Arts education in a culture of performativity: a case study of what is valued in one Queensland school community

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Abstract

The global education policy field, characterised by neoliberalism, performativity and accountability, from which many Australian education policies are drawn, includes the adoption of mechanisms such as a high-stakes testing and standardisation of curriculum in an effort to improve student outcomes. There are now competing discourses between mandated standardisation and accountability policies, manifested in polices such as high stakes testing, running parallel to social democratic policies advocating creativity, innovation and equity, resulting in tension between policy and practice, system and stakeholder. At a local level this shapes educational perceptions and in turn corresponds to curriculum choices. This research examines the educational values of teachers, parents and students when systemically these global trends have influenced local education policy.

This thesis is an in-depth single case study of one metropolitan primary school community in Queensland, Australia. Using thematic analysis, the thesis examines the influences of global education policy trends on local perception and practice through curriculum theory and cultural capital theory. Through a collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, this research aimed at determining what one school community valued in terms of educational purpose, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Attention was given to where arts education is placed in the curriculum hierarchy at a policy and practice level.

The findings offer a unique insight into how students, parents and teachers perceive, and in the case of teachers, enact policy, revealing that education was highly valued by each participant group. The findings suggest that global policy trends have influenced both local perception and practice, and that to some extent policies such as testing had become normalised. The curriculum hierarchy dominated by English and mathematics was valued at the primary level, but the arts were also considered essential to any balanced and worthwhile curriculum. At this point in time, at the case study school, the students enjoy attending because there are still enough "other than the normal things" to keep them engaged; the parents are satisfied, and the teachers are holding on. Ultimately it is teacher action that steers the way a school community values and perceives education, so whether or not this group of teachers can continue to resist the pressures of performativity and continue to enact curriculum according to their values, remains to be seen.

Education policy and practice is now a very public field and the findings from this thesis suggest that the three most important protagonists in the story have critical and
worthwhile opinions to contribute, how this is effectively achieved is a consideration for governments. The thesis contributes methodological knowledge by identifying the voices of the three most important stakeholders in education – the students, parents and teachers, not as separate research projects but in-situ as a community.
Statement of Authenticity

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

____________________________________________
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Dedication

For my parents, who valued education.

Victor Charles Stockwell
(27.10.1918 – 25.10.1999)

and

Phyllis Stockwell
(05.08.1930 – 08.03.2008)

There is no such thing as absolute value in this world.
You can only estimate what a thing is worth to you.

Warner (1829-1900)
List of acronyms or abbreviations used within the thesis

**ACARA** – Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority
**ACER** - Australian Council for Educational Research
**BSSSS** – Board of Senior Secondary School Studies
**C2C** - Curriculum into the Classroom
**CDC** - Curriculum Development Centre
**COAG** - Council of Australian Governments
**EAPI-Q** - Education and the Arts Partnership – Queensland
**EQ** – Education Queensland
**HPE** - Health and Physical Education
**ICT** - Information and Communication Technologies
**IMP** – Instrumental Music Program
**K** - Kindergarten
**KLA** - Key Learning Area
**LOTE** - Languages Other Than English
**NAPLAN** - National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
**NCLB** - No Child Left Behind
**OECD** - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
**P/Prep** - Preparatory year of schooling
**PISA** - Programme for International Student Assessment
**PTAR** - Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading: Comprehension
**QCAR** - Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting
**QCAT** - Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks
**QSA** – Queensland Studies Authority
**QSCC** – Queensland Schools Curriculum Council
**QTU** - Queensland Teachers Union
**RE** - Religious Education
**SES** – Socio-economic status
**SOSE** - Studies of the Society and Environment
**UNICEF** – United Nations Children’s Fund
**WTO** - World Trade Organisation
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Chapter One

Most people have an opinion about education, because to varying degrees, whether formally or informally, it has been experienced by all of us. It is a field heavily laden with values and assumptions, mostly about what each individual considers is a “good” education. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) note in their important work within the Australian context:

> Education is a deliberate, purposive activity directed at the achievement of a range of ends...it suggests that something worthwhile is being intentionally transmitted, and that something valuable is being attempted. Thinking about education thus necessarily involves considerations of values. But where are these values to be found? What might be their content? Whose values are to be privileged? How should they be justified? (p. 71)

Apart from individual perceptions, education is influenced by social, economic and political policy trends on a global, national and local level. Currently, Australia’s education system is characterised by a global trend towards accountability, a trend that has been prevalent in Western nations like the United States and the United Kingdom for some time. Incrementally, trends like standardised testing are adopted across systems and unintentionally, new models of operation become normalised. Eisner (2002) argues:

> All of us, through the process of acculturation and professional socialization, acquire a language and a set of images that define our views of education and schooling. These images do not enter our cortex announcing their priorities. They do not herald a position or proclaim a set of virtues. Rather, they are a part of the atmosphere. When we talk about learners rather than children, competencies rather than understanding, behaviour rather than experience, entry skills rather than development, instruction rather than teaching, responses rather than action, we make salient certain images: our language promotes a view, a way of looking at things, as well as a set of images, of what schools should be, of how children should be taught, and of how consequences of schooling should be identified. Because differences...are subtle, we often use a new word without recognizing that the new word is capable of creating a new world. (pp. 359/360)

Written during a period characterised by a culture of performativity (Lyotard, 1984), this study examines how current educational policies have affected the participant
experiences in the case study school. This thesis examines these concerns by generating an in-depth case study of one metropolitan Queensland school investigating the aspects of education that are valued by the children, their parents and teachers in order to determine if there is any mismatch between what is valued and the enactment of education policy. A particular focus of the study is how the enactment of national and local educational policies have affected the delivery and perceived value of arts education in this school community. This thesis came about as a result of professional dissatisfaction with the way in which education appeared to be heading in Queensland since the adoption of polices such as national standardised testing. Luke (2011) notes:

Viewed from this autobiographical and cultural standpoint, the relationships between research and the making of policy, between policy and classroom practice, between evidence and reform are not abstract. They are everyday problems facing politicians and bureaucrats, school boards, parents and principals, teacher educators and teachers. (p. 367)

Polices like standardised national testing, have filtered down from their origins in global education reform movements such as the knowledge economy, accountability frameworks and neoliberalism. While they take their meanings from these global frameworks, they are invariably shaped by local contexts. Kenway (2007) suggests that the combination of global frameworks and local contexts has created an Australian education policy that embraces an “accountants” and “cartographers” view of schooling, where everything needs to be measured and graphed, and where there is a tendency to “collapse accountability with accountancy and ability with docility” (p. 3). Ball, Maguire, Braun and Hoskins (2011) further note that the interpretation of these new policies is complex with the result being that teachers become enactors of policy, interpreting, manipulating and contextualising them as necessary. Likewise, “the form and extent of enactment will depend on whether a policy is mandated, strongly recommended or merely suggested” (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010, p. 551). The term policy is defined in the context of this thesis in Appendix A.

agricultural model and in doing so fails to actually reform anything at all. Rather, it narrows the curriculum, de-professionalises teachers, ostracises non-core subjects, and further marginalises disaffected learners (Rotberg, 2004). Literature on the nature of knowledge suggests a fundamental change in the nature of learning has occurred where "learning (is) circulating along the same lines as money, instead of for its ‘educational value’" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 6). Identified as an input/output model, this model prioritises subjects according to their measurability and value for money (Eisner, 2002, p. 22). The model lacks the desirable “gaps” in curriculum that Abbs (1989) refers to, the “possibility thinking” that Burnard et al. (2006) refer to, and the “something more our children deserve”, that Eisner (2002a, p. 207) refers to.

Recent literature suggests that this marginalisation of the arts, can be attributed in part to global, national and local governmental policies that have confirmed and reinforced the neoliberal, input-output model of education (Lyotard, 1984; Marshall, 1999; Jeffrey, 2002), while others argue that there is now a disproportionate amount of time spent on the basics, reducing teacher professionalism and discouraging alternative ways of teaching and learning and disenfranchising students (Hursh, 2008; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Maguire, Perryman, Ball & Braun, 2012).

In terms of curriculum management, this valuing of some areas of learning over others, according to some authors (Robinson, 2006; Reid, 2009; Alexander, 2010), potentially transmits an impression about what knowledge is important and what is not, and a hierarchical structure emerges that places subjects that can be measured at the top, for example, English, mathematics and science, and those that are not easily measured at the bottom, for example, the arts. Teachers as professional educators and parents and students as educational stakeholders, prioritise their choices and perceptions based on these impressions.

As a music teacher with more than 26 years’ experience working in Queensland schools I am keenly interested in how these policy shifts have affected schools in general, and arts education and educators in particular. My professional experience notes that while the arts might be valued by a majority of Australians (Costantoura, Saatchi & Saatchi, 2001), arts subjects in schools are becoming more and more marginalised as the various disciplines within the arts struggle to achieve legitimacy. This thesis set out to test whether the perceived marginalisation is a reality and to investigate whether or not in adopting policies that over-emphasize the value of core subjects, education might potentially be reproducing
social, economic and cultural capital and amplifying disadvantage (Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012).

In the following sections, an introduction to the global and local educational landscapes this study sits within will be offered, including a brief overview of the positioning of arts education within this geography. This discussion will be followed by an outlining of the research questions that guide this thesis, accompanied by a rationale that justifies the importance of the study. Brief contextual information about the case study school follows to provide the reader with a site upon which this study is built. The background of the researcher is also offered, before an overview of the thesis as a whole is provided.

The global landscape: neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation

Neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation are three key features of the current global educational landscape, and all three have exerted pressure on the school at the centre of this study. In the following sections, these features will be examined in turn, beginning with neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism

Since the 1970s, neoliberal agendas have gained immense influence in society and there are many and varied descriptions of what they are. “Adopted by social-democratic as well as conservative parties”, Connell andDados (2014, p. 117) note, “neoliberalism, in effect, is a new stage in the development of an integrated capitalist state” (p. 120). Neoliberalism now extends across the globe to all cultures and people, influencing “global trade, the state and military force, and land and agriculture” (Connell and Datos, 2014, p. 118). Neoliberalism is characterised by a language and culture of manufacture and efficiency, which has filtered into everyday life. There are many forms of neoliberalism, but fundamentally the practice represents an accumulation of certain political and economic landmarks (such as those adopted by the Thatcher and Reagan governments in the 1980s), that have occurred in the past five or six decades. Neoliberalism is now shaped as much by ideologies, policies and practices from Europe and the US, as from more recent developments in other parts of the world. This new neoliberalism now covers “three major arenas of debate and social struggle...global trade, the state and military force, and land and agriculture” (Connell and Datos, 2014, p. 118).
An influential factor in the spread of neoliberalism is the desire for choice and opportunity. Choice is a highly sort after quality in the industrialised world. Choice guided by the free market, is the foundation of neoliberalism. Harvey (2007) defines neoliberalism as:

A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. (p. 2)

Harvey (2007) notes that neoliberalism encourages a fundamental shift in the way state institutions operate. For example, once the state has set in place the mechanisms for a society to function, such things as education and healthcare, there should be no state intervention into the daily practices of that society. There is an assumption made that the individual is and should be free to choose the conditions in which they live, particularly pertaining to things like education and health. Harvey (2007) contends that “the assumption that individual freedoms are guaranteed by freedom of the market and of trade are a cardinal feature of neoliberal thinking” (p. 7) and that “each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being” (p. 65). Similarly Dimitriadis, Cole and Costello (2009) describe neoliberalism as a mechanism opposite to Keynesianism, where “an unfettered marketplace (or 'free market') uses scarce resources most effectively, promoting the overall good” also noting that neoliberal practice is characterised by small government, deregulation in business and decreased funding for “public safety nets...including schools and curricula” (p. 366). As a consequence, there is an increased focus on other measures that further support the state from delivering public provisions. In a neoliberal state there appears to be limited provisions made for those who do not have the freedom to choose. Hursh (2008) contends that as a practice, neoliberalism acts as a way for the state to shed responsibility to the individual claiming that the individual is now “free...from state interference”, free to pursue "their self-interests, which, coincidently, also served societal interests and promoted social progress” (p. 62). The effects on education and government provisions are the same, as a result of the transfer from state responsibility to the individual. “Competition, markets and privatization” underpin this shift and there is a heavy focus on self-provision and individual accountability for failure (Hursh, 2006, p. 20).
Hursh (2008) maintains that neoliberalism is complex and contradictory, noting paradoxically that equity is often used as the chief justification for choice. This justification is based on the neoliberal assumption that "a rising tide lifts all boats" (Harvey, 2007, p. 64). Harvey (2007) notes that neoliberal philosophy extols the virtue of self-directed choice extending "into the realms of welfare, education, health care and even pensions", yet, as previously noted, there is little concession for those who have no choice (p. 65). Furthermore, Hursh (2008) maintains, that neoliberalism has "become so embedded within our economic and political decision making that neoliberalism is rarely explicitly invoked as a rationale" (p. 61). Correspondingly, Ball (2012) reflects this concern noting the term is "used so widely and so loosely that it is danger of becoming meaningless" and more significantly, unchallenged (p. 3). As a consequence, Harvey (2007) argues that without a drastic divergence from the current position held by most industrialised nations, neoliberalism will continue to dominate public discourse, because “neoliberal theory and rhetoric...has also all along primarily functioned as a mask for practices that are all about the maintenance, reconstruction, and restoration of elite class power” (p. 188). Connell and Dados (2014) note that this is undoubtedly the case in the Northern hemisphere, but argue that in places like Australia, neoliberal polices were adopted as a means of becoming more “internationally competitive” (p. 123) as opposed to a means of dismantling the “welfare state” (p. 123). They argue that irrespective of the purpose, the overall results have been the same and “the worldwide extension of market logic continues, with education currently at the cutting edge – through international league tables for schools, corporatization of universities, restructuring of teaching workforces, and the redefinition of education systems as export industries“ (Connell and Dados, 2014, p. 132).

Since Milton Freidman advocated choice for schooling in the US in the 1970s, education systems have played with the idea of choice in schools. Kenway (2007) attributes the spread of neoliberalism globally on a 1996 OECD report titled, The Knowledge-Based Economy (OECD, 1996). She observed the influence of neoliberalism in education policy where a link was made between economies, education, knowledge and learning. Kenway (2007) concludes that “knowledge economies and associated discourses have become powerful levers and drivers of policy in...the OECD...in many nation states such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada” (p. 2) and, as previously noted the focus had moved to accountability. Ball (2012) argues that neoliberalism is characterised by the “increasing role of business, social enterprise and philanthropy in education service delivery and
education policy” (p.1). In part, there is evidence that neoliberalism is responsible for the dramatic changes taking place in this delivery. Ball (2012) goes further arguing, "in relation to education...the sum of these changes indicates the beginning of the end of state education in its ‘welfare form(s)’” (p. 2). Hursh (2008) states, “policies promoting testing, accountability, and choice...rather than educating students to be critical democratic citizens, are more likely to drive all but the wealthiest schools to focus on teaching the basic skills rather than complex, interdisciplinary learning” (p. 69). As a result, Hursh (2008) concedes that one of the inevitable outcomes is competition between schools, parents and students, “undermining...their incentive to engage in public discourse regarding the nature and purpose of schooling” (p. 69).

It can be argued that neoliberalism in education is modeled on efficiency measures. For example, Bonnor and Caro (2007) state:

The free market says if there are perceived problems (for example, a school) these can simply be solved by creating more competition...it treats education like any other product: people are consumers and any idea of them learning to become citizens is not relevant. (p. 35)

Terms like “knowledge economy” and “rule-based markets” highlight the influence of neoliberalism and they are the philosophical underpinnings for much of the current education policy in Australia. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) and Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) respectively note that the shift in policy discourse to reflect the neoliberal philosophy has also involved a change in educational purpose from one of equity and democratic principles, to one where policy and practice is “appropriated by the central state in its determination to control, manage and transform society” through solely economic means (Braun, Maguire & Ball, 2010, p. 549). Furthermore, the hierarchy of subjects is evidence of accountability steering education policy, with measurable outcomes weighted against un-measurable ones. It has always been the case that the 3Rs have dominated the school curriculum, but not at the expense of other areas, nor linked so closely to standardised testing, nor at the expenses of the most disadvantaged. However, as Alexander (2010) notes, “merely to question the continuing hegemony of this view is to court ridicule” so alternatives are not often considered (p. 175). On a practical level, schooling exists to serve social and economic purposes. For example, Marshall (1999) notes:
Education is required to create the skills which are indispensable if the wider social system is to perform efficiently. These skills are of two kinds: those that contribute specifically to enable a country to participate in the markets of world competition and those that contribute to maintaining internal cohesion and legitimation. (p. 310)

However, the balance between schooling as an emancipative tool and the pedestrian purposes it also serves seems to have been tipped towards the latter. Currently, neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation are interlinked in what Ball (2012) recognises as a new method of practice in education in the twenty first century as well a reflection of "the complex and changing relationships between market, the state and the public sector...invested with both antagonism and interdependence" (p. 29). Consequently, education is no longer a vehicle for personal liberation and growth but rather designed instead, to "supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions" Neoliberalism shapes the way schools; teachers and students operate, through a process of "professional osmosis". At a macro level this occurs through policy, which has been founded on the principles of the market – competition, accountability and economic imperatives, and at the micro level, through the practical application of these policies in the form of measurable outcomes, increased pressure to produce results and to conform to a "one-size-fits-all" model of schooling. As Ball (2012) maintains, "neo-liberalism is realized in mundane and immediate ways in our institutions of everyday life" and it now "speaks and cuts through our language, purposes, decisions and social relations" (p. 29). As a consequence, individuals and organisations have embarked on a continuous process of reinvention in order to appear more closely aligned to the standards and operational practices of the market. In education these practices include operating schools as if they were businesses dealing in commodities.

Neoliberalism has encouraged performativity, or more precisely as Ball (2012) notes, "performativity is the quintessential form of neo-liberal governmentality...it operates within a framework of judgment within which what ‘improvement’ and effectiveness are, is determined for us, and ‘indicated’ of us by measures of quality and productivity" (p. 31). Neoliberalism is now embedded in our operational practices, but it also extends into the way individuals have come to understand their position in the workplace, how we understand our daily life outside of the workplace (Lumby, 2009; Ball 2012 & Thompson, 2012). These authors contend that performativity has invaded "our heads, and our souls" (Ball, 2012, p. 31) and as part of this process, the individual succumbs to the process of
performative practice in order to appear professionally valuable. It is a situation whereby every player extrinsically and intrinsically receives and perpetuates the pressure emanating from the culture of performativity. If the process is questioned, it is assumed that the person asking the question is somehow at fault, or unwilling to see the need for improvement. Ball (2012) notes, the "consequence of continual animation and calculation is for many a growing sense of ontological insecurity; both a loss of a sense of meaning in what we do and of what is important in what we do" (p. 31). On a practical level, this means teaching becomes a profession no longer characterised by compassion and courage, joy and innovation, but rather by accountability and judgment in curriculum delivery and pastoral care, and "nothing but the facts" (Bartlett, 1993, adapted from Dickens, 1854, p. 1).

Neoliberalism has encouraged and perpetuated the growth and institutionalisation of performativity in education policy and practice. Globalisation has been the vehicle in which these two pervasive states have travelled from nation to nation. The following section discusses the term performativity and how like neoliberalism, it is complicated and multidimensional. This is followed by a discussion of globalisation.

**Performativity**

Performativity is a broad and complex term with compound meanings, interpreted in different ways by different people. The term can relate to a number of differing, yet related circumstances - between individual, organisation and culture; perception and practice; policy and enactment (Ball, 1997 & 2012; Youdall, 2004; Lumby, 2009; Thompson, 2012). Performativity is far-reaching and it exists at the macro level, where organisational systems construct policy that increases the absorption at a micro level, where individuals are affected by the pressure performativity projects. As previously stated, neoliberalism is now entrenched in education policy discourse. As a result, performativity characterises much of the way current education systems operate. Neoliberalism and performativity now co-exist in a relationship of dependence, and it can be argues that this relationship has altered the purpose of education. For example, Marshall (1999) states:

> Bleak indeed is the desire for perfection. In this condition, the demands of performativity mean not the pursuit of educational ideals, like personal autonomy, or emancipation but, instead, the subsumption of education under the demands of efficiency for the total social system. (p. 310)

Similarly, Perryman et al. (2011) note:
The policy explosion of the last twenty years has been made possible in part because a constant stream of criticism has led to public and political acceptance of the idea that teachers are in need of reform...and this reform needs to be monitored by increasing surveillance. (p. 181)

A review of the literature suggests the term moves and changes according to the context. Lingard (2009), Thompson (2010) and Ball (2012) concur that performativity in current education practice has shifted the balance from collective contribution, to competition and individualism. As a consequence, this new vision, which is a reflection of business and market, has come to mean "a manufactured representation of 'the school'" (Ball, 1997, p. 318). Ball (2000) extends the argument to include the manner in which performativity also modifies the workplace and those who work within it. He states:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of 'terror' in Lyotard’s words, that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change. The performance (of individual subjects and organisations) serves as a measure of productivity or output or displays of 'quality'...they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgment. (p. 1)

At a micro level, individuals "manufacture" identify and practice on the expectations of the performative culture. As Thompson (2012) notes, this manufacturing process extends to the roles played by students and teachers, and argues that performativity to some extent has always existed in schooling as part of the formal process of delivering, assessing and reporting on curriculum. However, the notion of the good student and good teacher in part relates to the pressures exerted from performativity. Thompson (2012, p. 416) maintains, "like teachers, students in Australian schools are exposed to cultures that prioritise measuring and testing, reporting using mandatory standards and systems, state-sanctioned teaching methods, reformed organisational policies and reformed curriculum policies". This has resulted in students reimagining themselves according to the understanding that a good student is one who gets the best results, and where “the good student is best considered as a range of performances that are multiple, dynamic and contradictory, as students struggle to produce and position themselves within complex webs of power, or performativity" (Thompson, 2012, p. 417). Students appear to understand that to succeed one has to be seen to be performing according to the rules of play. Lumby (2009) also links
Performativity with identity whereby identity is constructed around adjusting personal values and practices to align them to performative practices explicit within a school. A teacher for example, might cease to “fit in” if they are not conforming to the dominant culture or operational model adopted within that school.

Ball offers several key arguments in relation to this situation, arguing that neoliberalism and performativity work hand-in-hand with policy that is constructed around the principles of the marketplace. In this view, performativity, excludes the voices of teachers and students, and instead privileges the mechanisms driving educational improvement on competition and accountability, directed from the macro level (Ball, 1997 & 2012). Ball (1997) states, “competition viewed on the macro level is seen as a positive way of improving results – on a micro level interpreted as competition and judgment” (p. 317). Furthermore, Ball (1997) contests that “professionalism is replaced by accountability, collegiality by competition...costing and surveillance” when schools are reimagined using performative policies constructed through the lens of neoliberalism (p. 326). He goes on to argue when performativity is embedded at a macro level in the core values and policies of the organisation, it alters the focus of schools from differentiation and innovation, to conformity and accountability. Ball (1997) further notes that schools are complex and often “paradoxical institutions” where on one hand meaningful and continuous professional development for teachers is very beneficial and “they are invigorated and empowered by new demands and skills”, at the same time, as the lens moves too closely to accountability, teachers become “exhausted by additional work, and, in some cases alienated from their selves and their colleagues” (p. 334). As a result, professional relationships are jeopardized. Ball (1997) notes, “what counts as good and bad, of course. Rests on what qualities of institutions are valued” (p. 334)

An increased emphasis on performativity in schools is evidenced by the change in work practices of teachers and students towards an input-output model (Jeffrey, 2002; Ball, 2000). The guiding neoliberal agenda of “more for less” mentality manifests itself in narrow, standardised curricula and testing in order to produce measurable results that will satisfy a market discourse. These intertwining discourses “support one another and as a network are more difficult to resist” (Hursh, 2008, p. 125). When conditions are then mandated and given legitimacy through legislation and government policy they are further normalised and adopted by the community, teachers and students. Ownership of the discourse is significant because it is directly related to who controls what is considered
important. That is, what constitutes knowledge, what is valued and in the case of schools who and what steers education policy and practice (Ball, 2000). For example, Woodward (2005) argues, “reality cannot be captured within one genre of discourse or representation of events...science will miss aspects of events which narrative knowledge will capture...legitimation of knowledge by performativity terrorises the production of ideas” (para. 16). The perception exists that if more value lies in knowledge that has a scientific nature as opposed to an emancipative nature, there will follow a dominance of the scientific, where testing and the production of scientific type results equate to a type of scientific knowledge and where “only knowledge which is legitimated is legitimate” (Woodward, 2005, para. 20). Performativity to a great extent excludes alternatives (Lumby, 2009).

Lyotard (1984) defined performativity according to the way knowledge is understood and used, predicting a change in the status of knowledge. He observed that “the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the post-modern age”, resulting in a dominant discourse about scientific knowledge (p. 3), noting that performativity represents the new relationship between “wealth, efficiency, and truth” (p. 46). Additionally, Marshall (1999) argues:

Performativity, post-Lyotard, has become almost a term of abuse to be used for the ideology and efficient practices of those institutions which, based upon the human sciences, are increasingly dominated by bureaucracy wherein goals are set in ever narrowing demands of reporting, and where accountability is measured by outputs. (p. 310)

In education, assuming that there is a fundamental change in the nature of knowledge, performative policy leads to value being placed on areas of learning that produce results, teaching being reduced to a means of monitoring the progress of results, and subjects like music are reduced to “edutainment”. In addition, when the results are laden with performance incentives, behaviours change, schools adopt mechanisms that further amplify the performativity and in turn further amplify the outcomes. As Ball (2000) notes, there is an “ethical retooling in the public sector which is replacing client ‘need’ and professional judgment with commercial decision making” (p. 17). Furthermore he argues that, “within the framework of performativity...teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, ‘add value’ to themselves, improve their productivity, live an existence of calculation” (p. 18).
In this thesis, performativity in terms of culture refers to the working culture at both a macro and micro level, within the current schooling system, where what can be measured is most valued. Performative policy in this thesis refers to education policy, which has been devised through the lens of neoliberalism with an explicit focus on compliance, data, results, accountability and competition. It is policy that results in reduced or non-existent professional autonomy, a reduction in holistic educational practices and a reduced focus on the child. When such macro level policy adopts and promotes a neoliberal philosophy, local practice is shaped accordingly, because the dominant and overarching mechanism of performativity explicitly and/or surreptitiously steers practice at that micro level.

For neoliberalism and performativity to exist on the broad scale that they now appear to, it is important to consider the role globalisation has played in this shift. The next section defines and discusses globalisation.

Globalisation

Globalisation defined by Singh (2004) is “a phenomenon, an argument, and a vision...a set of theories that provide researchers with conceptual tools for analyzing and understanding current economic, cultural, and technological changes” (p. 103). This includes a process of ‘shrinking’ existing practices, cultures, economies, systems and understandings down to be more homogenous, and extends across boundaries of state and country. Singh (2004) proposes that, “theories of globalization often emphasize different aspects of the globalizing process (economic, cultural, technological, political), and interpret these processes in widely divergent ways” (p. 104). In this thesis, globalisation refers to the process by which global trends in economic, cultural, technological and political affairs have influenced education policy down to the local level. Singh (2004) notes that the effects of globalisation on education are evident in the application of:

- Global capitalist economic processes on public education institutions; the rise of neoliberal, market- oriented educational policies; the influence of supranational institutions (such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]) on national education systems; and the emergence of new global cultural flows that shape new constructions of local identity and community (p. 104).

Globalisation in education policy and practice results from the direct influence of transnational organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNICEF, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank
on national decision-making (Moutsios, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). These transnational organisations have replaced the role the state in developing education policy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The term ‘the state’ is used throughout the section and it is defined as the organisation primarily responsible for the public provision. It is unique to each context. The term once referred to the Westphalian sovereignty where complete control was exercised over the workings of government and territory with no influence from external pressures or shifts (Beaulac, 2004). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) maintain that “globalisation has destabilised this assumption” and that education policy now reflects these shifts in social, economic and political policy (p. 14). The state therefore is no longer an entity operating under guidelines that are localised and context specific. Rather the state, although still directly responsible for public provision, is now heavily influenced by the philosophy of neoliberalism, and market mechanisms steer policy (Ball, 2006a).

Moutsios (2010) notes that as early as 1998, transnational organisations linked human capital to the world economy through the field of education policy, noting that these systems acquiesce to the “global economy” (p. 122). As a result, these transnational organisations indirectly influence the way citizens perceive the purpose of education, and that there is a global adoption of this new policy discourse (Perryman, 2006). Moutsios (2010) suggests that globalisation represents the placement of power and purpose in education policy, stating:

Power in education policy lies in a transnational space of economic and political rule...in the increasingly global acceptance of a specific perception of what education should be about: to maintain or increase ‘economic competitiveness’ or ‘growth’ or ‘development’ or, ultimately, ‘progress’. Progress, understood since the establishment of the nation state mainly as the unlimited accumulation of scientific and technological knowledge and increase of production and consumption capacity, continues, despite its transformations, to be a guiding idea and thus a source of widespread consent for policy-making across societies and education systems (p. 123).

Moutsios (2010) argues that the influence of transnational organisations to a great extent, has replaced the role of the state as creator of policy to one of modifier of policy, stating, “what we see under globalisation...is that social progress, identified more than ever before with economic competitiveness, is becoming a global policy-making project, managed, coordinated and measured through/by transnational institutions” (p. 123).
following is an excerpt from one of the education policy documents upon which Moutsios (2010) reflects. As a transnational organisation the OECD (2000) predicted:

In the coming decades there is a good chance that four simultaneous and powerful societal transformations will give rise to more variety and interdependence: from the uniformity and obedience of the mass era to the uniqueness and creativity of a knowledge economy and society; from rigid and isolated command planning to flexible, open and rule-based markets; from predominantly agricultural structures to industrial urbanisation; and lastly, from a relatively fragmented world of autonomous societies and regions to the dense and indispensable interdependencies of an integrated planet. Policy choices will be the determining factor in encouraging the potential synergies and minimising the friction and risks of conflict that these changes may bring (p. 7).

Through, the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA), the OECD extends its influence into national and local education policy. Member nations are competitive and ever observant of the statistics on education generated by PISA for the OECD. Moutsios (2010) notes that the PISA aligned member states account for “almost 90% of the world’s economy” and notes that this is a considerable influence over local decision-making (p. 122). The link between education reform, globalisation and economic security is highlighted in the following OECD statement: “education is important for individuals, for the competitiveness of nations and for social progress...as the world economy becomes more integrated...education will continue to be crucial to such endeavours” (OECD, 2011, p. 25).


Globalisation has become a major factor in motivating countries to reform their education systems and their choice of specific reforms. They are concerned about the loss of jobs in traditional industries and recognise that competitiveness will depend increasingly on a highly skilled workforce that can meet the demands of knowledge and high technology industries (p. 392).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) note that the state, once responsible for the development and implementation of public policy, must now look to global orientations to determine what might best steer practice. Henceforth, globalisation as a pretext for policy “has led to an
emphasis on policies of education as the production of human capital to ensure the competitiveness of the national economy” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 18). Education reform is seen as an investment in the future and therefore education itself has become a “global policy-making process” (Moutsios, 2010, p. 123).

Meyer (2007) attributes this change in process to a series of ecological, economic and social challenges of the past few decades that led to a perceived need for global “collective action” (p. 266). Meyer (2007) goes on to acknowledge that in striving for world social, environmental and economic stability the global state had evolved. Peters (2001) noted that the global state prominently influences national and local education policy producing a focus on the new knowledge economy and human capital. Globalisation and the unification of economic and social trends have resulted in the human condition being standardised and identified globally as “capital”. Human rights, environmental rights, political conditions and economic earning capacity are now amalgamated into a ‘global’ village metaphor that now influences and defines government policy.

Adoption of an international policy agenda by Australia can be attributed to the globalisation of education policy. Phillips and Ochs (2003) note, “foreign example is used by policy makers at all stages of the processes of initiating and implementing educational change” (p. 451), referring to the globalisation of education policy as a transfer of stimuli and in turn a “borrowing, modeling, transfer, diffusion, appropriation and copying” of policies across nation states (p. 38). Recent polices moves for example, are results of policy “me-too-ism” (Fasano & Winder, 1991) adapted from the and the UK and the USA in an effort to address the crisis in education, and to offer the public more choice and more accountable teachers and schools. The Australian policy context is discussed in detail in following sections.

In the next section, closer examination of the effects of this accountability agenda will be discussed in terms of high stakes testing, standardisation and the apparent misalignment between policy and practice.
The effects of neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation on teaching and learning

There are a number of implications for this new policy agenda. In terms of teaching and learning in schools, it favours subjects that can be measured, and marginalises those that appear to be difficult to measure. Abbs (1989), Greene (2001), Robinson (2009), Eisner (2005), Craft (2005) and Stoll, Fink and Earl (2005) maintain that education is now modeled on training with a focus on the acquisition of skills and a type of knowledge different to when knowledge was considered "to be an end in itself" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 5).

Eisner (2005) argues "the values and visions that have driven education during the first quarter of the twentieth century" have returned with a "vengeance today". This model is based on data and the "measurement of outcomes", has "an industrial culture in our schools, one whose values are brittle and whose conception of what's important, narrow...where achievement has triumphed over inquiry" (p. 207). Education becomes training and as a result, Abbs (1994) notes that "training invariably involves a narrowing down of the consciousness to master certain techniques or skills" (p. 15). This assertion has become normalised, and operates as a deeply entrenched paradigm that is now difficult to question. Likewise, Abbs (2003), Robinson (2006, 2009) and Alexander (2010a) concur that education systems have embraced a culture of measurement that has compromised the status of inquiry, authentic learning, historical and cultural experience, and the individual's thirst for knowledge, the teaching profession and teachers.

Early psychologists such as Thorndike set this process in motion by applying a scientific model to psychology and education, likening them to science. Thorndike's theory redefined education as a vehicle for success in society rather than as a vehicle for developing the mind, and it has direct connections to the neoliberal theory of education today (Marginson, 1993; Kenway, 2007). Dewey (1956), a contemporary of Thorndike, argued that education although still a social science, was inextricably bound with ethics and values. Reflecting on this, Luke (2011) notes that:

Dewey proposed a philosophy of education that focused on "social efficiency," that is, the production of human capital, laboring subjects. This focus he shared with Thorndike, but he also argued for the importance of citizenship and, indeed, cultural transmission. (p. 376)
Like Dewey, Abbs (1994) maintains that education must have at the core, a philosophy that encourages teachers to take risks, that values culture and history, and that focuses on the individual as part of that culture and society. However, despite the influence of Dewey, education policy has been unable to break from the more dominant traditions of Thorndike and the scientific model of measurement, ignoring the complexity of social structures and individuals, and placing too much emphasis on results. As Eisner (2005) states, “Thorndike won and Dewey lost” (p. 206). The model proposed originally by Thorndike and his contemporaries aligns well with the current neoliberal, performative culture of the current 21st century. Marginson (1993) argues that education now “assumes that the role of education is to maximise the development of each individual in terms of his or her ‘potential’, along with the need to educate for citizenry and economic contribution – the notion of human capital theory” (p. 19). Likewise, Greene (1995) observes that schools are now primarily responsible for producing employees, stating that children are “conceived of as human resources...raw materials to be shaped to market demand” (p. 32). In primary education it has resulted in an imbalance between skills acquisition through a “back to the basics” curricula based on the dictates of performativity such as testing, versus a holistic education that transforms the individual and creates a love of learning.

Viewed through a wider lens, recent trends in education might also be contributing to the gap between those who are able to navigate the system (through the accumulation and cultivation of capital) and those who are not (Lareau, 2003). Bardsley (2007), whilst acknowledging the complexity of schooling, maintains that one “indisputable fact remains that the system maintains or furthers the disadvantage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds” attributing much of this to policy (p. 494). Furthermore, Bardsley (2007) argues that in introducing polices that further benefit the middle and upper classes, “tiers of educational opportunity become entrenched, the vulnerability of those students from marginalised communities who do not have access to capital will increase and the goal of maximising the development of human capital will be undermined” (p. 497).

Lareau (2003) identified a significant part of this process can be attributed to “concerted cultivation” (p. 2). This is a process acted out by parents, which is characterised by open exchanges about the system, challenges to the system, understanding of the system and involving their children in a multitude of additional activities that stimulate educational advantage. These are choices made mostly by middle class and "to a lesser extent" working
class parents in an effort to gain the best possible future outcomes for their children based on navigating effectively the schooling system. Thomas, Keogh and Hay (2012) state:

Concerted cultivation refers to active, intensive parenting strategies where parents intervene in their children's education through the promotion of communication between children and parents, encouragement and rewards, support with homework, and additional home curriculum provision. (p. 3)

The accumulation of capital is also a result of policies and procedures that inevitably favour those in power (Bourdieu, 1986). As the “social world is accumulated history” the processes tend to be reproduced (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 1). Capital is further defined by Wacquant (1989) as a characteristic which:

Takes time to accumulate and which, has a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. (p. 5)

In addition, Lareau (2003) notes that through concerted cultivation, certain parents are able to equip their children with skills to succeed. Concerted cultivation is another form of capital attainable by some (usually middle and upper class children) and not by others (usually poor and working class children). This cultivation occurs, not so much as a result of economic capital, but rather as a result of the accumulation of social and cultural capital within the given circumstance, such as knowledge of how the system works and how to navigate the pathways to success. Policies such as standardised testing, a back to basics pretext for curriculum development inevitably favours those with more ability to practice concerted cultivation.

In research conducted over a period of twenty years Thomas, Keogh and Hay (2012), observed that concerted cultivation was also linked to perceptions of the role systems played in the education process. They concluded that parents to some extent, as a result of concerted cultivation, have assumed the responsibility for student academic performance noting:

These attitudes have provided the practical models for neoliberal policy imaginaries that have sought to shift responsibility for student educational outcomes away from education bureaucracies and schools and onto parents and students themselves. (p. 28)
Furthermore, Thomas, Keogh and Hay (2012) contend that this influence is also attributable to the success or failure of a school in general to meet outcomes. They also argue that the "dominant discourses of parenting that have emerged within the neoliberal policy regimes in recent years...have tended increasingly to hold parents responsible for the educational outcomes of students" (p. 26).

Henceforth, as a result of neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation, new education policy advances four problematic situations. Firstly, a focus on measurement, and in turn subjects that can be measured (English, mathematics and science); secondly, there is an apparent marginalisation of subjects that are perceived as un-measureable; there is an apparent neglect of alternative views of teaching and learning and finally there is real potential to increase educational disadvantage.

The next section discusses the Australia context and how these trends have affected education policy.

The Australian educational landscape

This research has taken place in a time of challenge and uncertainty with the release of many new policies designed to revolutionise education at both a state and federal level. To address the apparent crisis in education in Australia the Education Revolution policy (2007) was introduced. This was partly a fiscal stimulus response to the global financial crisis (injecting money into nation building projects –Building the Education Revolution), also including ICT packages for schools (Digital Education Revolution) and a proposal to further align the states and territories in terms of curriculum and assessment in all schools across the nation. Two of the resulting policies were a new national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum and the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (Reid, 2009). Reid (2009) suggests that the Australian community is yet to fully understand the impact of this policy agenda, but notes the adoption of such policy that has been strongly informed by overseas influences is puzzling. Reid (2009) notes, “just as Australia is gearing up to adopt them, such schemes have been abandoned in many countries...and are being strongly questioned in the UK and a number of American states” (p. 22). Luke (2010) argues that often reforms “are a solution seeking a rough demonstration of an educational problem” and that Australia’s education system at present appears to be presented as a “system in crisis” (p. 59). Luke (2011) also notes:
After a decade of implementation of centralized policy in the United States and the
United Kingdom, there is ample evidence that the actuary's approach can make for
reductive educational science, short-term policy orientations, and a plethora of
unwanted collateral effects at the school and classroom levels. (p. 368)

Furthermore, Reid (2009) argues, “more broadly, the whole approach is consistent
with the philosophy of organising education systems through markets...at the heart of this
approach to accountability is competition – the belief that the best way to encourage quality
is to get individuals and institutions to compete” (p. 21). Reid (2009) does not naively
dismiss the need for accountability, but rather argues “against the forms of accountability
that reduce quality and widen inequality” (p. 21). In addition to this policy alignment to
accountability, there appears to be reinforcement of the hierarchy of subjects. The
researcher’s professional experience suggests that while the arts appear to be valued by
approximately 50% of Australians (Costantoura, Saachi & Saachi, 2002), arts practice in
schools is more and more marginalised as the subject area struggles for legitimacy against
the mathematico-science tradition. This situation has been partly a result of the global,
national and local governmental policy that has instilled a neoliberal, input-output model
for education (Lyotard, 1984; Marshall, 1999; Jeffrey, 2002). There is now a
disproportionate amount of time spent on the preferred/mandated subjects, which
potentially reduces teacher professionalism and discourages and reduces alternative ways
of teaching and learning (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2009; Hursh, 2008; Maguire,
Perryman, Ball & Braun, 2012; Lingard, 2010; Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012). Yet, Ball, McGuire,
Braun and Hoskins (2011) argue that as part of the professional understanding of
mandates, teachers at the school level enact policy in many different ways through “a
collective process” where players move and change according to different groups and
interpretations (p. 631). Furthermore, they argue “the policy process is iterative and
additive, made up of interpretations and translations, which are inflected by existing values
and interests (teachers have a multiplicity of interests and values), personal and
institutional, by context, and by necessity” (p. 635). These interpretations are the focus of
this thesis.
Research questions and approach

Set against the global, national and local policy backdrop, three questions guide the research:

1. What are the competing discourses of education in the global, national and local policy contexts?
2. What influence do these discourses have on education in one Queensland state primary school community?
3. What do teachers, parents and students value in education and do the arts fit in?

In order to address these questions, an in-depth case study approach is adopted, with the bulk of the data being generated through interviews, questionnaires and observations. Focused on the community of one large Queensland metropolitan state primary school over a period of 18 months the interviews invited teachers, parents and students to identify what they value, prioritise and practice in schooling. In terms of student participants, the research examines the way they perceive the delivery of curriculum, their responses to standardised testing processes and their engagement with subjects like the arts. In terms of parent participants, the research examines the values held of education generally and how these values are enacted to assist children in learning. In the case of the teachers, the research examines how priorities are made based on professional judgment, philosophy and values, and how arts education policy has been enacted in this particular school. The research examines how these three groups and the values they hold intertwine with each other and align to current education policy.

The researcher’s background

In the words of Dimitriadis, Cole and Costello (2009) “this work betrays a deep faith in the arts in and of themselves” (p. 367). It is a strong bias that cannot be overlooked in this thesis. This deep faith is not without its problems however, for many who share this passion have not demonstrated sufficient awareness of the pressures that impact on arts enactment in schools. As Dimitriadis, Cole and Costello (2009) go on to note, “these pressures are continuing to intensify, and as such, researchers, practitioners, and arts advocates should ignore them at their own peril” (p. 367). Regarding the personal nature of qualitative research, Minichiello and Kottler (2009), argue that the researcher cannot effectively undertake the work "without understanding your own personality – that is, your
own motives, interests, values and goals. What are you searching for and what is the journey really about?” (p. 7). Like Minichiello and Kottler (2007) and Coghlan (2007) argue, “subjectivity is best counterbalanced thorough understanding one's own perspective in order to more carefully understand and articulate the position of others” (p. 388). In this case, my position was motivated by professional interest in how current policy might impact upon my own teaching philosophy and practice. Coghlan (2007) argues that current research trends are advocating a more interactive and contextually accountable practice, where “insider” research exists or where at a minimum, researchers are not operating in a top-down model. Furthermore, Coghlan (2007) notes in the case of the insider that this relationship with the research allows for authenticity and integrity, stating:

The researchers are already immersed in the organisation and have built up knowledge of the organisation from being an actor in the process being studied. This knowledge comes from the actor engaging in the experiential learning cycles of experiencing, reflecting, conceptualizing and experimenting in real life situations. (p. 336)

Davies (2005) describes a “position of privilege” where as an insider the researcher “is identified as part of the culture of the group” (p. 2). In the case of this research, I was a staff member, but I also have three school-aged children hence having empathy for parent participants. I was “accepted as belonging” thus enabling me to “understand what it feels like for people in the setting” (Davies, 2005, p. 3). Similar to the study by Haines (2009) who was a teacher/researcher at a large state secondary school in Queensland examining the impact of new policy on school culture and pedagogy, positioning my research in a context of familiarity enabled a greater depth and breadth of access to the organisational culture and operations. Haines (2009) acknowledged the benefits and impediments to such as position, but noted that the former compensated for the later. Likewise, the position I held at the school enabled frank and liberal conversations about education, schooling and values with both teachers and parents. I was in a position of privilege. Conversely, there are limitations to being an insider, and they are discussed in Chapter Four.

In 2009, I moved from my role as a secondary music and dance teacher to become a primary music teacher, having worked in the secondary sector for 22 years. During this time, my professional experiences focused on music and dance as independent disciplines where they were well resourced, well timetabled and well respected. This was evidenced commendable year eight to twelve student results, well-regarded public performances and
good student retention rates. I wrongly assumed that my colleagues in the primary sector enjoyed similar conditions. Upon moving into this sector, considerable misalignment between policy and practice was noted. Here classroom music was a subject area that was poorly resourced in terms of both teaching resources and time, whilst also being marginalised in terms of its perceived value.

Simultaneously, I completed a master’s degree focusing on the alignment of policy and practice in Queensland schools, as I was curious to know why classroom teachers appeared to be reluctant to implement newly developed arts curriculums and the new Outcomes Based Education reforms. In the secondary schools I had worked in, particularly in the senior years, there appeared to be no option other than to follow the prescribed syllabus as the independent authority the Queensland Studies Authority verified the work annually.

Later, as national testing programs emerged and spread, I noted that even for those with the inclination and interest, time for the arts was increasingly shrinking. I therefore became interested in examining curriculum enactment in a primary school community, and in particular, exploring what was happening to the arts in this climate of accountability characterised by national mandated tests in literacy and numeracy. The thesis, therefore, began, as a professional journey to make sense of my own world.

**The case study school: Alis Aquilae State Primary School**

Alis Aquilae* State School (AASS) is described briefly in the following section, in order to give the reader the local context prior to reading the following chapters. Chapter Four gives a detailed account of the school and the research participants.

The case study school is an Education Queensland co-educational primary school in Queensland, Australia. The population of the school is a mix of different cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds drawn predominantly from the surrounding suburbs. The school is a 'traditional' state primary school in an urbanised area with observable similarities in buildings and grounds to many other Education Queensland schools built at the time, as well as the adherence to mandated conventions like uniforms, timetables, playground duties, and other daily routines. At the start of the research, there were two administrators, a non-teaching principal and a non-teaching deputy principal, 42 teaching staff members, 24 teacher aides and auxiliary staff and approximately 520 male and female students. The school curriculum aligns with polices of the Australian Curriculum and

*To comply with ethics requirements a pseudonym has been used to identify the case study school.
Reporting Authority (ACARA), Education Queensland (EQ) and the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA).

**Importance of the study**

Many authors have discussed the implications of the marketisation of education on schools, and have hypothesised that one possible outcome will be the denigration of learning in some areas. Eisner predicted that the potential risks of policy reforms based on performativity disguised as standardised tests, league tables and prescriptive national curricula, is a society that inevitably places greater value on that which can be measured (English, mathematics and science) whilst devaluing other un-measurable subjects like the arts. This study examines these ideas by looking in detail at the effect of performative policy agendas on one average Australian school community. As Australian government education policies continue to embrace progression towards an audit culture like that which the US and the UK have both followed for a decade (Lingard, 2010), a study that seeks to identify the responses of children, parents and teachers to such an approach is timely. By incorporating a close analysis of the impact of these policies on a curriculum area that has been seriously marginalised by such policies in other contexts, such as the United States and the UK, this thesis offers the chance to establish if the concerns held by arts educators are genuine or not.

Lingard (2010) has argued that a reframing of Australian education “with the reductive effects of testing regimes and narrow construction of educational accountability” will eventually cause further degradation of already underachieving schools, reduced teacher professionalism, and a move away from the social equity principles upon which schooling in Australia has been based (p. 4). This pointed towards examining policy enactment in a primary school community, exploring what was happening to the arts in a climate of accountability that was developing as a result of the introduction of national mandated tests in literacy and numeracy. The thesis, therefore, began, as a professional journey to make sense of the researchers own world. The personal motivation for this research remains, to better understand the role of the arts in the current education environment, and to understand how and in fact if at all, an arts curriculum can be modified and delivered authentically in a primary school in a culture of performativity. This thesis offers a unique opportunity to explore the views of those most affected by education policy—students, parents and teachers as one community.
**Thesis overview**

This chapter has provided an overview of the context in which the research has been conducted – including the local and international educational landscape of the study. The chapter has also provided a rationale for the study; the position of the researcher as a professional practitioner and following is a chapter-by-chapter summary of the remaining contents.

Chapter Two provides a detailed literature review of global, national and local education policy trends and initiatives. It provides a detailed account of recent research as well as literature about the effects of performativity. Chapter Three offers material specific to the arts, focusing on literature relating to arts education, creativity, the creative economy and its role and positioning in schools. Chapter Four details the methodology. Chapters Five, Six and Seven detail the data, data analysis and results for the three key participant groups – students, parents and teachers, respectively. Finally, Chapter Eight offers a discussion of the key findings of the thesis, drawing together the responses of these three groups to offer conclusions and future research possibilities.

**Conclusion**

This chapter proposed that recent Australian education reform is not so much concerned with improving student outcomes as an exercise in accountability and performativity that has been borrowed from the policies of those in the US and the UK. These borrowed policies have in turn been influenced by the trends of neoliberalism, performativity and globalisation, trends that appear to be embedded within our Western culture. Australian government education policy has embraced the progression towards an audit culture that the UK and the USA have both followed for a decade, and again it is worthy to note that thus far these policies have been unsuccessful in improving student outcomes in the long term. The drive to undertake this research came from the researcher's professional experiences where the adoption of these new reforms had begun to impact upon the way the arts were perceived and delivered. Set against this policy backdrop, the study aims at providing direct professional advice about how to approach the arts as a teaching area, but also philosophical and academic explanations as to why the current education climate exists.
Chapter Two: global and national education policy trends

Chapter Two is divided into three sections. The first section, presents the global perspective of education policy, discussing how and why countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, adopt certain mechanisms such as high stakes testing and national curricula. In the UK these characteristics are evident in national education policies such as *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* policy (Her Majesty’s Government, 2003), and the national inspection system for UK schools - Ofsted, national testing and a national curriculum (Her Majesty’s Government, 2013). In the USA this is evident in the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) policy, *Race to the Top* (RTTT) and the *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (US Department of Education, 2013). Secondly the chapter examines in detail the way Australian policy has also been shaped by the influences of globalisation, neoliberalism and performativity. In Australia, new standardised national curriculum, standardised national testing, and publicly available school test results suggest that a similar pathway is being followed here. This includes an examination of Queensland’s policy response and how such trends have influenced local practice. Finally, this chapter looks at how performative policy has influenced arts education, leading into Chapter Three, which presents a detailed examination of the arts.

Global trends - high stakes testing, accountability and standardisation

On a broad scale, Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010) argue, “policy making has become ‘epidemic’…appropriated by the central state in its determination to control, manage and transform society” (p. 547). In addition, Levin (2010) notes that:

> Ever since public schools began, governments have been looking for ways to improve them. Over the last few decades many efforts have been made to address education issues through policy at various levels. Looking at these efforts around the world, one can only conclude that they have often been motivated more by untested assumptions or beliefs, or by issues currently in the public mind, than by evidence of value or potential impact. (p. 739)

As previously noted, the past few decades have seen governments worldwide pursue a direction in education reform, initiated by the Thatcher and Reagan governments, where
the knowledge economy and value for money underpin education policy (Peters, 2001; Ball, 2006; Rotte, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Redden & Low, 2012). Access to knowledge and a good education are now the most highly valued commodities, much more so than work in traditional or “blue collar” industries (Bardsley, 2007). Paradoxically, the nation-state has been disempowered as a result of neoliberalism and globalisation, yet simultaneously, through the same mechanism (manifested in accountability), the nation-state has increased central control. Levin (2010) acknowledges that education is one of the principle vehicles for reforming nations economically, socially and culturally, and has been thus for generations. This remains the case. However, both Lyotard (1984) and Woodward (2005), respectively argue that the fundamental basis upon which education was built has shifted, and education no longer represents emancipation but rather competition and output.

High stakes testing forms part of this process, and as a mechanism for judging schools and students, it has over many decades, achieved very little for educational reform and the improvement of student outcomes. Stobart and Eggen (2012) note “the tests become ‘high-stakes’ when the results lead to serious consequences for at least one key stakeholder. These consequences could be educational or occupational life chances for individual candidates” (p. 1). The authors note that NCLB was the epitome of neoliberal policy characterised by high-stakes testing, and despite years of failure to improve schools, worldwide, “policy makers are still drawn to high-stakes tests which offer relatively simple accountability measures and allow comparisons to be made between schools and local administrations” (Stobart & Eggen, 2012, p. 4; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2011). Many countries have adopted high stakes testing, underpinned by the philosophy of competition, over decades of schooling.

Certainly, since the inception of mass schooling there have been some significant changes made to schools, most notably to technology and information processing. Alongside this technological shift, however, there has been a shift in educational purpose (Abbs, 2003; Rotte, 2006; Kenway, 2007; Lingard, 2010; Moutsios, 2010). The focus has moved from education as a personal opportunity for growth, enrichment and individual economic security, to a means by which nations can harness economic growth on a broader global scale (Rotte, 2006). This has been disseminated in national and local practice through embracing accountability and measurement policies such as high-stakes testing. These policies have become a mechanism by which schools are judged, with good results suggesting good schools (Maguire, Perryman, Ball and Braun, 2011). Critics argue that this
model ignores the complexity of the educational process, devalues schools and teachers, narrows the curriculum and ultimately does not improve student outcomes in the long term (Thomas, 2005; Ball, 2006; Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2011; Au & Tempel, 2012; Minarechova, 2012, Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012, Hattie & Anderman, 2013).

Underpinning this position is a complex and shifting understanding of the purpose of schooling. Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) state, “there is no firm agreement among stakeholders about the core purposes of primary schools...the consequence of this is that there is a tendency for primary schools to acquire new responsibilities without shedding the old ones” (p. 7). Furthermore, they note that over the decades of mass schooling, various theories have ebbed and flowed through education policy from the scientific traditions of Thorndike to the developmentalism of Vygotsky and Piaget. The developmental view is still considered in primary education, however, Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) also note these philosophies have been recently challenged by “increasing pressure to improve test scores rather than to take account of children's stages of development and readiness to learn” (p. 9). On a broader scale, Stoll, Fink and Earl (2005), predict that governments and society in general have “become unconscious to their need to participate and have lost contact with their responsibilities and their knowledge of the society in which they live” (p. 12). They argue, along with Greene (2001), that this has led to primary and secondary schooling being turned into a vehicle for ‘training’ as opposed to fulfilling more social democratic purposes. Stoll, Fink and Earl (2005) concur that this has opened the way for “governments to set the agenda for education...do more mathematics, more science and more computers. If money is needed to finance these areas, then what gets cut are the arts, music and humanities because they are perceived to be of little utilitarian use” (p. 12).

Beginning with the United Kingdom, the next section introduces literature on performativity, globalisation and neoliberalism and the manner in which these three fields have shaped present education policy, the thesis aims to answer the research questions regarding how this global discourse affects the machinations and perspectives of one school community. UK education policy history is outlined in Appendix B, where a detailed account of is given to lay the contextual foundations for the current policy climate.
The United Kingdom

Historically, the 1988 UK Education Reform Act was instrumental in prompting the strong focus on literacy and numeracy and after decades of performative policy in the UK, concerns arose about the lack of recognition of the arts and creativity as part of the process. Robinson (1999) argued that along with the 3Rs, the arts, culture and creativity were fundamental to any educational reform, in order to create the most amenable conditions in which to learn, also suggesting that their inclusion was fundamental to the wider community of parents, business and industry, stating:

Realising the potential of young people, and raising standards of achievement and motivation includes all of these elements. Creating the right synergy and achieving the right balance in education is an urgent and complex task, from national policy making to classroom teaching. (p. 9)

Mortimor (2008) observes “the centerpiece of the English reforms is high stakes testing...this has led to situations where pupils are labeled, teachers blamed and schools threatened with closure...these tools simply help the advantaged to make even more strategic choices” (p. 19).

There has been a considerable amount of research written about the detrimental effects of accountability through high stakes testing on teaching and learning (Madaus, 1985; Madaus & Greaney, 1985; Madaus & Kellaghan, 1993; Hoffman, Assaf & Paris, 2001; Graham, Parker, Wilkins, Fraser, Westfall & Tembo, 2002; Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Taylor, Sheppard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2003; Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, Miao, 2003; Dills, 2004; Webb & Vulliamy, 2006; Perryman, 2006; Auh, 2007; Mons, 2009; Whetton, 2009; Berryhill, Linney & Fromewick, 2009; Madaus & Russell, 2010/11; Perryman, Braun, Macguire & Ball, 2011; Thompson, 2012; Dulfer, Polesel & Rice, 2012, and Mausethagan, 2013). The research argues that high stakes reduces teacher autonomy and professionalism, devalues the profession, narrows the curriculum, favours tested subjects, devalues other curriculum possibilities, and reduces education to a commodity. Further to Mortimore’s observation, Alexander (2010a) maintains that in the UK after years of performative-based reform, little has been achieved, stating:

The tests have impoverished the curriculum; the national strategies and professional standards have impoverished pedagogy; in many primary schools a professional culture of excitement, inventiveness and healthy scepticism has been
supplanted by one of dependency, compliance and even fear; and the approach may in some cases have depressed both standards of learning and the quality of teaching. (p. 7)

Research suggests that it is not testing per se that causes problems but rather the high stakes attached (Ravitch, 2010) and despite any apparent advances announced by governments, research argues that the knowledge gained for schools through the high-stakes testing process is insignificant. The tests do not acknowledge or provide solutions to the underlying causes of disengagement and low student achievement such as socio-economic factors, health and parental involvement in schooling (Madaus & Russell, 2011; Alexander, 2010; Caldwell & Vaughn, 2012). Madaus and Russell (2011) argue:

Mandating high-stakes testing allows policy-makers to side step difficult ideological, economic, and political issues that complicate addressing these underlying problems. Making high-stakes testing the heart of reform paves over the surface and obscures the root causes of poor attainment. (p. 22)

Webb and Vulliamy (2006) in a comprehensive research project involving 50 schools and 188 interviews with primary school teachers in the UK examined the effect of performative education policy from the New Labor government. The data revealed that despite some positive teaching strategies emerging as a result of the focus on literacy and numeracy and the policy Primary National Strategy, teachers claimed that “testing has gone too far”, resulting in primary schools being “over tested, scrutinised and squeezed” with “no allowance for professional judgment” (p. 6). The project concluded that teachers perceived policy enactment as “coming full circle”, referring to a return to the basics. Webb and Vulliamy (2006) predict that the UK education system faces two possible futures, one where continued professional judgment and practice is valued and enhanced, or a future that is dictated to by league tables and measurement models.

Webb and Vulliamy (2006) found that what was fundamental to teachers in terms of their work was how they nurtured their students to success. They concluded by stating, “for teachers...children are at the core of their professionalism. What keeps them in teaching is their interest in developing children’s learning, being able to boost children’s confidence and self-image, and their ability to make a difference in children’s lives” (p. 14).

In 2009 the European Commission reported that testing had in fact increased in schools, with findings suggesting that national testing had become a feature of education
systems across Europe. The commission found variation between counties with regards to “frequency and scope” of the testing, but only a few systems were free of tests. With regards to the publication of results, this was different between countries, with some publishing and some unambiguously forbidding the practice. However, on average European systems were administering at least three annual tests, and in some places up to eleven (European Commission, 2009, para. 6). The commission notes, that testing should only form a part of a much more intricate process and that at best it should be used to assist in improving student outcomes not grading them.

Looking specifically at the UK, in 2010, Robin Alexander was commissioned to write a review on the state of primary education. Known as Children, their Worlds, their Education, the review examined the impact of policy on the provision of primary education in the current climate of accountability. The review was vast in its remit and to report it here is beyond the scope of this research, but it is important literature and paints a picture of an education system broken by high-stakes testing and standardisation, accountability and choice. The review’s remit was to:

Seek to identify the purposes which primary phase of education should serve, the values which it should espouse, the curriculum and learning environment which it should provide, and the conditions which are necessary in order to ensure both that these are of the highest and most consistent quality possible and that they address the needs of the children and the society over the coming decades. (p. 15)

Alexander (2010) maintains that “education is a fundamentally moral affair” dominated by two “age-old” questions about what is taught and what should be taught in schools (p. 16). Alexander (2010) maintains that these “existing assumptions and practices are there, then, to be questioned for what they are – habits of thought and action which are so deeply ingrained that most people don’t pause to think about them” (p. 17). Historical precedence and decades of systemic policy have reiterated the hierarchical nature of school subjects. This lack of “pause to think” has further amplified the situation, as more and more policy is disseminated to schools. Eisner (2005), Robinson (2006) and Alexander (2010) argue that this has led to a further dichotomy between the basics and the rest, described by Alexander (2010) as “curriculum 1” (English, mathematics, science) and “curriculum 2” (the rest) (p. 242), this list of assumptions is detailed in Figure 1.
Figure 1: Curriculum assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum 1: ‘The Basics’</th>
<th>Curriculum 2: The Rest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High priority</td>
<td>Low priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen as key indicator of educational standards</td>
<td>The notions of ‘standards’ does not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides a curriculum for excellence</td>
<td>Provides a curriculum for ‘enjoyment’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepares children for life and work</td>
<td>Prepares children for relevant aspects of the secondary curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserves separate subject identity</td>
<td>Likely to be merged within ‘themes’ or ‘areas of learning’, or taught through other subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has substantial and protected time allocation</td>
<td>Is allocated little time, and is not protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil attainment is tested</td>
<td>Pupil attainment is not tested, and sometimes not even assessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High time/priority in initial training</td>
<td>Low time/priority in initial training, or omitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High priority in ...inspections</td>
<td>Minimal...provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantial ... provisions</td>
<td>Specialist expertise not required: anyone can do it (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist expertise welcomed: this teaching is demanding</td>
<td>(1)Music is generally the exception to the ‘anyone can do it’ assumption (but not art).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alexander (2010, p. 242)

In addition, Alexander (2010) adds three additional tensions – the “discourse of dichotomy”, “the discourse of derision” and “the discourse of myth”, resulting from decades of policy pitting one curriculum against another (p. 21). The discourse of dichotomy prevails because of an ongoing debate about the curriculum hierarchy. The discourse of derision prevails because “complex matters (in education) are reduced to the lowest common denominator”, and the discourse of myth, where even when there is evidence to the contrary, those in power rarely acknowledge the achievements of previous governments, and policy often involves a “destructive process” based on the dismantling of what has preceded (Alexander, 2010, p. 23). Alexander’s (2010) suggestions of curriculum 1 – the valued and preferred curriculum and curriculum 2 – the marginalised and undervalued curriculum, have a number of assumptions that characterise the way they are
perceived, conceptualised and in turn enacted and reproduced. Focusing on the discourse of derision, Alexander (2010) notes it has been established since the inception of mass schooling system where “split between the ‘basics’ or 3Rs and ‘the rest’ was as sharp as it was sacrosanct” (p. 242). Historically there has always been an emphasis on the 3Rs and the push for the basics has been an enduring legacy in school policy. It is understandable, as it is the core business of schooling. However what has altered is the focus on accountability and high stakes resulting from being seen as a good or bad school. It goes to the very core of what the review notes “is meant by a ‘good society’ and how through schooling this is both promoted and enacted” (Alexander, 2010, p. 17). Furthermore:

To this apocalyptic vision is added a sense that teachers are fighting a rear guard action against social forces they cannot be expected to control, while detractors complain, as they always have, that standards are falling, that schools are neglecting the 3Rs and that education is not what it used to be. (Alexander, 2010, p. 487)

Alexander (2010) observations reflect Eisner’s (2002) perspective on what he refers to as the “null curriculum” – the areas/subjects schools neglect or exclude (p. 99) sending unambiguous messages about what is valued.

