ‘accountability’ is not recorded in any Finnish educational policy dialogue. Progress is determined by success in building professional responsibilities within schools and encouraging lateral capacity building among teachers and schools, rather than applying external accountability structures.35 A focus on sample-based testing, thematic assessments, reflective self-evaluations and emphasis on learning first ‘…have established a culture of mutual responsibilities and trust.’36

The Victorian and national experience in Australian schools has been to place great store on NAPLAN as the means to provide data on school improvement. As this thesis has highlighted, significant federal funds and energy have been expended to ensure that all students sit national tests in key learning areas, with the annual aggregated results of school performances disseminated for public discussion. From the time when national testing was instigated, student learning achievement has flat-lined and in some areas, such as mathematics and science, performance levels have fallen in comparison with other OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Pouring more government funds into schools to lift performance standards will not significantly change the way teaching and learning is being delivered. Simply ploughing more money into education without an overhaul of the way education is being delivered is not a solution. Evidence from changes to the accountability requirements in the Finnish experience should be a serious consideration for the Victorian/Australian education environment. In Finland there is no inspection of teachers. Relaxed external standards guide schools and allow

teachers to concentrate on learning with their students rather than being apprehensive about the frequency of testing and the public ranking of their schools.37

The current culture of accountability in public sector schooling often threatens school and community social capital, and in the process harms trust. The pursuit of accountability in the post inspectorial era has provided parents and politicians with more detailed information about school and systemic performance, but at the risk of generating low morale, distrust and professional cynicism. Educational leadership must encourage collegiality and cooperation among teachers and a supportive climate across networked schools. Only a climate such as this will allow creativity, collaborative learning and a learning environment in which intellectual risk-taking is valued. The visionary Frank Tate challenged teachers and administrators to step outside conventional ways of thinking and doing. Pasi Sahlberg appealed to schools and teachers in a similar vein when he wrote in 2010 that

Schools in the sustainable knowledge society need to focus more on cultivating humanity and building social capital than on becoming marketplaces where value of success is determined by cost-efficiency and material competition for measurable private profit.38

Michael Fullan, a Canadian educational researcher and authority on educational reform, says that the future direction of educational change is ‘…the notion of sustainability’39 as a key dynamic in developing a new kind of leadership. If enduring large-scale change is obligatory, new leadership needs to go beyond the successes of increasing student

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37 Sahlberg, ‘Rethinking Accountability in a Knowledge Society,’ 2010, p.56.
achievement and move toward leading organisations to sustainability. Fullan discussed in a 2006 paper entitled *The Future of Educational Change: System Thinkers in Action*, that there was a lack of development of leaders towards system thinking: the need to link systems thinking with sustainability in order to transform an organisation or system.

Change is needed within the culture of an organisation where the intent would be

…to generate more and more leaders who could think and act with the bigger picture in mind thereby changing the context within which people work ... to go beyond individual and team learning to organisational learning and system change.\(^\text{40}\)

The challenge now for educational researchers is to investigate the merit or otherwise of organisational change and systemic accountability frameworks. The challenge now for school leaders is to step beyond their conventional modes of thinking and managing yet continue to operate successfully in a state-run Education Department. The Bastow Institute will necessarily play a vital role in continuing to prepare aspirant and current school principals to meet the needs of twenty-first teaching and learning priorities and encourage big picture thinking as Fullan articulated.

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