A Case Study of Teachers' Work to Implement the

Australian Curriculum: History

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Abstract

In recent years Australian schools entered a period of significant curriculum change with the phased implementation of a national curriculum. This research focuses on the work of teachers as they enact the official curriculum; their role in curriculum change is critical (Brady & Kennedy, 2003; Clandinin & Connolly, 1990; Smith & Lovat, 2003). History was one of the subjects included in the first phase of the Australian curriculum development. Teachers' understanding of the discipline, purpose and appropriate pedagogies is essential to student success in history (Taylor, 2008; Yilmaz, 2008). As an education officer working in curriculum support with history teachers across Queensland, a large state with considerable remote rural areas, I was interested in understanding the particular challenges of curriculum implementation for teachers in rural schools. The research reported in this thesis is a single-site educational case study that examines the experiences of one team of teachers as they planned for the implementation of the new curriculum, in the learning area of history, in a rural secondary school in Queensland. I locate my research at the intersection of four fields of inquiry: curriculum change, history curriculum, rural schooling and teachers' work as mediators of the curriculum.

This qualitative study is situated in a social constructionist paradigm, which holds that knowledge and meaning is brought into being through historically and culturally situated social practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Crotty, 1998; Gergen & Gergen 2003, 2008a). As such, I acknowledge the constructed and tentative nature of my research findings. Discourse theory informed data collection, analysis and interpretation. Discourse theory offers an explanation of how we make meaning of the world and emphasises the critical role of language in all social activity and meaning

making (Dryzek, 2005; Gergen & Gergen, 2008a; Philips & Hardy, 2002). Community of practice theory is a social theory of learning relevant to this study of how teachers learned together about a new curriculum, and informed the design and interpretation of this research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Facilitating access to teachers' authentic work was a key consideration in the research design. An action research approach was adopted that allowed teachers to work on real problems of practice specific to their context, and established a social setting that afforded my involvement alongside teachers. In negotiation with the school, it was decided to focus on planning for the Year 8 course of the *Australian Curriculum: History* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013b). Three whole-day planning meetings with teachers were arranged on site across a nine month period from 2012-2013.

The four teacher participants were all early career teachers. The remote location of the school meant that these teachers experienced a sense of professional isolation, an issue more acute given the task of introducing a new curriculum. A feature of this research design was my own participation in the planning days as a support for the teacher participants. Managing dual roles of participant and researcher has challenges (Fletcher, 2008; Grant, Nelson & Mitchell, 2008; Mackewn, 2008) and I found it effective to conceptualise my advisory role within this project as boundary participation and brokerage work (Wenger, 1998).

The data collected for analysis were audio recordings of the three planning day meetings and semi-structured interviews with teachers prior to the first planning day. Discourse analysis offers tools to deconstruct language in use to reveal the attitudes, values and beliefs that underpin social activity. Acknowledging the storied nature of human experience, and to reduce the large data set into manageable units of

analysis without losing the richness of the case, I identified small stories in the data (Bamberg, 2004; Georgakopoulou 2007). Adapting Gee's (1999, 2005) methods of discourse analysis, representative small stories drawn from the data were analysed to identify how language was used to build activities, significance, connections, identities and relationships. Discourses are frameworks for social activity, identifiable in patterns of thinking and acting in the world (Larsen, 2010; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). I looked for patterns across the initial discourse analysis of the small stories to identify the discourses in operation. As the teachers went about their practice of collaborative curriculum decision-making they wove together particular discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism. The identification of how these discourses were connected by teachers in this historical and socio-cultural context is significant because it offers insight into the complexity of teachers' curriculum work.

This research design informs the work of qualitative researchers. It has shown the reciprocal benefits for schools and researchers of using action research as a tool for data collection. It has developed a new application of the concept of 'small stories' developed by Bamberg (2004) and Georgakopoulou (2007) as units of analysis that keep intact the rich detail of teachers' talk-in-action. It also contributes an example of how Gee's (1999, 2005) method of discourse analysis can be adapted to suit a particular inquiry.

This study also provides further evidence, in a new context, of ways community of practice theory provides useful explanatory tools for educational research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Four key concepts from community of practice theory provided an interpretive lens that supported the identification of: how teachers accomplished mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of curriculum

planning for history; the shared repertoire of practices they built across the study; how teachers learned together about curriculum implementation; and, the nature of different membership roles. Discourse theory enriched this interpretation, surfacing the attitudes, values and beliefs that underpinned practice. In this way this study has advanced theory by highlighting the complementarity of discourse theory and community of practice theory.

Although I make no claims to general applicability across all school contexts, the detail of this case deepens knowledge of teachers' work in curriculum implementation and curriculum change, the rural teacher experience, and how the continuing professional learning of history teachers can be supported. This study contributes to the body of research monitoring the implementation of the national curriculum in Australia and has implications for those working to support teachers through curriculum change. It offers a detailed account of how teachers at one site managed the first year of a top-down curriculum change, working with a new curriculum that was more strongly framed than previous curricula. This study of curriculum implementation examines the process of transforming and re-contextualising the official curriculum for a particular learning context (Brady & Kennedy, 2003; Briant & Doherty, 2012).

With many decisions outside the classroom teachers' control, these teacher participants adopted a pragmatic focus on areas where they had most agency: choosing topics from options available, selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches and designing assessment. Teachers placed students at the centre of their decision-making, seeking ways to engage and support learners. Their collegial and collaborative ways of working supported decision-making practices and learning together about the new curriculum. Assembling the range of teacher knowledges

needed for curriculum implementation was a collaborative accomplishment of the community of practice (Shulman, 1987, 2004). This study also exposes some of the challenges in curriculum implementation and highlights the resilience, persistence and commitment of teachers in working through tensions in practice. It points to the value of education employers investing time to supporting the development of such communities of practice.

This research makes explicit the thinking and concerns of teachers as they made their curriculum plans for history. What emerged strongly in this case study was that historical content did not drive the curriculum work of these history teachers. Rather they emphasised the skills and concepts specific to historical inquiry, aligning with the dominant approach to school history internationally (Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas, 2015; Thornton & Barton, 2010; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013; Wineburg, 1999). The experiences of these early career history teachers suggest priorities for professional learning that can inform the work of those preparing teacher education courses and developing professional learning activities for teachers of history.

It has been argued that rural schooling is under-researched and that there is a tendency to reduce rural schools to sets of data that ignore the diversity of rural places and the social and cultural dimensions of the rural experience (Gannon, 2013; Roberts & Green, 2013; Sullivan, Perry & McConney 2013; White & Reid, 2008). This single-site qualitative case study contributes a "thick description" of the curriculum planning and decision-making work in one rural school setting (McGinn, 2010, p. 287). The research deepens knowledge of the rural school experience and challenges deficit discourses by identifying the capacity, confidence and commitment of this group of early career rural teachers. Further, the study informs the provision of

continuing professional learning for teachers and for those professionals who work in advisory roles with schools.

Keywords

Statement of Originality

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 were due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:

Student name: Lynette Sherington

Date: 31 March, 2017

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis is a case study of teachers' work, to plan for the implementation of a new curriculum, in the learning area of history, in a rural school. For teachers, curriculum change can be professionally stimulating but it can also be a time of apprehension, uncertainty and work intensification. In Australia, from 2008 the states and territories moved from national collaboration on curriculum towards the adoption of a national curriculum, a significant change for education in Australia (Brennan, 2011). History was one of the subjects included in the first phase of development of the Australian Curriculum, part of a move to a more disciplinary focus in the curriculum. The state of Queensland began the staged implementation of the national curriculum in 2012; the new history curriculum was implemented state-wide in 2013 (Department of Education, Training and Employment [DETE], 2014).

This study's analytic lens is on the work of teachers. The success of curriculum implementation is dependent on the knowledge base and work of teachers. As Kelly (2004) asserts: "Teachers have a 'make or break' role in any curriculum innovation" (p. 9). In the lead up to the implementation of the new history curriculum in Australia it was identified that there would be many teachers of history classes with limited professional preparation or experience in the subject (Taylor & Clark, 2006). This potential issue of implementation was likely to be even more acute in small rural schools, which typically have a high proportion of early career teachers and where teachers often teach subjects for which they have no professional preparation (White & Reid, 2008). As an education officer working to support history teachers across Queensland, I was interested in understanding the particular challenges facing teachers in rural schools.

This research, in seeking to understand teachers' curriculum work, does not investigate the work of a group of highly experienced educators in the centre of professional networks. Instead, it brings the practical realities of curriculum change into sharp relief with a focus on early career teachers, some of who had no professional preparation in the discipline of history, working in relative isolation, in a rural secondary school, with limited support. It investigated how this small team of teachers navigated the first year of implementation of a new history curriculum in Queensland, with a particular focus on the impact of the rural context on teachers' work. This single site educational case study adopted an action research approach and involved myself working with the teachers in an advisory capacity during three whole-day planning meetings spaced over a nine month period from 2012 to 2013. The context of this case study places it at the intersection of four fields of inquiry: curriculum change, history curriculum, rural schooling and teachers' work as mediators of the curriculum (see Figure 1, overleaf).

In this introductory chapter I briefly outline the Australian context of this study in terms of the change to a national curriculum, the new history curriculum, and the nature of rural schooling. I explain the scope and purpose of this research and the research questions guiding the study. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the organisation of this thesis.
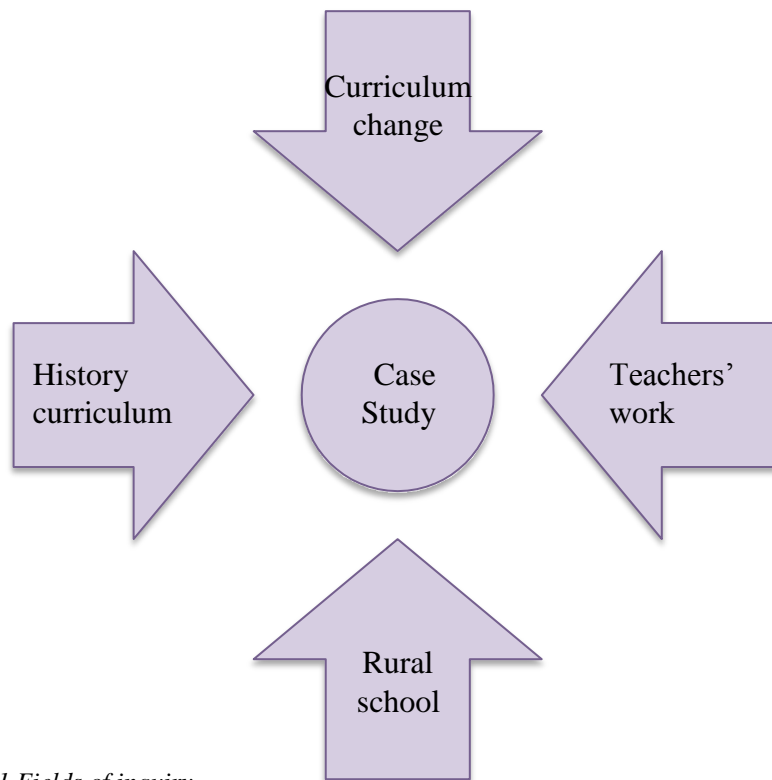
Figure 1 Fields of inquiry

Context of the Study

Moves Toward a National Curriculum in Australia

Australian schools are currently in a significant period of curriculum change as they undertake the phased implementation of Australia's first national curriculum. A series of national meetings and agreements identified and refined goals for schooling for all Australian children and were key milestones in the transition from increasing national collaboration towards a national curriculum (Brennan, 2011; Watt, 2005, 2008). The 1989 *Hobart Declaration on Schooling (1989)* saw State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education make "an historic commitment to improving Australian Schooling within a framework of national collaboration" (Australian Education Council [AEC], 1989, p.1). Ten years later *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* included

the identification of eight key learning areas: the arts, English, languages other than English, mathematics, science, studies of society and the environment, and technology (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 1999). In 2008 the National Curriculum Board was formed to progress a national curriculum, producing *The Shape of the National Curriculum: A Proposal for Discussion* (Brennan, 2011). Later that year, the Australian Education Ministers made the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). This superseded the two earlier agreements and highlights the need for education to prepare young people for the complexities of life in the 21st century. The 'Melbourne Declaration' has two overarching goals that now underpin the Australian Curriculum:

- Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
- Goal 2: All young Australians become:
  - successful learners
  - confident and creative individuals
  - active and informed citizens (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7).

The *Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Four Year Plan 2009 – 2012* which accompanied the 'Melbourne Declaration' included the formation of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to deliver the curriculum reforms. ACARA was charged with, "…development of a rigorous, world-class national curriculum, which builds on early childhood learning, from the first year of schooling to Year 12" (MCEETYA, 2009, p. 14).

The Australian states and territories endorsed curriculum in the phase one subjects of English, Mathematics, Science and History in December 2010 (ACARA, 2014). Later phases have seen the roll out of more subjects. At the time of writing,

version 8.3 of the Foundation to Year 10 curriculum was available for English, Mathematics, Humanities and Social Sciences (including the subjects History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business for Years 7–10), The Arts, Technologies, Health and Physical Education, a range of language subjects and an optional Work Studies subject for Years 9–10 (ACARA, 2106b). ACARA has also developed a suite of 15 senior secondary subjects, which includes Ancient History and Modern History (ACARA, 2016c). In Queensland, the state where this research took place, the Australian Curriculum is being progressively implemented. English, Mathematics and Science were introduced in 2012 to Year 10. History to Year 10, the focus of this research, was introduced in 2013 (DETE, 2014). This research began late in 2012 as teachers were preparing for the first year of the new history curriculum, and followed the teachers into 2013 as their implementation work continued.

The implementation of any new curriculum requires ongoing evaluation. For educators in Australia, a range of studies will be needed to reflect on the implementation and outcomes of this curriculum work – in diverse contexts, employing varied methodologies, and at different scales. To date most of the published research related to the Australian Curriculum evaluates the content of the curriculum and the thinking underpinning it, while systemic evaluations necessarily take a broad perspective (for example, Australian Government, 2015; Atweh & Singh, 2011; Gilbert, 2011; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Long & Garrett, 2014; Lupton, 2012). As a single site case study this research adds a "thick description" of curriculum change at one site and contributes to the growing body of research that is monitoring this significant educational change in Australia (McGinn, 2010, p. 287). It also contributes a rich account of teachers' work to the international literature on curriculum change.

The Australian History Curriculum

The subject history was positioned prominently in the Australian Curriculum as a phase one learning area from Foundation to Year 10, and forms part of the educational entitlement of all young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008, 2009). The study of history in the Australian Curriculum aims to contribute to the goals of the 'Melbourne Declaration' through the development of knowledge, understanding and skills for active and informed citizenship, through "a world history approach within which the history of Australia is taught" (ACARA, 2016d, p. 1). *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History*, a paper developed to guide the work of curriculum writers, states that through the study of history students should develop knowledge and understandings to equip them for future citizenship roles in a complex, rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world: "To equip students to operate in the world in which they live, they need to understand world history. History should have a broad and comprehensive foundation from which its implications for Australia can be grasped" (National Curriculum Board, 2009, p. 12).

This history curriculum represents a return to a more disciplinary focus in the curriculum. Previously, historical topics and skills had been taught in many parts of Australia (including Queensland where this research took place) as part of the learning area Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) (Tambyah, 2012). The history curriculum details the historical knowledge and understanding and historical skills to be taught at each year level. The rationale for the curriculum promotes the importance of the skills developed during historical inquiry: "The process of historical inquiry develops transferable skills such as the ability to ask relevant questions; critically analyse and interpret sources; consider context; respect and explain different

perspectives; develop and substantiate interpretations, and communicate effectively" (ACARA, 2016d, p. 1).

In the lead up to the implementation of the new curriculum there was some concern about whether there were sufficient history specialists for effective curriculum implementation. A report entitled *An overview of the teaching and learning of Australian history in schools* prepared for the Australian History Summit in 2006 concluded that not all teachers of history classes had professional preparation in history, finding that,

> …for both primary and secondary schools, we have teachers taking "history" sessions or lessons who have little or no background in the subject and who may fail to understand the nature of the discipline.
> (Taylor & Clark, 2006, p. 34)

Taylor (2008) pointed out that teachers' knowledge would be crucial to the successful implementation of the history curriculum arguing that, "…we need well-prepared and knowledgeable teachers of history" (p. 54). In the lead-up to the implementation of the new curriculum some concern was expressed about the capacity of universities to rapidly train enough specialist history teachers (Ferrari, 2010; Henderson, 2011). Rural schooling contexts are likely to feel the impacts of any shortage of trained history teachers. In rural schools the challenge of attracting a suitable balance of teaching staff, particularly in specialist teaching areas, is well documented (Barter, 2008; Campbell & Yates, 2011; Eppley, 2009; Green & Reid, 2004; Lake, 2007; Lock, Reid, Green, Hastings, Cooper & White, 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Rossi & Sirna, 2008; Wallace & Boylan, 2009; White & Reid, 2008). Teachers without a disciplinary background in history need opportunities for continuing professional learning to support their practice in history classrooms.

Initial research, commentary and debate about the new history curriculum has largely been focused on the content, goals and purposes of the history curriculum (for example, Gilbert, 2011; Henderson, 2011; Hoepper, 2011; Reynolds, 2011) and readiness for curriculum implementation (for example, Drummond, Halsey & van Bredar, 2012; Dilkes, Cunningham & Gray, 2014). This case study has allowed me to document the experiences of a group of rural teachers who had limited experience and varied levels of preparation for teaching history. Investigating how these teachers managed the complex work of curriculum implementation for history provides insights that can inform the provision of pre-service teacher education in history curriculum and pedagogy and continuing professional learning for teachers of history.

Rural Schooling in Australia

Australia is a geographically large country, but with a relatively small population concentrated in a handful of coastal, metropolitan cities. Students in remote and very remote schools made up only 2.3 per cent of the total Australian school population of approximately 3.5 million in 2010 and 83% of these attended a government school (Gonski, 2011, pp. 3 & 10). As a small proportion of the total school population there is a real risk that the needs of these students could be overlooked; indeed Roberts and Green (2013) argue that, "…the rural has been marginalized in educational research" (p. 768). The diversity of rural schooling contexts is also a feature of the Australian educational landscape. In aiming to achieve equity through a national curriculum, concerns have been raised that a 'one-size fits all' model may not be adequate to meet the needs of rural students learning in geographically diverse settings (Roberts, 2013). It is critical that the staff and students of rural schools are included in research about national curriculum implementation. This research contributes the perspectives of these remote rural teacher participants to

broader inquiry about the implementation of the national history curriculum. It aims to attend to the specificity of place as teachers negotiate tensions between national and state imperatives and local needs in their work to mediate a new curriculum. This case study contributes another illustrative case to a growing body of rural schooling research in Australia and internationally.

Two recent Australian studies warrant mention at the outset of this thesis as they both consider the implementation of the new history curriculum in rural contexts. They adopt different methodologies, scales and foci to my own study but offer important contextual considerations. Drummond, Halsey & van Bredar (2012) conducted research with rural school leaders in 2010 about the impending implementation of the new history curriculum. The 44 respondents from across Australia completed an online survey with a questionnaire using a Likert-type scale and four open-ended questions. While some were positive about the potential benefits of the new curriculum, the school leaders did express concerns including: provision of adequate time for teachers to engage with the new curriculum, adequacy of resources, including relief staff to enable teachers to attend professional development, and the significant amount of work for staff. Overall they found school leaders, "want support which is responsive to the contexts in which they work" (Drummond et al., 2012, p. 34). The concern expressed by the school leaders about the significant learning needs of their staff is an area of inquiry that my research explores in more detail. At the time of the survey the curriculum was on the horizon; my research presents a story of implementation and focuses on the experience of classroom teachers.

Roberts (2013) has reported results from a study conducted with rural teachers in New South Wales. Using either Skype audio or Skype video calls, interviews were conducted with a range of history teachers (and some education officers) about their

initial experiences of the new history curriculum. He expresses concern that many early career teachers were reluctant to participate in the interviews and notes that, "if participants are opting out of telling their stories their struggles with place are not being told" (p. 93). From the 18 teachers interviewed Roberts identified two categories – those with a more place-conscious approach and those with a more bureaucratic approach to curriculum. Roberts' study makes an important finding that rural teachers who were more context-driven were more positive about the curriculum implementation. The study reported broader patterns drawing respondents from various parts of the state of New South Wales, whereas my study focuses on one context. I also make use of interview data but the most significant part of my data is teachers' talk in the process of making curriculum decisions during the three planning days. The participants in my study were all early career teachers so I was able to focus on this particular dynamic of rural schooling. These two recent studies provide valuable contextual information of broader implementation issues. They also highlight the unique contribution of my case study to the field as a detailed account of how one group of early career teachers in a remote rural school went about their authentic work of making decisions about the national history curriculum for learners in their particular context.

Research Questions

The key research question guiding this exploratory case study was:

How do teachers in this rural secondary school approach the task of implementing a new national history curriculum, with the support of a researcher?

Four subsidiary questions focused analysis on different aspects of the study:

1. The task under investigation: *How do these teachers make their decisions about curriculum and pedagogy for the new history curriculum?*

2. The context of the study: *How does the rural socio-cultural context of this school impact on teachers' work?*

3. The processes undertaken: *In this study what impact does the researcher, and the research design, have on the teachers' curriculum planning work?*

4. The goal of the research: *How does this study inform the provision of support and continuing professional learning for teachers?*

Research Design

Working qualitatively with this highly contextual study, I found the need to draw on a range of theories and research tools in the design of this research. This case study focused on the pressing issue for these teachers – how to implement the new history curriculum. It was framed around an action research project where teachers worked together, with my periodic support, to make curriculum decisions and implement, reflect on and refine their plans. An action research approach offered practical benefits for the teachers, as they were able to make progress with their curriculum planning, but was also an effective tool for data collection as it allowed for a detailed examination of teacher knowledge in action. The data sources were teacher interviews at the outset of the study and teachers' conversations across three planning days. I analysed the data using a five-step method of discourse analysis, building on the work of Gee (1999, 2005). My own exploration of theory and methodology in developing a research design fit for purpose may assist researchers looking for ways to explore the complexity of authentic teachers' work where variables cannot be

limited and controlled, where plans change, and where authentic teacher talk resists easy interpretation.

Researcher Position

This study was designed to explicitly incorporate my own involvement in the action research project, cognisant of the impossibility of separating one's professional life history from one's research. I was an English and history teacher who worked in government secondary schools for 22 years, the last five years as head of a large social science department. My work role as an education officer at the time of the study, in part involved offering curriculum and assessment advice on Queensland's senior secondary Ancient and Modern History syllabuses to teachers throughout my state. In bringing my professional life history to the research project, a group of teachers geographically isolated from other history teachers were able to work on their curriculum implementation with periodic support from me. Aware of the need for reflexivity in research I included a research question that drew attention to the research process and my own role in the study. Although this case study is highly contextualised, in discussing the findings I draw out learnings that can inform the work of educational advisors.