Equity remains the key factor central to current policy failure. One poignant example raised by Alexander (2010) was based on a UNICEF report (2007), which noted that 25 % of Britain’s “children were growing up in poverty and deprivation” (p. 382). The report stated that the UK was one of the worst countries in the industrialised world as far as opportunity and equality were concerned. Relevant to this study, Alexander (2010) makes the link between education reform and the wider social policy agenda meant to affect change through children’s services, reasoning that “the educational service is universal, and comes into contact with all children”, therefore it is perceived as a vehicle for intervention (p. 389). Yet in contrast, Alexander (2010) notes that policies of equity via intervention can be contradicted by policies for testing and standardisation stating:

On one side, Every Child Matters (UK Education policy, 2003) requires them (teachers) to co-operate, integrate and support – encouraging them to reach out to troubled and difficult families. On the other, there are the standards agenda, choice and competition – forces that marginalises families for whom choice is not an option and competition means defeat. (p. 389)
Alexander (2010) went on to argue that statistics such as those provided in the UNICEF report, overlook the complexity of such issues and yet countries are obliged to act in the wake of the global, national and local media coverage that often follows such a claim. The review concluded that in the UK:

Primary schools appear to be under intense pressure but good in heart. They are valued highly by children and parents and in general are doing a good job. They do not neglect and never have neglected the 3Rs. (p. 488)

Furthermore, Alexander (2010) determined that “primary schools may be the one point of stability and positive values in a world where everything else is changing and uncertain” (p. 488) and that education needs to be de-politicised in order to reclaim a true purpose. Fundamentally, Alexander (2010) noted that current discourse “negates what education should be about” (p. 510).

In addition, Troman et al. (2007) suggests that another unintentional outcome of the new accountability model has been the failure of renewal for the teaching profession itself, arguing that professional standards have been marginalised along with pre-service teacher education courses, rigidly aligned to literacy and numeracy standards leaving little place for critical reflection and “evidence-informed professional judgment” (p. 37). Alexander (2010) notes, “all these trends raise very serious questions about the condition of the primary teaching profession as it now stands, and indeed about how far the usual connotation of the word ‘profession’ still applies” (p. 37).

On a broad scale, Lingard and Rizvi (1995) note that the role teachers play in contributing and implementing policy initiatives requires consultation and a degree of professional autonomy, otherwise, with a constant flow of new, centrally directed policy, “reform fatigue” can result, whereby a “heightened use of resistance strategies” will follow (Bishop & Mulford, 1999. p. 185). Current reforms, whilst attempting to deal with systemic improvement, are about regaining central control over education and “the consequence, in terms of disempowering teachers and silencing of their voices is clear” (Lingard & Porter, 1997, p. 37). In addition, Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) note, “principals observe that the peak education councils in the nation appear to have a pipeline that pumps new policies, new documents and new expectations into schools. They keep the curriculum and assessment industries humming along but take little account of schools’ capacity to respond” (p. 25). This capacity to respond is a complex undertaking compounded by the sociological nature of teaching and competing discourses in education, all of which
ultimately contribute to policy enactment at the local level. This change in teaching practice has a flow on effect in schools and the sheer volume of policy encountered over the past few decades must have a professional and personal impact, the least of all reform fatigue (Wolf, 2004).

In 2011, Perryman, Ball, Maguire and Braun used case study methodology using in-depth interviews with teachers in four English secondary schools in an effort to determine the effects of school league tables on English and mathematics teachers. They based their research in four co-educational, non-denominational secondary schools with national average results on the School Performance Tables. The project noted the effects of the new accountability model on the school culture within the case study schools. Perryman et al. (2011) contend that the new reform agenda leads to a decrease in professionalism and autonomy in non-tested subjects, and that a power struggle has developed between schools, subjects and teachers as a result of league tables. Teachers value each other, their positions and their interactions based on this new culture of performativity (Ball, 2003). Perryman et al. (2011) note that in contrast to other non-tested areas, successful results in high stakes testing subjects (English and mathematic) leads to increased power and access to resources for the tested subjects and a decrease in power and resources for the non-tested subjects. Interestingly, they also note that recent UK government policy has led to publishing of league tables in science, one language and a humanity (the subjects in the English Baccalaureate) as well as English and mathematics. The authors predict that rather than leveling the curriculum playing field, this will lead to a widening of the “pressure cooker” situation. Perryman et al. (2011) state “teachers are now accountable through formal audits of student learning outcomes controlled by senior management...pupils become objects and targets and the headteachers and senior management team are publically accountable” (p. 182). The concern is that because the changes to policy are incremental and slow, “increasingly, for many teachers, they know no other way” (Perryman et al., 2011, p. 183).

Lingard (2010) supports this observation by arguing “the evaluation message system (manifest in high-stakes national census testing) has taken the upper hand in many schooling systems with England as the best (or worst?) case in point” (p. 131). Lingard (2009) contends:
What we have seen is the transfer of authority from professional teachers to standardised testing instruments and the creators of such tests – a fraction of the middle class who have benefited in career terms from this policy regime. (p. 16)

With the increasing influence of globalisation and in turn, comparative educational statistics gathered from organisations such as the OECD, nations will continue to conform to this dominant paradigm because the fundamental belief is that more prescriptive intervention leads to better results.

A similar situation has developed in the United States in that high stakes testing, accountability and standardisation are the key features. This is discussed in the next section. USA education policy history is outlined in Appendix C, where a detailed account of is given to lay the contextual foundations for the current policy climate.

**The United States**

Hursh (2008) and Ravitch (2010) both maintain that in order to reform education, there needs to be a real and clear focus on high quality teacher training, professional autonomy, community provision and equitable provision of services across a range of learning areas. Hursh (2008) contends that in pursuing performative policy it reduces “the possibility of society and schools that support community welfare and the public good, over corporate profit” (p. 122), and “the real crisis in education is the increasing unwillingness of politicians and the public to realize that markets and privatization are not the solution, but rather the problem” (p. 143).

Looking closely at US research, Taylor et al. (2003) note despite the rhetoric of raising standards, compared to previous reforms that advocated diversity, high stakes testing advocated “minimum competencies and basic skills” and the “common thread running without interruption through all three decades of educational reform was the call for accountability” (p. 8). Further findings confirmed that inequitable models of schooling were developing with a widening of the gap between rich and poor, and the developing perception of good and bad teachers as a result of test scores. Teachers also noted that they were using mathematics, English and science to teach other subjects as opposed to allowing them a unique place in the curriculum.

Abrams, Pedulla and Maudaus (2003) found that teachers spend more time preparing students for tests than on other subject areas. Their research consisted of a nationwide survey of all teachers in the US about state wide testing programs. Much of their work
included the summation of other research on state testing in the USA and overall the consensus was that the tests have been unsuccessful as a means of addressing need in education. The main focus remains meeting the requirements of testing, which inevitably results in the marginalisation of other non-tested areas. The study also found that teachers “contradicted their own notions of sound educational practice” as a result of mandated testing programs. Abrams, Pedulla and Maudaus, (2003) concluded that there would be a “human cost” evidenced by further student failure and “dropout” (p. 27). Furthermore, they noted that it has become “increasingly clear that the anticipated goals of state testing policies are at odds with the realities of their implementation and can lead to unintended negative impacts” (Abrams, Pedulla & Maudaus, 2003, p. 27). In addition, the level of reliability in test scores was questionable as a true reflection of higher student standards and that potentially state testing lead to a “de-professionalisation of teachers” (p. 20).

Taylor, Shepard, Skinner and Rosenthal (2003) found in a 12-month study of schools in Colorado using random sampling of 1000 teachers, that teaching changed considerably due to high stakes testing. Their findings noted students “gave up reading real books, writing, and long-term projects” (p. 5). They also acknowledged that the high stakes testing and narrow curriculum focus resulted in inequitable outcomes for students in low socio-economic areas. In a similar study, using case study involving interviews with six high school English teachers and a further five as part of a focus group, Alexander (2005) found overall that the quality and quantity of curriculum area decreased and there was “a decrease in the amount of emphasis given to incorporating non-assessed items…and the amount of time spent on writing, speaking and listening activities” (p. 129). Teaching participants reported a disproportionate “amount of time spent on test-related items, noting, ‘time for poetry, writing and drama had been lost’” (p. 131). Ironically, literature itself was a victim of literacy tests. Alexander's (2005) findings also noted that the consequences of testing English and mathematics extended to the actual school culture and to the profession itself noting, “school size, education and years of teaching experience do not seem to exert an influence” (p. 130) over results or negative associations. Alexander (2005) found that there was a decrease in certain pedagogical practices such as “creative projects/presentations” and “problem-solving activities” (p. 132), as well as an “increase in the time spent on test-taking strategies” (p. 133). The teachers did claim that they maintained some of their valued pedagogical practices despite high-stakes testing. The overall findings were that high-stakes was testing affected schools adversely, and placed
pressure on students from both high and low achieving categories. There was considerable pressure at all times to improve test scores and contradicting themselves, some teachers felt there was no change to their teaching yet they still spent time teaching to the test. Finally, the study noted that there was a self-fulfilling prophecy in testing, as the low achieving students expected to fail and therefore continued to do so.

Au (2007), in a study of 49 schools in the US found that high stakes testing has resulted in a narrowing of curricular, a return to teacher centered pedagogy, and a lack of consistency between schools in terms of standards and expectations. Au (2007) concluded that this agenda invariably lead to poor professional practice, low student success and a depleted social equity agenda. The increase in governmental control over the curricular in the US has had, as in the UK, a detrimental effect on student outcomes.

On a broader scale, a US study by Goeglein (2011) found that 64.4% of teachers defined the purpose of education as “developing in students the ability to think independently, and to build knowledge from the information they gathered through observation and collaboration”; as well as “providing students the necessary skills to allow them to be both effective and adaptive in the workplace and in society” (p. iv). The teachers in the Goeglein (2011) study also noted that contrary to this, high stakes testing had a “significant impact on teaching and learning” (p. iv). Likewise a recent case study by Newbery-Long (2010) found that the curriculum had narrowed as a result of the NCLB policy and the associated high stakes testing. The basics dominated the curriculum and pedagogy to the detriment of all other learning areas. As a means of combating the effects of these policies, an integrated curriculum was seen as a means of counteracting the lack of time for the marginalised subjects, and that fundamentally professional values and educational philosophies “left teachers feeling conflicted” due to this misalignment (Newbery-Long, 2010, p. 5).

In terms of leadership and high stakes testing, Cohen (2011) in a recent US study of school principals found that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a “performance accountability culture” (p. 203). Furthermore, Cohen noted that this had resulted in the:

Marketisation of public schools, an increase in centralized or bureaucratic control of school districts, and a tension between a principal’s need to fulfill the mandates of the accountability culture and his (sic) own desire to maintain a connection to students and day-to-day classroom life. (p. 203)
Cohen (2011) noted the media influence on the school image and that the ranking systems were "unreliable and unfair" (p. 204), "tension between the principals’ own professional beliefs and the value placed on rankings" (p. 204), "loss of autonomy" (p. 206), cynicism about the systemic capacity to bring about real educational improvement and change; the findings also "reveal a chasm between what they (principals) believe to be the core purposes of their principalships and what performance accountability culture was continuously requiring them to do" (p. 207).

To conclude this section, Alexander (2010a) notes that despite the enormous international influence the US has, their schooling system does not rank at all in the top twelve for reading and mathematics, and there is no consideration given to equal opportunity or provision.

Much of the literature on high stakes testing documents the lack of validity in improving student outcomes, compounded by a general decline in quality, difficulty and quantity of curriculum particularly in non-tested areas. Schools are complex and multi-layered organisations that reflect the society in which they exist. As each nation’s practice comes into focus under the umbrella of globalisation, education is now one of the principal vehicles through which governments can be judged. It is this pressure to perform on the global scale that has led to a trend in education towards a culture of performativity and a devaluing of the areas that are un-measurable. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue a new model of globalisation is required if we are going to forge a path of equity, creativity and democracy. In Australia, policy borrowing from the US and the UK has resulted in the implementation of a standardised national curriculum, national testing and league tables. As a consequence the curriculum has been narrowed to emphasise English, mathematics and science and the negative effects on social equity in education are becoming evident (Lingard, 2010). Lingard (2010) states, “we need to learn from the effects of the borrowed policies in the source system, not naively implant them within our own national context without evidencing and policy learning at all” (p. 7).

In the following section, the literature details the historical and current trends in education reform in Australia and how they have been to a great extent shaped by the UK and US situations. Australian education policy history is outlined in Appendix D, where a detailed account of is given to lay the contextual foundations for the current policy climate.
Australia

The first policy for Australian schooling that presented school subjects as a group of eight key learning areas (KLAs) that all schools should teach was the *Adelaide Declaration – Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century* (MCEEDYA, 2009b). As noted in the historical account (Appendix D), this declaration replaced the *Hobart Declaration*. The eight KLAs were originally presented as follows:

In terms of curriculum, students should have: attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:

- the arts;
- English;
- health and physical education;
- languages other than English;
- mathematics;
- science;
- studies of society and environment;
- technology.

(MCEEDYA, 2009b, para. 2.1)

In this policy the KLAs were represented in a manner that suggested equity in time allocation, funding and value and the declaration stated, “in terms of curriculum, students should have attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas” (MCEEDYA, 2009b, para. 2). A foundation was laid for any future national curriculum to include all of these eight key learning areas. In addition, Angus, Olney and Ainley, (2007) note that there has never been a time in Australian schools where subjects other than the core subjects have held the majority of time and resources and history can attest to the fact that this is the way schools have operated. In the review initiated by the Australian Primary Principals Association, Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) commented about the Adelaide policy noting that:

The eight KLAs were defined in such a way that they appeared to be of equal status, an outcome that did not reflect the circumstances of primary schools, where English and Mathematics have always had a higher priority than other subjects.
Furthermore, the frameworks provided no guidance as to the relative importance of other subjects in the primary curriculum. (p. 22)

However, no further clarity was given to schools about the KLAs in the form of policy to guide implementation.

The *Melbourne Declaration*, that superseded the Adelaide accord, is more rhetorical and visionary, and it deals with a broad agenda of general capabilities serving as umbrella statement encompassing collective national goals, aimed at the creation of a more prosperous future for Australia. The statements include for example, “promoting equity and excellence and successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (MCEECDYA, 2009c, p. 7). Yet Reid (2008) notes:

> Although the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) contains a far more expansive view of the purposes of education, the public rhetoric...limit(s) the vision of the educational revolution to seeing students as (potential) human capital to be enlisted in the cause of economic recovery and growth. Such a stance marginalises the cultural, social, political and relational aspects of education. It understands students as potential workers and consumers, rather than as local and global citizens. It is hardly revolutionary. (p. 8)

All three declarations on schooling advocated increased accountability and the new declaration was not without criticism for the clear links made between the economy and education (Klenowsk and Wyatt-Smith, 2011). The *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEECDYA, 2009c) went some way in providing clarity around the subject hierarchy stating, "the learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels. English and mathematics are of fundamental importance in all” (p. 14). Yet the policy still included all eight key learning areas and there was an expectation that they would be maintained in any proposed national curriculum (Gattenhof, 2009; O’Toole, 2009).

*The Australian Curriculum*

A national curriculum policy for Australia has eluded politicians and educators for decades for many of reasons [See Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry, (1997); Lingard and Porter (1997); McHollow and Graham (1997); Marginson, Martin and Williamson (1995); Reid (2008)]. As Reid (2008) notes:
The quest for a national curriculum has been the holy grail of many politicians and education policy makers over the past 40 years, yet the various quests for this national curriculum have invariably floundered on the rock of state rights. (p. 8)

The new national curriculum, fully implemented in 2013 (phase one), is a result of many years of vacillation between States and Territories over curriculum, school age, and curriculum compatibility in what is a small country. This struggle between the Commonwealth and the State and Territories is an age-old debate about who should run schools given the Australian Constitution in which the States have control over schooling (Reid, 2008). Lingard and Porter (1997), and Lingard (2000) note that for the Commonwealth to elicit policy change they must do so through indirect means such as specific purpose funding or legislative change through state and territory consensus. In Australia this consists of conciliatory action with the Council of Australian Governments.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) consists of the premier/chief minister from each of Australia’s six states and two territories, chaired by the prime minister. In terms of education, the council meets annually to work towards cooperative government practice. Historically the federal government only intervened in state/territory affairs through a complicated, yet “adhoc” mechanism of funding “driven largely by considerations of political pragmatism” (Lingard, 2000, p. 26; Reid, 2009). The national curriculum was only made possible because of a “collaborative agreement” reached at a COAG meeting because at the time, all three political jurisdictions (federal, state and territory) were aligned to the Australian Labor Party. There was no political gain to be made by blocking any of the proposed reforms. Reflecting on this process, Lingard (2000) notes that COAG had “managed the reworking of federalism in schooling for the government and helped to achieve the national agenda” (p. 4). This was significant in terms of a national curriculum that had been on successive government agendas for decades (Kennedy, 1995; Reid, 2009; Lingard, 2010; Collins & Yates, 2010), yet remained unattainable because of state and federal political differences.

Like the US and the UK, the initial purpose of the new national agenda was to raise literacy and numeracy standards across the nation to meet world standards; ensure equity across all schools and all students; raise Information Communication Technology (ICT) efficiencies; raise professionalism and educational standards of the teaching profession; establish a public accountability process for schools and to build infrastructure in primary and secondary schools in an effort to balance provision (Reid, 2009; Davis, 2010). Since
2007, accountability has been one of the central platforms for new education polices in Australia (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2011; Lingard, 2010) and these new polices have contributed further to the culture of performativity. Following a decade of conservative federal government rule with a clear focus on individualism, ironically, the new Labor government shifted education even further into the domain of economics. Reid (2011) states:

Under the Rudd government, there has been another shift, this time towards a dominant economic purpose, with almost every major government document and statement emphasising the importance of education to the development of human capital...thus education is not a stand-alone item in what is known as the COAG agenda. It is listed under the priority of productivity. (p. 6)

Subsequently, a national curriculum became a reality and the federal government established the National Curriculum Board (NCB), now the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as part of the national curriculum agenda. Led by Professor Barry McGraw, ACARA consists of a group of educational academics responsible for selecting curriculum writers apportioned the task of writing the curriculum. The initial national curriculum shape paper declared:

Education plays a critical role in shaping the lives of the nation's future citizens. To play this role effectively, the intellectual, personal, social and educational needs of young Australians must be addressed at a time when ideas about the goals of education are changing and will continue to evolve. (ACARA, 2010, p. 5)

The shape paper went on to discuss the agreed considerations of a curriculum for the 21st century including, globalisation, the influences and relationships with the Asia, growing environmental concerns, and considerable ICT advances. With these new considerations in mind, the national curriculum shape paper stated:

Education must not only respond to these remarkable changes but also, as far as possible, anticipate the kinds of conditions in which young Australians will need to function as individuals, citizens and workers. These future conditions are distant and difficult to predict. We expect almost all young Australians who begin primary school in 2011 will continue their initial education until 2022. Many will go on to post-secondary education and not complete their initial education until the mid-2020s and later. However dimly the demands of societies in the mid-2020s can now
be seen, some serious attempt must be made to envisage those demands and to ensure they are taken into account in present-day curriculum development.

(ACARA, 2010, p. 6)

The *Melbourne Declaration* informs the current national curriculum policy maintaining much of the eight KLA structure, acknowledging that they are all necessary for the 21st century. Yet despite the declaration stating that “the learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels...English and mathematics are of fundamental importance in all” (MCEECDYA, 2009c, p. 15), all KLAs are included. When the federal government announced a new national curriculum in 2008 it only included four subjects – English, mathematics, science and history with little information about curriculum, assessment and reporting, and no information about pedagogy. At the time, Reid (2011) observed that it was:

Hard to believe that at that stage the Government seriously believed that a national curriculum could comprise four subjects, but there it was – no sense of whether other learning areas were to follow, no argument about why these four subjects were chosen, no overall curriculum plan. (p. 33)

Reid (2011) went on to note that with the initial introduction of the national curriculum:

It was apparent that very little thought had gone into understanding and defining the nature of “achievement standards”. Not surprisingly, the various writers in each learning area interpreted these differently, and so when the drafts were released, there was no common approach within subjects, let alone between them. (p. 34)

With the release of the draft *Australian Curriculum* it appeared there was a narrowing of the *Adelaide Declaration* to four subjects, which by default then devalued all the other KLAs. Phase two subjects (geography and languages) were acknowledged, but not drafted, and the arts were not included at all (Gattenhof, 2009) despite the understanding based on the Adelaide Declaration.

After public and professional unrest, and robust consultation between the then education minister Peter Garrett and a number of key arts advocacy groups, the arts were included as part of phase two (Gattenhof, 2009; Meiners & Dyson, 2012). The media release for the education minister at the time retreated on this apparent oversight, yet in doing so
clearly pointed to a hierarchy of subjects behind the national curriculum policy. Garrett (2011) stated:

The fact that the Arts curriculum is the second to be developed, after the foundation subjects of mathematics, science, English and history, demonstrates the Gillard Government’s commitment to fostering creativity and recognising that the Arts are at the centre of our way of life. (para. 7)

In light of the developments for a national curriculum, Reid (2008; 2011), and O’Toole (2009) commented at the time that with the initial drafting, writing and trialing of only four key learning areas as phase one subjects, there was a perceived failure to begin on an even playing field. O’Toole (2009) stated:

There’s no logic in leaving a key subject out of education planning. Bafflingly, arts education remains excluded from the Federal Government’s proposed national curriculum ...despite the fact that ‘the arts’ is now one of the eight compulsory learning areas. (para. 1)

It appeared that the phase one subjects were the most important and the most valued. Reid (2008) went further and argued that “firstly there is no clear rationale for a national curriculum and secondly that the design to date has been disjointed and ‘piecemeal’” and in selecting only four subjects for inclusion, he argued, “those subjects run the risk of downgrading other important areas of the curriculum such as the Arts...It’s hard to believe that a curriculum for the 21st century could be developed without these areas of knowledge” (p. 10). Furthermore “curriculum design should never be a piecemeal process...curriculum is greater than the sum of its parts” (p. 10). He also reasoned that “these subjects will also form a basis of a national testing program, it’s not hard to guess where the bulk of time and resources will go” (Reid, 2008, p. 10). In addition, Meiners & Dyson (2012) noted:

In 2008, there was no plan for the arts in the new Australian national curriculum and 'It has been increasingly clear that the school curriculum has become a battleground' (Apple, 2009, p. 242). Questions of the purpose of such a new curriculum, what will be included and excluded, were provoked and alarm bells for arts educators sounded immediately. The first learning areas, English, mathematics, sciences and history, were announced in 2008 and there was no sign of the arts in phase 2 which included only languages and history. (p. 6)
As implementation deadlines were extended to accommodate alterations, lobbying resulted in the arts being included in phase two of the national curriculum. Gattenhof (2009) concurs that it was only as a result of intense and unrelenting lobbying of the Education Minister by arts groups such as the National Advocates for Arts Education, that the arts were included in the national curriculum. Gattenhof (2009) also noted the reoccurring theme of arts education needing to justify inclusion in school programs. In addition, the implementation for the phase one subjects was also unrealistic given the short time frame and limited resourcing (Reid, 2011). Rizvi and Lingard (2010), drawing on the work of Hall (1996) argue that conflict of this nature is eventually resolved “by trade-offs between values, by side-lining a particular value, or redefining or re-articulating its meaning” (p. 76). This is supported by Reid (2011) who argued that this is a case of “policy catch-up”, as there was no clear understanding or development of a whole curriculum nor were there clear indications about assessment and reporting. Historically, Queensland had already faced similar issues with the failure to adequately implement the Outcomes Based Education policy, with a misalignment between curriculum, assessment and reporting in the 1990s (Lingard et al., 2001).

With the phase one and two subjects proposed, the national curriculum gained public and media support, as well as bi-partisan government support. The Courier Mail (Queensland) survey for example, reported that more than 79% of parents agreed in the need for a national curriculum (The Courier/Sunday Mail - dated 6th June 2010, State of Education Report Card). Further to this, recent research from Haley, Drummond and van Breda (2010) found that in surveying rural and remote educators with regards to the national curriculum, there was support for the policy. However there were concerns and reservations about the effectiveness of the implementation, particularly in resourcing and teacher training. The Queensland Teacher’s Union Journal ran many articles on the national curriculum, almost once monthly for the twelve months in 2009. One of the most pertinent comments regarding the policy noted, “it’s an interesting concept – a shared vision of curriculum. Whose shared vision? QSA’s? Education Queensland? Julia Gillard’s (Prime Minister at the time)? It certainly did not appear to be the vision of a classroom teacher” (Welch, 2009, p. 21). In addition, Aly (2010) raised concerns about the implementation of the national curriculum arguing that the policy thus far has been:

An unavoidably political policy initiative from a prime minister who so far has been relatively apolitical... the idea of a national curriculum, displacing the various state-
determined curricula that currently prevail, sounds suitably muscular and revolutionary...but only very modest changes have been made to the mathematics and science curriculum we presently have, and these changes will actually make the materials less dense, with an increased focus on statistics and probability. The biggest change is history – which will now actually be taught in its own right – but even here, the revolution is incomplete. And who, exactly, is going to teach it? Does the government have any plans to overcome this shortfall or will it rely on tertiary institutions to take the initiative? (p. 1)

Steve Ryan (2011) Queensland Teacher’s Union president also agreed stating that:

The national curriculum is a perfect example of a good idea going haywire. With decent planning, adequate resourcing and proper consultation, it should have been relatively straightforward to implement the curriculum over a planned period of time. Unfortunately, the federal government has ignored the realities of classroom delivery. There are no federal resources associated with delivery, and the government has abrogated its’ responsibilities to ACARA, which in turn seems to have hand balled its responsibilities around implementation to the state studies authorities. (p. 7)

In addition to implementation concerns, literature and research also raises questions about equity with the new education policies. Reid (2011, p. 35), reflecting the work of Teese (2000), argues that the “field of judgment” in the new national curriculum made no attempt at equity despite a great deal of available research into the area. In marginalising subjects like the arts, education policy supports the closure of opportunities that schools provide for the many students who otherwise would have no access to these experiences. Reid (2011) notes that there appears to be little understanding of:

The relationship between official content knowledge, pedagogy and assessment; the ways in which the official curriculum has tended to privilege the cultural capital of certain groups and marginalized that of less powerful groups; and how particular curriculum structures have tended to create hierarchies of knowledge. (p. 35)

Likewise, Luke (2011) contends high-quality educational outcomes are best achieved by adopting rigorous and determined curricula that embraces culture, creativity and innovation as well as “basics” and skills acquisition and “ups the intellectual ante and education bar” (p. 6). Luke (2011) goes on to argue that the new national curriculum
promotes a basics mentality potentially reproducing the status quo in terms of hierarchical learning discourses. He stated:

The Australian national curriculum has the hallmarks of the new generic, transitional curriculum settlement that emerged in the late 1990’s as a response to new economic and social contexts. This features a focus on basic skills acquisition and a taxonomic reinstatement of canonical content knowledges in literature, science and history. (p. 6)

Luke (2011) also raises the issue of standardisation, potentially a concern in terms of encouraging equitable educational outcomes, stating:

The case for an Australian national curriculum is that students should progress on the same curriculum standards, regardless of whether they live in the outback or the city. In the establishment of state curriculum and legislation for performance standards in the United States, the justification is that standards are a road to the classical liberal goals of fairness and equality of access. This is the logic of educational standardization. (p. 7)

One of the outcomes of these inconsistencies has been the marginalisation of the arts curriculum in the public and professional minds of Australians and it has further advanced the hierarchical curriculum in Australian schools. Pitfield (2013, p. 20) notes, "as Bernstein has demonstrated, official designation in the prescribed curriculum is extremely influential in endorsing the value of particular subjects, and this underlines the precarious situation for those which do not enjoy such designation". Pitfield (2013) maintains that from this hierarchy there are "knock-on effect(s)" as far as teacher self-efficacy is concerned to pursue teaching areas outside the favoured hierarchy, which in turn further marginalises those outside the favoured hierarchy.

In 2010, Professor Brian Caldwell gave a public lecture about the path Australia was taking in terms of adopting without question the “one size fits all” approach to teaching and learning from the UK and the USA. He stated, “my overarching concern is that innovation, creativity and passion, the key requirements in a vibrant society and a successful economy in the years ahead – are in jeopardy if we continue on our present path” (Caldwell, 2010, p. 1). He argues that the marginalisation of subjects like the arts through the mechanism of Australian education policy, will achieve little. Caldwell (2010) also perceives the inequity of performative policy. A viewpoint also shared by Redden and Low (2012) who note that
Australia has aligned education systems to those of the UK and the USA, stating, "Australia has caught up with England and the United States in ensuring comparability of all students' results in standardised tests and the public release of the data: the two core public information functions of neoliberal educational reform" (p. 38). Furthermore, Redden and Low (2012) point out that at no stage has any incumbent government actually clearly proven what the faults are with Australian schools.

At the time of writing, the Australian Curriculum now includes English, mathematics, science, history, the arts, health and physical education, languages other than English, civics and citizenship, economics and business, geography, technologies and national trade cadetship. However, no final curriculum materials have been released and there are no accompanying mandates for hours, or state-based mandated curriculum requirements for any other learning areas outside of English, mathematics, science and history. Considering the national and state based tests and the National Professional Standards and the Queensland College of Teachers registration requirements focus only on English, mathematics and science, it is clear to see what is valued. Henceforth, the Australian Curriculum has full implementation of only English, mathematics, science and history (with geography planned for 2014). Furthermore, in September 2013, there was a change in government, returning a conservative Liberal/National Party Coalition to federal parliament. In an effort to reduce government spending the new Liberal/National Party Coalition government has already pledged massive cuts in funding to ACARA, additional changes to phase one subjects already in schools and there are real concerns that Phase Two and Phase Three subjects will remain unfinished. Considering that this government had no arts policy leading up to the election, real concern exists for the arts.

The following section discusses the links between Australian policy and accountability, followed by the specific response from the state of Queensland where this study is situated.

**Australia, accountability and high stakes testing**

In addition to a new national curriculum, education reform included the introduction of national standardised testing in all Australia schools at juncture years three, five, seven and nine. The National Assessment Program- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), like the national curriculum, had previous history in policy. The tests were a fulfillment of the Adelaide Declaration (1999) and Melbourne Declaration (2008). In these declarations there are comprehensive statements on assessment, where all of the state and territory ministers
agreed on eight actions to achieve the specified set of educational goals. One of these actions is to “promote world-class curriculum and assessment”. In addition to this, in terms of student attainment through assessment, the Melbourne Declaration also states “assessment of student progress will be rigorous and comprehensive. It needs to reflect the curriculum, and draw on a combination of the professional judgment of teachers and testing, including national testing” (MCEECDYA, 2009c, pp. 2 & 14).

It was argued that national testing would assist in producing a world-class curriculum and ensuring world-class results with a focus on English and mathematics. In 2008, this resulted in the introduction of NAPLAN. Furthermore, the policy opened up the pathway for public and community monitoring of these results through the establishment of the MySchool website. This website was released in January, 2010 by the federal government, as a further fulfillment of Melbourne Declaration policy which suggested the need for public access to school test results. MySchool publishes school data based on annual NAPLAN results along with general school data including demographics, finances and behaviour management (see www.myschool.edu.au). The NAPLAN tests replaced state and territory based tests that were used at similar year level junctures but were only used for diagnostic purposes. They were not published nor accessed by parents or the general public (Reid, 2011). The complex process of education appears to be reduced to the results of one annual test, and the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment procedures likewise narrow. As Lingard (2009) observes:

Bernstein’s three message systems of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation – sit in symbiotic relationships with each other, with change in one affecting the practices of the others...(yet) the evaluation message system – or more specifically high-stakes, census testing at the national levels has become the major steering mechanism of schooling systems. (p. 13)

Lingard (2010) suggests that these “new norms of schooling for the audit society”, championed by NAPLAN, state based tests and the associated MySchool website have had unintentional outcomes on schools and students (p. 4). They appear to have divided the school year into two parts – pre-NAPLAN and post-NAPLAN and as other national education systems have found, they are potentially divisive and can lead to misleading information about the nature of schooling (Buoncristiani, 2009; Hursh, 2008; Alexander, 2010; Lingard, 2010; Thompson, 2012).
The MySchool website has not been without controversy and there have been a number of stakeholders concerned about the effects of the information disseminated to the public. For example, the Australian Education Union (AEU), the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) and the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) noted that the website contradicted sound educational practice. The following statement from the APPA president, Leonie Trimper (2009) notes these concerns along with the recognition that such practices were already failing in other countries. Trimper (2009) notes:

The flurry of the last few days with the launch of the MySchool website has certainly ensured the school year started at a cracking pace. As APPA President, I fielded more than 20 media interviews over the last few days...APPA has supported the principle of transparency but always with a proviso – that it must enhance primary education. We do have very real concerns about the misuse of the data and don’t want things to go off the rails as they did in the US and England.

The official APPA (2009) response noted that the organisation supported transparency in principle, however, for the reasons outlined in this chapter, the APPA also note that:

There are clearly dangers...from using the NAPLAN assessments for purposes for which they are not suited. Over-reliance on NAPLAN scores as the single source of evidence regarding school and system performance will almost certainly have unintended, negative consequences. Primary schools are particularly vulnerable. (p. 6)

Policies such as national curricula and standardised testing might not be progressive given their obvious global heritage, but there are suggestions that significant changes in teacher practice have since resulted (Groundwater-Smith, 2009; Comber & Nixon, 2009; Buoncristiani, 2009; Ried, 2009; Cooper, Ewing, Sarra, Baturo & Matthews, 2010; Lingard, 2010). Both NAPLAN and MySchool have been controversial and there has been unprecedented media focus on education, teaching and teachers since 2008 with introduction of the tests and MySchool. The use of popular media to influence public opinion is what Anderson (2007) describes as “the media using spectacle to generate points of view, perceptions, anxieties, aspirations, and strategies”, in this case to strengthen support of an educational accountability model previously championed in the United States and the United Kingdom (p. 103). Much of the attention is based around what Luke, Lingard, Green and Comber (1999) refer to as the “construction of crisis” motivated purely
by politics. The crisis in schools first came to the attention of the public under the previous conservative federal government in Australia who used the media to invent a crisis in literacy and numeracy in schools, particularly government schools, and as a result, undermined public confidence in teachers. Dr. David Kemp, Federal Minister for Education, during this period, released a statement to the media that labeled school literacy results “a national disgrace” (Kemp, 1999, in Luke et al., 1999, p. 764). At the time, Luke et al. (1999) identified a link between government policy and the “abuses of literacy” (p. 763) illustrating how federal intervention into state policy can be justified.

From this time, the use of the media in the advertising of “high performing schools with excellent staff” and the need to “eradicate failure” continues to mislead the public (Angus, Olney & Ainley, 2007, p. 3). Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) also argue that the “persuasiveness” of the media on accountability in schools and “the infrequency with which it is challenged publicly” has sent a clear message to parents - that schools that do not perform well in the tests are not good schools (p. 3). The release of MySchool further contributed to this apparent crisis and the media henceforth publishes league tables of the best performing schools based on test results, along with the SES data that the school publishes. This public denigration of schools that do not perform well on the tests and have low SES rankings also has a human cost. Clare Quinn (2010), a Gympie State High School student at the time of the first data release on MySchool noted:

Upon browsing the Gympie State High School website I discovered that zero percent of our student population fall within the top quarter of the socio-economic chart. It seems as though this is a system designed to make students walk through the school gates hanging their heads in shame, hiding their cheeks that burn with an overwhelming sense of inadequacy. MySchool is proof that one size does not fit all. (p. 15)

On a broader scale, Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2011) align the rise of testing with the rise of the “middle class and capitalism” (p. 68). They concur with previous authors that educational purpose has altered as a result, stating:

The main purpose of assessment was to sort students (in and out of schools), with assessment serving economic and therefore, political purposes. The rise of the middle class and capitalism reshaped the role of schools and schooling. The purposes of assessment to measure, sort and segregate were consolidated. It was at
this time that assessment was aligned with what Earl (2005) and others identify as seemingly scientific and objective mechanisms for measuring student achievement. By extension, such mechanisms are often associated with tests, and more specifically multiple-choice tests. The pervasive influence of this development, even to the present, is that test scores decide what each person’s role in society should be. (p. 68)

Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2011) argue that the use of standardised multiple choice tests, due to their apparent reliability as they “relied less on the human brain for decision making” compared to short answer tests, were therefore perceived to be more accurate indicators of school performance (p. 68). The adoption of standardised testing in Australia as NAPLAN, was a fulfillment of the declarations on schooling, met governmental desires for accountability and transparency, as well as a fulfillment of the obligation felt through organisations such as the OECD. Yet Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2011) note:

Many teachers, principals, parents and the teachers’ union in Australia are critical of the expanding testing regime and the ‘quick fix’ approaches being taken in some states. Some principals in particular are taking action to resist the lure of simplistic measures that appear to communicate indexes of quality in which it is claimed that the community, parents and students can have faith. (p. 69)

Recent research into the effects of NAPLAN by Dulfer, Polesel and Rice (2012) returned approximately 8500 responses from teachers in all states and territories in Australia. The survey requested information about “both the impact of NAPLAN on testing, pedagogy and curriculum practice as well as the more difficult (and largely ignored) question of the impact on students’ health and well-being” (p. 4). The Dulfer, Polesel and Rice (2012) findings suggest that NAPLAN is high-stakes due to the public perception and the media attention given to schools that perform badly, stating “NAPLAN performance may negatively impact on the public’s view of their schools, their enrolments and students’ movements” (p. 31). Secondly, the findings suggested that teachers, despite small gains in identifying whole school deficiencies in literacy and numeracy, noted that the negative effects of NAPLAN were too great to warrant the test. These negative consequences included decreased staff morale, as well as more specific areas like the detrimental effects on curriculum and pedagogy. The findings noted that there was “a potential narrowing of teaching strategies and of the curriculum offered to students” as well as negative effects on
“student health and well-being, and participants also overwhelmingly believed that poor NAPLAN results can potentially impact on a school’s reputation, and its capacity to attract and retain more capable students and staff” (Dulfer, Polesel & Rice, 2012, p. 31).

Furthermore, Thompson (2012) conducted a review into NAPLAN, surveying teachers from primary and secondary sectors in both Western Australia and South Australia. The survey questions focused on the effects of testing on curriculum and pedagogy, school culture, professional understanding and capacity.

The results were based on the responses of 961 teachers and overall suggested that the tests had a negative, rather than positive impact on all of the areas addressed in the questions, apart from whole school collaboration. In summary, 73% of teachers indicated that the test was of no help educationally; 38% indicated there was no positive impact, and 38% indicated cross school collaboration was one positive result; 53% indicated they believed the test gave inaccurate information about student progress and 51% indicated NAPLAN caused student stress.

In contrast to critics of recent education polices, ACARA chair, Barry McGraw counteracted the concerns arguing that in fact NAPLAN is not a “high stakes test” but rather a tool to reassure parents how their children are performing at school. McGraw (2012) stated:

NAPLAN is not high stakes nor is testing students’ competence in basic skills new in Australia. It’s time to set the record straight about the purpose and role of NAPLAN in Australian schools...NAPLAN tests students over a few hours spread out over a few days, four times from year 3 to year 9. The tests are not onerous and not high-stakes. Their primary purpose is to give parents information on how well their children are developing fundamental skills in literacy and numeracy from a broader perspective than individual teachers and schools have. The test results can reassure parents or alert them to problems, and provide a basis on which parents can have an informed discussion with teachers. (para. 1)

NAPLAN and MySchool are not in themselves revolutionary. They are models of standardised testing and public league tables that have existed in countries like England and the United States for some time, and there has been considerable research into the effects of high stakes testing and subsequent curriculum narrowing as a result. Yet concerns about the nature of the tests, the purpose, the preparation and the educational justification for them remains a contentious and unresolved issue. Caldwell (2010) notes
that as these policies continue to progress despite their obvious failure to affect change in the US and the UK, it is inevitable that Australia will witness increased inequity in student outcomes until there is significant change in policy. He states,

We are unlikely to see more than marginal and short-term improvement in outcomes for all students, or a closing of the gap between high-performing and low-performing students, until such time as we move ahead on a number of fronts. We must open the doors to the creative spirit in our schools that should operate in the future in the broadest of national frameworks. If we can't do this we may make progress in the short-term but other nations are moving faster and further and we'll soon be left behind. (Caldwell, 2010, p. 6)

The following section outlines the Queensland context and some of the policy responses and professional response to NAPLAN and MySchool.

Queensland’s policy response

Education Queensland is the state government body that oversees staffing, capital works, and the systemic requirements for Queensland schools. The Queensland Studies Authority, a statutory, independent agency from Education Queensland, manages the curriculum. Prior to NAPLAN, Queensland State Schools carried out testing at certain year junctures to check for literacy and numeracy proficiency, providing diagnostic information for teachers. NAPLAN replaced these tests, and in May Queensland schools administer the test, and by the end of term three the results are returned to schools. The tests have had an unsettled start in Queensland and at one stage there was a threat of non-compliance. In May 2010, teachers argued that due to the controversial use of the results, they would not administer the NAPLAN tests that year. The issue was resolved and the 2010 NAPLAN tests were completed, but it demonstrated the extent to which teachers would go to make a point that philosophically they opposed the publication of results without appropriate contextual information (See http://www.qutnews.com/2010/04/13/unions-resolute-on-naplan-ban/). The media contributed further to this heightened sense of crisis by publishing headlines such as “Stress Test – children sent home in tears, principals threatened, some students ignored and teachers admit to cheating”, (The Courier Mail, June, 11, 2010) and “Disappointment as Prep students let test standards slip” (The Courier Mail, September, 11-12, 2010). Professional organisations such as the Queensland Teachers’ Union also noted at the time, that NAPLAN and MySchool were inadequate and non-reflective of the holistic,
diverse and complicated nature of schooling (QTU, 2010). Lingard (2009) noted at the time that the media's coverage of Queensland's poor results and the ensuring review “demonstrated that the tests (had) become high-stakes” (p. 9).

The background to the 2010 controversy became apparent when the 2009 results returned and revealed an apparent failure on the part of many Queensland schools to perform well. This resulted in the incumbent government commissioning an inquiry into school performance. Headed by Professor Geoff Masters, the review was asked to – “Examine available data on the performances of Queensland students and, drawing on international research evidence, to provide advice in the areas of curriculum, assessment and teacher quality” (Masters, 2009, p. v). In particular, the review was asked to identify existing effective practices, to propose ways in which these could be scaled up, and to make recommendations for new strategies or initiatives for improving levels of literacy, numeracy and science achievement in Queensland primary schools (Masters, 2009).

The Masters Review considered a wide range of areas including the quality of pre-service teacher education and continued professional development of teachers. The recommendations are summarised in the following excerpt:

Recommendation 1: That all aspiring primary teachers be required to demonstrate through test performances, as a condition of registration, that they meet threshold levels of knowledge about the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science and have sound levels of content knowledge in these areas.

Recommendation 2: That the Queensland Government introduces a new structure and program of advanced professional learning in literacy, numeracy and science for primary school teachers.

Recommendation 3: That additional funding be made available for the advanced training and employment of a number of 'specialist' literacy, numeracy and science teachers to work in schools (and/or district offices) most in need of support.

Recommendation 4: That standard science tests be introduced at Years 4, 6, 8 and 10 for school use in identifying students who are not meeting year-level expectations and for monitoring student progress over time.

Recommendation 5: That the Queensland Government initiates an expert review of international best practice in school leadership development with a view to introducing a new structure and program of advanced professional learning for
primary school leaders focused on effective strategies for driving improved school performances in literacy, numeracy and science.

(Adapted from Masters, 2009, pp. x-xvi)

The review also recommended further testing of science at year levels four, six, eight and ten, in addition to NAPLAN. These years were selected to “minimise testing load” (p, xiii) and to deliver results to schools about the delivery of science education. These tests also accompany state tests known as the Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks (QCAT), aligned to the national curriculum at years four, six and nine in English, mathematics and science. Queensland state schools now face three separate testing regimes per year, on top of the implementation of a new curriculum and the general requirements of school.

The Australian Curriculum has been implemented in Queensland state schools through the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) policy, which aligns Queensland curriculum materials with those of the new Australian Curriculum. The policy states, “C2C provides schools with a comprehensive set of examples and resources to assist with the implementation of the Prep (F) to Year 10 Australian Curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science and History, and from 2014, Geography” (Queensland Government, 2013a, para. 1). At the suggestion of Education Queensland, each school is free to adopt C2C planning as a prescriptive policy encouraging teachers to follow closely to the teaching and learning processes suggested, or to adapt the planning as it is designed, “as a starting point for curriculum planning” (Queensland Government, 2013a, para. 3). In addition, the P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework details curriculum, teaching, assessment and reporting describing five priorities to ensure high-quality teaching and improve the learning and achievement of Queensland students. These priorities provide a focus for the work of Education Queensland’s central office, regions and schools. The framework specifies that schools:

Provide students with the required curriculum, assess, monitor and capture student achievement; set high expectations for each student and respond effectively to their current levels of achievement and differing rates of learning; prepare students to exit schooling with the foundation for successful lifelong learning and participation in the community; keep parents and students informed of the student’s achievement throughout their schooling. (Queensland Government, 2013c, p. 1)
This policy, previously known as the Roadmap, includes a focus on developing "strong leadership with an unrelenting focus on improvement...shared commitment to core priorities...quality curriculum and planning to improve learning...teaching focused on the achievement of every student...monitoring student progress and responding to learning needs" (Queensland Government, 2013a, para. 1). Leadership expectations are embedded in the *Principals’ Capability and Leadership Framework* and reflected in the *Teaching and Learning Audit*. The Teaching and Learning Audits, for example, consist of external auditors visiting state schools at least once in a four-year period (but not limited to) to audit the schools teaching and learning practices. A report is then sent to the school principal for action (see [http://education.qld.gov.au/nationalpartnerships/teach-learn-audits.html](http://education.qld.gov.au/nationalpartnerships/teach-learn-audits.html)). The auditors assess how well each school is managing according to the departmental priorities.

One of the striking features of the new C2C policy focus in terms of this research is the clear lack of inclusion of creativity, arts, or play in the school curriculum, particularly in the early years. There is a heavy focus on standardisation, and it is important to note that much of this is underpinned by a heavy focus on teacher quality in terms of literacy and numeracy proficiency. Despite the C2C strategy being touted as a ‘suggestion’ for planning, it appears to be the key focus in the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* for Queensland state schools.

The following section describes the effects of performative policy on the arts.

**The effects of performative policy on the arts**

One of the considerations of this thesis in terms of standardisation and accountability is the impact on other areas of the curriculum, specifically the arts. Dimitriadis, Cole and Costello (2009) argue:

> The arts are often seen as peripheral to the ‘real business’ of school and schooling. While this has been the case for some time now, the increasing pressures of high stakes testing and ever-more draconian public funding schemes...have created something of a 'perfect storm' for those working in the arts. (p. 361)

Perryman (2006) maintains, “there has been a shift in accountability from teacher professionalism, with accountability to themselves, their colleagues and their students (self-regulation), to accountability to agencies” (p. 2). Avis (2005) refers to this as the new “regime of truth” where the possibilities that authors like Eisner, Abbs, Greene and
Robinson speak of are refused entry (p. 79). Eisner (2000) argues, “test scores drive curriculum because what is tested is what is taught” and as a consequence untested subjects “can be neglected with greater immunity than those fields that are” (p. 5). As discussed in Chapter One, this focus on the measurable subjects “normalises” the hierarchy of subjects and denies other possibilities, and this industrial model of education imposed on schools has stifles creativity (Eisner, 2005; Robinson, 2006; 2009). Eisner (2005) states:

We seek curriculum uniformity so parents can compare their schools with other schools, as if test scores were good proxies for the quality of education. We would like nothing more than to get teaching down to a science even though the conception of science being employed has little to do with what science is about...We flirt with payments by results, we pay practically no attention to the idea that engagement in school can and should provide intrinsic satisfactions, and we exacerbate the importance of extrinsic rewards by creating policies that encourage children to become point collectors. (p. 207)

Likewise, Robinson (2009) contends that the model schools follow in standardisation and measurement comes at a great cost to teaching and learning, and that it is doing little to equip students with the skills necessary for the 21st century. Robinson (2009) argues that education reform needs to involve the dismantling of old dichotomies and the introduction of a new model developed towards individual learning. Eisner (2000) and Dimitriadis, Cole and Costello (2009) argue respectively that one of the prohibitive issues is that as a learning area, the arts are perceived by non-arts practitioners as lacking the rigour of the sciences. In addition to this, neoliberalism, globalisation and performativity that specifically emphasise measurement have further positioned the mathematics and sciences at the top of the subject hierarchy. Egan (2011) argues that systemically, despite the many policies based on measurement and accountability “the persistence of powerful progressive ideas continues to undermine our attempts to make schooling more effective” (p. 5). This is particularly so in the UK, USA and Australia, yet in countries like Finland, Lingard (2009) notes, where emphasis is on teaching and learning through professional choice, “there is real value in learning...teachers have a considerable degree of professional autonomy. There is no high-stakes testing” (p. 17). In addition to this, countries like Finland also have a strong emphasis on general compulsory arts education (Pascoe et al., 2005; Bamford, 2009).
In terms of policy, it has been well established that the UK, by 1999 had in place “a significant performativity culture to achieve its improvement standards policy through national testing, target setting and national inspections alongside publication of league tables” Troman et al. (2007, p. 551). In light of concerns about the effects of high stakes testing on school performance, there was a shift towards promoting “cultural and creative” policy, with a remaining focus on “driving up standards” (p. 551). As a consequence, the UK government released the All Our Futures policy (1999) discussed earlier, which attempted to address the issues of creativity and culture, alongside accountability and standardisation. Troman et al. (2007) noted that this new agenda was ironically very much about “how to maximise test scores...whilst also maintaining the motivation and commitment of staff and pupils, and satisfying external inspectors that polices were being implemented in a cost-effective manner...this problem shaped the cultural response to the introduction of creative policies” (p. 559).

Underpinning the Troman et al. (2007) observations was a qualitative, ethnographic study of six English primary schools examining data collected over a twelve-month period. From interviews with teachers, the researchers concluded that primary schools in their complexity produce many and varied versions of policy. Troman et al. (2007) argue that the dichotomy between the performative and creative policies also provides positive policy enactment in that creativity along with performativity, “provided ... curriculum coverage and task completion; and the psychic rewards of teaching” (p. 564). They concluded that the UK government creative polices for education – Creative Partnerships (2001) and Expecting the Unexpected (2003) had produced positive results in acknowledging a place for creativity and innovation in schools. They found that in the small spaces left between prescriptive tasks teachers found ways to teach authentically, aligning their practice to their values and beliefs about what it meant to be a good teacher.

Paradoxically, Alexander (2010) noted that while both teachers and students supported finding more small spaces for the arts in the curriculum, this view was not universal. Some parents were concerned about wasting time away from the core subjects, yet the review also noted that the terms creative and creativity were among the most commonly referred to by participants. Alexander (2010) noted that the “list of subjects has simply become longer and longer, and nothing has been removed to accommodate the newcomers” and that “many organisations expressed deep concern about the plight of the
arts, and called for music and drama to be rescued before they disappeared altogether” (p. 214). In terms of general perceptions about the arts, Alexander (2010) noted an:

Increasing tendency to seek to justify the arts by reference to outcome measures of social or economic utility which has little to do with how the arts are experienced...this has been unhelpful to the cause of the arts in schools. (p. 228)

This failure to accurately define the arts as a rigourous, academic, as well as unique field, has further compromised public perceptions. Much of this responsibility falls to the work of the teacher. Bamford (2010) noted, “education is a double-edged sword that can be used to either cultivate or stifle creativity. The teacher is the fundamental reference point in the school. Their role is of prime importance in promoting creativity” (p. 1). Bamford (2010) referred to the PISA scores and the important role they play in shaping national policy, particularly when scores drop and ‘measures ensue’ to improve them. In the context of the PISA tests, Bamford (2010) highlighted the introduction of a test instrument that would test for creativity. If this were to occur, it would “make a major difference because education systems that ignore creativity are not going to perform very well on that internationally scored test” (p. 1). Interestingly, Bamford (2010) went on to discuss the need for creative teaching and learning advocacy through the arts, but with evidence based material of why to teach the arts in schools. Much of this made connections to the creative economy. As previously discussed, Perryman et al. (2011) noted that with the English Baccalaureate, British schools are now required to test a language and a humanity subject. Research suggests that value will be extended to these two subject areas through their association with testing. It would be ironic if a test were the saviour of arts education in schools.

Likewise, in the United States, there has been a considerable amount of recent research in the area of the effects of high-stakes testing on the implementation of arts. These include, but are not limited to, Oreck (2006), Mishook (2006), Rademaker (2007), Spohn (2008), Parsons (2009), French (2009) and Kratochvil (2009).

In 2006, Oreck examined the case of NYC schools and the effects of high stakes testing on the arts, followed by Spohn (2008) who conducted a series of interviews with teachers to gain their perspectives on NCLB policy and how it has affected arts education in a school district in Ribbon Valley, Ohio, USA. Furthermore, Kratochvil (2009) investigated arts practice in the NCLB era in a K-12 school using a single in-depth case study. These studies span the last five years and the distance from east to west coast of the US.
Oreck (2006) through a qualitative research project investigating arts practice in New York City schools concluded that despite increasing pressure to produce better student results, teachers found ways to incorporate the arts into their programs. The research provided data from a series of open interviews with six teachers from kindergarten to year 12 New York City public schools. Oreck (2006) also noted the dichotomy created by opposing policies – one that advocate the arts and creativity with another that mandates testing and standardisation. He also noted that there has been a misalignment between professional development requirements in that arts in general education courses has been emphasised in schools despite a marked drop in teacher training at the tertiary level to adequately provide it. Along with many previous authors, he noted, "high stakes testing undermines creativity and teacher autonomy" (p. 2). As with previous authors Costantoura et al. (2001); Angus et al. (2009); Eisner (2002) and Abbs (2003), Oreck maintains, “one obstacle to studying the use of the arts by teachers in the classroom is the lack of a simple definition of what constitutes art” (p. 3). Dewey (as cited in Oreck, 2006) confirmed that a good teacher identifies and nurtures the creative ability of the student in order to reproduce skill and artistry, as opposed to teaching these things (p. 3). Oreck (2006) found that there was no indication that demography or background determined arts education curriculum, but rather the centrally imposed “compressed schedules” (p.17). The study found that the “low level of self-reported use” of the arts in the curriculum contrasted the apparent “high value” given to arts education as part of the teacher’s belief modes (p. 5).

The study concluded that when the arts formed a part of the curriculum they enabled teachers to offer multiple and diverse ways of learning to all students who they believed were capable of high achievement. Moreover, teachers make individual choices about what to teach despite the external pressures placed upon them in the performative culture of high stakes testing. Yet the high stakes testing is acknowledged as playing a major role in professional decision-making.

Spohn (2008) conducted a series of open-ended interviews with teachers in Ohio to determine the effect of the NCLB policy on arts education. Spohn (2008) found that overwhelmingly teachers felt that pedagogy had altered and professional choice in the provision of curricula had narrowed. In two cases music teachers were advised that allocated teaching time would be reduced if test scores in mathematics and reading did not improve (p. 6). This is a reflection of what Perryman et al. (2011) refer to as “increasing the power” of the tested subjects. Spohn (2008), like many previous authors, argues that the
heavy focus on accountability further marginalises disadvantaged students and schools. Spohn claims that it also disadvantages the students who might otherwise choose to pursue a career or interest in the arts or a specific art form. This in turn will have a flow on effect in terms of aesthetic appreciation and understanding of culture; audience levels and public participation in the arts and eventually to education and teaching further marginalising the subjects. As indicated by Webb and Vulliamy (2006), education will have come full circle.

Kratochvil (2009), as part of a PhD study examined the effects of the NCLB policy on arts education in Californian schools, in the USA. This was a single in-depth case study using interviews with participants to determine where arts education is situated in the current climate in the US. Kratochvil (2009) contextualised the thesis with historical material that enables one to see the link between past policy, political, social and economic trends, and the present inequitable practices found in Californian schools in terms of arts education. Within the context of schools in California, the findings noted that 90% of students did not receive an adequate arts education while at school and students from low SES backgrounds were further disadvantaged due to inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities in the arts. This is despite the NCLB policy that also required standards to be reached in arts education in schools noting, that the current performative practices in the US were “contrary to state policy which requires a standards-based arts curriculum as part of a student’s core education” (p. 154). The areas however are untested on state/nationwide tests. The findings revealed that because the art were so highly valued on an individual level, despite intensification of work associated with high stakes testing, teachers found ways to implement arts programs. The US research found that many of the teachers shared a core philosophy that proved them “unwilling to compromise on their belief that the arts are essential to the development of an individual” (p. 157). In addition, teachers in the Krotchivil (2009) study “experienced complete flexibility in making curriculum choices in their classroom and freedom from ‘top down rules’” (p. 154). The study concluded that the arts are valued, but with the negative economic and political pressures currently being experienced in the US, they will remain on the fringe.

**Conclusion**

This chapter examined current research into the global and national policy field, specifically examining high stakes testing and accountability. The literature suggests that the culture of performativity to varying degrees, defines the UK, US and Australian education systems.
This is evidenced by the introduction of accountability measures such as national tests, standardised national curriculum and publically available school test results. The chapter detailed the process behind the introduction of such polices into the Australian system which further demonstrated the links in the global policy discourse.

The literature suggests that the principal focus of this discourse is about accountability and efficiency, as opposed to educational emancipation and improving student outcomes. Furthermore, much of the literature suggests that this culture has come at the cost of professional autonomy, self-efficacy and teacher identity, learning areas outside the field of influence and uncertainty. As Buckingham (2012) advises, international agencies and trends should not be the driver of education policy in Australia, as there are so many other factors to consider along the lines of culture, geography, history and identity, stating, "it is important that Australia does not sacrifice the valuable aspects of its unique educational system in the pursuit of an unattainable goal" (p. 2).

Policy is a transitional field; player's constantly move and change within the field (Singh, Thomas & Harris, 2013). However, if a policy is mandated, there is a professional obligation to implement and despite the capacity to respond, reform fatigue and/or outright obstruction, teachers are compelled to follow the rules (Braun, Maguire and Ball, 2010). As a part of this process there is a whole gamut of pedestrian policy demands placed on teachers, intertwined with the daily requirements of a school. For example, playground duty, uniform policies, care policies and extra-curricular policies. In such a culture, how does a teacher implement in a five hour day, mandated teaching time for English and mathematics, history and science; cover the other key learning areas of the arts, health and physical education, geography, technology, languages and all of the other pedestrian requirements of a school? They prioritise, placing mandates first, and everything else gets added on. Furthermore, when systemic policy steers education towards a back-to-basics mentality favouring testing and measurement, eventually it finds its way into the consciousness of parents and students, normalising accountability as a substitute for education. Perryman (2006) proposes that one of the results of this is “panoptic performativity” where "lessons are taught to a rigidly prescribed routine, school documentation and policies closely mirror the accepted discourses of school effectiveness and the whole school effort is directed away from education and towards passing inspection" (p. 2), to “deprofessionalisation” (p. 17), "disempowerment" (p. 18) and a loss of purpose.
The literature supports the concept of a hierarchy of subjects that dominate the school curriculum and the education discourse, dictated by the apparent 'measurability' of each key learning area. This is not to say that subjects such as English and mathematics are not the core business of school, but rather, the focus appears to have moved so far to advantage these subjects and marginalise others. To a large extent, Australia has adopted the policies and practices of countries like the US and the UK in an attempt to address apparent deficits in schools, particularly in falling literacy and numeracy levels. Yet, the literature also presents additional evidence that suggests that the course of high stakes testing and prescriptive national curricula in the UK and the US has been unsuccessful in achieving the desired outcomes in improving literacy and numeracy in the long term and despite the mandates, teachers who choose to are managing to find time to teach what they value. Ironically, since the introduction of mandates that dictate a majority of the school day must be spent on literacy and numeracy studies, Australia has been downgraded on the OECD/PISA scale for reading and mathematics for 2013. Equity also becomes a concern, and the current climate of performativity appears to be reducing opportunities due to the narrowing of the school curricula to the basics, and ignoring the fact that capital is a significant factor in school success (Lingard, 2009).

The following chapter discusses arts education as part of a broader picture of the purpose of primary schooling, and why the arts continue to struggle for legitimacy in the school curriculum.
Chapter Three: the arts

This chapter examines the place of the arts in the school curriculum with a particular focus on the claims made about the contribution the arts make to education, and whether or not the culture of performativity has impacted upon teaching and learning and if there is any evidence of disengagement and dismantling of arts programs and alternatives views of teaching and learning as a result.

The chapter firstly examines why the arts are important in the lives of young people and why they should be a real part of the school curriculum in terms of their potential to inform and transform individuals. Secondly, the chapter discusses how creativity has been and is currently defined in terms of the arts and the creative economy. Finally, the chapter concludes with the arts struggle for legitimacy and how this potentially will result in a situation where, “if you can pay you can play”.

The importance of the arts in education

It is widely acknowledged that the arts are an inherent part of the human condition and there is evidence that for centuries, music, dance and visual art, have been used to tell stories by both indigenous and non-indigenous cultures (Dewey, 1934; Reimer, 1970 & 2003; Eisner, 2005; Ewing, 2012). Bamford (2006) contends that, “the arts have always been part of humanity's most vital concerns” and more importantly, that, “children are born aesthetically aware and they engage in the arts long before they can speak or write...given this view, the arts are fundamental to education” (p. 19). In education, they offer possibility and opportunity beyond the obvious, and they encourage and support learning through risk-taking, experimenting, making mistakes, and finding solutions, often collaboratively, but always creatively (Burnard et al., 2006; Robinson, 2006; Craft, 2000).

In his seminal work Art as Experience, Dewey (1934) advocated arts education as part of life experience, not separate from community or self. Dewey coined the term “art as experience” and recognised the value of quality arts experiences in education, in a manner that made connections to life, experiences and stages of learning (Dillon, 2001; Bamford, 2006). Dewey theorised that the arts are best learnt through real, hands on experience and that there should be little differentiation between art and life. Dewey also advocated that the arts were the only way to assist in developing aesthetic skills in the observer as well as
the artist. For this reason, the arts in schools should be open to both artist and audience in an experience that is collectively stored towards shaping the creative mind (Dewey, 1934).

Like Dewey, Abbs (2003) maintains that the arts are integral to the human condition and that they are inextricably connected to a sense of the self and the past. In his argument for arts education, he states:

The arts, at their best, deepen and refine our sense of what it means to be alive; they open out existential possibilities for our lives; they invite us to see again free of the grimy occluding stains of habit, free from the easy smears and cheap distortions of received opinion. At times they disturb, even terrify, but they do so in order to liberate, in order to give birth to some kind of insight, some kind of wisdom. This is a most unfashionable view, a view against the flow, but it seems to me, nonetheless true. After all, today's most fierce fashions are nearly always tomorrow's most facile deceptions. (p. 67)

Abbs (1994) also argues the need for arts education to be experienced authentically along with an understanding of the aesthetic, suggesting this in turn develops creativity, a sense of culture and recognition of history and place. He acknowledges that creativity and the aesthetic are perceived through the senses, but this process should not compromise academic and artistic rigour, arguing that creative ideas, although perceived through the senses are still "ordered, moving and significant" (p. 172). Furthermore, Abbs (1989) notes that creativity is universal and innate, that "our creativity is natural, the symbols it gives birth to are intricate and continuous elaborations of our intrinsic natures" (p. 8) maintaining that originality as a concept is misleading because all work draws from our "received culture" (p.20). Abbs (1989) suggests that teachers need to understand this, and use historical and cultural capital, in conjunction with the provision of "proper structural conditions for this area to develop" (p. 2).

Lierse (1997) concurs noting, “it is the development of an aesthetic attitude, which gives joy and meaning to life and which leads to creativity and imagination. An imaginative life and creative life is a fundamental part of what defines us as human beings” (p. 40). Craft (2000) speaks of the arts, creativity and imagination in terms of “possibility thinking” (p. 9) through a theory, which involves three concepts: “being imaginative; posing questions and play” (p. 9). Craft advocates a curriculum where these things are not suppressed; as opposed to current educational policy, which she argues stifles creativity. Likewise, Greene (2001) maintains that the arts represent "unexplored possibilities...new ways of seeing,
hearing, feeling and moving” (p. 7) and that through academic objectivity and links to community and culture, the arts connect “us in a desire to see more, feel more, understand more, listen more accurately, dip more passionately into life” (p. 149). Greene (2001) notes that by teaching the arts in schools we are building autonomous and self-motivated learners who take with them into society imagination and resilience. Moreover, Greene (2001) does not dispute the need for schools and society to address “social issues” nor the absolute necessity of the 3Rs and accountability, but this agenda should not be at the expense of everything else, stating:

We also have to attend to the possibilities in new ways of teaching, new ways of creating environments in the classrooms, new ways of developing a sense of agency in children...the sense of hope for something beyond what is. (p. 150)

Due to the potential of the arts, the authors cited also refer to the need for the arts to take a primary place in policy and education, moving away from the notion that the arts exist on an opposite side of intelligence and curriculum to the preferred subjects, English, mathematics and science.

In addition to the aesthetic domain Eisner (2005) argues, “that the arts are cognitive activities, guided by human intelligence, that make unique forms of meaning possible” (p. 76) and more significantly, “the arts are not mere diversions from the important business of education; they are essential resources” (p. 67). Furthermore, alternative ways of learning championed by educators such as Gardner (1983) and the multiple-intelligences theory, have also contributed to the understanding of arts education. Gardner (1983) believes that all children have many different ways of learning, and went further to define these categories specifically as linguistic; logical-mathematical; spatial; bodily-kinesthetic; musical; interpersonal and intrapersonal (Gardner, 1983). Gardner believed that all the intelligences exist and function in humans to varying degrees. At the time, this new education theory, which advocated the arts as one of the unique ways of learning, did much to raise awareness in both arts and education circles of their potential. Like Abbs, Gardner (1983) maintains that artistic intelligence can be sustained through the interaction that occurs with the individuals' cultural environment.

Like previous authors, Goldberg and Phillips (1992) believe arts education supports and encourages both cognitive and aesthetic skills, stating:
For both teachers and students, the arts can be a form of expression, communication, imagination, observation, perception and thought. The arts are integral to the development of cognitive skills such as listening, thinking, problem-solving, matching form to function, and decision making. They inspire discipline, dedication, and creativity... they can nurture a sense of belonging... provide a vehicle for individual, communities and cultures to explore their own world and journey to new ones. (p. v)

Many authors stress that the teaching of creative thinking as a fundamental part of arts education, requires a great deal of deep and highly developed skills in the teacher accompanied by a clear articulation of what the arts are (Abbs, 1989; Eisner, 2002; Ostern, 2007; Brinkman, 2010).

One of the enduring problems facing arts education in schools is the lack of a clear definition of what the arts actually should be in schools (Eisner, 2002; Angus, Ainley & Olney, 2007; Alexander, 2010). Part of this struggle has been discussed in Chapter Two in the wider debate about how a good education is perceived. As early as 1967, Eisner argued that much of this confusion stems from the paradoxical nature of the curriculum debate, stating:

Educational objectives are typically derived from curriculum theory, which assumes that it is possible to predict with a fair degree of accuracy what the outcomes of instruction will be...in some subjects areas, such as mathematics, languages and the sciences, it is possible to specify with great precision...in other subject areas, especially the arts, such specification is frequently not possible, and when possible, may not be desirable. (Eisner, 2005, p. 19)

This problematic situation of what constitutes a good education, whether the arts are aesthetic or cognitive, “fluid” as compared to “solid” like the sciences, has resulted in a continuous state of struggle for the arts (Eisner, 2000, p. 5). In addition to this there is also a lack of clarity about how creativity and culture are defined and how they contribute to the definition of arts and art education, making it even more difficult to clearly and accurately define what each term means. This is discussed in the next section.
The problem of a definition

In addition to the competing discourse of performativity, and the hierarchy of subjects, one of the challenges facing arts education is the enduring concern about what exactly arts education comprises. For decades now a definition of the arts, art education, and creativity has vacillated between the structured, disciplined pursuit of artistic perfection; to the study of culture; to the free pursuit of personal creativity and expression. As noted earlier, Eisner (2002) suggests that much of the problem for the arts lies with the public perception of what a good education is, shaped originally from Platonic theory that separated “mind” and “body”, the mind being superior and where “words and numbers” were the most rigorous vehicle for expression (p. 76). The arts have thus been considered “irrational” as they are expressed, not through words but through actions and symbols (p. 76). Building on this, Eisner (2005) maintains that embedded education theory can be ascribed to the original work of educators like Thorndike who used science as the underpinnings to guide educational practice, because:

Science was considered dependable, the artistic process was not. Science was cognitive, the arts were emotional. Science was teachable, the arts required talent. Science was testable; the arts were matters of preference. Science was useful, the arts were ornamental. It was clear then as it is today which side of the coin mattered. (Eisner, 2002, para. 9)

Despite that fact that teachers understand that “knowledge is a social construction...built collectively” and “that children learn in multiple ways”, the school curriculum remains “linear” in “assumption” and “transmission” (Wrigley, Thomson & Lingard, 2011, p. 2).

Bamford (2006) describes how, over many decades, a series of diverse and sometimes opposing trends have helped shape what we now know is a “relatively fixed” international definition for arts education (p. 30). Trends such as Technocratic art, akin to technical drawing and design; Child art that was aligned with developmental stages and freedom of expression; Art as expression, with a focus on creativity and the therapeutic benefits of the arts through a heavy focus on individual expression and creative freedom; Art as cognition, aligned to intellectual inquiry and critical thinking; Art as aesthetic response; Art as a cultural agent; and finally, Postmodernism, where there was a destabilising of the above and in fact a questioning of the existence of art itself as a “definable concept” (Adapted from Bamford, 2006, p. 32).
Upon closer examination, *Child art* for example, aligns with Dewey (1934) who (as noted earlier) advocated that arts education be included as an integral component of education curricula and that education had to be aligned with the interests and developmental stages of the child and most importantly experienced by the child. Yet what often takes place under these assumptions is a free, unstructured, and unaccountable process that betrays the skills and knowledge required to perform Bach for example. Likewise, Abbs (2003) suggests the historical foundations upon which the modern art education paradigm characterised by “progressivism and modernism” are now the precursors for what we now call art education (p. 49). Vacillation between artistic freedom, expounded by movements like *Child Art* and *Art as expression*, and government intervention in the 1970s, when the arts aligned with a more “disciplined base” (Bamford, 2006), demonstrate this ongoing problem. Abbs (2003) notes for example, that by the 1970s and with the neoliberal reforms of the Thatcher government, movements like Child Art, were replaced with a theoretical position much more closely aligned to the Western artistic tradition, and “intellectual rigour, cognitive benefits and academic rationales” were applied to support the arts in education (Bamford, 2006, p. 33). Subsequently, Abbs (2003) maintains that the arts moved to the status of disciplined subject as well as “fine vehicles for human understanding” (p. 56) and that all the arts forms together, “work through the aesthetic, all address imagination, and all are concerned with the symbolic embodiment of human meaning” (p. 57). Abbs (2003) notes that the future for arts in education through this period looked positive – there was a balance between the two extremes with a focus on creativity and innovation, coupled with cognitive/intellectual understanding and practical skill. However, within a decade, after incremental marginalisation through neoliberal policies, the new arts agenda had been dismantled. Abbs (2003) states:

> At the level of daily practice, teachers of the arts, like all other teachers...have become obsessively preoccupied with a bewildering list of bureaucratic imperatives far removed from the actualities and potentialities of their teaching...the pupils in turn, spend their lives frenetically preparing for assessment or being assessed or waiting to receive results. (p. 59)

Paradoxically, Abbs (2003) also claims that due to a failure to adequately articulate what the arts mean, “instead of addressing and liberating the imagination”, current practices have “merely added to the symptoms of decay, loss and futility” (p. 151), believing that, in segregating art from life, and through segregating the art disciplines so dogmatically,
particularly in the early years of schooling, fortified “a result-driven specialist cast of mind” (p. 58).

Bamford (2006) as noted previously, suggests that there is to some degree an international agreement on arts education, perhaps identified by institutions like the International Baccalaureate, which states:

From the earliest times, artistic expression has been common to all cultures as human beings make statements through a variety of non-verbal forms and create objects that are aesthetically pleasing...they (students) are also encouraged to identify particular creative abilities and to master techniques appropriate to that form of expression. (IB, n.d. para. 1)

Yet, in contrast to this, Abbs (2003) notes that despite small gains, no universal or clearly articulated concept of the arts has ever materialised, and so what we have remaining in education is a fringe movement, tacked onto the end of the school day.

Further to this, additional issues exist in pre-service teacher education programs, where the ‘input/output’ model has filtered down and reduced or eroded completely tertiary arts courses for general classroom teachers and even for specialist teachers (Garvis & Riek, 2010). This situation was previously noted by the research of Russell-Bowie (2002), Jacobs (2008) and Hartwig (2004) who concur that beginning teachers in the primary school setting lack confidence in teaching the arts in their classrooms due to both limited personal experience and limited teacher training.

Furthermore, in a study by Wright (2003) in Wright and Pascoe (2004) it was noted that almost half of pre-service teachers surveyed had no exposure to the arts. When the situation is examined in terms of global education policy agendas, conflicting curriculum priorities, a lack of experience and training in arts education and a lack of a clear definition of what exactly it is that has to be taught, it is easy to see how the arts have become and will remain marginalised. Likewise Alter, Hays and O’Hara, (2009) show that despite the possibility that the arts offer “such as creating positive attitudes to learning, developing a greater sense of personal and cultural identity and fostering more creative and imaginative ways of thinking” the deficit in pre-service teacher education courses, especially for general classroom teachers will remain a considerable obstacle (p. 22).

In recent research, Lemon and Garvis (2013) found that teachers rely on personal exposure and experience in the arts to adequately prepare for the requirements of school. Personal experience therefore defines their curriculum intent and planning and if this is
non-existent, limited or one directional, the results can lead to a further disenfranchisement of the arts (Bamford, 2009). Lemon and Garvis (2013) state:

From a teacher self-efficacy perspective, personal experience is important for informing beliefs about master of experience (that is the teaching of the arts). If there is little prior experience to draw upon, the pre-service teacher has limited experiences to draw upon in their planning and programming of arts experiences. Moreover, the pre-service teacher may realise this in a type of ‘reality shock’ in a classroom environment when there are expectations from the school administration and parents to plan meaningful arts experiences for children, yet they have limited understanding and experience of how to implement this successfully. In some instances, the reality shock could be so great (caused by emotional arousal) that the pre-service teacher may simply reject and stop any involvement with teaching arts experiences. (p. 5)

This research invites an important conversation given the impending implementation of the arts as part of the new national curriculum in Australia. Ultimately, what is advocated is a return of the arts to a primary place in belief structures and values, and a move away from the “discourse of dichotomy” where the arts exist on an opposite side of intelligence to English, mathematics and science (Alexander, 2010). Identifying the arts as integral to the human condition is a common thread, yet it is also to the detriment of the arts as a subject within the school curriculum due to it's un-measurable and often undefined nature. What is enacted remains unknown.

One of the most significant features inextricably linked to the arts is creativity. As noted in the previous section, creativity is also a difficult concept to define, and again this further compounds the problem of defining the arts. Creativity is discussed in the next section, followed by a discussion of the creative economy.

**Creativity**

Defining creativity, Abbs (1989) suggests that it is an innate and universal understanding, appreciation and application of the aesthetic experience. He contends that creativity must be regarded as a natural human condition to be nurtured and cultivated, suggesting that “our creativity is natural, the symbols it gives birth to are intricate and continuous elaborations of our intrinsic natures” (p. 8). Creativity, once associated exclusively with the arts, is now more complex and many different definitions and historical precedents shape
understandings of the term. Historically it was associated with “divine inspiration” (Craft, Gardner & Claxton, 2008, p. 2) and over the centuries the term has come to be understood “as the human capacity for insight, originality, and subjectivity of feeling” (Craft et al., 2008, p. 2). Generally it is accepted that creativity means to engage in action that is an extension of accepted and expected thought and action, it is a way of doing things differently, or as Robinson (2009) maintains, it is the ability to have an original idea of value.

Creativity is now a universal term that relates to all people in all societies in both the Western and non-Western cultures and it is now diverse in that it does not refer exclusively to the arts, but rather to any area of work, research, study or interest. It is associated with architecture, mathematics, science, engineering as well as the traditionally defined creative arts such as visual arts and music. It can be found in the way we choose to dress, decorate our homes, and deliver our thoughts and ideas. Policy generally acknowledges that creativity leads to innovation and discovery, and that this new attribute may in turn lead to further economic development. Hope (2010) supports this by arguing that “there is little difference between the type of thinking necessary for creative work in the arts and the type of thinking necessary for creative work in other fields” (p. 39).

Florida (2004) asserts, “both at work and in other spheres of our lives, we value creativity more highly than ever, and cultivate it more intensely. The creative impulse – the attribute that distinguishes us as humans, from other species – is now being let loose on an unprecedented scale” (p. 4). Creativity is no longer exclusive to the arts, but forms part of the new economy, with “multidimensional and... mutually reinforcing forms” (Florida, 2004, p. 5). Hope (2010) notes, “the word creativity used by itself is one of the most nonspecific terms we have, although each concrete application of the term is quite specific” (p. 39). Creativity is also identified as a special attribute like a gifted musician possesses or “special talent creativity” and “self-actualising creativity”, where the individual works on developing such skills (Auh, 2000, p. 81). Hope (2010) also asserts that creativity has characteristics linked respectively to professional practice (for example, artists and surgeons) and private practice (for example, cooking and dressing), while the attribute may also be considered an amalgamation of several attributes as Fulton and Hallgarten (2005) note:

Collaborative in nature; it demands a joint commitment and shared vision and a willingness to embrace open-ended outcomes, challenge and risk. It offers an opportunity to look at the world in new ways, to value difference and to experience
new things. It encourages creative, critical and reflective thinking and produces excited, enthusiastic, enquiry-driven learners. (para. 7)

All of this suggests that further to the problematic definition of the arts, the concept of creativity is problematic. For example, furthering the dichotomy between the arts and the sciences, Robinson (2006) argues “we have disconnected our conception of creativity from our conception of intelligence” (p. 25), henceforth, placing more value on creativity to problem solve, as opposed to creativity to make something artistic.

Creativity is often exclusively associated with the arts, but it has also become a broad term for innovation, as Hoffert (2005) notes:

Creativity is a loaded term; it has no agreed definition, specific role or even uncontested existence and its relation to both research and discovery is uncertain. It is a term which can arouse ambiguity and dissent and confuse our understanding of the path to innovation, rather than enable greater insight; however there is no doubt that the enhancement of the skills embraced by ‘whatever’ we take creativity to be, are crucial to achieving innovative outcomes. (p. 153)

Creativity in fields such as engineering for example might be described as innovative problem solving, whereas in the arts, it is often linked to originality. This contributes further to the dichotomy between the arts and the sciences. Yet, as Abbs (1989) notes, there are no original ideas, ideas are a result of our “received culture” and in linking creativity to originality the very flow of the creative idea is stifled (p. 20). Furthermore, Abbs (2003) argues that the arts have been to some extent their own worst enemy and the bifurcation between the sciences and the arts widened when creativity was exclusively linked to originality, stating:

The current broad reaction against “expressive” and “open-ended” education can be understood partly as a reaction against the styles of teaching that developed out of the misplaced cult of originality with its belief in “self-expression” and “creativity”. (p. 2)

He goes on to imply that society is “paying a high price for that earlier Modernist iconoclasm of spirit” (p. 2).

In terms of education, Alexander (2010) maintains that there is a misalignment of intent between government policy where one espouses the virtues of creativity, culture and diversity, but legislates, funds and rewards another policy that imposes standardisation and
high stakes testing. This is a complex, multilayered position, made more so by the fact that education is heavily valued laden, and the process of enacting policy is also heavily value laden (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Changing schools is led by aims and objectives, usually drawn up by those distanced from the place of enactment and to achieve the aims there are many considerations. Thomson (2010) sums this up by stating:

Put simply, where you end up and what you end up with (outcome) is inextricably connected with what you are trying to achieve (purpose), and the avenues you use to try to get there (process). Trying to become a democratic school through using authoritarian means, for example, is clearly going to be problematic and the outcome may be something far from the goals attempted. Purpose, process and outcome are inseparable. But the end points of change are not all the same. All outcomes are not equal. (p. 15)

What has emerged in the last decade in general education policy terms is a new emphasis on the attribute ‘creativity’, but not in or through arts education. Rather the focus is more about the creative economy, the “global curriculum settlement around educational basics and “new economy” competencies that focuses almost exclusively on the measureable production of human capital” (Luke, 2011, p. 371). In 2009 the European Commission conducted a survey involving approximately 10 000 teachers across the European Union. The findings noted that creativity was considered an interchangeable attribute across fields and that it could be encouraged through a number of methods including creative pedagogy and ICT. Quintin (2009) noted:

An overwhelming majority of teachers believe that creativity can be applied to every domain of knowledge and every school subject. They do not see creativity as being only relevant for intrinsically creative subjects such as the arts, music or drama. This is of paramount importance for the development of creative thinking as a transversal skill. (p. 7)

Yet there was no consensus about the inclusion of creativity within the actual curriculum itself with at least one quarter of the surveyed teachers noting that creativity in the curriculum had no place. This aligned with additional findings that suggested there was no consensus about what the term actually meant nor was there consensus about how it might be achieved. Quintin (2009) notes:
In addition to contrasting situations across countries, the different views within countries are also to be noted. This calls for discussion and debate regarding the conceptualization and implementation of creativity in the curriculum, so as to reach a more common understanding and shared practice within each national context. (p. 16)

Quintin (2009) found that one of the most important factors in the development of creative thinking in schools was the actual culture of the school itself. The most conducive being a school culture that encouraged “creativity... (through) learners’ empowerment and open-mindedness, to rather a surprising extent... risk-taking and mixing academic work and play” (p. 7). Hennessey, (2000) argues that one of the most detrimental factors for creative development is extrinsic motivation or reward, especially in the form of testing (p. 294). Frick (2012) argues this “creative death” (Hennessey, 2000), results when learning is driven by activities linked to “socially imposed factors, like tests” (p. 231). Frick (2012) maintains the teacher holds the key to this tension through the use of pedagogy where they “stressed the importance of understanding over test performance” (p. 232).

What is evident is that terms such as creativity, imagination and innovation have become interchangeable. They are terms that reflect a society that appears to value difference, but in the twenty-first century this can be attributed to economic reasons, as much as supporting an alternative view. Creativity is regarded as a sought after commodity in our new creative economy and it is not subject specific (Florida, 2004; Cunningham, 2006; Craft, 2006; Craft et al., 2008). Lassig (2009) notes, “creativity is no longer on the periphery or synonymous with genius, nor is it reserved for the arts” (p. 1), maintaining there is now “recognition of the increasing economic value of people’s creative ideas and this realisation that creativity can be measured, gives it value” (p. 1).

The creative economy is discussed in the following section.

The creative economy

The creative economy was first introduced into policy in 1998 by the government of the United Kingdom as part of a taskforce of inter-systemic collaboration, the Creative Industries Taskforce. This group coined the definition that is still widely accepted—“activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have the potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Cunningham, 2006 p. 5). Prior to this, cultural industries was the preferred term, and it
referred to the cultural policy of the incumbent government that was usually distinguished by high arts and popular arts (Garnham, 2005). Again, there is ambiguity and conflation in the use of the terms culture and creativity. The link between these two fields was a result of the new relationship between the treasury and the departments that it funded in an effort to make public spending accountable. In the UK, Cunningham (2006) noted that this has resulted in a "refocusing of the creative industries towards higher growth business development and clearer differentiations of economic and cultural goals" (p. 9). This language combines the language of business, industry and creativity, and it is a new discourse (Cunningham, 2006; Garnham, 2005).

Creativity now has an economic value, and this is demonstrated through the use of terms like the creative economy, and the transfer of terms across fields. Current policy documents observe the importance of creativity as an attribute of the worker. Florida (2004) argues that this has been a result of an acknowledgement that creativity as Abbs (1989) argued, is innate, henceforth a “key factor in our economy and society” (p. 4).

In the Australian context, in 1994 the Federal Labor Government under the Prime Ministership of Paul Keating released the Creative Nation policy (Cunningham, 2006). This policy was designed to develop a strong community understanding of Australian identity and culture with a clear conflating of the definitions of creativity and culture. The policy was heavily focused on the complimentary nature of creativity and culture, and how these two attributes contribute to a “common heritage” through the appreciation and understanding of the arts and history. Keating’s (1994) opening address is a single example of government policy that reflects a philosophy linking history to an understanding of culture, achieved through the arts, allowing individuals make sense of their worlds. Keating (1994) states:

To speak of Australian culture is to recognise our common heritage. It is to say that we share ideas, values, sentiments and traditions, and that we see in all the various manifestations of what it means to be Australian. Culture, then, concerns identity - the identity of the nation, communities and individuals...Culture, therefore, also concerns self-expression and creativity. Not only do we seek to preserve our heritage and tradition, we cultivate them. We preserve the things that make us what we are and cultivate the means of reaching what we can be. We recognise that the life of the nation and all our lives are richer for an environment in which art and ideas can flourish, and in which all can share in the enjoyment of them. With a
cultural policy we recognise our responsibility to foster and preserve such an environment. We recognise that the ownership of a heritage and identity, and the means of self-expression and creativity, are essential human needs and essential to the health of society. (p. 5)

In contrast to this Australian policy, in the year 2000 the OECD released a future studies policy detailing a proposal for a sustainable future for the 21st century, the *Creative Society of the 21st Century* (OECD, 2000). This release argued that individual and organisational creativity are an integral part of the economic, social and cultural success of nations. In terms of education policy and the provision of curriculum, creativity has become a significant element of twenty first century rhetoric (Craft, 2006). Given the influence the OECD has in policymaking, this document generated a place for creativity in future national government policy around the world, however, the OECD document, which promotes creativity, made no connection to arts education. In 2006, the OECD released additional guidance towards the school reform agenda in the *Think scenarios, rethink education* policy, noting that successful school reform is best guided by adopting a “scenario” model as opposed to a “problem-solution” model (Thomson, 2010, p. 31).

This model stresses the need for change through considering what might happen, what could change and how best to accommodate these ideas. Further to this, in 2010, the OECD released a document titled *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from Pisa for the United States: OECD,* (OECD, 2010) to inform American school reform. This document detailed the success of a variety of countries (Canada, China, Japan, Singapore and Finland) that performed consistently well in terms of educational outcomes for students. Countries successful in terms of education standards were those that also encouraged various types of creativity and creative practices in teaching and learning, along with a belief that creativity and creative practice is accompanied by rigour and substance. The report noted that despite the cultural differences in the definition of creativity between countries, creative practices were encouraged and acknowledged. Notably, the OECD did not point to standardised testing as contributing to school success alone. Sheridan-Rabideau (2010) suggest that any conversation about creativity and curricula must necessitate a discussion about the arts in schools and as “the arts are most frequently presented ‘episodically’, rather than evenly, throughout the educational experience” without fundamental change, this will remain the case (p. 55). Further maintaining “the creative energies of the artist must be central within such a pedagogical shift” (p. 54).
In 2013, the OECD released the *Art for Art’s Sake: the impact of arts education* a research project examining whether or not the arts impact upon the academic performance of students through the enhancement of cognitive and behavioural skills. The OECD research specifically focused on each of the disciplines within the arts looking separately at how they work asking:

Artists, alongside scientists and entrepreneurs, are role models for innovation in our societies. Not surprisingly, arts education is commonly said to be a means of developing skills considered as critical for innovation: critical and creative thinking, motivation, self-confidence, and ability to communicate and cooperate effectively, but also skills in non-arts academic subjects such as mathematics, science, reading and writing. Does arts education really have a positive impact on the three subsets of skills that we define as “skills for innovation”: technical skills, skills in thinking and creativity, and character (behavioural and social skills)? (OECD, 2013, p. 1)

The OECD research notes that countries with a high degree of embedded arts education in their system are more likely to stimulate the kind of thinking that is advocated for the 21st century. In addition, and most importantly the OECD (2013) document argues:

Ultimately, the impact of arts education on other non-arts skills and on innovation in the labour market should not be the primary justification for arts education in today’s curricula. The arts have been in existence since the earliest humans, are parts of all cultures, and are a major domain of human experience, just like science, technology, mathematics, and humanities. The arts are important in their own rights for education. Students who gain mastery in an art form may discover their life’s work or their life’s passion. But for all children, the arts allow a different way of understanding than the sciences. Because they are an arena without right and wrong answers, they free students to explore and experiment. They are also a place to introspect and find personal meaning. (p. 4)

In the Australian context, in 2007, the Australian Research Council, Centre for Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation commissioned a report entitled *Education for a Creative Workforce: Rethinking Arts and Education*. In this report there is a clear statement made about the transferability of skills and the desirable employee attributes in the 21 century. The document states:
Almost any work on the arts and creative industries needs to set out its terminology clearly, particularly as ‘creativity’ has now become such a widely used, even misused, term (Banaji et al., 2006). The ‘creative workforce’ in this context includes those who work in the cultural and creative industry sectors, as well as those who work in creative occupations in the wider economy – designers who work in car factories, or musicians who work in education. It should also be taken to include the current demand for ‘creativity’ in the workforce in general. (Australia Council, 2007, para. 7)

The document outlines a number of motivating factors behind the inclusion of creative thinking in workforce attributes. They include the growth of economically driven models of the professional identified by the term “creative industries” and the encouragement of creative practices in the general workforce (Australia Council, 2007, para. 10). The document also makes not of the ambiguity of definition for the arts and arts education also involving creativity.

The most recent cultural policy in Australia came about as a result of the incumbent federal Labor government’s 2020 Summit. This new policy is reflective of the OECD (2000) policy that creativity, culture, arts, industry, education, innovation as interchangeable terms. The summit advocated that:

Australia has a rich, diverse, creative and unique culture. The Government recognises that fostering creativity is not merely fundamental to a healthy arts industry, but is critical to capturing innovation and strengthening a unique Australian identity that is recognised around the world. The Government is committed to encouraging excellence in the arts, supporting our cultural heritage, promoting creative education and ensuring public access to arts and culture. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009)

The government’s final document argued for the need for culture and creativity in education, but again it did not make the explicit policy link to arts education in schools. As a result of the 2020 Summit, in 2013, the federal Labor government released a new cultural policy entitled Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). This policy has five equal goals stated as:

1. Recognise, respect and celebrate the centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to the uniqueness of Australian identity.
2. Ensure that government support reflects the diversity of Australia and that all citizens, wherever they live, whatever their background or circumstances, have a right to shape our cultural identity and its expression.

3. Support excellence and the special role of artists and their creative collaborators as the source of original work and ideas, including telling Australian stories.

4. Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector to contribute to national life, community wellbeing and the economy.

5. Ensure Australian creativity thrives in the digitally enabled 21st century, by supporting innovation, the development of new creative content, knowledge and creative industries.

(Commonwealth of Australia, 2013, p. 6)

Policies such as this have gone some way to mediating the joke that historically, through certain eyes, Australia was often known as a “cultural desert”. Craik (2006) notes it has been a recent change that we have “emerged from a bleak landscape and embraced cultural and creative practice as an important aspect of nation building” (p. 1). In a paper titled A Horse With No Name: Arts and Cultural Policy in Australia, Craik (2006) discusses the first white settlement keen to nurture “a cultivated people” and in turn establish a “national culture” (p. 1). Craik (2006) noted that continuous support and funding for institutions like the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), established in 1932, and the national and state opera and ballet companies, are testament to Australia’s keen interest in producing a cultural legacy. What is missing from the large policy statements is the fundamental link between the arts and school education.

Evidence for the arts in education

In the past few decades there has been a great deal of research into arts education and how teaching “in and through” the arts is beneficial and it has been widely noted that “the arts provide permission to explore, indeed to surrender” to educational experiences (Eisner, 2002b, p. 4). This section presents some of the evidence for the inclusion of arts in education in schools focusing mainly on the two countries that Australia most closely aligns with, the US and the UK.

Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (1999) as part of the seminal work Champions of Change (Fiske, 1999), note that students who were involved with the arts were far more capable in all areas of the curriculum and in developing, demonstrating and transferring skills across
fields. Skills such as self-confidence, reliability, resilience, observation and judgment, referred to by Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (1999) as “habits of mind” for their durability and transferability (p. 51). The arts curriculum encouraged students to develop the skills 21st century education policy advocates. On a broader scale, Riley (1999) noted:

The ultimate challenge for education is to place all children on pathways toward success in school and in life. Through engagement with the arts young people can better begin lifelong journeys of developing their capabilities and contributing to the world around them. The arts teach young people how to learn by giving them the first step: the desire to learn... they will need an education that develops imaginative, flexible, and tough-minded thinking. The arts powerfully nurture the ability to think in this manner. (p. 9)

The research by Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (1999) provides evidence that arts rich schools are better equipped to produce students who value and practice creative thinking, “risk taking, task persistence, ownership of learning, and perceptions of academic accomplishments in school” (p. 51). In addition, the research found that the skills the students developed in the actual arts subjects transferred across to other learning areas and underpinned the students ability to problem solve, cooperate and reach conclusion in their learning.

Catterall, Chapleau and Iwanga (1999) note that arts education produces “substantial and significant differences in achievement and important attitudes and behaviour between youth highly involved in the arts on one hand, and those with little or no arts engagement on the other hand” (p. 18). Their research provided longitudinal evidence that meaning in the arts also matters “when it comes to variety of non-arts outcomes” (p. 32). This evidence also suggested improved prospects across a diverse range of areas for low SES students. They also noted that students from high SES backgrounds were also more likely to be involved in the arts.

Bamford (2006; 2009 and 2010) contends that the arts are pivotal in the development of citizens who exhibit skills that will be required to navigate a new reality characterised by the rise in technology in particular (2006). Bamford (2010) noted that the characteristics of a creative individual are those that performative policy values as attributes worthy of the 21st century. Such skills include information processing ability, fine motor skills, risk-taking capacity in learning, multi-tasking and intelligence. The arts attend to these skills, yet Bamford (2009) argues that, “increased effort has to be made to establish synergies
between knowledge, skills and creativity. With few exceptions education policy gets no further than paying lip service to these ideas” (p. 20).

In addition, Bamford (2010) argued that creativity and the arts must be experienced through well funded, well taught programs from a very young age for them to have any long-term benefits. Without this early experience, the human capacity to be creative and innovative is reduced. Bamford (2006) contends that the arts offer an alternative, yet rigorous and engaging way of teaching and learning and additionally, they address issues of inequity, disenfranchisement and school retention. In her groundbreaking research the “WOW Factor” (Bamford, 2006), it was noted that the arts played an important role in academic success. However, the findings also suggested that this advantage was present only when superior quality programs were delivered. In addition, she found that the arts were used in most countries worldwide to varying degrees either as unique disciplines or as pedagogical tools.

In the UK study Robinson (1999) states, “creative and cultural education are not subjects in the curriculum, they are general functions of education” (p. 6), and he stressed the need for a new way of teaching, learning and responding to the needs of the community beyond increasing literacy and numeracy scores. Robinson (1999) saw this new way as intrinsically linked to creativity and cultural awareness stating:

Creativity is possible in all areas of human activity, including the arts, sciences, at work at play and in all other areas of daily life. All people have creative abilities and we all have them differently. When individuals find their creative strengths, it can have an enormous impact on self-esteem and on overall achievement...Creativity is not simply a matter of letting go. Serious creative achievement relies on knowledge, control of materials and command of ideas. Creative education involves a balance between teaching knowledge and skills, and encouraging innovation. In these ways, creative development is directly related to cultural education. (p. 6)

Bamford (2009) and Robinson (2001, 2009) argue that creativity and innovation are characteristics shared by the countries highest ranked by the OECD in terms of educational success, countries, like Finland, where the arts do not struggle for legitimacy. Specific programs promoting creativity in education can be seen in the UK’s Creative Partnerships program that ran in UK schools from 2002 until 2011 facilitated by the UK government and the national arts funding body as a response to “growing concerns...about the lack of creativity in schools” (Hall, Thomson & Hood, 2006, p. 3). The program involved
approximately 5000 UK schools working with teachers, students and communities to promote arts, culture and creativity. *Creative Partnerships* (2002) mission states:

The programme has developed the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements, and opening up more opportunities for their futures. It has supported thousands of innovative, long term partnerships between schools and creative professionals including artists, performers, architects, multimedia developers and scientists. Schools in the CP programme have used creativity to solve problems and have seen real improvements in pupil attendance, behaviour and attainment, as well as in parental engagement. (para. 2-4)

The programme involved visual and performing artists as artists-in-residence, working along side schools to facilitate school change. Despite worldwide acclaim for the program, there have also been concerns raised about the need for accountability that ultimately affected the delivery of the program. Tension between "standardsation" of supply and teaching in and through the arts to “promote standards” (Hall, Jones and Thomson, 2009, p. 86) was one consideration for future programs of this kind. In addition, the subjectivity inherent in the arts caused tension in schools as a result of the requirements to meet certain accountability obligations, as well as overarching pedagogical issues with regards to how to teach the arts (Hall, Thomson and Hood, 2006). However, as part of the UK education reform agenda, *Creative Partnerships* went some way towards school improvement. Hall, Jones and Thomson (2009) note that one important consideration for any policy is the notion of enactment at the local level, stating:

> We hold that policy – be it the standards or creativity agendas or any other, such as *Every Child Matters* - is not simply delivered or implemented. It is altered – refracted /diffracted at several points – the region, the local authority, the school, the classroom. This happens no matter how tightly steerage is imposed from above - it is just a matter of the degree of variation. (p. 10)

Hall, Jones and Thomson (2009) define this as “venacularisation” policy that at a local level is adapted, noting:

> Vernacularisation at a local level does not mean a completely unique interpretation. Rather, it means that there are specific and particular versions of larger policy agendas able to be constructed. Thus, what happens on the ground is often somewhat different from what policymakers and programme managers envisage.
To translate this into education, we might say that what schools can do is both patterned through international, national and local social/economic/cultural relations and framed and delimited by political and policy regimes. Nevertheless regional and local interpretations are possible. (p. 11)

At the local level, it was the ability to adapt and modify that ultimately reformed practice in the UK. Furthermore, Hall, Jones and Thomson (2009) note:

It may be that the capacity to produce site-specific versions of change is precisely what the education system needs at this point in time. There are risks involved in attempting to run a diverse vernacular programme, but there are equally risks involved in attempting to standardise too much, particularly if such attempts follow an audit-oriented standardisations approach. (p. 11)

Considering the diverse range of possibilities, definitions and perceptions associated with the arts, this “venacularisation” or local policy adaption, appears to be a worthwhile choice for improving student engagement and outcomes.

The following section examines the arts within the Australian context, followed by a particular focus of arts in schools.

The arts in Australia

Since 1995, a series of research projects and government reports have investigated arts practice in Australian schools and communities, including but not limited to, Australian Government Senate Inquiry into Arts Education in Australian Schools (1995); Fullerton and Ainley (2000); Costantoura, Saatchi and Saatchi (2001); Barrett and Smeigal (2003); Piscitelli, Renshaw, Dunn and Hawke (2004); Commonwealth of Australia- Backing Our Creativity (2005); Pascoe et al. (2005); Hunter (2005); Queensland Government - Education for the Creative Workforce (2007); Davis (2008); Ewing (2010) and Caldwell and Vaughn (2012), revealing many divergent viewpoints about the arts. These viewpoints range between the importance of the high arts (opera, ballet, classical music for example), to the importance of popular culture. This diversity in understanding about what the arts mean to people further compounds the problem of a definition of the arts themselves. For example, Latham (2004) discusses the need to align the arts sector more closely with the philosophies and practices of the corporate sector in order to survive due to inevitable funding constraints, with regards to art forms such as opera. Likewise, Hunt and Shaw
(2008) argue that the arts sector needs to be more “sustainable” through encouraging better policy, professional development and public access. In contrast, Barrett and Smeigal (2003) argue that there needs to be a connectedness between what they refer to as “Big A” arts (high arts) and “Little A” arts (popular arts) representing in real terms a connection between the professional artist and education and real life/community arts and crafts. Yet in all the discussions there is no clear definition of the arts themselves in terms of professional or educational understandings.

In the year 2000, the federal government commissioned an inquiry into the state of the arts in Australia entitled Australians and the Arts (Costantoura et al., 2001). Funded by the Australia Council, the report investigated to what extent the arts were valued and how they related to the lives of Australians. The initial reason for the study was partly to do with justifying the expenditure dedicated to the arts over many decades, accompanied by a decline in arts support in the community. The then Prime Minister, John Howard stated the report was aimed at the arts community in the hope that it would “respond to...and...make a great contribution to the ongoing cause of a wider understanding of the value of the arts and most importantly the enjoyment of the arts by a broader cross-section of the Australian community” (Howard (nd), in Costantoura et al., 2001, p. 3). The report revealed that in general Australians value the arts and at the time of the research was split almost 50/50 between those who saw value in the arts and those who did not (high value, 18%; fairly high value, 31%; fairly low value, 23% and low value/none 28%) (p. 37). They also found that the arts were variously understood (confirming the ambiguity of definition previously discussed), with 53% seeing it has having personal benefit; 85% as a personal activity; 21% as a community/national benefit; 15% attending for specific art-form support and 20% with no engagement at all (p. 57). In response to these statistics, Coustantoura et al. (2001) noted that the professional arts communities attributed this poor participation on the education system and the lack of adequate preparation of future arts consumers, suggesting there was a systemic failure to offer entry points for all of the arts and raising enormous implications for schools.

More recently, the Australia Council conducted research into how Australians were participating in arts events as part of a national project known as More Than Bums On Seats (2010). In part, this research supported the Coustantoura et al. (2001) findings that Australians valued the arts in principle, but determined that this does not necessarily transfer into participation in arts activities in the community. The findings indicated that in
the previous 12 months, 90% of people had participated in an arts activity, 40% had “creatively participated” and 7% had no participation at all, but their definition of “arts activity” was very broad and included cinema, literature and craft. For example, 50% of participants engaged with music as consumers, with only 15% of participants actually playing an instrument/performing and the most popular form of arts engagement with literature, with reading novels being the most popular at 84% of participants. Going to the movies does not form part of the arts education definition nor is literature defined as an art form in the school curriculum. It falls under English. The research found that those not involved in the arts post-school generally were older; male; uneducated; have a disability or serious illness; have English as a second language; have low socio-economic status with either practical or attitudinal reasons for non-attendance (Australia Council, 2010).

Most significantly in terms of the focus of this thesis, 86% of respondents agreed that the arts should be a fundamental part of the education opportunities of every Australian child (Australia Council, 2010, p. 5). Coustantoura et al. (2001) concluded that overall there was “substantial potential to promote the value of the arts more effectively, since 82% of those surveyed did not believe that the arts have a high value” (p. 38). In addition, they noted that the level of educational achievement was a key factor in value and participation stating, “education appears to be strongly linked to the value that people place on the arts” (p. 41). Yet no clear link is ever made between professional arts policy and arts education policy. Overall, the research suggested a paradox where people claimed to value the arts but did little to actually make real this claim.

The following section discusses the arts in Australian schools.

The arts in Australian schools

In Queensland in 2002, state schools were invited to participate in a policy initiative called the Year of Creativity. This policy was in part responsible for this project in terms of the researcher’s professional curiosity about policy alignment. This was borrowed policy based on global agenda from the OECD for creativity to be recognised as integral to education and the economy. The Queensland state government envisaged a creative and smart state for Queensland (Lassig, 2009). One of the positive outcomes of the Year of Creativity policy was the establishment the Queensland academies for excellence in senior schooling. There are three academies in total and entry is via application/audition - an arts academy (Kelvin Grove), mathematics, science and technology academy (Toowong) and a health academy
(Gold Coast). These academies are undoubtedly an excellent development in terms of extending and enriching student learning in a specific discipline, especially in the case of high performing students, but the creative industries academy has done very little for the arts in schools generally. It could be argued that although it is very encouraging, establishing one centre of excellence in the arts for a few select senior students does not encourage a broad culture of creative teaching and learning in the arts across the primary and secondary sectors.

In work more focused on arts education, again within Queensland, Piscitelli et al. (2004) conducted a study entitled Education and the Arts Partnership Initiative - Queensland (EAPI Q) (2004). This study used a “first of its kind” statewide survey of arts practices in schools, together with in-depth case studies generated predominantly in rural, remote and low socio-economic status schools. The results revealed that the quality of program delivery in the arts was inconsistent, with music being the most successfully implemented in Queensland schools (Piscitelli, et al., 2004, p. 1). The findings noted:

Music and visual arts are almost universally included on school-based curriculum planning documents, thus indicating that children in Queensland schools have universal education in some form of arts education. The questionnaire data highlights the success of music and instrumental music in particular, and this can be understood as a direct result of 25 years of policies, which have supported and encouraged music education. (p. 22)

Piscitelli et al. (2004) confirmed that the arts were pivotal in raising overall “academic achievement, intellectual gains, connections to the wider world, and opportunities for leading productive and fulfilling lives” (p. 90). Additionally, Piscitelli et al. (2004) found that “even though many students indicate that they do not intend to pursue an art form as a career option, they view the arts as important and beneficial to their personal, social and civic lives” (p. 90). Importantly, the EAPI-Q research was conducted within a climate where less emphasis was placed on performativity as it preceded NAPLAN.

The national review of school music education, Augmenting the Diminished (Pascoe et al., 2005) found Queensland to have better classroom music practices compared to other Australian states, yet overall the review concluded that music education in Australia was characterised by “pockets of good practice” (Jeaneret, 2006, p. 94) and much inconsistency. Soon after this report into music education, the national visual arts review First We See (Davis, 2008) revealed a similar story, noting inconsistencies throughout the nation.
Furthermore, this review revealed a lack of definition about what exactly constitutes visual arts education (Davis, 2008; Angus, Olney & Ainley, 2007; Alexander, 2010). As previously discussed, this apparent lack of clarity in what the arts are and mean to people potentially translates into how teachers and parents perceive the arts in schools, how teachers construct curriculum and how each unique discipline is valued. English, mathematics and science, in contrast are determined; they are regarded as "solids" (Eisner, 2000, p. 5).

More recently, the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) commissioned Professor Robyn Ewing to review arts education in Australia. The resulting report suggested that while there are some excellent examples of arts practice in Australia, such as *The Song Room* (see [www.songroom.org.au](http://www.songroom.org.au)), there is still a great deal of room for improvement. Ewing (2010) found that “in Australia, both the intended and enacted school curricula continue to be largely based in the mainstream culture of the more affluent, resulting in students from other classes and culture feeling alienated or confronted” (p. 31) noting that the “privileging of certain subjects…the reporting of student outcomes and school results...contribute to inequitable schooling outcomes” (p. 31). Ewing (2010) also notes “a growing body of research suggests that immersing students in strong arts-based educational programs may well result in increased interest, motivation and engagement in learning”, going someway to mediate these problems. The ACER research supports the claim that learning in and through the arts contributes to the socio-cultural process of learning where teacher and learner, community and culture, contribute.

Like previous authors, Ewing (2010) also notes that teacher self-efficacy plays an important part in the ability to embed “arts experiences in learning” (p. 35) and that the teacher/practitioner is a “powerful” tool in the process. Ewing (2010) also notes that teacher education is deficient in providing “capacity” to teach the arts (p. 35). Ewing (2010) observes that with the new national curriculum there is an opportunity to implement a new “creative culture” in arts education in Australia, but cautioning that for this to succeed “governments and education systems must reshape the completing competitive academic discourse that currently works against such a culture” (p. 55). This argument is based on research that suggests, “the Arts, while not a panacea for all problems, do have the potential to help us address any of the habitual problems routinely embedded in current educational institutions” (p. 55).

Australian research also suggests that there will be a cost attributable to the loss of arts education across all schools in Australia – socially and educationally. Caldwell and Vaughn
(2012) note that the most difficult challenges facing the arts in schools derive from two sources – “the justifiable focus on literacy and numeracy” and “cut-backs in public funding” (p. 2). Like previous authors, Caldwell and Vaughn (2012) attribute much of the dichotomy between the mathematically-science tradition and the arts to education policies and practices set up in the nineteenth century, noting also that prior to the inception of mass schooling at the time, this was not the case. They also argue that a “revolution” of sort is required to move the arts into the school curriculum in order to encourage the possibility thinking (Craft, 2008) that government’s desire. Caldwell and Vaughn (2012) maintain that “disruptive innovation” is required as opposed to the “narrowly focused, inward-looking discourse... characteristic of politics in Australia" (p. 150). Their research also points to the potential of the arts to assist in addressing issues of inequity in educational provision, disengagement of learners, empowerment of the teaching profession, engagement with culture, history and community, and the development of innovative and creative thinkers. Additionally, Ibrahim and Ewing (2012) note that one of the most significant points about arts education is that children are exposed to it from the very earliest of ages. Educationally, the authors acknowledge the links made in other research between strong academic achievement and the arts; developing resilience and creativity thinking; and “transformative learning” (p. 140). These are the qualities that policy advocates as necessary to embrace the challenges of the 21st century.

Finally, the Australian Curriculum for the arts is due for implementation in 2014. The following statement from Stone (2013) outlines the problematic situation that has developed as a result of a change of government, and one in which has potential to further compromise the delivery of a “solid” new curriculum. Stone states:

The arts curriculum was signed off by state and federal ministers on 30 July, just five days before Prime Minister Kevin Rudd called the 7 September election. The curriculum was scheduled to be published in mid-2013 so that arts educators could become familiar with it and begin planning their programs for next year. The curriculum is to be implemented from February 2014. But because of the election the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), like all government bodies has gone into caretaker mode and cannot declare new policy or regulations. The delay is frustrating for arts teachers and curriculum developers, as a five year development process is scheduled to be coming to an end. While major changes are not expected if there is a change of government, because the curriculum
negotiation has been largely bipartisan, the election technically throws the whole approval process in doubt, just as the arts aspect of the new National Curriculum is ready to go. (para. 1-5)

If and when the new curriculum is released, it will then fall to the states and territories to implement, and this will come down to the Principal’s discretion as to what is taught and what is not. The hierarchy of subjects (Teese, 2000; Robinson, 2006; Pitfield, 2013) and the high stakes associated with the standardised testing program will heavily influence the final choices that are made.

Not all stakeholders were content with the new curriculum for example, the Music Council of Australia (2012) continue to voice their concerns about the failure on the part of ACARA to accurately represent the arts and specifically to present a legitimate music curriculum stating:

Much in the future of music education in Australia depends upon the adequacy of this curriculum. The Music Council has collaborated in a constructive way with ACARA in its execution of the difficult exercise of developing the arts curriculum and has appreciated ACARA's consultative approach. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to accept ACARA’s general proposition and argue at the edges. The curriculum in its present form lacks substance, rigour and credibility. Music is not dealt with as a serious study. (para. 3)

The following section discusses how the issues of definition, subject hierarchies, accountability and the definition of a “good” education have contributed to this struggle for legitimacy that the arts appear to have.

**The struggle for legitimacy**

The struggle for the arts to gain legitimacy has been an ongoing one, due to inaccurate definitions and competing policy discourses, it may continue. Coustantoura et al. (2001, p. 273) argue that through the provision of “better education and opportunities in the arts” across all educational sectors, Australians believe many of the current problems would be addressed. Barrett and Smeigal (2003) conclude that by advocating a more egalitarian approach in schools teachers will “awake(n)the sleeping giant” that is arts practice and appreciation. Part of the aim of the Coustantoura et al. (2001) report was to inform the arts community and other interested stakeholders how best to change practice to address such
issues and open access, appreciation and involvement in the arts across education, professional practice and community. The report noted that a “perceived failure of the school system to deliver on arts education is considered by many in the arts sector to be at the root of many problems in the way people view the arts today” (p. 273). The report recommended that in order for the arts to survive, they needed to be regarded as “a natural part of life” by all Australians; this is fundamental to their future success. Furthermore, the report recommended “if there is one message in this for the arts sector, it is that the sector should be open to reconsidering what might have been assumed about whom and how Australian’s value the arts” (Coustantoura et al., 2001, p. 5).

Most recently, Baker (2012) in a study of US schools found that engagement in a music program significantly increased a student’s ability to succeed at school and beyond. Furthermore, Baker (2012) found that access to arts education is being denied many students as a result of NCLB policies and there is a significant divide in educational achievement between those who access the arts and those who do not. Baker (2012) notes the tension in the competing discourses in education, observing that in some cases students performing poorly on tests were “exempted from any arts instruction” in an effort to increase time for English and mathematics (p. 17). Baker (2009) notes that there are ongoing policy issues associated with the US study arguing:

Curricular arts instruction need to take a hard look at this set of issues and work to keep the larger goal of arts learning in local decision-makers’ minds at a time when there is so much pressure to justify the arts in schools as a support for achievement in the “more important” subjects. The future of arts teaching and learning in schools may depend on the extent to which arts educators and their organizations are successful in casting achievement in terms of broader goals. (p. 24)

As previously stated, in Australia the struggle had been somewhat mediated by the release of a new cultural policy, and the new Australian Curriculum (Phase Two), but also a new government. In terms of the national curriculum, Phase Two subjects including the arts were set for implementation in 2014 with the five disciplines of music, dance, drama, visual arts and media arts maintained. However, despite the disciplines maintaining independence in the Australian Curriculum, there is no clarity in policy about how this is to be achieved. Given the delay in the release of the national arts curriculum due to the change of government accompanied by an increased focus on English, mathematics, history and science there are real concerns a robust solution remains elusive.
“If you can pay you can play”

Discussed in Chapter One, literature suggests that marginalising subjects like the arts in schools, education systems might also be contributing to social inequity, where only the high achieving schools will be in a position to offer subjects like music. This section looks at whether or not this is a possibility.

Previously discussed, Teese (2000), Robinson (2006) and Pitfield (2013) note that the hierarchy of subjects, the emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and the focus on high stakes testing marginalises subjects outside of this preferred agenda. Furthermore, Teese (2000) argues, “for the socially disadvantaged, the curriculum is a system for *limiting the assertion of academic merit to the most able*” (p. 203). Luke (2004) maintains that “minimum requirements will become maximum expectations”, and the basics will become enough for some schools (p. 356). Taking the observations one step further, Bamford (2006) observes that, “extensive arts-rich programs tend to be most prevalent in affluent and high achieving schools (p. 39).

Teese (2000) concurs arguing that the hierarchical nature of curriculum leads to a reduction in power and choice by those already compromised. In the current context, potentially, low-test score schools will narrow curriculum to focus on test scores targets. In contrast, schools with high-test scores will be free to value-add to their programs. Success breeds success, and in turn leads to “risk-taking and creativity” in learning, contributing further to improved outcomes at school (Teese, 2000, p. 199).

This is supported by longitudinal studies undertaken by Catterall, Dumais and Hampden-Thompson, (2012) who found that:

> Higher-income, higher-educated families will, on average, provide their youth with more opportunities to experience the arts through extra classes, lessons, or opportunities for attendance, perhaps through more affluent schools with extensive arts programs. (p. 9)

Jacob and Lefgren (2007) in US research examined the relationship between the effects of high stakes testing and parent perception of schooling, based on the premise that “academic achievement as measured by test scores is the primary objective of public education” (p. 59). The survey-based study revealed that parents in low and high socio-economic schools in the Western states of the US exhibited different perceptions of schooling based on academic results. The study found that low socio-economic parents
favoured teachers who were able to raise test results in lieu of teachers who considered student satisfaction as a prerogative through the implementation of multiple and diverse ways of learning. In contrast, parents from high socio-economic backgrounds were much more likely to request teachers who met the student satisfaction criterion, coupled with a value added curricula of “critical thinking” and “curiosity” (Jacob and Lefgren, 2007 p. 64). This study suggests that curriculum guided by mandated testing contributes to inequity.

Bridgeland, Dilulio, Steutert and Mason (2008), following a nationwide survey of US parents regarding how satisfied they were with their child’s school, support the concept that performativity as a stimulus for education policy has resulted in the disparity between low and high socio-economic expectations of schooling. Bridgeland et al. (2008) found that low SES parents felt the education system was unable to adequately prepare their children for the future. The report made connections between low SES parents and the perceived failure of the school system to extend and challenge their children. The opposite was the case of high SES parents. Yet all parents regardless of social, economic or cultural status understood the connection between parental involvement in schooling and good student outcomes. Bridgeland et al. (2008) also noted that parents of students in low performing schools observed that the school did little to correct the deficits. The research noted that:

Parents with children in lower quality schools feel they have fewer options for making decisions about how to equip their children for the future…it is clear that while a majority of parents understand that our society is going to ask new things of their children, and that those of lower socio-economic status understand this fact most acutely, those whose children attend low-performing schools are trapped. (p. 9)

Furthermore, while teachers and administrators are forced to bend to the demands of mandated policy the arts will be marginalised, along with creativity and innovative ways of teaching and learning. In the context of this research, what might be proposed is that as AASS moves towards a complete adoption of performative policy, teachers and parents will preclude the arts and alternatives ways of teaching and learning from their way of thinking about education.

**Conclusion**

Research suggests that there is a clear argument for the inclusion of the arts in the school curriculum from the very first years of school. The arts have unique qualities, but also
qualities that transfer across disciplines, as well as cultures and individuals. Eisner (2005) states:

Imagination is no mere ornament; nor is art. Together they can liberate us from our indurated habits. They might help us restore decent purpose to our efforts and help us create the kind of schools our children deserve and our culture needs. (p. 214)

Yet there is also evidence that these unique qualities to some extent, have been to the detriment of determining exactly what the arts are and how they should be taught. When “existing assumptions and practices” (Alexander, 2010, p. 17) are preferred and alternatives are not considered, the dichotomy between curriculums 1 and 2, and the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged will only widen. Paradoxically, research has shown that when teaching in and through the arts, disadvantaged students can traverse the divide between failure and success and equip themselves with lifelong learning skills that include access to tertiary entrance, course completion, community engagement and civic responsibility (Burton, Horowitz & Abeles, 1999; Catterall, Dumais & Hampden-Thompson, 2012).

If the arts are to resume a legitimate place in the curriculum there are a number of major considerations to address. The dominant educational epistemology needs to be questioned and reviewed through policy, which encompasses and encourages alternative ways of teaching and learning whilst still aligning to rigorous national standards. Along with a more public campaign to consistently, thoroughly and pragmatically define the arts as separate disciplines, as well as pedagogical tools, these considerations will go some way to addressing the struggle for legitimacy.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology, outlining why and how case study methods best suited the aim of investigating one school community and whether or not the key points raised in the previous chapters are a concern for the participants.
Chapter Four: methodology

This qualitative research project is constructivist in nature. It is underpinned by the notion that “the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 19). Qualitative research details and describes routinely occurring facets of life that provide meaning for those involved and it involves the study of participant activity through a lens of individual meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Qualitative research is essentially the study of people in the places where they exist; doing what they understand needs to be done in their daily lives to create meaning and to have those lives make sense. Qualitative research developed as a reaction to scientific research and the apparent lack of understanding and ability of quantitative researchers to adequately define the human condition. Freebody (2003) notes:

> Many educational researchers came to feel that research activities structured through the logics of quantification leave out lots of interesting and potentially consequential things about the phenomenon – interesting and consequential not just in terms of the concerns and understandings of educators’ experiences, but also in terms of the richness of the accounts of educators’ experiences. (p. 35)

Lichtman (2006) describes qualitative research as having a number of critical elements. These elements include how the study is described, understood and interpreted. It is a dynamic, holistic process where there are multiple ways of achieving the outcomes, and these outcomes are multilayered. The research uses “inductive thinking” based on narrative data gathered in the authentic environment in which it exists. It involves in-depth analysis where the participant data is the central focus acknowledged as having been viewed through the lens of the researcher (Adapted from Lichtman, 2006, p. 13-15).

Drawing on the work of Silverman, Freebody (2003) states, “the qualitative researcher should approach data that is not found in a naturally occurring context with skepticism and with interest in how it is that the artificial context itself has been defined and acted upon” (p. 39). The naturally occurring context in this research refers to the position of the researcher as an insider, and that the data was collected concurrently whilst school life continued to unfold. In the case of teachers, meaning can be found in the choices made about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment based on prior life and professional experiences. Furthermore, it relates to how teachers have interpreted texts and policies
and enacted them in a manner that is both historically and philosophically based. Lincoln and Denzin (2000) state, a "commitment...to study human experience from the ground up, from the point of interacting individuals who, together and alone, make and live histories that have been handed down to them from the ghosts of the past", is indicative of qualitative research (p. 1063).

Qualitative data is potentially more effective in interpreting a given phenomenon as there is an "undeniability" about the data due to the organic, authentic and holistic nature of the source (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). These descriptions of "mundane, thoroughly recognisable but unremarkable daily practices" makes qualitative research "inductive, value-laden holistic and process-oriented", and a methodology that aligns well to educational philosophies and practices (Freebody, 2003, p. 38).

Minichiello and Kottler (2009) note, "much of your life has been spent investigating issues and subjects that intrigue or confuse you" (p. 1), where personal experience, history and present day interactions with people, places and things influence this position. The researcher believes that the world is constructed by individuals according to history, culture and ongoing activity purposively or randomly selected by the individual. It is similar to symbolic interactionism whereby meaning is drawn from "how people define events of reality and how they act in relation to their beliefs" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 4). The researcher's ontological and epistemological positions are one in which an understanding and perception of the world is developed through social interactions and contexts in which people are involved. This constructivist viewpoint stated by Wiggins (2007) means, "all ways of knowing and interpreting the world are valid...for the individual who holds them" (p. 76). Multiple sources of data and participant stories emerged and changed as the research took shape.

This project is a study of particular phenomena. Specifically, this research examines the way global trends have influenced national and local education policy, now characterised by standardisation and performativity. It takes "account of both 'micro' and 'macro' levels", recognising the place of "education policy making within its broad economic, social, and historical contexts" (Taylor, 1997, p. 32). The next section details these research methods according to data collection instruments and other contextual information that is relevant to the case.
Case study

This thesis is a single case study. Stake (1995) and Yin (2008) maintain that case study falls into the constructivist paradigm and therefore acknowledges the subjective and variable nature of meaning. Flyvbjerg (2004) notes that the use of case study defines the constructivist paradigm noting:

The closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its simple wealth of details are important... for the development of a nuanced view that human behavior cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory. (p. 422)

Stake (1995) viewed case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). These important circumstances are also a result of history and accumulated experience as well as their present day “potential for learning” (Stake, 2000, p. 447). There is a “complexity” in case study and this is characteristic of a single or multiple cases. Stake (2003) asks, “what specially can be learned from the single case?” noting that the single case study is a “functioning specific”, with “working parts...purposive...often has a self” and “is an integrated system” (p. 156). It is “functional or dysfunctional, rational or irrational, the case is a system” (p. 135). Furthermore, Stake (2003) “temporarily subordinates other curiosities so that the stories of those “living the case” will be teased out” (p. 136). Gay (1996) and Stake (2000) agrees that the qualitative researcher is unable to observe and discover every attribute of that which is being observed in any case study. They argue that it is the richness of the data collected that is the essence of the research and in the existing context, what can be made of it. Freebody (2003) suggests that in the school context the:

Distinctive feature of case study is...its focus on attempting to document the story of a naturalistic-experiment-in-action, the routine moves educators and learners, make in a clearly known and readily defined discursive, conceptual and professional space (the ‘case’). (p. 82)

Gay (1996) describes case study in education as most likely to be the study of a school, classroom, an administrator, a teacher or a student and this is elaborated upon by adding that case study is often appropriately supported by gaining an understanding of “how and why things came to be the way they are” (p. 219).
Lichtman (2006) also maintains that case study gives qualitative researchers a more liberal approach to their research in that flexibility and fluidity are essential if data collected is to be as rich and thick as is possible. In this thesis the aim was to hear the teacher, parent and student voices in order to understand what, how and why certain choices had been made at a time when education policy is dominated by performativity. Colwell and Richardson (2002) use the example of a case study conducted by Stake, Bresler and Mabry (1991) concerning the teaching of the arts in American schools. This case study describes a constructivist case study where methodology maintained the connection between the researchers and the phenomenon being studied with each report holding individual significance and uniqueness. Using this example, the research for this project uses case study methods to maintain the integrity of project by optimising the case itself as opposed to searching for generalisability (Colwell & Richardson, 2002).

In determining the qualitative nature of the research, this project adopted intrinsic case study methodology using a single site, collecting data using semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and students at the case study school, researcher observations and a school-wide survey to gather data. This study is based on the work of Stake (2003) who saw intrinsic case study of a single site as having for its motivation a researcher wanting to gain “better understanding of this particular case” (p.136). Central to this research is the effect of performativity on educational values, choices and practices and how globalised policy trends have influenced local education policy and policy enactment echoed in the voices of participants. It is therefore deductive in nature, based on a set of external circumstances, where the research has great significance to the researcher as well as to the participants (Stake, 2003).

The case study site might be regarded as a “regular” school; it is not extraordinary in any of its characteristics (Metcalfe, 2012). This point refers to that fact that it is not peculiar for any systemic reason. For example, it is not the state’s largest or smallest school. It is not a centre of excellence, and it does not have any particular characteristics that would set it apart from the many other state primary schools in Queensland. For this reason it is “ordinary” and the study of AASS is an examination of a “single example” of the ordinary (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 420). By intensively focusing on one school, this research hopes to achieve a close examination of the way in which one school community responds to new policies concurrently released. This approach is supported by Stake (2003) who argues that there is a fundamental authenticity and relevance to a single case, without any
need for generalisability, stating “case study method has been too little honoured as the intrinsic study of a valued particular” (p. 140). It is a “middle-line” example of a school and as a single site study stands as a “valued particular” without comparisons or generalisations being made.

**Data collection**

This research consists of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, granted ethical clearance according to the Griffith University ethical standards under protocol number EBL/29/09/HREC. The ethics materials can be found in Appendices E to H. Pseudonyms have been used to identify participants and the case study school.

In the beginning stages of data collection, a parent survey was administered, which was used as an introduction for participants to the project as well as a base line data gathering exercise about the school. The survey was delivered to the school community via classroom teachers on a voluntary basis and consisted of the following four sections:

1. Your education experience;
2. NAPLAN;
3. MySchool
4. The proposed national curriculum

This survey was distributed in April 2010, just prior to the May NAPLAN tests. The school wide survey for this project was available in two forms: on-line through a web-based survey tool - Survey Monkey with IP addresses disabled to ensure anonymity; and as a paper copy distributed via classroom groups and returned without names to a labeled Griffith University collection box in the classroom. The paper survey data was entered manually onto Survey Monkey to align with the electronic copies. The surveys had an 11.4% take up rate over the entire school population and in some cases they were incomplete. The results are included as part of the data analysis, the survey as Appendix I and the results as Appendix J.

In addition to the survey, the principal focus of the data collection was over 30 hours of interview material recorded and transcribed with participants discussing their views of education. Strauss and Corbin (1990) discuss the use of combined research methods, quantitative and qualitative as being conducive to effective practice. Terrell (2012) concurs that in using quantitative data to support qualitative data a “sequential explanatory strategy” is adopted possibly retrieve more data from the case study site. Both Strauss and
Corbin (1990) and Terrell (2012) refer to the distribution of priority as a key consideration, and in this case the quantitative material served as a provisional and preliminary data source only. The survey was used as an introduction to the future data collection. The focus was on the qualitative semi-structured interview material to follow.