Overview of Chapters

This chapter has set out the broad context of the case study – the work of teachers in a rural school, to implement a new history curriculum, as part of a wider change to a national curriculum. I have given a brief overview of the research and highlighted how this study contributes to a broader research agenda. I have also suggested that the theory and methods used to investigate the complexity of teachers' work also have relevance to other qualitative researchers.

In Chapter 2 I review the relevant literature to locate this study in the fields of curriculum change, school history, rural schooling and teachers as mediators of the curriculum. I review contemporary understandings and critiques of school curricula and teachers' pivotal role in curriculum change. I distil a range of possible approaches to the study of history and identify a dominant discourse of school history. I review key themes in rural schooling research and point to particular issues connected to support for teachers in rural schools. I also review the literature on teacher knowledge and teachers' professional learning to position this study to inform the work of teacher educators, advisors and providers of ongoing professional learning.

In Chapter 3 I set out the theoretical framework that has guided the design of this case study. I situate this research in a social constructionist paradigm, explaining my epistemological and ontological standpoint. In designing and interpreting the research I looked to theories explaining how people work together, and have drawn extensively on community of practice theory. In considering the data to be collected and analysed I was particularly informed by discourse theory.

In Chapter 4 I provide a detailed explanation of the research design. I justify my particular assemblage of research tools to conduct and analyse this case study. I describe the research site, participants and research activities. I also explain my own participation in the research, evaluate the constraints and affordances of this research design, and explain the ethical considerations that guided the research.

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7 I report the data analysis. I conducted a discourse analysis of a range of 'small stories' drawn from teacher interview and planning day data (Bamberg, 2004; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Chapter 5 reports my discourse analysis of data from teacher interviews conducted prior to the planning days. In Chapter 6 I provide analysis of data drawn from each of the three planning days. In

Chapter 7 I identify the discourses in operation across both the interviews and the planning days – the final step in my data analysis.

In Chapter 8 I synthesise and discuss the data analysis to answer my key research question. I draw on discourse theory and community of practice theory to make sense of the complexities of teachers' curriculum work at this site.

In Chapter 9 I reflect on how this case study makes contributions to knowledge in the fields of curriculum change, school history, rural schooling and teachers as mediators of the curriculum. I explicate how this informs those working in pre-service teacher education, educational advisory roles and the provision of ongoing professional learning for teachers. I also highlight how the study informs practice in terms of methodology and application of theory.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter I locate my study in wider literatures about curriculum change and national curricula, teachers' work as mediators of the curriculum, school history and rural schooling. Table 1 below provides an outline of this literature review.

Table 1 Structure of literature review

Context of the study	Change to the Australian Curriculum	Teachers' curriculum planning work	In the learning area of history	In a rural school
Relevant literatures	**National curricula and curriculum change**	**Teachers as mediators of the curriculum**	**School history**	**Rural schooling**
Themes	Moves to more centralised control of the curriculum	Teacher agency and decision-making	Nature and purposes of school history	Diversity of rural places
	Critiques of standardised national curricula	Teacher knowledge	Teaching school history	Educational outcomes for rural students
	Teachers' responses to curriculum change	Teachers' professional learning	The F-10 history curriculum in Australia	Teaching in rural schools

Although my research is highly contextualised, all human activity is connected to broader fields of social activity. Curriculum decisions made in metropolitan capitals, far from the remote rural school where this study took place had a powerful impact on the work of the teacher participants. Therefore I begin by outlining broader debates about moves towards more centralised and standardised national curricula. This raises critical questions about the underlying assumptions of the curriculum, control of the curriculum and impacts of the curriculum. Although issues related to ideology and loci of power are not directly addressed in my study, they do shape the

institutional boundaries within which the teachers worked. I also briefly review knowledge about how teachers respond to curriculum change processes.

I then turn my attention to the critical role of teachers as mediators of the curriculum. Teachers have varying degrees of agency as they make decisions about how an official curriculum will be translated into practice. Teachers draw on a range of knowledge to exercise their judgement and make decisions. I emphasise the relevance of Shulman's (1986, 1987, 2004) influential work on the knowledge base of teachers. Professional learning is critical to teachers' knowledge growth, and positive outcomes are reported from models viewing learning as a site-specific, everyday activity for teachers, as opposed to more formal and irregular professional development activities.

History is the learning area of focus in this study. I show how school history is different to, but influenced by, academic history. I survey debates about the role of school history in nation building, different ways the past is conceptualised and identify a dominant pedagogy of school history. I then provide an overview of the organisation of the *F-10 Australian Curriculum: History*, and the specific year level that was the focus of this study.

I conclude this chapter by returning to a focus on the rural context of this study. I review the dominant themes emergent in the literature on rural schooling. The ways rural places are defined and described tends to mask the great diversity of rural schooling contexts. The attainment levels of rural students remain an area of concern for educators. The challenge of attracting and retaining staff is a persistent issue, as is the related issue of support for teachers in rural schools.

National Curricula

Moves to More Centralised Control of the Curriculum

Concern for equity has often been a rationale for more centralised control of the curriculum (Moore, 2006). This is true of Australia, where the first goal of the 'Melbourne Declaration' promotes equity and excellence as an outcome of schooling for all Australian children (MCEETYA, 2008). The document that guides the Australian curriculum's development, *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* also points to a concern for equity stating:

> …an Australian Curriculum will provide a clear, shared understanding of what young people should be taught and the quality of learning expected of them, regardless of their circumstances, the type of school that they attend or the location of their school. (ACARA, 2013a, p. 5)

Other explanations for greater control of the curriculum have been offered from more critical perspectives. Gannon (2013) argues that moves to a standardised curriculum in many countries reflect the effects of neoliberalism. Similarly, based on her analysis of the documentation that underpins the Australian curriculum, Ditchburn (2012a, p. 259) argues that a "new-liberal hegemony" prevails that has shaped the Australian curriculum. Developed in this context, the Australian curriculum "…constructs its citizens to be skilled, employable workers capable of competing in, contributing to and being successful in the global economy" (p. 263). She argues that other goals of education no longer count. This echoes Young's (2006) concern that the role of central governments in setting national curricula is an "interventionist trend in educational policy which is in danger of undermining the purpose of schools..." (p. 20).

Moves for greater control of the curriculum in a number of countries have also been linked to the introduction of high stakes testing regimes and more managerial approaches to schooling (Boote, 2006; Ditchburn, 2012a; Husbands, Kitson, & Pendry, 2003; Raines, 2007). Gannon (2013, p. 17) argues that discourses of accountability and standards create an "audit culture" that is changing the way we view educational outcomes. In Australia high stakes testing in literacy and numeracy have become a feature of the educational landscape since 2008 when annual National Assessment Plan in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 began (ACARA, 2016a). Brady and Kennedy (2010) cautioned that a national curriculum in Australia must not serve instrumental purposes: "…to relocate power from the states/territories to the Commonwealth and it should not be merely the basis of on assessment regime that can further regulate what goes on in Australian classrooms" (p. 23).

Critiques of Standardised National Curricula

Assumptions underpinning the curriculum

A national curriculum reflects a nation's decisions about what all students should learn, and there is contention around what these common experiences should be (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Brady & Kennedy, 2003; Moore, 2006). Moore (2006) points to two unresolved issues with so-called 'entitlement curricula': "who decides what the entitlement should be – and what desires those choosers bring to their choices…Second, the notion of entitlement assumes a certain commonality of desires, needs, requirements that is not necessarily reflected in society" (p. 96). Ross (2000, p.10) explains,

> …a national curriculum requires someone, somehow, to rule that
> certain cultural artefacts (selected, by very definition, from particular

cultures) should be elevated to be passed on to all children, and that
other cultural manifestations be excluded from formal education.

Roberts (2013) suggests that an impersonal and 'placeless' national curriculum is one "…in which the key curriculum question of 'what knowledge is of most worth?' has been definitively answered and how to teach it codified and packaged" (p. 90).

Goodson (1992) expressed a concern that a curriculum, as a social construction, can be taken for granted without sufficient questioning of who has made the decisions and on what grounds. Reflecting on the Australian experience, Ditchburn (2012a; 2012b) argues that the assumptions that underpin the Australian curriculum have been accepted without question, observing that feedback on the curriculum focused on practical matters of implementation, rather than questioning the goals. She points out that "…once it appears that the architecture of the curriculum – its rationale, its focus, its skills and content – has already been decided and accepted…then important debates about the 'why?' and 'what if?' and 'who says?' are sidelined" (Ditchburn, 2012a, p. 266). Indeed this is a critique that can be made of my own research which focuses on practical implementation, although in illuminating what teachers do with the curriculum I provide a case that may inform the type of critical questioning Ditchburn advocates.

Impacts of the curriculum

Theorists operating in critical and postmodern discourses of curriculum studies contend that the curriculum is an important cultural artefact, exerting a strong normative or hegemonic power, that tends to perpetuate the social inequities it aims to resolve (Apple, 2004; Bernstein, 1990, 2000; Goodson, 1992; Moore, 2006; Teese, 2000; Teese & Polesel, 2003). The power of the curriculum lies in an illusion of

equity and impartiality; the processes of schooling seem natural, neutral and arbitrary when in fact they are all culturally, historically and socially produced by the dominant culture (Apple, 2004; Teese, 2000). Teese (2000) suggests this process may begin with curriculum writers' unconscious construction of an ideal student without sufficient recognition of the historical and cultural bases of their curriculum decisions. The resultant curriculum privileges the types of knowledge and skills associated with the dominant culture, effectively marginalising those students who lack the cultural capital required to successfully engage with the curriculum (Ross, 2000; Teese, 2000). Although the rhetoric of national curriculum emphasises an entitlement for all, Moore (2006) argues, "entitlement for one student may be perceived and experienced as imposition by another" (p. 96). In particular reference to the subject of history, Barton and Levstik (2004) note that a student whose prior knowledge from their home culture conflicts or is unconnected with school history will have more difficulty mastering the curriculum.

Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

Large-scale curriculum reforms tend to be top-down changes imposed on teachers (Marsh & Willis, 2007). For most teachers in Australia, the move to a national curriculum means another change in a long series of changes. Change can have a negative impact on people generating feelings of frustration and alienation (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014). Teachers' feelings of self-efficacy can be challenged in this change environment. Dilkes, Cunningham and Gray (2014) report research in Western Australia investigating teachers and change, with a particular interest in change fatigue. For their study 23 teachers from a regional high school were interviewed about their experience and perception of change to the new curriculum. They found that teachers had different dispositions to change and

developed four composite identities to describe this. The Cynics conveyed "a sense of futility and powerlessness" in the face of curriculum change (p. 56). The Realists were pragmatic and "temper disappointments with successes" (p. 56). The Enthusiasts "…believe that the benefits outweigh their personal discomforts" (p. 57). And the Leaders were "hopeful but tempered" and aimed to communicate "a sense of ownership and delivery of a sound rationale" (p. 57). The qualities correlated with a positive disposition for change were commitment, motivation and goodwill (Dilkes et al., 2014). However, Dilkes et al. (2014) stress: "Change fatigue is currently a silent killer of mandated curriculum reform" (p. 59). Smith and Lovat (2003) argue that if change is to be successful in a school a significant amount of time needs to be invested in developing a shared vision and reason for the change. They also see collaboration, fostering a sense of ownership, managing feelings and perceptions, and a whole school commitment as essential ingredients in managing change in schools. Teachers need time to become familiar and confident working with a new curriculum. While teacher reactions to curriculum change have been varied, Kelly (2004) maintains adopting any new curriculum innovation "…can succeed only when the teachers concerned are committed to them and … they understand, as well as accept, their underlying principles" (p. 9).

Teachers as Mediators of the Curriculum

Teacher Agency and Decision-making

Intended and enacted curriculum

Teachers are the mediators of the curriculum, interpreting the official curriculum for their students (Kelly, 2004). Hattie's (2009) synthesis of numerous educational studies identified the importance of quality teaching for positive learning

outcomes. He maintains: "It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful…" to learning (Hattie, 2003, p. 2). There has long been recognition of a gap between the ideas of curriculum planners and the realities of implementation; curriculum documents represent intentions but the curriculum that is experienced is always dependent on how teachers enact it in their classrooms (Briant & Doherty, 2012; Smith & Lovat, 2003). Clandinin and Connelly's (1990) observation remains true: "curriculum plans…founder or prevail on the activities of the teacher" (p. 246). Brady and Kennedy (2003) note that, while teachers are largely excluded from decisions made by curriculum writers, "they do get the last, and perhaps most important, say about how it will be translated into practice" (p. 24).

Teacher agency

Centralised and technicist approaches to curriculum have been associated with the dominance of a 'teacher-as-curriculum-implementer' image over 'teacher-as-curriculum-maker' (Craig, 2012; Ditchburn, 2012b; Kelly, 2004). Ditchburn (2012b) argues that the Australian curriculum "places knowledge as something to be prescribed by 'experts'; that situates teachers as policy implementers…" (p. 348). In centralised systems some educators have questioned whether sufficient flexibility remains for teachers to make professional judgements about the curriculum to tailor teaching to their learners in local contexts. Kelly (2004) has been critical of national curriculum implementation in England and Wales maintaining that the focus on testing, inspections and one-size-fits-all materials aiming to 'teacher proof' the curriculum resulted in a loss of teachers' agency. Hacker and Rowe's (1997) study of science teachers' responses to the implementation of a national curriculum in the UK found an increase in teacher-directed instruction focused on content, despite the fact that the curriculum embedded experimental and investigative skills. Husbands et al.

(2003) noted that teachers' criticism of the UK national history curriculum led to a number of rewrites focused on reducing content prescription and incorporating more flexibility for individual schools and teachers.

Educators can encounter professional dilemmas as they work to implement a prescribed curriculum in local contexts. These dilemmas are more pronounced when the official curriculum conflicts in some ways with teachers' own views about the purpose of education, what it is to be a professional, and learning, teaching and assessment (Briant & Doherty, 2012). Roberts (2013) argues that a narrowing of education and the rise in accountability measures that follows "…undermines teachers' self-efficacy and professional commitment and subsequently limits professional knowledge" (p. 89). This claim is exemplified by a small US study where a literacy teacher complained of feeling "like a butterfly under a pin" and was frustrated by her lack of agency when a mandated curriculum reform was implemented (Craig, 2012, p. 96). In commenting on Australia's preparations for the implementation of a national curriculum, Brady and Kennedy (2010) emphasised the need for flexibility in a curriculum to cater for multiple contexts and priorities that may emerge. Similarly, Roberts (2013) questions how well a 'metrocentric' curriculum, developed from an urban ideal, can meet the needs of Australia's diverse cohort of rural students.

However, other research would suggest that teachers do find ways to exercise their agency where a new curriculum is mandated. In the UK, Kelly (2004) found that prepared curriculum materials were not used in the way curriculum planners had intended; teachers adapted and used the materials in their own way. Fernandez, Ritchie and Barker (2008) studied the move to a mandated Physics curriculum in New Zealand. They found that there was considerable resistance to the uptake of the new

curriculum and that teachers sought to see how they could simply continue their existing practice: "The curriculum change became paper-work … but essentially their physics lessons remained the same (p. 198). Some studies have reported that teachers have found prescribed curriculum documents helpful as they implement new curricula. For example, Raines' (2007) study of art teachers' responses to the New York State mandated visual arts curriculum found that contrary to expectations, the teachers reported that "the new mandates helped them organize their curriculum, think about goals and plan activities" (p. i). Similarly another US study found beginning teachers of English found prescribed curriculum programs and materials assisted them to develop their practice (Grossman & Thompson, 2008). Different ways of responding to mandated curricula are clearly evident. Roberts (2013) found this in his Australian research in a rural context where those teachers with a more place-conscious approach were more likely to see the curriculum as a general guide whereas those with a more bureaucratic approach tended to see it as a document to be followed.

Teachers' decision-making

Smith and Lovat (2003) identify a decision-making space or operational space in curriculum enactment, which may be small or large depending on the number of options available to teachers. The decision-making space is narrow when a teacher perceives that others have already made most curriculum decisions. Drawing on Bernstein, Smith and Lovat identify this as strong framing. For Bernstein (2004) framing is a form of control: "Framing refers to the principle regulating the communicative practices of the social relations within the reproduction of discursive resources…" (p. 34). Detailed, mandated curricula are considered strong frames, because they tightly regulate what can and cannot be taught and how it can be taught.

In contrast, curriculum documents that are more flexible, containing guidelines and recommendations, are weak frames and teachers have a much larger decision-making space.

Many educators have sought to explain teachers' work to mediate the curriculum in the decision-making space between an official curriculum and the classroom – that is, understanding how teachers decide what to do. Some explanatory concepts include: teacher discretion (Boote, 2006), practical reasoning (Phelan, 2009; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012), pedagogical reasoning (Shulman, 1987), professional judgement (Dottin, 2009) and deliberation (Schwab, 1969). For Dottin (2009) professional judgement is "knowing what to do" (p. 84). He defines judgement as "the evaluation and the understanding of different kinds of possibility" (p. 84). Expert teachers seem to make good decisions about what to do almost instinctively (Hattie, 2003). Explaining exactly how they do this is more difficult. Marsh and Willis (2007) note that research has demonstrated that planning "…is too complex to be reducible to a simple formula or to a series of determinant steps" (p. 186). Phelan (2009) emphasises the need to understand a pedagogical situation to be able to apply judgement: "Practical reasoning refers to a teacher's capacity to discern particulars and make wise judgements about how to act in pedagogical situations" (p. 93). She maintains that teachers who have deep situational knowledge can make better connections between the local context and wider goals: "While discerning teachers respect the particularity of the situation or case, they will find a way of bringing that particularity into some relationship with established norms or procedures in the area" (Phelan, 2009, p. 97). Similarly, Pendlebury (1990) has emphasised the need to be able to understand and make use of the particularities of different situations and contexts, a quality she calls "situational appreciation" (p. 171).

Boote (2006) uses the concept of 'teacher discretion' to acknowledge the importance of teacher agency and decision-making even in the context of mandated curricula. Boote defines discretion as "the capacity and obligation to decide what actions are appropriate and the ability to take those actions" (p. 465). He suggests that teachers need to use their professional judgement to interpret the intent of the curriculum; make appropriate choices where there is ambiguity or options; decide how to prioritise elements of the curriculum; address the particular needs of their students; accommodate community concerns; be true to their own values; select from available resources; fit in with their colleagues' approaches and many other possible variables (pp. 464-465).

Shulman's (1987) model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action offers an explanation of how teachers interpret and enact curriculum documents for their own students. Although presented as steps, the process is intended to be iterative. The first two phases of the model (Comprehension and Transformation) focus on the thinking and knowledge involved in the planning phases. After comprehending the curriculum in terms of its purpose and organisation of the subject matter, teachers begin the task of transforming the official curriculum for their learners by interpreting, structuring and organising content, making decisions about how best to represent the material, and selecting the most appropriate instructional repertoire. Transformation also includes making adaptations to accommodate particular student needs. The next two phases (Instruction and Evaluation) are about the teaching and learning and the simultaneous on-going evaluation. In the final two phases (Reflection and New Comprehensions) teachers' reflection informs the next cycle of teaching and learning.

Teacher Knowledge

Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) posit "teacher knowledge and knowing affects every aspect of the teaching act" (p. 666). Shulman's (1986, 1987, 2004) identification of the range of knowledges teachers utilise points to the complexity of curriculum enactment. He initially identified three categories of content knowledge teachers use: "(a) subject matter content knowledge, (b) pedagogical content knowledge, and (c) curricular knowledge" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). Apart from knowledge of the topic, subject matter content knowledge also includes understandings about how knowledge is constructed in a particular discipline area. As Yilmaz (2008) contends "History teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the nature of history as a domain of knowledge in that epistemological beliefs affect not only their approaches to reading and understanding historical texts but also their instructional practices" (p. 38). Pedagogical content knowledge is influenced by subject matter content knowledge and is "the dimension of subject matter knowledge *for teaching*" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). Shulman is still referring to content knowledge, but that "particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability" (p. 9). For example, in history, this could include knowledge of a how a topic may be broken into areas of investigation suitable for students, or how a complex process of evaluation of an historical source can be broken into smaller steps to support student skill development. Curricular knowledge, according to Shulman, is all the programs of study and the associated resources that might be drawn upon. For history this would include knowledge of curriculum documents including the overall aims of the course, the skills and understandings to be developed, and where to access a range of suitable resources. He also expands this concept of curricular knowledge to include teachers' knowledge of what students

have studied in the subject before and what will come after, and what complementary work they are doing in other subjects. Although some have questioned Shulman's overemphasis on content knowledge (Goodson, 1992), he later broadened these ideas suggesting seven categories of teacher knowledge:

- Content knowledge

- General pedagogical knowledge

- Curriculum knowledge

- Pedagogical content knowledge

- Knowledge of learners

- Knowledge of educational contexts

- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values (Shulman, 1987, 2004).

Teachers' Professional Learning

Teachers' knowledge growth is connected to professional learning. Structured learning activities with pre-determined content, such as workshops, courses and meetings, often described as 'professional development', aim to support teachers' knowledge growth. However, Long (2012) argues that there is no guarantee of any impact on teachers' pedagogy from attendance at formal professional development activities. Indeed, Fullan (2007) asserts: "Professional development as a term and as a strategy has run its course" (p. 35). In contrast, 'professional learning' reflects a different view of the teacher as a lifelong learner.

Schön's (1983) work on reflective practice has been influential is positioning teachers as learners. For Schön an effective practitioner is always learning. They are able to explore a situation through taking action, reflecting on that action, and using

that information to shape their next actions; they are researching and practicing at the same time. Professional learning is a continual process where learning is, "nested in authentic situations that have meaning and relevance for individuals and groups of teachers" (Long, 2012, p. 46). Hall and Scott (2007) found that professional learning was most meaningful for teachers when it was explicitly linked to curriculum their students were learning. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) believe that effective professional learning activities engage teachers in concrete details of their practice, connect to their work with students, are participant driven, grounded in inquiry, and are collaborative. For Fullan (2007) the most important thing to learn is how to operate most effectively in your own context. He urges a continual focus on learning and more collaborative efforts to learn together. Sparks (2013) also argues that significant professional learning occurs when teachers collaborate and assist one another. Likewise, Long (2012) advocates for greater priority to be given to this type of professional learning which "is continuous and dynamic, with teachers investigating the core of their own professional practice" (p. 46). She too notes the value of collaborative professional learning but stresses that teachers need "sustained and supported time" to talk about their work and problem-solve (Long, 2012, p. 47).

Action research has frequently been presented as a highly effective model to facilitate teachers' professional learning (Kelly, 2004; Kemmis, 2008). It is a collaborative, democratic, practical, site-specific form of learning. Action research "seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4). It begins with practical problems or challenges that are identified by the participant researchers who work through cycles of action and reflection. Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei and Andree (2010) note time

for teachers to collaborate on specific issues of practice is an effective form of professional learning: "Job-embedded professional learning time also supports the kind of context-specific professional learning and action research that has been found to be more effective in catalyzing change in teaching practice than generic workshops…" (p. 4).

Action research has had particular resonance in the field of education as "it values the 'researched' community as a vital part of the research project and its members as experts in their own experiences" (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008, p. 589). Kelly (2004) explains that conventional forms of research that offer very generalised findings are of little use to practitioners. Heron and Reason (2008) argue, that co-operative inquiry is able to draw together four different ways of knowing – experiential knowing, presentational knowing, propositional knowing and practical knowing – and as such is a powerful learning tool. In the field of education, driven by teachers, action research has the potential to offer practical insights into educational problems.