The interviews were conducted with teachers, parents and students at mutually agreeable times over a period of 18 months, either at the school, the participant’s home or place of choice. They were all recorded using a digital voice recorder. The researcher transcribed the first four interviews, with each varying in length from 20 minutes to in excess of an hour. An external transcription service was then engaged (www.pacifictranscription.com.au/) to transcribe the remaining interviews. Each transcript was checked alongside the recordings and a preliminary analysis commenced.

Two staff forums to encourage more professional exchange of ideas and experiences replaced the second round of teacher interviews. These were both audio recorded in the school library. The focus groups were selected according to teacher availability on the proposed afternoons after school.

The first round of interview questions consisted of very general questions about education and values relating to education. These are included as Appendix K for staff and parents and Appendix L for students. Data was collected prior to and after the NAPLAN tests and at times when new policy was released or media reports prompted follow-up visits. The interviews were semi-structured; firstly gaining information about the general purpose of schooling, contextual information and other material that the interviewee brought to the meetings.

The second round of interviews was more specific and was based on the previous interview material to gain more in-depth information about specific educational issues. Charmaz (2006) maintains that in using this creative and continuous relationship between data collection and analysis “we shape our data collection to inform our emerging analysis” (p. 20). This data collection and analysis process can be described as cyclical and based on a ground up approach in that the researcher attempted to suspend judgment in order to obtain authentic and faithful information. One teacher, initially interviewed individually, was unable to attend the forum and provided a written response to the questions. The students were all interviewed with either one or two parents present at the interview at times organised with their parents. In all cases except for two, the students were interviewed at their homes.
Coincidently, *The Courier Mail*, a Queensland daily newspaper, initiated a customer survey titled Education Report Card with many similar questions to those being asked in the research project. Some of the relevant results of the newspaper survey were used as a stimulus for the second round interview questions (See Appendix M for parents and Appendix N for teachers). Second round interviews discussed:

1. The school and newspaper survey results;
2. The proposed *Australian Curriculum*;
3. Education and politics.

These themes were used to promote more specific conversation about values, policies and practice and how they align. The questions moved from specific material about the surveys to a more philosophical discussion about education in terms of the policy agenda of the incumbent government. This included a discussion about the national curriculum and the education policy. Following an initial review of the data, all participants were asked if they would like copies of the transcripts for review, and where necessary, some participants were approached to clarify certain comments. Prior to the finalisation of ethics, an opportunity was provided for participants to offer additional feedback (see Appendix O).

An ongoing collection of policy artifacts also formed a part of the data collection (Dick, 2005) as it assisted in shaping questions and follow-up research. A list of where to find these artifacts can be found at Appendix P. This included updating policy documents relating to the national curriculum, NAPLAN and other relevant polices throughout the course of the study. Merriam (1998) refers to this process as documents that are not collected through interview but that assist in making meaning of the subjective context-based choices made by participants. In the nature of constructivism, reality continues to shift and modify, contextually referring to new policy and policy enactment.

**Voice**

One of the key concepts underpinning this thesis methodology is the term voice. Voice represents the views and understandings of the participants involved in the research. In coming to understand the nature of knowledge, this project does not have an epistemological purpose in terms of knowing that something is “true”. Rather it is aimed at finding meaning in the actions and choices of people who already hold their own epistemologies and believe them to be true. The participants come to this with pre-existing
histories, based on experience within a social world. Voice is seen to be a real and audible identity, a person who is part of and involved in the context of the story. The role these participants play in the research is integral to telling an authentic story of this school community and the effects of the performative culture on schooling experiences. Fielding (2009) suggests the use of five reflective questions to guide research. Fielding’s focus was specifically student voice, but the questions are applicable across participant voice generally and have been adapted accordingly. They have been summarised from Fielding (2009, p. 115) as follows:

1. Purposes – Why involve these particular participants at this time?
2. Ontology – Is there a teacher, parents and student standpoint and why should they be heard?
3. Epistemology – What will these voices tell us that we do not already know?
4. Roles – How have the participants played a part in the research overall?
5. Identity – How does the research affect participant identity?

This thesis includes the voices of teachers, parents and students as three distinct categories. They are the “street-level bureaucrats” (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003) who on a daily basis “steer understanding and action” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) in their school community. Smyth (2001) argues that often teachers are “being assailed upon to deliver on requirements over which they have had no control, nor in which they have participated” (p. 28). This preclusion of the principal stakeholders in education from education policy is a common criticism of policy. To this end, it is a key focus of this research to have as a central focus the voices of the teachers and students. Grieg, Taylor and Mackay (2007) refer to this type of research as small-scale research into participants and their activities. Although small scale, it is intended to provide an in-depth and critical reflection of the current policy climate in terms of professional ontological or epistemological assumptions. It was designed to offer an indication of what school was like for the ultimate recipients of educational policy.

The parents, although not direct recipients of policy, are key stakeholders in terms of education services and they are very influential in the student outcomes. Tramontane and Wilms (2009) for example, found that the accumulation of cultural capital through family involvement is one of the greatest predictors of successful educational outcomes for school students. In this research the parent voice is used to gain an understanding about what is valued in education from parents who invest in choices and resources to provide
educational opportunities. These choices in turn, play out in the actions within the educational cycle based on local, national and global policy. To what extent there is interplay in terms of values and practice, is also part of the inquiry.

With specific reference to the student voice, Fielding (2009) notes that it “has gained increasing prominence in the last few years” in terms of educational research (p. 101). He divides the research into three broad categories – the benefits to students themselves when listening to their own and other peoples voices; evidence of the student voice used to guide teaching and learning to “engage with peers” and school; and finally, the student voice as part of the “external accountability and inspection” process (adapted from Fielding, 2009, p. 102).

One of the important observations Fielding (2009) raises is the concern about purpose and power, noting that unless there is a clear understanding of the purpose in using the student voice, the outcome can be difficult to validate. Fielding (2009) argues that there will potentially always be tension in formal education settings when the voices of students are examined due to a long held assumption that the viewpoints of the young are “by virtue of their youth and inexperience, of limited value or legitimacy” (p. 112).

The student contribution was valued as part of this research, as it demonstrates how the complicated field of educational policy is received. For example, students in these interviews discuss teaching methodology in lay terms and how they understood what worked for them and their learning. Some of the students observe and comment on policies such as NAPLAN where they have noticed a focus on testing or practising for the test, but in general there is no connection made to a specific policy agenda or bigger picture ideas such as economy, politics and globalisation. This thesis uses the voice of the students in the context of teacher/researcher, as a means of external accountability, in terms of policy enactment, specifically in arts education.

**Achieving authenticity**

Authenticity is achieved when multiple sources of data are used to verify the phenomenon from different angles, known traditionally as triangulation. Stake (2003) refers to this process as the “process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 148). Triangulation is referred to by Janesick (2003) in three ways – data triangulation where multiple sources of data are used, investigator triangulation where there is more than one researcher to share the process
and theory triangulation where theoretical perspectives are used to “interpret a single set of data” (p. 66). Furthermore, Janesick (2003) argues that qualitative research is judged by a “psychometric paradigm” that “revolve(s) around the trinity of validity, reliability, and generalisability, as if there were no other linguistic representations for questions” and it leaves little room for “alternative ways to think” (p. 66). As a result, this methodology advocates a process known as “crystallization” where multiple methods are engaged to ensure that data is collected, analysed and represented authentically (Janesick, 2003, p. 69).

Lichtman (2006) concurs that in qualitative case study methods it is important to be open to new ways of knowing and recording observations.

Criteria to assess authenticity should not be one dimensional and solely scientifically based. The need for absolute accuracy is at odds with qualitative research, trying to overlay the quantitative methods of positivism and accountability onto the qualitative method of constructivism and multiple perspectives. Authenticity nonetheless is an important facet of the research to ensure that the participants are represented accurately. To this end, this project used multiple sources of data, collected over time, to assist with this process. Likewise, the participants had multiple formal and informal opportunities to discuss the data during the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Secondary to the data collection, policy artifacts were an important part of the research process as they assisted in explaining some of the data through historical and current example. Hill and Kerber (2000) identify that historical research “enables solutions to contemporary problems to be sort in the past” as well as shedding “light on present and future trends” (p. 159). One such facet discussed in the literature review is “reform fatigue” where policy/reform overload results in teachers actively choosing to resist policy enactment at the local site either as it is prescribed or at all in some cases. It comes about from too much “top-down, centrally imposed reform” that is judged by teachers as making little difference to student outcomes (Bishop & Mulford, 1999, p. 186).

The interview data and historical context were used to strengthen the constructivist philosophy underpinning the project. They provide context, and along with current policies enable the researcher to piece together a history of reform, and subsequent practice (Yin, 1994). Policies such as the Melbourne Declaration (MCEECDYA, 2009c) for example, maintains considerable influence over education policy directions in Australian schools. It has provided the philosophical framework for the Australian Curriculum,
NAPLAN and MySchool. Policy artifacts also worked as a stimulus for data collection and analysis in this study.

Data analysis: a three-way conversation

The collection of data from the three participant groups revealed three distinct stories about education values, policy and practice. In analysing data, Gay (1996) maintains that fields of inquiry are identified and verified according to their meaning and relevance to the research questions. Yin (2008) sees the analytical process as crucial to the reliability of the data and the theory, maintaining that data analysis should comply with the following four basic principles - attend “to all of the evidence; address all rival interpretations; determine what is the most significant and aim to demonstrate through the literature review and analysis a thorough understanding of the field” (adapted from Yin, 2009, p. 161). To this end, this research has employed a layered thematic analysis process based on the identification of themes using the work of Ryan and Bernard (2003) and the step-by-step analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006).

The data collection instruments themselves align with the constructivist paradigm discussed earlier, as they provide a core structure to the project but without a rigid set of questions and procedures. The focus was on the participant responses. Using open-ended questions, the researcher was able to adapt the interviews to flow as the participant required, to best seek out rich and thick data. Frequent and multiple visits over time supported the notion that reality is a construct of time, place, activity, experience and understanding.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research approach that, according to Ryan and Bernard (2003) is where:

   Analysing texts involves several tasks: (1) discovering themes and subthemes, (2) winnowing themes to a manageable few, (3) building hierarchies of themes...and (4) linking themes into theoretical models. (p. 85)

The first step in the analysis of the data for this project uses thematic analysis based on the work of Ryan and Bernard (2003), Frith and Gleeson (2004) and Braun and Clarke (2006). Defined as a method of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes)
with data” that is “conducted within a constructionist framework...that does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 4/14). They argue that thematic analysis is a popular analytical tool in qualitative research and underpins much of the more “demarcated” types of analysis such as discourse analysis or grounded theory (p. 4). They describe the process as an accessible form of analysis particularly for novice researchers, that when detailed prescriptively is rigorous and informative. They add, “through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of the data” (p. 5).

There are many different interpretations of thematic analysis and the way the themes are identified and labeled. These include deductive or “a priori” thematic analysis, or inductive thematic analysis. Deductive thematic analysis is based on the collection of empirical data that is then analysed according to the “the characteristics being studied; from already agreed on professional definitions found in literature reviews; from local, commonsense constructs; and from researchers’ values, theoretical orientations and personal experiences” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88). Following the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) this research has also built in a disjuncture to facets of the research to ensure authenticity and not to present analysis that is based solely on the content of the research questions. This process is described as inductive thematic analysis with “latent theme” identification where analysis uncovers themes and meanings that exist within the structure of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 15; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). This type of thematic analysis does not “fit into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytical preconceptions”, and potentially, the selected themes may contrast with the content of the research question and subsequent data collection/semi-structured interview questions. The following step-by-step process, taken from Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 35) details the steps followed in the thematic analysis, noting that at step two, scrutiny techniques from Ryan and Bernard (2003) were used.

**Phases of Thematic Analysis**

1. Familiarising yourself with your data: transcribing data, reading and re- reading the data, noting down preliminary ideas.

2. Generating initial ideas: highlighting interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: collating ideas/expressions into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

4. Reviewing themes: checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes: ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report: the final opportunity for analysis offering a selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Frith and Gleeson (2004) used similar methodology in a qualitative study that examined the effects of clothing on the way men interpret their lives. They described this process as:

First, the data were read carefully to identify meaningful units of text relevant to the research topic. Second, units of text dealing with the same issue were grouped together in analytic categories and given provisional definitions. The same unit of text could be included in more than one category. Third, the data were systematically reviewed to ensure that a name, definition, and exhaustive set of data to support each category were identified. (p. 42)

The globalisation of education policy discussed in the literature review for example, suggests that the a priori analysis model allows the researcher to see whether or not there is evidence that policy is achieving the desired outcomes by looking at the data and seeing what whether policy transfer has occurred in terms of language used and practice. That is, to what extent, if at all, has the global policy agenda found its way into the discourses of the “street-level bureaucrat” and educational consumer and whether or not performativity becomes part of this discourse? At an additional level, the data then offered up themes absent in the literature such as ambivalence. Henceforth, during the initial analysis the researcher attempted to suspend judgment by not presupposing that the data will or should align with a predetermined framework.
Identifying themes

The first level of analysis employed deductive model of thematic analysis using the stages of analysis described previously. The analysis was then based on the themes that came from the literature review, the researchers prior experience in education and local, commonsense constructs. Five fields were highlighted using different colours in the transcripts in order to get an overall visual summary of what concerned the participant and how frequently these ideas were discussed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88). This process began when the professionally transcribed interviews were returned in order to check their authenticity. Subsequently, when generating the initial concepts for the analysis the guiding thesis questions and the literature review allowed a systematic analysis of the data according to these ideas hence constituting a priori approach. This initial method was used across all of the data sets and it provided a useful visual tool to see where and if the ideas were supported in the data. The student data for example, at this first level of analysis indicated very few, if any examples of policy or philosophy, indicating immediately that there was limited comment about these topics specifically. Yet the second level of analysis based on inductive thematic analysis, revealed sub-themes that emerged purely from the data. This process of analysing the data produced a number of expressions/themes/concepts that re-occurred across the data set. The final level of analysis mapped the themes across each group of participants to determine what was common and what was duplicated. No data analysis tool/software program was used as the method adopted was detailed, cross-referenced and thorough without the need for such a tool. The computer software tool, NVivo 9 was considered, but analysis was completed just as thoroughly “by humans” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85).

After adopting this process, a number of recurring subthemes or expressions were identified after scrutinising the data in terms of repetition, similarities and differences, cutting and sorting verbatim parts of the text and identifying what was missing from the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The themes identified in the preliminary analysis were:

- Purpose/philosophy of education
- High stakes testing
- National curriculum
- Education policy
The arts in education

The second stage of analysis across all three participant groups tailored the themes as follows: philosophy of education (parents and teachers only); curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (teachers, parents and students) and politics (teachers and parents only). The findings from the analysis are detailed in Chapters Five (students), Six (parents) and Seven (teachers).

The case study site: Alis Aquilae State Primary School

AASS is an Education Queensland school in metropolitan Queensland, Australia. The population of the school is a mix of different cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds drawn predominantly from the surrounding suburbs. The school was selected partly for convenience, after four other Education Queensland schools were unable to assist with the research. This was due to concerns about staff workloads and capacity to deal with the added burden of research, as well as simultaneously occurring curriculum reforms.

The school is a traditional state primary school in an urbanised area. This refers to the observable similarities in buildings and grounds to many other EQ schools built at the time, as well as the adherence to mandated conventions like uniforms, timetables, playground duties, and other daily routines. At the start of the research, there were two administrators, a non-teaching Principal and a non-teaching Deputy Principal), 41 teaching staff members, 23 teacher aides and auxiliary staff and approximately 510 male and female students.

The MySchool website details the school profile, socio-economic status, NAPLAN results and gains, and results of like schools nationally and in the area. The data from the MySchool website known as the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) score is an indication of the socio-economic status and educational achievements of the school clientele. A high ICSEA score suggests that the school draws clientele from high-socioeconomic status and well-educated families. For example, an independent boys school in the states capital, is one of Queensland’s most prestigious private schools and as such has an ICSEA score of 1193 compared to the national average of 1000. At this school 1% of parents drawn from low SES backgrounds contrasted by 83% drawn from a high income demographic. In comparison, a remote indigenous school between Northern Territory and Queensland has an ICSEA score of 601 with a 3% top ranking for parental SES and
educational achievement and 61% in the bottom section. The case study school might therefore be described as average in terms of the ICSEA score. The average Australian ICSEA score has a value of 1000, with an equal distribution of 25% of the student population falling into the bottom, two middle and top quarters. AASS has an ICSEA score of 990, close to the national average. However, AASS has a student distribution of 30% in the bottom quarter, 18% and 26% in the middle two quarters and 26% in the top quarter. On the MySchool website, the school also acknowledged that it has been servicing the local community in excess of one hundred years as a primary school.

AASS has an annual recurrent income of approximately $5,200,000 with $10,000 dedicated to each student and approximately $140,000 dedicated to capital expenses (building and grounds; human and other educational resources). Like many Queensland state primary schools, the school was built more than a century ago with traditional two story timber buildings. There are no additional features such as air-conditioning or computer labs. The buildings and grounds are in need of a great deal of work and the school is currently the recipient of the State Schools of Tomorrow funding as well as the federal government Building the Education Revolution funding in order to upgrade facilities.

At the time the research began, the school was following the Queensland Studies Authority curricula of the Essential Learnings in the eight key learning areas agreed to under the Melbourne Declaration. The school was also undertaking preliminary work on aligning this material to the national curriculum, phase one subjects of English and mathematics. The school participates in the annual NAPLAN tests in May and the Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks (QCAT) tests in literacy, maths and science emanating from the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). The school receives funding from the federal government for a literacy coach to assist in improving literacy levels and this was a result of the achievement levels in the standardised tests. The students who access the literacy coach are also required to sit ACER reading, writing and comprehension tests known as the Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading: Comprehension (PTAR) tests twice a year to measure the effectiveness of the literacy coaching program. These tests are designed and distributed by a private company and the school pays for this out of the annual budget allocation.

AASS has a number of programs running that enhance the curriculum. These include the Instrumental Music Program (IMP), offered in most state primary and secondary
schools in Queensland; inter-school sport for years five to seven; learning support and intervention programs; speech therapy; regular school excursions, a year two, five, six and seven camp, regular performances from the Queensland Arts Council, extension programs such as catering and sailing, and extra-curricular activities such as concert bands, choirs, public speaking and swimming club. There is a strong focus on ICT and on professional development for staff. Community involvement is encouraged through an active Parent's and Citizens’ Association (P & C) and the associated committees from the P & C such as the swimming club and safety house. The P&C also run a number of different fundraising activities throughout the year, as well as parent information sessions about relevant topics such as bullying for example. Students are expected to wear the full school uniform and there is a volunteer run uniform shop at the school to support this policy. The school is a feeder school for two local state high schools, and in a smaller capacity, a number of independent/private schools.

Teachers are responsible for the curriculum management at the classroom level made in the school, as there is no Head of Curriculum position. However, the staff attends fortnightly year-level meetings to ensure comparable curriculum preparation, delivery and assessment across year levels. The full staff meeting occurs on the alternate fortnight for professional development activities and general staff business. The school is an Education Queensland school and therefore has adopted the Oneschool framework that applies to the whole state of Queensland. Oneschool also contains relevant student and departmental data, accessible by all Education Queensland staff across school sites. There is a specialist health and physical education teacher and a specialist music teacher for the preparatory year through to year seven. There is also a specialist language teacher from year four through to year seven. There is an itinerant instrumental music teacher who visits the school for a day and a third a week. This includes a rehearsal for a junior and a senior concert band. The school also has a chaplain and separately to the chaplaincy program, the school runs voluntary Religious Education lessons once a week with community volunteers.

The school day is divided into three sessions – sessions one and two are predominantly used for literacy and numeracy, and session three is used for the other six key learning areas over the course of the week. Teachers have non-contact time away from their classes for four/thirty-minute sessions per week and these sessions are taken by the specialist teachers – one 30 minute music for preparatory to year seven classes; two 45 minute language lessons for years four to seven and two 30 minute health and physical
education lessons for preparatory to year seven classes. A sample year four timetable is shown as Appendix Q. During these times non-contact time is taken by the teachers, so they are not present in the lessons and they traditionally use this time for preparation and correction. Teachers are not required to attend specialist lessons like they were previously expected to do. Students in the Instrumental Music Program attend a 30-minute lesson during class time once a week, on a rotational basis. There is a full school assembly once a week and a separate senior assembly once a week. The national anthem and the school song are sung at each full school assembly. The school day extends for six hours from 9am to 3pm; contact teaching time is five hours and forty minutes, with two lunch breaks in between. Schooling is compulsory and students are expected to attend all school sessions. There are 42 weeks of primary schooling per calendar year for student attendance and approximately 43.5 weeks of contact time for teachers. This detailed account of the school enables the reader to construct an image of the school day.

The participants

All of the research participants were members of the AASS community. They were drawn from different age, gender and racial groups. The age range was between 11 years to 60 plus years of age, covering a diverse range of experiences of schooling. Generational experiences were also noted, where some of the parents and teachers attended the primary school. All participants resided in the local area. Some were from professional backgrounds, others stay-at-home parents and others skilled workers. They came from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. This information is observational data from the researcher’s perspective having worked in the case study school as a teacher.

There were a total of 44 participants interviewed – one administrator, 11 female teachers, two male teachers, 13 female parents, three male parents, 11 female students and three male students. There is a detailed description of each participant following this section. The teaching staff was approached to be part of the study and all who came forward were the ones that were interviewed. There was a particular focus on the teachers in the year three, five and seven group as these were the teachers affected directly by the NAPLAN tests. There was one teacher who was performing administrative duties. Parents were selected in two ways – the researcher selected the majority through a process of negotiation after initial invitations were offered in the school newsletter, and upon approaching parents that were known to the researcher in the course of the position held
by the researcher at the school as music teacher. Two parents were recommended from staff, and one parent came forward after completing the anonymous survey and asked to contribute further to the process. The students interviewed all attended the primary school either at the time of the interview or in two cases moved to year eight during the course of the research. They were all children of the parent participants.

The majority of participants are female and this is a reflection of the two things in the case of the teachers and parents—females dominate the teaching profession particularly in the primary sector with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suggesting the figures are approximately 21% male staff in the primary sector compared to 79% female (ABS, 2013). Likewise the researcher’s 25 years’ experience in education supports the fact that a majority of volunteer parents at school are female, and in general there are only parent volunteers in the primary sector. The student participants are the offspring of the parents interviewed; therefore there was no control over participant gender. Appendix R provides a brief snapshot of each individual student, parent and teacher, along with a table providing the connections between participants.

The following section details the limitations and benefits associated with this project.

**Research context: limitations and benefits**

*Limitations*

While commensurate measures were taken to ensure that this research was conducted as objectively and as thoroughly as possible, certain limitations must be acknowledged due to the position of insider researcher. As noted in Chapter One, the limitations of insider include the potential to miss certain details because they are self-evident, where an “outsider” would note the differences and investigate them. To prevent this occurring, I made multiple trips to the case study school, observed many lessons and interactions, and analysed the data from as many thematic positions as presented to me. A further imitation is the possibility that insider research also has the potential to change the way the insider is perceived and treated during and after the research in the case study site. Likewise Drake and Heath (2008) note that often in the case of post-graduate studies, students often use their place of employment as part of the research process making them vulnerable to the affects of assuming both the role of a critic/investigator and staff member simultaneously. Drake and Heath (2008) contend:
In practice, insider researchers are members of an organisation with a particular culture, ethos and workplace mission...insider researchers often have to handle interpersonal relationships very sensitively to avoid problems in future dealings with colleagues...particularly in terms of the security of their own job and their continuing personal and professional relationships with colleagues. (p. 135)

This was the case with students and parents also where there was both a position of power as a teacher at the school, and as a parent, sharing common experiences. It is a fine line to tread. As noted earlier, one of the other limitations as an insider, not just at AASS but also as an employee of Education Queensland for many years, was the challenge of suspending judgment and remaining a “neutral investigator”, (Drake & Heath, 2008, p. 136). Drake and Heath (2008) note that the “gratitude” one feels for colleagues and participants who agree to be part of the project might also limit or constrict the ability to see the data clearly (p. 136).

Coghlan (2009) maintains that there are three facets to interactive/insider research – pre-understanding, role duality and organisational politics. Pre-understanding exists because the researcher has played or has a role as part of the organisation under study, and hence they are part of the operation and organisational culture that exists in all institutions and organisations. Coghlan (2009) argues that role duality refers to the two positions held by the researcher “being the practitioner first and adopting the secondary role of the researcher only at a later stage” (p. 339). Coghlan (2009) maintains this can lead to conflict and identity issues. This is documented in the thesis of Haines (2009) who “had to tread a fine line between being an insider, as a colleague of those I studied, inhabiting the same context as them, and being an outsider, as the researcher seeking to reflect on and interpret what is happening” (p. 76).

Finally, insider research involves balancing the organisational politics that exists, and understanding and acknowledging this complexity. Coghlan (2009) suggests that this involves working carefully in order to protect the authenticity of the research, whilst at the same time avoiding workplace instability. Again, like Haines (2009), I took leave from Education Queensland in 2009 in order to better concentrate on my research and to stand at a distance through the analysis and writing phase. I maintained my connections to the school as a volunteer through this period. I returned to my permanent position with Education Queensland in 2012.
Benefits

One of the most deliberate and influential aspects of a constructivist based qualitative research process is the role of the researcher. In this research there is an emphasis “on the place of the author in the text, their relationship with participants, and the importance of writing in constructing a final text that remains grounded in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). This intertwining relationship between data, participants, site and researcher constitutes a holistic approach best fitting this particular study. Rubin and Rubin (2005) note that the process and the position of the researcher has the potential to further amplify the data. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) state that “researchers could and should provide insight and imagination as key characteristics of inquiry itself”, also acknowledging the active and positive role-played by the “insider” researcher (p. 1). They conclude that “the researcher can no longer assume a position of disinterested observer”, and must acknowledge and contribute continuously to the research journey. Birks and Mills (2011) concur that in “articulating their beliefs and feelings about the world and reflecting on these equips a researcher to make decisions of a methodological nature” (p. 8), for this reason the next section is written in first person.

Based on the work of Bryant and Charmaz (2007) within this study, I have not been a “disinterested observer” (p. 1), but rather, as previously stated in Chapter One, I was a specialist music teacher at the school, and in this role I was very passionate (and remain) about my subject. I always took very seriously the opportunity to introduce students to the arts, particularly music and dance, as much as possible and in as many forms as possible. In addition to this, my master’s study examined the alignment of policy in the case of the Outcomes Education Reform in Queensland schools. This has led to my interest in education policy and how it is enacted.

My acceptance of the position at the local school coincided with the introduction of NAPLAN and the national curriculum, and I was witness to the attention these two new policies provoked in the media. Professionally, I found both of the policies were incrementally challenging my teaching ability with music lessons canceled, professional development turned to NAPLAN, and constant conversations with colleagues about the mounting pressure to perform. I could not see a place for the arts in future primary school curricula. On reflection, my insider status at the case study school, and as a member of the teaching profession for many years, allowed me access to information that I would not have
had as an outsider looking in. It has enabled me to access history, policy, literature and experience to work alongside participants who have willingly responded to my research.

In choosing to use the methodological approaches of inductive thematic analysis, my position as insider allowed me to see the data from another angle, as well as make deep contextual connections that would otherwise have not been possible. For example, one of the participants had been a secondary visual art teacher and knowing this allowed me to make connections between the beliefs held by the teacher regarding the arts and how they were enacted. My close professional connections to the teachers made it much easier to have open and frank conversations about education in Queensland. This openness would not have been the present as an outsider looking in.

**Conclusion**

Qualitative research methods using thematic analysis were best suited to this research project. The semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents and students from one school community enabled rich data to emerge that demonstrates how this community is experiencing change due to a performative policy reform agenda. Schools are complex places, where professional and personal decisions are constantly made. Likewise, parenting is a reflection of this process where decisions are made based on circumstances, histories, beliefs and values. Qualitative research methodology using case study and thematic analysis allowed the data to come “from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 19). This method aligns with the constructivist nature of the project.

The following three chapters present the findings from the data collected from the students, parents and teachers at AASS investigating what they valued and how this is enacted in practice.
Chapter Five: the focus case: the students of AASS

Chapter Four provided a rationale for and description of case study methods used within this thesis noting that this methodology best reflects the constructivist nature of the project where individuals conceptualise their own version of reality according to the beliefs, understandings and experiences they have. This chapter presents the findings from the student data, offering a picture of how this small group of AASS students, 14 student participants on total, perceived their educational experiences. The provides details of how the students view learning, including the elements of the school day that have the most purpose for them, what they value, what they don’t, and any perceptions they have about how the current culture of testing has influenced their learning experiences.

Across all data sets (students, parents and teachers), three key themes of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment emerged. Given the uniqueness of each participant group and the individual roles they play in the education cycle, the themes were perceived in differing ways. Henceforth the key themes are described separately and according to the idiosyncrasies of each participant group, in Chapter Six for the parents and Chapter Seven for the teachers. In the following two chapters, two additional themes of philosophy and politics emerged. These two themes were not present in the student data as they are concepts that are not particularly relevant to primary aged children.

Given that one of the most important facets of this research was giving voice to the participants, the terms curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for the student data were described using the actual words the students themselves used. Henceforth, the terms “the normal stuff” described by Amelia, and the “stuff that’s not sort of normal” described by Elisha, are used to describe a combination of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Throughout this chapter the themes often interconnect, overlap or relate, as the fields themselves are inseparable when defining education. Figure 2 represents the themes and subthemes that emerged from the student data expressed using the student headings of the “normal stuff” and “stuff that’s not sort of the normal”.

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### Figure 2: Student data themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Normal Stuff</th>
<th>Stuff that’s not sort of the normal...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|            | • Mathematics and English morning and middle session  
             • Repetition of work  
             • Reading at desks  
             • Writing at desks  
             • Subject integration  
             • Boredom in class  
             • Ambivalence | • Subject integration  
                                • Creative projects  
                                • Visual art  
                                • Drama  
                                • HPE  
                                • Extension program  
                                • Instrumental music  
                                • Experiencing the extra-curricular activities  
                                • Pride in representing the school |
| Pedagogy   | Normal Stuff | Stuff that’s not sort of the normal... |
|            | • Ways of teaching  
             • Test preparation  
             • Creativity  
             • Sitting at desks  
             • Inside work | • Ways of teaching  
                                • Learning without knowing  
                                • Hands on learning and non-writing tasks  
                                • Creativity  
                                • Competition  
                                • Getting out of class  
                                • Interschool projects |
| Assessment | Normal Stuff | Stuff that’s not sort of the normal... |
|            | • NAPLAN  
             • Other tests  
             • Concern  
             • Pride  
             • Ambivalence | • Pride at achieving  
                                • Creative projects  
                                • Performance opportunities |
Understanding the differences between “the normal stuff” and the “stuff that’s not sort of the normal”

In attempting to identify what the school day meant, the student interview questions focused on what each child liked about school, what they remembered as being their favourite subject, their least favourite part of the day and the reasons for these choices. The students were asked about NAPLAN and how they recalled the process. Finally they were asked about what they might like to change about school if they could. Throughout the interviews, the students articulated a number of ideas that link to the central research questions relating to the way certain policies like NAPLAN influenced their perception of school, how the arts factored into the school day, and what value they placed on certain activities according to high and low points in the school week. Although they did not specifically talk about philosophy, the students articulated their thoughts about what they liked and disliked about school, and overall there was an implicit understanding that school was compulsory and they had to attend, they had to study the things they did not like and as compensation they looked forward to the things they did like. One appeared to balance out the other over the week.

For many of these students the moments of difference were what made the day a good one or not, a “normal” one or not. For example, if the day involved mathematics, English, testing, assessment, writing, reading and other similar tasks, they considered this normal. The students were not perplexed or disheartened by this, but rather appeared resigned to the routine. However, if the day offered something different to the routine, they considered this other than normal. Interestingly, the “other than normal” represented both the preferred curriculum, such as mathematics, when it was delivered in an interesting and different way, as well as the obvious activities such as Friday afternoon sport.

The “normal stuff” emerged from the data to represent the majority of the responses from the student participants about the curriculum areas covered in a routine manner for a majority of the school week. The normal stuff includes English, mathematics, science, written work, assessment, tests, reading, and to a much lesser extent some of the other key learning areas like history. The normal stuff is what Education Queensland consider the requirements of P-12, described as the specified documents to follow; the intended curriculum; the learning requirements; the nationally endorsed training programs; the core of a students learning program (Queensland Government, 2013c). Education Queensland
clearly defines curriculum as a “series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students” (Eisner, 2002, p. 31). The students interviewed acknowledged that there were a “series of planned events”, but it was the nature of these events that identified them as normal or not normal. For example, the normal stuff for Karen included “just writing out stories and reading and things like that”. Other students referred to the routine according to the daily timetable that centered on literacy and numeracy. There was a clear connection between normal and the key learning areas described by Alexander (2010) in “Curriculum 1”. Paradoxically, the students also identified “Curriculum 1” learning areas as other than normal if the pedagogical approach was different and engaging outside of chalk and talk.

The following sections discuss the student interpretations of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment through the lens of the normal and the other than normal stuff.

**The normal stuff: curriculum**

Much of the normal school day was reflected in the division of time and there was consensus amongst participants that literacy and numeracy characterised and consumed much of the normal day. The students were not discontent with the normal stuff but rather, ambivalent and unmotivated/disinterested in the subject area under study. Amelia, Charlie, Henry, Lilly, Elisha and Harry shared similar experiences of their daily routine. Amelia noted “we do mathematics every day but sometimes it just starts to get really boring because we’re doing it every day all year”. Charlie also noted:

> The first session we do maths then go onto either our technology or our English...this is before morning tea...sometimes we actually have the whole first session for just maths...when we get back from lunch we read for five to 10 minutes then we do some testing. (Charlie, yr. 5)

He went on to add subjects like science, SOSE, history and geography “we fit it in sometimes in the afternoon”. Henry also recalled that most days of the week the first two sessions of the day were spent studying either mathematics or English. Mathematics was usually first and English followed in the second session. However his favourite subjects were art, science, technology and SOSE, noting that English was his least favourite subject. Lilly had similar experiences to Henry. She stated, “we do a lot of mathematics in our class” recalling that the first topic undertaken in the day was mathematics. She also noted that
the second session of the school day was mostly spent writing narratives or preparing for NAPLAN. “Yeah pretty much all morning” summed up Elisha’s day regarding mathematics although she also acknowledged the teacher tried different ways to engage the students during these sessions. Elisha’s second session of the school day was spent on spelling and literacy tasks noting again that the teacher through pedagogy attempted to make the session more interesting. Harry had a similar story with the addition of identifying good days at school as the ones when he did not have tests like the regular Friday spelling test. He recalled “I just don’t like spelling tests, I like reading and all that stuff, not spelling, another one is English skills. They’re too easy”.

With regards to the normal work that the students talked about, the process was somewhat mitigated by feelings of pride in personal achievement such as a test or a piece of writing. Furthermore, Molly considered mathematics a normal thing but she enjoyed maths because of pedagogy, whereas Matilda liked maths for maths sake. In addition to this, Jo commented that “mathematics is really fun to do because it’s helpful outside of school” where she clearly associated learning mathematics with good post schooling outcomes. She had also classified subjects often according to why she thought they were important to her. She described her favourite subject as visual art, music, mathematics and science, reasoning these choices because music and art were creative and “mathematics...because it’s helpful outside of school”. Whether intentionally or not, Jo appeared to have adopted the dominant discourse that subjects like mathematics and science were more beneficial for post schooling options. This perspective has been noted by Alexander (2010) who suggests, “mathematics was a subject that children identified as particularly important for their adult lives” (p. 222).

The normal stuff: pedagogy

Concepts such as repetition of work, boredom, ambivalence, assessment, competition, mixing of subjects, enjoyment and ideas for change emerged as part of the learning process from the student perspective. The students appeared indecisive about much of the school day and the moments that stood out in terms of learning or enjoyment were the times when things were approached from a different or exciting angle offering new opportunities to learn. On the other hand, some normal subjects were also favourites due to pedagogy. The students reflected on ways of learning, feelings associated with learning and the characteristics of the teacher’s work that made the normal things fun. Eisner (2002) notes,
“teaching is an art in that the teacher's activity is not dominated by prescriptions or routines but is influenced by qualities and contingencies that are unpredicted” (p. 155). This unpredictability or uncertainty can be attributed to the pedagogical choices made by the staff, with the data suggesting that traditional teaching methods were viewed as normal, whereas curriculum and assessment presented differently was considered not normal. For example, reading and writing at desks was normal, while digital storybooks and marble mazes were not. Alexander (2010) states:

Children recognised that learning was divided into discrete ‘areas’ such as literacy, art, music, mathematics (or numeracy) and so on. They tended to see these subjects as important...but also felt that particular subjects...should be studied for their own sake because they were engaging and enjoyable. (p. 148)

Madaus, Russell and Higgens (2009) identify that specific values are attributed and reproduced at school. These beliefs then become part of the normalisation of the educational process, and confirm and/or alter the expectations the community has about schooling. The process of associating the first and second sections of the school day with English and mathematics reinforces the belief that they are more important than any of the other key learning areas. The students conveyed this knowledge clearly and to a great extent they were ambivalent to this.

This next section details the student responses to assessment, considered part of the normal school day.

**The normal stuff: assessment**

The students did not refer to the term assessment, but rather to specific pieces of work that they knew were reported upon, referring to a number of projects that involved writing, technology, media and ICT, drama and oral presentations. Assessment items that were considered normal were not discussed outside of a few brief comments about regular spelling test, mathematics quizzes and homework tasks. The predominate form of assessment referred to was NAPLAN. To recapitulate, Bernstein identified three message systems in schooling – curriculum, pedagogy and assessment/evaluation. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) went further to argue that testing is a fourth system. NAPLAN falls under the normal category and all of the students except one reflected a degree of resignation towards the tests considering the practice a normal part of school.
NAPLAN – “just another test”

All of the participants had either been involved in or were preparing for NAPLAN at the time of the interviews. The students recalled there had been a considerable amount of time spent practicing for the test, which included completing past tests, arranging desks to get a sense of the examination conditions, and reworking literacy and numeracy tasks to align with the test requirements. Amelia stated, “it was brought up a lot and a lot of learning was towards NAPLAN to try and get better for NAPLAN as well”. Amelia’s comments were reflective of the group of students interviewed, summing up that a lot of class time had been spent on test preparation. At the same time the students also expressed their appreciation and understanding that their teachers had adequately prepared them both academically and emotionally for the tests. Any concerns felt were extinguished by positive experiences due to teacher preparation and the fact that many of the teachers had stressed to the children that it was “just another test”. For example, Lilly recalled that her teacher had been practicing for the test stating, “yeah we do lots of practice, I remember our teacher telling us just relax, just pretend it’s just a normal test so don’t worry”. Further discussion of NAPLAN revealed that Lilly, new to the school when she first encountered the tests, noted the preparation had assisted her in settling in and doing well.

Charlie noted that every Friday the teacher tested the class on the weekly work so testing was a regular event in his classroom, and she thought this might have assisted in her NAPLAN preparation. She noted that her teacher’s support was crucial to her success in the NAPLAN tests stating her teacher “actually helped me to keep on track with my testing. I really enjoyed the testing part of it but I don’t think I did as well as I thought I would. I enjoyed it”. Charlie appeared to take pride and satisfaction from the preparation and the close working relationship she had established with her teacher during the test preparation and this was partly responsible for her attitude to the test.

Molly remembered practicing for NAPLAN using the previous year’s booklets and she thought her practice writing was better than her actual test. She was not worried about the test and acknowledged that her teacher put them at ease. She remembered her teacher gave them confidence in that the result was “just a piece of paper”. Molly (yr. 6) recalled the practice process in the following passage:

Molly: We’d sit round the table and she’d give us old booklets from the year before. Yeah, we’d like try all the words. Yeah, getting some wrong
but not being like disappointed because you got the rest of them right. I remember having to write a story about the box. I think I did better with the box (practice) than the actual one, real test.

Recalling how she felt at the time, Molly said:

Molly: No, I wasn't necessarily worried, I was more - like Miss A always said that your results, it's a piece of paper. If you get a C it's really good, so she did make us all confident about it. I think I did pretty well. I know some people did better than me, but I can't be good at everything.

Facilitator: Were you happy with what you did?

Molly: Yeah I was. I think if I did it this year I'd get more right.

The students were pleased that the preparation had achieved the desired results, noting as Karen had that she “sort of thought it was a good thing”.

In some cases practicing using previous tests and targeted work in class ‘really helped’ students like Alannah who recalled NAPLAN as challenging, noting:

Well my class, we had it over three weeks. We had the spelling and the comprehension and all that in the first and the second week and then mathematics in the third week. I thought it was a little bit hard because I couldn't actually understand most of the questions. I thought that I wouldn't be able to do the writing because I'm not a really good writer. I was surprised how my story came out. (Alannah, yr. 5)

She also recalled that the teacher’s aim was to “try and get better for NAPLAN” when introducing work. This sense of achievement and surprise at results were also reflected in the recollections of Matilda (yr. 3) who had just completed her first test:

Facilitator: What can you remember about NAPLAN?

Matilda: It was a bit hard at some points.

Facilitator: Did your teacher help you out with it in class?

Matilda: Yes a lot.

Facilitator: So you did quite a bit of practice?
Matilda: Yes.
Facilitator: Did that help you think? And you weren't worried or you were?
Matilda: I was worried a bit.
Facilitator: A little bit and how did you feel at the end of it?
Matilda: Proud, because I did well.

Likewise, Henry remembered that despite all of the in-class preparations where he recalled, “we did two pages at a time throughout the week” of the previous year’s test, he was still stuck for ideas on the day. However this was not recalled with anxiety or disappointment, but rather ambivalence and amusement that he could not get his ideas out. Henry’s mother (Gail) interjected stating that he wasted his practice time in class because he “didn’t do any planning to write his story”. Henry (yr. 5) recalled:

Henry: We did three weeks (of practice) and our practice test for the writing thing was the box. Mine didn’t turn out too good.
Facilitator: Why didn’t it turn out too good?
Henry: Well you have a box and I couldn’t think of anything straight away.
Gail: ’Cause Henry didn’t do any planning to write his story.
Facilitator: What about in class though?
Gail: In class, in that practice one, he just wrote. He didn’t plan his ideas out to then put it on paper.
Facilitator: So did you get a bit stuck on the test to think of something?
Henry: Yeah.

Like other students, Harry (yr. 6) recalled practicing a lot for NAPLAN stating that “we just kept doing it” when referring to the practice sessions. He mentioned the other testing that the class undertook known as the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Tasks (QCAT) claiming that they were better than NAPLAN as the teachers helped and they were difficult in comparison. Jo recalled that in primary school she practiced for NAPLAN by beginning with the previous year’s test for the teacher to “see where we’re at and see what we need to work on”. She recalled she felt no anxiety or disengagement from the task, and in fact she noted that the teachers supported the students recalling “they were very serious about it.
but they let us do it at our own pace. They didn’t rush us or try and get us to do more than we could”. She felt that it was a lot less stressful at primary school than she understood it to be at secondary school. Byron remembered NAPLAN testing based on the narrative he had to write about a box and he recalled that his story was good. He was amused that he had managed to write the NAPLAN story about his brother. He was not worried about the test. His mother Sarah noted that he had been having some difficulties with literacy and numeracy and that she put in a lot of effort at home to support his learning, which included checking on homework activities. She noted that “he will only do as much as he has to” and therefore she had to be diligent in providing academic support.

Alexander (2010) argues that children either began or became “ambivalent to testing” after time and this certainly appeared to be the case for many of these students even when some were initially concerned about succeeding (p. 149). Furthermore, Alexander (2010) notes that when students prepare for tests they are “more positive and relaxed about them” (p. 149). The findings here suggest that the students valued the efforts of teaching staff, the support and encouragement in test preparation, and as a result downplayed the tests. In addition, the findings suggest that since the inception of the NAPLAN national testing program, the fourth message system of schooling, testing, identified by Rizvi and Lingard (2010), had become normalised in the school. As a result of highly motivated teachers whilst acknowledging the importance of NAPLAN, had deliberately chosen to present a “just another test” philosophy to the students.

The following section presents the “stuff that’s not sort of the normal”.

“Stuff that’s not sort of the normal”: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

The term “stuff that’s not sort of the normal” came from Elisha who made the suggestion that she would like to do more of the things she characterised as different.

More of stuff that’s not sort of the normal like mathematics, English. Maybe more of the stuff that we don’t normally learn about. Like I don’t know - like history and geography and stuff that we don’t learn much about. (Elisha, yr. 7)

The term also came up in conversation with Amelia who noted, “I also like music and language, it’s a good change from the normal stuff”. This category included areas outside of
the preferred curriculum like HPE because as Harry noted "we get active and get out of school...we do funner (sic) things than working". It was interesting to note that the students perceived the disciplines in such a way and even subjects like history and geography, part of the preferred curriculum, appear to have been to some extent marginalised when compared with English and mathematics.

This section covers the areas of the school day the students defined as "stuff that's not sort of the normal". However, as with the findings for the normal stuff, this section includes paradoxical viewpoints as a result of pedagogy or context. Of course, other than the normal stuff referred to the areas of school outside of the preferred curriculum, like Instrumental Music and Interschool Sport, but it also included mathematics when the pedagogical approach was engaging. The activities that stood out for the student participants were ones that might be considered different, that engaged them because they were active, learning without really knowing they were. For example, Molly began the interview outlining her favourite subjects mathematics, visual art and music. She articulated why mathematics was one of her favourites detailing that it was because the teacher made the subject fun, yet challenging without her knowing she was working as conscientiously as she was. She recalled:

Facilitator: So why is mathematics your favourite subject? What is it about it that makes it your favourite subject?

Molly: Well this year, Miss B has made mathematics fun. We're actually getting really better at it this year.

Facilitator: How has she made it fun? What's she done?

Molly: Well we've been doing angles...she (the teacher) numbers them or letters them and then you have to find how many degrees are in each...I find that really challenging but fun. Everyone goes oh, but I like it. I think it really helps. She does really hard ones...it's like oh my gosh it's going to take forever, but it's really quick. So yeah, I like mathematics. That's why...Oh yeah, and last week we did a marble maze and that was for our technology project. So we had to bring in our own cardboard and we used our desk on a slight tilt and just make a run...mine ended up failing and stopped half way through. But we spent the whole day making it and you could just see that
some people were struggling but Miss always came and helped us and the whole idea of a marble maze was good. Straight away the day she told us we were doing it, I went looking on YouTube and looked up marble maze.

Facilitator: So it would have helped you with your angles?

Molly: Yeah it did

Facilitator: Even if there wasn't a direct connection you could automatically see how.

Harper (mother): Absolutely. It's a creative way of teaching them about technology and mathematics combined really.

Further to this, Molly recalled another activity where angles and gravity were explored by blowing into straws to move tiny soccer balls into goals to score points. Two class teams competed against each other, boys versus girls, and this creative and competitive teaching strategy successfully engaged the entire class. Molly and her mother observed how the teaching methods again were the key to the successful activity:

Molly: With the science stuff we played a game, a science game. We had a straw each and there were these little soccer balls and there were goals and we each took turns in blowing. That's like good with your angles and gravity. It's a good science thing and that was fun. You had to try and hit like - it was a whiteboard eraser you had to try and hit that. So yeah, that was good - girls versus boys.

Harper: I honestly think that Molly has been lucky enough to have really creative teachers. Her teacher has been outstanding. So I just think the school is fantastic in offering different ways of teaching.

Outside of her immediate classroom sessions, Molly also recalled enthusiastically other experiences she had had where teachers had made things different in the learning process. For example, when reflecting on a visual art activity with the Deputy Principal, Molly recalled:

Well the arts. It's just like one day Mr C. came in and said, just copy what I do, don't do what you think it is. It turned out being a face upside down. Everyone started drawing an actual face. But the
whole point was trying to draw what you see and not what you think you should draw. Yeah, I just like how they make it different and yeah, it’s good. Although I’m not the best at art, I think it’s fun. (Molly, yr. 6)

Molly concluded that in doing things differently, the teachers encouraged and enabled her to learn and enjoy what she was doing. These creative ways of learning encouraged follow up research at home and Molly’s mother appreciated the enthusiasm of Molly’s teacher and was impressed with the way her daughter had been engaged in the learning process.

Like Molly, Karen noted that the most effective and positive experiences from school were those that enabled her to have the ability to participate in hands on activities, which she felt, really made her learn. She did not enjoy what she termed “working in class” by distinguishing between writing subjects and doing subjects when referring to the classes she undertook each day. This was recognition that she preferred learning occurring in authentic and engaging ways where “games and different activities” were part of the curriculum, as opposed to subjects where writing was a major component. Much like her brother Harry, she valued being active.

Interestingly, although science is a phase one national curriculum subject it was rarely mentioned as part of the school day. One example was Byron who had a clear recollection of a recent experiment where the students were required to make a bridge that could hold a significant amount of weight from paper. He enjoyed the competition between groups associated with this and like other students, this sense of competition between classes was in part the motivation for the activity and part of what was valued. Harry was also very enthusiastic about a reading competition set up between the classes, and reading word challenges between the two competing year six classes was his focus. The competition was the focus as opposed to literacy skills.

Subject integration was another pedagogical approach that the students identified as “stuff that’s not sort of the normal”, reflected in activities like making of digital storybooks, although in themselves they represented work on literacy and numeracy. Amelia shared Elisha’s thoughts that, “normally we work on these digital story books that we’re making in class and I like writing them and stuff”. These books were an example of subject integration for English, SOSE, technology and visual arts, where the students were responsible for writing a story and creating an artwork by hand and then transferring all of
this to a digital file. These books were then printed and read to the younger grades. Experiences such as these were considered other than normal because the activity used a different pedagogical approach.

The obvious "other than the normal stuff", included sport, excursions, music and visual art. These tended to be experiences or disciplines that value-added to school, but often fell outside the systemically valued curriculum. Harry enjoyed visual art as one of his favourite subjects, but what he valued about visual art, was the opportunity the school provided to exhibit student work in the annual art exhibition. A number of the students also valued the opportunity to represent the school, and pride underpinned these experiences. For example, "representing the school on swimming districts...and...representing the school at playing my instrument like playing The Last Post in year 6...going out to eisteddfods and Fanfare". Karen (yr. 8) reflected on these points noting:

Karen: The first time I got my instrument I was really glad that I got the trumpet and that's where it sort of began. That's why it became one of my favourite subjects. From then I sort of always have kept playing and really enjoy it. In sports I just like to go around physically and run around and stuff. I like school but like everyone else it's sort of yes and no.

Facilitator: So when you say you don't like the work in class, what do you mean by that?

Karen: Just writing out stories and reading and things like that.

Reflecting the findings of Alexander (2010), these comments suggest that students value subjects like music and sport because they enable them to experience new and different things outside of the 3Rs. The value lay in the fact that they were "a good change from the normal stuff". The students identified activities that required authentic and hands on learning such as festival days in the language; playing instruments in classroom music; performance opportunities such as talent quests and concerts for the school parades.

In terms of the arts, very few of the students mentioned their inclusion in their weekly schedule except on special occasions. For example, Henry recalled a play he had a lot of fun working on as part of English, called Rap Pugnet, "about a boy who was all-fancy and then he turned into a rapper". Charlie recalled drama used as a vehicle for SOSE the class worked on a play but they never got to perform due to time constraints. In addition to this
visual artwork was a student highlight and Henry recalled an integrated unit described as a pivot dance activity in the following:

Henry: My favourite subjects are art, science, technology and SOSE and in technology we have to make a Pivot dance thing.

Facilitator: Tell me about that.

Henry: It's a stick figure dance. There's this site on the computer called Pivot and we took pictures of our group mates and then we've got to make it into a dance, and to a song...

Facilitator: So why do you like those subjects the best?

Henry: They're very - we get to go outside; go on websites; listen to stuff. It's all fun.

Facilitator: What's your least favourite subject?

Henry: My least favourite is English.

English for Henry represented sitting at desks and working, when he wanted to "go outside, go on websites, listen to stuff".

Elisha noted that she had not covered much of the arts in class in terms of drama or dance apart from a SOSE unit where the students made up a role-play about the First Fleet. This activity aimed at representing the interactions between the convicts and new settlers in Australia that the students had studied in SOSE. Elisha valued this experience and recalled one humorous moment as the highlight of her semester:

We were learning about the First Fleet and we were doing this role play and it was so much fun because B and someone else both wanted to be the captain of the ship right (laughter) and so B was going to be the right hand man but we decided she would be the left hand girl because she's left handed. It was fun. And we had to sit on desks as the settlers and under the desks were the convicts and the convicts kept grabbing our legs. (Elisha, yr. 7)

Like Karen, she noted that activities that engaged her most were hands on and authentic such as the Winter Olympic Sports poster, a mythical animal construction, and computer skills building. Unfortunately she lamented that the school day mostly moved
from mathematics and English as a majority of the learning time and subjects such as SOSE and art were studied in the afternoon sessions.

Matilda's favourite part of school included writing stories and mathematics, and one visual art activity where she was required to design a new Australian flag and an island. She also enjoyed doing HPE and music, and she described them as fun. In class she enjoyed working on a SOSE project where they were working on “olden day things” where the class was completing a project based on a different aspect of life from this time comparing it to the present. Lizzie commented on the creative ways that teachers taught writing, science and mathematics at the time of the interview, connecting work to real life situations and making links across the learning areas. This helped her to learn. For example, Lizzie recalled a project about an insect that featured science, writing and visual art, which resulted in the construction of a sculpture of the insect under study. When asked what she would like to change about school, Lilly would like to cover more geography and she mentioned that she would like to travel around the world, Lilly commented, “I think myself I would like to do topics from around the world like, I would like to travel around the world, yes, geography that we don’t do in class”. Lilly's mother, Simone, noted that she could not recall very much of this key learning area in the curriculum.

In term three every year the AASS runs an extension program that offers a multitude of experiences for students. Exclusive to year four to seven only, the program lasts seven weeks and runs from 1pm – 3pm on a Friday afternoon. The program offered activities such as drumming, dance, kayaking, lawn bowls, recreational fishing, sailing, gymnastics, catering, guitar, fashion, basketball, trampolining and cultural studies to name a few. For all of the students who had been involved it was the highlight of the school year. Molly captured this sentiment stating:

Molly: I think it’s amazing. I did sailing this year and that’s just like - that was amazing. The water was freezing but just being able to make the sail - turn it on and glide through. It’s fun because you see people fall off and stuff and it makes it - yeah

Facilitator: With your extension program what other things have you done in other years?

Molly: Well from grade four to seven - in grade four I did cultural arts and we did Aboriginal decos...we don't actually have most of them, we
send them away to a school. In grade five I did canoeing and kayaking. We had our own kayak and we'd go on trips along the harbour and everything. That really gave me good muscles in the arms. That was hard.

Charlie noted that the program allowed her to do things that she would not normally do, for example:

Charlie: Last year I did drama for extension. We did a play called *Beauty and the Beast*. It was really fun. You got to memorise your lines and you had to actually say it loud and clear.

Facilitator: What character were you?

Charlie: I was a Tudor and a peasant girl.

Facilitator: Did you enjoy learning your lines?

Charlie: Yes I did.

Facilitator: Why do you think you liked that so much?

Charlie: It was a different side of me, so I don't really act and all that so I really enjoyed it because I got to perform in front of the whole audience. It was really fun.

If Amelia could make changes to school it would be to introduce more activities in class that like the extension program offered suggesting that what was most valued by the students were approaches that enabled learning to occur actively and distinctively for each child.

**Conclusion**

These children are not representative of the whole school and from a single case study it is not possible to generalise results. However, four key findings about these students and their perceptions of learning can be drawn from the data.

Firstly, the findings suggest that the students are coping well at present with the new curriculum requirements of the *Australian Curriculum* and the standardised testing program, so long as they are provided (as they appear to be) with opportunities to extend their experience through the “not normal stuff”. The students acknowledged and
understood that subjects like mathematics and English were necessary, but their ambivalence to having to do these subjects suggests a kind of complacency that comes with routine. Further research into the student perceptions of the curriculum is warranted to determine whether or not as Alexander (2010) found, that the students are resigned to undertaking this study because they understand the long-term value or because they really are resigned to it because it is a routine.

Secondly, in terms of NAPLAN, the students appeared to be accommodating the testing process well. The pressure appears to be reduced by teacher support, and as a result of this support, the students have embraced a realistic and pedestrian understanding of the test, rather than “high-stakes” view. However, if there is an increase in testing, an increase in curriculum and pedagogical standardisation, the findings suggest that disengagement will increase, as there is already evidence that the students are ambivalent to the parts of the day that are normal. If the normal becomes the predominant feature of the school year, and the other than normal stuff decreases, school itself will become less and less engaging, and as Harry noted, the best part of the school day will be “going home”. This possibility poses real concerns for teachers and schools in terms of future policy enactment.

Greene (2001) argues we have to offer opportunity to extend learning and in fact teaching capacity. It comes down to balance, and not an over exaggerated allocation of time and values to “Curriculum 1” at the expense of everything else. The concern is that in schools where a majority of the school day is dedicated to practicing and improving test scores, authentic teaching and learning will be sacrificed (Hursh, 2008; Madaus, Russell & Higgens, 2009).

Thirdly, pedagogy was a critical factor, and the findings suggest that the most commonly referred to “favourite part of the day”, were activities presented in an interesting, engaging and authentic manner. While most of the students appeared ambivalent to “Curriculum 1”, the exception was where teaching practices engendered more enthusiasm or when there was some level of personal achievement. Pedagogical tools like subject integration were highly valued and this method offered unique opportunities for successful student outcomes. What was universal was a dialogue that supported authentic learning and teaching, not teaching to the test or to just reading, writing and normal stuff, yet when the pedagogy engaged, the classification changed.

Alexander (2010) argues that in order to facilitate good curriculum outcomes, three conditions must be met. There needs to be “an intelligent and flexible approach to
curriculum planning and timetabling...a refusal to be bound by the government’s expectation that literacy and mathematics should be allocated at least half of the available daily teaching time (and)...high quality teaching in all areas” (p. 245). These three conditions appeared as characteristics of the teacher’s work experienced by the students at AASS. As learners the students were able to discern teaching and learning styles that worked for them, yet they also understand the need to cover the routine normal things as part of their education.

Finally, the findings suggest that the arts were valued, as were many of the other curriculum areas that were considered different. Students appeared to value experiences like the extension program most highly as they offered the possibility of a new experience. In conclusion, Karen succinctly summed up the schooling experience for many of the students stating, “I like school but like everyone else it’s sort of yes and no”, depending on what the day brings – will it be normal or not?

The next chapter presents the views of the parents.
Chapter Six: the focus case: parents

Chapter Five presented the student voice. This chapter presents analysis and discussion of the parent voice ranging from the responses to the initial school survey through to the semi-structured interviews. This chapter reveals how the parents at the case study school perceive teaching and learning, what value they place on education, and if there is any evidence of the new performative policy discourse in these perceptions. Special emphasis on the role of the arts is included. The themes of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment were the key themes that emerged from the data, with the addition of philosophy (referred to as educational purpose) and politics.

Survey results

As previously stated in Chapter Four, in the beginning stages of data collection, a parent survey was administered, which was used as an introduction for participants to the project as well as a base line data gathering exercise about the school. Sixty-seven parents, representing 11% of the school population, responded anonymously to the survey. Contextual information revealed that 56.5% of these attended primary school in Queensland, 27.4% outside of Queensland and 22.6% outside of Australia. Attendance at a Queensland secondary school was 60% Queensland, with 20% surveyed educated outside of Queensland and 21.7% overseas. Therefore it can be deduced that approximately three-quarters of the survey participants have some understanding of the Queensland/Australian school system.

As far as volunteer involvement in the school was concerned, 37.1% indicated they were moderately involved in school activities and a further 24.2% were highly involved. This suggests that volunteers play an important part of the school with almost one quarter of the parents surveyed highly involved at the school. Of course, given their motivation to complete and return this survey, the high results in terms of participation is not surprising and for this reason is undoubtedly not reflective of parent participation across the parent population.

In terms of NAPLAN, 90% of parents were aware of and knew about the testing program. All of the respondents had children who had already sat the tests in year three, five or seven. Out of the respondents, there were 72% of parents who knew of the NAPLAN tests and supported the need for national literacy and numeracy tests, with just 28% not in
favour of their introduction. In terms of MySchool, 82% of parents knew of the website and the connection to NAPLAN, but only 61% of those asked as to whether or not they had looked at the site, had done so. Those who had looked at MySchool also looked at other schools as a comparison.

In terms of the national curriculum, all the parents supported the need for the policy because of the perceived transient nature of the Australian population. In terms of national curriculum subjects, when asked within the survey to comment on the comparative importance of subjects for their child’s education, there was unanimous agreement that English and mathematics were the most important subjects for primary school students. The subjects were listed in the survey according to the way they are listed in the *Melbourne Declaration*. The results (Figure 3) indicate that second to English and mathematics, were the arts and science, as opposed to science and history represented in Phase One of the *Australian Curriculum*. The arts and science were not differentiated. Technology followed the arts and science and rated only just above Health and Physical Education, history and geography. Language (LOTE) was the one area the survey participants could see the least value in for a primary education.

**Figure 3: Parental curriculum preferences for all eight key learning areas**
In breaking up the arts disciplines, preferences indicated music as the most important arts subject to survey participants. After music, drama and media were ranked equally, followed by visual art, with the least important art identified as dance. These results could be attributed to the fact that music specialist lessons occur in the school and the Instrumental Music Program also featured as a highly valued and important part of the school program for many parents.

The preliminary survey data suggests that the parents are local community members with a vested interest in AASS. There was consensus for a national curriculum, but subject priorities suggest parents place greater importance on the arts than government policy makers do. There was consensus in the placement of English and mathematics. Testing for literacy and numeracy was supported, but as the survey served as only baseline data, reasons for or against NAPLAN itself were not ascertained. The next section details the semi-structured interview data.
Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews began with questions about general views on education to more specific policy questions. The following section presents the analysis of the interview data providing an insight into the parents and what values, perceptions and practices they keep about the education of their children. The dominant themes that emerged from the data were:

1. Philosophy
2. Curriculum
3. Pedagogy
4. Assessment
5. Politics

Early discussions led to questions about values, the purpose of primary schooling and comments about how the school in general catered for the needs of their child/ren. Following this, more specific questions were then asked about NAPLAN and how they perceived the testing process and its effects on learning; and the national curriculum, which at the time of the interviews was in the preliminary stages of development and in some cases initial implementation. This included a discussion about what key learning areas were considered fundamental and important to be included in the new Australian Curriculum. This then led to a conversation about the arts in school and how parents perceived arts education at AASS. Finally parents were asked to reflect upon whether or not they felt that the current education system best reflected their own values and the aspirations. These perceptions were identified under both philosophy and politics as they necessitated a discussion about current government policies such as NAPLAN and the Australian Curriculum, as well as recent federal and state government policy.

Four of the parents participated in a second round of interviews following the release of an education survey conducted by The Courier Mail. These interviews focused on questions about the dominance of literacy and numeracy, the crowded curriculum, testing programs, education and politics. Parents were not asked demographic or personal information, nor were they asked to give specific information about their children such as school results, NAPLAN results or personal details. The focus of the questions was to determine what value was placed on education, why and how it was understood in the context of the parent/student/school relationship, and how these areas aligned with current policy and practice.
Figure 4 on the following page, presents the themes and subthemes that were revealed as part of the data analysis. They are listed in the order in which they emerged from the data, and they were selected for their frequency. Terms like pedagogy were not used, but rather teaching methods or the way teachers work, but for consistency in presenting the results pedagogy has been used in this chapter. The terms philosophy or purpose of education, curriculum, assessment and politics were understood and used by all parents. Following Figure 4, each theme is discussed in detail.
### Figure 4: Parent data themes

| Philosophy | • Parental responsibility as central to the learning process  
• Parental role in schooling  
• Student behaviour  
• Valuing education  
• Student individualism  
• Read and write plus life skills  
• Fostering interest in education  
• Equity |
| --- | --- |
| Curriculum | • Well-rounded education, with the basics as “a given”  
• KLAs, a national curriculum and “too much to cover”  
• Preparedness for high school  
• Life skills – values and ethics education  
• Providing cultural experiences  
• Multiple opportunities and fostering talent where/ when it emerges  
• Creativity  
• Conflicting roles for teachers  
• Time allocation |
| Pedagogy | • “Raising the bar”  
• Multiple ways of learning  
• Pedagogy and engagement  
• Creativity and arts education - self-advocacy in curriculum choices  
• Creativity and arts education -self-advocacy  
• Age and pedagogy  
• Brain development and ways of learning  
• Behaviour management |
| Assessment | • Standards  
• NAPLAN  
• “Raising the bar”  
• Assessment as a teaching tool not a measuring tool  
• A "good school" for my child not a national comparison |
| Politics | • Three year terms  
• MySchool  
• Education as a “political football”  
• Federal and state responsibilities  
• Over governed  
• Equity  
• Teacher status |
Philosophy

*Parental responsibility and its centrality to the learning process*

Under philosophy, parental responsibility for education was revealed as a key aspect of education for the parents. This included the provision of basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, a good night sleep, as well as general respect for education and preparedness for learning. The theme “prepared for learning”, used by the parents, included the sub-categories - life and school experiences; instilling in the child the importance and value of education; distinguishing the different attributes of each child and their individual needs and talents; teaching life skills such as general knowledge, values and ethics; building on experience such as sport and cultural activities; playing a role in the school in supporting the child whether that consisted of reading with them, assisting in homework activities or generally acknowledging the school day and discussing the activities and accomplishments; and finally encouraging behaviour that supported learning such as listening, questioning and checking. Keen to be in control of these responsibilities, the majority of parent participants were concerned that a great deal of emphasis was placed on teachers to “parent” instead of teach, particularly in the case of children who came to school unprepared to learn. School should be used for teaching, not for teaching the things this group of parents believed were parental responsibilities. For example, combating obesity, general health and well-being issues, manners and behaviour were not part of a teacher’s job.

This outcome aligns with much of the literature and research focused on parental involvement and school success, such as Hallgarten (2000), Fan and Chen (2001), Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001), Lareau (2003), Desforges and Abuchaar (2003), Anderson and Minke (2007), Zauora and Aubury (2011), and Raveaud and van Zanten (2011) who acknowledge that the roles played by parents in encouraging successful schooling outcomes was pivotal. This role is heavily influenced by socio-economic status, parental education and cultural capital, and by the alignment of family values, practices and aspirations to those of the schools. Zauora and Aubury (2011) for example found:

Parents generally tend to recognise that the establishment of good home-school relationships can affect children’s progress. They also accept that they are responsible for their children’s behaviour. The majority of parents appeared to
recognise that children’s learning is a shared responsibility between home and school. (p. 21)

Although some authors note that school success is dependent on many and diverse circumstances such as socio-economic status, race and gender, Hallgarten (2000) argues that parents ultimately influence all of these factors. Anderson and Minke (2007) maintain the most effective home/school partnerships exist at the invitation of the teacher and that parents were most effectively involved when this direct link was made. Hallgarten (2000) argues that the home/school partnership is fundamental to school success and that the “mutual support mechanisms” that are established through this partnership are some of the most significant influences on student success at school (p. 9). Likewise, Kruger and Michalek (2011) note that despite the differing research angles adopted, “these studies share the assumption that a successful parent-school interaction highly influences the children’s development and generally enriches the daily school routine” (p. 1).

Parental responsibility in this thesis is characterised by the success of this mutual relationship. The findings confirm this position, and furthermore, reveal that parent involvement in schooling extends the role to unpaid/unclassified teacher-aide extended to helping out in the classroom during the day, where volunteer parents were assisting with incomplete homework tasks for children who did not have the support from home such as reading activities.

Audrey argued that schooling preparation should begin as early as year one and with her children she had valued the opportunity to support her children through the years at primary school. Audrey stated, “It has always been important...going to bed early every night...this is like a job...it’s always been a big priority to help”. This concept that schooling was “like a job” suggests that there were responsibilities and expectations attached to schooling. Instilling ideas of readiness, involvement, commitment and performance were all factors that contributed. Part of the process of going to school also involved the accumulation of life skills, and Harper affirmed "it's a life balance that we need to teach our kids at a young age". Learning to include and balance physical activity, study time, free time, home time and many other experiences Harper believed were skills parents should be teaching, not “push(ing) the responsibility onto someone else” like schools. In addition to this, Sarah understood the actual academic process was a shared commitment and referred to school as, “involv(ing) parents as well as the teachers...keeping the parents in the loop of where the children are supposed to be”. Furthermore Sarah noted:
People nowadays take a bit of an easy road out and rely too much on schools to put values into kids and to push them a bit harder...it’s up to us parents to get kids involved and interested and motivated...that is not the school’s job.

Jack also argued that many of the additional activities teachers were expected to do such as sport; health and physical activity within the school day were parental responsibilities. He stated, “they’re our kids and school’s not a day care just so we can have a break. A lot of parents use it for that aspect”. Like Katherine and Jack, George agreed that parents abdicated a lot of their responsibilities to the school especially in terms of sport, recreational activities and health and fitness activities. He argued that “it seems like society these days is putting everything on teachers” noting that “if they (parents) are really interested in that (sport) and they want their child to do it, then you take your child to those outside school time and you get what you want out of them. School to me, they should get back to their core foundations”. Referring as other parents have to the core business of schooling, which is teaching curriculum and assessing that curriculum through pedagogy, it also reflects the literature that consistently speaks of the crowded curriculum and the struggle to accommodate an increasing program of activities from ethics to philosophy to values (Angus, Ainley & Olney, 2007; Alexander, 2010).

Parental responsibility also extended to defusing stress from concerns such as NAPLAN; follow up on information from school; seek solutions to problems that were particular to their children; and generally be “a lot more accountable than we are” (Harper), in terms of making judgments about schools and sending children to school ready to learn. This was linked to Harper’s perceptions of MySchool. For example, from the very early stages of deciding on a school, Harper believed that parents needed to look at the geographical area that the school was in, walk inside the school grounds looking at the resources and finally, meet the teachers as opposed to relying on an external mechanism like a website. Harper argued that it was more important to do your own research and recalled her research into AASS stating:

I went in and got my own opinion and met the principal and looked at the school too, like, is there lots of artwork around and does it look interesting? What do the teachers’ look like and the kids look like? So I don’t think it should be based on something that you find on a website.
In this excerpt, it is clear that Harper also valued visual art and saw art as one of the indicators of a successful school environment, along with the general external appearances of the school and the community of learners within. Another parent wryly noted that if the music program in a school was good, everything else would be as well, because it was the last thing schools spent money on.

Audrey noted that education was the second most important priority after family, noting, “it’s our number one importance…following up on homework...there’s a strong emphasis on doing well...listening behaviours in class...keep asking until they understand because it's their future”. Likewise, Katherine was very proactive arguing:

If there are any issues with their learning process, I’m straight onto it. I speak to the teachers pretty much immediately if I’m finding they’re struggling with anything. They address it pretty much straight away. I have a pretty good rapport with the teachers with my kids so it’s working out quite well.

Katherine, like all of the parents, believed that it was a strong home/school relationship that fostered the best outcomes for the children and this involved following up at home when difficulties with schoolwork became evident, or following up at school with the teachers. Jack noted that parents were required to assist in many of the homework/project tasks that came home, often due to the complex nature of the tasks and/or the resources required completing them. At times he thought these were unreasonable and was empathetic towards children who did not have parental support. Katherine and Jack recalled one such example which illustrates both the beneficial and amusing side to such tasks for parents equipped with the skills and resources to assist, but illustrates the difficulty that some children without this support would experience. Jack and Katherine recalled:

Jack: But I mean, homework, sometimes (the teachers) do some outlandish homework. We’ve had some real doozies thrown to us, like building a bridge out of newspaper and you’ve got a week to do it, and it’s like, well, with everything else going on...

Katherine: With toothpicks, glue, newspaper and string.

Jack: I know, and it’s like how are we supposed to...
Katherine: No staples, no sticky tape.

Jack: And two metres of string. I think I used 20 metres of it on this! (Showing the finished artefact)

Katherine: It's got to take at least a 50-gram weight being dragged across it without it falling down.

Jack: In our scenario, with our large family, we've got to then help them.

Katherine: I just said to Jack, help them, please...

Jack: At the end of the day, it fell over and collapsed but you know what, we got the thing made and we had family time together!

Likewise Andrea noted, “we feel that education works best for the children when it’s supported by family and parents, when there’s good communication between school and parents”. She supported her children with their work at home, as well as offering to them opportunities such as drama and music lessons outside of school. Clayton and Simone placed a very high value on education and together they supported their children in all of the endeavours they pursued at school. This support included discussing homework tasks, and encouraging discussion and participation, offering a creative home environment and allowing the children to pursue interests as they arose.

Lucy acknowledged that the link between home and school had been pivotal in the success of her children, noting the dual role shared between parents and students in the following quote. Lucy stated:

In my point of view I think between school and home we have to build a very good relationship so we can follow what children are doing at school, and we can follow them and help them to what they need to study...and just support them.

She spent a lot of her time after school assisting her children with their schoolwork and in conjunction instilling in her children a sense of responsibility to do what they had been asked to do by their teachers. The value and importance she placed on education was also reflected in Audrey’s philosophy that school was akin to a job entailing responsibility and ownership of one’s own work. English was Lucy’s second language and therefore she felt it was imperative to have extra time spent on homework to ensure her children were keeping up. She acknowledged that she was fortunate to be able to stay home and assist
her children in their work and reflected that it must be difficult for children who have parents who work, “struggle with homework”, and then were unable to seek assistance. Lucy felt problems build incrementally until students “just drop off because they can’t understand”.

When the conversation turned to students who did not have the advantage of parental support at home, Ruby noted that it should not be a governmental responsibility to get children to school, to ensure “parents are taking an interest in their child’s education” and “ensuring they get their homework done”. In the following passage, she noted a concern shared by Jenny, that in one of her children’s classes teachers (and at times parents) were performing the role of (other) parents in home reading. Ruby noted:

There are teachers and teacher aides who are doing home reading with children, in the school day, because the parents simply won't do it. You know, it's effective, and it's great for those teachers to be doing it. But it isn't really their responsibility to take one child and read with them, when there's a whole other class who has parents who are prepared to sit down for 10 minutes and read with their kids. So no, some things just simply aren’t a government responsibility.

Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) note in a case study project examining the parent/school relationship in low SES families that there is a distinct correlation between economic and cultural capital and educational success. They found “substantial evidence suggests that achievement and cognitive development increase when effective parent involvement practices are in place”, yet they noted in low SES homes parental involvement is a complex issue influenced by class structure, parental educational levels, economic, social and cultural capital (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 78). Like Lareau (2003) they argue that SES status is perpetuated by the structure of the schooling system itself and that there is a distinct advantage for children from middle and upper class homes. One of the findings from this research deals with the complex role now adopted by teachers in bridging the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. For example, Evelyn who worked in the social services understood the difficult role faced by teachers in society where quite often children are coming to school from homes where the basic needs are not being met. She was concerned that there were now too many “emotional demands” placed on teachers. Evelyn commented:
I see first-hand probably the other extreme of those social needs and how, when they come to school, that they would have trouble even sitting and focusing. They're generally not sleeping enough. I'll go to...their homes in the middle of the night and they're still awake. How can a child function properly when they're not getting enough sleep? They don't have proper nutrition. I make these amazing wraps for my son for lunch and he's got kids wanting his healthy lunch because they all they have is chips and chocolate. So I don't know how any person can focus let alone a child, when there's poor nutrition, not enough sleep, poor boundaries, not enough discipline at home. How are they going to come and want to learn? So then that teacher has to pick up the slack on that. But what do you do with those children?

Policy likewise confirms this position, for example in the *Australian Curriculum*, the website clearly links school success to the authentic and deep involvement by parents (Queensland Government, 2013a). In the state of Queensland, the following excerpt from Education Queensland also details the government position:

Students are more likely to be successful when their parents are engaged in their education. A wide range of research has shown that when parents are truly engaged, children: attend school more regularly; are better behaved; have better academic outcomes; have a greater sense of how to be successful in school; are more likely to graduate and go on to post-secondary education. Parents and carers can support their child's education by familiarising themselves with the Australian Curriculum, to understand what their child will be learning at each stage of their schooling. (Queensland Government, 2013b, p. 2)

These observations reflect the values of a parent who values education but also has the capacity to navigate the territory of policy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, as well as the systemic structures of an institution.

Thomas, Keogh and Hay (2012) conclude involved parents consider themselves to be good parents as they exhibit values, attitudes and behaviours that advocate the parental role. Further noting that this position contributes to the abdication by governments to adequately provide educational services to constituents and in doing so “shift responsibility
for student’s educational outcomes way from education bureaucracies and schools and onto parents and students themselves” (p. 28).

The parents in this case study were all dedicated to opening up pathways for their children to succeed; evidenced by the value they placed on education and their involvement in education. Alexander (2010) notes paradoxically that “parent involvement may increase rather than reduce inequality” as parental involvement works to advantage “the already advantaged by engaging those parents most likely to reflect the norms and values of the school and ignoring the hard-to-reach parents who are less likely to readily enforce (these) norms” (p. 83). Concluding that “in a perfect world” this partnership should be a two-way street, yet much remains undone by schools in overcoming this problem (p. 83).

Similar to the findings in this project, Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) also found that parents were critical of other parents who did not contribute to the home/school partnership stating, “some parents were openly critical of other school parents whom they perceive as uncaring, apathetic, and irresponsible. They worried about the effects of non-involvement on the attitudes and behavior of these parents’ children” (p. 92). All of the parent participants from this study argued that better communication between school and home would be advantageous for all parents and specifically more information about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment on a regular basis.

The purpose of primary schooling

The purpose of primary schooling to these parents encompassed a range of positions. Fundamentally the primary school should put into place the foundation for learning based on English, mathematics, and science (reading and writing) as a solid base for secondary school. However, the parents supported a bigger view about the schools responsibility to the community of learners to offer opportunities that would foster talent. For example, Simone noted:

Education is essential for a population with a vision for the future, who think beyond the next pay cheque. And creativity and the arts need to be supported to provide balance, so we're not raising generations of nerds but generations who understand and see beauty and therefore see a world worth saving.

Simone and Clayton both spoke more than one language and stressed the need for primary school to explore, study and understand more than Australian and Western culture. They
felt primary school was about creating a desire for knowledge and experiences, for “dip(ping) more passionately into life” and for bridging divides, an arts philosophy coined by Greene (2001, p. 148). Clayton stated that primary schooling should provide:

> Access to as many different experiences that they can...as many options as they can...obviously you know the basic numeracy and literacy skills are taken as read...but...the broader field of arts and aesthetics and all of those sorts of things – I mean they’re very important because they are part of the human condition.

Clayton also raised the point that there is a very competitive nature to Australian society reflected in school purpose and system, particularly in terms of sport and academic achievement. Clayton noted “everybody wants their kid to be better than everybody else’s kid”, affirming that he hoped for the best education the school could provide for his own children in terms of good foundations and multiple opportunities to diversify experiences, not compliance to tests and a narrow curricula. Beryl also questioned whether or not “our view is wide enough” and that all students have different attributes that must be advanced at school. Like George, she noted that offering subjects like music “seemed to help” the students learn in other areas and her family placed “equal value” on the key learning areas, stressing the importance of doing well across all subjects. Andrea felt primary school provided “a good grounding...in the gamut of subjects that are going to set them up for high school...and trying to find out where their strengths are”. This was all linked in to also providing an environment that instilled confidence and inquiry. Harper believed that school served the purpose of encouraging learning, and preparing children for whatever the future held. Harper stated that schooling was about:

> Sound knowledge of just about everything in life, a base knowledge, and an appreciation for a lot of things. I would hope that they come out very open-minded...I want my children to feel like they can go and conquer the world...I want them to go ‘Mum, I’m off, I’m backpacking in Europe, and have the confidence to do that because they were given all the basics.

Evelyn agreed that primary schooling was a “necessity” and that the “basics” again were “given”. In the younger years she advocated a thorough understanding of “how to write sentences, spell and do their mathematics”. “All the rest” she felt could follow in the
upper primary years. Evelyn had also completed research in the area of brain development and argued that school should encompass opportunities across the arts to “develop all... aspects in the child, especially if that’s their strength. I think it develops another part of the brain that’s really important”. This focus on the child as an individual learner and her work on brain development also lead her to comment on student motivation at school and the excessive time spent writing at desks. Evelyn noted, “for a child that could be challenging, even 30 minutes...there should then be an opportunity to do something different which uses a different part of the brain, whether it be dance or art”.

Like many parents, Audrey believed that primary school should provide a “good academic grounding” stating it should “meet their needs in a basic way. It addresses the fundamentals...that will hold them in good stead for high school, which I think is the important educational period in their life”. Audrey supported her children’s schooling and prioritised it as the most important pathway to success. She believed that the curriculum should be predominantly focused on mathematics and English and if her children were to show signs of struggle in these areas she notes, “it would be music and sport to go first”. Yet she also noted “music and arts and sports are probably a little bit more enjoyable to them than mathematics and English”. Like other participants, Audrey felt that the school would “work with then to get the best out of them rather than this is what we do and okay, everyone do that”.

The arts and languages played an important role in this journey for Harper, as she believed they were necessary to open up the world of possibilities to the students in terms of cultural and social understandings, stating they “open up the universe to them, instead of just talking about Australia”. She felt that this school did an excellent job in terms of her desire for a “good” education with her child Molly having excelled in many areas thus far.

Chapter Three referred to a number of authors who advocated the arts as a vehicle for learning, as well as a fundamental part of a child’s schooling and life experience. Schools however are constantly juggling for time in the curriculum and in terms of choosing between KLAS, the “Curriculum 1” subject always took precedence.

One of the difficulties in bestowing so many roles onto a primary school education is how to fit it all in. Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003, p. 9) discuss the broadening of the curriculum in schools to include areas such as Indigenous Perspectives, Asian Perspectives, Sustainability (current examples from the Australian Curriculum, General Capabilities, 2012) as a consequence of our “search for meaning”. They also note, “somewhere along the
way, in the name of education reform, policy makers may have confused structure with purpose, measurement with accomplishment, means with ends, compliance with commitment, and teaching with learning” (p.18). Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) point out that primary school purpose is also compounded by the:

Pressure...to sacrifice depth of understanding for breadth of coverage. The more that is packed into the primary curriculum, the more difficult it becomes for teachers to provide students with opportunities to pursue subject matter deeply or to experience the satisfaction of discovering it for themselves. (p. 95)

They go on to predict, “as achievement levels in literacy and numeracy become the litmus test for school success, it will become increasingly difficult to ensure that the other subjects receive a sufficient allocation of time” (p. 95). Alexander (2010) points out that a further compounding problem is that to do one thing well requires sacrifice from somewhere else in the curriculum and mostly this comes from subjects like the arts.

Like many of the interviewees, Ruby talked about the purpose of primary schooling was “to teach children to read and write” but the parents also noted that school should provide multiple opportunities to develop talent and to expose children to experiences that many of them would otherwise not be provided outside of school. For example, Ruby noted, “across the board, there’s lots of kids who would never be exposed to music in their life or wouldn’t be in a sports team if schools didn’t provide them”. The parent’s views were contradictory, and they acknowledged this. Ruby for example noted, “there is only so much that you can do between nine and three”, placing a clear emphasis on the importance of parental support out of school hours. Many of the parents felt that primary school should teach skills “through expectations in the classroom” for excellence and lifelong learning, as opposed to schooling that advocated a prescriptive program. They advocated an education that encouraged creative citizens, who could certainly follow instructions, but who would be able to think for themselves, noting, that “the more prescriptive it (school) becomes...the less expectations there are on kids” to think for themselves (Simone).

George argued, “we’re still stuck in the traditional schooling sort of thing” referring to the mass schooling model and he acknowledged that the first thing he looked at in primary education were the quality of the English and mathematics, but then he turned his attention to how the school was providing ways of “diversifying” the learning process. He felt the further development of talents should be central to secondary school. He acknowledged that his responses were somewhat contradictory in that he felt primary school should focus
on the basics, yet he would like his children to be “immersed in all different things”. He noted it all came down to personal belief and values. Schooling should be about “raising...a valuable member of society”. In terms of key learning areas, George recognised that the arts, LOTE and sport also played an important role in learning stating:

> I think the arts immerse them in things they wouldn't naturally do in their normal lives. I think everybody should have a feel of it because it might, it normally takes one child maybe just one visit to an art gallery or look forward to an artist or see a concert or see music. They know basically straight away if they like that sort of stuff. You know what I mean. So they can see that, that’s when they should take those children and keep fostering. You can see the kids that are sporty or not interested and so forth. So don't worry about it. The same thing with you could use I know it's got nothing to do with the arts but LOTE. After a while you can see the kids that want to learn and those kids that don't want to learn you can focus then on something else.

Like many parents, Jack believed that English, mathematics and science were important but he also acknowledged the need to balance out the day with the arts as “a lot of kids learn better through the arts. They can explore their creative side”. Here Jack acknowledges the importance of pedagogy to student success, understanding that there are many children who do not learn well without differentiation in curriculum and delivery.

Katherine stated that primary school should be a place where her children would receive “what they need to get to where they want to go. Because they all have different ideas on what they want to do when they finish school”. She noted that school should help provide the opportunities to make this possible and along with her help, her children could reach their goals. She commented, “only if it drives them will I pursue it. I’m not living through my kids. They’re actually living their own dream and I’m just making sure I can help wherever possible”. This intertwines with the role of the parent in assisting in the pursuit of dreams and reinforces the importance of the school and home relationship.

In the case of Lucy, English is a second language therefore the predominant focus of schooling in these early years was to establish a good grounding in the language. In assisting with this at home and through contact with the school, all of the other key learning areas and schooling experiences became easier for her children. Lucy
acknowledged that the extra time needed to complete work because of ESL made other areas challenging. She advocated standards at primary school as they enabled her to see how her children were progressing. Ultimately she hoped that school would provide them with a “good career for their life...it is good for society as well...not only good for themselves but good for society as well. If they have a good education that can help a lot”. Lucy firmly believed that school should also provide a good environment in every classroom that was conducive to learning.

Peta had two children at the school and she believed that primary school should “give them confidence in their ability to achieve the best that they can for themselves...to slip into any job they like...what we want is nice rounded child that has attributes and skills to handle any situation”. For the primary school years, Peta looked more at the level of application than achievement, but also acknowledged the need to do well in English for example. Peta hoped that school would provide a “sense of belonging and respect”, and provide opportunities to develop talent.

In terms of arts education, George, Peta, Simone and Clayton all believed that providing quality professional experiences at school was imperative to encouraging arts appreciation and understanding. They all felt that the primary school needed to provide visits to professional performances and galleries as opposed to the amateur ones. Peta and George noted:

Peta: I don't think my kids have ever been on an excursion to a theatre, to a concert - I'd love to see my kids go and listen to a concert, you know. Not a concert, a what are they called?

George: Orchestra.

Peta: That’s the word. Love to see them or go to the art gallery. Just to have that experience. Even if they hate it and come out going that was boring. Just to have that experience and that respect for peoples talents and the hard work that’s gone in and the idea of all the instruments coming together. I’d love for my kids to do things like that.

George: Yeah, not arts council sitting on a concrete floor, uncomfortable, sweaty, hot, not in a proper performance for a theatre. So plays and that sort of thing, you know.
This idea is as much about the school assuming the responsibility of providing a broad range of social and cultural opportunities that contribute to the build up of capital, as it is about providing experiences in education. Parents who do not have this capacity are further restricted if the school system does not make this provision. These findings reveal the complexity of schooling and the way purpose intertwines with curriculum and pedagogy. The following section examines the theme of curriculum and how the parents perceived this field and their role within it.

**Curriculum**

The parents saw the core business of schooling as the delivery of curricula in the key learning areas. Much of the ideas about curriculum intertwine with the previous section on purpose where many of the parents talked about the school offering multiple opportunities to their children in order to find and develop individual talent. In addition to this parents raised specific points about the curriculum detailed in this section.

Audrey talked about “raising the bar” or extending students beyond what was expected of them as a “middle of the road” standard. She worked full-time and was finding that if her children required extension material she was obliged to seek this out herself at home and she had no time for this extra work. She maintained that the school had a responsibility to challenge students to always seek more and she felt that there was too much attention paid to the mid line, noting “the middle of the road is what’s acceptable and that’s a good job by a teacher if they can get them in the middle”. Some parents attributed this to the pedagogical choices made by certain teachers. Audrey referred to challenging the students with more work, and like Andrea, felt at times there could be more on offer as far as teaching and learning beyond the acceptable standard. Harper noted when reflecting on a project that she watched her daughter Molly completing for SOSE, that the teaching method was as important as the curriculum itself. Harper recalled:

My daughter in her Year 5 this year did a project; they had to develop an Avatar figure after the movie came out. They had to design the figure, they had to make it out of clay, they had to write a report on it, and they had to make a story, like a fiction story out of it. There were so many things involved in that one project - my eldest daughter loved it, did really well. I can see, I can stand back and see, wow, you don't even realise how much you are learning
while you were doing this. That, to me, is the best way of teaching. So one of your questions in there is talking about creative thinking and is there enough about that? With my kids' teachers, yes. So far, so good.

The parents all subscribed to the view that school should provide multiple ways of learning and learning through doing that in turn fosters talent and a love of learning. This included experiences in the arts, LOTE and science as well areas like geography outside of Australia. Harper believed creativity needed to factor into the learning opportunities in order to fully engage and instill in children a desire to learn. Clayton, Ruby, Jack and George talked about student engagement in terms of “hands on learning”, or as Clayton remarked “learning by doing” as being effective.

A number of parents acknowledged the arts engaged children in learning and that the provision of an arts education, and the fostering of creativity, were important roles played by school. In addition, the Instrumental Music Program was an outstanding feature for these parents and many of them commented on their love of the program and the opportunities it had provided. The Instrumental Music Program is part of the co-curricula program, and it is reported on the bi-annual report card. Katherine noted she “loved to have the music in the house”, as a result of years in the program for successive children. In addition she noted that if it weren’t for their involvement in the Instrumental Music Program, her children “wouldn’t be able to do that. There would be no way they would be able to do it” referring to the lessons, the instrument provision and the numerous opportunities that were provided for performance. In addition to music, Sarah recalled the wonderful effect a drama performance had had on her daughter and the way she had chosen something out of the normal for her. Interestingly, her daughter Karen, also recalled this was a feature of her year seven. Katherine also acknowledged that the Instrumental Music Program had really benefitted her children and taught them resilience and confidence.

Parents generally were in support of the Australian Curriculum to be implemented by 2013, cited mostly for mobility reasons and for the need of a national benchmark for education standards, Jack summed this up with his thoughts that “it’s a good way to start...if you can go from one state to another and get the same education, at least mentally, you’re ready for it. You’re not going to be disadvantaged”. Some of the parents had experienced first hand the inconsistencies between the state systems either through employment or
schooling issues. Beryl jokingly commented when asked about this issue “we haven’t had Federation yet!” but all parents supported the idea that one could travel interstate with Evelyn noting it would be good to “be on the same page”.

On a broader level, the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* revealed that many of the parents held concerns about the effectiveness of governments to actually manage the implementation. Reflective of the literature, parents at AASS were not naïve in thinking that there was not a place for accountability and consistency and the quest for standards and benchmarks was a shared view. Indeed, parents were hopeful that the *Australian Curriculum* would be a first step towards national unity and national educational improvements based on applied standards. However, many of them noted that such drastic change had potential for disappointment as well because of politics.

Evelyn noted in her job national standards were adapted to suit local idiosyncrasies noting:

> We are very big and we’re very diverse and we’re very multicultural. So will one curriculum fit all of us? I don’t know...I can guarantee you though that even if we have a national curriculum, things will be tweaked to suit certain environments.

Ruby was concerned about the amount of money that was wasted on trials when she felt that money would be better put straight into the schools as part of a simultaneous implementation. She argued that trials were a waste of money if the system continued to place so much emphasis on testing and not on the observable outcomes of teachers and the professionalism that they developed through years of experience. Ruby was also concerned that the *Australian Curriculum* would in fact lead to more testing with an emphasis on results and standardisation of curriculum rather than a real reform. Ruby stated:

> I can see that we’re going to have testing, but if they continue to increase testing they’re (the national curriculum) going to be test based. It’s going to be a test-based curriculum, so why waste all this money? Why not just make up the tests, and go here we go teachers, you need to do this, because I do think that they are teaching to tests now. A lot of money is potentially being wasted on a curriculum...[laughs] if we’re going to have a test for everything.
Luke (2011) suggests that the new curriculum will underpin “another ‘back to the basics’ movement – with the potential to further narrow, fragment and trivialise the enacted curriculum” (p. 7). Ruby believed very strongly that teachers should be determining outcomes based on their professional experience, and she noted the complete lack of flexibility that was disseminated through the new curriculum with concerns about flexibility and creativity, particularly in the early years of schooling. Ruby recalled this scenario from one of her school visits:

Why can't you just have an observable outcome? This is the outcome, and teachers have spent millennium writing report cards, and knowing what kids can and can't achieve. I even see now, in year 1, the testing that is done in the classroom to produce report cards is astonishing. There are very right and very wrong answers. There is no in between. I was thinking about creativity last night, because I'd had a child who had to write an answer to the question - Who will keep you safe? The expected answer was a policeman, nurses and doctors and all that year one stuff. Well I had a child, who put God, and I was asked by the teacher did we go to church? Because if we didn't go to church, he couldn't have that as a right answer. We don't go to church. But I argued that one, and said we discuss lots of religions in our house, and we do, and then when the next part of that assessment came along, God was put back in.

Ruby recognised the expertise that teachers had, yet was also skeptical about such a prescriptive curriculum, noting too that teachers do not have a great deal of control over this. George who supported more teachers input into policy, and in turn curriculum, also lamented this silencing of the teacher's voice (Lingard & Porter, 1997). George stated:

I wish that it (policy) were still done by ex-teachers, not politicians in there for four years…or have some sort of teachers who have been in the classroom and see how it actually goes. That's one thing and I'm sure you've heard it a thousand times.

Parents at AASS noted that to this point there had been very little information disseminated to them from the school about the Australian Curriculum and the subsequent curriculum changes as a result of this policy. What they knew about had come via the
media and word of mouth. There were considerable concerns amongst parents that the arts must be included in the *Australian Curriculum* along with all of the other KLAs. Parents here, unanimously agreed the curriculum should cover English, mathematics, science, history, the Arts, HPE, technology and languages, but the phase one subjects (English, mathematics and science) were of the most significant.

Noted earlier as a philosophical contradiction, the crowded curriculum was raised as a concern by a number of the parents who felt that teachers were expected to cover too much in the five hours of contact time per day with the students. This crowding included concerns about subjects such as teaching social and behavioural skills, programs like bike education, time spent on extra activities such as sport, yet all of the parents commended the school on the extension program that they agreed value added to the school program enormously. Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) previously were quoted as noting that curriculum crowding has resulted in a broad, but shallow curriculum and “the more that is packed into the primary curriculum, the more difficult it becomes for teachers to provide students with opportunities to pursue subject matter deeply or to experience the satisfaction of discovering things for themselves” (p. 95). Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) also claim that crowding makes it difficult to achieve high literacy and numeracy standards (p. 95). What has occurred as a result is a narrowing of the curriculum to literacy and numeracy tasks to ensure that this is remedied. As indicated by the student data, a majority of the school day revolves around literacy and numeracy tasks, and the last session balances this intensity with curriculum 2 activities. Luke (2010) asserts that higher stakes curriculum and assessment in schools “subordinate(s) or disregard(s) elements of the official curriculum not formally assessed” (p. 8). At AASS, when asked if crowding might be relieved through the removal of certain KLAs, parents were not unified on the choice. LOTE was the only possible KLA under question.

However, as evidence that education is very much a values based enterprise, Simone and Clayton were great advocates of learning a second language in school but they felt there needed to be clarification of objectives by government to determine the direction of LOTE education and teaching strategies. For example, there is no consistency across the state about language choice, time allocation or methodology. LOTE consists of a number of different languages in and one school might be teaching German, while the school next door might be teaching Japanese. In addition, the closest secondary school might be teaching Italian or Mandarin. Furthermore, the courses do not begin at a uniform time. In some
schools students have 45 minutes of LOTE once a week from year four, in a different school they will have LOTE twice a week for 30 minutes and some have one hour a week, but only from year six. The inconsistency makes it difficult to determine exactly what the purpose of teaching a language is. For example, Simone asked, “is LOTE about understanding and having an appreciation of other cultures, or is it actually about developing skills in that language?” In the short space of time they have at school, it is difficult to do a language justice and therefore Simone noted, “it doesn't create a desire in the kids to learn another language”. For these very reasons, parent George argued that it should be dropped from the primary school curriculum.

In the case of the arts, parents felt that they served a very special purpose in their child’s education, fostering creativity, engagement and “something different”. George felt the arts contributed to learning and would like to see teachers and schools offer and follow up on available opportunities. He stated:

> I think the arts immerse (the students) in things they wouldn't naturally do in their normal lives. I think everybody should have a feel of it because it might, it normally takes one child maybe just one visit to an art gallery or look forward to an artist or see a concert or see music. They know basically straight away if they like that sort of stuff...that's when they should take those children and keep fostering.

The findings from AASS confirm what Alexander (2010) found in the UK in that “mornings were devoted to the national curriculum core subjects...while in the afternoons remaining subjects were taught” (p. 227). Alexander (2010) also found that “support for the arts was not universal” amongst UK parents noting “that school plays took away time from the 3Rs” (p. 227). In contrast, at AASS, both the students and the parents universally valued and welcomed the arts. Only one parent, Audrey stated that upon entry to secondary school “if (her children) were getting behind in mathematics and English...music and sport would be the first to go. Until they picked themselves up”.

Parents such as Harper believed that the school provided multiple opportunities for learning, the arts included. She was very pleased with the quality of the programs offered at the school and particularly with the quality of the teaching staff that she had been in contact with for her child, Molly. As George acknowledged fostering interest was a key concern of all of the parents and they expected staff to look for student strengths as well as
improve upon weaknesses. Ruby believed, along with Jack, Katherine, Clayton, Simone, George and Evelyn that hands on learning was the best way to achieve results. They felt that teachers needed to stimulate interest in their subjects according to choice of pedagogy. These ideas were based around the concept of “teacher quality”, which the parents also identified as a teachers ability to actively engage their students in a selected field of study. This included everything from mathematics to drama. Ruby believed that teachers had to have expectations of all children and this relationship was reciprocal between schools and parents – high expectations equaled high results. Pedagogy or the way teaches teach, is discussed in the next section.

**Pedagogy**

Pedagogy, or in parent terms teaching, was a topic parents repeatedly referred to in this research. Clayton summed up the general sentiment from all of the parents in the following statement, “no matter how good the system is, the school is or anything, about 85 per cent comes down to the teacher who's standing in front of you on the day”. Many of the parents talked about their child’s teacher and the manner in which they presented work to the students to make it engaging and they linked this ability to teacher quality. They talked about teachers who were willing to bring new and interesting ways of learning into each class and offer multiple opportunities to succeed. This process was identified as fostering talent, creativity, confidence, pride, participation, equity, enthusiasm and success. Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003) refer to creativity as producing innovative ideas and acceptance of change – two highly desirable aims of much of he education policy that is produced. They note, “innovation requires creativity, imagination, autonomy and risk taking. To respond to these needs, an education system must possess the same characteristics” (p. 18). Creativity was raised for example and George noted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>George:</th>
<th>Creativity can be in a story. Creativity can be in how they perceive the world and what their concepts, how creativity I don't think that just comes in painting or dancing.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator:</td>
<td>So have you seen that encouraged in your children at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George:</td>
<td>Our oldest son yes definitely, especially with his writing and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator:</td>
<td>How have they done that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
George: Just the way he’ll write something and then the teacher will help him to visualise something else and maybe go on a different tangent and try and not, just be guiding him, not tell him. Then he’ll start coming up with his own concepts with his writing.

Harper observed this in terms of teaching strategies that were markedly different across year levels and with individual teachers and that perhaps the younger teachers were the more creative and diverse. She reflected on the success of this integrated unit:

Harper: Year 1 it's still very much play-based too, but for my older daughter, the last two years, both years she had younger teachers, who I think are more aware of the different teaching styles there are and how you can make it more interesting, as opposed to just sitting in a classroom and listening. I think some people think nowadays that you can only learn by doing it the old-fashioned way. They kind of see, they're not doing enough Mathematics and not enough English, without realising what all these projects involve.

She also noted that she had no problems with students having to be tested, to have to sit down and work at “study-based” material as “opposed to the creative stuff” as it was a good reflection of life. It was the balance that she thought was important.

All parents, to differing degrees talked about how teachers teach and that they had observed how certain things engaged more than others. Many of the parents recalled integrated projects that they had assisted with at home or heard about from their children and they acknowledged the inclusion of literacy and numeracy in these tasks. These tasks were reflected upon favourably as they engaged their children and gave parents the impression that real learning was happening. Ruby who was an advocate of “hands on learning all the way through” acknowledged that a teacher’s capacity to engage a class was also linked to resourcing and professional capacity for seeking out new and alternative ways of teaching. She had noted a difference between teachers at the school to engage the students in basic reading and writing tasks through a variety of different mechanisms. Andrea, like Harper, felt she had experienced “a very strong teaching complement” since her children had been at the school. Along with Simone and Clayton though, she noted the opinions gained from other parents had assisted with “a certain amount of negotiation through the school” to find the “right teacher”. Written for specific teachers were sent to
the principal at the conclusion of the year to secure a place in that specific class for the following year based on this right teacher knowledge. This was an accepted practice at the school.

Jack, like Ruby, supported hands on learning as a basis for good teaching, rather than teaching to a test. He felt that all subject areas would benefit from what he described as “inquiry based learning” and he made reference to recent policy announcements by the incumbent prime minister and to the very core of what he believes primary schooling to be about. Jack noted:

> When the Julia Gillard came out with her press statement and said that we need to train our students to become workers, I mean at primary school they don't need to be trained to be workers. They need to have an inquiry approach to learning. I mean, they've got to be inquisitive in what they're doing. That's the only way they will learn.

At AASS, the parents felt that a “community of educators” was crucial to student outcomes, regardless of pedagogy and experience. Some parents noted that behaviour management was also a contributing factor to outcomes, and as Ruby noted, “a lot can be undone at home”, despite all of the efforts of the school. Evelyn was sympathetic to teachers who had many behaviourally and socially challenged children in their care and she felt too much was expected of teachers and that many of the younger teachers were ill equipped to deal with some of the very difficult problems their students faced and the subsequent behaviour that they exhibited in the classroom. Alexander (2010) also found that “many teachers believed that...values ought to be instilled by parents rather than themselves and were adamant that they were at the receiving end of tendencies which originated outside the school and which made their task much more difficult than it should be” (p. 285). Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) noted in the Australian context, the changing social dynamics and that “there were increasing numbers of children beginning school who lacked the necessary social and language skills and the ability to concentrate. These children rejected adult authority and lacked interest in the routines of the classrooms” (p. 18).

Much of the literature proposes that it is through alternative ways of learning that disengaged youth are brought back into the education system. Interestingly, Harper felt the younger teachers were better equipped to present more dynamic and creative lessons and
commented that in general. On the other hand, Evelyn felt that the increase in complex social and behavioural problems that some of the students brought to school, were beyond the life experiences and capabilities of the younger teachers. These parents understood that teaching may well include such things as meeting the basic needs of some students (food, clothing and school resources), teaching social skills, completing homework and dealing with “the exceptional pace of societal and family change” that breeds instability (Alexander, 2010, p. 57). In the Australian context, Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) found that “differences in the backgrounds of the students” is clearly linked to the “stark differences among classrooms in the calmness, sense of engagement and purposefulness of the teaching and learning” (p. 37).

With this group of participants, there appears to be at present an alignment of values and practice, and in general, all of the parents were happy with the staff at AASS, whilst acknowledging that the role of the teacher had become increasingly difficult with many conflicting requirements outside of the traditional role of teaching. This reflects the work of Zauora and Aubrey (2011) who note that when the “school’s social and cultural mores and operations match well their (parents) own way of life, habits and needs. Their children appear to be prepared to adjust easily to the school’s life and parents feel confident to be involved” (p. 22).

The only noted criticism of the teaching staff was frustration at the lack of communication with parents about day-to-day classroom curriculum expectations. Many of the parents would like to have had more regular information about what actually was going on in the classroom on a regular basis and how more regularly they might be involved. They felt that they needed this information to assist with homework and school preparation. They regarded it as essential that teachers were pivotal in offering learning opportunities that otherwise the students would not have at home, but they also acknowledged their role in setting the foundations in place for good learning habits.

The next section discusses assessment and how the parents understand this term based on their interactions with AASS.

**Assessment**

Assessment emerged from the data as an area of concern for parents. On a general level, parents felt that there was insufficient communication from school about the requirements for assessment and they believed that this in turn affected their capacity to help at home.
This lack of communication related to homework tasks, projects, as well as formative tests like NAPLAN. Outside of these few comments, the discussion centered on NAPLAN, with little or no other comments about other assessment. This next section deals only with the NAPLAN test.

Overall parents were satisfied with the philosophical concept of testing when it was used to benefit educational outcomes and steer policy and practice towards improving educational outcomes for students. But there were differences in opinion about the actual process. Some were opposed to the endless test preparation to “teaching to the test”, others were opposed to the construction of the MySchool website, others were ambivalent to the test, but like many of the students, all of the parents saw NAPLAN as a normal part of school.

Many of the parents felt that there needed to be more information from the school on the NAPLAN program with regards to what the students need to know to succeed on the test. For example, in Andrea’s case, her family had gone away at the time of the test preparation the tests and she was concerned that the teacher “downplayed” the tests “when it was actually a big deal”. Likewise in the case of George and Peta’s son, they felt that the first time he sat the NAPLAN test it was a “complete disaster” as he was very “overwhelmed”. It was the first “big test” he had been involved with and he was unprepared for it. Second time around, the teacher had prepared him well, his parents supported him at home and he was confident that he would succeed and he did. Yet, George remained very adamant that the testing program was very detrimental to schooling outcomes in general. George argued:

I don’t think we need NAPLAN. There’s enough testing in the school at the moment to see where your child is at if you want to do that. NAPLAN’s just a political stunt to see the government on their side saying, this is what we’ve done as a government, see what we’ve done? NAPLAN is so we can see where the teachers are at, where the schools are at sort of thing...Why do I need to have my child that went to my school compared to someone in Mount Isa or Thursday Island or Adelaide or something. My concern is for my child. If he’s getting the best education he can and the best effort he can put in.

Sarah noted that the NAPLAN program should also involve parents adequately preparing their children for these types of experiences at school. She noted that “it was just
one of those things coming up” with her children and also commented that her children sat the state based QCAT tests as well and they were all part of school. However, Sarah was a volunteer in the year three classroom at the time of NAPLAN and she did note that “we were doing it continuous(ly), every day we were doing – recounts – a story”. She also commented that NAPLAN potentially could cause stress and she felt that the teachers were under pressure preparing for the tests noting, “I think the teachers were stressing out because they had to teach them stuff that they’ve never learned yet. They had to teach them in a certain timeframe and I think that was hard”. She felt the test was at the wrong time of the year and would be better placed later in the year. Sarah and Beryl felt that the tests were privileged according to teaching time to the detriment of other teaching areas.

Beryl noted that as a teacher aide in one of the classrooms she was concerned about the students who could not convey their ideas through the mechanism of testing and that many of them “are so much brighter in some ways than some of the kids” but the test was considered by many parents as “the most important thing”. Curriculum focusing too much on traditional learning styles and the lack of provision of opportunities to “mix up the day” were concerns voiced by Evelyn. She stated “to sit and do mathematics and English all day do you think kids are going to want to come to school?” arguing that the key to school success was teaching the basics of reading and writing and mathematics definitely, but through multiple ways of learning. McInerney (2006) argues that in fact the current system of high stakes testing is a result of governments laying blame on falling standards of literacy and numeracy predominantly on state schools. Drawing on the work of Margonis (2004), McInerney (2006) claims that there is a “middle class tendency” to judge schools based on low academic performance as a result of test scores (p. 67). One of the concerns raised by the AASS parents, was the use of assessment data to their judge school and teachers.

On a broader level, Katherine for example did feel the testing regime was stressful and she was initially concerned that the results were a reflection of “failing on the report card” but was reassured by her teacher that this was only an indication of “where the school sat within Australia”. Katherine, like George relied more on the home-school communication channel for information about their children’s progress, where direct communication with teachers about strengths and weaknesses was a more effective method. The tests were put into perspective after consulting with the classroom teacher about this dual process.
However, many of the parents argued that teaching to the test was a “deficit model of teaching” (Ruby) and that pedagogy was ignored as a result. Ruby argued that the testing was part of schooling yes, but that it must be used for steering pedagogy, stating:

I don’t have a problem with kids being formally tested at all. I have a problem when testing doesn’t inform teaching…that test is for a completely different purpose…the amount of time, effort, energy, money, resources that went in to teaching kids how to colour in a circle so they could answer these tests was ridiculous.

She felt there was political pressure all the way along the line from the premier to the education minister to the principal and then finally to the teachers. She noted that her son was then the final recipient of this pressure. She talked to her child at home about the test and became very aware as to the large amount of practice had been taking place at school. The tests take place in May and Ruby was aware that the results did not come back to the school until November and she felt if there was going to be any educational purpose to them they would turn around much more quickly than this. One could therefore argue, “the results need to come back sooner”. Harper had no issues with the testing program as she believed it was part of preparation for other life experiences where testing and gathering of data are required. Like Audrey who commented, the students “should have this knowledge by this point in time and that’s what they’re tested on. Whether they’re actually taught that level of knowledge at that time is another thing”, Harper’s concerns were with the use of the test to judge schools. Harper argued that schools must be judged on all of their merits, revealed in the following passage shows:

I have no problem with testing. I don’t agree with what is done with the results, like many people, that’s where I’m a bit old-fashioned still. I have no problem with kids needing to be prepared to be tested, it’s part of life. It happens throughout life and they need to be prepared for it. Again, I think that is up to us parents to prepare them for it, not make it a stressful experience and explain to them what it’s actually for and that kind of stuff. So to me, it’s no biggy. Again, it has its place and it’s for me, maybe they concentrate on that for one term over the whole year and do a bit more sit down and
study-based stuff, as opposed to creative stuff. That’s okay to me; I have no problem with that at all.

Some of the parents acknowledged that there was too much emphasis placed on the tests generally that the process, placed a great deal of pressure on teachers and principals. George for example was vehemently opposed to the tests arguing that there was very little value in schools comparisons via the MySchool website and was annoyed that the media had used this as a vehicle to “put local schools down”. Drawing again on the role of the parent George noted:

If you’re not involved in your child’s education you shouldn’t be looking at those sites in the first place. If you don’t have the knowledge and the background to eliminate the bullshit from what’s really there…it’s just the politicians again playing the vote game.

In addition to this, one of his personal recollections mirrored the thoughts of Beryl regarding the inability of standardised testing to accurately represent what happens at a school in terms of curriculum diversification, meeting students needs and the complex problems that some students, parents and teachers have to deal with each day. George observed:

I see teachers around the area comparing their school to our school, saying we’re better. You know what I mean, I see it already. Oh we got 97% compared to this school or compared to that school, we must be a better school. That’s just the teachers, it’s just baloney, you know what I mean. Compared to...What you want to compare it to is a school that’s got an IL (intellectually impaired) kid who is really hard finding it academically, but this kid now has learnt that he can tie his shoelace, or he can start reading a book, or he can be social, or...he’s not banging his head against the wall anymore. How do you weigh that up against NAPLAN?

Other parents were equally as passionate about the inequity of the MySchool site. For example Ruby stated:

I won’t even look at it because you cannot judge a school on one test. I want a school that looks at my child and teachers who can say well,
you've got a child who's working here and we need to do this and actually care about the kids.

She also recalled the media frenzy over the testing and the many accusation of cheating that were occurring in order to raise test scores including certain students being "excluded from the test". Her final thoughts were that "there are many more indicators that can be used to decide whether schools need support or not". Students should not be viewed as data.

Clayton like other parents had no objection to testing and understood the importance of having a system in place that "tracks defined objectives". What he felt was "bizarre" was what he and Simone identified as the "competitive nature of Australians" with regards to the test results and the apparent need to compare and rank schools. He stated:

As a parent, I couldn't care less if my child's school was in the top 100. I just want to know that it's doing a good job and in a way, if there is - and I haven't looked at the MySchool website to know whether this is the case. But what you want is for there to be a benchmark to say you know this is what we as a community decided is good enough. If we have information to that...surely it's a good thing for individual schools to use as a lobbying tool to say look we're failing these kids. It's not our faults as individuals but give us the resources to improve that performance.

Simone commented on the "panic that it creates amongst the teachers", like Ruby suggesting it then filters down to the children. Simone noted that the children were preparing for the tests in class and she concluded that:

Obviously and logically, if you're spending extra time in preparation for the test, you have to be taking something away from something else...for the thong to be properly representative it should just happen on any one day you know without everybody spending a huge amount of time preparing because that's going to artificially inflate the result.

This is corroborated by much of the research around standardised, high stakes testing that points to the fact that teachers invariably "teach to the test" (Hursh, 2008; Thompson, 2012; McGuire, Ball & Braun, 2010; Lingard, 2012). Clayton pointed out that the national
average is an illogical line that needs to be reclassified as a national benchmark comparison stating:

The problem I have with the way it’s interpreted is that they always rate things above or below the average. It's irrelevant. It should be above or below the benchmark. How many of our schools are doing well enough to meet a reasonable national standard and if most of them are above that, fantastic, that's great but there's always going to be half of them above the average and half below. So it's an unwinnable race, it's madness to take a big stick to Queensland because they're below the average nationally. If they're good enough, if they're above the reasonable benchmark, fantastic, that's what you wanted.

In contrast to most of the parents, Lucy liked NAPLAN as she liked to have an indication as to where her children were sitting against other children around Australia. She also noted that other school scores were an influence in her decision about choosing secondary schools and she felt that the private schools were in general doing better. However, all of the parents agreed that the students should be covering the work in class and that the tests if they were to give any authentic indication of school achievement should be treated as a “point in time” test. In line with Alexander (2010) and Hursh (2008), this data reveals that testing that does not inform teaching is contraindicated to good student outcomes and in fact it does little more than contribute to a “decline in teaching and learning”.

Some of the parents referred to the need for teachers to have more control over their assessment and that judgment ultimately should be in their hands. Angus, Olney and Ainley (2007) noted previously that, “in the past, teachers managed their classroom assessment programs for their own purposes. Tests were diagnostic tools to find out whether students had understood what had been taught” (p. 27). This professional judgment has been to some extent removed from teachers and given over to policy makers who are removed from the actual classroom. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) write about the extent to which this has actually affected the profession in a fundamental way claiming that:

A culture of performativity…has affected the very souls of teachers, who feel they can no longer practise authentic pedagogies or authentic assessment practices
aimed at learning across a wide curriculum, but are framed by the evaluation message system as mere technicians, implementing a centralised and standardised and somewhat reductionist curriculum. (p. 10)

Parents did not question accountability, but rather, the implementation of policy that reduced schooling to testing. Parents understood that assessment was a fundamental part of schooling, and in fact life. However a majority of these parents saw the potential for NAPLAN to become the sole driver of curriculum and pedagogy in schools. AASS had not reached this point, but still, parents were aware of the wider conversation about this problem and exhibited concern about what else might result.

Parental conversations often linked the political situation of the time to the topic of conversation. For example, when asked about the alignment to systemic values to his own, George replied, “It’s an open-ended question, yeah. Some do and some don’t but that’s what makes us individuals, you agree with something, you don’t agree with something”. The following section unpacks this idea.

**Politics**

Politics came up with a majority of the parents interviewed. By politics the parents meant the role played by the state and federal governments in the implementation of education policy at street level. Moutsios (2010) refers to education politics as “the explicit activity of citizens – parents, teachers/academics and students – to set into question and reflect and deliberate on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic mode of learning and, if considered necessary, to alter them accordingly” (p. 124). Despite this definition, these parents felt that they were powerless to change policy, and lamented the effects of the short political cycle and policy designed for the sole purpose of “vote grabbing”.

Several parents were concerned that education was often used as a “political football” and that the focus should be on student outcomes and not on political gain. Jack argued that “there is little focus on the student and too much focus on schools performance, to the detriment of the education system...teachers should be able to teach, not meet politically designed outcomes”. Ruby felt that the entire motivation behind policies like NAPLAN and MySchool and potentially the national curriculum were political. Ruby felt the money spent on initiatives usually followed by trials were a waste, and that the money would be better given directly to schools. Ruby stated:
I don't actually know why governments bother trialing anything because they never change anything at the end of the day anyway... I guess for me a lot of the stuff with education is put the money on the ground. Put it in schools - like the reading books I was talking about, let schools have some decent resources and stop spending money trialing a curriculum that you still, at the end of the day, are going to say, here's the curriculum. Here's the prep curriculum, we all trialed it and we made all these comments about it and you know what, they didn't change it. So I do find the whole concept of trialing things a little bit - maybe it will be different this time.

Later, Ruby talked about the way schools were being influenced by the MySchool initiative and the potential it had for further policy to introduce performance pay for schools and teachers. Parents noted this “disciplining of public education”, or the “big stick approach” and the politics around policy blurred the real purpose of education (Comber & Nixon, 2009, p. 344). Ruby in the case of NAPLAN, stated:

I don't think that teaching, or being a principal, is a profession where you can be rewarded for results. It's unfair to do that, and I vaguely recall there being a rewards system for teachers in certain schools. Yes - they will work hard, and hopefully they will achieve some results. But there are teachers in other schools, who work just as hard, and unfortunately, it is very true, there are some children who aren't going to learn in the school system, no matter how hard a teacher works... I don't think that's fair on teachers.

In the case of performance pay, accountability and the appearance of creating a solution to the problem of declining literacy and numeracy standards, Andrea shared the view that motivation was mostly political, stating, “I am concerned that education is a commodity and a political football and as such the decisions and policies are short sighted and poorly constructed”. Yet Clayton believed that governments had to “start somewhere” with new policy whilst noting that time was necessary to really produce good governance and unfortunately states are governed in a three or four year cycle which often results in lack of continuity and indecision. On this point, George felt that there was a need to stabilise the curriculum as opposed to changing it each political cycle noted this. He argued
for practicing and retired teachers to be part of policy construction and felt that “ex-teachers, not politicians” should be in charge of the curriculum. Ruby noted that governments like to make changes when they take office and that “this whole education revolution is this governments baby and the next government may...if it’s not in place...it could all just go down the gurgler if there is a change of government”. Ironically, Evelyn noted when referring to the “education revolution”, that “revolution is good but you still need to be able to read and write properly”. The parents at AASS acknowledged without dissent that politics played a significant role in the way schools operated. In some cases like finding for school infrastructure renewal, there was unanimous support. Some cases, like the federal intervention through testing, were contentious. The lack of stability from one government to the next was a key concern, and this has been a particular characteristic of Australian politics for the duration of this research.

Conclusion

The parents who participated in this study were invited to talk about the way they understood school to be for their own child/ren in terms of general education, NAPLAN, arts education, policy and any other areas they raised during the interview process. Philosophy or the purpose of schooling; curriculum and pedagogy, or learning experiences and teacher quality; assessment and politics emerged as the dominant themes. These parents are not representative of the whole school and from a single case study it is not possible to generalise results. However, as with the student chapter, five key findings can be drawn about the parent’s perceptions of schooling from the data.

Firstly, these parents acknowledged that primary education was there to foster talent and to expose children to new experiences in life, often unattainable outside of the school, with the ultimate purpose as preparation for secondary school and eventually work and life outside of school. The parents felt that at this point in time, this school was doing the best it could to meet what they believed to be the purpose of education. The data revealed that as a bare minimum, these parents expected school to provide the 3Rs. In addition to this, the data revealed that schooling should also provide a well-rounded education that included the eight key learning areas that parents understood in terms of policy, as agreed upon in the Melbourne Declaration. They felt school should “fill in the gaps” in the knowledge and experiences gained by the students, and that fundamentally primary school should lay down a solid foundation for secondary school. The school was there to provide
multiple opportunities to find and foster talent, and to provide multiple opportunities to develop social, cultural and academic skills.

Parents acknowledged their preferences for core subjects at primary school to consist of English, mathematics, science and history, but they also argued that these subjects should not be studied at the expense of everything else. They supported the arts as equal to science, as well as LOTE and physical activity, and like the students, agreed that the school offered a lot of experiences outside of the classroom that they considered highlights of the school year such as the extensions program and the instrumental music program. They were aware that there was a heavy focus on testing and accountability, and a majority hoped that the standardised tests would eventually be used for sound educational purposes as opposed to judging schools as they currently were. What they all hoped for was that eight years of primary schooling would “open doors” for their children and allow the children to grasp every opportunity extended to them, supported at home by the network of parental responsibility. Conversely, the parents also acknowledged that this enormous task commissioned to schooling was impossible given the time constraints of the school day and the difficult curriculum mandates that they understood were imposed as a result of certain policies.

Secondly, the findings suggest that underpinning the parent data was the notion of a shared responsibility for education between the school and the home. They strongly believed that the interaction between home and school resulted in a complimentary learning environment where children were in turn encouraged students to value education, and to question, pursue and adopt a similar disposition. These parents were all actively involved in the lives of their children both in and out of school, attributing the responsibility for success to the home/school partnership. They worked towards their children succeeding at school, and wanted the school to focus on the core that they believed met the basics but also offered multiple opportunities. The findings from the data revealed an active process of concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003; Thomas, Keogh & Hay, 2012), practiced by the parents in an effort to gain as much as they could for their children. The educational philosophy that these parents valued was based on a successful relationship between home and school, and this was seen as pivotal in achieving successful educational outcomes. Furthermore, for some parents there was a clear connection between “bad parenting” and poor school readiness/ability to learn. This undertaking by the parents would be a significant part of the way the students perceived school.
Thirdly, the findings revealed that there was support for accountability in schools in terms of meeting national standards/benchmarks, and that testing itself was not a problem. In terms of NAPLAN, at this point in time opinion was diverse – at one end there were parents who saw the test as providing useful information about where their child sat in the bigger national picture; in the middle there were parents who saw the process of testing as useful, but NAPLAN not so, arguing that teaching to national benchmarks would be more useful than testing for averages; and finally those very much opposed to the tests due to what they saw as a complete lack of educational purpose. The findings also revealed that the parents actually felt that testing played a part in the overall preparation for life. However, NAPLAN was not supported as a means to judge schools, or as a teaching tool in lieu of a diverse, flexible and creative curriculum.

Fourthly, the parent data revealed that the arts were highly valued and a great deal of emphasis was placed on them by all of the parents. The parents supported the arts as a way of teaching, as a way of encouraging creativity, as a means of personal expression and most significantly as a way of experiencing something different that would otherwise be unavailable. This was especially the case with the Instrumental Music Program. The arts were not preferred above the key learning areas of English, mathematics, history and science, but at the same time, they were considered essential to the primary curriculum.

Pedagogy emerged as the fifth key finding from the parent data revealing that like their children, the parents saw evidence of engagement when the learning experiences were diverse and authentic. They valued good teaching and they actively supported the teaching and learning process at home and were happy to assist their children with the schoolwork set by teachers. However, the one criticism aimed at the school concerned the lack of provision of information about regular, weekly curriculum matters, which they felt impacted on their capacity to support learning.

Finally, the findings suggest that at this point in time, the curricula and co-curricula activities offered at AASS met the needs for this group of parents and what they wanted for their children. All of them noted certain elements of the school they would like changed to suit their individual educational ideals, but in general, their values were aligned with those of the school. However, in terms of the bigger picture, the data revealed that politics and policy were not well aligned and there was a clear lack of confidence in politicians making good decisions to improve the education system in Australia. Concluding remarks from George summed up much of what this group of parents thought about education and
politicians. George noted the “mainstream normal mum and dad” who he believed valued education in Australia. Governments too, he believed, valued education but “they’re not very switched on, and they’re not going to give something, if they get nothing in return”.

The next chapter presents the final participant group in the case study, the teachers of AASS and their views of education.
Chapter Seven: the focus case: the teachers

It's a good job. I wouldn't be doing it, I don't think any teacher would be doing it if they didn't find it rewarding. It would be too hard. Way too hard to turn up to everyday unless you wanted to be here. You just couldn't. I can honestly say I've never ever in my 20 or so years of teaching had a day where I've thought 'I just can't go today' - never had a day like that ever. (Sophie, year six/seven teacher)

This chapter begins and ends with the voices of teachers. The chapter itself presents the themes that emerged from group and individual interviews. The teachers from AASS deliberated over what education meant in terms of how the global and national policy agenda influenced practice, what was valued and whether there was misalignment between these fields. Fourteen teachers, two male and twelve female, were interviewed. They represented each school year level, with the exception of year one. One interviewee was the (non-teaching) principal, who, although an administrator also identified herself as a teacher and learner. A reflection of her philosophy of teaching is discussed later. Among the participants there was approximately 270 years of teaching experience reaching back to the 1970s. Given this experience, many were proficient in navigating a multitude of reforms as they “layered up” as part of their practice, with one reform running into the next (Collins, 1995, p. 3). Other teachers were new to the profession, yet had already experienced a number of reforms to improve student outcomes. Analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews with the staff revealed several key themes - philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and politics. In the case of the teachers all the headings were pertinent and used authentically, often co-exist and intertwine. For example, curriculum was linked to pedagogy, and pedagogy with curriculum; assessment with testing and education intertwined with politics, all underpinning philosophy. Some themes were paradoxical. For example, teachers would rather NAPLAN did not exist, but when questioned about the results, conceded that there was some value when looking at whole school data. The themes are presented in Figure 5.
**Figure 5: Teacher data themes**

| Philosophy       | • Maslow and the hierarchy of needs – the provision of basic necessities  
|                  | • The value of the teacher in society and the nature of the profession  
|                  | • Social skills  
|                  | • Teacher as parent  
|                  | • Home/school partnerships  
|                  | • “Every child can excel at something” – primary school, secondary school and outcomes  
|                  | • Teacher as learner -professional development  
| Curriculum       | • The crowded curriculum and the time allocations for KLAs  
|                  | • Subject integration  
|                  | • The Australian Curriculum  
|                  | • NAPLAN  
|                  | • Policy implementation  
|                  | • Creativity and the arts  
| Pedagogy         | • Subject integration  
|                  | • NAPLAN as pedagogy  
|                  | • Creativity  
|                  | • KLA specific units  
|                  | • Differentiation  
| Assessment       | • NAPLAN and the use of the results  
|                  | • Changing teaching practice  
|                  | • Relationships  
|                  | • Accountability  
|                  | • MySchool  
| Politics         | • Political intervention – “lip service” and “vote-grabbing”  
|                  | • Accountability  
|                  | • Funding and what is valued  
|                  | • Aligning values and policy  

Philosophy

So quite a big, complex question for a Monday morning. Education is about providing people, in particular students, the skills, the understanding, the competencies to be able to be successful community members and being able to acquire the profession or career that they so desire, as well as encouraging them to be well-balanced people with hobbies and other inner-self qualities that enable them to really appreciate and enjoy life. So it’s not a narrow focus; it’s quite broad and it’s through education that we can actually change the way of people’s thinking and it can impact on how the world is run. (Min, Principal, AASS, 2010)

The opening extract from Min, the school principal, speaks of the “three big ideas...about education” (Egan, 2008, p. 9). Socialisation, Plato’s academic idea, and Rousseau’s developmental idea and a combination of these defined education for the teachers interviewed at AASS. Educational philosophy in this thesis refers to the theoretical and practical underpinnings for developing the academic, social and personal attributes of students. These philosophies were based on theories of educational psychologists as well as professional experience overlaid with personal values and beliefs. As Min commented, this was a complex concern, as every new cohort presented with vastly different needs. Educational philosophy encompassed a number of roles including a provider of basic necessities, teacher, facilitator, mentor and parent. Some teachers referred to their profession as “more than a job” and many of them felt it was part of their identity. Yet despite these complex roles, many of the teachers felt that their profession was undervalued in society. The following section unpacks each of the themes using the subthemes as a guide.