School History

Nature and Purposes of School History

School history is different to academic history. The academic discipline of history influences the shape of school history: history teachers have often studied history in undergraduate programs, historians contribute to history curricula, historical methods have been absorbed into pedagogical approaches, and historians regularly engage in public debate about school history. However, school history curricula are developed with broader educational goals in mind and with more constraints. Foster and Padgett (1999) emphasise, "the primary purpose of introducing historical inquiry

into the classroom is not to turn children into mini-historians" (p. 358). The vast majority of students will never study history beyond school. Thornton and Barton (2010) point out that in academic history any and every topic can potentially be studied in any way, whereas this is not the case with school history. As they explain, "When historians begin to study new questions, they face little opposition from others … for new approaches do not necessarily crowd out old ones" but in schools "choices must be made about which topics are important enough to include … each new topic *must* crowd out an old one" (pp. 2487-2488). The development of school history curricula is therefore accompanied by considerable debate about what to teach, how to teach it and why.

School history and nation building

Interest groups, including politicians and professional historians, have expressed strong opinions on what should be included in school history curricula. In particular, debates about national history have centred on how a nation's story should be told, evidenced in the so called 'history wars' in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia (Clark, 2009; Parkes, 2007; Stearns, Seixas & Wineburg, 2000). As Stearns, Seixas and Wineburg (2000) point out, what is taught to a generation of school children has a powerful impact on how a citizenry will view their nation's past and shape their future. Thornton and Barton (2010) identify two broad standpoints in these national debates – a conservative view that promotes national history and aims to build a "unifying historical narrative" and a progressive view that emphasises "preparing reflective citizens for a democratic society" (pp. 2475 & 2489). This debate around the role of school history in nation building has played out in Australia for decades. A renewed focus on the teaching of history from 1996 was promoted by then Prime Minister, John Howard, who felt the

nation's story had been rewritten by the political left; particularly in contention was how colonisation and Indigenous dispossession should be viewed (Clark, 2009; Parkes, 2007). It is acknowledged that political and ideological debates about school history in public arenas form part of the context in which classroom history teachers work.

Different orientations to the past

Another influence on the shape of school history curricula is contention about different orientations to the past. As Stearns et al. (2000) point out "the process of communicating knowledge about the past is, above all, an epistemological and cultural act that conveys deep and sometimes unintended messages about what it means to be historical in modern society" (p. 3). In reflecting on different approaches to teaching national history in schools, Seixas (2000) notes three different orientations to the past are possible when teaching about a particular event – 'enhancing collective memory', 'disciplinary' and 'postmodern' approaches. The first presents a fixed narrative of an event in a nation's past that has been selected and calls on the teacher to "…teach the best story as the way it happened" (p. 20). The second teaches alternative versions but encourages students to make decisions based on their interpretation of evidence. In this orientation, "rather than being *told* simply to believe a single story, students come to understand what makes a valid historical account" (p. 20). The third orientation he identifies, the postmodern orientation, focuses less on arriving at a valid interpretation and more on understanding how the past is used by different groups for different purposes: "…to understand how different groups organize the past into histories and how their rhetorical and narratological strategies serve present day purposes" (pp. 20-21). Critics of postmodern approaches (for example, Lowenthal, 2000) point to concerns with nihilism and relativism. Of the

three different orientations, Seixas (2000) asks, "can we find ways to introduce their various insights at different levels of schooling, while mitigating their weaknesses by being alert to their dangers and flaws?" (p. 34).

McCrum (2010) also identifies three broad paradigms of history that are differentiated by their epistemological standpoints. In 'Reconstructionist' orientations the past is conceived as fixed and knowable; this orientation emphasises "the objective inference of facts from sources and their re-presentation in historical accounts" (p. 22). In 'Constructionist' orientations "the reality of the past is knowable through its traces and can be understood according to social theories and explanatory frameworks" (p. 24). Concepts like change and power, and structures such as politics and economics, are mobilised to explain the past, and the sources of evidence from the past verify the explanations. McCrum (p. 26) notes that in the Reconstructionist tradition the historian works with objective distance to uncover the facts of the past, whereas historians in the Constructionist tradition recognise "the mediating influence of the historian on the evidence" when they select and use evidence to construct explanations of the past. The 'Postmodern' orientation situates history in the present: "The past is no longer accessible and no longer exists; history refers to the accounts of the historian" (p. 29). Because there is no true account of the past that can be known; it is only through the language of historical accounts that we encounter history – and these accounts are ideologically laden. Within each of these broad paradigms there are various positions and McCrum (p. 34) argues that the dominant discourse of the majority of mainstream historians is Constructionist:

> The majority of mainstream empirical historians accept knowledge as a
> human construction. Whilst maintaining a fundamental belief in the
> knowability of the past accessible through an evidential base, they
> embrace the possibility of a multiplicity of interpretations and are

aware of the implications of history's textualism in both its sources and in historians' accounts.

This orientation to the past is also reflected in contemporary school history programs.

Teaching School History

A dominant discourse of school history

The pedagogical approaches now privileged in school history have been influenced by critical theory, academic history and understandings from cognitive psychology and constructivist learning theory (Foster & Padgett, 1999; Parkes, 2007; Seixas, 1993; Yilmaz, 2008). In 1972 the British Schools Council History Project 13-16 set out a framework for introducing students to a new way of learning history that "centred on the investigation of events and situations using the surviving evidence, and modes of explanation rooted in the concepts of change, causation and empathy" (Schools History Project, 2015, Influence). Their work was highly influential in leading a shift from traditional content-driven school history (Husbands et al. 2003; Seixas, 2015; Stearns et al. 2000). In 1996 Young (p. 70) described how school history had undergone change in Australia:

> The 'new' history is characterised by its emphasis on the present and the search for alternative perspectives on established version of times and events…Historiography has broadened its investigation to include questions about the historian as narrator and his/her role in the construction of historical meaning. The return to narrative and story has expanded the discipline's capacity to incorporate a vast array of participants and perspectives.

The inquiry pedagogies favoured in constructivist approaches to learning, align with the methods of academic historians and have been developed into frameworks for the history classroom (for example, Seixas, 2015; van Boxtel & van

Drie, 2013; Wineburg, 1999). As Barton and Levstik (2004) affirm "inquiry is an approach consistent with current theory and research on human learning. When understanding is needed, inquiry appears to be one of the best ways to get there" (p. 189). Following are two examples of frameworks from the international literature that embed historical inquiry.

The influential Canadian framework promoted by the Historical Thinking Project builds on the work of Seixas (2015) who identified six historical thinking concepts that students should engage in during historical inquiry. Thinking historically requires students to:

- Establish historical significance

- Use primary source evidence

- Identify continuity and change

- Analyze cause and consequence

- Take historical perspectives

- Understand the moral dimension of historical interpretation (Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness, n.d., Historical Thinking concepts).

Seixas (2015, p. 5) points to the critical thinking required when using this framework to guide an historical inquiry:

> While they look like concepts, the reason that they are so generative is that they function, rather, as problems, tensions, or difficulties that demand comprehension, negotiation and, ultimately, an accommodation that is never a complete solution. History takes shape from efforts to work with these problems.

In the Netherlands van Boxtel and van Drie (2008, 2013) developed an historical reasoning framework to describe the activities students should employ in the study of history. The six components of their framework are:

- asking historical questions (the 'engine' for historical reasoning),

- using sources (interpreting and evaluating sources and making use of them in inquiry tasks),

- contextualization (situating an historical event, phenomena or person in its temporal and socio-cultural context),

- argumentation (making claims about the past supported by historical evidence),

- using substantive concepts (abstract concepts such as feudalism, emancipation, Neolithic Revolution) and

- using meta-concepts (such as causation, change, evidence, empathy) (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2008).

These two frameworks are representative of a now dominant discourse in school history; Thornton and Barton (2010, p. 2491) present a succinct summary of this approach to teaching history in schools,

> ... that many historians and other social educators have long agreed on. These include, at a minimum, the following: That students should learn how the social world operates, in all its complexity and variety – now and then, near and far; that students should engage with multiple perspectives, both the variety of viewpoints that existed within a given historical period and the range of ways in which history is used and interpreted today; and that students should learn about the process of inquiry – asking questions, evaluating evidence, and drawing conclusions – so that they understand how knowledge of the social world is constructed.

This emphasis on historiographical approaches – of 'doing history' – does not negate the importance of historical knowledge. For example, Van Boxtel and van Drie (2013, p. 46) emphasise the role of historical knowledge in the process of historical reasoning:

The quality of pupil's historical reasoning is not purely shaped by their understanding of second-order concepts and heuristics specific to the domain, and by their epistemological beliefs about the domain; it also depends on their knowledge of historical facts, concepts and chronology.

Similarly Lee and Ashby (2000) make a distinction between substantive knowledge (historical content) and procedural knowledge (historical skills and concepts). The *Australian Curriculum: History*, reflects this thinking, presenting the curriculum in two interconnected strands of 'Historical knowledge and understanding' and 'Historical skills'(ACARA, 2013b, Content structure). The historical concepts and historical skills described in the Australian history curriculum have much in common with existing frameworks for teaching history.

History in the classroom

Although a clear and valued pedagogy for history is privileged in the international literature (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Husbands et al., 2003; Pendry & Husbands, 2000; Seixas, 2015; Stearns et al., 2000) there also remains a concern that this approach to history is not always evident in practice. Writing about the Australian history curriculum, Taylor (2008) and Henderson (2011) both point out the challenge and complexity of history for students. Taylor (2008) asserts that, "History is a complex discipline and even creating an historical narrative is a major cognitive achievement for students…" (p. 54). In the US, Barton and Levstik (2004) also explain that historical inquiry is challenging for teachers and students: "Both academic research and our own classroom experiences suggest that teachers and students have enormous difficulty carrying out some of the key components of historical inquiry" (p. 185). In the UK, Husbands et al. (2003, p. 21) cite a 2001 report for the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

regarding implementation of the UK history curriculum noting that "in too many schools, however, opportunities for developing enquiry skills are limited, or not as good in one class as in another, and consequently there is little systematic development of such skills". Lee (2005) comments on research in the UK where a number of students reflecting on their history courses struggled to demonstrate coherent historical understandings, recalling only fragmented accounts of past events. Thornton and Barton (2010) assert that a considerable body of research at the turn of this century showed that "teaching and testing of facts remained the mainstay of history classrooms" (p. 2479). Foster and Padgett (1999) note students can find history "irrelevant, tedious, and boring" (p. 357). Clark's (2008) more recent research found that many of the 182 secondary students she interviewed disliked learning Australian history: "For every student who enjoyed Australian history, there were many more who really disliked it" (p. 13).

Yilmaz (2008) maintains that a teacher's understanding of the discipline of history, the purpose of history in the curriculum, and constructivist pedagogies as related to history are all requisite for the successful implementation of a history curriculum: "If the teacher has not yet built a strong sense of why history is taught, he or she is unlikely to make reasoned and informed decisions about planning, implementing and assessing history curriculum and instruction" (p. 40). Research in Australia has revealed concerns about the number of teachers who will be teaching history classes without any professional preparation in the discipline (Taylor & Clark, 2006). Supporting teachers to develop their professional knowledge has been identified as a key to reducing the "gap between promise and practice" (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 3).

The F-10 History Curriculum in Australia

In this section I provide an overview of parts of the *Australian Curriculum: History* that are most relevant to this study. This information is about the version of the curriculum in use at the time of the study. Since the completion of the study a review of the curriculum resulted in a number of changes to the history curriculum (Australian Government, 2015). Most notable was the development of a single Humanities and Social Science learning area for the primary school years to address overcrowding of the curriculum.

Stated goals and purposes

In Australia, the goals and purpose of history in the curriculum are stated succinctly in the rationale that accompanies the curriculum content. Firstly, the rationale shows that the study of history is related to citizenship. History is positioned as a subject that can help students understand their place in the world, and also prepare them for futures as global citizens. For example, it states:

> Awareness of history is an essential characteristic of any society, and historical knowledge is fundamental to understanding ourselves and others...It also helps students to appreciate Australia's distinctive path of social, economic and political development, its position in the Asia and Pacific regions, and its global interrelationships. This knowledge and understanding is essential for informed and active participation in Australia's diverse society. (ACARA, 2016d, Rationale)

The historical thinking skills developed in this disciplinary-based subject are presented in the curriculum as important tools for active and informed citizenship. The rationale reveals considerable alignment with the constructionist orientation to history identified by McCrum (2010) and the disciplinary orientation identified by Seixas (2000). For example, the rationale states:

History, as a discipline, has its own methods and procedures which make it different from other ways of understanding human experience. The study of history is based on evidence derived from remains of the past. It is interpretive by nature, promotes debate and encourages thinking about human values, including present and future challenges. The process of historical inquiry develops transferable skills such as the ability to ask relevant questions; critically analyse and interpret sources; consider context; respect and explain different perspectives; develop and sustain interpretations, and communicate effectively. (ACARA, 2016d, Rationale)

Organisation of the *Australian Curriculum: History*

The *Australian Curriculum: History* is organised around two "interrelated" strands: Historical Knowledge and Understanding and Historical Skills (ACARA, 2013b, Content structure). The historical skills privileged in the curriculum have much in common with other frameworks:

- Chronology, terms and concepts

- Historical questions and research

- Analysis and use of sources

- Perspectives and interpretations

- Explanation and communication (ACARA, 2013b, Content structure).

These skills promote an inquiry approach and inquiry questions offer a further focus for each year level.

In Years 7-10 learning is organised by time period and each year level includes an overview unit and a number of depth studies. There is some choice in the depth studies. Within each unit there are a number of content descriptors. Content elaborations offer further suggestions for teachers.

Key historical concepts are explored through the content and are similar to those developed in Canada:

- evidence,

- continuity and change,

- cause and effect,

- perspectives,

- empathy,

- significance and

- contestability (ACARA, 2013b, Content structure).

Each year level includes an achievement standard that describes, "the quality of learning that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point in their schooling" (ACARA, 2013b, Achievement Standards).

The curriculum does not offer specific advice around assessment, but does include sample responses at, below and above standard as support material. In Queensland the schooling sectors have provided guidance on assessment.

Seven general capabilities are embedded across the whole Australian curriculum:

- Literacy

- Numeracy

- Information and communication technology (ICT) capability

- Critical and creative thinking

- Personal and social capability

- Ethical understanding

- Intercultural understanding (ACARA, 2013b, General capabilities).

The three cross-curriculum priorities are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

- Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

- Sustainability (ACARA, 2013b, Cross-curriculum priorities).

The Year 8 curriculum

In this study the school chose to focus the project on Year 8 history because, at the time of the study, this was the first year of secondary school. The Year 8 curriculum focus is 'The Ancient to the Modern World', identified as the period c.650 AD (CE) to 1750 AD (CE) (ACARA, 2013b, Year 8). For Queensland teachers, this curriculum represented significant change as it contains more prescription and disciplinary focus than the previous Studies of Society and Environment curriculum.

Rural Schooling

Diversity of Rural Places

Defining rurality

Issues of definition make the task of researching and talking about rural schooling difficult (Barter, 2008; Bourke & Lockie, 2001; Budge, 2006). The term 'rural' is very generic and masks a huge diversity of people, places and ways of living. Rural places are largely defined in spatial and geographical terms. The Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) is a widely-used measure that classifies all Australian communities based on road distance from the nearest service centre (these are classified according to population size) from 0 high accessibility to 15 high remoteness (Australian Population and Migration Research Centre, 2014). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2014) uses 5 Remoteness Area (RA) categories: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote, very remote. The MySchool website (an Australian government website that publishes data on every school) uses MCEETYA's Schools Geographic Location Classification Scheme to classify all

schools as either metropolitan, provincial, remote or very remote (ACARA, 2016e). It has been argued that such classifications and statistics do not sufficiently capture the human dimension of rural places (Gannon, 2013, Lock et al. 2009; Roberts, 2013). The social and cultural dimensions of rural places need to be depicted to more accurately conceptualise rurality (Barter 2008; Reid, Green, Cooper, Hastings, Lock & White, 2010; Roberts & Green, 2013; Wildy, Sigur**ä**ard**ó**ttir &Faulkner, 2014). As Howley, Theobold and Howley (2005) assert: "The *rural* in rural is not most significantly the boundary around it, but the meanings inherent in rural lives, wherever lived" (p. 1).

Attending to the diversity of rural places

The great diversity of rural places is also masked in statistical representations of rurality. White and Reid (2008) caution researchers against generalising across the specificities of place. Sher and Sher's (1994) report into rural Australia found that inaccurate, narrow rural stereotypes prevailed that did not reflect the diversity of rural life. In reflecting on educational policy Roberts and Green (2013) maintain that the normal approach to equity results in rural schools being lumped into one category, applying a sort of "geographical blindness" (p. 769). However, there are huge differences between rural schools located in, for example, a 'tree change' or 'sea change' community near a metropolitan centre, a mining town with a largely 'fly in, fly out' workforce, an Indigenous community in central Australia, or a small town in a pastoral region in the grip of a drought (Sullivan, Perry & McConney, 2013). Thomson (2000) used the term 'thisness' to emphasise the specificity of place when she noted numerous subtle differences between schools that were considered geographically and statistically 'like schools'. Roberts and Green (2013) argue this concept of 'thisness' is very relevant to research about rural contexts. For Roberts and

Green (2013) there is too much 'thatness' occurring in efforts to address rural schooling issues that serves to: "…erase the particularities of place and assume the needs of such schools as given" (p. 768).

Educational Outcomes for Rural Students

Rural and remote schools can be sites of educational disadvantage. In Australia urban students tend to outperform rural students in tests of literacy and numeracy. On international tests (Program for International Student Assessment [PISA]) and on national literacy and numeracy tests (NAPLAN) students in urban centres outperform those in rural areas and the more remote the school the greater the educational disparity (Gonski, 2011; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 2000; Lamb, Glover & Walstab, 2014; Sullivan et al., 2013). The 2009 Australian data from PISA shows that in Australia students of low socio-economic status, rural and remote students, and Indigenous students demonstrated lower academic performance (Sullivan et al., 2013). Lamb, Glover and Walstab (2014, p. 66) analysed national literacy data for the state of Victoria and noted that in reading by Year 3 rural students were already 7 months behind in learning compared to their urban counterparts. Struggles with literacy impact all learning areas, including the subject of this study, history, which has considerable literacy demands (McTygue & Tindall, 2005; Mountford & Price, 2004).

Socioeconomic status can be a predictor of educational attainment and in rural areas parents are more likely to earn less as there are fewer professional jobs in these localities, and they are also more likely to be unemployed (Sullivan et al. 2013). However, this is not the sole explanation for the lower attainment of rural students. Lamb et al. (2014) found that when they adjusted NAPLAN scores to account for socioeconomic status there was still a discernible gap between urban and rural literacy

rates. The reasons are complex and persistent including higher absentee rates in rural schools, fewer subject offerings for senior students due to school size, fewer experienced teachers with discipline-specific expertise, funding issues and high staff turnover (Gonski, 2011; HREOC, 2000; Lamb et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2013). These concerns are not unique to Australia. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted an 'urban advantage' in every country that participated in the 2009 PISA tests (Lamb et al., 2014).

Although educators are rightly concerned about educational disadvantage, statistics fail to capture a real sense of place and a full picture of rural schooling. Some rural education researchers have noted that rural-urban binaries and deficit models recur in the literature (Lake, 2007; Moriarty, Danaher & Danaher, 2003; Reid et al, 2010; Wallace & Boylan, 2009; Young & Kennedy, 2011). Gannon (2013), for example, is critical of how schools are storied on the MySchool website arguing the narrative of each school uses an "impoverished vocabulary of numbers" (p. 20). Defining rurality in terms of distance from metropolitan services, reflecting on achievement that does not match urban counterparts, and labelling schools as 'hard to staff' are all practices that contribute to the construction of a deficit discourse. In reporting the literature on rural schooling in this chapter, I acknowledge my own contribution here. Roberts and Green (2013) point out that 'metrocentric' and deficit perspectives on rural education, "take no account of the particularities and affordances of rural social space" (p. 766). To counter a potentially disabling rural-urban binary Moriarty, Danaher and Danaher (2003) propose that rural education researchers "seek new ways of mapping and celebrating the diversity and richness of educational experience in contemporary Australia" (p. 136). Reid et al. (2010),

following Bourdieu, position their work to "speak back, symbolically, to the violence that is done to rural schools…" (p. 270).

Teaching in Rural Schools

Staffing rural schools

The challenge of attracting and retaining a suitable balance of staff, particularly in specialist teaching areas, is a recurring theme in international and Australian studies of rural education (Barter, 2008; Campbell & Yates, 2011; Eppley, 2009; Germeten, 2011; Green & Reid, 2004; Lake, 2007; Lock et al., 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Roberts, 2004; Rossi & Sirna, 2008; Sharplin, O'Neill & Chapman, 2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2009; White & Reid, 2008). In Australia attracting and retaining staff in rural schools is a major concern for every state and territory (White, Lock, Hastings, Cooper, Reid & Green, 2011). Sharplin, O'Neill and Chapman (2011) point to the disproportionately high number of young and inexperienced teachers in rural schools.

In Australia, some researchers suggest a pervasive 'metrocentric' worldview impacts on staffing rural schools as many teachers give preference to metropolitan placements (Campbell & Yates, 2011; Green & Reid, 2004; Halsey, 2009; Wallace & Boylan, 2009). The National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education (HREOC, 2000) also noted a number of disincentives to teaching in rural and remote schools including a sense of isolation, high costs of travel and other living expenses, poor and costly housing, lack of access to professional development and limited promotional opportunities. As a consequence rural schools can experience difficulty in specialist areas such as science, technology, arts, special education and learning support (HREOC, 2000; Lake, 2007). This means that teachers in rural schools often teach

outside learning areas for which they have professional preparation and this can place additional demands on early career teachers (Halsey, 2009).

The high staff turnover has consequences for schools, students and communities. Lake's Queensland study (2007) revealed a community perception that young teachers do not commit to the community, and found that the work of innovators was lost due to high staff turnover. Roberts (2004) also notes the difficulty in maintaining the continuity of programs. Rossi and Sirna (2008) reported rapid turn over rates of physical education teachers in Queensland rural and remote schools and found that the community could view teachers as transitory interlopers.

Efforts have been made to attract teachers to rural schools. In Australia, the TERRAnova project aimed to identify "successful teacher education strategies aimed at making rural teaching attractive and a long-term career option" (Lock et al. 2009, p. 31). They sought ways to support pre-service teachers to understand rural social space: "Coming to know a place means recognising and valuing the forms of social and symbolic capital that exist there, rather than elsewhere" (Reid et al. 2010, p. 272). The Renewing Rural and Regional Teacher Education Curriculum (RRRTEC) project now has a website to support teacher educators that offers learning modules and extensive resources (White, Kline, Hastings & Lock, 2011). A strong emphasis is on thinking about the specificity of place – the first two modules being 'Understanding Rurality' and 'Understanding Place'.