Providing the necessities

Many of the teachers interviewed spoke of deeply held convictions about student needs and how they perceived their role. This was discussed with reference to educational theorists like Maslow and Piaget. In addition, more targeted philosophies were revealed such as philosophies about teaching boys; teaching to align with self-efficacy; applying specific learning theories about teaching mathematics or for higher-order thinking. However, underpinning all of the conversations was the acknowledgement that some students did not come to school prepared to learn with parents being censured for failing to provide the
necessary conditions for school success. This represented the great value teachers placed on education, and the frustrations they felt when student support was out of their control.

Both Kassie and Rose noted that their teaching practice encompassed the role of provider, supplying basics such as breakfast and lunch, schoolbooks and materials, to some of their students. These necessities were purchased out of the teachers’ own money and distributed according to need. Kassie recalled:

You get all the kids who come to school with no food or no support or mum and dad are screaming at each other. They don’t want to learn...they forget to send them to school. How can you educate a child whose basic needs are not being met? All they care about is their basic needs. They can’t think about their writing. (Kassie, yr. 6 teacher)

She went on to note that in some cases, teachers have adopted the role of social worker and time is now spent making many children feel secure enough to learn. Kassie noted:

I always buy books and stuff like that for them. Pencils, rulers, all the stationery stuff. Textbooks I’ve bought and food if they haven’t got food. I’ll organise them to get it at the tuckshop. They don’t always tell you; lots of kids won’t let on. They are protecting their parents sometimes. So it is pretty hard to educate a child from that situation. Some parents just don’t value education. I mean they’ve had five years before they get to school and it is pretty hard to change that.

Likewise, Rose talked about the fact that students need to feel secure to learn, stating:

The students have to have their basic security of safety, of food, all of those things before you can get any further and I have come into contact with so many more children that don’t have those needs supplied...you’re trying to make up some of those deficiencies that the kids have, to even get them into a mindset of being able to learn (Rose, yr. 4 teacher).

Some of the teachers felt personally and morally obliged to provide basics/necessities. Rose talked about Maslow (1943) and the hierarchy of needs, acknowledging that learning
cannot take place when the conditions were not right to learn. Maslow outlined a hierarchy of needs that included food, clothing and shelter at the top as the most basic of physiological needs prior to the realisation of more complex needs such as self-actualisation (Turner & Helms, 1979, p. 364). Teachers at AASS acknowledged that certain children were already behind when they arrived at school. Discussed previously in Chapter Three, the connection between disadvantage and "low attainment" remains “incontestable” (Alexander, 2010, p. 59), and with teachers like Rose and Kassie, this connection is evident within their classrooms and it helps define their professional choices. Policies such as NAPLAN and the national curriculum were designed in part to address such disadvantage.

The data revealed that a great deal of value was placed on the home/school partnership by the teachers, evidence in the concern around the children who were not supported at home and welcomed when there was a strong link. This is discussed in the following section.

**Social skills and the home/school partnership**

Many of the teachers referred to education as a socialisation process (Egan, 2008) and saw their role as helping children to attain social and behavioral changes as well as academic progress. Melanie, a year seven teacher, referred to a “moral compass” where she guided student’s "egocentric selves" towards respecting the rights of others to learn as well as “focusing on the appropriate social skills...working on a value a week and linking in philosophy and linking it back to SOSE” for example. This was the best method she found in settling in a new class, and to set in place good learning conditions. Likewise, Charlotte’s philosophy was discussed in terms of the importance she placed in term one on having the class bond together to be able to work collectively and cooperatively. Charlotte reflected:

*I guess I feel really strongly, in education, that it’s not just about teaching your children facts or teaching your children the KLAs. It’s so much more than that. If you don’t bring in the philosophies of respect, courtesy, caring and just human qualities that a lot of children miss out on at home. If we don’t bring those into our program, then a lot is lost. I feel that the first term, which is why I have this huge problem with the NAPLAN test, the first term in any class should be devoted to the dynamics of the class. By the dynamics, I mean the personalities and who they are and how they...*
work, how they see themselves, how they see other people and how they learn. If you don’t devote literally ten weeks intense working to that, then you don’t have learning taking place… I feel strongly that this has all been turned on its head… because there’s this dreadful emphasis on academic. Although obviously academic is important, but equally important are the philosophies. They’re not being given equal place. Part of my way that I’ve always brought all of this in is through the arts. What I’m finding now is that it’s very difficult to do that. The children are so opened up to learning through the arts. They’re so opened up to expressing themselves, to risk taking, to doing all the things that a good learner does, through an arts program. If you start off every year that way, I personally have found that the children are better with the 3Rs at the end of the year, than if you don’t start that way. (Charlotte, yr. 3 teacher)

Furthermore, teachers such as Gary, a year three teacher, reflected on his role as a “surrogate parent” performing many of the tasks traditionally the responsibility of parents. For example he was often asked for advice about how to parent. Gary stated:

We are actually teaching parents how to be parents. They don’t know what to do; the children are ruling the house. We do home visits and help parents with parenting skills and put them onto the Triple P because they don’t know what to do - it’s scary.

There is an associated value judgment being made, that parents who could not equip their children with the appropriate means to achieve at school, did not value education. This was a common thread among the parents as well, for example, Ruby who also associated aspects of what she considered “poor parenting” as a lack of interest in education.

Sophie extended this into a student’s capacity to think. She had observed that in her cohort of a six/seven composite, many of the students who struggled at school came from homes where education did not appear to be a priority. She based this observation on interactions and assessments about general knowledge and contribution to classroom discussions. Each day she started her morning with a discussion about general knowledge
and current affairs observing that the students who experienced topical conversation at home were more able to achieve. Sophie noted:

I have a lot of thinkers from homes that have thinkers in them. My lower group appears to be the homes that don't have thinkers - they're the parents that you don't see, that you don't get contact with. They're the parents that you wish you saw a lot more of - you invite them for interviews and they don't show up. Their kids don't have that - it appears that they don't have that art of conversation in their houses. They don't talk about topical events. It appears to be not all but generally those kids that need that learning support. They haven't had that same stimulation and it goes both ways. Their school works at a level that's below year level benchmarks and they are not getting that stimulation at home either. Not in all cases but generally. (Sophie, yr. 6/7 teacher)

In the context of this research, the socio-economic status of the school from Myschool suggests that there is at least 30% (one in three children) of the school clientele from a low SES and parental educational achievement demographic. Much of this is reflected in the literature on schooling in the 21st century relating to the unraveling of social structures that support the family (Alexander, 2010). Sophie’s comments, along with the previous data about providing basic necessities, reflect a bigger picture of “unequal childhoods” (Lareau, 2003). As Kassie noted, the role for some teachers is that of a social worker, way before any teaching can occur. Once trust was gained, teachers like year seven teacher Gail believed that every child could excel at something and this is discussed in the next section.

**Every child can excel at something**

I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of seeing that change, that growth...in things that are measurable and things that aren't measurable - social changes, behavioural changes...the difference in their standard of work, the difference in their higher order thinking. So in all of the different ways. (Sophie, year six/seven teacher)

Many of the upper-school teachers referred to their teaching philosophy in relation to the ability of primary school to prepare students for secondary school, or the academic concept of education (Egan, 2008). This finding suggests that primary teachers viewed
their role differently to that of their secondary colleagues, and they all shared the view voiced by Gail that “every child can excel at something”. However, two of the teachers saw a secondary model being imposed on a primary system with the current reforms to the detriment of the uniqueness of the primary sector. Min advocated for a more sustained appreciation and acknowledgment of the primary years to enable the correct “building blocks” to be put into place for all future success.

Gail argued that the key to good student outcomes came from the ability of a school to offer a diverse and in-depth curriculum. She argued that all of the key learning areas served a different purpose for this very reason and by removing any, individuals would be affected. Gail stated:

Every child has a talent, and that talent might be sport, it might be science. Whether it be dance or well arts usually...so all curriculum areas are important, because it gives a child who's good at one of those things a chance to really excel. (Gail, yr. 7 teacher)

Likewise, year seven teacher Paris, believed that her students were capable of meeting any of the challenges she gave them providing the right support had been put into place. She came from a long line of teachers within her own family, was an advocate for the development of shared responsibility for learning between home and school hence contributing directly to successful learning outcomes. Paris reflected the philosophy of many of the parents in her discussion on this topic, stating, “I am trying to set them up for high school, and give them the foundation in every subject. To find what they like doing, what their strengths are”.

Paris noted that the students who struggled in her year seven classes were the ones who did not get home support for homework and revision, linking back to the philosophy regarding parental support for education. Paris stated:

There’s a responsibility that they go home and work at home. So when we have any sort of formalised testing, if they haven’t studied the material, revised the material, they really struggle in the classroom. Parents are getting reports in year seven and they're saying, what's happened this year? They've slipped so far behind. It's not the fact they've slipped behind at all, it's the fact that the content has stepped up and they haven’t matched it.
This follow up work enabled students to deal with the vast jump in curriculum expectations and to continue to progress through high school. Without parental support for education, this gap, identified by Paris between the curriculums from year six to year seven widens and becomes more difficult for a struggling student to traverse (Paris, yr. 7 teacher). In addition to these ideas about student success, individual outcomes drove Sophie who talked about professional satisfaction when observing academic as well as social growth as part of her teaching philosophy, she stated:

The thing that drives me to the top of the pile would be the outcomes. The things that kids can actually produce and the way you get them to produce those things in a really positive framework – it’s the achievement of the kids and the growth of the kids when you take a class at the beginning of the year and you see growth and development. By the end of the year I think it gives you a really good sense of achievement knowing what the kids were like in the previous year. You do a little bit of research on how they were in Year 5, academically and socially, and see how you can shift that before they leave you at the end of the year. I think that’s what drives me.

These comments reflect those of a US study by Goeglein (2011) that found 64.4% of teachers defined the purpose of education as “developing in students the ability to think independently, and to build knowledge from the information they gather through observation and collaboration”, as well as “providing students with the necessary skills to allow them to be both effective and adaptive in the workplace and in society” (p. 4).

As part of outcomes, standardised testing was discussed in philosophical terms as having a “significant impact on teaching and learning”. Some teachers spoke about NAPLAN in such a way that there appeared to be a clear division between pre-NAPLAN (February, March and April) and post-NAPLAN “after May”. NAPLAN directly contradicted the philosophies held by the teachers. The findings suggest that the fourth message system of schooling - testing (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), now prevails over the other three, because for a crucial part of the school year, teachers are altering the way they teach despite long held philosophical beliefs. When asked about NAPLAN, many of the teachers would like to have seen it abolished. Charlotte summed up the general sentiment in her comment, “it’s bizarre. It’s totally against any education philosophy that I hold dear. Personally, I think it’s
just against any principle of intelligent education philosophy”. In fact, the comments made by Kassie that NAPLAN “distracts from your teaching,” suggests that fundamentally she did not categorise it as teaching that is while you are preparing for NAPLAN you are not actually teaching. Further to this, the principal Min argued that the schooling system of unitised portions of study, where a child moved on to the next unit or year level regardless of their outcomes was a problem. Min noted:

Now, from my experience of working in a high school, that when you did a unit it didn't matter whether the kids knew it or not, you then just went onto the next unit. It was all just done in time blocks; there was no connection or transfer of knowledge from one. If a kid didn't know something you just parked it because you had to get on and do the next term...so my theory is about kids actually knowing and applying the information. If they don't know something then you need to make sure that they do, because you can't have your building blocks if they've missed. So it's really about engagement of children and them owning their learning, rather than the content, which you can tick off that you've taught it, despite the fact they may not have learnt it.

This situation was exaggerated by the testing program and the new Australian Curriculum. Some of the more experienced teachers managed to enact the standardised testing policy in terms of better alignment to professional values, but nonetheless, NAPLAN appeared to dominate the first term. Teachers such as Charlotte and Grace were very strongly against changing their teaching styles. Both of them had previously taught to the test when the first NAPLAN tests were carried out, with unsuccessful consequences. Both had reverted back to teaching as they understood it. For example, Charlotte concentrated on the arts in term one, focusing on cooperation, team building, creativity and risk-taking in learning. Intertwined with the core skills of reading and writing (a given). She remained true to her own philosophy and included the arts in her program as much as she could, and she was determined not to change. Grace had developed a pedagogical approach that was very student-centered and academically rigorous, after many years of “chalk and talk”. In the following extract she recalls her earlier experiences, and how she turned her philosophy around only to be confronted by NAPLAN.
I trained a number of years ago and it wasn't until I experienced what was called the Action Learning Process, which was very much a child centered research programme that children were involved in, that kind of started my thinking in terms of teaching and learning to change. I also attended an e-learning conference and that shifted my teaching, personal teaching pedagogy big time, in terms of what was best practice. I really started questioning the way that I teach and what was best practice, in 21st Century teaching what was the ideal...I really turned my teaching around.

Facilitator: What did it go from?
Grace: It went from very much teaching the basics to allowing children to become the leaders in terms of their own teaching. So I got very big into formative assessment. I got very big into facilitating and that's the style of teaching that I really enjoy, a facilitating type teaching. Very much into – what are the words I want – into higher order thinking... it made me do a complete turn around... I got very bored with the way I was teaching and I didn't feel the children were learning as well as they could...I did all the group stuff, all that sort of thing, but I felt it was still very much chalk and talk, and I hated it. I no longer enjoyed the way I was teaching. (Grace, yr. 7 teacher)

The philosophy behind Grace's pedagogy focused on the development of higher order thinking skills, resilience in learning and student engagement through constant reflection. Grace recalled the start to the year and the angst she endured over her philosophical/pedagogical beliefs versus NAPLAN. NAPLAN was a retrograde step for her, until a professional development session restored her practice to accommodate both her teaching philosophy and NAPLAN preparation. She stated:

Grace: I hate it (NAPLAN)

Facilitator: What happened?
Grace: Absolutely hate it. I felt that I stepped back into the way I used to teach.
Facilitator: I was wondering that when you said that at the start, that you'd changed.

Grace: Yep.

Facilitator: It must have been compromise?

Grace: It was really difficult.

Facilitator: You'd made a conscious decision to make those changes?

Grace: Yeah, and it really upset me and it wasn't until... It was because of pressure, and that was pressure on myself thinking that these children have to be able to do this, this, this, this, so I went very much back into teaching the basics. Only having nine weeks to do that and having children in year 7 who you've sort of got to get, that are expected to know these things but they all come at different levels and it's the same with each of those year groups. It wasn't until I heard a NAPLAN speaker that was organised as PD (professional development) and she talked about the mathematics and she talked about just focusing on number and fractions and she said, and get into your higher order, and it's the higher order thinking that the children need all the way through, and I just felt this huge relief. In saying that, there was only three weeks to go until NAPLAN. So next year I am very much going to do what I've always done in the last seven years and go back to that.

Here teachers Rose, Gail and Charlotte revealed how policies such as NAPLAN cross over many fields. Rose prioritised pedagogical methodologies that resulted in the development of higher order thinking as a means of generating “good teaching practice”, and in turn good student outcomes. She used student work to reflect on her own practice. Like Grace and Charlotte, she described NAPLAN as “totally assessing and trying to put a sausage factory theory behind it” (learning). The data also revealed the paradox of high stakes testing described by Madaus and Russell (2011). The possibilities are outweighed by what is at stake. Rose commented:

NAPLAN has some value I think, in that we've looked at we need to change our mathematics teaching et cetera, but I think that's used
more in the public media to assess teachers and schools, rather than looking ways of improving our teaching.

Gail who was a very experienced teacher commented, “NAPLAN is just one point in time test. The good kids do well and the not so good kids struggle with it a bit. I don’t think it is all encompassing”. Yet she conceded that to a point it had changed pedagogy, remarking. Gail stated:

I think it governs what we do to a certain degree anyway because you do have to cater for the fact that you’re going to have a NAPLAN test. A really big positive, in my opinion for NAPLAN, is I never realised how much and how well children could write in 30 minutes before I ever did one of those writing assessment pieces.

She concluded:

I would hate to think that it came to a time where everything was directed towards NAPLAN. There is just so much more...I’d rather that it didn’t exist, but as it exists and we have to work with it, then don’t fight it, just work.

For some teachers, primary school was seen as a preparatory step towards the higher stakes secondary years, and this in turn needed to be supported by parental responsibility. Many of the teachers discussed achievement as part of a broader theme about student behavior, school readiness and the home school partnership as part of the “every child can excel at something” equation. Conversely, Min acknowledged current policy was inhibiting the teachers’ ability to differentiate and experiment with curriculum in order to reach the students who did not have the advantage of supportive homes. Underpinning all of the focus on student outcomes is the notion of professional development. Philosophy was also described in terms of the teaching profession, and the teachers detailed the role they felt they played in society and how they understood their own position in this broader framework. These points are discussed in the following sections.

**How the teachers at AASS perceive the nature of their profession and the value of the teacher in society**

The profession itself was referred to as a “conviction” and expectations were beyond those of a regular job, linked to the role of the teacher within a community and society. In
addition Rose stated, "it’s really a lifestyle choice it’s not just a job. That’s my personal philosophy and I get the satisfaction of seeing the kids change as well in what they’re doing", stressing that the position required a great deal of dedication, commitment and out-of-school hours preparation. It was not a nine to three job, but a lifestyle. Teachers believed that there was a connection between what they valued professionally and how this informed their perception of what the purpose of primary education was. On the same broad level, Min believed that there was an art to the profession, a skill set that could only be developed over a long period of time through a great deal of professional development and dedicated reflection. She was regretful that “society has devalued the role of teacher” and argued that teachers had been placed in such a defensive position where they were being stripped of professional autonomy. She argued that a “new reform” was needed in schools, and a new way of educating children that respected teacher views as well as research to make policy decisions.

Min questioned the practice where, to use the words of Hursh and Martina (2003) "schools are decreasingly concerned with developing thoughtful informed citizens and more concerned with raising test scores and preparing economically productive employees" (p. 1). She was aware of the pressure to perform in terms of the Education Queensland audit and test results. Consequently as part of her leadership role, she was attempting to alleviate the pressure on teachers through trusting their professionalism and offering continuous and relevant professional development.

Discussing educational philosophy in terms of professional identity further promoted the idea that schools are a “small cosmos of the broader environment that we live in” (Min, Principal). Adopting this philosophy, Min noted:

I aim to make everything real life...to run the school here in the manner in which I expect the people to behave - when I say behave I mean learning behaviour as well as social behaviour - as part of the broader community.

She discussed the work of a number of theorists and writers currently in her repertoire that included the “habits of mind” concepts of Costa and Kellick (2011), and the work of Carr-Gregg (n.d) on resilience, linked to the broader purpose of education as a preparation for life. She used the term methodology when referring to her educational philosophy, underpinning the very practical nature of her professional practice. She explained:
I probably try and model what I talk about. My belief is that if my own practices model what I believe in, then I am giving the experience to others to actually see what I'm talking about. I have worked now throughout many schools throughout Queensland and probably my experience based in an indigenous community made me really aware that you have to do those things that you're expecting others to do so you really understand - when you ask them to do a change in curriculum you know what it means and then you have a greater understanding of what strategies you can put in place to support them.

This “decrease in concern” for education as an emancipative tool, replaced by performativity, aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Lyotard (1984) in Chapter One regarding the nature of knowledge. The teachers interviewed held views that link to Ball (2003) who suggests that, “it is not that performativity gets in the way of ‘real’ academic work or proper learning, it is a vehicle for changing what academic work and learning are”, and that the “policy technologies of market, management and performativity leave no space of an autonomous or collective ethical self. These technologies have potentially profound consequences for the nature of teaching and learning and for the inner-life of the teacher” (p. 226).

There appears to be evidence that teachers at AASS perceive that value is now placed on knowledge that can be measured and in time, this may result in fundamental changes to the way teachers perceive their place within the profession overall.

**Teacher as learner**

The teacher as learner was another key educational philosophy for these teachers, particularly Min the principal. She believed that a continual process of professional renewal through self-examination and reflection led to the best teaching and learning outcomes. Min stated:

I believe in professional development; I believe in the action research model where we actually discover, plan, do and monitor; so all the time, that’s the way that we operate. Some of the teachers probably don’t know that as much as probably what I would like, but that’s because they haven’t got - I don’t believe that there's the
time for them to go into the research about effective schools and leadership when I'm wanting them to really focus on curriculum with the kids, so I'm hoping that the respect will get them to follow through. I think that one of my biggest issues is that - because I believe in that action research model - some people are wanting points in times where you stop and review things and then you have this change; so you change the whole document or you change the whole. Whereas I believe that the process here is evolving. (Min, Principal)

Many of the teachers supported the role of professional development in their work, stressing the need for embracing new ideas to enhance teaching programs. For example, Gail “always believed in a lot of professional development” aligning with school leadership and current systemic priorities. She accepted each new reform and adopted a motto of acceptance accompanied by hard work with regards to reforms that she did not necessarily agree with, like NAPLAN. Other teachers like Rose used self-reflection and a broad range of student results to report on pedagogy and make subsequent changes. Min supported this as the school principal through the encouragement and support for team meetings and collaborative teaching, moderation and professional sharing which she believed assisted in meeting expectations fundamental to successful teaching and learning. Overall there was a strongly held belief that the position of teacher was an evolving one as each new day, week, month and cohort came with different challenges. The challenges included meeting the needs of curriculum and assessment changes as well as learning and experimenting with new pedagogical ideas.

The themes of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are discussed separately in the following sections, and within each, the subthemes are unpacked to reveal how the teachers at AASS enact education policy.

**Curriculum**

Curriculum emerged as the second major theme and the responses focused on the tensions between philosophy and practice, curriculum crowding, subject integration, using the arts as a teaching tool, meeting mandates, differentiation, the national curriculum, professional development and the concept of “learn, apply and transfer”. Pedagogy played a dual role, linked to both purpose and curriculum. Teachers referred to a number of methods
employed to facilitate successful learning outcomes. Pedagogical discussions suggested a tension between the applications of flexible teaching methods versus an increasingly prescriptive policy agenda when interwoven with NAPLAN and the *Australian Curriculum*. Pedagogy is detailed in a later section, but here the discussion deals with subthemes directly related to curriculum. These included the crowded curriculum; subject integration; time allocations; NAPLAN; the *Australian Curriculum*; policy implementation; creativity and the arts.

**The crowded curriculum and time allocation for the key learning areas**

The crowded curriculum was the overriding subtheme that emerged from the data about curriculum. Teachers commented on the rise in both systemic and community expectations and the difficulty in balancing the need to produce good results and to offer a diverse range of experiences to students. A majority of the teachers attributed the crowded curriculum to years of reform that had “layered up” in schools. The past was ever present as suggested by Min who commented that teachers never work from a “clean slate”. In relation to crowding, teachers almost universally commented that there was now so much demanded of school time, with fewer and fewer resources, inevitably something had to be sacrificed. There were only so many hours in the day. Paris when discussing the need to meet all of the requirements of mandates, parents and policies, noted “you pour it from one bucket to give to another”, recalling the recent *Smart Moves* (Queensland Government, 2008) policy that had negatively affected her teaching time commenting:

> Until recently for HPE, the mark and the comment were the PE teacher’s responsibility. Now again we’ve got more to deal with as it’s been split. The PE teacher does PE and we do health. So again that's another element that we have to find time for. It's just becoming so unrealistic to teach in-depth across so many KLAs. (Paris, yr. 6/7 teacher)

*Smart Moves* was introduced in 2008 and requires primary teachers to accommodate an additional 30 minutes a day to physical activity in order to help address the growing obesity epidemic. The 30 minutes are in addition to regular HPE lessons and therefore have to come out of class teaching time. The weekly timetable includes 30 minutes for Religious Education, 30-45 minutes for assembly twice a week, three hours to school sport on Friday afternoons for years five, six and seven, and many other diversions that do not
make up part of the preferred curriculum. Another issue regarding the primary school curriculum identified by the APPA was the lack of a “gatekeeper” to ensure “additional activities are measured against the totality of the curriculum” (Angus, Olney and Ainley, 2007, p, 23), such as school excursions, gala days, school musicals, and other gaps in the curriculum that compete with teaching time allocations. Thoughts on crowding were supported by Vi who noted:

Everything else was being cut back because we had this push for English. But it’s impossible to fit all of your other KLAS in. Everything else suffers. You can do integration but trying to get everything - technology and SOSE and science and each of the aspects of the arts, as well as teaching the health component - it’s just there is not enough time to do it.

Time allocation tension was furthered complicated by the mandated hours increased for English and mathematics to meet the requirements of the Australian Curriculum and NAPLAN. A minimum of seven hours per week must be spent on English for year one to three; a minimum of five hours must be allocated to mathematics and one hour to science. For years four to seven, there is a minimum allocation of six hours per week to English, five hours a week to mathematics and one or two to science (see QSA time allocations at http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ac_time_alloc_entitlement_advice.pdf).

Confusion over curriculum time allocations were attributed to the curriculum frameworks of the 1990s that presented the eight key learning areas as having equal status (Angus, Ainley and Olney, 2007). Angus, Ainley and Olney (2007) also argue the hierarchy was modified “in an ad-hoc way, by shifting gradually the time allocations for subjects” (p. 23). The crowded curriculum is a result of the failure by successive governments to clearly articulate policy. Min discussed the issue of crowding and referred to previous investigations by Education Queensland into the issue. She recalled, ‘there was a group...looking at cluttering of the curriculum. So when they actually did that calculation of hours it was much bigger than what we actually had in a day’ but no decision or action was taken to solve the problem. The Queensland Studies Authority has provided some clarity stating, “unallocated” or “discretionary” teaching time should be 20% of the overall allocation, outside of the 80% dedicated to the teaching of the Australian Curriculum based on the understanding that a students accesses 1000 hours of teaching time per year (QSA, 2011). In addition, the QSA policy lists the possible activities “that make up the remainder
of the school curriculum” to include, but not limited to, Smart Moves, Instrumental Music, and NAPLAN tests and preparation (QSA, 2011, p. 5). Extending the four hour and fifty minute contact time at school is one option. However, ultimately policy favours English, mathematics and science, so they will remain dominant. The remaining subjects will be taught according to the values, time and choices teachers make.

Teachers at AASS believed that until there was more emphasis placed on professional autonomy, little would change. NAPLAN had contributed to the tensions within the curriculum and despite it clearly being a part of assessment; it is included under curriculum as many of the teachers identified the tests as part of curriculum due the influence on teaching time.

**NAPLAN**

The link teachers made between NAPLAN and the curriculum was evident and there was no doubt that teachers felt pressure in term one to teach to the test. For the three remaining terms they were relatively free to concentrate on other KLAs, whilst still meeting time allocations for English and mathematics. Vi noted the layering of pressure in the first part of the year and the conflict she experienced is detailed in the following excerpt:

> It comes down to time and there are things that you'd love to do. But with this push for just literacy and numeracy results and you get told one thing and then told another thing and then we get told about the NAPLAN to teach, all this preparation and then the results come back and they say we've over prepared and you kind of - you do what you are told. But then in the end you go well, you are damned if you do and you are damned if you don't. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

This was also reflected in the student data about the amount of time used to practice for the test. Ironically systemic feedback noted “over preparation” in the tests resulted in formulaic writing in the student responses in the literacy tasks. Vi explained:

> The kids were just churning out recipes and they were too over practiced, which is what was...said in the books that we got back. But we were told to do all the practice and we had the letter sent home from Anna Bligh (state premier) saying here is where you can work with your children and here's what's being done in the schools
and it just came through that the kids - they'd lost all their imagination in it.

Her professional dilemma resided in how to teach authentically and still meet the mandates, overlaid with the issues of media commentary and parental expectations, even when parental support in some cases was not forthcoming. She was aware that the blame for a child’s failure might now be directly attributed to her explaining:

Vi: I mean, other KLAs are going to get neglected because there’s just this pressure to get these results and because that’s what we’re reported on and that’s what the - tables go up, the league tables, based on NAPLAN results and so that’s what it’s all about is trying to get those results up and then you do what you do and then get dragged over the coals again if it’s not...

Facilitator: Does the pressure come from this administration or from this administration via Central Office?

Vi: It's layered pressure and it's from - I mean it comes from administration. It comes from Central Office. It comes from the newspapers. It comes from parents. It comes in many, many forms because you are always trying to get the results along without - and often times without a lot of support, through my experience without a lot of support from the parents at home. They just expect you to be the ones to get the results without the follow through.

In contrast, Min as Principal believed she was assisting in “relieving the pressure” as opposed to creating it, but acknowledged it was multi-layered. She believed the pressure could be relieved through professional development and thought that a great deal of the pressure was in the interpretation. The relationship between NAPLAN, curriculum, overcrowding and pedagogy can be seen in the following comments from Min:

The pressure is the interpretation and I know from principals’ meetings that when I’ve spoken to staff from other schools they are feeling the pressure that they have to do this via their principal, whereas I tend to come back and try and alleviate some of that pressure and keep their professionalism up to do the best job that
they can. I believe if they do that the results will be there. I do know that with the audit, the teaching learning audit - and this is just one example - that in one school they asked, from the principal, all the teachers' timetables for the number of hours, because now we have to show an hour-and-a-half that we're doing in English, an hour-and-a-half mathematics... I've got none of those timetables here...I believe that through their professionalism they have got that as part of their daily planning, weekly planning and unit planning. So when the auditor comes in to talk to me about that I will say: go out and talk to any of the teachers.

Min believed in making available professional development, teachers would work towards equipping themselves with the required skills to effectively teach. Clearly there is a “top-down” process of accountability that Min, despite her efforts to diffuse, transferred to teachers. In offering to auditors the proof that she trusted her teachers' professional judgment, by putting the emphasis onto the teacher to prove that they were meeting mandates, the individual teacher was vulnerable. This situation is a reflection of what Perryman et al. (2011) describes as the “intensification of teacher’s work” (p. 182) where layer upon of pressure falls finally onto the heads of the classroom teacher. Perryman et al. (2011) note that “performative systems lead to a change in the way in which we value each other, and judgments are made according to the productivity of colleagues, rather than their personal worth. Performativity achieves its goals through what Ozga (2009, p. 152) calls “disciplined self-management” of individual or group. Teachers do what they need to do.

This section touched on the subtheme of NAPLAN and how it has crossed into the field of curriculum. In the following sections, NAPLAN will be discussed further in terms of how the teachers perceive the influence of the tests across the fields of pedagogy and assessment, but first, interview responses relating to the Australian Curriculum are offered.

**The Australian Curriculum**

The implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* in Queensland state schools consists of implementing the *Curriculum to the Classroom* (C2C) policy. Support for a national curriculum was unanimous with both parents and teachers agreeing that there was a need for a ‘level playing field’ across Australia. Both groups cited mobility as a key factor for this
belief. The staff felt that a national curriculum was “a long time in coming” and acknowledged a number of past attempts. Conversation then turned to concerns about the initial roll out, equity and effective implementation on the part of the government. Reiterating on C2C, Min was concerned that the policy was too narrow to accurately reflect the complex nature of teaching and learning, and that there was a great deal of scope for improvement, remarking:

My issue with curriculum is that if we keep going down the line of C2C where they're (EQ) telling us, this is the context you're going to teach, this is when you have to teach it - they've actually lost sight of the students and the differentiation. It also loses sight of the enquiring mind and the high order thinking skills, which is what makes curriculum (Min, AASS, Principal).

The C2C reform in Queensland is very prescriptive and there has been a lot of conjecture and misunderstanding about how prescriptive teachers need to be. On C2C as the Queensland systemic response to the Australian Curriculum, Min went further to argue:

I actually think we need another reform in curriculum in Queensland. I think that they've botched up a response to the Australian Curriculum. I think some people just must be writing to keep jobs. I think that they've actually plucked out a good year two teacher to write some units - not realising that it's going somewhere else and they've plucked out another year four, rather than curriculum writers.

She argued for a curriculum that took into account the professional ability of the teacher, creativity and innovation and one that took into account the diversity of the Australian people, but which aligned to a set of rigorous academic standards. Further discussion revealed her thoughts on schools and capital in this context. Min affirmed:

In our current climate I actually see the C2Cs are inhibiting creativity. It's a very recipe driven process. That's why I like to give teachers the professional freedom or flexibility to work with their students in the contextual things that are happening in their local environment. So that the students can create the opportunity to be creative. Rather than boxing them in, and have a lot of divergent
thinking... I don’t think they (EQ and the *Australian Curriculum*) will be addressing it (cultural capital) going down the NAPLAN and pre and post-test regime and favouring it and valuing it and resourcing it as they are. They're going to actually lose that social and sustainability of capital in the future. They're very narrow thinking for long-term goal. That's my personal view.

Min felt that the ultimate result of narrowing the curriculum, then prescribing pedagogy and assessment, would further disadvantage those already “disenfranchised” from education. She argued that disadvantage was best addressed with creativity and innovation, not standardisation and accountability, and as with many teachers, this was often achieved through the arts. This was a shared belief. In opening discussions about the *Australian Curriculum*, the participants were asked about the initial proposal that initially did not include the arts. This situation led to a great deal of conjecture about the role of the arts in schools and to a degree, there was a determination to maintain their place in the curriculum within individual programs. For example, all of the participants noted that the arts were fundamental to any national curriculum. In addition, many of the teachers strongly supported the specialist music program for the curriculum content and the potential music education has to teach high-order thinking, creativity and many of the attributes discussed in Chapter Three with regards to arts education. Jake, Gail, Rose, Vi and Kassie noted the important role music plays in the lives of the students and school community as an extra-curricula program, and that classroom teachers could not run this. They claimed that it was a specialist area and needed teachers with those specific skills. Yet the arts has no mandated teaching time, nor a prescriptive national curriculum, nor an agreed upon framework for what actually constitutes an education in the arts in primary school. In the QSA time allocations, it is listed under “learning areas taught to all students but not necessarily in each year of K (Kindegarten) to year 8” (QSA, 2011, p. 6). The arts are part of the discretionary curriculum despite the evidence that education in and through the arts are universally acknowledged as beneficial. One of the ways the arts were included in the curriculum at AASS, was through subject integration and this is discussed in the following section.


Subject Integration

Many of the teachers advocated for subject integration in order to accommodate as many of the KLAs as was possible in a term. Mostly relying on thematic or disciplinary integration, the teachers found that this was the best method for covering the eight KLAs throughout the school year. Integration was also a method of engaging the children as it offered authentic, ‘hands on’ activities for the students to complete. Within the integrated units place was allocated for formative and summative assessment pieces based across the KLAs. For example, Paris cited an arts unit recently completed with her class that teaches through the arts but also covers a large proportion of literacy content. She recalled, “my arts unit is a drama monologue which the children write and memorise and the English in that is extreme...that’s all editing and drafting. So there’s English throughout – there’s literacy throughout everything which there should be”. Vi, recalled an integrated unit she devised, in part as a solution to covering a number of key learning areas that otherwise she would not have been able to cover. This was one of the units recalled by student Henry as one of his schooling highlights. Vi recalled:

I tend to do a different one in each term, so for the last term I did dance and technology together and the kids choreographed a dance, which they then animated as pivot characters. So they were engaging with some ICTs as well as getting a bit of dance happening. Next term we’ll do some drama. But you can’t get all of it in all the time. You have to choose a specific one for each term and then get that - it tends to be an afternoon a week, if that’s all the time that you get and you have got to sort of try and jam it all in there. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

Using subject integration allowed the teachers to cover all the KLAs but with the added dimension of authentic learning experiences for the children. For example, student Molly reflected positively about a soccer match they played with dusters and straws when Sophie was teaching angles in mathematics via technology, whilst student Lilly recalled making a marble maze in Rose’s class. Likewise, the researcher had observed a number of outstanding units also by Rose that incorporated SOSE, music, visual arts and English. They were “real life” practical units that thoroughly engaged the students. More significantly,
integration allowed the teachers to meet the mandated hours for English and mathematics, while also meeting curriculum requirements for the other KLAs.

**Policy implementation**

One of the real concerns raised by teachers regarding the *Australian Curriculum* was the implementation and the professional development that would accompany it. Many teachers had noted previous reforms and the failure of government to adequately implement the new material due to resourcing deficits. Resourcing was always a concern in implementing a new policy, including human resourcing as professional development. When asked about the implementation phase of the national curriculum Sophie remarked:

I think it's been done in typical Education Queensland style. No support for teachers. Teachers are funny people, they are very time poor. Unless they are given time you can't find time...you need to cope with what's happening now and what's happening next term. One of the problems at the moment that teachers are struggling with is we used to be able to do a unit of work that was all encompassing of all of the KLAs. Whereas now we have to treat each KLA as a separate entity...the difficulty comes when you need to cover all of those points in the KLAs and have those measurable outcomes and with national curriculum we're expected to do more. Yet, they are not giving us more time, they are not giving us better budgets, they're not supporting it financially, we had no science budget. Everything that we get for our classrooms now we pay for, we support. English all of this functional grammar that they are asking us to do, which is fantastic, but there's no financial support. Each child needs a blue highlighter, a green highlighter, a pink highlighter, stick notes, paper and there's no structures around to support it. You need to do this but you need to do it on your own.

She went on to note:

I think it's going to be, it's very prescriptive. I think it's going to be very difficult to get teachers to take multi-age groups. In a classroom like this it wouldn't function. (Sophie, yr. 6/7 teacher)
Inconsistency was another concern about the implementation. Mary for example, stated, “really the only way that you should be implementing a new curriculum is for everybody to be exposed to the same sort of training. Not the idea of one going off and coming back...not everyone's getting the same message”. The problem was also discussed in terms of the unrealistic ways trials are run, a point also raised by parent, Ruby. Gail with her many years of experience noted the detrimental effects of trialing each KLA in isolation from a school. She commented:

Gail: When these things are trialed, the English is trialed in isolation. The mathematics is trialed in isolation. The history is trialed in isolation. So what can be done by one school and they're trying - they're not only trialing but because of who we are, we try to impress - that's in our nature - all teachers love to impress people. I mean that in a really kind way. They seem to fit a lot more in than you would be able to do if you trialed all of the subjects - all the curriculum areas, at the same time...

Facilitator: So does that become detrimental?

Gail: I think it does yes.

Melanie noted it “gives them (QSA) an unrealistic point of view of what can be achieved” and then these expectations are transferred to school as policy. Paris, who had been recently seconded by the QSA to trial a new English program, confirmed Gail’s experiences. Paris stated:

I spent an entire term purely on an English unit. I had to sacrifice other areas and it was a great unit – gee you know some really great lessons and ideas and the kids had a ball, but it's not realistic completely unrealistic–no way...that's how it comes through. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)

The teachers argued for a comprehensive and well-funded implementation of the new national curriculum and had great hopes for “leveling the playing field”. There were other concerns though about equity and performance pay linked to the new curriculum and how disadvantaged schools would be treated.
Teacher concerns reflect much of the work on implementation by authors such as Levin (1998; 2010) and Kenway (2007) who note that there is often misalignment between policy and practice, attributable to implementation. Levin (1998) states “the road from ideological belief to political commitment to formal policy to actual practice is rarely a straight one” (p. 134) and both parents and teachers noted that more often than not local knowledge steers much of the practice in schools and policies are “twigged” to suit contextual needs – “venacularisation” as Hall, Jones and Thomson (2009) describe it. Levin (1998) goes on to argue that, “in each setting general ideas must be turned into specific regulations and practices and at this level the pressure of local circumstances comes to the fore, so that what looks like similar polices, looks like quite different practice” (p. 135). This is further complicated in Australia by the constitutional arrangement for education. Authors such as Hargreaves and Moore (1999) argue, “in the end, successful outcomes are rooted more in a well designed and inclusive process that respects teachers’ professionalism than in an obsessively detailed product” (p. 9). This does not appear to be the approach that Education Queensland has adopted in implementing the Australian Curriculum through C2C.

The next section examines the data around creativity, and the arts.

**Creativity and the arts**

Conceptually, the teachers discussed the arts in terms of their innateness to the human condition and like parent Clayton, they had witnessed how experience in the arts nurtures creativity and the development of a successful learning culture. Four strategies were identified in the data where the arts were pivotal in terms of curriculum:

1. Implemented as part of a social awareness/induction program in the opening term/s and to assist with personal growth, development of confidence and a sense of belonging, along with a love and interest in learning, creativity and to new possibilities;
2. Implemented as part of an integrated theme based unit of work with subjects such as SOSE and English;
3. Implemented as an authentic art experience for and of itself;
4. As a one off, stand alone performance such as the extension program dance performance or school musical.
The idea that the arts were used as a tool to encourage personal growth reflects much of the literature that advocates the power of the arts subjects to invite acceptance, risk taking, innovation, cooperation, resilience and creativity (Fiske, 2002; Deasey, 2002; Greene, 2001; Bamford, 2006). The staff universally agreed that the arts reached many of the children that had difficulties with school, and in general were a great equaliser in terms of experience and moderation, that is, the subjects appealed to all of the students in many different ways. Teachers like Vi used contemporary music and dance genres to engage her students; Rose, Kassie and Grace used the visual arts; Gail alternated according to each cohort and found a great deal of success and satisfaction had been gained over the years from both curricula and extra-curricula involvement in the arts. Philosophically and practically, all of the teachers considered the arts a vital part of the school curriculum, reflected in the following statement from Kassie:

Now the arts, if you teach the arts you teach kids to be innovative and creative and that is what you want them to be. You want them to be innovative, you want them to be creative, you want them to be able to go off and do things and be independent. But I think you're teaching them exactly the opposite if you are narrowing it down to that academic this, this, this.

Kassie was a strong advocate for the arts and she provided support for other teachers to implement their programs. She came from a professional fine arts base and henceforth placed a great deal of value on the arts. She remarked that despite the crowding and mandates (the “academic this”), “something has got to give and that is what they’re doing with narrowing the curriculum, but there is no way I’ll be getting rid of the arts out of my curriculum”.

This resilience for maintaining the arts in the curriculum was a common belief, made evident through the way each teacher found ways to implement the arts into their program, even if it meant day-tight compartments of time were used and then not revisited again for some time. It was critical that the opportunity was still offered. There was clear evidence that the arts were extant, but they were covered in afternoon sessions or when the “normal things” had been covered.

The motivation behind teaching in and through the arts came from the educational aim of encouraging creativity, establishing an appreciation of history and culture, and engaging diverse learners. Creativity was considered an attribute that could be demonstrated across
all learning areas, but there was a clear understanding that it was a key responsibility of arts education. Vi made her case:

In terms of (creativity) I think it belongs across all areas of the curriculum and it seems to fit in with my personal teaching philosophy. I try to share my own thoughts and feelings and also encourage the students to share theirs – whether it be having a personal response to an artwork, studying the culture and customs of other countries, looking at the tessellations in mathematics – beauty and expression can be found everywhere and it's important to acknowledge personal opinion – I encourage my students to always justify their opinions in order to help others understand where they are coming from.

Creativity in the classroom was referred to by Grace as an innate condition and she tried to encourage creative thinking not exclusive to the arts, but rather, like Vi, used creativity as a key pedagogical tool. This was also noted by some of the parents who commented on teachers who were creative in their approach to teaching in work samples such as the digital storybooks and the drama productions linked to SOSE, in other words the use of subject integration. Vi was one of these teachers whose work both parents and students reflected favourably upon. Examples offered in relation to her innovative work included a media/arts integration project using fractured fairytales and the pivot dance unit. Vi also used the arts as part of the socialisation process and lamented that much of the problems facing the teaching of the arts in school is a reflection not only of the crowded curriculum, but of the weaknesses in the pre-service teacher education programs and teacher self-efficacy (Garvis, 2009). She herself felt that she could use more support in this area, but her desire to keep teaching in and through the arts was important. Vi best expresses this sentiment in the following excerpt:

I think the arts are absolutely, really important, because it’s another outlet for kids to be creative and to actually get some understanding and it gives them another tool...when we were doing our narratives, I was using - I turned myself into a feature film basically and did a dramatic performance for - to get the kids excited about it and I was galloping around as the knight and pulling my sword out. The
narratives that they wrote after that were just brilliant because they had that outlet... and I've got in my class a few sort of behaviour issues and we've had a bit of that sort of cattiness and I've used quite a bit of role play to help with the social side of things as well, which has been really useful. What I would really like to do is to have some more training myself on - particularly like visual arts, because I'm not a great artist myself and more like the musical appreciation side. So how music - how you respond to music and how it makes you feel and why musicians choose different instruments and they are played in different ways to create a storyline. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

As previously stated, Vi described herself as not being a great practitioner but she placed a great deal of value on the arts, on aesthetic education and how it enables her to explain the world to her students. This theme of self-efficacy emerged with some of the teachers. Melanie in particular felt that she lacked a great deal of expertise in teaching all of the arts and relied on the expertise of colleagues for guidance. Through a process of professional sharing and cooperation, teachers like Melanie implemented an arts program within the classroom. Both Melanie and Kassie recalled experiences from their teacher training that had compromised their self-efficacy and understanding of music and therefore they remained wary of pursuing it in class.

For the early years teachers, encouraging creativity through the arts underpinned much of their teaching practices, wherever possible, as they believed that it was essential to the development of the young mind. This is supported by much of the literature discussed in Chapter Three. Gary used the arts in the curriculum at every opportunity he could find. He worked in the lower primary years and believed that the arts were crucial to early years education. He was also unique in the respect that he often participated in classroom music lessons instead of taking his non-contact time in order to follow up and to support the music program. He noted:

The expectation when I first started teaching was, I went to the specialist lessons and the expectation was – I would follow up lessons on what the specialist was doing...that’s what I still try to do...I do a lot of dance...we do a lot of drama.
It is interesting to note that Gary had previously been a physical education specialist and gave that away when the non-contact time policy was affected as he recalled "I went from being a physical education teacher to a babysitter...all of a sudden I had to provide non-contact time...I ended up being a babysitter". He was also a principal in a rural school and relinquished this position when the decentralisation or devolution policy came into effect in the 1990s. This he claimed resulted in a lack of flexibility, and it "caused a lot of grief in the community" due to the lack of adequate departmental support. Back in the classroom he believed he was now free to teach children and not administrate.

Rose was a great advocate for the arts within her program, but she also acknowledged that she was dedicated to teaching literacy and numeracy, as it was fundamentally important to success in all of the other KLA and to school generally. What was remarkable about Rose was that she maintained excellent student outcomes, behaviour and participation without sacrificing any of the key learning areas. Like Gail, she believed and practiced the philosophy that all of the key learning areas could be covered authentically. As part of this research project and as a contribution to the school, in collaboration with Rose, a visual art, dance, music collaboration was rehearsed and performed for the school community. This performance was student devised and was linked to the SOSE unit that Rose was covering in class. It was an excellent example of a one off performance and the type of possibilities this teacher offered to her students. Parent Simone recalled this as a highlight of the year for herself and her daughter. Rose believed that if there was more collaboration between staff members and specialists there would be a greater capacity to incorporate the arts into the curriculum. She was concerned however, that the arts were often used as "show ponies" rather than as a serious curriculum provision.

The philosophies and practices about the arts that teacher Rose followed had similar underpinnings to schools in the study undertaken by Kratochvil (2009) in the US, as discussed in Chapter Two. It was about priorities and taking action to support them. Like Min, Grace, many of the parents and all of the student participants, Rose was a great advocate for the Instrumental Music Program, which she saw as one of the most beneficial opportunities the school offered to the students. The program offers many children the opportunity to play an instrument that they would not be able to access. AASS supported this program and a great deal of money and effort was put in to maintain it. It was the value placed on it by all members of the community that made this possible. Significantly, the Kratochvil (2009) thesis found that it was the value placed on the arts and the
willingness of the school to act upon these values, which enabled a thriving arts curriculum. At AASS, there was certainly evidence of the arts in the curriculum, more so in the earlier years and particularly associated with certain teachers. It was also noted that the students ‘loved’ the arts and that for this reason some teachers knew that it was a necessary part of the curriculum. The following conversation between Kassie and Rose reflected the a wider view held by the teachers, whilst reflecting the systemic hierarchy as well:

Kassie: You can’t always dedicate the whole afternoon.
Rose: Just make sure it’s there.
Kassie: Yes, because the kids really love it. They really enjoy that time.
Rose: And to make sure that we’ve resources within the school, that we’ve got money. I mean, we’ve had to fundraise for our arts money. Teachers have had to be out there on barbeques to get the money in the school for arts and so budgeting shows where our priority is too.

Later, Vi made a significant comment with regards to the departmental priorities and the arts, noting “you can’t get data from creativity. You can’t get a score-a scale and a score that you can go here is this child compared to this child”.

One of the other aspects of the arts raised by teachers such as Gail, Rose and principal Min, was the use of the arts as a tool to reach the children who were disengaged from the schooling process. In the course of this research this use was witnessed first hand working with Rose’s year four class to produce a dance. There were two boys who up to that point were not engaged at all. The dance held their attention. Min reflected on this more broadly stating, “in those disadvantaged schools you have to actually be more creative to enable those students to have some sort of sense that they can achieve things. So you have to be more out there encouraging them to be engaged”. This is a reflection of a great deal of research on the arts as a tool to engage children from diverse backgrounds, represented by the work of Lupton (2004 & 2005); Catterall (2009); Loughery and Woods (2010); Catterall, Dumais and Hampden-Thompson (2012) and Ewing (2012). For example, Loughery and Woods (2010) note, “working to enhance children’s creativity appeared to provide the medium to instill in children a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem, coupled with an ability to rise to a challenge, persistence and opportunity to control their learning” (p. 83). In addition, Catterall, Dumais and Hampden-Thompson (2012) found that students who were disengaged from school regained a sense of resilience for learning, interest in
coming to school and then improved academic outcomes as a result of involvement in the arts.

As previously discussed in philosophy, teachers like Charlotte, despite NAPLAN, still maintained her arts program in term one, as she felt it was the only way to get her class to settle into the new routine of school, and to “gel” a group. Charlotte found that for the students who were struggling to settle in to school, to establish a routine and to understand what learning was about, found it much easier to do so through the arts. In using the arts in term one, she found she had a class of students who were willing to learn and who worked confidently and cooperatively. Charlotte, like many of the other teachers, noted that by implementing a program of testing in schools in the first two terms of the year, often reducing pedagogical creativity, there was a concern that further damage would be done to already marginalised students. Making school a place to want to learn was a valued priority and it came down to individual teachers to manage curriculum to accommodate their teaching values along with centrally imposed mandates. These decisions are reflected in the remarks made by parent Evelyn:

I believe that human beings need to be well rounded and you know yourself if you’ve just sat and written for an hour as an adult it’s quite draining. For a child that could be challenging, even 30 minutes of - so then I would suggest that then that would be an opportunity to do something which uses a different part of the brain, whether it be dance or art, so that the day is mixed up so that the child is developing different parts of their brain to complement one another. To sit and do mathematics and English all day do you think kids are going to want to come to school?

Nonetheless, tensions did exist for teachers as a result of curriculum crowding and the pressure of accountability. This was also noted by Min the Principal, who suggested that the complexity of the school setting might possibly be one of the inhibiting factors to effective implementation of the arts, but she also stated “if you are going to do something innovative and creative it needs the arts”. She supported staff in whatever arts pursuits they chose to explore, and was the instigator of the extension program, highly valued by all of the school community, from which many one off, arts activities were pursued. However, Min was concerned that auditors might misunderstand the concession to professional freedom to use the arts as a teaching tool, and this top-down pressure in the end might in
fact contribute to the eventual decline in the use of the arts in the curriculum. The following conversation details her thoughts on the issue:

Min: Yes, so that gives another dimension (the arts). But what I am saying is that if you are going to be getting the children to learn about report writing, then you select something that either is contextual in your school environment or something that the children have brought in that has intrigued them, or something that intrigues you as a teacher that you can actually capitalise on (in) their imagination.

Facilitator: That will match the creativity in their own environment.

Min: Yes and then you can use drama, dance or visual arts to capture their imagination.

Facilitator: Then meet that standard.

Min: Yes. Whereas, I’m really very passionate about this and I probably will find that when I give an audit that the people won't understand. They are expecting, I think, to come in and see that the Year 4s are all doing this unit at this point in time, and the Year 6s are doing that.

Reid (n.d) notes that “a curriculum is not the sum of its parts” and like the teachers at AASS in this study, he does not dispute the fact that English and mathematics underpin the primary years. However, in initially releasing a national curriculum with only these subjects, a strong message had been sent to the public about what was valued and what was not. The community as the status quo adopts this value system, given authority by government policy. Certainly, Angus, Anley and Olney (2007) are correct in asserting that there has never been a time in education when English, mathematics and science have not dominated the hierarchy of subjects. This is a reflection of the original mass schooling construction. However, what has altered is the emphasis and value now disproportionately placed on the measurement of and publication of results that are attributable only to the subjects that can be measured (Lyotard, 1984; Eisner, 2002).

The bigger picture Lingard (2000) refers to as the effects of globalisation of policy also impacts upon this practice. This phenomenon is a result of economic modelling imposed on
schooling, teachers, students and communities to produce results has changed the nature of schooling. In addition to this, Ball (2000) argues that this alignment of education policy to the economic imperatives of globalisation has also changed the nature of the teaching profession itself. Ball (1999) states:

The demands of performativity, dramatically closes-down the possibilities for ‘metaphysical discourses’ (Lyotard, 1984), for relating practice to philosophical principles like social justice and equity. And the ‘fables’ (Lyotard, 1984) of promise and opportunity such as those which attend to democratic education are also marginalized (para. 24).

Consequently, despite the educational philosophies each of the teachers held, the dominant course followed was the mandated one, where literacy and numeracy dominate the morning and middle sessions and then the other subjects are condensed into the close of the school day. Yet, each of these teachers valued the arts enough to find gaps in their programs to ensure that opportunities were being given to their students to explore their ideas, learn something about culture and history, and a little about technique. Boosted by programs like the extension program, the Instrumental Music Programme and one off, standalone performances for specific events, the arts still had an important place at AASS.

**Pedagogy**

The third theme to emerge from the teacher interviews addresses pedagogy. Luke (1999) has noted that:

> Our main game is and always should be pedagogy teaching and learning in the face-to-face setting of classrooms. This is teachers’ work. This is where what John Dewey called the “educational enterprise” gets done. This is where student ‘outcomes’ – whether we define them in terms of skills, knowledges, attitudes, social practices, behaviours, ideologies, identities – get shaped. So all of our policy efforts, any structuring and restructuring, all of our what we do as bureaucrats, administrators, support and clerical staff, needs to focus on setting enabling conditions for that to happen. At times, that means intervention, at times it means getting out of the way. (pp. 3/4)

In this section the areas discussed include subject integration, NAPLAN, creativity, and differentiation within the key learning areas and how they form part of the pedagogy for
each teacher. Teachers referred to their work as making a difference to their students and as Gail stated, finding out what a child was good at. The teachers discussed multiple and diverse pedagogical tools that ranged from explicit teaching of literacy skills to thematic integration incorporating a number of KLAs. Much of this has been discussed under curriculum and subject integration, but here the chapter unpacks further integration as a pedagogical tool and NAPLAN as a pedagogical tool.

**Subject integration as pedagogy**

Subject integration as a curriculum tool was discussed previously, but it is one of the areas within the data that emerged as crossing over a number of fields. Subject integration was the principle method apart from explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy skills that dominated the pedagogical choices of teachers, much more so in the early years. Teachers felt that integration enabled authentic, real life learning and it activated an interest in and an ability to study a range of KLAs. Another finding that emerged from the teacher data in terms of curriculum was the use of arts within integrated units of work. Examples of this include linking SOSE with the arts, particularly drama, music and dance with SOSE and English, English with drama, technology with visual art, and HPE with SOSE. Subject integration in the primary school enabled teachers to present a curriculum that was engaging and relevant as it removed the constraints of KLA subject divisions and offers to the students authentic and real life opportunities to learn reflective of the earlier *New Basics* curriculum reform which was never fully implemented by education Queensland in the late the early 2000s (Stockwell, 2004). This reform was based on the philosophy of productive pedagogies that advocated connectedness; intellectual quality; supportive classroom environments; recognition of difference and pedagogical alignment. The relevant Education Queensland document states:

> Dewey's theory of learning is that optimal learning and human development and growth occur when people are confronted with substantive, real problems to solve. His argument is that curriculum and instruction based on integrated, community-based tasks and activities engage learners in forms of pragmatic social action that have real value in the world. (Queensland Government, 2001, p. 4)

Many of the teachers spoke of units where they used integration and their success was reflected in the student and parent data revealing these experiences as some of the most
popular recollections about school. Subject integration appeared to be the most productive way marginalised KLAs were allocated any priority in a crowded timetable.

When asked directly about this Paris identified a number of possible subject combinations that herself and teaching partner Grace shared, Paris noted:

Facilitator: How do you approach the eight KLAs?

Paris: The eight? I try and integrate when possible, but not to the extreme where it gets ridiculous. I try and make connections when they exist...Grace and I looked at the sustainability of the Bay and that sort of thing this semester. So that integrated science with English with a lot of different areas, which was good. We're still going on that... I try and integrate when I can. It just makes sense. It's difficult though, with what they're telling us now - the department saying, move away from integration, which is making it hard.

As referred to previously in curriculum, integration also contributed to assessment items for a number of different combinations of key learning areas. For example, Paris's successful English/drama integrated unit that used drama monologues provided both an English and an arts mark for the unit. Paris detailed the process as follows:

Paris: We did monologues this semester, and it was absolutely phenomenal what came out. Kids I least expected really did well.

Facilitator: Did they write the monologues?

Paris: They had the option. I gave them - I really scaffold it. I selected some myself that I thought would suit different abilities and then they had the option to go and look for some on their own and then bring it to me to read through and make sure it was appropriate. Then the third option was to write their own. The ones that wrote their own just blew me away - incredible. I wish I'd spent longer on it as a unit. I didn't give it the time it deserved. But what those kids did in the short amount of time they had was just phenomenal. Some of the boys that wrote their own I would never have picked. A lot of those boys are really into their music, like the lyrics with hip hop music and rap music. I think they used that as a background to write their
own written form. It was just phenomenal. I said that to a few teachers. Because it was the first time I'd really done the whole monologue thing, usually we do a play or something. But this was more giving their own creativity. They just loved it. That was the thing that blew me away. I had some kids putting on accents. The kids would sit there and watch. One of them said at the end, we forgot it was Fran. We didn't know it was Fran. I said, that's the beauty of it. You know, you get these kids who won't say boo in the classroom, yet they'll get up - she got up and did this monologue on a recovering anorexic. It was just like, how does a 12-year-old get that sort of power across? It was phenomenal. It was so good. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)

The marble maze that Rose used as a stimulus for an integrated unit on technology, science, English, mathematics and ICT for year four was also a very successful assessment task. Rose recalled:

The marble maze was the technology side. They had to do a plan, make and appraise; but with that, they had to use their knowledge from the simple machines. That lent itself to that. That's still ongoing, in that we photographed the development of their construction, and when they finish this unit with the ICT teacher, they're going to then use IT to put that plan to show the development, into a photo story. (Rose yr. 4 teacher)

Vi used subject integration as well and reflected on the success of a unit she began “after May” signifying the end of the NAPLAN test and the freedom to explore alternative curriculum choices to test preparation. Here Vi recalls two units one for technology, mathematics and visual art; and then English, drama and ICT.

Since May we've done - well, we did quite a big technology unit where the kids were involved and they loved it - were involved in designing a tidy tray. Because our tidy trays are atrocious and every time you pull them out everything falls out. So they had the opportunity to design their own. I gave them set criteria and a design brief and they had to meet certain specifications. Then they
had to justify their choices and they were allowed a ‘wow’ item. But it had to sort of be educational and then they actually constructed them. So that was a really big - that was a big success...We've been doing some drama performances. The kids are actually working on some performances at the moment where they're doing some fractured fairytales and they are just in their little groups. Well, hopefully we'll get to perform them next week. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

Vi was the teacher that parents and students referred to when discussing the successful units on the pivot dance activity and the Rap Pugnet play.

The staff had adapted their teaching practices to the culture of performativity through the use of pedagogical approaches such as subject integration, use of ICT's in assessment and working collectively across year levels and in teams. This is referred to by Jeffrey, Troman and Zellina-Phillips (2008) as “smart teaching” and allows teachers to “deliver successfully the established National Curriculum objectives in skills, knowledge and understanding“ (p. 8). However, findings in this thesis concur “teaching for creativity has a more difficult path to tread for performativity discourse is entrenched and influential” and it “involves aspirations, determinations and commitment to achieving the necessary accolades to confirm status” (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p. 8). Ball (1998) maintains, these teachers face a “constant struggle to ensure that the performative aspects of a school's performance do not wholly represent their day to day set of practices” (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p. 12) and the “not sort of the normal stuff” was marginalised to fun time slots like Friday afternoon art. The culture of performativity has become normalised across all three participant groups. This discourse has trickled down from global policy discourse to the classroom where “inevitably they reproduce the language of professional practice and the language of a target and assessment culture, the language of the team and of auditors” (Jeffrey et al., 2008, p. 11). The year appeared to fall into a pre and post-NAPLAN calendar for planning.

One of the guiding questions for this thesis relates to the arts curriculum at AASS and how teachers managed to include the arts disciplines within the curriculum frameworks. The question asked, ‘what do teachers, parents and students value in terms of education and how do the arts fit in?'

The next section details creativity and the way the teachers interviewed value it, use it and encourage it amongst their students.
Creativity and the arts as pedagogy

Creativity was evident in the pedagogy across many KLAs and integrated units. In some cases a direct link was made to the teaching philosophy and the pedagogy as Vi summarised in the following passage:

I think my strength lies in my creativity - I'm constantly trying to think of new and inventive ways to deliver the content - not just in the area of the arts. I tend not to teach the same things each year - I get to know the kids and try and approach the curriculum in a way that engages with their interests. I use a lot of positive reinforcements and try to make things fun, I'll often ask the students for input into what they want to learn about and also how they want to do it - individual learning styles are really important. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

The arts were also used as a pedagogical tool. Gary, like Charlotte from the middle years and Paris from the upper school, used the arts as a tool in his early years classes and felt they were the best method for reaching out to the younger children, settling them into routines early. Paris used the arts as a way of engaging the students, but she also valued the arts for their own sake and noted that is was an important part of her teaching to show the students what the arts were as a group of disciplines. Paris stated:

I was always in the performing arts, so I try and bring that across into what I do today. First semester I do visual arts for their art and then second semester I do drama as their art mark. A lot of the kids have never experienced that before. They've only done art and then they see music as something completely separate. So I make sure I have a good talk to the class about what ‘the arts’ actually is. It's not a segregated little room where we do music and then we do this and then we do that. I try to bring it into English lessons and bring it into anything I can, pretty much. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)

An alternative way to cover the other key learning areas including the arts, was teaching specific subject areas for a single longer block of time. This worked best for areas like science, with time dedicated by some teachers to experimentation and report, or visual
art. This way the learning area was covered, put aside, until time permitted to return to it. This method enabled deep and thorough learning in the selected KLA as opposed to superficial learning that can be attributed to units when they are integrated. Teacher Sophie adopted this for visual art in an effort to maintain the "creative flow" once the students had begun and immersed themselves into a unit. Sophie commented:

> If we've got a real roll on with a particular piece in art - I don't like getting it out for an hour a week and that's it. Because you know when you've got that creative flow happening it needs to continue. You break the flow, you get the piece and it is just never the same. So sometimes we can spend half an hour in middle session on art, then we come straight back in from lunch and get into it - get the piece finished. (Sophie, yr. 6/7 teacher)

**Differentiation**

Some teachers cited concerns over differentiation and working to meet the needs of so many diverse learners when teacher aide time was scarce. Sophie used her teacher aide time constructively to allow her to split the class between Special Education Program (SEP) students and non-SEP students. This way she could dedicate time to the students who required extra assistance and also effectively teach the other students in the class. Sophie had a cohort of very high and very low achievers and “nothing in between”, which made her choice of teaching methods fundamental to her success. Both Gary and Sophie noted the rise in children diagnosed with special needs as placing a lot of pressure on classes and teachers.

Concerns were also evident about students who presented at school with behavioural issues and there was consensus that teaching social skills was part of the remedy. Like many of the teachers, Melanie found that this was especially necessary in the first half of the year and after the lunch break when the students had been outside in the playground for 60 minutes. As already noted, she linked the problems associated with students who did not come to school, with an unwillingness and lack of preparation to learn, often accompanied by many behavioural issues. These students could not participate in a classroom setting, which required focused learning and consideration for others. Melanie remarked:
I found the unstructured moments the behaviour management kids really struggle with. Having said that, we really, really persevered this year... With the great kids, they swim on. With the kids who probably most need those skills, they've grown up in a situation where they're still so egocentric, so self involved. I think that perhaps next year I need to focus on more that no one has the right to take anyone else's learning opportunity away. You don't have the right to steal someone else's time for learning. If you're not going to apply yourself to the best of your ability well that's one thing, but you can't waste someone else's time. (Melanie, yr. 7 teacher)

With the Intellectually Impaired (II) students, she recalled a recent excursion to the art gallery that suggests the concern about inclusion was outweighed by the educational and cultural experiences that they all had. She recalled the trip:

Melanie: The last two years I’ve taken them on excursions to, we went to Andy Warhol last year and this year to the Impressionism.

Facilitator: Was that alright?

Melanie: It was good, yes. An incident with one child at Andy Warhol. I just should have rung up (school), but you feel you’re under so much pressure that if you ring for someone to come and collect, anyway, they really like the Impressionism exhibition. One of my really low learning support kids said, he made a really good comment. He said, “come up here, can you see all the stripes, all the brush work that you talked about, can you see how much detail’s in this?” Yes I can, there's a lot of detail. He said, “you can't really see what the painting’s about though but you can just see the hard work here. Now come back here with me and look.” So I was thinking, whoa. So, that was worthwhile doing.

Overall, the staff felt that there needed to be more support for the difficult students who took a great deal of teaching time away from the remaining class. The also believed that the arts were a way to engage both II students as well as behavioral students, along with administrative support, resourcing and parental support.
Some of the participants conveyed concern about differentiation and how this was possible in order to meet mandates as well as the needs of children who were not ascertained as special needs. This came under particular focus when NAPLAN was discussed. Assessment is discussed in detail in the following section.

Assessment

The fourth data theme that emerged from the teacher data was assessment. Described by Bernstein (1971) as one of the three message systems of schooling, along with curriculum and pedagogy, assessment or evaluation for these teachers included the weekly formative and summative tasks that were undertaken to guide their teaching. However, for this thesis, assessment focused on the NAPLAN tests.

**NAPLAN**

An unintended consequence of the NAPLAN program is that it had begun to steer curriculum and pedagogy. However, it was the use of the test results that was of the biggest concern to the teachers. Despite small gains in understanding literacy and numeracy weaknesses across the school, the teachers believed that NAPLAN was really a tool for assessing school and individual teacher performance. They argued that NAPLAN was a politically and media driven policy that gave to parents a point in time test that needed to be backed up with the other accompanying years preceding and following each year of the each test. NAPLAN was inappropriately used as a way to judge schools and individual teachers and worked off a deficit model of teaching, reducing creativity and innovation.

At a professional level, the teacher data revealed that the tests merely confirmed what the teachers themselves already knew about their students. The test offered moderate gains in understanding school wide deficits in literacy and numeracy, but individually teachers were concerned that there were some cases of “warped results” where classroom formative and summative results did not match with the NAPLAN ones, suggesting to parents that students were actually passing mathematics and English, when in fact it was the student's ability to “colour in the dot”. At the second staff forum this tension was discussed as follows:

Paris: I’ve got a few that have - two years running who have without doubt fluked the multiple choice questions to come up with band A in their learning support.
Melanie: Sometimes they’re just lucky colourers.

Gail: There is a random chance that’s going to happen if it’s multiple choice.

Mary: I think too on that QSA site, there are some great - some of the stuff that I’ve picked up, there are some great teaching ideas, but I still think that NAPLAN itself as a testing vehicle is too narrow and my concern is the way it’s being used - you know the results.

Vi recalled how at times there could be “lucky kids” because they know how to “colour in the bubbles”. She stressed:

You just have to talk about it being a point in time test and all those things. So it might be they have just got lucky. They have coloured in bubbles. Kids who you sometimes expect to do really well don’t necessarily do very well, so that could be the pressure of the testing and the pressure that has built up from the NAPLAN coming from - it sort of filters down, down, down from government down to us onto the kids, and from parents as well, and with MySchool coming in and the big blow-up over that. (Vi, yr. 5 teacher)

These sentiments were also shared by Toni and Gary who both had children who passed the NAPLAN test yet were, in Toni’s case, failing mathematics in class and, in Gary’s case, was an intellectually impaired child. They both acknowledged the test was misleading and it is easy to understand then how the conflict arises between the parent and the teacher. The teachers were concerned that there were many children who “appeared” to pass because of the national average, but in fact had failed most of the test. In spelling for example, one child at the national average had spelt one word right out of the list. The concern was one shared by parent Clayton, who argued that the average is an arbitrary and fluctuating line, as discussed in Chapter Six.

Criticism was also laid on the way NAPLAN challenged or contradicted many of the teaching philosophies that were held by participants. Teachers were concerned that learning was about “how to sit a test” as opposed to literacy and numeracy. Yet, once this had been acknowledged, some of the experienced teachers reverted to pedagogy they knew worked the most effectively across the board. In the curriculum section previously
discussed, it was noted that teachers like Gail and Gary were concerned because the test did “detract from your teaching time”. Gary noted:

It actually detracts from the teaching time because of the pressure that has been on us to achieve. If it was used purely as what we were used to from the past Queensland one, when we used it as a diagnostic tool and a tool that can work out whether there were deficiencies in our school, that was great. When the other pressure is being put on. (Gary, yr. 3 teacher)

His tone alluding to “not so great” and he went on to say that the influence of the media was detrimental commenting, “it’s there in the media. Often the day of the test it’s on the radio. It’s on the TV the night before, so kids are watching”. Toni noted “there was a lot of pressure last year, I thought, but not as much this year”. Rose however felt that the pressure was greater “particularly when you are having your results published and you are compared to other schools in the district, so it reflects upon the school as a whole”.

When Gary was teaching in non-NAPLAN year levels he commented that he never gave assessments like NAPLAN. He assessed children in a manner where “the format I used didn’t give the children choices, so they didn’t have a choice...they had to go to the text and get the information. They couldn’t guess”. Overall however, there was general consensus that the test results usually aligned accurately with in class assessment results at the time when the tests were undertaken. However, by the time the NAPLAN results came out in fourth term, six months after the test had been undertaken, they were pretty much irrelevant on an individual student basis, but were diagnostic for overall school performance.

Another finding that emerged from the data was the concept that the working relationships between student and teacher, and teacher and parent were also adversely affected by the tests in a few cases. This was about the tension between term one approached philosophically and pedagogically to establish good working relationships on one hand or as term for test preparation on the other. Furthermore, the misalignment between the testing years, the results and previous school and life experiences of the students was problematic in terms of parental expectations. Parental interaction due to the tests came in two forms, questions about results “does this mean my child has failed?” and challenging teachers about their professional failure. Paris was adamant that the situation needed to be viewed with a much wider lens than it was currently stating:
I worry about when we get the results back...the Year 5 teachers say we're always coping it but it's not the Year 5 problem. It's not a Year 5 issue here; it goes far deeper than that because it's from Year 3 to Year 5 and only the first part of Year 5. So to say Year 5 reading is an issue is not accurate. It's much deeper - like there's a whole - the year before that and the foundation years even prior to that. So I find it's difficult to lay accountability on a particular teacher or a particular year level with NAPLAN because it's so much broader than saying in Year 7 this is what this child can do. In November, no it's not. My results for my NAPLAN are so different from where my children are now that I barely take it into account when I do reporting. So I think it's flawed in that respect. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)

For example, Grace had experienced difficulties with parents who did not contextualise the test in terms of seven years of schooling and six of home life prior to school. Raised initially by Kassie, the following excerpt reflects a wider discourse about the blame laid upon the teachers when results were poor. The teachers were unanimous in the belief that the results were a ‘whole school’ and parental issue. Paris argued:

I worry about when we get the results back - a Year 5 test for example - it comes up with four reading comprehension for example, the Year 5 teachers say we're always coping it but it's not the Year 5 problem. It's not a Year 5 issue here; it goes far deeper than that because it's from Year 3 to Year 5 and only the first part of Year 5. So to say Year 5 reading is an issue is not accurate. It's much deeper - like there's a whole - the year before that and the foundation years even prior to that. So I find it's difficult to lay accountability on a particular teacher or a particular year level with NAPLAN because it's so much broader than saying in Year 7 this is what this child can do. In November, no it's not. My results for my NAPLAN are so different from where my children are now that I barely take it into account when I do reporting. So I think it's flawed in that respect. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)
Considering that each child in year three had already had three years of schooling (Prep, years one and two) and five years at home prior to entering school, the results Paris argues were evidence of years of accumulated experience and not solely the responsibility of the year level teacher. Rose likewise commented, “as Kassie said, it’s not just the responsibility of year 5…It’s our whole school responsibility. We can’t look it at purely as the staff who have the data in front of them”. An additional concern was that some parents saw the test as an opportunity to lay blame for their child's poor performance. Grace noted:

A lot of parents feel that in year 7 you are going to save their child. You know, year 7, this is when they have got high school next year and now you are going to save my child. It didn’t matter that they didn’t achieve in years 6, 5, 4, 3, 2; now you are the saviour. So that’s interesting. It’s really interesting. (Grace, yr. 7 teacher)

The following excerpt documents a parent/teacher interview involving Grace, where a parent demanded to know why her child had “failed”. Grace recalled:

I had parent feedback last year from one of my children who was very low and has been low in the previous NAPLAN test and the state tests as a year 3. This child was getting a lot of support from the special needs teacher and the parent came in a couple of days after the NAPLAN results had been issued and she said to me - stormed into the classroom - and said to me, you seen these results? I said yes. She said, so what are you doing about it or what have you been doing about it? I said to her, well I said, as I shared at the parent interview with your child...that academically your child has a lot of difficulty and that these steps are in progress. But I said, how long has your child been at school? Whether this was professional or unprofessional you can make that decision. How long has your child been at school at the point when NAPLAN was sat? It worked out at five or six years whatever and I said, and your child has been with me for nine weeks. We had school holidays, we had camp, and we had two weeks establishing routines et cetera, et cetera, so I said, pretty much we’re probably looking at eight or nine weeks of this year and your child’s been at school for six years. So I said, do you
expect me to perform miracles? I couldn't help it. I could not help it. The parent backtracked and she said, oh yes I understand what you're saying. I said, however let's have a look at the progress that has been made from NAPLAN to now and I said, academically such and such is always going to have difficulty. But we looked at progress and I said, beginning of the year your child couldn't do his own homework. I said you used to do it for him. I said, do you do that now? No…that's progress…he can pull a computer apart, he can put it together. Can you do that? No. Can I do that? No. So it was quite interesting but I was very firm. (Grace, yr. 7 teacher)

Toni observed in her class, “a few parents whose kids were quite stressed about it, made a few phone calls. But I think it was last year I had that and I just sort of reassured them it was one point in time and that it was okay. Like in tears...the kids were worried”. Gary too recalled "I know the kids are so aware of it now. Last year, when they got the test back they wanted to see if they were dumb or not". This comment was reflected in some parent data as well, with parents Peta and Katherine concerned that the results were evidence of “failure”. Peta in particular noted the very negative affects of the test on her oldest child. Kassie found in her class "one girl who cried doing the test because she her reading was so poor that she was really, really low...she just cried because she couldn’t - she said, I can’t read it. She was distraught". Overall, the teachers approached the tests as “one point in time”, a “normal test” to alleviate any stress for the students. This choice was confirmed by the student findings that pointed to the fact that the tests had become normalised and there was a certain degree of ambivalence shown towards them.

In support of the tests, evidence of whole school data was useful in the eyes of teachers like Rose who reported that as a staff they were using the results to act on professional development and exchange to improve the results of comprehension for example. She noted:

I guess as a school whole, we have looked at reading comprehension being a weak area, so there has been that focus across the school to with our literacy, support staff and things like that. We have tried to get professional development ourselves, but it’s a slow process. That sort of thing is not going to change overnight. (Rose, yr. 4 teacher)
Min supported Rose, noting that NAPLAN did have “some value” in that from an administrative point of view, it enabled better allocation of teacher aide time, and for the teachers it enabled an analysis of specific deficits such as reading. Min noted though that she ‘checked with teachers to make sure those tests were validated by ongoing assessment’ before reading them at face value. This is an experienced leader who is aware of the discrepancies that do arise in the tests like those experienced by Gary. Vi and Kassie noted that they had changed the way she did spelling tests so they aligned with the NAPLAN procedure for testing spelling. In addition, NAPLAN was credited for generating professional development money allocated to literacy coaches to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. So across the country there has been an outpouring of federal and state money aimed at improving test scores. Ironically, this funding was finite and linked to further testing to determine value for money.

Accountability

As previously indicated in the section on results, the teachers felt that accountability was one of the key motivating factors behind NAPLAN. That the new assessment practices were more about checking what teachers were doing, than improving student outcomes. Reflected also in the timing of the test. Many of the teachers and parents shared this point, that if NAPLAN was to be an authentic diagnostic tool, why was it scheduled for May? Why was it reported upon in November? Why publish the results to an ill-informed public and media? And why reward and punish based entirely on one test? Yet teachers were not naive about the need to be accountable. Both Sophie and Mary noted that accountability was a necessity in all professions. Mary referring to pre-NAPLAN reforms and the current climate commented:

I think it’s very dangerous...you can really come to any sort of conclusion and manipulate statistics to get the conclusion or the outcome that you want... I think all of us would agree that you need accountability. I think there was a time where we weren’t accountable. So there definitely needs to be some accountability. I mean we are a profession and I think we've been given too much freedom. But this is a dangerous way of doing it, because they can draw any sorts of conclusions that they want to. (Mary, teacher-librarian)
Sophie’s response suggests mixed messages about the tests. There are positives when results are good, and she also acknowledges the need for accountability, but alongside this are the ever-present concerns of inaccuracy and judgment. Sophie stated:

I find it very time consuming. But I don't find it a total waste of time. I find it a good purpose for the kids to get really intensive study done in particular areas. Because of the group that I've got it's their thing. They love getting high results, they love getting that feedback that they are doing really well. The 6s, I got them to do the seven NAPLAN practice tests and they handled it beautifully. Some of the 6s got higher results than some of the 7s because it's based on that higher order problem solving. I tell the Grade 6s how wonderful they're doing and that they'll have no problem at all next year with it. I incorporated it into what we were doing...I see NAPLAN has its place - everywhere within a large system needs accountability. But what they do with that information is also skewed. That's the part that teachers fight against - it's the same with MySchool. They need - you need some sort of measurable outcome for different reasons. But the reasons that they use that information are the wrong reasons. (Sophie, yr. 6/7 teacher)

Overall, the findings suggest NAPLAN was interpreted by these teachers as more about the system checking teachers' work, than improving student outcomes. Despite the added funding for resources like literacy coaches, real improvements were difficult and took time. Paris noted that, "you can get all the funding you want because I know. I've got 10 hours teacher aid time a week, but that doesn't mean I can bring that child from a reading as a six year old level to reading at a 12 year old level in a year. It's just so unrealistic". In contrast, Melanie noted that despite the gain of a literacy coach ironically reading resources were inadequate:

I think that in terms of NAPLAN, I feel like we're being pushed to increase our results and I think we're significantly, we're appallingly under resourced in reading. I can't believe our lack of resources. All my experience in terms of reading groups, like this big push and having a literacy coach, we actually don't have enough interesting,
engaging material for these children. We’ve got a class set of laws and lawmakers, well when you’ve got some children whilst they’re in year six, they’re reading at grade two or three level. You really need to have three or four ability groups in your classroom for reading and each child needs to have a book in their hand because my difficult word isn’t the same as your difficult word. (Melanie, yr. 7 teacher)

Grace found the departmental auditors quite concerning when they interviewed four children in her class about the tests. One child was ineligible as she had undergone spinal surgery; another informed the auditor that she “did all my practicing at home and I practiced and practiced and practiced” and two students when asked what level (A-E) they ranked, talked about improvement against criteria, with Grace commenting that it was a much more effective method. The inference here is that the auditors were not really asking about student progress, but checking whether or not the teacher was doing her job. The teachers felt pressure to perform and it changed the nature of their job.

Min argued that there is no acknowledgement of how difficult teaching and learning actually is for many. Min agreed that the current educational discourse favours middle and upper class families, and continues to reproduce disadvantage. Consensus about equality came up with teachers noting the “zero” scores of ineligible children and a policy of inclusion in enrolments skewed the results. Melanie noted, schools are not situated on an “even playing field” and for this reason she argues that it was imperative for schools to have results well in advance of the public stating:

I think teachers should have access to the results and have professional discourse before - there should be a lag in terms of public availability of those results to media, because they’re skewing their focus...They’re not going to look at growth or anything like that. They’re just going to look at who they can give positive attention to and whether there’s an opportunity for negative attention. (Melanie, yr. 7 teacher)

This “negative attention” is recorded in the local newspapers, and then ultimately on the MySchool website, which links in to the conversation about what the results are actually for. The teachers were not averse to being held accountable for their work, but it
was the manner in which this had been undertaken through performative policy that was the issue. As Mary and Melanie observed, schooling was too complex, compared to the simplistic league table process:

Mary: I think it’s very dangerous. I mean it’s like statistics; you can really come to any sort of conclusion and manipulate statistics to get the conclusion or the outcome that you want. I think all of us would agree that you need accountability. I think there was a time where we weren’t accountable.

So there definitely needs to be some accountability. I mean we are a profession and I think we’re just being - we’ve been given too much freedom. But this is a dangerous way of doing it, because they can draw any sorts of conclusions that they want to.

Melanie: An example of that is the student I’m trying to get into a school of excellence for sport or guide him towards that in terms of football and the school has said, look we really won’t consider him unless he’s an A, B student. We don’t have that option at the front gate. Sorry we really can’t enrol you unless you’re an A, B student…we’re not all on the same playing field.

The following section discusses this mechanism for public accountability, the MySchool website.

MySchool

Globally, high stakes testing has been directly linked to league tables, and despite considerable opposition from professional associations in Australia, the MySchool website was launched by the federal government. The staff at AASS was uniform in their condemnation of the site as it failed to meet any educational just reason for being in the public domain. They were concerned most of all about the detrimental effects on the local school. The data from this research suggested that the publishing of school results was out of context and failed to reveal the complexity of schooling. At the second staff forum, these issues were raised in the context of the lack of “an even playing field” (Melanie) and the economic, educational, social and cultural inequities that were not considered when devising policies like MySchool. Paris noted:
For example, with inclusion - I mean we have inclusion now with all these children who wouldn’t be in mainstream class rooms if not for inclusion, who are with us now, who we make modifications for, who still sit NAPLAN. Is that taken into account for performance pay? Or children from poor backgrounds or poor socioeconomic status? We can't be compared as teachers in low SES with teachers who are teaching in affluent schools. (Paris, yr. 7 teacher)

The findings from this research suggest that the MySchool website had done little more than undervalue the role of teachers, remove professionalism, reduce outcomes, reduce morale, further marginalise disadvantaged schools, stigmatise certain population groups and create a state of panic in the public about failing schools (Hursh, 2008). There was a great divide in what the government thought was acceptable practice and what the teachers believed was acceptable. For example, in the year of the research, NAPLAN results were published in the papers before schools had had an opportunity to examine the results. In Queensland, there had been notification from the Director General of Education via an email sent to teachers on Friday afternoon but the newspapers had published the results on the Saturday making it impossible for teachers to discuss the results. As noted by Melanie, the teachers felt professionally betrayed by the department at their lack of understanding of the importance of having this professional conversation before the media. Melanie noted:

I think teachers should have access to the results and have professional discourse before - not going to look at growth or anything like that. They’re just going to look at who they can. There should be a lag in terms of public availability of those results to media, because they are skewing their focus on that isn’t going to be what we’re going to be focused on. They give attention to the negative. (Melanie, yr. 7 teacher)

Vi was concerned that she was unable to discuss the results with colleagues over the weekend and that parents were reading information out of context, requiring her to ‘defend’ herself on Monday. The exchange between Gary and Vi outline this concern shared by all at the forum:
Vi: The results were in the papers before you could even get a chance to actually look at them yourself. Like you might be looking at it but you're also opening up *The Courier Mail* first thing on Saturday and here's all of this information and you really haven't had any time to digest it, too look at it...

Gary: No.

Vi: ...to look across our cohort, to talk with admin about it, to look across all the year levels. It's there and now we have to deal with it, without actually having had any time ourselves to think about it.

Facilitator: Before parents are seeing it.

Vi: Yes, and even if we did see it on Friday, it’s still there for everyone on Friday. It’s not...there’s a time for the teachers to get together, look at it, talk about it, prepare for it. It’s all out there for everyone all at once and you just have to try and catch up.

Min was concerned that the tests stifled creativity in both teachers and students, stating, “NAPLAN now concerns me because it is actually taking away teacher's creativity and innovation” and she was adamant that teachers should not be teaching to the test but maintaining their “creativity and innovation” in order to develop higher order thinking and test readiness based on skill and ability as opposed to teaching to a test. She noted that educational researchers and teachers, people who were in the context, should make classroom decisions. On a broader level, accountability was also having a very adverse affect on teacher professionalism and status. MySchool was seen by Min as contributing to this. She commented:

Min: It's a very narrow view on a complex issue that - by putting that site up - it really devalued what education is. We would not do that in a school setting and yet the politicians can see that it's a good way for parents to have the data to make their decisions. With any data collection you can analyse it in any manner that you so desire and I think that the complexity of communities is not respected in that. I think it's, nearly, like back to a recipe: that you teach content and then children can regurgitate it in a test and there's no reference to
how education actually is impacted on by the broader, viable world that we live in. Actually, I think it’s quite disrespectful.

Facilitator: To the profession?

Min: To the profession. I've looked up the data and I’m not sure how I actually interpreted it because I didn’t really know what I wanted to do with it and it’s your purpose that drives how you analyse. I suppose I reflected on it too after working in so many communities throughout Queensland, but if I was back in **** SS I would’ve been just absolutely devastated because the amount of work that you did to help those children would not have been reflected - or how well the kids were doing would not have been reflected in that test, because those tests are not designed for Indigenous students, because Indigenous students don’t work and operate with tests. Test conditions are an art that some people can do well and many others don’t do well. I think it’s quite discriminatory and I do know that a colleague was telling me that a real estate agent has promoted real estate in his area because the students did well in NAPLAN from the MySchool results. So, again, it’s what other people then use that data for to create circumstances that should never exist.

Thompson (2012) points to the detrimental effects of high stakes testing on teaching and learning, with research findings reflective of US and UK studies, noting:

High-stakes testing creates incentives for teachers to narrow the curriculum, adopt teacher centered pedagogies, and teach to the test...one of the common perceived effects of high-stakes tests is the creation of classroom environments that are less, rather than more inclusive. (p. 7)

Furthermore, Thompson (2012) found that the tests decreased real teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy, and they created a learning environment that was not conducive to achieving good student outcomes. Findings also showed that “communication, collaboration and mutual understanding” were favoured and developed by teachers, parents and schools in order to counteract the “negative impacts generated by NAPLAN” (p. 7). Findings here also reveal that teacher professional judgment remains the
best indicator for reporting student results and that outcomes are improved through continued professional development.

Additional to the findings on NAPLAN, themes also emerged from the data about politics and education, with NAPLAN being viewed as part of a political agenda. The next and final section discusses how teachers perceive education is as a “political football” that is often used to win votes as opposed to opening up educational possibilities.

**Politics**

Politics, like all the other themes, intertwined with all of the teacher themes. Politics for the purpose of thesis is defined as the political interventions into schooling that are more often than not perceived as nothing more than tokenism in an attempt to win votes. Fullan (2000) noted that in order for real educational reform to occur there must be alignment between the educational aims of teachers, school and the system, stating, “sustained change is not possible in the absence of a strong connection across the three stories” (p. 582). In order for an alignment to occur the federal system must align with the states and territories who are constitutionally responsible for education. This is an ongoing and complicated negotiation in Australian politics (Lingard, 2000). These teachers referred to both the state and federal levels of government, and the lack of respect that both levels appeared to have for schools, teachers, parents and students, given the way education was used a “political foot”. This section reveals the perceptions the teachers hold about politics in terms of “paying lip service”; accountability as the new agenda; funding and how that indicates what is valued and finally how the current system aligns with their own values about education.

The teachers argued if politicians were really serious about education, governments would be funding it according to need and according to research. Teacher training would reflect this agenda and so would the value placed on the profession in society. They felt that politicians paid “lip service” to education, and that mostly it was just another avenue to win votes and appear to be pro-active as a political leader. Teachers believed that the testing program, the national curriculum and school funding arrangements were politically motivated, and at worst, had the potential to disadvantage certain schools. They confirmed the theory that policy is an “authoritative allocation of values” and that it was increasingly evident which values were reinforced through “funding for certain things and denial of funding for others” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 7), that is literacy and numeracy above all.
else. There was consensus that the current performative culture was also devaluing the role of teachers.

On a broad scale some of the teachers queried Australia's fascination with America and the UK despite public discrediting of the policies currently being embraced. Melanie and Mary noted:

**Melanie:** Back to England and the States, in terms of what their model is and what they drive, we seem to move towards that model at this phase where they've gone, oh this model isn't working and we go oh, right we need to take that on. We have done that as a profession - forever and a day that's happened... Australia says, oh great America's doing this and then they're phasing it out and moving into the next thing that they think will be the band-aid solution for everything.

**Mary:** Yet we do have very well respected people saying, don't go that way. People like Allan Luke and they're not the ones making the policy decisions!

Likewise Gary and Rose shared these concerns:

**Gary:** It's annoying me because we're following what England and America are doing. We're doing that and it's a cost saving. If they are really serious about education they would sink funds back into education.

**Rose:** So there is not the value in education and learning. The value is in producing a factory and what you can measure as your output. That's all.

Much of this was attributed to the short terms of government and a new government's need to appear to be offering a solution to a crisis. Melanie noted that despite appearances, the political decisions were not based on educational judgment but on how to win votes and "the Almighty Dollar". She observed, "these guys did this in that time frame and that didn't work so we've got to push for this other thing because we could make that work to show how bad they were".

When discussing NAPLAN results, there was absolute astonishment by two of the teachers, accompanied by mutual agreement, at the choice of candidate who was selected as Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth at the time. The following
transcript is represented in full to give the reader a sense of the tone of the meeting at this point. (B1 and B2 are giant talking and walking bananas from a television broadcast and the new Minister for Schools, is better known for his role as the lead singer in a counter-culture, internationally acclaimed rock band of the 1980s and 1990s).

Facilitator: What are your thoughts on the recent line-up of the government, where there is no longer an Education Minister, there’s a Schooling Minister and a Skills Minister?

Gary: Yes, I saw that. Peter Garrett.

Facilitator: So the schooling minister is in charge of schools - Peter Garrett.

Toni: (shocked) Peter Garrett?

Vi: Yes, he’s just been appointed.

Toni: Peter Garrett? (Incredulous)

Rose: Yes.

Vi: He was a teacher.

Toni: You might as well put B1 and B2 in there...

Jake: Well, if he performs at the same standard as he did for the environment, we’ve got a lot to worry about...

Toni: Peter Garrett - I can’t get over that!

Jake: It just shows how much education is valued when you put in Peter Garrett, isn’t it?

Although adding a humorous note to this thesis, this conversation reflects a wider, more serious concern of the teachers that education appears to be so undervalued to the extent that an ex-rock star could lead the federal education portfolio.

*Accountability*

Accountability has been discussed in detail in the previous themes, but is identified here as a political tool to judge teachers and schools. This subtheme is an underlying association with all of the conversations here. It is a reflection of the original policy that stated the
Australian government was committed to “strengthening accountability and transparency” (MCEECDYA, 2009, p. 10). Kassie contended:

The people who are pushing this whole agenda are very conservative, very right wing and they are the ones who are pushing and it is all in this so-called academic stream. It is just crazy because that's not what kids need, especially in primary school.

This perception was particularly the case in the teachers interpretation of the MySchool website. Melanie felt that this was due to the accountability push commenting:

When they’re doing that push...when we look at where we sit internationally and you know they like us in the top results and we’ve had that in the past. Now that would be good media but that’s not the focus.

Min noted:

Sometimes politicians or key decision makers make a decision not knowing the complexity that sits under something and they go for a simple version, which is not how things happen in schools... I believe teachers, through their research, find ways to help kids learn better.

The teacher participants agreed with policies such as a national curriculum that had potential for positive change, but not policies that appeared to disadvantage some schools.

**Funding and what is valued**

The data revealed agreement between teacher and parent participants that education funding should be the first priority of government, spent directly on schools, teachers and resources, not policy. This concern was also reflected in brief discussions about dismantling the public school system (Bonnor & Caro, 2007) as the flow on effects were becoming evident in schools like AASS due to “residualisation”. This was also attributed to expenditure on capital works that although external to the needs of the classroom, convey to the public an image of the school. Run down facilities, might also imply a rundown operation.

Furthermore, Rose linked the funding of schools to the value placed on education and exchanged opinions with Gary about this:
Rose: I also feel as though things are being engineered so people who value education are looking at private schools, who have to work their guts out to pay for the school fees to give them a situation where education is valued, the resources are there for the children. The teachers are not better. The curriculum is really no different. But all the beautiful things, I guess, and the clientele are controlled more. So I don’t know. Is the government engineering things so that people fund their own education? And they keep stripping the state system.’

Gary: The previous government was. I thought it was very obvious with the previous government in terms of the fact that less money was being spent maintaining schools and that because if they let them run down, people would pull their kids away from them.

Rose: Well, that’s right. I mean, look at this place, for example.

This discussion relates to the neoliberal agenda of economic imperatives before educational outcomes, thus removing responsibility from government for basic services traditionally provided by the state. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) assert that this has resulted in a transformation of the way national, state and local governments operate. Hursh and Martina (2003) refer to this as an impartial stance on provision where-by governments provide “objective indicators of quality”, ignoring the fact that not all citizens have a choice (p. 1). This discourse reflects the global “preoccupation” with education as a source of wealth creation through jobs, accompanied by devolution of state responsibility for the provision of services.

Performance pay for teachers

Gary had reached the conclusion that the new performative policy agenda was about performance pay for teachers, already part of government incentives under the national teaching framework. This accountability model was then taken up in conversation revealing a deeper concern about the ignorance of authority in recognising the complexities of schools and schooling. Jake also raised concerns about teacher training at tertiary level, noting the universities and the respective education departments appeared unconcerned about the standard of entry. Again, this is linked to the value placed on the profession in
society. It is not reflective of medicine and law for example. Gary, Rose and Jake then continued the discussion on the topic as follows:

Gary: The other thing is too, they have been trying for years to find a way to put teachers in a system where they can rank you and give you a score. They haven't been able to do that. They would like to work performance and pay standards so they can be sure but they don't know how to do it and this is what - some of this...

Rose: A driving force towards it.

Facilitator: So you are saying teachers specifically, not students? So this is performance pay you are referring to?

Gary: Yes, I'm talking about performance pay... it's such a difficult concept to get around and difficult - there are so many facets in teaching that you just can't break it.

Facilitator: So where do you think we're headed then?

Jake: Well, on this performance pay, why are they doing it? What is their argument? What's their target? Is that to get better teachers? Because if that's the case, why do they lower the entry standards into colleges and make it easier for the lesser educated people to get into teaching, whereas surely you do want some with a reasonably high academic standard, especially in English and mathematics and those sorts of things. So why lower your standards and make it easier for people to get in and then say, well, we're going to have to improve teaching through performance pay or something by putting pressure on teachers through that. There is no way I would accept that. When you look at my cohort of kids and you've got kids that are below standard and you compare me to someone at a private school who has got none of those kids in their class, how on earth can you possibly compare?

Rose: That's right.

Jake: They just can't do it and yet that's what they keep pushing.
This conversation reflects the argument that education now aligns with an economic agenda, and even to the point where teacher’s work can be measured according to outputs. It returns the conversation to the input/output model of schooling, where teachers are now facing real concerns over how their work will be measured. The situation has the potential to further increase the pressure on the tested subjects, as well as the teachers who teach the work.

The teachers felt that the new paradigm in education devalued their role in society and struck at the core of the profession itself. Much of the conversation about education turned on the argument of equity. They were cautiously optimistic that the new national curriculum would go some way to assist really disadvantaged schools, but would have to “wait and see”. There was concern amongst all the teachers about funding, privatisation and performance pay based on results and how this would affect equity. Grace sadly noted a conversation with a parent about secondary school and whether it was better to send a child to a private school. She noted that there appeared to also be a hierarchy between the state and the private systems, based mostly on perceptions and not fact. Rose attributed this to a government agenda focused on personal responsibility for services such as education.

**Aligning values and policy**

To conclude, the following conversation between four teachers at a staff forum is cited in full. The teachers were asked about whether or not they felt the system aligned with their values. To a great extent their responses sum up much of the perceptions of schooling for the staff interviewed at AASS.

**Gary:** It doesn’t reflect my values and beliefs because the system we’re getting now is favouring academics in terms of it is only rewarding those who do really well academically. They are the ones out there. We’ve got a group of kids coming through and it doesn’t matter what we do with these kids, they are never going to be an A or a B student.

They are going to survive just as well as the A and B students in society but we have to give them the skills. If we keep holding them back and telling they are stupid and the media and everywhere
keeps giving the information that they are not worthwhile because they are not getting As and Bs, so it's really a bad way we're going.

Vi: It feels like all the fun is being sucked out of teaching. We're not allowed to engage the kids and get them excited about things and it's all just about data, data, data. Assess - here's the data. Analyse the data. This is what you're not doing right. This is where you're going wrong. Fix it. But there is no easy fix.

Kassie: The curriculum is being narrowed. It's just like we're going down this tunnel and it's narrowing down and all these things fit in.

Gary: I find it really strange because some of the people that are successful out in our society weren't successful at school. Now they are commenting about schools and saying that - especially some of the politicians are commenting about schools and that we're doing the wrong thing - and yet they weren't successful but they have made a great living and a good career for themselves. So aren't they reflecting back on what actually went well for them in school, in terms of their social development and other areas of development?

Rose: I feel like a lot of the direction that is being imposed on primary schools now has that secondary school feel about it. It's pushing subject areas, which I think have traditionally always been a high school forum. It seems like those decision makers have that high school, secondary background and are imposing that on primary school teachers. Primary school teachers have always taught the child and I think that is becoming lost because of all this pressure. It's very secondary driven and I think seeing two sides, teaching in a secondary and a primary school, I think primary school teachers do an amazing job. I think, really, we're being forced to change and I don't think it's for the better.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the teacher data. The teachers who participated in this study are not representative of the whole staff at AASS or the teaching
profession in general, and from a single case study it is not possible to generalise results. However, as with the student and parent chapters, key findings can be drawn about the teachers perceptions of schooling from the data. As with the parents the key themes to emerge were educational philosophy, curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and politics. The findings suggest evidence of a globalised policy agenda of accountability within the structure of the school. The teachers confirmed that there is a hierarchy of subjects in AASS dominated by English, mathematics and to a lesser extent, science and history. The findings confirmed that the performative culture of testing and accountability had begun to alter the perceptions and practices for these teachers. Yet, teachers were managing to maintain curriculum and pedagogical choices that allowed them to align their professional educational philosophies to their practice within this framework of performativity. At this point in time the teachers presented as a group of dedicated and hard working professionals who were working in conditions that were in a number of ways, against their core values.

Firstly, the teachers all held similar philosophical view points about education in that it should be the platform upon which all other decisions are made (Dewey, 1934), and as the principal stated “a force for change”. The staff understood implicitly, as parent Clayton also made clear, that successful student outcomes in the 3Rs should be a “given”. In addition to this however, the staff, more so than the parents, understood how complex teaching was, particularly when the student population drew from vastly different demographics as it does at this school. This complexity blurs the line between teacher and social worker/parent. These dual roles are often required and this in turn affects curriculum delivery. The alignment between teachers and parents about the importance of strong and supportive home/school partnerships was also evident as part of their teaching philosophies. Like the parents, the teachers relied on each other to encourage learning, offer support and provide optimum learning conditions at home.

The teachers appeared to be in a constant state of tension between the potential they could see to bring about real change and the daily concerns of dealing with 27 young children with a multitude of individual needs. In addition to this, the teachers were trying to work out ways of aligning their values to mandated curriculum, whilst differentiating the curriculum, offering alternative ways, against a backdrop of standardisation that was occurring simultaneously. At this point in time, the findings suggest that this group of
teachers were working against what appears to be an inevitable practice shift in terms of standardised curriculum provision.

As part of their educational philosophies these teachers unanimously believed the eight key learning areas and in particular the arts, were fundamental to primary schooling as a way of establishing a sense of belonging, to encourage risk taking in learning, innovation and creativity, team work, aesthetic development and resilience. There was unanimous agreement that current policies however were doing little to encourage this way of teaching and that the curriculum and pedagogical choices were narrowing to the preferred subjects. This was a result of two things – the principal’s choice to allow a degree of autonomy, and to the deliberate choices in policy enactment on the part of the staff.

Secondly, the NAPLAN testing program was considered a policy that had little educational merit when weighed up against the publication of league tables and proposed school funding models. Where and when the tests were used to determine weaknesses in reading or algebra for example, some of the teachers felt that this was a valuable contribution to their knowledge as a professional staff. This concurs with Jeffrey et al. (2008) “the possibility of improving the achievement and progress of young children is a value they hold dear and where performativity can assist this process they support it providing people and schools are not pilloried for failure” (p. 14). However the tension that resulted when parents gained knowledge of results before staff, and the ill-informed media surrounding NAPLAN, confirmed that the tests served little more than a political purpose. The test results only confirmed what teachers had already ascertained through classroom assessment and observation throughout the year and most of the teachers agreed that they had modified their teaching programs to suit the test preparation, and in turn sacrificed some of their philosophical beliefs about what good teaching is. Their biggest concern was the use of the tests by government and media to rank schools. As with many studies on high stakes testing, the teachers argued that judging schools based on test scores is detrimental to student outcomes, school moral and to the teaching profession itself.

There was some evidence noted from the teachers of student distress because of the tests, but significantly, the findings demonstrate that these teachers approached the test preparation and program itself through the lens of “its just another test, so don’t worry”. In turn the students participants had adopted this perception themselves. Parental concern and misinterpretation of the data was raised and both at testing time and when results were received, followed by blame leveled at teachers. This was a concern, as was the notion
that the year level teacher specific to the test was responsible for the results. The teachers believed that at the outset of the first tests there was considerable pressure placed on them as well from the school administration, the broader education department, the media and community about “doing well” on the tests. The findings strengthened the summation of Lingard’s (2010), that there are now four models of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and testing. However, due to the professional choices to support their students, made by the teachers at AASS, this is not always negative.

The principal also felt the pressure of NAPLAN and as such she had made the professional decision to accommodate individual teaching styles, according to an overall school development plan for literacy and numeracy, where teachers were responsible for their own professional choices when the auditors came. The principal did not want to have to ask for evidence of time allocations in English and mathematics. She was a strong advocate for professional development, and encouraged much professional dialogue about curriculum matters. There was no Head of Curriculum position at the school, as the principal believed that all teachers were heads of curriculum, and needed to have these professional skills in order to complete their job. Like the teachers, the principal was very concerned about the missed opportunity for real change.

Thirdly, there was definite concern about the way in which education had become a feature of political discourse. The teachers felt education was too often used as a “political football” to be passed around from election to election with little regard for improving student outcomes. Many teachers were skeptical about the latest “revolution” and had adopted a “wait and see” opinion. They had little doubt that current policies were more about accountability than education. Their skepticism had been confirmed by developments such as the initial Australian Curriculum that overlooked the arts; the choice of education minister; the use of policy to “wave the big stick at teachers” and for the teachers who had been teaching for some time, the years upon years of neglect of the state school system. The principal advocated strongly for a new era in education that stressed the need for students to be able to “do” after acquisition of knowledge. She firmly believed that no education reform was ever free of the previous one and that teaching and learning must be shaped by that context, noting “we’re actually reflecting, adapting, reshaping and moving on because that’s actually what life is; you don’t ever get rid of anything and start again”. She noted that the current policy direction was narrowing the curriculum, inhibiting teacher professionalism, student/school equity, creativity and innovation. The
final chapter concludes the research journey at AASS and addresses the questions of how this one school has adapted during this time of change. Policy recommendations and possibilities for further research are offered. To conclude, I will leave the reader with Paris and Melanie's final comments, like Sophie's opening comments they sum up much of the attitudes, philosophies and thoughts of this group of AASS teachers:

Paris: In general, we're doing a good job. I think the entire backlash and the flogging we're getting from the media; I think in general we're in this industry because we love it, because we enjoy it and because we love seeing what kids can do. You shouldn't be here if you don't...you give it all you've got and I do, I think the media flogs us when we're down...If you look at others teachers - you can go into any classroom, you can see how hard these people work and they do because they love it.

Melanie: Unfortunately accountability doesn’t really care about whether we enjoy it or not.
Chapter Eight: are we exacting a price?

The title for this chapter comes in part from a statement of Eisner’s. In full, Eisner (2005) notes:

The pursuit, or at least the exploitation of surprise in an age of accountability is paradoxical...we place a much greater emphasis on prediction and control than on exploration and discovery. Our inclination to control and predict is, at a practical level, understandable, but it also exacts a price; we tend to do the things we know how to predict and control. Opening oneself to the uncertain is not a pervasive quality of our current educational environment. I believe that it needs to be among the values we cherish. Uncertainty needs to have its proper place in the kinds of schools we create. (p. 209)

This research highlights Eisner’s paradox between the desire for results presented in terms of clear measureable data on the one hand and the expectation of a creative, innovative and differentiated curriculum on the other.

This apparent tension informed the research question, which emerged as part of a professional inquiry into how general classroom teachers, were balancing performative education policies with arts education policy. Part of this focus was an examination of the broader context and how global policy influences had filtered down to the local school community. It aimed to be both a study of the impact of current educational policy on practice and perception, as well as a “readable” document that might assist the researcher and others in understanding current professional discourse. The research was managed by three guiding questions:

1. **What are the competing discourses of education in the global, national and local policy contexts?**
2. **What influence do these discourses have on education in one Queensland state primary school community?**
3. **What do teachers, parents and students value in terms of the purpose and process of primary education and where do the arts fit in?**

This chapter addresses each of these questions in terms of findings from the case study site, and offers recommendations and future research possibilities.
What are the competing discourses of education in the global, national and local policy contexts?

The thesis has described and illustrated how the field of education policy has now reached a global consensus, revealing that there is a global policy agenda steered by globalisation, neoliberalism and performativity. In addition, it highlights for this school at least, how education policy discourse has been reshaped from an emancipative and community oriented practice, into one focused on training, testing, measurement and standardisation. The literature and the empirical analysis suggests that values, perceptions, intentions and practice are closely linked and external influences such as neoliberalism have a significant influence over these fields, but this is not necessarily a negative perception in all cases. These global pressures are a reality for many, but they are being resisted and challenged by many, including some of the participants in this study.

There is evidence in this research that the global discourse has filtered down to the local level. Global influences such as policy from the OECD and publications from PISA steer national and local public policy towards addressing the apparent deficits in education without actually knowing what the deficits were to begin with. The globalising of policy has led to Australia adopting similar polices of high stakes testing and league tables, and national curriculum standardisation based on similar policies from the UK and the USA, despite evidence that such policies do not improve student results in the long term. Henceforth, tension now exists between the preferred curriculum that is subject to testing and league tables and the other curriculum, which is not. The loss of uncertainty is a result, and in addition, key learning areas like the arts for example are marginalised because they come from an apparently un-measurable base (Eisner, 2002). They have not disappeared, but there is evidenced that they are under threat.

In Australia, successive federal and state governments, in adopting the new global policy agenda have mandated one size fits all policies manifest as the NAPLAN standardised tests for years three, five, seven and nine in literacy and numeracy, and a standardised national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum, with disproportional focus on English, mathematics, science and history. The findings from this research did not dispute the importance of the 3Rs in primary school. Rather, the perception that these skills were “a given” was unanimous (Clayton). The findings suggest that in fact, when the 3Rs are read
as “a given”, the curriculum should therefore have room for uncertainty provided through the arts, extra-curricula activity, sport, and curriculum that is not sort of the normal stuff.

The case study school has thus far managed to balance the standards agenda with the creative agenda for now, but there is definitely evidence of the global policy agenda at AASS and a shift in practice. The situation at the school could be better, and there is evidence with the Queensland state government policies and the wider public and political discourse solely focused on academic achievement, that it may get worse. Within the student participant group there was certainly evidence of a competing discourse between the parts of the school day that were considered normal and those that were not. There was not tension, rather ambivalence. This factor alone suggests that teachers and parents should be concerned about the effects of the probable disconnect from school that further performative practices might lead to. Will children want to come to school?

The parents were not unhappy about the notion of testing per se, but rather perceived testing as part of life and a worthwhile experience to have. However, when testing in the form of NAPLAN was considered against the accompanying dialogue about judging schools, performance pay for teachers and other student achievements over the years of schooling, there was agreement that it served very little educational purpose. As parent George noted, testing was no replacement for good teaching, good resources and professional autonomy. The quality of the teacher was acknowledged as the driving force behind school success.

Within education policy there also appears to be a competing discourse where one policy mandates standardisation and another simultaneously released policy suggests the need for innovation, creativity and differentiation. There was evidence of a competing discourse in the teacher data, perceived as pressure emanating from the top-down, resulting in teachers feeling pressure to meet the requirements of the NAPLAN program, and the new curriculum which at times went against their professional values and judgments. At this early stage in the new reforms, these concerns were self-correcting, in that the experienced teachers, “once burnt”, reverted to the pedagogical approaches they knew worked, as opposed to teaching to the test. In terms of arts education, the arts were highly valued by all staff members interviewed for the project and there was no question about including the arts in the curriculum. However, there was acknowledgment that it was compromised according to time and resources, but none-the-less the teachers felt they were covering the arts (particularly drama and visual arts) authentically, and there was mounting tension about how to balance the curriculum. They acknowledged unanimously
that without the arts, many children who learn in and through the arts would have opportunities taken away from them, and this was against all of their professional values. At this point in time, they remained adamant that they would find a place for the arts, yet a lack of uncertainty was beginning to appear. At the time of data collection, C2C had only just been released, henceforth, the “venacularisation” of policy enabled AASS to maintain pedagogical freedom, but with C2C now fully functioning, potential for this to change is very real.

Bernstein proposed three message systems of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation, clearly evident as the levers within AASS. Lingard went further to propose that testing has become the fourth message system. The findings here suggest that this discourse is evident; assessment has become a major feature of the perceptions of school for all three participant groups, although there is little evidence that value is placed on the tests in terms of educational outcomes. The findings also confirm that for the teachers this is negative, but for the students and parents, it is not. Testing had become normal, likewise English and mathematics for most of the day had become normal. In terms of the first research question, there is growing tension between balancing curriculum and pedagogy; interest and engagement; with assessment and evaluation; standardisation and data, for all participant groups, particularly the teachers. Overall, the competing discourses were much more intensified within the teacher participant group, where there was clear evidence that values and professional judgments were beginning to be compromised, and the loss of uncertainty was incrementally creeping in.

With this in mind, the following section discusses how this discourse has affected the students, parents and teachers at AASS.

**What influence do these competing discourses have on the values held by teachers, parents and students?**

Noting that the competing educational discourses mostly affected the teacher participant group, this section discusses the student, parent and teacher findings in terms of the this influence and what choices were made in terms of balancing educational provision in teaching terms and forming perceptions in parent and student terms.
The students

Unlike the parents and the teacher findings, the student data revealed a dichotomy in school with two themes identified as the normal things and the other than normal things. For the students, all five themes of philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and politics were not evident explicitly. What dominated the student data were two ideas centered on curriculum and pedagogy. The first idea was about the normal stuff (philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment), as opposed to the second ideas - stuff that's not sort of the normal (also philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment). The students assumed that a majority of their school day would be spent on English, mathematics and science, and in term one, NAPLAN preparation. They expressed ambivalence to the normal things, and a certain degree of boredom and resignation to this major part of the curriculum/day. Research findings suggest that testing, as Lingard, surmised has become normalised. This was evident in the resignation and acceptance of testing by students, and from the ambivalence shown when discussing the tests. Some of this can be attributed to the teachers who were focused on “downplaying” the tests to reduce student stress, henceforth encouraging a lackadaisical/just another test attitude. This suggests that within the student participant group there was as competing discourse between normal stuff and not normal stuff. The findings reveal that the student’s perceptions of schooling are defined by the “standards” agenda, not the “creative” one, yet more value is placed on the creative one.

In terms of curriculum in general, there were also contradictions in the findings about normal things. The normal things were only described as such if they were attached to normal pedagogy. If mathematics was taught in an engaging and creative way such as the straw and duster soccer game to understand angles, then this lesson was considered not sort of the normal. Paradoxically, subjects like instrumental music were considered both. It was boring when the students did not study music that was part of their life experience. They enjoyed the lessons and rehearsals most when learning familiar repertoire, but highly valued if it enabled school representation, performance opportunities or opportunities to play their favourite compositions.

In contrast to the “normal things”, the findings revealed that the students favoured the things that were not normal within the school day. Part of this was attributed to pedagogy, where students were engaged with activities that were presented creatively and differently like the digital storybooks, the dance items and the marble maze. The most valued part of
the not normal category was the extension program that offered activities such as sailing, dance, drama and kayaking. All of the students who were eligible were delighted with their experiences thus far, and the others were really looking forward to being able to join the program. Across both parents and students this was a highlight of the school year.

These students were the beneficiaries of a high level of parent involvement in the school in both direct (parental/home support) and indirect ways through school committees, in-class support and homework activities. Through a combination of parental support and quality pedagogical experiences, these students were content with their AASS experience. For some, however, the best part of the day was still “going home”.

**The parents**

The parent data revealed universal support for the “Curriculum 1”/preferred subjects and also supported the need for sustained practice in literacy and numeracy. However, this support came in the form of tacit understanding that the basics were a given and that this then should enable the school to offer more than the preferred curriculum. Parents commented most favourably on pedagogy, and the teaching activities that were linked to creativity to encourage higher order thinking. They complimented the staff when they saw evidence of innovative ways of engaging their children in learning, yet at the same time saw the place for explicit teaching. Despite not being grounded in educational theory, it was apparent that the arts were highly valued, as both a teaching tool and as a key learning area. They were regarded as playing a significant role in an holistic education.

There was some dissent, about NAPLAN and its inherent value. Many of the parents acknowledged that the teaching of literacy and numeracy was the core business of school and many did not have an issue with the use of formal testing. In only one case, did a parent actually use NAPLAN scores as an indication of how their child was doing at AASS as compared to other nationally similar schools. One parent was very opposed to the test because she believed it failed to meet any educational purpose at all. Overall, parents had adopted staff advice that it was “just another test” and therefore normalised the testing experience for their children in the way it was approached at home, this had a great deal to do with their perceptions of the test. They agreed that testing was a “part of life” and henceforth the test served such as purpose. The competitive nature of Australian society emerged as a concern involving the test, and it was noted by some parents that this was
having an adverse effect on educational purpose. Parents did not support the use of NAPLAN test scores to judge schools, teachers or for performance pay.

The parents understood that schools were very complex places, and each individual interacted with school in a unique way. There was criticism over the lack of both human and physical resources to support students with behavioural and special education needs that in turn affected the operations of the general classroom and their own child’s capacity to learn. Many of the parents felt unprepared for the NAPLAN tests with regards to how to support their child at home, and they would have liked more information on assessment such as projects in terms of supporting their child at home with time and resources. Likewise, one parent felt that more information should be disseminated about crucial junctures like NAPLAN test time to avoid timetabling clashes with family activities.

The findings revealed evidence of what Lareau (2003) described as “concerted cultivation” where parents were directly (through hands on participation) and indirectly (through the subliminal messages conveyed through action) equipping their offspring with skills to succeed at school. Evidence of a definition of good parenting was revealed as parents criticised other parents who they believed did not adequately prepare their children for school. The parent participants in this research actively engaged with the school on behalf of their children and in turn, positively affected the outcomes for their children. Their language, understandings of system functions, ability to navigate through interviews, questions and situations, involvement in the classroom and school gave this group a distinct advantage in the home/school partnership. These parents understood the importance of being part of a “community of learners” (Jack).

Criticism of the school reflected the importance this group placed on developing strong links between school and home. The data revealed that the lack of regular, pedestrian communication about curriculum matters was a concern, and more information from each classroom was recommended to facilitate homework, relevant discussions about the day and/or learning reviews. In addition, many of the parents felt a greater need for a “raising of the bar” and suggested that more academic extension materials were developed for students who were above average. One parent in particular found the school focused too heavily on the middle ground. Another parent noted that if the school concentrated solely on raising literacy and numeracy standards and did not seek alternative ways of teaching through research, students would feel less and less compulsion to attend school. There was a great deal of emphasis placed on the teachers by the parents to really make school an
exciting place to be, yet there was the underlying belief that literacy and numeracy dominated the curriculum and none of the parents really challenged this.

There was a degree of disillusionment amongst these parents with politicians and the lack of political will to really prioritise education, yet in the local context the parents felt that AASS was doing a good job of aligning practice to the values they held. The parents felt that the school covered the normal things satisfactorily and offered a wide range of other than normal things to engage their child. Overall, AASS was the best school for their family and their child at that point in time.

The teachers

The teacher data revealed the five themes of philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and politics as intricately related and interconnected. Through the implementation of mandated policy such as NAPLAN, the Australian Curriculum and the MySchool website, teachers like those at AASS were compelled to place mandates ahead of any educational philosophies they valued. This provided a source of tension between employee requirements and professional autonomy, in turn influencing the way teachers perceived their own professional identities. At this point in time, some of the teachers felt that to certain extent they had maintained some professional autonomy, still able to make decisions according to their professional beliefs, but they all conceded that their teaching had to change to meet mandates. Teachers like Grace for example, had to work through a whole cycle of personal/professional turmoil moving from old ways to new ways to old ways to new ways once more as a result of NAPLAN. After this process, true to her own beliefs in higher order thinking and child centered rigorous pedagogy, she continued to teach authentically, in line with her own values. Likewise, Charlotte still used the arts as best as she could in term one despite the pressures to practice for NAPLAN, to settle her class and to have them work together as a "community of learners". There was acknowledgment that accountability was dominant as opposed to systemic trust in their professional capacity.

There was skepticism about the relative worth of the recent education reforms and whether or not they would actually make a difference to student outcomes in the long term. NAPLAN was acknowledged as having some value as a cross-school indicator of certain areas of literacy and numeracy such as spelling, but it was deemed superfluous considering the six-month delay between testing and the receipt of results. Ultimately the test served
only as confirmation of the other regular formative and summative assessment that the teachers undertook as part of their programs. The test results demonstrated how parents held teachers responsible for poor results despite the years of preceding home and school experiences. Likewise, the test year teachers also resented taking the blame for poor NAPLAN results when learning is an accumulation of experiences from previous school years and home. There was however there was a clear divide between the first part of the year characterised by NAPLAN, and the second part, after the test. Many of the experienced teachers had witnessed a number of reforms over their careers and as part of this appeared to be best equipped to modify practice to meet mandates whilst at the same time, meet their own professional values. To a point though, as even the most experienced among the staff acknowledged that teaching had to be modified in order to follow mandates. Undoubtedly these competing discourses were key characteristics of the teachers work – tension between policy and practice; mandates and philosophies; perceptions and realities.

There was some disillusionment that the teaching profession had been devalued as a result of the MySchool website and there was criticism about the way the system failed to understand and acknowledge the fact that schools like AASS had an open door enrolment policy, as opposed to the independent school sector. The staff acknowledged the complex nature of their job and in doing so revealed how policies of standardisation like NAPLAN, do little for a school were diversity and differentiation were a key concern. This revealed what they saw as a competing discourse between the way their job was perceived by the system and the real job of teaching.

The teachers were reluctant to make a decision about the *Australian Curriculum* as it was too new, but they welcomed the possibility of an “even playing field” across the country. They had hopes that the new curriculum would bring unity across national standards, but the teachers also revealed concerns that the national curriculum might end up as another example of a failed reform because of poor implementation, lack of resources and too much politics. Teachers such as Paris had already experienced the lack of consistency in the trials, and teachers like Gail with many decades of experience, noted similar concerns. The principal herself was unimpressed with the Queensland systemic response to the *Australian Curriculum* and felt that another reform was necessary, a reform that valued the professional role of teachers. Her focus on professional development was her way of addressing any of the challenges that new policy brought and she advocated this very strongly to staff.
One of the key aspects of this research was the way the arts were included in the professional decisions the teachers made at the school. The findings revealed that the teachers in this research valued the arts highly and to the best of their abilities they included and intended on including the arts disciplines with which they were most familiar. However, the teachers acknowledged that as the new *Australian Curriculum* took effect, time for the arts looked increasingly threatened despite the promise within the policy itself.

On a broader level, and without exception, the teachers at AASS felt that the system was heading in the direction where sooner rather than later, it would no longer align with their educational values and beliefs. For example, if performance pay were introduced for “good results” on NAPLAN; if the C2C policy became so prescriptive that pedagogy was reduced to supervision; if the arts were removed from the curriculum altogether; preps no longer had time to play as a result of too much assessment. Politics played a significant role in this conversation and teachers were unanimous in the belief that both sides of government paid “lip service” to education and what dictated much of the agenda was money “the Almighty dollar” as Melanie described it. Like the parents, there was a clear lack of support for educational reform that was based on political rather than educational motives and the teachers lamented the fact that educational professionals were not more widely used in the construction of policy. The political machinations that were occurring at the time of the research also had a negative impact on their profession as they noted the apparent value the government placed on education by installing an inexperienced minister to such as significant portfolio. All of the teachers felt that the teaching profession had been devalued as a result of the focus on measurement and data, and in the exclusion of teachers from the decision-making process. There was real concern that further devaluation could result.

**What is valued in one school community?**

In the case of the students, parents and teachers interviewed as part of this study, certain parts of school were certainly valued and important. School itself was understood as a necessity, but the students had divided their school days between normal and not normal things. They valued most highly the moments when school created memories – like representing the school for music or sport, featuring in the annual art exhibition or performing as the prince in the school play. They did not talk about philosophy, politics or performativity, yet as they faced each day at school, they become part of the process of
accepting that school is a place to produce results, filled mostly with the delivery of normal things and less and less of the not sort of the normal things that they valued.

The parents placed a very high value on education but their understanding of education sat paradoxically between the social democratic principles of Socrates and the scientific theories of Thorndike. They wanted everything for their children, but also acknowledged that only so much could be achieved in a five-hour school day. The parents were very focused on ensuring that their children had numerous opportunities to improve and in doing so, inadvertently aligned their values to the culture of performativity through the acceptance of reforms such as NAPLAN and MySchool. The parents interviewed at AASS were fortunate in that they understood how to navigate the schooling system and this enabled them to support their children. They had accumulated the necessary knowledge through active engagement with the school and the teachers, which in turn presented a positive view of school for their children. When there appeared to be a problem, the parents in this study asked for clarification. There was no concern about approaching the school and there was a great emphasis on the home/school partnership. Interestingly, the parents relied on word of mouth about who was considered a good teacher and who was not. This ability to understand and participate in the school put this group of parents at an advantage over those unsure of institutional navigation, and the process of concerted cultivation was clear.

This group of parents, with the exception of two, were unimpressed with the current agenda of testing and standardisation, but not against it enough to be alarmed. In educational terms, they were more interested in what AASS could actually achieve for their child in the broader sense of education, as a preparation for high school and beyond. At this point in time, AASS served their needs, and aligned with their values.

Likewise, it is self-evident that teachers highly value education, basing much of this belief on the transformative power of education, and the position of privilege. Yet again they were drawn between teaching to their values and meeting the expectations of policy. All of the teachers valued the arts and they maintained the arts within their classrooms within the confines of mandates. They valued their profession, yet they were disillusioned about the way education policy in general was heading. The research found that there was a clear connection between the teaching practices of certain teachers and the way school was perceived by the students and parents. Pedagogy, despite performative policy, appeared to influence all three groups within the school community (students, parents and
teachers) and what was seen as good pedagogy was characterised by creativity and innovative thinking. At all levels (student, parent and teacher) it was this thinking outside of the box that most engaged and informed.

Finally, the research revealed that the AASS community has not been immune to the effects of the global policy shift towards performativity. Yet at AASS, at this point in time, as a result of local choices, the students enjoyed coming to school because there were still enough “stuff that’s not sort of the normal” to keep them engaged, and the parents were satisfied because their children were mostly engaged and successful. The teachers were holding on and it is through teacher action that the school communities shape their perceptions of education. Whether or not the teachers at AASS can continue to resist the pressures of performativity and teach according to their professional values remains to be seen. A price has not been exacted yet, but the likelihood remains.

Significance

This research study set out to determine how the global policy discourse had filtered down to the local level. Theoretically, the thesis supports Bernstein’s theory that schooling is comprised of three distinct but connected systems – curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. It goes further to support Lingard’s view there is now a fourth mechanism of schooling – testing, but in this particular case, this is not always delivered or perceived in a negative way, as a result of pedagogical and personal choice. Furthermore, there is clear evidence of cultural capital theory operating, firstly as a high level of understanding of the school process and secondly as a high level of involvement by this group of parents in their child/ren’s education.

These findings offer unique insights, not previously offered into how students, parents and teachers perceive, and in the case of teachers, enact policy. In the case of teachers the thesis provides an insight into how professional values are balanced and enacted autonomously whilst also enacting mandated policy. The thesis also provides insights into how these three stakeholder groups would like to see future education policy constructed. Furthermore, there are possible implications for local education authorities to observe and draw upon this information to inform new policy regarding curriculum intent and how this might be best conveyed to school communities. In addition, there are implications for future policy regarding how teachers and parents interact as a result of policy that now overlaps and affects all three participant groups. Education policy and practice is now a
very public field and the findings from this thesis suggest that the three most important protagonists in the story have critical and worthwhile opinions to contribute, how this is effectively achieved is a consideration for governments.

The thesis contributes methodological knowledge by identifying the voices of the three most important stakeholders in education – the students, parents and teachers, not as separate research projects but in-situ as a community. In particular, the parent and student voices have been heard. The thesis makes clear links between the layers of schooling from global trends to classroom practice, and makes a clear argument for teachers playing a vital role in the enactment of policy within the entire school community. The following section offers ideas for further research.

**Recommendations for further research**

Whilst the literature presented earlier explored the effects of high stakes testing and curriculum standardisation on teachers, there appears to be little research into the effects of this culture on all levels of the school community. In addition, there is a gap in the literature providing information about how individuals within the school community value and prioritise educational choices and how these values are aligned with policy and practice. As such, there is a need for additional research in-situ, into the values that individuals hold in term of educational choices, and how these individual perceptions of education steer these choices (Barton, 2003). Furthermore, whilst the literature provides evidence that the hierarchy of subjects holds validity, and that historically, literacy and numeracy have always taken precedence in the school curriculum, there is a need for more extensive research to determine the value teachers, parents and students place on other key learning areas like the arts, and whether or not literacy and numeracy are taught at the expense of these KLAs. This should extend to an exploration of the notion of cultural capital and economic disadvantage and the marginalisation of the arts. This should include research into curriculum narrowing towards those areas systemically valued and preferred and in the case of English and mathematics, tested. Further investigations might be aimed at determining how performative policy affects cultural entitlement in schools, and how parents perceive their role and the role of the school in developing cultural capital.