Professional learning for rural teachers

The inadequacy of support for teachers' professional learning in rural schools has also been a focus of research (Green & Reid, 2004; Lake, 2007; Lock et al., 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Rossi & Sirna, 2008; White & Reid, 2008). White and Reid

(2008, p. 3) argue that a result of "staffing churn" is fewer experienced teachers to guide new graduates. Similarly, Kennedy, Young and Dorman's (2009) study found early career teachers were often the only teachers responsible for a learning area and that there were significant demands on senior staff acting as mentors for new teachers. Lake's (2007) study of science education in remote Queensland schools found that, while some teachers embraced remoteness as giving them more freedom to innovate, others reported feeling isolated from social ties, administrative support, technical or disciplinary expertise and had difficulties getting to professional development. Panizzon and Pegg's (2007) national study on strategies to support science, mathematics and ICT educators in rural Australia found significant professional learning needs in rural and remote areas; that the professional development was not always suited to the particular needs of the school; and where professional development was available, it was difficult to release teachers because there were no available relief teachers to cover classes. The HREOC (2000) inquiry also found the practical issues of cost of travel to larger centres to access training and the difficulty employing casual replacement teachers was a significant barrier to attending formal professional development activities.

Conclusion

In this literature review I have located my research in four broad and interconnected fields of inquiry. Teachers in this rural case study engaged in a significant curriculum change as part of a move to a national curriculum in history. In first highlighting broader political debates about national curricula that centre on control of the curriculum, the assumptions underpinning the curriculum and the outcomes of the curriculum, I acknowledge the wider cultural and institutional context of the work that was undertaken by teachers in this remote rural school.

However, this study's focus is on the practical issues of implementation of this curriculum change. The literature suggests that while teachers face some conflicts negotiating curriculum change, it is teachers' understanding of, and commitment to, the curriculum that is important for a positive disposition towards change.

The literature related to teachers' work as mediators of the curriculum emphasises teachers' critical role in curriculum enactment. It also underscores the significance of teacher knowledge in the process of making decisions about how to interpret a new curriculum for learners. I have emphasised the influential work of Shulman (1987, 2004), describing the different types of knowledge teachers draw on to support their curriculum implementation work. Teachers' knowledge growth is supported by professional learning opportunities that are collaborative and grounded in immediate and local problems of practice. This helps explain why the educational community values action research. The design of this study was informed by these literatures, and also seeks to extend them by contributing a thick description of how this team of early career teachers in a rural school made their decisions and plans for history, in the process learning together about a new curriculum.

A clear and valued pedagogy for school history is evident across the international literature; however, school history has proven to be a complex and challenging subject to teach. Teachers with limited knowledge of the historiographical approaches privileged in contemporary history curricula need access to support and opportunities to learn about how to teach history. In the lead up to the introduction of the Australian history curriculum this potential issue was foreshadowed, as it was recognised that not all history classes would be taught by teachers with professional preparation in history. An overview of the structure and organisation of the *Australian*

Curriculum: History, and the Year 8 course in particular, contextualises the discussions that form the bulk of the data for this study.

Individual school contexts add another layer of complexity to teachers' work to implement history curricula; this study is situated in a rural school. A number of persistent themes emerge in the literature on rural schooling: the need to attend to the diversity of rural places, concerns with the educational attainment of rural students, the challenge of staffing rural schools and supporting teachers' professional learning. Although this study does not directly address pressing concerns about educational outcomes for rural students, supporting rural teachers impacts on rural students. As Green and Reid (2004) point out: "… quality teachers and quality teaching is an issue that relates directly to quality learning outcomes for children, to be understood in terms of both *academic* and *social* outcomes" (p. 255). This research deepens understandings of the rural teaching experience. Commenting on curriculum implementation in rural schools, Roberts (2013) advocates greater responsiveness to place in curriculum decision-making. Adopting an action research approach, working collaboratively with rural teachers in-situ as they work to implement a new history curriculum for their learners, allows my research to explore just such an imperative. In the next two chapters I explain the theoretical framework that underpins this research and provide a justification and explanation of the research design.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I explain the theoretical framework that informs this research (see Figure 2 below). I firstly explain the social construction paradigm in which this research is situated and the understandings about knowledge, language and power that have informed my qualitative and participatory approach to this research. I then show how discourse theory and community of practice theory have been influential in conceptualising both the research design and the interpretive lenses.
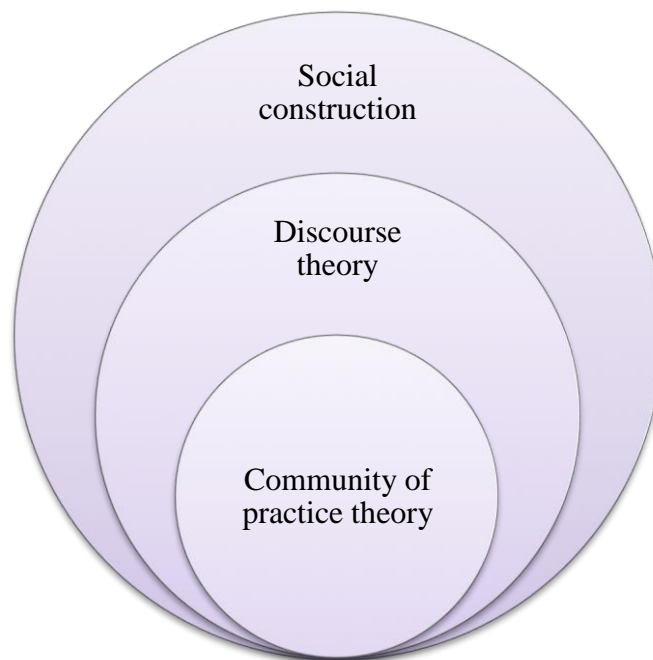
Figure 2 Outline of theoretical framework

Social Construction

My research adopts an epistemological perspective that holds that knowledge and meaning is brought into being through historically and culturally situated social practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Crotty, 1998; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; 2008a). Berger and Luckmann (1967) were influential in theorising that reality is socially constructed arguing that, "specific agglomerations of 'reality' and 'knowledge'

pertain to specific social contexts" (p. 3). Shared understandings of the world, enacted and reinforced as people engage in everyday communal interchange, constitute a subjective reality (Andrews, 2012; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). However, a social constructionist perspective does not suggest that all meaning making literally happens with other people; rather that we all bring to any activity a view of the world shaped by cultural understandings. Crotty (1998) explains that humans from birth are 'encultured' – that is, immersed in cultures and sub-cultures that "establish a tight grip upon us and, by and large, shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives" (p. 79). Therefore meaning making is a cultural process. It is also historical because each instance of meaning making builds on all that has come before. Social constructionists share some key assumptions about the generation of knowledge, the central role of language in this process, and the way power is embedded in all social interaction (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; 2008a). Social construction is also a paradigm that makes certain assumptions about how researchers may investigate and generate knowledge (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Ryan, 2006). As such, this perspective has influenced all aspects of the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of this research.

Knowledge

In the social constructionist perspective knowledge or truth is what is real for a particular community. Influenced by Kuhn's 1962 publication *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, social constructionists hold that "truth exists only within a paradigm" (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, pp. 2-3). Knowledge is not something that is possessed; rather it is "…something that people *do* together" (Burr, 1995, p. 6). Knowledge claims are negotiated in social contexts for shared purposes and are considered valid when accepted as such by a community of stakeholders (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Another group, in another time, or context,

may have a very different perspective on what they hold to be true. As Burr (1995) emphasises, knowledge is built within a particular view of the world: "all knowledge is derived from looking at the world from some perspective or other, and in the service of some interests rather than others" (p. 4). This is not to deny the existence of an objective reality, rather a view that humans have no direct access to an objective reality (Andrews, 2012; Crotty, 1998; Mills, 1997; Schwandt, 2000). Useful knowledge and 'truths' can be formed within communities – for example, pedagogical knowledge can be usefully employed within an educational community (Gergen & Gergen, 2008a). However, there are other communities where these knowledge claims would be rejected. Social constructionists view all knowledge as tentative and situated. As Gergen and Gergen (2008b) assert: "no authoritative statement about the nature of things stands on any foundation other than its own network of presumptions" (p. 819).

Implications for this research

Taking a situated view of knowledge and meaning making, I locate my research in a particular historical and cultural setting where meaning making about curriculum is the social activity in focus. This is an institutional context where there are long histories of meaning about the project of schooling. Understandings of what it is, for example, to be a teacher or a student, or to implement a curriculum, are long-established and widely-shared 'truths'. As questioning this view of the world is beyond the scope of this research, I acknowledge this is the particular paradigm both myself, and the teacher participants, operate within. Context determines what is considered possible and not possible within this project. For example, as employees the teachers do not have the option of not teaching a prescribed curriculum. As a researcher a school has allowed into their community, I do not have the option of

advocating radical departure from the stated curriculum or established ways of working and need myself to work within institutional structures. As Gergen and Gergen (2008a, p. 168) caution:

> When a researcher enters a group or organization, he or she is also entering a domain of the real. And, to participate in this world the researcher will almost necessarily be required to affirm this particular account of the real. A failure to do so would function as a token of bad faith.

Therefore, in the design of this study I commit to the realities and practices of the teaching community that I work with.

The importance of context is further emphasised in my research questions that refer to the specificity of place (see pages 10-11: *these* teachers, in *this* school). I acknowledge that what may be true for this group of rural teachers may not hold true for another. In choosing to conduct a single site case study and investigating teachers' work in this context I am attentive to what Gergen and Gergen (2008a, p. 162) call the "forms of life" within this knowledge-making community. It is within this reality that I study how one group of educators makes meaning of a new history curriculum for their students.

Research in a social constructionist paradigm problematises the role of the researcher in constructing knowledge. In a social constructionist paradigm research is not a search for absolute truths, but rather a search to understand how certain knowledge and understandings are achieved by people (Burr, 1995). In developing research questions, approaching a problem in a particular way, interpreting data and reporting results researchers actively shape the findings of any study, that is, construct particular knowledge claims. In acknowledging the social and situated nature of knowledge generation I adopt a qualitative approach in this research. I explain my findings in terms of what counts as knowledge in my own educational and research

context. I offer a transparent account of my actions and thinking for others to critically evaluate. I do not try to present a set of definitive answers; instead I offer tentative, contestable findings and leave open possibilities for further interpretation. I hold with Gergen and Gergen (2003) who maintain that social constructionists regard "all our assumptions and related practices open to reflexive reconsideration" (p. 34). I strive to build more reflexivity into this study through incorporating a research question that particularly focuses on my own impact on the project (see page 11).

Power

Social constructionism also adopts a critical stance connecting knowledge and power. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault (1977) explicated how knowledge and power are interconnected, noting that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 27). What passes as knowledge is what is allowed to; it is power that generates reality and meaning (Crotty, 1998). Foucault (1977) calls this a power-knowledge process that "determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge" (p. 28). Particular forms of knowledge in communities will advantage some and disadvantage others, reflecting and reinforcing power structures and inequities. This is evidenced in, for example, the research of Teese (2000) in Australia which shows how schooling, which values a particular assemblage of knowledge and skills, tends to reinforce the inequities it aims to overcome.

Social constructionists are attentive to the ways issues of power are kept from plain sight, the way power structures ensure certain issues are never raised in the first place, and the way that power influences whose voice is heard and whose is not (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008). Power permeates discourses in ways that makes power

structures in society seem natural (Foucault, 1977). Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) liken this notion of power to Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony and Friere's culture of silence. For example, 'experts' having a better understanding of what to do than lay people is a common storyline in our culture. This makes it seem natural, for example, that a novice teacher should defer to a more experienced colleague, potentially rendering the novice teacher relatively powerless in a curriculum decision. In such an example, uneven power relations are so taken for granted that both parties play their respective roles in this storyline. The way power is deeply embedded in everyday social reality can advantage some at the expense of others (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Implications for the research

The institutional power of schooling, impacts on all aspects of teachers' work and a detailed investigation of this dimension of power is beyond the scope of this research. However, I do maintain a critical orientation to my research, in particular giving attention to establishing ways for teachers' perspectives to be heard and recognition of the constructed nature of my own research findings. This research aims to ensure the experiences of rural practitioners are included in knowledge generated about the new Australian curriculum. These teachers had no power over the shape of the curriculum document and no option but to implement the curriculum to the best of their ability. For this reason the focus on teachers' every day work of curriculum planning and decision-making has been fundamental to the design of the study.

Acknowledging the impossibility of researcher neutrality, I chose to design a participatory project where I worked alongside teachers. This required careful consideration of power relations and roles and relationships given my own personal life history as an experienced history teacher and educational advisor working with

participants who were all early career teachers. I aimed to eschew traditional notions of novice and expert by building a collegial relationship where I acknowledged the teachers' expertise in their own context. In reporting this research, I also take care in mediating the experiences of rural teachers. I include transcriptions of extended sections of teachers' talk in this thesis to retain a more detailed account of teachers' experiences in recognition of their role as co-constructors of the knowledge generated through this research.

Language

Social construction acknowledges the centrality of language in constructing accounts of the world (Dryzek, 2005; Gergen & Gergen, 2008a; Philips & Hardy, 2002; Tonkiss, 1998). Language is the key meditational tool in all human activity (Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011; Wells & Claxton, 2002; Wertsch, 1989). The linguistic turn in the social sciences in the 20th century rejected the notion that language represents a fixed expression of meaning or reflects an external objective reality (Locke, 2004; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Wittgenstein, 1968). Rather, our use of language is bound up in the discursive conventions of cultures. In any given community people tend to follow particular language conventions – Wittgenstein (1968) called this playing 'language games' – such as following grammar rules, genre conventions and rules of content that define how things can be described and what can and cannot be expressed. Gee (1999) argues that language functions to "scaffold the performance of social activities" and "to scaffold human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions" (p. 1). Similarly Mills (1997) asserts that through the language we use to describe the world, we impose an order on the world that does not exist intrinsically.

Social construction also acknowledges the human tendency to express and understand experiences in a storied form. Gee (1999) maintains, "narratives are important sense-making devices" (p. 134). Gergen and Gergen (2003) concur, arguing "the story form structures our understandings and thus our actions" (p. 61). Existing stories are products of culture and, when experience is connected to existing stories, themes and motifs recur (Gee, 1999). The productive power of stories is realised through language.

Implications for this research

Taking the view that it is through language that we make meaning of the world and shape our understandings, I focused my data collection on language in use; I aimed to bring teachers together to talk about their curriculum work. This record of teachers' talk as they go about their curriculum planning and decision-making formed the main corpus of data. My methods of data analysis explained in the next chapter also draw on this understanding of how language builds social activities, and the story form structures social activity.

Discourse Theory

Discourse

In general use discourse means spoken and written interactions such as conversations, stories, commentary or speeches but its theoretical range of meanings is much broader (Howarth, 2000; Mills, 1997). In this research I draw on both general and theoretical meanings of discourse. I will refer to teachers' talk about their curriculum work as language in use. I reserve the term discourse for theoretical explanations of how language and other activities construct social reality.

A discourse is a shared way of understanding, acting in and representing an aspect of the world; this is realised through and embedded in language and other social activities (Dryzek, 2005; Fairclough, 2003; Foucault 1972; Howarth, 2000; Mills, 1997). In this way discourses represent particular perspectives on aspects of the world (Gee, 2005). For example, the discourse of schooling encompasses the way certain attitudes, values and beliefs cluster together to construct a particular perspective on education. Those who subscribe to this discourse share a belief that children (constructed as 'students') should attend schools and be organised by age group ('grades' and 'classes') and taught certain valued things (organised as 'subjects') by adults (recognised as 'teachers'). When we draw on this understanding of schooling, we communicate and act in a way that brings objects, activities and identities into being (Dryzek, 2005; Gee, 2005; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). For example, things such as schools, timetables and assignments are brought into being and given specific meanings in the discourse of schooling; activities or practices such as teaching a lesson, reading a textbook, completing homework, and attending a staff meeting are given shape by this discourse; and, in doing these activities, identities such as students, classmates and teachers are both taken up and recognised. As Ryan (2006) puts it: "Discourses 'invite' us to be human in certain ways, or to respond to others in certain ways" (p. 22). Discourses that are widely shared over time may incorporate understandings and assumptions about the world that seem so natural that we come to think of them as taken-for-granted truths (Larsen, 2010). The discourse of schooling described above can be described as a dominant discourse as these particular beliefs about education are so pervasive they are naturalised and largely unquestioned (Mills, 1997). However, there are other perspectives on education that represent alternative discourses.

Discourses exist only as a pattern of thinking and acting in the world. Phillips and Hardy (2002) point out that discourses do not "possess" meaning, rather, it is the act of sharing and repeatedly making use of values, attitudes and beliefs that cohere in certain ways that brings a structure to a discourse: "discourses are shared and social, emanating out of interactions between social groups and the complex societal structures in which the discourse is embedded" (p. 4). For example, in participating in a parent-teacher interview particular understandings are drawn on by both parent and teacher to guide their interaction. The discourse of the parent-teacher interview regulates this practice and defines what the conversation will be about, who should speak, when and with what authority, what linguistic resources will be drawn on including what meanings will be attached to words and phrases, what register will be adopted, and the arrangement and use of physical objects. Larsen (2010) describes discourses as working like organisational frameworks for our social activity: "Discourses offer us frames, definitions and structures through which to view, experience and make sense of the world" (p. 209).

Discourses reflect and construct the social world

As we engage in social life we simultaneously draw upon and construct discourses. Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O'Garro Joseph (2005) emphasise this reflexive process: "discourse moves back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world" (p. 369). For example, when a group of teachers talk about an upcoming lesson, they are drawing on the dominant discourse of schooling to frame their way of understanding and talking about the learning process. The assumptions they share about teaching and learning shape the way the teachers think and talk about the lesson, but in making use of the discourse for their discussions they are also contributing to the ongoing construction of the discourse by

reinforcing that particular perspective on teaching and learning. Every time we talk or act our understanding of 'the lesson' in a particular way we are perpetuating the dominant discourse of schooling. As Dryzek (2005) explains: "Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgements, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements" (p. 9).

Discourses may have long histories but they are not static; meaning is constantly being contested and discourses do change over time (Foucault, 1972; Mills, 1997). As discourses are combined and interact in new ways discourses are transformed and new discourses emerge. The values, beliefs, attitudes and practices that structure the discourse of schooling are in a constant process of change. While many fundamental beliefs have remained stable for some time – such as the need for schools, organising time into years, terms and lessons, and the need to conduct assessments – there are shifts in thinking that have the effect of transforming the discourse such as new designs for learning spaces that both reflect and influence new ways of thinking about and enacting teaching and learning.

Discourses are innumerable and vary in scale. There may be multiple discourses operating within any social activity making the boundaries of discourses difficult to delineate (Gee, 1999; Mills, 1997). Discourses themselves can be seen as combinations of other discourses, described by Fairclough (2003) as a "texturing together of discourses" (p. 126). The discourse of schooling can be seen as constituted by combinations of many other discourses of varied scale and specificity such as the discourse of assessment for learning, the discourse of high stakes testing, the discourse of student-centred learning, the discourse of the parent-teacher interview, the discourse of historical skills, or the discourse of reading a book in a particular

teacher's class. The discourse of the parent-teacher interview itself weaves together discourses of parenting and childhood development as well as teaching and learning.

Discourses combine and interact in many different ways (Larsen, 2010). Discourses may merge to form new hybrid discourses (Gee, 1999, 2005). For example, a discourse of 'academic history' combined with a discourse of 'inquiry pedagogies' and a discourse of 'schooling as contributing to life-long learning' all contribute to a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that might be identified the discourse of school history. Discourses may overlap, or operate in concert or in opposition. Two discourses about teachers identified by Larsen (2010) are an example of a complex interaction. A discourse of 'the centrality of the teacher' suggests that the teacher is the most important influence on student outcomes. This discourse has developed over time and is constructed by (and evident in) numerous texts and social acts, for example, film texts that feature narratives about inspiring teachers who are the key to turning around student achievement and teacher awards that recognise the skills and dedication of the individual teacher. Larsen also identified another discourse of 'blame and derision of teachers'. She argues that both discourses combine to make it seem a truth that problems with teachers are to blame for poor performance and are the only avenue through which to address educational issues. She claims this has the effect of taking attention away from structural, funding, or social issues that impact on student outcomes. Instead, she argues, these discourses operate together "to de-professionalise and demoralise teachers by neglecting the broader socio-political contexts within which they work" (Larsen, 2010, p. 212).

Analysing Discourse

Discourses are embedded in language and other social activities and are organised into texts (Dryzek, 2005; Gee, 2005; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Texts are

discrete instances of language in use (which includes the social activity). A conversation in a staffroom, a set of notes on a whiteboard, a report card, or doing a particular science lesson on genetics are all examples of the vast number of texts that are shaped by, and contribute to, the discourse of schooling. Several discourses can be in operation in a text. Burr (1995) explains that texts can be identified as belonging to the same discourse when they are "painting the same general picture of the object in question" (p. 34). Discourse analysis offers tools to deconstruct the language in use in texts to reveal the attitudes, values and beliefs that construct the social activity. For example, the way a science lesson is conducted, including the language used, reveals certain understandings about scientific knowledge (for example, what knowledge is valued and how this knowledge is constructed), certain understandings about what it is to be a teacher and a student (for example, what roles and relationships should be adopted) and certain assumptions about teaching and learning (for example, what pedagogical approaches and resources are valued). Discourse analysis allows the constructive meaning making processes of language in use to be revealed, and in this way the discourses in operation can be identified.

Implications for the research

These understandings about discourse and the way language constructs social reality have informed decisions about data collection (language in use), data analysis (discourse analysis) and aspects of data interpretation (identification of discourses in operation). Discourse theory informed the focus on teachers' talk about their curriculum decision-making and planning. Discourse analysis was used to deconstruct selected sections of language in use to identify the way these teachers built activities, significance, connections, identities and relationships (Gee, 1999, 2005). I then looked for patterns across this initial discourse analysis to identify key discourses in

operation across the study. I acknowledge also that the institutional setting defines the context in which the teachers work, and as such limits the discourses available to them.

In summary, discourse theory offers an explanation of how we make meaning of the world and emphasises the critical role of language in all social activity and meaning making. Discourse theory is applicable to all social life and I now drill down to focus on one particular form of social organisation – a community of practice. Because this project brings together a group of teachers and a researcher, community of practice theory is useful to build understandings of how the group operated, including how they mobilised certain discourses.

Community of Practice Theory

Communities of Practice

Community of practice theory developed by Lave and Wenger (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is a social theory of learning relevant to this study of how teachers learn together about a new curriculum. A community of practice is a social group formed through mutual engagement in a joint enterprise, making use of and constructing shared ways of doing things (Wenger, 1998). Community of practice theory informed the way this project was established, and also offered suitable explanatory tools. In this section I describe the key concepts from community of practice theory that have been most influential in this research design. These are mutual engagement in joint enterprise, development of a shared repertoire of practices, different types of membership and membership trajectories, and boundaries between communities of practice.