Furthermore, following this thesis, it would be advantageous to revisit AASS and examine how curriculum entitlement and pedagogical practices have changed as a result of the full implementation of the *Australian Curriculum* through Queensland’s C2C policy,
particularly the influence the policy is having on beginning teachers and whether or not they are following it as a prescriptive document or as a guideline to planning.

In terms of policy recommendations, this thesis supports the important role played by the "street level bureaucrat" in the enactment of policy. Policy recommendations go further to suggest national standards across Australia would be best achieved through recognition of professional autonomy, local knowledge and local requirements. At best, policy should avoid any standardisation of pedagogy and employ curriculum standardisation only when relevant. In light of the fact that the enactment of these recommendations are unlikely given the historical precedent, in terms of practice, this thesis proposes that what is most needed in schools is courage (Marsden, 2013) on the part of students, parents, teachers and administrators to allow and in fact, pursue uncertainty in the face of increasing political intervention into schooling. To some extent, this was demonstrated by the teachers, encouraged by the parents and enjoyed by the students at AASS, but how much longer this can be sustained in the face of increasing pressure remains unknown.
Appendices
Appendix A – Definition of policy

“Policy is designed to steer understanding and action without ever being sure of the practices it might produce” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 5).

In examining systems of government where policy documents act as the skeleton for the system itself, it is essential to understand what is meant by the term policy and where, when and how policies have been constructed, and for whom they are intended. In this thesis, global, national and local education policy is examined to determine where similarities exist and where policy “borrowing” occurs and whether or not they are aligned to the values of the stakeholders.

This thesis uses the definition of policy indicated by Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) who state “policy is both process and product. In such a conceptualisation, policy involves the production of the text, the text itself, ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice” (p. 25). Further to this definition however is a complex process of construction and enactment.

Ball (2010) refers to two types of policy systems that affect the operational choices made by schools – substantive policy where the policy alters the operational structure of the system, school, curriculum and pedagogy, and then regulatory policy where systemic governance is remodeled (Ball, 2010). These two models are influenced by globalisation where the principle parts of a neoliberal agenda - entrepreneurship, individualism, marketisation, multiple consumer choice and standardised educational accountabilities have become characteristic (Ball, 2010). This new policy discourse or ‘new public management’ (Lingard, 2009) has led to a loss of professional and personal creativity, a loss of social democratic practice and a marginalisation of alternative views of making meaning of the world (Greene, 2001; Eisner, 2002; Ball, 2010).

Ball (1993) defined policy as “neither text nor discourse, but both. They are implicit in each other...policies are ‘things’; policies are also processes and outcomes” (p.15). Policy is often a political exercise heavily influenced by social, ethical, moral, financial as well as practical conditions (Ball, in Taylor et al., 1997) and in many cases with an emphasis on ‘policy borrowing’ (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) suggest that policy as a discourse is difficult to define, and that “policy is much more than a specific policy document or text...it is...continually in process...complex interactive and multi-layered.” Taylor et al. (1997) goes on to state that policy is both “rational and incremental”,
there being a set of prescriptive stages for the development of policy (p. 34). Incrementalists argue that policy development works over time by building on currently existing policies and practices. They are also both “substantive and procedural” (Taylor et al. 1997 p. 34)-substantive policies deal with what governments are intending to do and procedural policies with how things are to be done and by whom. One key feature of education policy given the layers of systematic procedure from central office to the classroom, “whatever the terminology, policy processes in systems and in schools consists of fragile and uneven settlements between and within discursive fields” (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1997, p. xxi).

The development, implementation and evaluation of policy are ongoing processes that generate much professional conversation and action (Taylor et al., 1997; Ball, 2010). Policy studies in the field of education play a significant role in informing the professional decisions of teachers. Reflecting upon the opening quote from Rizvi and Lingard (2010), an examination of current policy trends assist in establishing why and how global policy is ‘borrowed’ and redistributed at a local level. To continue with the analogy, government and non-government organisations produce policy intending on ‘steering understanding’ but in the case of the some of the policies examined in this thesis, teachers have a large influence on the final destination. This analogy allows the researcher to understand how, when, why and with whom local policy enactment, despite emanating from afar, produces results that are organic, idiosyncratic and unique to each individual. How and why primary school teachers enact arts education policy in a performative/audit culture is a result of how mandated and non-mandated policy agendas that have their origins in global education policy, are manipulated according to the local conditions.

Policy is a reflection of the pattern of thinking of those within the power structures of the state, and in turn reflects certain values that are dominant (Peters, 2001; Ball, 2006; Lingard, 2009; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010;). Ball and Lingard, respectively, both argue that it is critical to understand that the there are various stakeholders who “control the field of judgement – including who controls measurement and chooses what is measured” (Lingard, 2009, p.16). Moutsios (2010) suggests in education policy there is a “hierarchical, expert driven and goal-oriented process”, which remains unchallenged about the purpose of education (p. 124). Policies that operate in the local case study school have filtered down from their origins in global education reform movements of the knowledge economy, accountability frameworks and neoliberalism. They take their meanings from a global
framework but they are invariably shaped by local context. What becomes evident is the multilayered discourse that exists when considering the meaning of policy and how this applies to practice and there will always be a degree of “street level bureaucracy” (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003) in the way the policy is eventually delivered.
Appendix B - The historical education policy context of the United Kingdom

In 1988, under the Prime Ministership of Margaret Thatcher, the British Government introduced the *Education Reform Act (1988)* that allowed subsequent United Kingdom national government policy to align itself to market mechanisms and the neoliberal agenda. These market mechanisms referred to the systems that affect the economic structures and operations of a country – the trade, currency, human capital, resources, and other utilitarian mechanisms that make the global machine operate, particularly in Western countries and increasingly in developing countries (Exley & Ball, 1997; Hursh, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This act signified the beginning of a new wave of education policy reform with the principle focus of mandated educational standards/outcomes, balanced carefully against the money invested. Auditable measures of education, that is, an input/output model had been adopted (Lyotard, 1984).

The challenges to Keynesian economic theory, heralded by the Thatcher (UK) government, and subsequently the Reagan (USA) government in the 1980s, saw productivity and accountability as the new focus in schools, along with a move away from the principles of social justice, equity and professional autonomy (Exley & Ball, 1997; Jessop, 2013). These philosophies were made real in a national curriculum for English schools, and accompanying accountability through the “introduction of mandatory testing at ages 7 and 11 and the publication of test results” (Alexander, 2010, p. 32). In aligning education policy to global markets, the Thatcher government adopted a new policy doctrine for education that overlooked the traditional aims of education involving the ‘struggle over three distinct but often competing values: democratic equality, social mobility and social efficiency (Labaree, 2003). Tatto (2007) and Maguire et al. (2011) concur that this has moved education policy and practice towards results and not to attainment. As a consequence of the UK 1988 reform act, the rise in neoliberal policy and globalisation as part of a new policy agenda, there appears to be a “retreating from a once-within-our grasp vision of progressive education into a safer, more measurable and quantifiable territory” (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009, p. 3).

During the decade of the 1980s, social unrest resulted as a reaction to British and European governments re-organising priorities away from “state socialism to liberal market capitalism” in an effort to secure economic growth (Jessop, 2013, p. 2). This
economic revolution in Europe was epitomised by the social unrest in Germany and symbolised the breaking down of systems of government and an establishment of a new type of accountability. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) note that:

More than anything, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signified a fundamental shift in policy thinking around the world, both resulting from and giving rise to the globalisation of capitalism and the emergence of a ‘neoliberal’ ideology, reshaping the ways in which public policies are now forged, implemented and evaluated. (p. 2)

Furthermore, as part of the global shift in perspective, the fall of the Berlin Wall was part of the impetus that moved education policy towards having a more ‘outward’ focus (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 2) suggesting that individual nations now had a responsibility to compare national performance with international levels. Rotte (2006) reinforces this view stating, “economic globalisation and its consequences for increasing international competition on the world markets, including growing problems on the labor market of most Western countries, have changed the focus of the discussion” (p. 2). Political intervention into education from the Thatcher years through to the Blair years resulted in “an average of one new directive or policy paper a day issued forth from the national ministry of education” all due to a strong belief “that state education was failing” (Rotte, 2006, p. 319). Henceforth, as a result of years of reform, schooling in the UK is now characterised by a “highly prescriptive, uniform curriculum that covers the full timetable” with English school children the “most tested in the world, with external tests...used at ages five, seven, eleven, fourteen, seventeen, and eighteen” (Rotte, 2006, p. 319).

In terms of accountability, the reform witnessed the “establishment...of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) headed by Her Majesties Chief Inspector” and the national program for school inspections (Alexander, 2010 p. 33). This led to a period of tension in education in the UK with the government openly attacking the mechanism of schooling yet doing little to improve it. As a consequence the government established an English national curriculum, along with national testing and standardised pedagogical practices as part of the Excellence in Schools policy of 1997. This policy considered education, identified predominantly as raising standards in literacy and numeracy, as being “a vital investment in ‘human capital’ for the twenty-first century” (Robinson, 1999, p. 5). These reforms were instrumental in introducing “performative regimes into English primary schools” (Troman et al., 2007, p. 549). Interesting, in 1999 the National Advisory Committee on Creativity and Cultural Education was developed in the UK to investigate the state of creative
education in the emerging curriculum. Robinson was commissioned to investigate the role of the arts, culture and creativity within the education process. As a result, Robinson (1999) concluded:

The key message of this report is the need for a new balance in education: in setting national priorities; in the structure and organisation of the school curriculum; in methods of teaching and assessment; in relationships between schools and other agencies. Over a number of years, the balance of education, in our view, has been lost. There has been a tendency for the national debate on education to be expressed as a series of exclusive alternatives, even dichotomies: for example, as a choice between the arts or the sciences; the core curriculum or the broad curriculum; between academic standards or creativity; freedom or authority in teaching methods. We argue that these dichotomies are unhelpful. (p. 9)
Appendix C - The historical education policy context of the United States

Historically, the 1983 US federal government report *A Nation at Risk* was the original stimulus that led to a heavy focus on standards and accountability in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The perceived and publically advertised risk was that the US was falling behind other industrialized nations and the federal government at the time viewed education as the key to alleviating the risk. The report noted:

> All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (p. 11)

Aligned with the political influence of the UK, the report manifested in the US system as high stakes testing to improve literacy and numeracy standards. Scott (2011) notes that through:

> Inflaming a sense of crisis over public education not living up to its intended function of training a servile workforce has provided the primary rationale for what has commonly become known simply as “education reform”. (p. 273)

This report eventually led to further performative policy, which did little in the US to stem the flow of failing schools and students. The policies that emerged were based on neoliberal philosophy whereby free choice in schools, and the promotion of “student, teacher, and school improvement through systems of reward for excellence” did little for equity. The *No Child Left Behind* policy was a result of these previous policy incantations (Scott, 2011, p. 274).

The criticisms of the NCLB act have been deep and many authors argue that the US education system is worse off as a result of its inception. Lipman (2007) argues “NCLB brings under one umbrella social conservatives, proponents of the market, and business interests concerned with preparation of a literate and disciplined workforce through education standards and measurement” (p. 38). Further to this, Scott (2011) cites the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Massachusetts, who note:
The face of American schooling is changing in ways that we do not believe the public realizes or endorses. The pressure of high stakes testing catalyzed by NCLB is compelling schools to focus on a narrow curriculum, depriving students of the rich learning that comes from the study of art, music, history, science, foreign language, and physical education – all currently being pushed to the periphery or eliminated completely. It is unacceptable that a liberal arts curriculum is gutted in the name of closing the achievement gap, and it is not in the best interests of any students, their families or the nation to continue on this path. (Amherst Regional Public Schools, 2007, para. 2)

Hursh (2008) argues these performative-based policies have been directly responsible for the continued “decline in teaching and learning”, rather than a rise in teaching and learning standards. One of the defining features of NCLB noted by Hursh (2008) was the provision made in legislation for schools to be closed down or privatised if they “consistently fail to meet ever-increasing test score benchmarks” (p. 105). Likewise, Edmondson and D’Urso (2009) argue that the outcomes of this decade or more of American educational reform has:

Resulted in a school system that is dictated by bureaucratic rather than democratic principles and where the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) still in existence, has done little to raise literacy and numeracy standards, nor addressed school retention or unemployment rates. (p. 85)

Ravitch (2010) concurs that NCLB failed to achieve any real educational improvement in the US and in fact, like Hursh argues that it has dismantled public education. Ravitch (2010) notes:

High-stakes testing...undermines education. High-stakes testing promotes cheating, gaming the system, teaching to bad tests, narrowing the curriculum. High-stakes testing means less time for the arts, less time for history or geography or civics or foreign languages or science. We see schools across America dropping physical education. We see them dropping music. We see them dropping their arts programs, their science programs, all in pursuit of higher test scores. This is not good education. (para. 11)
Appendix D - The historical education policy context of Australia

Almost four decades ago, the Australian Labor Party took federal office after 23 years of conservative rule under the Liberal/Country Party coalition. Although this is some time ago, drawing from this time, this thesis reflects on past policy platforms to understand the present. By briefly revisiting these early reforms, this review will demonstrate how as far back as 1973, global trends had begun to influence local decisions in terms of the government intervention in education. Underpinning any discussion about schooling reform in Australia, it is essential to remember that in the Australian Constitution, schooling is under the control of state and territory governments and that the federal government can only influence schooling through indirect or specific purpose funding arrangements.

With this constitutional consideration in mind, the Whitlam government of 1973 was responsible for a number of educational interventions; one of the most significant of these was the Karmel Report (Lingard, 2000). This report instigated one of the first major education reforms that impacted directly upon the states and their curriculum provision in the 1970s. It was believed that the centralised authority could no longer meet the needs of an increasingly complex and diverse society that Australia was becoming. In terms of curriculum, the Karmel Report argued that curriculum development should be returned to the very people involved in its implementation and in doing so schools would be able to provide access and equality of participation and standards (Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 2000).

In conjunction with the Karmel Report recommendations, in 1975 the Whitlam government established the national Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). This represented a concerted attempt by the new federal government at returning control to a central agency and statutory authority responsible for, as opposed to directly controlling the curriculum (Lingard, 2000). This established the reform agenda for the foundations of a national curriculum in the establishment of the first Core Curriculum for Australian Schools (1980) policy. This was aimed at producing a curriculum that had at the core a set of knowledge and skills transferable across a variety of workplaces, rather than a curriculum of content common to all states. Local idiosyncrasies were then to be covered in the curriculum by the teachers and experts developing local policy.

The CDC existed at a time of generous education funding under the Keynesian system of economic management. Contrasting this, in the UK, there was the agenda of the new policy paradigm characterised by economic accountability and lean policy enactment as a
result of increasing social upheaval, as previously discussed. In Australia at this time there was little social unrest compared to counties abroad and in terms of education policy there was a lag in the neoliberal philosophies that had taken hold in the UK. Henceforth, schools were funded on a needs basis with the CDC existing in a privileged, but endangered climate. Lingard, Hayes and Mills (2000) argued that:

The *Karmel Report* came at a high point of the Keynesian social policies in Australia; the report witnessed a huge increase in commonwealth funding for schools linked to the view that greater expenditure...was central to the achievement of greater equality (p.10).

This reform signified one of the first national initiatives and was an example of how the Commonwealth government could influence state policy through funding.

This period was short lived and in November 1975 the Conservative/Liberal government replaced the federal Labor government. The new government’s education polices aligned with the UK neoliberal agenda of economic conservatism. Following the lead of the conservative Thatcher government in England, this period became characterised by fiscal restraint and the economic rationalist agenda that pervades the system to date. Sumson (2006) observes:

Three decades after Whitlam, Australia's political, economic and social landscape has changed dramatically. Government policy in general and childcare policy in particular, is characterised by continually increasing demands for accountability, efficiency, and adherence to market-based principles. (p. 1)

Lingard et al. (2000) concur, "policies were framed by a vastly different political context from that of the 1973 *Karmel Report*, notably, one of globalisation and related meta-policy status granted to economic restructuring and internationalisation of the Australian economy" (p. 27).

Curriculum reform advocates embraced an agenda where education represented a means to achieve greater economic efficiency, a more successful and productive workforce, and a more global curriculum that needed to embrace life skills, work skills for the new global economy and the ever-changing and rapidly advancing technological society (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). The curriculum reform agenda began to introduce the concept of vocational education in an acknowledgement of globalisation and the understanding across cultures and boundaries that schools must play a role in the
production of ‘human resources’. There was also support from business to include vocational education in the general curriculum, hence strengthening the link between this new stakeholder in the provision of curriculum in schools and subsequent policy enactment. Other stakeholders began to emerge with a desire to impact upon curriculum decision-making in policy terms. For example, Commonwealth and state governments acknowledged that the non-government schooling systems were responsible for educating 30% of student population. These new stakeholders needed to be heard in the curriculum reform debate and therefore the motivational base began to broaden. Privatisation joined the policy platform and as a result, individuals became increasingly responsible for their own education. Meyer (2007) noted that at the time, in contrast to economic efficiencies, the global advocacy for human rights also influenced Australian policy, evident in the development of policies to support the diverse learning needs of students. However, despite a more focused approach to equity, successive federal governments continued to stress the need for accountability and individual responsibility and curriculum reform remains heavily characterised by economic rather than educational and equity principles, with an intense focus on value for money.

In 1985, a second federal education report, the Karmel Report: the Quality of Education Review Committee was released. Underpinning this was a desire to rationalise resources through the creation of a national curriculum. This collaboration led to a loose attempt at a national curriculum developed through state co-operation and was designed to stimulate the Australian economy through education. Bartlett (1993) noted at the time, the policy was devised “to maximise scant curriculum development resources and to minimise unnecessary differences in curriculum across the states; underlying this was an agreed rationalism of resource use” (p. 287). Following this, in 1987, the Federal Education Minister (John Dawkins) released two additional reports. Two polices resulted from these reports. Firstly, Skills for Australia, a policy designed towards producing a more skilled workforce and secondly, Strengthening Australian Schools (SAS), a policy designed to raise academic standards. Dawkins stated at the time, “Australia can no longer afford fragmentation of effort and approaches must be developed and implemented in ways which promote real improvements in schooling across the nation” (Dawkins, 1988). As curriculum reform policies they were heavily based on the vocational training opportunities schools could link with prospective employees.
This reform agenda led to the 1989 *Hobart Declaration* whereby the six states and two territories agreed to a common curriculum framework and the national goals for schooling (Bartlett, 1993, p. 389). The *Hobart Declaration* represented the first collaborative statement on educational goals for Australia. The declaration stated:

The schooling of Australia's children is the foundation on which to build our future as a nation, Council agreed to act jointly to assist Australian schools in meeting the challenges of our times. In reaching agreement to address the following areas of common concern, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education made an historic commitment to improving Australian Schooling within a framework of national collaboration. (MCEECDYA, 2009a, para. 1)

The *Hobart Declaration* determined that there were a universal set of skills and educational requirements shared across all areas. In terms of arts education policy, the declaration stated that students were to develop “an appreciation and understanding of, and confidence to participate in, the creative arts” (MCEECDYA, 2009a, para. 5). The Hobart Declaration was the beginning of inter-systemic collaboration among states, territories and the commonwealth, although it did not translate into practical school based policy.
Appendix E - Staff information sheet

Participant Information Sheet: School based staff (Administrators and teachers)

Project Title
*Education, the Arts and Mandates in Queensland – What is valued? By whom? And why? How are these responses enacted?*

Primary Investigator
Rowena Riek
School of Learning and Professional Studies
Faculty of Education
Griffith University, Mt Gravatt
(07) 3735 7111
Email: r.riek@griffith.edu.au

Purpose
This study aims to determine what is valued in terms of education and the arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts and media) in the context of other over arching policy mandates such as the NAPLAN testing regime. The study will examine in depth the values held by Administration, teaching staff, parents and students towards education, the arts and mandated policy, and how these values adjust to the requirements of school practice. It is a longitudinal study over the course of 12 months to coincide with the implementation of the Essential Learnings, NAPLAN and the proposed National Curriculum.

This is a PhD study under the supervision of Dr Kay Hartwig and Dr Julie Dunn at Griffith University.

Background
The disciplines of Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Arts and Media make up the five strands indentified as the Key Learning Area (KLA), 'The Arts', in most State and Territory Government schools in Australia (QSA 2009). The Arts Key Learning Area is part of the curriculum for all state school students in the state of Queensland from years one through to eight, with the option of electing to study one or more of the individual disciplines in secondary school through to year twelve. The amalgamation of these independent disciplines was a result of a proposal put forward in 1999 by State and Territory Ministers of Education at the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Mceetya), 2009a).
This thesis will explore the nature of the Key Learning Area ‘The Arts’ (Music, Drama, Dance, Media and Visual Arts) in one large Queensland state primary school and how, why or why not, teachers teach the five strands of the arts KLA as part of their curriculum and how other stakeholders associated with the school view the arts within the curriculum. It will also examine what value is placed on the arts in terms of competing curriculum priorities such as mandated tests.

What you will be asked to do

This is a longitudinal study. Over a period of 12 months you will be required to attend mutually arranged interview times with the researcher to answer a series of semi-structured interview questions regarding the topic. You will be asked to discuss your values with regards to education, the arts and mandates and how you are currently putting these values into practice in the current environment. You will be asked to consider your practice in terms of curriculum/educational priorities and how these are best achieved. You will be asked to reflect on your role with regards to certain policy documents such as NAPLAN and the National Curriculum. There will be no student work samples collected; no vide recording of data; no direct request of students to perform specific tasks. All interview data will be recorded. Selected classes will be observed, however no direct conversation will occur with any classroom member including the teacher at this time.

Inclusion Criteria

You will be invited to participate in the study if you are an Administration Officer, teacher, parent or student of the school selected. You will need to be at a Primary school site of an Education Queensland school with a population in excess of 550.
You will have to have read and signed a Voluntary Participation Agreement.

Exclusion Criteria

Ancillary staff, parents with students not enrolled at the school site and secondary school employees.

The expected benefits of the research

Participation in this study will provide rich data on the values stakeholders place on education and the arts in terms of other priorities in this competing curriculum environment. It will assist in informing other research that will contribute to the national curriculum policy development regarding the inclusion of the Arts. It may be used on-site to inform decisions made regarding school plans and curriculum priorities. The outcomes
will assist in preparing arts curriculum document and programs at the school site for future reference.

Risks
There are no known risks associated with participation in the study.

Confidentiality
Data will remain the property of the researcher and will be kept as confidential as is possible by law. All data will be kept in the possession of the researcher. All data/data participants will remain unidentifiable, along with the school site and associated information. Data will be de-identified as soon as it is collected. All data will be secured for a minimum of 5 years. All computer-based data will be password protected. Any concerns need to be discussed with the researcher prior to participating in the study.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and your participation is based on personal choice. Participation/consent may be withdrawn at any time during the study, and your involvement will discontinue from that point. Data collected up to that date would remain the property of the researcher.

Feedback
Data collected from the research will be analysed, then written up in a narrative form in the final thesis document. This document will be made available to your school Principal for your reference. Subsequent copies will be available through the researcher at Griffith University. The data collection process will consist of a series of open-ended interviews, they will be recorded and this data will be verified with the participant to determine accuracy. This will be done as part of the course of the research. Feedback and discussion for verification purposes will occur at this time and also be recorded.

Contacting the Investigators
The primary researcher is happy to answer any question you may have regarding the research. Please do not hesitate to contact Rowena Riek on 0412 209384 or email r.riek@griffith.edu.au

Complaints Mechanism
Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).
**Privacy Statement**

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's privacy Plan at www.gu.ed.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585.
Appendix F – Staff consent form

Informed Consent Form (Staff)

Project Title

*Education, the Arts and Mandates in Queensland – What is valued? By whom? And why? How are these responses enacted?*

Primary Investigator

Rowena Riek
School of Learning and Professional Studies
Faculty of Education
Griffith University, Mt Gravatt
(07) 3735 7111
Email: r.riek@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

• I understand there are no known risks associated with participation in the study;
• I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
• I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
• I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher – Rowena Riek on 0412209384 or email r.riek@griffith.edu.au
• I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without comment or penalty;
• I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
• I agree to participate in the project.

________________________ ____________________________  __________
(Participant) (Participant’s signature) (Date)

________________________ ____________________________  __________
(Researcher) (Researcher’s signature) (Date)
Appendix G – Parents information sheet

Participant Information Sheet: Parents/Care-givers

Project Title
Education, the Arts and Mandates in Queensland – What is valued? By whom? And why? How are these responses enacted?

Primary Investigator
Rowena Riek
School of Learning and Professional Studies
Faculty of Education
Griffith University, Mt Gravatt
(07) 3735 7111
Email: r.riek@griffith.edu.au

Purpose
This study aims to determine what is valued in terms of education and the arts (music, dance, drama, visual arts and media) in the context of other over arching policy mandates such as the NAPLAN testing regime. The study will examine in depth the values held by Administration, teaching staff, parents and students towards education, the arts and mandated policy, and how these values adjust to the requirements of school practice. It is a longitudinal study over the course of 12 months to coincide with the implementation of the Essential Learnings, NAPLAN and the proposed National Curriculum. This is a PhD study under the supervision of Dr Kay Hartwig and Dr Julie Dunn at Griffith University.

Background
The disciplines of Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Arts and Media make up the five strands indentified as the Key Learning Area (KLA), ‘The Arts’, in most State and Territory Government schools in Australia (QSA 2009). The Arts Key Learning Area is part of the curriculum for all state school students in the state of Queensland from years one through to eight, with the option of electing to study one or more of the individual disciplines in secondary school through to year twelve. The amalgamation of these independent disciplines was a result of a proposal put forward in 1999 by State and Territory Ministers of Education at the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Mceetya), 2009a).
This thesis will explore the nature of the Key Learning Area ‘The Arts’ (Music, Drama, Dance, Media and Visual Arts) in one large Queensland state primary school and how, why or why not, teachers teach the five strands of the arts KLA as part of their curriculum and how other stakeholders associated with the school view the arts within the curriculum. It will also examine what value is placed on the arts in terms of competing curriculum priorities such as mandated tests.

What you will be asked to do

This is a longitudinal study. Over a period of 12 months you will be required to attend mutually arranged interview times with the researcher to answer a series of semi-structured interview questions regarding the topic – times and frequency will be mutually agreed upon. You will be asked to discuss your values with regards to your child’s education, how these values are currently enacted upon in the current environment. You will be asked to consider these concepts in terms of educational priorities and how these are best achieved for your child. You will be asked to reflect on policy documents such as NAPLAN and the National Curriculum and how you may see it as interweaving with your educational priorities. With your consent, your child will also be interviewed regarding their participation in arts programs at the school and how they think it fits into their ideas about education. There will be no student work samples collected; no vide recording of data; no direct request of students to perform specific tasks. All interview data will be recorded. Selected classes will be observed, however no direct conversation will occur with any classroom member including the teacher at this time.

Inclusion Criteria

You will be invited to participate in the study if you are a parent with a student at the school selected. You will need to be at a Primary school site of an Education Queensland school with a population in excess of 550. You will have to have read and signed a Voluntary Participation Agreement.

Exclusion Criteria

Ancillary staff, parents with students not enrolled at the school site and secondary school employees.

The expected benefits of the research

Participation in this study will provide rich data on the values stakeholders place on education and the arts in terms of other priorities in this competing curriculum environment. It will assist in informing other research that will contribute to the National
Curriculum policy development regarding the inclusion of the Arts. It may be used on-site to inform decisions made regarding school plans and curriculum priorities. The outcomes will assist in preparing arts curriculum document and programs at the school site for future reference.

**Risks**

There are no known risks associated with participation in the study.

**Confidentiality**

Data will remain the property of the researcher and will be kept as confidential as is possible by law. All data will be kept in the possession of the researcher. All data/data participants will remain unidentifiable, along with the school site and associated information. Data will be de-identified as soon as it is collected and coded. All data will be secured for a minimum of 5 years. All computer-based data will be password protected. Any concerns need to be discussed with the researcher prior to participating in the study.

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and your participation is based on personal choice. Participation/consent may be withdrawn at any time during the study, and your involvement will discontinue from that point. Data collected up to that date would remain the property of the researcher.

**Feedback**

Data collected from the research will be analysed, then written up in a narrative form in the final thesis document. This document will be made available to your school Principal for your reference. Subsequent copies will be available through the researcher at Griffith University. The data collection process will consist of a series of open-ended interviews, they will be recorded and this data will be verified with the participant to determine accuracy. This will be done as part of the course of the research. Feedback and discussion for verification purposes will occur at this time and also be recorded.

**Contacting the Investigators**

The primary researcher is happy to answer any question you may have regarding the research. Please do not hesitate to contact Rowena Riek on 0412 209384 or email r.riek@griffith.edu.au

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ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).

**Privacy Statement**

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's privacy Plan at www.gu.ed.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585.
Appendix H – Parent’s consent form

Informed Consent Form (Parents/Care-givers and students)

Project Title

*Education, the Arts and Mandates in Queensland – What is valued? By whom? And why? How are these responses enacted?*

Primary Investigator

Rowena Riek

School of Learning and Professional Studies

Faculty of Education

Griffith University, Mt Gravatt

(07) 3735 7111

Email: r.riek@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand there are no known risks associated with participation in the study;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher – Rowena Riek on 0412209384 or email r.riek@griffith.edu.au;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3735 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

___________________  ______________________  _______________

(Participant)  (Participant’s signature)  (Date)

___________________  ______________________  _______________

(Researcher)  (Researcher’s signature)
Appendix I - Survey

1. Griffith University : Participant Information Sheet

To Parent/Caregivers,

Questionnaire Coversheet: Education and your child.

Background:
I am a PhD student studying the effects of mandated curriculum reforms such as the NAPLAN testing program on education and schools. I have chosen to examine this in terms of what is valued in education by parents, children and teachers within a particular school setting. This is a very timely study given the amount of focus in the media and in schools on NAPLAN testing, the MY SCHOOL website and the proposed National Curriculum by the current Federal government. It is anticipated that this research will benefit future educators in determining how best to balance a curriculum when faced with overarching responsibilities from governments. It will also bring into the argument the voice of the parent and the child, as to what they value in terms of education in the primary school setting.

Project Description:
This survey forms a smaller part of my overall study that also includes interviews and literature analysis. This survey is an attempt to get a snapshot of the values held by parents regarding what they value in terms of their child’s education. If you decide to participate in this survey relating to you, your child/ren and the values you hold about education, you will be asked a number of questions to complete online. The survey is anonymous and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality:
The survey does not disclose any names or information that will link you and your family to the responses. Data from the questionnaires will be analysed and collated for research only. On-line surveys: IP addresses will not be collected as part of this survey, thereby maintaining participant anonymity.

Voluntary: Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participate. If you choose to participate you may withdraw from the survey at anytime without penalty. In returning a survey (complete or partial completion) you will have consented to that information being used for data analysis and to inform my research. Please keep the paper copy of this information sheet should you require it. It will come home in your child’s folder.

Feedback and Summary of results: Participants will be offered an appropriate and timely summary of the results of the overall research. Once data is collated, a summary of the results will be available form the school Principal.

Further Inquires:
This project has Ethical Clearance from Griffith University. Dr Kay Hartwig and Dr Julie Dunn from the School of Education supervise the project. Please contact Rowena Riek if you have any further inquiries. Details below.

Thank you for your consent and participation in this research.

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Rowena M Riek
School of Education
Mobile: 0412 209 384 Email: r.riek@griffith.edu.au
1. Your education experience.

1. Where did you attend primary school?
   - Queensland
   - Other State or Territory
   - Outside of Australia

2. Where did you attend secondary school?
   - Queensland
   - Other State or Territory
   - Outside of Australia

3. What was your favourite subject at Primary school?

4. What was your favourite subject at secondary school?

5. What was one of your most positive curriculum based memories of schooling?

6. How many children do you have?

7. Of these children, how many attend Wynnum North and what are their year levels? Please do not use names.

8. With regards to WNSS only - how would you rate your involvement level in this school?
   - Very Low
   - Low
   - Moderate
   - High
   - Very High

Please tick:
2. NAPLAN - National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy

Please answer the following questions in terms of each individual child.

9. Do you know what the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy) testing program is?
   - Yes
   - No

10. Have any of your children been involved in the testing program to date? Please indicate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 3 NAPLAN Test</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 NAPLAN Test</td>
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<td>Year 7 NAPLAN Test</td>
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11. If your child (please answer for each individual child) participated in NAPLAN, did they discuss it with you at all and in what way? Explain?

12. Are you in favour of NAPLAN and the need to test National literacy and numeracy levels?
   - Yes
   - No
3. MYSCHOOL

This refers to the new MYSCHOOL website.
Access at www.myschool.edu.au/

13. Do you know about the MYSCHOOL website www.myschool.edu.au?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

14. Have you looked at the MYSCHOOL website?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

15. If no, why not?

   Please indicate according to the responses listed:
   ○ Too busy.
   ○ Not interested.
   ○ Politically opposed to the site.
   ○ Morally opposed to the site.
   ○ Other (please specify)

16. If yes, did you look at other schools as well as WNSS?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

17. Are you aware of the link between the NAPLAN testing program and the MYSCHOOL website?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
4. The National Curriculum

This section relates to the new NATIONAL CURRICULUM (www.acara.edu.au/) currently in draft form and open to public consultation.

18. Do you think Australia needs a National Curriculum?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Unsure

19. If yes, why?
   

20. If no, why not?
   

21. Are you aware that there is a National Curriculum currently in draft and awaiting public consultation?
   
   (Access it at www.acara.edu.au/)
   
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

22. If yes, what is your response to the proposed curriculum so far?
   

23. The new National Curriculum has a number of subjects currently in draft.

Below is the list. Please rank each subject according to what you think is the most important for YOUR child's schooling?

1 = MOST IMPORTANT
10 = LEAST IMPORTANT

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<td>Instrumental Music</td>
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<td>Languages Other Than English</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
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</table>

24. The new National Curriculum has a number of subjects currently in draft.

Below is the list. Please rank each subject according to what you think your child sees as the most important for their schooling?

1 = MOST IMPORTANT
10 = LEAST IMPORTANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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<td>Geography</td>
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<td>Health and Physical Education</td>
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<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Other Than English</td>
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<td>Mathematics</td>
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<td>Science</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
25. Some of these subjects have sub-strands. Please rank each strand in order of importance to your child's education. 1 = MOST IMPORTANT; 5 = LEAST IMPORTANT.

**The Arts:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. Health and Physical Education: Please rank each strand in order of importance to your child's education. 1 = MOST IMPORTANT; 3 = LEAST IMPORTANT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5. General question and thanks!

27. Does your child participate in any extra-curricular activities within the school? (For example Swimming Club, Concert Band, Musicals, Choir, etc)
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

28. Please list these activities in order of importance in your opinion, to your child's interests:

Thank you for completing this survey.

Should you require further information about the project please contact Rowena Riek on 0412209384 or email r.rief@griffith.edu.au

If you require further information about the National Curriculum please visit www.acara.edu.au/

If you require further information about the MYSCHOOL website please visit www.myschool.edu.au/
Appendix J – Survey results

Relevant Survey Results

Education and your child

Where did you attend primary school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other State or Territory</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of Australia</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 62
skipped question: 0

Education and your child

Where did you attend secondary school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other State or Territory</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of Australia</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 60
skipped question: 2

Education and your child

With regards to WNSS only - how would you rate your involvement level in this school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please tick:</td>
<td>9.7% (6)</td>
<td>25.8% (16)</td>
<td>37.1% (23)</td>
<td>24.2% (15)</td>
<td>3.2% (2)</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 62
skipped question: 0
### Do you know what the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy) testing program is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Response:** 60  
**Skipped:** 2

### Have any of your children been involved in the testing program at this school? Please indicate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 3 NAPLAN Test</td>
<td>54.4% (31)</td>
<td>45.6% (26)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5 NAPLAN Test</td>
<td>46.7% (21)</td>
<td>53.3% (24)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 7 NAPLAN Test</td>
<td>37.2% (16)</td>
<td>62.8% (27)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered:** 61  
**Skipped:** 1

### Are you in favour of NAPLAN and the need to test National literacy and numeracy levels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered:** 60  
**Skipped:** 2
### Education and your child

**Do you know about the MYSCHOOL website www.myschool.edu.au?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **answered question**: 60
- **skipped question**: 2

**Have you looked at the MYSCHOOL website?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **answered question**: 61
- **skipped question**: 1

**If no, why not?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too busy</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically opposed to the site</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally opposed to the site</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **answered question**: 29
- **skipped question**: 33
### Are you aware that there is a National Curriculum currently in draft and awaiting public consultation? (Access it at [www.acara.edu.au/](http://www.acara.edu.au/))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>22</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **answered question**: 39
- **skipped question**: 23

### Do you think Australia needs a National Curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **answered question**: 39
- **skipped question**: 23
Subject preferences

Arts preferences
Appendix K – Parents and teachers first round interview

First Round Interview with participants – teachers and parents

Sample questions only:

1. Would you please give me your general thoughts on education – what you think it is for, what you want for your children and how you think this is best achieved at school?

2. What are your general thoughts about the arts in schools?

3. What are your general thoughts about NAPLAN and the NC.

- Interviews are to be conversational and attempting to gain an insight into values and beliefs re education.

- Follow the lead as to where the conversation will go.
Appendix L – Student first round interview

First Round Interview with participants – students:

1. What do you like about school? Why?

2. What are your favourite subjects? Why? Tell me about them?

3. Did you do NAPLAN? Can you tell me about that?

3. What would you like to change about school if you could?

4. What would be one of your most favourite memories or something really good that you did at school?

5. Is there anything else?
Appendix M – Parents second round questions

Questions for parents: Second Round

Section One: The Courier/Sunday Mail and School Survey School Survey

1. Recently I conducted a parent survey at your school. At a similar time there was the Courier/Sunday Mail - dated 6th June 2010, “State of Education Report Card”.

Both surveys confirmed support for NAPLAN (51% in the CM/SM survey and 71.7% in the schools survey), but expressed concern about the use of the tests. The CM/SM survey suggested that 70% parents believed the NAPLAN tests detracted from teaching and that results were ‘warped’. Please comment?

2. What are your thoughts on an increased testing regime for schools, at each year level (year 1 through to year 12) in the PHASE ONE subjects?

3. In the CM/SM survey, 82% of parents thought there should be more time spent on English and 70% said there should be more time spent on Maths. Please comment on this in terms of your own opinion and in terms of the other key learning areas?

4. Parents in the CM/SM survey also supported a greater role to be played by schools to ‘keep the faith’ with 72% of parents requesting time to be spent on Religious Education. How much of a role should schools play in values education, RE and other such programs. Please comment?

Section Two: The proposed National Curriculum

1. Below is a list of the subjects in PHASE ONE of the National Curriculum: English; Maths; Science; History

The school survey results showed a high level of support for the National Curriculum with 79.5% of parents agreeing for the need to develop one. The school survey results showed that the 4 most important subjects to parents in a proposed National Curriculum were English, Mathematics and Science. Please comment on these results.

2. PHASE TWO subjects awaiting further development are:
The Arts; Geography and LOTE. In the school survey, The Arts, LOTE, History and Geography were ranked as the least important. Please comment on this and what you would expect to see in terms of the best curriculum for your child?

3. PHASE THREE subjects that are yet to be drafted include HPE, Technology and ICT. Yet, HPE and Technology appeared as high priorities in both surveys.
4. This was also an issue in the CM/SM survey with 45% of parents supporting the need for a minimum of 2 hours per week spent on HPE and Sport. Some parents suggesting 45 mins. per day to be spent on HPE. The CM/SM research also found that teachers however were feeling that it is becoming very difficult to fit everything into an already crowded curriculum. Please comment?

5. The school survey results showed that the arts ranked in order of importance were – 1. MUSIC, 2. DRAMA, 3. MEDIA, 4. VISUAL ARTS and 5. DANCE. With regards to the teaching of the arts in schools, which of the five arts strands would you prefer to see your child focus on in the primary years?

6. Creative thinking and practice are two of very sort after credentials in the 21st century workforce. The arts are usually considered the curriculum areas responsible for this development. How do you think the school has covered this in your child’s curriculum? Please use examples where you can recall any specifics.

7. If there were no arts subjects (including classroom music) or instrumental music in the school curriculum, how would you as a parent develop creative thinking and practice in your children?

8. The CM/SM research suggested that some parents look to schools for parenting support and advice, with 84% of parents under 35 asking for future programs run by schools. What are your thoughts on this topic?

9. The CM/SM survey also demonstrated a strong support for same sex classes. What are your thoughts on this?

Section Three: Education and politics

1. Please comment on the ‘Building the Education Revolution’ under the recent Federal Government.

2. Who do you think should be responsible for the development of education policy? How do you think the Federal Government should intervene into the Education system, given that constitutionally it is a State responsibility?

3. Do you think that the current education system reflects your own values and beliefs? Where do you see education policy and practice heading in the future for Australian schools? Where would you like to see it go to prepare students as much as is possible for an unknown future?
Appendix N – Staff group forum questions

Questions for staff: group forum:

Section One: School Survey and the Courier/Sunday Mail survey.

1. Recently I conducted a parent survey at your school. At a similar time there was the Courier/Sunday Mail (CM/SM) survey - dated 6th June 2010, “State of Education Report Card”.

Both surveys confirmed support for NAPLAN (51% in the CM/SM survey and 71.7% in the schools survey), but expressed concern about the use of the tests. The CM/SM survey suggested that 70% parents believed the NAPLAN tests detracted from teaching and that results were ‘warped’. Please comment?

Have you had any parent feedback regarding NAPLAN?
Have you had any departmental/professional feedback since the 2010 tests?

2. In the CM/SM survey, 82% of parents thought there should be more time spent on English and 70% said there should be more time spent on Maths. Please comment on this in terms of your own opinion and in terms of the other key learning areas?

3. What are your thoughts on an increased testing regime for schools, at each year level (year 1 through to year 12) in the PHASE ONE subjects?

4. Parents in the CM/SM survey also supported a greater role to be played by schools to ‘keep the faith’ with 72% of parents requesting time to be spent on RE. Please comment? Do you currently have any ‘values’ education in your program?

5. The CM/SM research suggested that some parents look to schools for parenting support and advice, with 84% of parents under 35 asking for future programs run by schools. What are your thoughts on this topic?

6. The CM/SM survey also demonstrated a strong support for same sex classes. What are your thoughts on this?

Section Two: The proposed National Curriculum

1. The school survey results showed a high level of support for the National Curriculum with 79.5% of parents agreeing for the need to develop one.

Here is a list of the subjects in PHASE ONE of the National Curriculum: 

English; Maths; Science; History.

The school survey results showed that the 4 most important subjects to parents in a proposed National Curriculum were English, Mathematics and Science. Please comment on these results.
2. PHASE TWO subjects awaiting further development are:
The Arts; Geography and LOTE. In the **school survey**, The Arts, LOTE, History and Geography were ranked as the least important. Please comment.

If PHASE TWO subjects are implemented, there will be a mandated requirement that the arts are taught for 2 hours a week? How will you meet this requirement? Do you envisage this including the 30 minutes for the music specialist that Qld currently has?

3. Please comment on the possible abolition of the classroom music specialist in Qld if the National Curriculum suggests such modifications?

4. In the school survey parents ranked the arts in order of importance as follows – **MUSIC, DRAMA, MEDIA, VISUAL ARTS and DANCE**. With regards to the teaching of the arts in schools, which of the five arts strands would you prefer to focus on in the primary years?

5. Creative thinking and practice are two of very sort after credentials in the 21st century workforce. The arts are usually considered the curriculum area responsible for this development. How do you cover this in the curriculum at this school? Please use examples where you can recall any specifics.

6. If you found that you were unable to cover all 8 KLAs in your given teaching time, how would you prioritise the list? Please give consideration to mandates, your own teaching philosophy and values?

7. PHASE THREE National Curriculum subjects that are yet to be drafted include HPE, Technology and ICT. Yet, HPE and Technology appeared as high priorities in both surveys.

The **CM/SM survey** results showed that 45% of parents supported the need for a minimum of 2 hours per week to be spent on HPE and Sport. Some parents suggesting 45 mins. per day to be spent on HPE. The CM/SM research also found that teachers however were feeling that it is becoming very difficult to fit everything into an already crowded curriculum. Please comment?

Section Three: Education and politics.

4. Who do you think should be responsible for the development of education policy?

5. How do you think the Federal Government should intervene into the Education system, given that constitutionally it is a State responsibility?

6. Please comment on the ‘**Building the Education Revolution**’ under the recent Federal Government.

7. Do you think that the current education system reflects your own values and beliefs?
8. Where do you see education policy and practice heading in the future for Australian schools? Where would you like to see it go to prepare students as much as is possible for an unknown future?

Regarding the report: “A survey conducted by the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) found that 85 per cent of primary school principals strongly supported the Building the Education Revolution. This survey reflects the overwhelming feedback the Government has received from principals and school communities around the nation.”

“The National Coordinator’s Implementation Report confirms that there have been 55 complaints out of 25 489 applications and 24 382 projects funded. This amounts to 0.22 per cent of applications and 0.23 per cent of projects funded.”

Appendix O – Parent follow up questions

Parents follow up questions: Griffith University.

Dear ____________

Please answer the following questions with regards to your current schooling situation.

1. What are your thoughts on the Australian Curriculum to date?

2. Have you been made aware of the changes being made to the school curriculum of this change?

3. How do you envisage teachers implementing the arts national curriculum to include all areas – dance, music, drama, visual arts, media arts?

4. What do you think the future of education looks like in terms of the economy, creativity and knowledge?

5. What are your thoughts on the new Flying Start (Year 7 to high school policy) policy and how do you think it will go in Queensland?

Once again, thank you kindly for you time and contribution to this research.

Rowena Riek
Appendix P – Relevant policy

Australian Curriculum at http://www.acara.edu.au

NAPLAN – the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
http://www.naplan.edu.au

MySchool – the comparative schools website linked to NAPLAN found at
http://www.myschool.edu.au

Melbourne Declaration


More Than Bums on Seats -

Queensland State Education – 2010

1-10 Curriculum Framework :Outcomes Based Education


Inclusive Education (students with disabilities) (June 2004)

Queensland’s Future - Building on the Smart State - a discussion paper on the future of the Smart State (November 2004)

Productive Pedagogies (2001) within The New Basics Project

Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework (DETA 2005)


Changes to School Reporting commenced and QCAR developed.


Regional Literacy Managers were appointed along with funding for Heads of Curriculum for Primary schools


Numeracy: Lifelong Confidence with Mathematics Framework (2007) -


One School Reporting and Preparation -


PAT-R- Maths, comprehension and science assessment -
http://www.acer.edu.au/tests/pat-reading;
http://www.acer.edu.au/tests/patmaths-plus;
ttp://www.acer.edu.au/tests/pat-spelling-punctuation-grammar;
https://shop.acer.edu.au/acer-shop/group/PATS

Teaching and Learning Audits (2010) -


Strategic plan (2013) Education Queensland -
Appendix Q – Sample timetable

Sample timetable – year four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Parade (20 minutes)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>English Maths</th>
<th>Tech/English Maths</th>
<th>Parade (30 minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.00 – 10.45</td>
<td>HPE (30 minutes)</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15 – 12.45</td>
<td>Maths Reading</td>
<td>Maths Reading</td>
<td>English Music (30 minutes) English</td>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>Maths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15 – 2.45</td>
<td>Reading Science</td>
<td>Reading Arts</td>
<td>Reading SOSE</td>
<td>RE LOTE (30 minutes) English</td>
<td>Arts or other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Appendix R – Research participants

Students

Karen

Karen is a female student who had attended the case study school for all of the years of primary school. She had just begun year eight at the local secondary school at the time of her interview. Karen was interviewed at her home with her mother present for the duration of the interview. She was enthusiastic about school and stated that it was a good place to be and that “hands on” activities were the highlight of school life. Karen played an instrument in the school band and had participated in all the available music activities that the school offered in terms of concert band, choir and performance opportunities associated with these groups at school and outside of school representative activities such as competitions and music camps. She also enjoyed representing the school in sport and was pleased to be able to contribute this way to the school community. Music and sport remained Karen’s favourite subjects at school. The extension activities offered at the school were a highlight and Karen commented that one of the activities she had participated in was a play that they produced in 2009 where she was in the lead role. She was achieving high levels of academic and extra-curricular success.

Elisha

Elisha is a female student who at the time of interviewing belonged to the upper primary school. She was interviewed at her home in the presence of her mother, father and sibling. Elisha was a well-spoken and articulate child who had recently arrived at the school. She discussed her favourite subjects and her general thoughts on schooling, with the occasional assistance of her mother. Her favourite part of the week was interschool sport where she was able to travel to other schools and compete in netball. A favourite curriculum subject was visual arts, particularly painting. She was a member of the student council and had suggested the next fundraiser might go towards buying new instruments for the music department.

Lilly

Lilly is a female student who at the time of interviewing belonged to the lower primary school. She answered questions with the assistance of her mother who was present for the
entire interview. Her father and sibling were also present at this time. Lilly stated that visual art was her favourite subject along with choir and that she really enjoyed being a part of this group. She loved reading, writing storied and visits to the school by external providers such as Queensland Arts Council and Book Week initiatives such as The Book Garden visits were an enjoyable part of the school term.

**Lisa**

Lisa is from the early years of primary school and she recalled her experiences as ones that she either liked or disliked because of their ability to engage her interest. She was interviewed at home with her mother and sister present. Visual art was one of the favourites, along with the visits made to the school by the Queensland Arts Council and activities that were hands on. She made particular comment about the recent performance that took to the student body the theory of Edward DeBono’s five thinking caps – “The Dragon’s Hat” ([http://qac.org.au/](http://qac.org.au/)). The student commented that she was looking forward to the scheduled excursion to the zoo to study Australian animals, although she described the topic itself as “a little boring”. The student was able to articulate that school activities that involved games in learning were the most enjoyable – maths games, games in HPE. Overall, however the student enjoyed school and liked all of the subjects that she had been studying in and out of class. Her general recollections were positive and optimistic.

**Amelia**

Amelia is from the upper primary school and was interviewed at home with her mother and sibling present. She described different elements of school that engaged or disengaged her from learning. On her own admission she was not “into” reading and therefore found some things difficult arguing that she did not practice the skill enough. This was not an academic issue but she recognised that she should read more. Amelia also commented positively on external providers such as the Queensland Arts Council visits, the Instrumental Music Program that she belonged to and the extension program that she had also been a part of where she had been successful in being placed in a music extension activity; clay animation, sailing and she was looking forward to the drama unit she had just enrolled in. Overall, Amelia enjoyed school. She was a confident and well-spoken student who understood her own strengths and weaknesses and how to articulate these to the interviewer. She was School Captain and this was a hurdle for her to overcome with her
mother stating “School captain was hard on you. We worked through that... If you don’t try, you don’t get anywhere”. She was about to embark on an overseas family holiday and was looking forward to taking her drama script with her to learn on the plane. The family all valued music and the mother and father were either actively learning or had learned an instrument.

Jo

Jo was one of two of the participants who had recently moved into secondary school studying year eight, however she had previously attended AASS for the duration of her primary schooling. She was interviewed at her home with her mother and father and siblings present. She commented that she no longer participated in interschool sport and was able to elect to do choir instead which she thought was an excellent option. The Instrumental Music Program remained a highlight for Jo and she was at the time of the research undertaking the study of two instruments and was playing in the school band. She began as an instrumental music student in year five through the Instrumental Music Program and participated in all of the events that the school had offered her in terms of music performances, competitions, festivals and camps. Her family was very supportive of the music program in the primary and secondary school. She had been a member of the choir at primary school as well and participated in the school musicals. Her year seven recollection of her two favourite subjects was music and languages. Jo was a very enthusiastic interviewee who articulated well the way she had moved through the schooling years.

Charlie

Charlie is a student in the upper primary school and was interviewed at home with her family present at the interview. Charlie began the interview by commenting that her favourite subjects were science, visual art and English. The aspects of primary school that she did not like were “the long days and moving on to different subjects when you get into one subject and how you actually learn more about one subject and learn less about another one”. Charlie was a member of the Instrumental Music Program and played in the school band. Charlie commented that when she leaves school she would like to be one of many things from a musician to a zoologist. She understood that school was the gateway to these possibilities and therefore she was undertaking a wide variety of opportunities that
would assist her in achieving success. She was very articulate in her comments about the activities that she had been involved in and mostly, she was looking forward to the Instrumental Music tours and workshops that she knew were approaching. Like many of the previous participants, the most engaging activities for Charlie were those that were practical and authentic.

**Alannah**

Alannah is a student from the upper primary years and she was interviewed at home with her parents and siblings present. She considered visual art, technology (building things as opposed to ICT) and maths as her favourite subjects. She was part of the instrumental music program learning the bass clarinet and she had just attended a large multi-school camp where she recalled participating in the dance, singing and playing opportunities offered there. Studies of Society and Environment was not one of her favourite subjects, although she was looking forward to the camp that was associated with one of the units of work covered in SOSE. Health and Physical education was also a subject that the student did not appear to consider a favourite, except for the swimming component.

**Henry**

Henry is a male student from the upper years of primary school. He was interviewed at his home with his parents and two of his siblings present. Henry was a very enthusiastic and engaging participant and had much to say about school and how he saw it contributing to his experiences thus far. He was a member of the school choir and the Instrumental Music Program. When he leaves school he would like to be a policeman or a primary school teacher.

**Harry**

Harry is a male student from the upper primary years and he was interviewed at home with his mother and siblings present. Harry was keen to describe the favourite part of his week beginning with a clay animation that the class were working on based on an indigenous story. He enjoyed going to instrumental music and he was currently learning the trombone. He enjoyed HPE and Interschool Sport as they were subjects that took him out of school and away from “working”. He stated “we get active and get out of school”. He also enjoyed the extension weeks and had experienced a lot of the physical activities on offer such as
trampolining and gymnastics. He joked that the favourite part of the school day was “going home”.

**Byron**

Byron was a male student from the lower primary years and was interviewed at his home with his mother and siblings present. His mother contributed to the conversation at times. He enjoyed attending classroom music lessons, visual art and SOSE, but did not enjoy English or mathematics. He remembered no drama or dance activities in class although he vaguely recalled doing some drama in year two with a supply teacher for the day.

**Lizzie**

Lizzie is a year five student at the school and was interviewed after school in the library with her mother and sister present. Her favourite subjects she talked about are concert band, visual art and mathematics. She enjoyed the different ways that she had learned to do mathematics and that was why she thought it was her favourite subject. She also enjoyed her involvement in the Instrumental Music Program where she was now able to read music and participate in band. She enjoyed the recent band camp she had attended. She is a quiet achiever and one who embraces much of the responsibilities that school requires for success and she enjoys the participation and co-operation within the school community.

**Matilda**

Matilda is a younger student in the early years of school and she was interviewed with her mother and sister present in the school library. We began this interview about NAPLAN as it was a recent event in this student’s life. She had just completed the year three test and was a little worried but felt proud at the end of it as she did well. Everything about school was considered good, when asked if there were other things she would like to do she said she would like to write more stories. Matilda is a quiet student who articulated succinctly the things she liked about school.

**Molly**

Molly is a female student from the upper years of primary school; she was interviewed at home with both her mother and father present. She was very articulate and confident and spoke clearly about her participation in the school. She was aiming for a leadership
position in year seven and acknowledged that she was looking forward to this opportunity. She was in a composite class (year 6/7 combined) and enjoyed covering the work that the year sevens were covering. Molly was a member of the school choir and the Instrumental Music Program and was a keen participant in these activities. Instrumental Music was her favourite part of the arts and she really enjoyed learning pieces of music that people know like the theme from Harry Potter. As far as any possible changes that could be made, Molly acknowledged that resourcing was an issue and that the school was overdue for renewal in terms of buildings and school supplies. Molly’s mother added that their children were naturally inquisitive by nature and that despite what happened with the national curriculum and other such policies, her children would do well at school because of this very supportive and creative home life.

Parents

Harper

Harper is the mother of two students at AASS. She is the parent of one of the student participants. She was interviewed after a recommendation from a teaching staff member. She was interviewed at her home during the school day. She was educated overseas and moved to Australia after completing all of her schooling abroad. She speaks a second language other than English.

Audrey

Audrey is the mother of two of the student participants. She was interviewed after a recommendation from a teaching staff member. She was interviewed in the school library during school hours.

Beryl

Beryl is also a teacher aide at the school, but was interviewed in the capacity of parent. She has had children go through AASS and has worked at the school for a number of years, firstly as a volunteer and now as a staff member.
Sarah

Sarah is the mother of three of the student participants all of who have attended the school, with one now moved to secondary school for year eight. She assisted at school for reading groups and in the classroom regularly. She was interviewed at her home.

Ruby

Ruby is a mother of three children at the school. She assisted at school for reading groups and in the classroom. She came forward to be interviewed after completing the school survey. Ruby was interviewed at her home after her children had gone to school.

Lucy

Lucy is a mother of three children, all of who have attended the school, with one now moved to secondary school for year eight. She assisted at school for reading groups and in the classroom. English is a second language. Lucy was interviewed at her home after her children had gone to school.

Evelyn

Evelyn is a mother of one child at the school. She assists at the school in her professional role and she was recommended for interview from one of the teaching staff. Evelyn was interviewed at the school library on her way to work during office hours.

Katherine and Jack

Katherine and Jack are the parents within a large family from the AASS community. Katherine is involved in many volunteer activities to support the school community. She moved to Queensland from New South Wales and has had children attend both systems of schooling. Katherine attended AASS as a student and was taught by one of the teacher participants. Katherine and Jack are the parents of four of the student participants. Katherine was initially interviewed in the school library after the school day had begun and then Jack and Katherine were interviewed together at their home in the evening during the school week.
**Peta and George**

Peta is the mother of three students who attend AASS. She is married to George who works in education. They are both involved as volunteers at the school. Peta and George were interviewed at their home after school hours.

**Andrea**

Andrea is the mother of two children who attend the school. She is involved in the Parents and Citizen’s Association and is a dedicated volunteer. She is the mother of two of the student participants. Andrea was interviewed at her home after her children had gone to school.

**Simone and Clayton**

Simone and Clayton are the parents of two students at the school. Simone is a volunteer within the classroom and Clayton works in education. Simone was born overseas. Simone and Clayton were interviewed at their home on the weekend. They both speak a second language other than English.

**Jenny**

Jenny is a parent of two students who attend AASS, and she has been a regular support for the classroom teacher in the classroom regularly helping with reading and other literacy tasks. She also volunteers at Arts events and has been a great support for the Instrumental Music Program. She was interviewed at school after drop off.

**Teachers**

**Gail**

Gail has been a teacher with the Department of Education for more than four decades. She has taught at this school for most of that time. This now encompasses many generations of students, parents and actual teaching staff who have been taught by Gail. She is a highly respected member of the staff and school community. She teaches in the upper school. She was interviewed in her classroom, and then as part of the staff forum in the school library.
Kassie

Kassie is an upper years teacher who has been teaching for two decades and also holds a fine arts degree so she has a strong visual arts component within her program at the school. She is an advocate for the arts and their capacity to teach and engage students. She was interviewed at her home and then in the library as part of a staff forum.

Rose

Rose was originally a secondary school visual art teacher. She now teaches predominantly in the middle primary years of three, four or five. Due to her cross sector experience she has gained a new and deep respect for primary teachers who have to deal with many of the “parenting” issues that are not often present in secondary schools. She is also an advocate for visual art, instrumental music and music generally and their capacity to teach and engage students, and to contribute to a students overall academic success. She was interviewed in her classroom and then in the library as part of a staff forum.

Paris

Paris is an upper years teacher who has been teaching for almost two decades and has also had a background in the performing arts. She is an advocate holding and maintaining at all times high expectations of students in her classes in all areas of school in order to best prepare them for the secondary arena. She is a strong supported and practitioner of arts programs in the school. She was interviewed in her classroom and then in the library as part of a staff forum.

Charlotte

Charlotte is an experienced teacher who was originally a primary school music specialist. She now teaches predominantly in the middle primary years of three, four or five. Due to her move from specialist to classroom experience she had gained a deep understanding of the delicate balancing act between classroom teaching and specialist teaching and how to get as much from each as possible. She is also an advocate for the arts and their capacity to teach and engage students, and to contribute to a students overall academic success. She was interviewed in her classroom and then via email as the Department transferred her to Far North Queensland.
Vi

Vi is an early years teacher who was new to the teaching profession. She is a strong supported and practitioner of arts programs in the school and uses it as part of her subject integration program and as a forum for the student to engage a diverse range of students. Vi was interviewed in her classroom and then in the library as part of a staff forum.

Grace

Grace is an experienced teacher who was originally a teacher in New Zealand. She teaches predominantly in the upper years. She was a great advocate for higher order thinking through authentic learning and assessment and was very focused on pedagogy that produced results in these areas for her students. She was interviewed in her classroom and then as part of the staff forum.

Gary

Gary is an experienced teacher who was originally a primary school physical education specialist, then country school principal. When he moved to primary classroom he predominantly worked in the upper middle primary years, but was now in a composite in the early years. Due to his move from specialist to administrator to classroom he had gained a deep understanding of the delicate balancing act between teaching, managing and community communication. He was a great advocate for the arts and their capacity to teach and engage students, particularly in the early years where he believed they were fundamental. He was interviewed in his classroom and then as part of the staff forum.

Melanie

Melanie is an experienced teacher who works in the upper years. She was heavily involved in sport in the school and was a great advocate for children to be actively engaged in their learning. Melanie worked towards this through hands-on, inclusive practices that supported a diverse range of learners. She was interviewed at the researchers home and then as part of the staff forum.

Sophie

Sophie teaches predominantly in the upper years. She was originally a primary school physical education specialist. She was an experienced teacher who was a great advocate
for children to be responsible for their own learning. This was achieved through a careful process of differentiation and negotiation. She was interviewed at school and then via follow up written material, as she was unavailable at the time of the second staff forum.

**Mary**

Mary was originally a primary classroom teacher and she has many years of teaching experience. She now works as part of the support staff in the school and is instrumental in the role she plays in facilitating learning across all year levels. She is a great advocate for the link being made between the child, the family and the school to ensure thorough support for education success. She supported this through scaffolding her activities to suit the needs of a diverse range of learners. She was interviewed at school and then as part of the second staff forum.

**Jake**

Jake has been a teacher with the Department of Education for almost three decades. He is a very experienced teacher who has taught at this school for some time and he has predominantly taught in the early years. He is a highly respected member of the staff and school community. He was interviewed as part of the staff forum in the school library.

**Toni**

Toni is an experienced teacher who teaches predominantly in the upper years. Like Melanie, she was involved in sport in the school. In addition to this, Toni was involved in many of the student leadership activities that the school offered for the upper school students. She was interviewed as part of the staff forum.

**Min**

Min is the school principal. She was originally a secondary school teacher and then moved to the primary sector to eventually become a principal. Min had been principal of the school for a decade, and was currently in the process of overseeing a large grant to upgrade school facilities. Her primary focus centered on all members of the school community modeling the behaviour they expect to see in others, from academic success to behaviour in the school yard. With the staff, Min is a great advocate for continual professional development of an academic nature that can be transferred into tangible skills in the
classroom. The following table illustrates the connections between the students, their parents and their teachers.

**The connections between student, parent and teacher:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>Harper</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alannah</td>
<td>Katherine and Jack</td>
<td>Vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>Katherine and Jack</td>
<td>Vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Katherine and Jack</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Katherine and Jack</td>
<td>Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Non-participating male staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Kassie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matilda</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>Two non-participating female staff – job sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lizzie</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>Kassie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilly</td>
<td>Simone and Clayton</td>
<td>Rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>Simone and Clayton</td>
<td>Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Non-participating female teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent only interviewed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Beryl</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent only interviewed</td>
<td>Evelyn</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Peta</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent only interviewed</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent only interviewed</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table makes the connections between the teaching staff, students and parents and it is relevant to the discussion in Chapter Eight where similarities and differences are acknowledged across groups. It reveals the connections between curriculum intent and experiences in the classroom, as well as the value placed on certain things at home by the
parents. In the data analysis, there is a clear connection between the responses from some student participants, matching the teaching experience and the parental expectations.
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