Mutual Engagement in a Joint Enterprise

Mutual engagement in a joint enterprise is a key condition in the formation of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Mutual engagement in, and a shared accountability for, an enterprise is "the source of coherence", holding the community of practice together (p. 73). The nature of the enterprise is continually negotiated and shaped by the community of practice through doing the enterprise together. Communities of practice do not operate in isolation, but always develop in broader historical, cultural and social contexts that present particular constraints; however, Wenger's (1998) study of a group of medical claims processors illustrated that even though their work roles were established by their employer, the claims processors developed their own practices to deal with what they understood to be their enterprise. As he notes:

> …even when the practice of a community is profoundly shaped by conditions outside the control of its members, as it always is in some respects, its day-to-day reality is nevertheless produced by participants within the resources and constraints of their situations. It is their response to their conditions, and therefore *their* enterprise. (Wenger, 1998, p. 79)

Development of a Shared Repertoire of Practices

Lave and Wenger's theory centres around the concept of practice. The way a community of practice understands and conducts their joint enterprise is the 'practice' of the community. Practice means 'doing'; more specifically, "it is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do" (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). Over time members of a community of practice develop a shared repertoire of practices – resources, ways of doing things and beliefs – that represent the accumulation of the knowledge of the community (Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011).

Members of the community of practice negotiate meaning about their practice through complementary processes of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998). Participation is "the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises" (p. 55). Participation in a community of practice shapes members' identities. For example, participating with colleagues to plan lessons builds an identity as a teacher. Reification is the way of condensing a complex series of ideas or ways of working into an abstraction that is shared and understood by the members of a community of practice; Wenger explains it as "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into 'thingness'" (p. 58). Stories, tools, symbols, mottos, concepts, and processes are examples of reifications that become part of a community's practice. For example, a subject curriculum document can be considered a reification of a much more complex set of ideas about what and how to teach. Sometimes others external to the community of practice contribute to reifications. For example, in an institutional setting such as a school, the employer may reify many policies and procedures, and employees need take them up in some way. However, Wenger notes, "reification must be re-appropriated into a local process in order to become meaningful" (p. 60).

Through participation communities of practice construct reifications; making use of reifications also shapes participation. As Wenger (1998) explains, "participation and reification both require and enable each other" (p. 66). These particular processes become a shared repertoire of practices particular to the community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) also acknowledge the significance of language in building a shared repertoire of practices and in negotiating meaning.

Learning

Communities of practice are conceptualised as structures of learning –
members are learning how to do the particular enterprise of the community of
practice. Developing on their earlier work on apprenticeship, Lave and Wenger
(1991) theorise learning as a situated activity involving the process of legitimate
peripheral participation. Newcomers are gradually brought into full membership of a
community of practice, moving from legitimate peripheral participation to full
membership as they learn and build competence in the practices of the community.
Wenger (1998) notes that people do not typically cite that they are learning when they
engage in a community of practice, rather seeing their participation as part of their
normal activity. This reflects a common view of learning as a discrete activity that
happens separately to everyday social activity. For Wenger learning happens as we
engage in our enterprises: "What they [members] learn is not static subject matter but
the very process of being engaged in, and participating in developing, an ongoing
practice" (1998, p. 95).

Membership

Communities of practice have different types of members on different
membership trajectories. Much of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical work has
been about legitimate peripheral participation. Legitimate peripheral participation
admits newcomers into a community of practice, recognising that, initially, only a
certain level of participation is possible. But it also acknowledges that these
newcomers are on a trajectory to full membership. Others may have a more
provisional membership, accepted into the community of practice for a time, but
never on a trajectory towards full membership (Wenger, 1998). People are also
members of, and participate in, multiple communities of practice. A teacher may

belong to a classroom community of practice, a number of subject area teaching

teams, a whole staff teaching team and many more communities outside the school.

Boundaries and Connections

Communities of practice do not operate in isolation but are connected to many

other communities and enterprises (Wenger, 1998). Boundaries between

communities may be tightly defined (with a strict requirement for membership) or

more loosely delineated. According to Wenger connections, or boundary crossings,

are either reificative, through boundary objects, or participative, through boundary

encounters.

A boundary object is a reification that coordinates practices across

communities of practice because they operate as a "standardized reification" (Wenger,

1998, p. 106). A national curriculum document could function as a boundary object,

connecting teachers in communities of practice across a nation. Wenger (p.108)

explains an artefact operating as a boundary object represents a "nexus of

perspectives" and that the artefact obtains its meaning from this shared use. For

example a curriculum obtains its meaning from the way different groups of teachers,

students, administrators and parents make use of the artefact.

Boundary encounters are opportunities for members of different communities

of practice to engage; for example a visitor can immerse themselves in another

community's practice to understand it more deeply: "Practice has the advantage of

offering something to do together, some productive enterprise around which to

negotiate diverging meanings and perspectives" (Wenger, 1998, p. 114).

Brokering is a boundary encounter that builds connections across communities

of practice. Brokers are those who, because of their multi-membership, can bring

some element of one practice to another community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Those taking a broker role in a community of practice are not on a trajectory towards full membership. Brokers have to avoid being either drawn into full membership or being rejected as intruders, as Wenger asserts: "their contributions lie precisely in being neither in nor out" (p. 110). In making new connections and bringing elements of one practice into another, brokers can influence the negotiation of meaning. Mayer, Grenier, Warhol and Donaldson (2013) studied external coaches, conceptualised as brokers, who were employed by intermediary organisations to establish communities of practice to support schools implementing a reform in the USA. In their study the broker promoted cooperation and communication, brought new knowledge to the group and brokered conflicts. Akkerman, Petter and de Laat (2008) also point to the value of external brokers in initiating the formation of communities of practice in a project with tourism industry workplaces in the Netherlands.

Implications for this research

Community of practice theory informed the initial establishment of this project. Investigating how teachers went about implementing a new history curriculum required a focus on teachers' practice. I aimed to consider how a prescribed national curriculum was realised in a remote rural context and drew on Wenger's (1998) observation that, "Even when a community of practice arises in response to some outside mandate, the practice evolves into the community's own response to that mandate" (p. 80). Therefore, the research design needed to afford opportunity for teachers to come together in an authentic context to negotiate meanings around their practice. Adopting an action research approach for data collection established the time and space for this mutual engagement in a joint enterprise, and afforded me the opportunity to join teachers at key junctures in their

planning. Community of practice theory also offered valuable insights when interpreting the results of the data analysis. It focused attention on engagement in the enterprise of curriculum planning and decision-making, the shared repertoire of practices, different membership roles including my own participation, and professional learning.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the theoretical framework that underpins this qualitative and participatory case study. By adopting a social constructionist stance I hold that meaning making is constructed in social activity, that knowledge is socially, culturally and historically located and represents what is held to be true by a particular community at a particular time. This informed my decision to conduct a single-site case study. Attending to issues of power/knowledge, I focused this research on the perspectives and experiences of a group of rural teachers, those charged with implementing a curriculum developed by others in a distant metropolitan setting. I also acknowledge that this thesis is my own constructed account of this case study. As such I commit to a transparent reporting of my study and emphasise the contextual specificity and the provisionality of my findings. I have also emphasised the importance of language as the key mediational tool of human activity. Discourse theory has informed my decision to focus on language in use and to collect data from authentic teacher curriculum planning activities. It has also informed my approach to data analysis that focuses on how, through language, teachers construct shared understandings of their curriculum work. Community of practice theory has influenced my understanding of the social dimensions of the study, including my own participation in this research. In the next chapter I provide a more detailed account of the research design.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In this chapter I justify and explain the specific methods employed to answer my key research question: *How do teachers in this rural secondary school approach the task of implementing a new national history curriculum, with the support of a researcher?* Roberts and Green (2013) argue that the challenge of researching in rural contexts requires less focus on traditional methodological integrity and more on the problem being investigated. In the design of my research I adopt the "strategic eclecticism" and "resolute focus on what is being researched" that they advocate (p. 765). I draw on approaches from case study, action research and discourse analysis to produce a research design that is fit for purpose. Case study affords a close focus on teachers' work in one rural school. Action research approaches support investigation of the practical task of curriculum implementation and rich data collection opportunities. Discourse analysis offers suitable tools to deconstruct the data to surface underlying assumptions, values and beliefs and supports researcher reflexivity.

I begin this explanation of my research design with the key decision to conduct a single-site case study and a description of the case study site. I then explain the process for recruitments of participants, detail participation and the conduct of semi-structured interviews with participants at the outset of the study. Then, I explain how and why I used an action research approach to frame a project that would offer an insight into teachers' authentic work, and present an overview of the corpus of data collected. I also discuss the importance of roles and relationships in this research. After this, I explain my use of discourse analysis. I detail my five-step approach to data analysis including transcription decisions, identifying appropriate units of

analysis, and the particular tools of discourse analysis I employed to analyse and interpret the data. I close this chapter by addressing ethical considerations and approval processes and acknowledging the limitations of the research design.

Single Site Case Study

Case Study Research

Case studies allow the researcher to understand real-life phenomenon in depth with the purpose of shedding light on an issue of more general interest (Gerring, 2007; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009). As Gerring (2007) explains, with a case study, "We gain a better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part" (p. 1). A defining feature of a case study is that it investigates a bounded system (Bassey, 1999; Dinkelman, Margolis & Sikkenga, 2006; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2009). My research is a single site case study with clear social, temporal and spatial boundaries. It has investigated the work of a small group of history teachers, preparing to teach the *Australian Curriculum: History*, with Year 8 students, in one rural secondary school, in the first year of full implementation of the new curriculum. In this section I firstly justify the decision to conduct a case study.

Although case study research has been criticised for a lack of generalisable findings, case study research can make a significant contribution to knowledge. First, a case study adds depth, rather than breadth (Blatter, 2008). A case study can offer more detailed insight into issues identified by larger scale studies. For example, my own case study more deeply investigates an issue raised by the research of Drummond et al. (2012), which surveyed school principals about the implementation of the Australian Curriculum (see Chapter 1). Respondents reported that school leaders "… want support which is responsive to the contexts in which they work" (p.

34). This case study reveals possibilities – explained in terms of how one group worked in their context – that may be of value to others seeking to support teachers in rural schools.

Second, case study research can draw analytic focus to details of difference. Larger scale research tends to find commonalities, potentially having the effect of erasing difference. This is an important consideration in rural research where the huge diversity of rural contexts, particularly in Australia, is frequently lost in reporting rural issues (see Chapter 2; Roberts & Green, 2013; Sher & Sher, 1994; White & Reid, 2008). Schatzki (2002) argues for the site to be the centre of investigation into social life holding that: "…the character and transformation of social life are both intrinsically and decisively rooted in the site where it takes place" (p. xi). This points to the need to attend to the particularity of context to understand phenomena. All teachers' work is necessarily specific to the socio-cultural context of a particular place, cohort of students, and group of teachers. In seeking to understand the complexities of teachers' work, a single-site case study is an appropriate lens.

Third, case study research is attentive to issues of power and agency. Cormack and Comber (2013) assert that the lived experience of educators in schools is often absent from educational debates: "The work – emotional, everyday and pragmatic – is often invisible" (p. 78). A case study approach allows this everyday lived experience to be brought into focus. This research addresses a real and current concern of teachers working to implement a prescribed national curriculum in history. Also responding to potential issues of power inequities, Gannon (2013) argues that the dominant mode of storying education in a neoliberal environment is collections of data. She advocates disrupting this dominant storying of education with other

narratives that provide thicker descriptions. In following teachers' work across a nine month period I am able to offer a detailed account of one teaching team's experiences.

Fourth, case study research can identify issues for further investigation and contribute to the accumulation of knowledge in a particular field. Stake (2000) argues that case studies can refine theory and suggest new areas of investigation. Bassey (1999, p. 52) suggests that it is possible to make "fuzzy generalisations" or propositions that may contribute to wider professional discourse. This case study contributes another rural example to knowledge in the fields of curriculum change, school history and teachers' work in curriculum implementation. I also draw from this case study suggestions for further research.

Selection of the Research Site

Purposive sampling was used to locate the research site. Stake (2000) suggests purposive sampling means "leaning towards those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn" (p. 446). Based on this premise, informed by my research questions and influenced by my professional life history, I developed the following criteria for a potential case study site:

1. A state secondary school. My own teaching career was in public sector secondary schools. I determined there would be benefits in working within the education sector and school level I was familiar with. I also knew that all state schools were due to begin implementation of the history curriculum in 2013.

2. The school would be implementing the history curriculum in 2013 with no, or limited, prior progress on this implementation. This would enable me see more clearly the work around the new curriculum as any issues would likely be most apparent in the first year of implementation.

3. A more remote rural school. As I particularly wanted to investigate whether issues related to a rural context were significant in curriculum change in the learning area of history, I reasoned that the more remote the school, the more defined any issues of rurality would be.

4. The school should not have close connections with me. Although my work role meant it was possible someone in the school would know me, I aimed to work with a school where I was not well known in order to maintain separation between my work role (which at the time of the study was mainly around senior secondary history) and my research (related to the F-10 curriculum).

I generated a list of schools that matched the requirements of my study using a publicly available list of remote state schools. The second school I approached, initially by telephoning the school's Head of Department responsible for curriculum in lower secondary, expressed an interest in finding out more about what would be involved. I sent a letter of invitation to participate, a school information sheet and a Department of Education, Training and Employment application to conduct research and continued my discussions with the school about how the research might be organised. The school agreed to participate if there were enough teachers interested in being involved. When a small group of teachers expressed interest, the school principal gave their consent to participate.

Rural Context and Design of the Case Study

Conducting a rural case study and the decision to pursue a research site distant from Brisbane, the metropolitan capital, where I live, shaped a number of key research design decisions.

Because rural schools are typically small schools, I knew potential participants would be drawn from only a very small number of history teachers. I also foreshadowed potential difficulties retaining participants across two school years due to high staff turnover in rural schools (Roberts, 2004; White et. al., 2011). Therefore participant flexibility was built into the design of the study. I did this by planning a study focused on a particular shared activity, rather than a particular collection of individuals. This ensured that the project was sustainable even if participants changed.

The likely remoteness of the school setting would preclude frequent site visits. Therefore, in negotiation with the school, I organised the study around a small number of site visits, with the aim of capturing key moments in teachers' curriculum planning. As envisaged, distance and time were significant constraints. Each site visit required two days' of travel and costs for transport, accommodation and leave from work. I made three site visits in total, flying twice and driving once. With only a small number of site visits possible, I needed access to the teachers for a sustained period to collect sufficient data. Funding for some teacher release from classes was a critical requirement for this case study as it provided the dedicated time for the teacher participants to work together. Before inviting schools to participate I ensured that sufficient funding was available to support the project through funding provided by Griffith University to support PhD research.

Knowing access to professional learning opportunities can be more limited in rural schools, and that it was likely I would encounter early career teachers or teachers with limited professional preparation in the learning area of history, I reasoned the school may see a benefit in their history staff having access to support from an experienced history teacher. Therefore, I designed a more collaborative study where I would offer to work with the teaching team, able to offer advice if requested.

Aware that schools are busy places and that research projects can be an additional burden on staff, I determined the specific focus of the history curriculum work should be negotiated with the school to ensure the project was also meaningful and useful work for the school. This led to my decision to frame the social activity under investigation as an action research project. I discuss this in more detail in the next section. While the information sheets provided a possible outline and timetable for the project (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), as expected, the final shape of the project differed from this in negotiation with the school.

Research Site

A key reason to do a case study is to focus on the specificity of context. Normally a case study would begin with a detailed description of the site, but issues of confidentiality precluded this usual approach. Any precise description of town size, key features and distance from the metropolitan centre would render the school easily identifiable. Therefore in this description of the case study site I have avoided precise detail to maintain confidentiality, relying instead on more personal impressions to sketch a sense of the physical context.

The research was conducted with teachers in a rural secondary school in a town in Western Queensland. Pastoralism is the main industry of the region. Rural service industries dominate the town and there are some tourist facilities. Flying out on my first two visits the remoteness became evident as I watched the settlement become increasingly sparse, the vegetation cover thin and the red dirt begin to dominate the landscape. I drove on my third visit to better appreciate the isolation experienced by the teachers. The town is many hours' drive from the capital city of Brisbane and road works at the time made the journey even longer. When I finally

arrived at my hotel, I was acutely aware that this community is very isolated from the metropolitan centre of Queensland.

The school is classified as 'remote' by the state government. Remote schools are those "over 3 hours from a regional or larger town" (DETE, 2010, Location guide). ACARA uses an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) to enable comparisons between schools; the school in this case study has an ICSEA value lower than the average of 1000 (ACARA, 2015). The total secondary school population is below 500 and there are fewer than 30 teachers. The school consists of a cluster of one and two story buildings of mixed vintage around open play areas with ovals beyond. Seeing kangaroos grazing near the car park on my first school visit underscored for me that I was going to learn about a place very different from my own work experiences.

Participants

Participant Recruitment

In this study the first contact with the school was with the Head of Department responsible for lower secondary curriculum. Teachers were approached regarding participation once the school had expressed a possible interest in being involved. Due to distance, I was not able to visit the school and speak directly with teachers to invite participation. The participant information letter (see Appendix 2) therefore became an important tool for communication with potential participants and was distributed to teachers of history by the Head of Department. I emphasised to the Head of Department that teachers should feel no obligation to participate.

Three teachers expressed an interest in participating. They were all teaching Year 8 SOSE (the previous integrated social science curriculum taught in

Queensland) at that time. The Head of Department was the main conduit for information in the establishment phase, although one teacher did ring me to discuss participation prior to the study. Because the group of teachers were part of an existing Year 8 teaching team, it was decided that the project would focus on planning for the implementation of the history course for the 2013 Year 8 cohort.

Participants

As foreseen, staff changes at the school did impact participation. I made three visits to the site in 2012 and 2013 and the mix of participants changed across the three visits. There were a total of four teacher participants during the project. Although not part of the teaching team developing the new curriculum, the Heads of Department were my main school contact. They also completed consent forms to participate and did join the group for some parts of the planning days.

The changes to participants that occurred were:

- A new Head of Department took over in 2013 and agreed to take over the role of overseeing the project for the school.

- One of the teachers was unable to continue after the first planning day as they were no longer teaching history.

- One teacher was not able to make the third planning day due to another school priority on the same day.

- One teacher on a short-term contract expressed an interest in joining the project for the third planning day and was supported by the school to do this.

I collected only pertinent details related to teaching experience and professional preparation for history on participant information sheets. Given the small

number of participants, in order to maintain confidentiality I present a list of characteristics of the group of teachers, rather than a detailed professional life history of each individual:

- The classroom teachers were all early career teachers aged between 20 and 30.

- Three of the four teachers were in their first school posting.

- For all teachers this was their first experience of a rural school.

- Two were in their third year of teaching at the outset of the study, one in their second year of teaching, and one in their first year of teaching.

- Two of the four teachers had professional preparation in history, the other two had professional preparation in other social science subjects.

- All of the teachers taught some subjects for which they had no professional preparation.

- Neither of the Heads of Department supporting the teachers had professional preparation or experience teaching in the social sciences.

In short, the group represented a typical rural school staff as described in the literature: experiencing frequent staff turnover, with a high proportion of early career teachers, sometimes teaching subjects for which they have no, or limited, professional preparation (Roberts, 2004).

At the outset of the study all participants had some experience of teaching history through the SOSE curriculum and one had taught a history subject at senior secondary level. They had also built some familiarity with the Australian Curriculum having attended a professional development day in their district and trialled some of the Feudal Japan depth study topics from the Australian Curriculum in 2012.

Participant Interviews

The day before the first planning day I conducted semi-structured interviews at the school with each of the three initial teacher participants. (Time constraints precluded an interview when a new participant joined the study on the third planning day.) Teachers gave up some of their preparation and correction time to complete the interviews, which were audio-recorded. Expected to take 15-20 minutes each, the interviews evolved into longer conversations of 35-43 minutes. Initially designed to provide additional information about the participants' individual perspectives on the research themes, in practice the interviews had a more significant contribution to the establishment of the project. They gave me insight into the lives and experiences of these rural teachers, helped build my understanding of the school context, and were an opportunity to begin relationship-building work that would support the project to follow.

The interview questions were closely related to my research questions and were provided to participants to consider several minutes before the interviews began. The interview questions were:

History curriculum and pedagogy
- For students, what do you think is most valuable thing about studying history?
- How are you feeling about teaching the new history curriculum?

Working collaboratively
- What ways of working [on curriculum planning] are most beneficial for you?

Rural socio-cultural context
- How much does the rural context impact on decisions you make about teaching?

Teachers' professional learning
- What sort of professional development/professional learning activities do you get the most out of?
- What professional development would be most helpful for you to implement the new history curriculum?

From a social constructionist perspective interviews represent interviewer-generated speech and a form of data that are controlled and managed by the researcher (Georgakopoulou, 2008; Mishler, 1999; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The interviewer typically sets the direction for the interaction according to the questions that are asked. I mitigated the potential problem of reliance on interview evidence by making it only supplementary to the main data set, which was drawn from practice. I also analysed the evidence using discourse analysis which allowed me to attend to the way researcher and participant make meaning together in the interview (Mishler, 1999). The interviews conducted in this study added considerable value once analysed and considered within a larger corpus of data.

Planning Days

Action Research Approach

Facilitating access to the authentic planning and decision-making work of teachers was a key consideration in the design of this case study. Action research approaches offered strategies to accomplish this. Developed by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s action research is a collaborative, democratic, practical, site-specific form of inquiry and learning (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). It pursues practical solutions to participants' problems or challenges by working through cycles of action and reflection. In this section I justify my decision to use action research approaches to frame a local curriculum project as the focus for collaboration and a tool for data collection.

Action research has a practical focus and setting. It is located in the normal work setting of participants and addresses real, site-specific problems of practice (Piggott-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Marsh and Willis (2007)

observe that teachers can be overwhelmed with immediate priorities and "rarely have an opportunity for reflection or a chance to share ideas with colleagues" (p.188). Rather than adding another impost on teachers' time, this research project aimed to engage teachers in a material and concrete problem of practice – implementation of a new curriculum – that would have immediate value for them.

Action research is social, participatory and collaborative. Most (but not all) action research involves a collaborative effort where, through cycles of action and reflection, participants engage in learning as a social enterprise (Lewis, Perry & Friedkin, 2009; Piggott-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008; Zuber-Skerritt, 2001). This informed the use of an action research project to bring teachers and myself together to talk about their work through a series of planning days. I reasoned this would give me access to teachers' thinking about their decisions, but also be of practical value to the school. Although this collaborative approach to curriculum planning is not always a school practice, it has been a feature of my own professional practice. I discovered in early conversations with the Head of Department, that this approach was also a well-established practice in their school setting. Therefore all came to the task with similar ideas about how we might work together.

Action research is iterative with any number of cycles of action and reflection (Piggott-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008; Zuber-Skerritt, 2001). The process of reflection drives learning in action (Zuber-Skerritt, 2001). In this study I conceptualised the action component as largely undertaken outside my visits, with some reflection and planning being the focus of the planning days. A series of planning days would offer deeper insights than a 'one-shot' visit or 'one-take' interviews (Bamberg, 2004). A more longitudinal study can attend to developments and recurring themes.

Action research values experiential knowledge. Knowledge is constructed within and for a particular context and grounded in concrete experience (Greenwood & Levin 2000; Piggott-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008; Zuber-Skerritt, 2001). Local knowledge held by participants is highly valued in action research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Ospina, Dodge, Foldy & Hofmann-Pinil, 2008). Action research has had particular resonance in the field of education as "it values the 'researched' community as a vital part of the research project and its members as experts in their own experiences" (Grant, Nelson & Mitchell, 2008, p. 589). I took up this view of teachers as experts in their own experiences as a foundation on which to build a relationship with the participants. Although I focused on learning from the participants, I also aimed to allow teachers to draw on my experience if requested.

Action research incorporates a critical perspective; attention is paid to who contributes to the production of knowledge (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Fletcher, 2008). As Grant, Nelson and Mitchell (2008) assert, in action research "the truth and knowledge of the community is both privileged and communicated" (p. 598). I strove to establish a supportive, non-hierarchical relationship with participants and ensured teachers always had the final say in what would work for them.

Organisation of Planning Days

The action research component of the study was initially loosely sketched so that it could be tailored to support both the school's practical needs and my research interests. In total three planning days were organised for the teaching team to work on planning the Year 8 history course. The school took the teachers off-line for the planning days, with funding to facilitate some teacher relief built into the research design. The project began with two planning days and a third was added by mutual agreement after the second planning day.

Areas of focus for each planning day were established via phone and email prior to each planning day meeting. Teachers discussed arrangements with the Head of Department who then liaised with me. This meant that all participants began each planning day with reasonably clear, shared expectations. These goals were further clarified at the outset of each morning session.

The planning days were held in a small meeting room in the school administration building in order to remain away from the busy-ness of the school day. The room included a whiteboard, had internet access and teachers brought their laptops and key resources. I provided hard copies of the curriculum documents and support materials. Each planning day began at 9 am and concluded at 3 pm. The day was organised in three sessions with breaks for morning tea and lunch. Audio recordings were made of each session.

Planning Day 1 was held in the final term of the year before the new curriculum was to be implemented. Three teachers and myself worked together for the full day. The Head of Department participated in most of the first session and called in throughout the day. The first session focused on broad decisions about the selection of depth studies and the assessment plan. The middle session focused mostly on decisions about course organisation and assessment for the first term. The afternoon session was devoted to planning the first assessment instrument. At this point teachers were planning for students they had yet to meet.

Planning Day 2 was held at the end of the first term of the implementation year. The students were now well known to the teachers. Two of the original teachers participated, and the new Head of Department joined the group at various points throughout the day. The second planning day began with reflection on the year to date in Session 1 including the reasons why some plans were changed. The middle session

focused on planning for the upcoming term. The third session focused on developing an assessment instrument.

Planning Day 3 was held at the end of the first semester of the year of implementation. One of the teachers from planning day one remained and a new teacher joined the project. The Head of Department joined the group at various points during the day. The main focus of Session 1 was reflection on the past term's work. In Session 2 the course outline for the next semester was developed and more detailed planning for Term 4 completed. The third session focused on developing the Term 3 assessment.

Corpus of Data

The data collected for analysis were audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews and the three planning day meetings. The data collection activities and participants are shown in Table 2 overleaf. Most discussions were recorded, with the exception of some small gaps due to technical issues. Some email texts were also collected but these were generally brief and did not add greatly to the corpus of data.

Table 2 Data collection activities

Data collection activity	Participants involved in production of data	Data collected
Interviews with initial teacher participants	Teacher 1 Teacher 2 Teacher 3 Researcher	Audio-recordings of three teacher interviews
Planning Day 1	Teacher 1 Teacher 2 Teacher 3 Researcher (Head of Department 1)	Audio-recordings of three planning sessions
Planning Day 2	Teacher 1 Teacher 2 Researcher (Head of Department 2)	Audio-recordings of three planning sessions
Planning Day 3	Teacher 1 Teacher 4 Researcher (Teacher 3 part of 1 session) (Head of Department 2)	Audio-recordings of three planning sessions
Post study follow up with teacher participants	Researcher Teacher 1 Teacher 2 Teacher 3 Teacher 4	Brief replies to email communication
Notes: 1. Parentheses indicate these people occasionally joined the planning and are present in some sections of transcripts. 2. As explained, this teacher number does not necessarily correlate with the teacher numbers used in the transcripts of the planning days.		

Roles and Relationships

Roles and relationships were an important consideration in the establishment and ongoing management of this research project. My relationships with the Heads of Department and the teacher participants were critical to the project, as was balancing my participant-researcher role.

My Role in the Project

A fundamental feature of this research design was my own participation in the study. Models of researcher as participant point to the advantages and the potential pitfalls of this approach. Some action research designs emphasise the role of the researcher working with participants as a co-researcher. Studies have reported that in these situations the external support was valued, the role of facilitator provided guidance to the group, and the development of institutional partnerships produced valuable synergies (Fletcher, 2008; Grant et al., 2008; Mackewn, 2008). Fletcher (2008) draws attention to the complexity of managing dual roles as a participatory member of a learning community and facilitator within the project, and secondly as an outside observer evaluating the whole process. Studies of this kind require the researcher to be attentive to their own impact on the study. To this end I included a research question that explicitly considered my role in the project: *In this study what impact does the researcher, and the research design, have on the teachers' curriculum planning work?* Consideration also needs to be given to strategies to avoid potential power differentials between researcher and participant, so that the local and situated knowledge at the heart of the study is not lost or subsumed (Grant et. al., 2008). In this study I used the interviews to position myself as a learner and to emphasise that I valued the local expertise of the teachers.

Relationship with the Head of Department

This study would not have been possible without establishing a relationship with the two Heads of Department. As a former Head of Department, I was able to establish a collegial relationship based on a shared understanding of the nature and demands of their role. The person who provides entrée to a case study site can be described as a gatekeeper (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). The metaphor of a gatekeeper most often connotes negatively as a controller of access to participants and a filter on data. However, given the reality of busy school settings, an individual who can facilitate arrangements in the school is critical. Rather than viewing the Head of Department as a 'gatekeeper', I saw them as supporter of the research: the one best positioned in the school to coordinate the project and keenly interested in facilitating the opportunity for teachers to work together.

Relationship with the Participants

Building my relationship with the teachers was a key priority in the design of the project. As noted, the interviews conducted with individual teachers were a vital step in establishing trust and shared understandings. I was alert to my commitment to trust and the need to protect participants when discussing the project with the teachers' supervisors. The teachers were part of a newly established teaching team and during the interview time we were able to confirm a shared commitment to working collaboratively. I also needed to be sensitive to the participants' existing relationships with each other. I was mindful that the teachers had to live and work together in a small community once I had left the school at the end of each planning day. The project work could not jeopardise their collegial relationships. I took care to avoid taking sides, to quickly defuse any potential friction, and to focus on the

strengths and positive contributions of each participant. This required ongoing

attention to manage this sensitively as I facilitated the planning day meetings.

Data Analysis

Discourse Analysis

The data collected in this study were analysed using discourse analysis.

Particular discourses in operation can be identified in texts when analysis surfaces the

underpinning pattern of assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs (Locke, 2004;

Mills, 1997; Phillips & Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis is also a reflexive

methodology, acknowledging that researchers themselves are operating within a

particular academic discourse and that social research is a construction of one

particular reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In educational research the researcher

often has a background in education and is likely deeply immersed in educational

discourses. Discourse analysis offers strategies to engage in more reflexive and

critical analysis.

Different approaches to discourse analysis

Because discourse analysis is driven by the texts it studies there are no

concrete rules for this method (Tonkiss, 1998). Phillips and Hardy (2002) identified

two main lines of difference in approaches to discourse analysis: the relative

importance of text versus context, and the degree to which the operation of power is a

focus. In my approach I try to find a balance between context and text; and I focus

less on the operation of power than critical discourse analysis approaches.

Discourse analysts who give a strong focus to power dimensions usually

employ critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is particularly attuned to

the way power is embedded in all language interactions (Kress, 2001; Van Dijk,

2001). Research questions typically target social justice agendas. Analysis is focused on understanding how dominant discourses operate to support the operation of hegemony and the marginalisation and disempowerment of some social groups. While these are important research agendas, they are beyond the scope of my study. As a case study embedded in the institution of schooling, I do acknowledge that all situations involve politics and the distribution of social goods but I do not make this a particular focus.

Some discourse analysts have a finer grained focus on texts at the level of vocabulary and grammar. Fairclough (2003) has employed methods of close textual analysis that draw on the resources of Systemic Functional Linguistics developed by Halliday and Hasan (1985). For example, determining how social actors are represented in clauses (grammatically 'activated' or 'passivated') reveals whether they are given agency (Fairclough, 2003). For my own study, the quantity of data ruled out this level of focus across the whole data set. Instead, I initially privilege context to select smaller segments of text for more detailed analysis, but I do note some pertinent lexical features in my analysis. In this way I aim to balance the context/text dimensions of the analysis.

My data analysis method takes Gee's (1999, 2005) concept of the building tasks of language as a key analytic frame. Gee identifies seven building tasks of language, arguing that through language we construct significance, activities, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and semiotics. These building tasks all contribute to construct a particular perspective on the social activity being investigated, and make it possible to identify and describe the discourses in operation.

Discourse analysis method

Based on Gee's building tasks of language, I developed a five-step process of data analysis, which includes some initial analysis to prepare the data for close discourse analysis:

1. Transcription of audio-recordings.

2. Identifying 'small stories'.

3. Mapping 'storylines' and selecting illustrative small stories.

4. Discourse analysis of selected small stories.

5. Synthesising the analyses to identify discourses in operation across the data.

Step 1 – Transcription of audio data

I view the transcription of data as the first step in my data analysis due to the range of researcher decisions involved. As my first research project involving audio-recordings, and due to funding limitations, I made the decision to transcribe the data myself. This had three advantages: I built an appreciation of the myriad small decisions involved in the process; I immersed myself in the original data sources in preparation for analysis; and listening repeatedly to recordings to check transcriptions, allowed me to view my own participation more critically. I do not claim complete objectivity in the transcription process, but offer a transparent account of my efforts to accurately record the conversations about curriculum work that are the main data sources of this study.

Organisation of transcripts

Approximately 17 hours of audio-recordings were transcribed. The transcripts were organised by interview and planning days. Each planning day transcript was

further divided into the three sessions – Session 1 before morning tea, Session 2 before lunch, Session 3 after lunch. In citing data in the following chapters I reference them by interview number or by planning day number and session.

In the transcripts the teacher participants were identified by number to assist maintenance of confidentiality. Their speech is organised into statements. I follow Mills (1997) who asserts "statements – the most fundamental building blocks of discourse – are those utterances or parts of text which have an effect" (p. 13). Often these statements are sentences or main clauses, but they also include single words or even sounds that represent some meaning by a speaker. Where there was reference to teachers, students or places, I replaced names with X. While the conversations remained remarkably focused on the work at hand, the occasional reference to other school business was not transcribed as part of my commitment to ethical research and the trust teachers had placed in me.

Annotation decisions

As Gee (2005) points out "speech always has far more detail in it than any recording or transcription system could ever capture" (p. 106). The process of transcribing data involves choices on the part of the researcher about what to record (what to leave in and what to leave out) and how to record it (organisation and annotation systems). Transcripts vary in their level of focus on kinetic features such as gesture, movement and facial expression and prosodic features such as intonation, stress and rhythm (Gee, 2005). I made decisions about what features would be salient. When designing the study I had judged that kinetic features would not be particularly useful to my research questions and therefore chose to complete audio-recordings, rather than audio-visual recordings. Similarly, I chose not to use a detailed annotation system, electing to record only those prosodic features that I judged to be of

significance. I determined that it was not necessary to capture every nuance and inflection as I would not be analysing at such a fine-grained text level. I used standard punctuation to represent the cadence of the natural speech. I used italics for words that were particularly stressed and em-dashes to indicate pauses of significance. I made sparing use of other annotations making judgements about relevance and clarity.

I noted Bamberg's (2004) caution that when we translate words to written text we tend to 'fix' meaning: "What can be 'lost in translation' is the non-fixity, the fleetingness and negotiability of the interactive situation as whole" (p. 1). To ensure I retained a sense of the flow, tentativeness and 'non-fixity' of the original discussions I took care to record: fragments of speech such as sounds indicating agreement or questioning; thoughts left unfinished or unstated; and some mis-starts, asides and mistakes. Where a word was clearly meant to be another word, and the group understood the intended meaning, I included the intended word in square brackets immediately following. I also used square brackets to indicate words left unsaid but understood by the group. I also took care to record brief words and sounds because they represented participation or agreement and were important to the progress of the group and their collaborative decision-making. This included 'yep', 'yeah', 'mm hm' and similar. I added annotations where the meaning of these sounds might be unclear when read. For example, 'mmm' could mean hearty agreement, grudging agreement, go on I'm listening, curiosity and more. Where there was overlapping speech I aimed to record the speech order accurately and indicated in brackets who the speaker was addressing to enable the two lines of conversation to be followed. Because of the small number of participants this was not a significant issue.

Transcription accuracy

The initial transcriptions were left for a number of weeks and then reviewed for accuracy. I made small adjustments which mainly involved checking the order of speakers and words in complex sections such as where the group divided into separate conversations. I also reconsidered the spelling of some sounds and added punctuation marks to capture the tone more accurately. I rechecked the accuracy of segments of the transcriptions chosen for detailed analysis again during the data analysis phase.

Step 2 – Identifying 'small stories'

After transcription, my next step in data analysis was to reduce a large corpus of data into appropriate units of analysis. Although content analysis or thematic analysis may have been options for initial data reduction, these approaches (whether using a commercial program or manual process) risked atomising and de-contextualising the data. I drew on the concept of 'small stories' from the field of narrative inquiry, making small stories my main unit of analysis.

Small stories

As Clandinin, Pushor & Orr (2007) assert: "Stories are the form in which we and other teachers and teacher educators most often represent our experiences" (p. 33). Bamberg (2004; 2011a; 2011b) and Georgakopoulou (2007; 2008) used the notion of small stories to develop new interpretive insights into identify formation in their method of narrative inquiry. They argue it offers deeper insights than 'big story' biography approaches where individuals recount to interviewers a unified life story (Georgakopoulou, 2007; Bamberg, 2004). Bamberg (2004) maintains it is in the small stories that we see "the '*real*' stories of our *lived* lives" (p. 2). He emphasises the value of attending to the small details of everyday conversations, arguing that for their

identity research, "each small move or act may give away aspects of who we are" (Bamberg, 2011b, p. 127). Applying the small story concept to my case study data allowed me to reduce the large data set into manageable units of analysis without losing the richness of the case. Each discussion – or small story – addressing a curriculum planning issue offers insight into the larger process of curriculum implementation. I conceptualised the 'big story' of curriculum change in this school as composed of all the small moves, that is, the small stories teachers constructed as they went about their curriculum work.

Identifying small stories

Georgakopoulou (2008) defines small stories as "discourse engagements that integrally connect with what gets done on particular occasions and in particular settings" (p. 601). In the interview context, I considered small stories to be discourse engagements where teachers reflected on their work role and offered their accounts of this. In the planning day context, I considered small stories to be significant episodes in the curriculum planning and decision-making process, such as choosing a topic to teach or deciding how to teach a skill. To locate the small stories I read through the transcripts page by page and asked the simple question: 'What is going on here?' Then, to identify where individual small stories began and ended I looked for discourse markers (Mills, 1997). These are, the words or phrases that signal moving on to new topics. This may be a single word such as, "So, …" or "OK, …", or more explicit, such as "Now let's have a look at…". During the planning days some stories were interrupted and returned to. In this case both parts were considered to constitute the small story. I recorded the small stories on a data map; a sample from the data map is provided in Appendix 3.

Step 3 – Mapping 'storylines' and selecting illustrative small stories

To further prepare the data for the discourse analysis, I next identified the 'storylines' that emerged from the small stories. I use the term storyline in the same sense as a theme, but particularly chose the term 'storyline' to underscore their origins in the small stories. They represent the issues that teachers returned to again and again throughout the project. Working like recurring plot lines, these storylines helped make sense of how each small story fitted into the larger story of curriculum change in history at this school.

I recorded on a data map the storylines each small story contributed to (see Appendix 3). In my first attempt to identify storylines I was not concerned to assign preselected categories, preferring to let storylines emerge from the data as per traditional approaches to grounded research (Diaz Andrade, 2009). In my second sweep I collapsed categories, joining storylines that cohered and finding a suitable term to organise them. For example, I joined "research" and "source analysis" into one storyline: *Historical skills*. I joined "timetabling", "classroom allocation" and "school terms" into the storyline *School structures*. Sometimes reducing categories too far lost an important nuance. For example, where I faced a cluster of data about 'time', I used two storylines: *Time to plan* and *Time/amount to teach*. Four meta-categories of storyline emerged that helped further organise the data: history curriculum, assessment, learner and rural storylines.

I used this map of the storylines to select a range of representative small stories for deeper analysis. When selecting small stories for analysis, I aimed for representation of the range of storylines emerging in the data and to reflect the relative dominance of storylines in the data. In this thesis I have included extracts

from small stories that represent storylines across the four meta-categories. The selection of these representative small stories is summarised in Appendix 4.

Step 4 – Discourse analysis of the small stories

Building tasks of language

To conduct the discourse analysis of the selected small stories I adapted a set of discourse analysis questions developed by Gee (1999, 2005) organised around five of his seven building tasks of language. Gee (1999) encourages researchers to adapt his strategies to suit the research context: "Such tools and strategies are continually and flexibly adapted to specific issues, problems, and contexts of study. They are continually transformed as they are applied in practice" (p. 6). I explain how each of these building tasks of language identified by Gee (2005, pp. 11-13) was more, or less, relevant to my study.

1. Building significance.

The meaning of words is flexible and situated, but we understand them because we recognise their meaning in a given situation or context (Wittgenstein, 1968). In any situation we use language to give things a particular meaning, and to make some things more significant than others (Gee, 2005). In my study the words and phrases given significance by teachers working on curriculum change were pointers to important beliefs about and influences on their curriculum work.

2. Building activities.

In any situation we use language to enact particular activities. When we engage in an activity we choose language because of the activity we are engaging in, but as we talk and act in particular ways we are, at the same time, shaping the activity in a reciprocal process (Gee, 2005). Identifying what activities teachers engaged in

and what actions and sub-actions they enacted through language offered insights into their decision-making processes. In my discourse analysis approach I identified this building task of language first by initially asking 'What is going on?'.

3. Building identities.

Gee (2005) explains that, "we use language to get recognized as taking on a certain identity" (p. 99). To probe the ways of working and my involvement in the project, I asked how language was being used to construct particular types of identities.

4. Building relationships.

By this Gee (2005) means "we use language to signal what kind of relationship we have, want to have, or are trying to have" (p. 99). This is closely related to identity construction and I conflated questions about building identities and building relationships in my approach. I was particularly interested in the relationships between the teachers and myself as a facilitator of the project.

5. Building politics.

Our use of language conveys a perspective on the distribution of social goods (Gee, 2005). In my study I acknowledge that teachers are working within the confines of the institution of schooling. As explained, due to my contextual constraints, I chose not to use critical discourse analysis and therefore did not focus on building politics in my analysis.

6. Building connections.

By this Gee (2005) means, "we use language to render certain things connected or relevant (or not) to other things, that is to build connections or relevance" (p. 100). For example, connecting a budget deficit to a global financial

crisis can make it seem very important to take certain fiscal decisions. In my study this illuminated where teachers saw causal links between factors in their curriculum work. It also enabled me to hone in on dis-connects where tensions were evident.

7. Building sign systems and knowledge.

We use language to privilege certain sign systems and certain forms of knowledge which may exclude others (Gee, 2005). In my study the participants are all tertiary educated, all working with a familiar curriculum document, within a specialist language system privileged in academic and educational settings. A focus on building sign systems was not relevant to my study.

Discourse analysis questions

In adapting Gee's (2005) process I developed a set of discourse analysis questions suited to my inquiry. I developed a discourse analysis worksheet and conducted analysis of approximately 40 small stories (see Appendix 5 for a completed example). A smaller selection of these small stories is presented and their analysis discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. After the initial analysis, I reviewed the analyses of the small stories looking for new insights or to confirm my findings.

The discourse analysis questions, adapted from Gee (2005, pp.110-113), applied to the small stories are shown in Table 3 overleaf.

Table 3 Discourse analysis worksheet questions

Discourse analysis worksheet questions (developed from Gee, 2005, pp. 110-113)	
Building task **Key question**	**Questions and prompts**
1. Building activities What activity/activities related to the curriculum work is this small story used to enact?	•What is going on here? What is this small story about? •What are the components of this small story? (Sub-activities) •What happens in this small story? (Actions) (Prompt – Are they deciding, considering, comparing, identifying, explaining, weighing up, arguing, suggesting, testing, planning, joking, remembering etc.?)
2. Building significance How is this small story being used to make certain things significant OR not and in what ways?	•What words and phrases seem important? •What are the situated meanings of these words and phrases? •What values are attached to particular words and phrases, and by whom? (Prompt: important, relevant, challenging, accepted, necessary, positive, negative, not valued etc.) •What is not made significant? (Mentioned or not mentioned)
3. Building connections How does this small story connect or disconnect things? How does it make one thing relevant (or irrelevant) to another?	•How does this story connect to what comes before and after? •What sort of connections are made in this small story? (Prompt – activities, significance, identities and relationships) •What sort of connections are made to things outside this situation? (Prompt – outside this project, e.g. school, community, wider educational contexts) •What tensions and disconnects are evident in this small story?
4. Building identities and relationships What identities and what sort of relationships are being enacted in this small story?	•What identities are under construction here? (Prompt – consider roles, positions, knowledge and beliefs, feelings and values) •What sort of relationships are being built or taken for granted? (Prompt – between teachers, between researcher and teachers)

Step 5 – Identification of discourses in operation

In this final step I looked for patterns of attitudes, values and beliefs, and ways of being, across the discourse analyses of the small stories.

The questions I applied across the small stories were:

1. Across the small stories, what patterns are evident in the activities being built?

2. Across the small stories, what patterns are evident in things made significant and connected?

3. Across the small stories, what patterns are evident in the nature of identities and relationships being constructed?

Then, I asked:

4. What discourses are being (re)produced in the small stories?

5. How are the discourses related or connected?

Answering the research questions

With the data analysis completed, my analysed data included:

- A map of the whole data set showing small stories and key storylines emergent in the data.

- A set of analyses of representative small stories that showed specific ways that language was used to build understandings about the curriculum work.

- A set of notes identifying relevant discourses in operation.

Limitations of the Research Design

Throughout this chapter I have explained the methodological decisions and affordances of the research design; in this section I acknowledge the limitations of this research design.

- Single site rural case study

A single site case study does not enable comparisons and differences between school settings to be explored. This case study cannot claim to represent a typical rural school, or a common experience in implementing the new history curriculum.

This research can only report what happened at this site, with this particular group of teachers at that particular point in time.

- Real school setting

Locating the research in a school setting also means that the study cannot be fully controlled and emergent circumstances can impact on the research design. Some of these challenges could be anticipated and planned for, such as changes to participants. Other issues could be mitigated. For example, it was not possible to conduct post-study interviews with all participants, so they were replaced with email communications.

- Practical focus

The focus on the practical work of teachers limits attention on some of the more structural and institutional issues in schooling. As previously discussed, this study is limited in its ability to probe and critique these factors.

In negotiating a project that aligns with school needs and priorities, this research investigated broad planning and decision-making rather than more fine-grained lesson planning. A study with a greater focus on pedagogy and planning at the lesson level would require more sustained attendance at the school and different approaches to data collection.

- Three site visits

The intended curriculum is the focus of this study, not the curriculum enacted and experienced by students. Due to the remote site, this study focuses on three key points in teachers' planning and decision-making (Planning Day 1, before Term 1; Planning Day 2, end of Term 1; Planning Day 3, end of Term 2). Between these stages the teachers continued to work on their curriculum implementation.

- Collaborative inquiry

Collecting data from a group setting means that individual differences between teachers are not foregrounded in this study. This was a necessity in this small school environment to protect the professional standing of the teachers in their own school community.

- Teacher participants

This research has maintained a clear focus on teachers' work. While the teachers frequently talk about their students' engagement with the curriculum, this research does not directly investigate students' experience of the curriculum.

- Researcher participant

I acknowledge some limitations in this research design related to working as a sole researcher participant. I have completed all of the stages of analysis myself, including analysing my own contributions. I have aimed to mitigate this limitation by: using discourse analysis techniques that include scope to analyse my own participation; explicit accounting for how I conducted the analysis; retaining large sections of data intact when reporting the analysis to increase transparency; and using my supervisor as a critical friend.

- Validity claims

The complexity of social interaction at a real school site makes it impossible to isolate with certainty the effect of particular factors or actions. This means that findings are necessarily tentative. This research design does not make claims to achieving positivist goals of internal and external validity and reliability. Instead I aim for credibility and authenticity by offering an account of how I reached my conclusions and by a reflexive stance that considers the impact of my own participation (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Ethics

Approval Process and Informed Consent

The design of this research adheres to the principles of ethical conduct in human research and meets the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2009). Following an application for level E1 ethical clearance, this research was approved by the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee – University Research Ethics Database Protocol Number: EDN/38/12/HREC. All data retained are in a de-identified format and electronic records are password protected.

As part of the process of attaining informed consent, information sheets and consent forms were sent to the school principal and potential participants (see Appendices 1 and 2). The school and participant information letters explained the nature of the research project and identified potential risks and benefits of participation. An additional application to conduct research in a Queensland state school was also submitted following Department of Education Training and Employment processes. The principal gave written consent for the school to participate in September 2012.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to these formal processes I ensured that ethics were at the forefront of my thinking throughout the whole research process, mindful of the trust participants placed in me. As Stake (2000, p. 447) has emphasised, researchers have a moral responsibility towards their participants:

> Those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment and self-esteem. Something of a contract exists between researcher and the

researched, a disclosing and protective covenant, usually informal, but best not silent – a moral obligation.

- Voluntary participation

Participants were enrolled soon after the school gave consent to participate in the study. The teachers' written consent was obtained before any research activity commenced. Participation was voluntary and the teachers were advised that they may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. It was also made clear in discussions with the school that no teachers should feel obliged to participate in the study. The flexible research design assisted in ensuring teachers did not feel pressured to join the study because the project could be adapted to suit whatever grouping of teachers wished to be involved.

- Avoiding perception of conflict of interest

As a part-time student, I was required to ensure separation between my work role and my research. I clarified with the school and my employer that my research was part of my private studies and not related to my work. I particularly focused my research in the area of lower secondary curriculum to separate it from my substantive work role in the senior secondary phase.

- Minimising burdens of participation

The study was designed to ensure most data collection aligned to the normal work of the teachers, minimising the burden on participants. Teachers were advised about expected time commitments through the processes of informed consent. Where additional data were sought, strategies that impacted minimally on teachers' workload were selected, primarily email.

- Maintaining confidentiality

In this research I committed to maintain the privacy of all participants through the processes for collecting, managing, storing and reporting data and findings. Maintaining confidentiality required constant vigilance due to the nature of researching in a small community (White, 2012). To preserve participant anonymity, I first strove to ensure the school could not be identified. For this reason I have presented a more generalised description of the research site than would normally be desirable. Second, when describing the participants, I have presented a list of the characteristics of the group rather than detailed professional life histories of each individual. I found that experience and professional preparation were not important variables between the teacher participants, who could all be described as early career teachers. For example, the teacher with the most history professional preparation had only limited experience teaching history, whereas a teacher with no history professional preparation had more experience teaching history. Third, when transcribing audio recordings I used teacher numbers rather than pseudonyms. This removed distinctions between male and female participants and teachers and Heads of Department. The same person did not necessarily have the same teacher number in all of the transcripts. I de-identified all references to people and places. Fourth, I made use of gender-neutral pronouns when reporting the data. I used 'their' as a singular pronoun.

- Protecting participants' professional standing

In the conduct of this study I have been mindful of the responsibility to protect the professional standing of the teachers in their own school community. When communicating with their supervisors I always spoke about the group collectively, affirming their professionalism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have justified key research design decisions, and provided information about the conduct of the research. In summary, I have drawn on case study, action research and discourse analysis methodologies to develop a qualitative research design tailored to the context and research questions. Appendix 6 provides a record of the research activities conducted as part of this study. In the remaining chapters I report the analysis conducted, and the findings and implications of this study.

Chapter 5 Data Analysis – Teacher Interviews

Prior to the planning days that formed the bulk of the data for this study, I interviewed the three classroom teachers participating in Planning Day 1. In this chapter I present the findings of my discourse analysis of eight small stories that reveal these teachers' experiences of, and beliefs about, teaching history in this rural school. This analysis shows how the teachers understood the curriculum planning work ahead of them. The similarity of teachers' interview responses reflects the shared attitudes, values and beliefs of this small teaching team at the outset of the study.

Presentation of the Analyses

I organise the reporting of the discourse analyses in this chapter and the next by providing a transcript of selected small stories and an accompanying summary of the discourse analysis explaining how language is used to build activity, significance, connections, identities and relationships (Gee, 2005).

I have drawn a key quote from each story to serve as a title. While it has been necessary to truncate the small stories here due to their length, I have aimed to ensure sufficient conversation is retained in the extracted transcript to ensure the reader has a sense of the whole. Ellipses show where some sections have been omitted. I present the transcripts in numbered lines representing separate utterances, punctuated to capture – as far as possible – the cadence of the speech. For ease of reading, I have used minimal annotations, only adding clarifications where necessary. In the first column speakers are shown. Teachers are numbered T1, T2 and so on and my own

speech as the researcher is identified as R. Line numbers in the third column allow for easy location of quotes referenced in the analysis.

I begin the analysis of each small story by providing contextual information and identifying how language is used to build activity. Then I identify how through language certain things are made significant and connected and how identities and relationships are being built. The use of gender-specific pronouns when referring to participants has been avoided; I have used 'their' and 'they' as singular pronouns. The same teacher number is not necessarily connected to the same participant throughout the interviews and planning days. Because this study's focus is on the group of teachers working in a community of practice, there is no need to track responses of individual teachers across the study. When discussing my own contributions in the discourse analysis I use third person, referring to myself as 'the researcher'. This is a technique I used to create some interpretive distance from the data set when conducting the analysis. The discourse analysis for each small story is largely written in present tense. I revert to past tense when summarising the analyses and in the discussion in later chapters.

Small Story 1 *Out here*

Building Activity

This small story unfolds in response to the first interview question (see Table 4, overleaf). Language is being used to construct an understanding of the value of teaching history in this place; as such it contributes to shaping a sense of purpose for the history work to come. The conventions of the interview genre structure the conversation: question, response, check for understanding and confirmation. The researcher's opening question shapes the ongoing conversation by focusing on the

value of studying history for students (line 1). The teacher's response is tightly

framed by the question and thus centres on the value of history (not what isn't

valuable) and on students (not the teacher's enjoyment or otherwise of history).

Table 4 Small Story 1

Sp.	**Small Story 1 *Out here*** **Extract from Interview 1**	Line
R:	What do you think are the most valuable things about studying history for your students; so, what do you hope they are getting out of it?	1
T1:	So out here it's actually so beneficial because they are so secluded from a lot of the things you would take for granted.	2
	When, if you were in the city – like, the access to — so a lot of pop cultural things, and access to a more developed understanding of the world, and like connections with the outside world, and opportunities to travel and so forth like that.	3
	The kids out here don't really have that sort of connection.	4
	Like I'm not saying it's *that* remote that they've never heard of the other countries around the world or anything like that.	5
	I'm just saying because it's such a small community their goals and their understanding of their lives are very, very focused on that remote lifestyle.	6
	There's not much to do in X so they have to make their own fun.	7
	And that comes from like going camping, or going pigging, or going raising horses, or working on the farm, or whatever it is out here that they have – or go motorbike riding, or those sort of things.	8
	And I think that's the thing that history does for these kids is that it opens their eyes a little bit to the world around them.	9
	And opportunities for them to explore things that they probably previously, they wouldn't have had access to.	10
	Similarly to what SOSE was originally basically for, history can do the same thing, but the only difference is it's in the past.	11
	So obviously when the kids start they're doing Ancient History in Year 8, and through most of the junior subjects in primary school as well, so it's really, it's opening their eyes to a lot of different things.	12
	I really think it's valuable – um – for that reason.	13
	There are a lot of students out here who are – who are very close-minded and it's not necessarily their fault.	14
	…	

	A few of them go: 'Why do we have to learn about Japan? Why can't we learn about our own history?'	15
	…	
	And so it's our job to go, well, history is a way of understanding other people and opening your mind and that sort of stuff.	16
	And I think I've gotten through to them by going, well you can't really learn about your own history until you learn about the other people who have been involved in it.	17
	…	
R:	So I'm hearing two different ideas – it's the idea of them expanding their horizons a little bit –	18
T1:	Yes.	19
R:	And the second idea is it's giving you a chance to explore values and different perspectives.	20
T1:	Yeah and different perspectives and that sort of stuff.	21
	…	
	And trying to get that sort of – that core empathy and those sort of values into the history curriculum is quite kind of important.	22

Building Significance and Connections

While the researcher's question has made the value of history for students significant, the teacher makes the rural context significant to their work. The interview question makes no mention of rurality (although the interviewee is aware of the researcher's interest in the rural context), but it is the first thing the teacher considers: "So *out here* it's actually so beneficial …" (line 2). The teacher uses the expression 'out here' three times in this small story (lines 2, 8 & 14). It connotes remoteness and isolation more so than an expression such as 'here in the country'. The significance of the rural context is further built through vocabulary choices that present country and city life in binary opposition. Rural life is described as isolated; city life is connected. Words used to describe the country location are: "so secluded" (line 2), "remote" (line 6), and "such a small community" (line 6), where there's "not

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much to do" (line 7). By contrast, in line 3 the words "access", "connections" and "opportunities" present a different picture of city life. The teacher does describe local activities that students enjoy (line 8), and this teacher considers the students, "very, very focused on that remote lifestyle" in terms of their "goals and their understanding of their lives" (line 6). The teacher also suggests that this less connected circumstance contributes to some close-minded attitudes (line 14). This use of binaries to explain country and city life constructs remoteness as a potentially limiting factor for students.

The words the teacher uses to describe what history can offer echo the sentiments about urban life in line 3: "…it opens their eyes a little bit to the world around them" (line 9) and offers "opportunities for them to explore things" (line10). The researcher attempts to summarise this as "expanding their horizons" (line 18). The expression 'opening their eyes' suggests that the subject matter of the history curriculum can deepen students' knowledge and understanding of the world. Further, the teacher extends the idea suggesting that in "opening your mind" (line 16) the study of history may counter "close-minded" attitudes (line 14). History can provide opportunities for students to and consider others' perspectives (line 21) and values such as empathy (line 22). They see incorporating values such as empathy into teaching as part of their job as a history teacher: "And so it's our job to go, well, history is a way of understanding other people" (line 16). In this way the teacher is connecting the study of history to student needs, in this rural context.

Building Identities and Relationships

This teacher is building an identity as a certain kind of history teacher. Because they make the needs of rural learners significant and connected to the subject history, they build their identity as a learner-centred teacher, approaching history

teaching as a future-focused endeavour. The small story also begins to build a relationship between researcher and participant. Through her questioning and checks for understanding, the researcher is actively constructing herself as a learner seeking to understand the teacher's experiences.

Small Story 2 *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history*

Building Activity

As in the previous small story, here language is used to construct an understanding of the value and purpose of teaching history in this place. Curriculum, learner and rural storylines intersect as the teacher explains how the needs of their rural students are central to their goals for history.

Table 5 Small Story 2

Sp.	Small Story 2 *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history* **Extract from Interview 2**	Line
R:	For your students here at this school, and even thinking about students that you will teach in the future, what do you hope they get out of learning history?	1
	What's important for you that they learn in history?	2
T2:	Getting a sense of the world, *particularly* out here.	3
	Getting a sense that there is a larger scope of the world around them.	4
	And just learning to question, that perspectives stuff – I love talking about perspectives.	5
	Because I just think that ability to question the world and question what you are told and question the way you look at things that's something that's so —	6
	It's something that we do in such a unique way in history.	7
	And I just think it's so good, that higher order thinking stuff.	8
	…	
R:	And that point that you've just made, when you say it I think – 'that's so true', that idea of that sense of the world that you are a part of, you are part of this bigger world.	9

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T2:	Making sense of the fact that you are part of a larger context.	10
	Which the kids out here just – there's this —	11
	X (town) is their world.	12
	There's no world outside of X (town).	13
	There doesn't need to be a world outside of X (town).	14
R:	So that's sort of opening their mind to a whole lot of other possibilities.	15
T2:	Trying, trying.	16
	...	
R:	You said perspectives – can you talk a little more about what it is about perspectives and learning about that in history that's really valuable for kids?	17
T2:	I have noticed – again, more out here that I did in the urban setting – the way kids just take for granted what they are told.	18
	They just straight out believe you and I even say to them sometimes 'How do you know I'm telling you the truth?'	19
	'How do you know what I'm telling you is what you should believe?'	20
	'What do you need to do?'	21
	'What else could you look at?'	22
	'Where else could you go for the information?'	23
	I always find it really interesting – they have all these preconceived notions about good guys and bad guys and I love questioning that.	24
	And looking at things from — that empathy building stuff, I guess.	25
R:	And is that critical inquiry, you reckon that is going to be a skill they are going to need in their lives?	26
T2:	I think.	27
	And especially the way that we obtain information now.	28
	You don't memorise things from a textbook.	29
	It's all here. *(holds up laptop)*	30
R:	You don't have to remember facts do you; you look them up.	31
T2:	No, you go to Google.	32
	The ability to research, that ability to critically look at what you are reading, those inquiry processes are going to be —	33
	Because it is how we should be learning; it is how they are learning now.	34

	And we should be teaching them to do it properly.	35
R:	And that idea that we are awash in information —	36
T2:	You need to know how to focus that.	37
	How to focus your information and how to actually get what you want out of it.	38

Building Significance and Connections

To establish the value of history for their learners, the teacher gives significance to, and connects, rural isolation and the nature of learning in history. The teacher employs intensifiers and emotive word choices to give significance to school history. They describe history as valuable ("*so* good", line 8), enjoyable to teach ("I *love* talking about perspectives", line 5 and "I *love* questioning that", line 24), and as a distinctive contribution to students' learning ("something that we do in *such* a unique way in history", line 7).

The use of the intensifier 'particularly' in line 3 suggests history is of special benefit for these rural students. The teacher explains their belief that history is about: "Getting a sense of the world, *particularly* out here" (line 3). The expression 'out here' is used twice in this story to emphasise the remote location and was used by each of the teachers in the interviews in a similar way (lines 3 & 11). The teacher suggests that as a consequence of isolation their students have a narrow view of the world explaining: "X (town) is their world. There's no world outside X. There doesn't need to be a world outside of X" (lines 12-14). They explain history as a subject that can address this perceived insularity in the following comments: "Getting a sense that there is a larger scope of the world around them" (line 4) and "Making sense of the fact that you are part of a larger context" (line 10). This implies that through the study of historical content students are encouraged to think about other times and places.

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However, for this teacher greater significance is given to the concepts and skills embedded in the discipline of history. Later in the interview when referring to historical content the same teacher says: "I think a lot of it is fairly irrelevant to most of the kids out here" (Interview 2).

The teacher identifies and gives significance to a cluster of historical concepts and skills related to critical inquiry such as questioning (line 5), perspectives (line 5), critical thinking (lines 19-23), empathy (line 25), and research (line 33). The teacher cites things that students learn to question in history – "the world", "what you are told", "the way you look at things" (line 6). The researcher suggests in line 26 that critical inquiry is a lifelong skill, and the teacher builds on this highlighting the skills of historical inquiry: "The ability to research, that ability to critically look at what you are reading, those inquiry processes…" (line 33).

Building Identities and Relationships

The teacher and researcher in this conversation are constructing themselves as history teachers who know and value the learning area. For example, the teacher positions both as history specialists by using an inclusive plural pronoun 'we' in line 7. Much of the meaning in this conversation is dependant on the assumption that they both understand particular terms relevant to the discipline of history. For example, the teacher is able to make passing reference to "that perspectives stuff" (line 5) confident that the researcher understands the depth of meaning attached to that as an historical concept. The researcher can also be seen building a working relationship that will be critical to the project. The researcher is minimising potential power differentials by affirming the value of the teacher's observations and local expertise. For example, rather than attempting to be a neutral interviewer, the researcher comments on the teacher's response: "…when you say it I think – 'that's so true'"(line 9).

Small Story 3 *Dogs are better than cats just because they are*

Building Activity

This small story is shaped by the researcher's first interview question about the value of school history. Like both colleagues (Small Stories 1 and 2), this teacher's reflections construct an understanding of the value of school history for learners, so shaping a sense of purpose for their curriculum work.

Table 6 Small Story 3

Sp.	Small Story 3 *Dogs are better than cats just because they are* **Extract from Interview 3**	Line
T3	I've found, and I've only really been teaching it for the year in the pure sense of history, so I've been learning a little bit about source analysis and those sorts of things myself, but I really like the way that it talks about perspectives.	1
	And the students start to see that there's not necessarily one simple way of looking at it.	2
	So when we look at World War 2 for instance they hear from a Japanese veteran and they get a different perspective on that rather than just what they've heard.	3
	…	
	That's often the way of it, is that the things that are difficult are the important things.	4
	…	
	So seeing things from different perspectives and understanding Asian cultures even as a whole and how these things interact I think is really important for them.	5
	…	
T3:	The analysis of sources – I'm really starting to enjoy that now.	6
	I had a bit of a win with my – I know it's not the national curriculum – my Year 11s last week.	7
	They had a bit of a debate about something and one of my students said "We can see all of the [evidence], and in particular where it says here…"	8
R:	Bingo. (both laughing)	9
T3:	"Yes but over here it says…"	10
	And you are doing it second nature and I didn't even have to tell you to do that!	11
R:	That is a win!	12

T3:	So it's the idea of them justifying, rather than just having an opinion, whether it's in English or history or anything.	13
	Rather than them just saying, "Dogs are better than cats just because they are," them [students] actually taking the step and going "Well we can see from the evidence here that this seems to be the stronger point."	14
	So they are starting to.	15
R:	So you kind of think that's a really transferrable life skill for them?	16
T3:	Yeah, yeah, and it comes back again to the perspectives thing as well.	17
	You know, of looking at what other people found and figuring out where the balance is when they are making decisions, rather than just being a gut instinct or an immediate response.	18
	So that's one of the really good skills in history.	19
	And obviously research skills.	20
	There's research skills within most subjects, but reliability and bias and being critical about sources, not just taking them for granted, is a really difficult skill to teach.	21
	But it's also really beneficial across subjects so I think it does help them in general.	22

Building Significance and Connections

In explaining the value of history the teacher gives significance to historical concepts and skills. The teacher gives an example to explain the value of encouraging their learners to consider different perspectives, in this case to deepen understanding of Asian cultures (lines 3 & 5). A dis-connect is evident between the value of this learning about the perspectives of others, and the challenge of teaching this: "That's often the way of it, is that the things that are difficult are the important things" (line 4). The teacher uses an absurdity ("Dogs are better than cats just because they are", line 11) to highlight the value they place on the skill of being able to justify a position with evidence (line 14). They note a sense of achievement they felt when a student mastered this skill (line 11). Research skills are also made significant. Although the teacher acknowledges research is developed in most subjects, the critical evaluation

of sources is foregrounded as a particular contribution of history (line 21). Again, a dis-connect emerges between how important it is to teach these skills in history, but how challenging it is (line 21).

This small story connects these skills of history to skills for life. The teacher begins this building work by showing that justifying positions is useful "whether it's in English or history or anything" (line 13). The researcher takes up this point and suggests: "So you kind of think that's a really transferrable life skill for them?" (line 16). In affirming this, the teacher explains another example, research skills, and, this time adds: "So I think it does help them in general" (line 22).

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story the teacher is building an identity as a history teacher who is growing in confidence. Although they did not have initial professional preparation in history, the teacher recounts a successful learning episode. A student, unprompted, made a careful analysis of available evidence to justify a point (line 8). The researcher helps to co-construct the teacher's identity, when she acknowledges that she, as a fellow history teacher, understands the significance of this achievement that may seem inconsequent to others (lines 9 & 12). Shared laughter about practice (line 9), the researcher's encouragement (line 12), and the teacher's affirmation they have been understood ("Yeah, yeah," line 17) are examples of how language is also being used to lay the foundations of a collegial relationship.

Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job*?

Building Activity

While the first three small stories have focused on the teachers' view of the value of history for their learners, this small story builds an understanding for the researcher of how students perceive school history in this context. The teacher cites past student and teacher comments to explain their perception that students may not see the relevance of history.

Table 7 Small Story 4

Sp.	Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job?* **Extract from Interview 3**	Line
T3:	Occasionally I think it might be nice if you had more access to perhaps be able to go to things like museums and excursions and things.	1
	But I'm not even sure of what it's even like in terms of when you're in suburban Brisbane whether or not a lot of that sort of thing goes on.	2
	I don't know if that's a major disadvantage or not of being so far away in terms of the student interest in the subject.	3
	Perhaps it does have implications because often out here you get the comments about 'Well how is this going to help me with my job?'	4
	The focus is about the job; a lot of students they are not really looking anywhere beyond X (local employer).	5
	Not that there's anything wrong with that, but there is an emphasis on that sort of manual work or service work, not really thinking of going to uni.	6
	There's a very small portion that end up going to uni, so a lot of them struggle with that idea of how does history help.	7
	I know at parent teacher interviews sometimes you get parents saying "How long do they have to do it for because it's not really helping them for their job".	8
	So that idea of what learning and education is about in the community and the culture of it can be problematic.	9
	And I'm not sure that's [isn't] the case everywhere, but I guess I'm noting that is fairly common out here.	10
	But having said that there are still activities and ways, and students do get engaged.	11
	It's not that they are totally disinterested in absolutely everything to do with history.	12

| R: | Is it just something that you have to be mindful [of], to keep them engaged? | 13 |
| T3: | Yes, definitely. | 14 |

Building Significance and Connections

The teacher is unsure whether the rural context impacts on students' experience of history. The teacher answers the researcher's question about the rural context hesitantly using low modality qualifiers: "I'm *not even sure…*" (whether urban students visit museums, line 2) and "*I don't know* if…" (students are disadvantaged because of distance, line 3). They tentatively conclude, "*perhaps* it [rural context] does have implications" (line 4). After suggesting that student interest in the subject may be related to the rural context, the teacher adds: "And *I'm not sure* that's [isn't] the case everywhere, but *I guess I'm noting* that is fairly common out here" (line 10).

The teacher does connect some students' lack of interest in history with perceptions of relevance. The teacher cites an example of how students question the relevance of history: "'Well how is this going to help me with my job?'" (line 4). The teacher believes that some students and parents connect history with academic pathways rather than employment pathways (lines 5-8). The teacher is unsure if disengagement with history is a particularly rural issue, but it is an issue for them and they affirm that attending to student engagement is important in their practice (lines 11-14).

Building Identities and Relationships

This teacher identifies a dis-connect between student beliefs about the relevance of history (Small Story 4) and teacher beliefs about the value of history

(Small Story 3). This has the effect of constructing the role of the history teacher as an important responsibility, but also a challenge.

Small Story 5 *Unless it's ridiculously important*

Building Activity

In this small story the teacher builds the researcher's understanding of the difficulties accessing professional development in a remote rural school. They communicate a sense of professional isolation and unmet professional learning needs due to the problems of access to and relevance of formal structured professional development opportunities.

Table 8 Small Story 5

Sp.	Small Story 5 *Unless it's ridiculously important* **Extract from Interview 1**	Line
T1:	Because a lot of it takes place in X (city) it's a X (number) hour drive or a X (number) hundred dollar plus flight.	1
	The school will pay for the professional development but they won't flat pay for the flights so it has to be driving.	2
	So to go to a one-day professional development it's three days out of school.	3
R:	You worry about what your class is doing and you get behind?	4
T1:	Yeah, unless it's ridiculously important it's not worth it in the end.	5
	And a lot of our professional development is done online through web conferences and those sorts of thing, if we can get access to them or so forth.	6
R:	Have you seen any good ones, or is it a bit slim on the ground – for history?	7
T1:	Not for history – Arts and stuff I do quite a bit of if I can have time for it – but when in comes to history –	8
	We had a group come out recently – I think it was part of the QSA I'm not sure.	9
	They did stuff with the P-10 History and they were running through resources and stuff.	10
R:	More like an orientation session I think, if it's the one I'm thinking of.	11
T1:	Yeah and they gave us some good websites that we can use for some things and some	12

	access to some ideas and so forth.	
	But in the end it was still up to us to come up with the ways of teaching and creating it.	13
	…	
	It's the way we deliver it is the main thing.	14
	Whether or not – we can come up with as many ways of delivering it as possible and we hope that it's working.	15
	But we're not 100 per cent sure if we are hitting the criteria – cause that's another thing, understanding the criteria.	16
	…	
R:	We can talk about that tomorrow with the group.	17
	If everyone's a bit 'What are we supposed to be doing about assessment?' we can have a chat about that.	18
	…	19
	I've got the basic point that it's really hard to access face-to-face and at the end of the day its probably more trouble and expense than it's worth –	20
T1:	– Than it's worth.	21
R:	Particularly if you don't know what you are going to get out of it.	22
T1:	Yeah, yeah – if we can be told you are going to get a smorgasbord of resources.	23
R:	Yeah, but you're never quite sure when you sign up to things are you?	24
T1:	Yeah, exactly.	24
R:	You're pretty open to online stuff if it's available and relevant?	26
T1:	I am – things for Arts seem to be quite easy to do.	27
	Like they basically do things like a painting exercise, they show you what they are doing.	28
R:	You get a lot out of that – it's very, very practical?	29
T1:	I'm not Visual Art trained [so] seeing a Visual Art teacher work – [is good]	30
	I had to teach myself and write the [Art] work program this year so that sort of stuff is really beneficial for me.	31
R:	But you haven't really found anything really like that for history that's been really hitting those things that you've been looking for?	32
T1:	No, so I'm trying to find stuff that is specifically linked to topics I'm teaching.	33

Building Significance and Connections

The situated meaning of 'professional development' in this small story is formal structured learning delivered at workshops or online. The teacher describes barriers to engagement with professional development, giving particular significance to two factors – the remoteness of the school and the relevance of professional development on offer. The issues of access to, and relevance of, professional development are more acute when connected to the remoteness of the school and the professional learning needs associated with a new curriculum. [1]

The distance, and consequent time and cost of being out of school, make attending face-to-face professional development activities difficult for this teacher (lines 1-3). The type of professional learning the teacher seeks is focused on everyday classroom teaching and learning. The teacher cites one professional development activity they were able to attend (lines 9-10). While the teacher found the workshop useful, they note that, "in the end it was still up to us to come up with ways of teaching and creating it" (line13). The teacher judges a workshop to be of value if it offers practical resources (lines 23). The teacher is not averse to online professional development and recalls a painting exercise that showed how a Visual Art teacher worked (lines 27-28).

Building Identities and Relationships

In sharing their concerns with the researcher, the teacher invites the researcher to take up a supportive role within the project. In turn the researcher positions herself

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[1] The Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) has developed the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) resource to support Queensland state school teachers implement the Australian Curriculum. At the time this study began this was being progressively developed for history (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

as an experienced colleague who understands the teacher's experience and can help them resolve concerns. For example, in line 24 the researcher emphasises shared experience, showing she knows what it's like to attend professional development that turns out to be less useful than hoped. Although not explicitly stated, there is an implication that the researcher has the capacity to support the teachers to work through issues of concern. For example, when the teacher expresses some uncertainty about aspects of assessment: "That's another thing, understanding the criteria" (line 16), the researcher says: "We can talk about that tomorrow with the group" (line 17).

Small Story 6 *And then someone leaves again*

Building Activity

This small story builds an explanation of how frequent staff turnover and limited teaching experience impacts on curriculum work at this rural school. The teacher structures their explanation with a series of paired statements: situation – impact. When the teaching team has limited experience or professional preparation (lines 2-4), "that can make it difficult" (line 4). When new teachers are graduates (line 10), that can have benefits, but "it can be frustrating with some subjects" (line 11). Where the only teacher with professional preparation in a subject is a first year teacher who has to take the lead (line 13), "that's challenging" (lines 14).

Table 9 Small Story 6

Sp.	Small Story 6 *And then someone leaves again* Extract from Interview 3	Line
T3:	One other thing would be staffing.	1
	That we do note that in terms of our Head of Department is not trained in the area and those that are teaching history some of them are not trained in history.	2
	And those that are, it's first, second, third year.	3

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	And even within other subjects – that's often the case within the humanities area or Arts – so that can make it difficult, the lack of experience.	4
R:	And the changing staff?	5
T3:	And changing staff.	6
R:	That's really –	7
T3:	Because that happens quite regularly.	8
	Out here it's often a three to four year turn around, and then someone leaves again.	9
	Those coming in tend to be young, not always but usually, they're graduates or recent graduates.	10
	Which has its benefits in some ways, but certainly I know it can be frustrating with some subjects.	11
	History is good in the Year 8s because I've got X (teacher) and X (teacher) even though they are new teachers as well.	12
	But in some humanities based subjects it can be very difficult when none of the teachers are teaching the subject they're trained in and as a first year [teacher] they're the only one.	13
	So that's challenging.	14

Building Significance and Connections

The teacher builds the significance of experience. Experience in this small story has two situated meanings – professional preparation and years of teaching experience. This teacher does not have professional preparation in history and values the support of two colleagues who do (line 12). They note that those who do have professional preparation in history, are early career teachers (line 3).

The lack of experience reported by the teacher is connected to staff turnover. The teacher explains there is "often a three to four year turn around, and then someone leaves again" (line 9). The use of 'again' communicates a sense of the regularity of this staff change. Underscoring this loss of experience is the very next observation – the arrival of new appointees who tend to be "graduates or recent

graduates" (line 10). The teacher suggests this has benefits but can be challenging (line 11). The teacher cites a situation where a teaching team needs to rely on a first year teacher because they are the only one with professional preparation in the learning area (line 13).

Building Identities and Relationships

The teacher is building a professional identity that values discipline-specific knowledge, skills and experience. When this is missing, "that's challenging" for teachers (line 14). This teacher points out that the history team does have experience and demonstrates more confidence when the teaching team has some discipline-specific expertise (line 12). This teacher is also foregrounding collaboration in curriculum work as an established part of their practice.

Small Story 7 *You guys look to me like you're pretty good at that!*

Building Activity

In this small story the researcher and teacher find common ground in valuing collaborative ways of working that will support the next day's planning activities. Using the conventions of the interview genre, the researcher asks questions and checks her understandings and observations with the teacher. Some understandings are confirmed such as the connection between the rural context and teachers' ways of working (line 29) while other suggestions are not taken up by the teacher, such as the impact of staff turnover suggested in line 14. Together they construct an understanding of teacher collaboration as an affordance of a small rural school posting.

Table 10 Small Story 7

Sp.	Small Story 7 *You guys look to me like you're pretty good at that!* **Extract from Interview 2**	Line
R:	And as we said our project's going to be a collaborative model of working together and I think you guys look to me like you're pretty good at that!	1
T2:	Yeah!	2
R:	Like, that is your way of working.	3
	So maybe if you just could tell me why that works for you then, if that's how you've got used to working.	4
T2:	I don't know why it works so well for us, it just —	5
	I think cause we are all friends outside school we see each other all the time.	6
	I don't know, we just talk.	7
	Because we are doing all these brand new units, we are having to resource everything ourselves, and write all these brand new lessons.	8
	There's nothing there, everything has to be done from scratch.	9
	It just saves a lot of time, and a lot of our energy.	10
	We don't have time to be writing brand new lessons all three of us.	11
R:	And so you couldn't really use much you had previously in the school or –?	12
T2	Nup.	13
R:	I guess if you have a high staff turnover, not a lot held sometimes perhaps?	14
T2:	We've just never taught some of these.	15
	It's just never been taught here before which makes it a bit difficult.	
R:	So it's a great strategy to keep everyone sane, to be able to actually share the workload.	16
	Any other good things that come out of that way of working?	17
T2:	Well X (teacher) is not actually a trained history teacher either, X talks to X (another teacher) and I a lot about the historical skills stuff.	18
	And cause I obviously haven't got any experience teaching history, well as a graduate anyway.	19
	So X (teacher), we call on X (teacher) a lot for that, just to get [their] advice.	20
	…	

R:	Kind of a way you're learning together then?	21
T2:	Yeah.	22
R:	…I suspect some of that, how you all know each [other socially] and you all hang out outside school and you're all friends —	23
	I don't know if that happens in a big urban school does it?	24
T2:	No, doesn't.	25
R:	So I'm already thinking those social networks that you form because you are all newly arrived here –	26
T2:	Mm hm (agreeing).	27
R:	You kind of support each other socially as well and it pays off in your ways of working together doesn't it?	28
T2:	Yes it does, absolutely.	29
R:	I'm thinking that's one of the contextual things –	30
T2:	Yeah, I can't really see that happening in a big school where you've got 40 staff or 50 staff or however many.	31

Building Significance and Connections

Collaborative ways of working, as the focus of the second interview question, are initially given significance by the researcher. (Because action research is a collaborative model, the researcher was keen to discuss this with each teacher via the interviews. This small story is representative of each of the interviews.) The researcher uses an inter-textual reference to begin the conversation. At morning tea in the staffroom the researcher had observed the three teachers intently discussing an aspect of their English unit. The researcher's comment: "… you guys look to me like you're pretty good at that!" (line 1) is a reference back to this earlier conversation. The ensuing dialogue constructs a shared understanding of collaboration as valued practice.

Two practical reasons to collaborate are offered that connect the rural context to teachers' curriculum work: as a response to the workload of early career teachers ("It just saves a lot of our time, and a lot of our energy", line 10); and as a support for those teaching subjects for which they have limited professional preparation or experience ("I obviously haven't got any experience teaching history", line 19). The teacher identifies that opportunities to collaborate are facilitated by their friendship outside school, noting, "we see each other all the time" (line 6). The researcher builds on this comment, suggesting this may be encouraged by working in a small rural school, drawing on her own experiences in much larger urban schools (lines 23-24 & 28). The teacher agrees concluding: "I can't really see that happening in a big school where you've got 40 or 50 staff or however many" (line 31).

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story both the teacher and researcher can be seen establishing identities as collaborative practitioners. Further, the co-construction of collaborative ways of working as positive, productive and responsive to the needs of teachers in this context, establishes a shared understanding that will be an important foundation for the working relationship on the planning days.

Small Story 8 *But how to make those decisions?*

Building Activity

This teacher's explanation of their concerns about the task of curriculum work ahead, establishes teachers' decision-making as critical to curriculum implementation. It also helps the researcher understand this teacher's professional learning needs.

Table 11 Small Story 8

Sp.	Small Story 8 *But how to make those decisions?* **Extract from Interview 2**	Line
T2:	For me just knowing how to unpack curriculum and turn it into something useful for the classroom, that's been my single biggest [need].	1
	Because I've never had to do it before and because we didn't —	2
	We were still doing SOSE at uni, even though they knew we would be doing Australian Curriculum.	3
	…	
R:	What you really need support in is the nitty gritty of how we go from all that stuff and all those support documents and that curriculum to me standing in front of the class.	4
	It's that in-between space.	5
T2:	Yeah and because what's in the Australian Curriculum is huge.	6
	To cover, what they want you to cover in 13 weeks.	7
	Plus you've got to take out at least three or four weeks for assessment time and then reporting time.	8
	So you are not actually getting 13 weeks, you're getting more like 10 if you're lucky.	9
	And to cover the amount that they want you to cover.	10
	Well OK – what do I keep?	11
	What do I cut?	12
	Where should my focus be?	13
	…	
	But how to make those decisions?	14
	What am I basing those decisions on?	15
	That's going to be –	16
	Because I can decide what I think is most important, but that may not actually be the intent of the curriculum writers.	17
	I don't know.	18

Building Significance and Connections

The prescribed nature of the new history curriculum is given significance by the teacher; the teacher faces the task of making the curriculum someone else has designed into something useful for their students (line 1). The teacher makes reference to an unidentified authority "they" who have either produced or mandated the curriculum ("what they want you to cover", line 7) and seeks to understand the intent of the curriculum writers (line 17). In this context, three factors are identified as potential challenges – the scope of the curriculum, the teaching time and teacher experience. The teacher believes: "what's in the Australian Curriculum is huge" (line 6) and goes on to explain how the time to teach, assess and report is limited (lines 8-10). Given the time constraints, the teacher is aware they must make some critical decisions about where their emphasis should be (line 13).

However, this teacher feels ill-prepared to make these critical decisions: they did not have any professional preparation for this history curriculum (lines 2-3); as an early career teacher they have not had to make these sorts of curriculum decisions before (line 2); and they are unsure of the curriculum writers' intent (line 18). The teacher's use of a series of largely rhetorical questions underscores their uncertainty. They ask: "Well OK – what do I keep? What do I cut? Where should my focus be?" (lines 11-13) and "But how do I make those decisions? What am I basing those decisions on?" (lines 14-15). The frustration, implied by the use of rhetorical questions that can't easily be answered, has the effect of constructing enactment of this curriculum as a challenge for early career teachers.

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story the teacher's identity as curriculum-maker is constructed. The teacher's role is to: "unpack curriculum and turn it into something useful for the

classroom" (line 1). The researcher uses a 'gap' metaphor to emphasise the work of teachers as operating in "that in-between space" (line 5) between the stated and enacted curriculum. In these ways the teacher and researcher co-construct the teacher as critical to curriculum implementation work, but this teacher has also identified some unmet professional learning needs to feel effective in this area.

In response, the researcher begins establishing herself as a potential mentor. Firstly, she restates the teacher's concern to show that she has understood their situation (line 4). Secondly, she uses everyday language to describe the curriculum documentation ("all that stuff and all those support materials", line 4) communicating a sense of empathy for the overwhelming nature of the task. Thirdly, through pronoun use she shows empathy with the teacher and positions herself as a colleague. In line 4 the researcher uses 'we' to emphasise she is a fellow history teacher ("How *w*e go from…") and uses 'me' to take on the teacher's role to show understanding of the situation ("To *me* standing in front of the class").

Conclusion

The analysis of the small stories in this chapter has surfaced the attitudes, values and beliefs these teachers held at the outset of the project about their curriculum planning work for history. I discuss the findings of this discourse analysis in detail in Chapters 7 and 8. In brief, it is evident that these teachers shared many understandings about their rural context in terms of the isolation students may experience and their need to collaborate and support each other as rural teachers. They each valued the historical concepts and historical skills embedded in the new curriculum and believed it offered students opportunities for valued, transferrable learning. They understood their curriculum work for history as an important responsibility but also a challenge, and they identified some unmet professional

learning needs. The analyses in this chapter have also foreshadowed the collaborative and collegial ways of working that would characterise this project and the role I would take up in the planning days. I discuss this in detail in Chapter 8.

This chapter has analysed small stories that captured individual teachers' thinking about their work in a semi-structured interview. In the next chapter I report my discourse analysis of a larger number of planning day small stories, which are necessarily 'messier' being drawn from authentic episodes of collaborative planning and decision-making.

Chapter 6 Data Analysis – Planning Days

In this chapter I present my discourse analysis of a range of representative small stories drawn from across the three planning days. This selection of small stories focuses on a range of history curriculum, assessment and learner storylines (see Appendix 4). Notably, there were few explicit rural schooling storylines evident during the planning days. However, I argue that the understanding of their rural context that the teachers expressed in the interviews does permeate their practice on the planning days and I discuss this in Chapters 7 and 8. The analysis of the small stories shows how teachers working in a community of practice were able to make decisions together about plans to implement the new history curriculum and work through tensions in practice. I organise the reporting of this discourse analysis in the same way as the previous chapter, including some contextual information where needed, an extract from the small story, followed by a discussion of how the teachers, and myself as a participant in the planning day meetings, used language to build activities, significance and connections, and identities and relationships.

The small stories are presented in chronological order. The first six small stories are from Planning Day 1 that was held towards the end of the school year, and involved planning for the new curriculum to be implemented with Year 8 students in the following year. Three small stories are drawn from Planning Day 2, which was held at the end of the first term of teaching the new curriculum. Five small stories are from Planning Day 3, which was held at the end of the second term of teaching the new curriculum. This planning day involved some reflections on Term 2 work and planning for the remainder of that year. At the end of this chapter I briefly point to the

way dominant storylines recurred but defer more detailed discussion to Chapters 7 and 8 where I synthesise the analysis of data across the interviews and planning days.

Small Story 9 *The Engagement thing is a big factor for us*

Building Activity

This small story is drawn from early discussions on the first planning day as the group identify, and begin to record on the whiteboard, key considerations for their planning. This is accomplished as each teacher contributes a viewpoint on engagement in history. Teacher 3 nominates student engagement as an issue in history: "I think engaging our kids is hard, with the history stuff" (line 1). Teacher 1 supports this statement: "…the engagement thing is a big factor for us" (line 4). Although Teacher 2 doesn't have a problem engaging students, they still see its importance, and also concur that engagement must be a focus in planning (for example, line 9).

Table 12 Small Story 9

Sp.	Small Story 9 *The engagement thing is a big factor for us* **Extract from Planning Day 1, Session 1**	Line
T3:	I think engaging our kids is hard, with the history stuff.	1
R:	Yeah, so 'engagement' – would that be a separate point maybe?	2
T1:	Yeah well I would say it would be.	3
	I think the engagement thing is a big factor for us – separate thing.	4
T3:	It's a huge factor – it's been my single biggest issue.	5
T1:	For specific students in specific areas, like things like, specifically the problem that I've noticed is with [the] Japanese [topic] as opposed to the other two subjects [topics].	6
T2:	Whereas for me I find I don't have too many problems engaging them with the subject.	7
	It's the way that it's actually communicated to them.	8

	I find they struggle a little bit if there's not enough variety for them, and I do try to make sure they have variety but –	9
T1:	Yep that's normal.	10
R:	OK, so that's like pedagogy isn't it?	11
T3:	Yeah.	12
T2:	And more hands on, having the time and finding ways of making sure there are more hands-on type activities.	13
T1:	Activity, variety, yes is a really important thing.	14
T2:	And time constraints.	15
T1:	Yeah.	16
T2:	So those two things sort of go together.	17
R:	Yep we've got to factor those in –	18
	(all laughing wryly)	
T2:	Yeah and that's not just in terms of the planning, that's in terms of face-to-face time with the students.	19
	If you are going to have group work or if you are going to have something like the mystery object type activity – they do take quite a lot of time.	20
R:	Time (agreeing).	21
T3:	Yeah.	22

Building Significance and Connections

The situated meaning of 'engagement' in this small story is student interest in lessons. The researcher initially picks up on Teacher 3's first mention of engagement and asks if it should be a separate point on their whiteboard list (line 2). Teacher 1 agrees that it should be a "separate thing" (line 4). Teacher 3's choice of adjectives heightens the significance of engagement: "It's a *huge* factor – it's been my *single biggest* issue" (line 5). In deciding to list engagement as a separate priority for their planning, these teachers give engagement particular significance in their curriculum work.

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The teachers implicitly connect engagement to positive learning outcomes. Achieving engagement is connected to particular pedagogical approaches. For Teacher 2 this means offering "variety" (line 9) "…making sure there are more hands-on type activities" (line 13); "group work" (line 20); and "the mystery object type activity" (line 20). Teacher 1 indicates agreement with Teacher 2: "Activity, variety, yes is a really important thing" (line 14).

These pedagogical approaches are in turn connected to time constraints. Teacher 2 explicitly connects face-to-face teaching time and use of varied activities in line 17. They explain these pedagogical approaches "…do take quite a lot of time" (line 20). The other teachers indicate agreement in lines 16 and 22. In this way the teachers also construct teaching time as a critical factor in being able to enact suitable pedagogies to accomplish student engagement in learning. Describing time as constrained (line 15) implies the engagement they hope for may be at risk. Laughter points to a shared recognition of a tension between the pedagogies they favour and the teaching time available (line 18).

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story the researcher is using language in ways that can be seen to both potentially hinder and encourage her participation. In line 11 when she suggests the teachers have made a point about 'pedagogy', the researcher applies her labels to the teachers' practice. The teachers do not take up this technical language and the researcher has risked constructing herself as an outsider to this group. Elsewhere in the story the researcher takes opportunities to express understanding of the teachers' concerns. For example joining in laughter and repetition of the word 'time' in line 21 expresses knowing and understanding a concern, based on common experience.

Building a sense of shared experience and understanding assists the development of this community of practice.

Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first*

Building Activity

From early in the first planning day teachers were thinking and talking about assessment requirements. In the extract below, Teacher 3 turns discussion to the first assessment task (line 1). The teachers seek to select an assessment technique that will be supportive of learners who would be beginning their first year of secondary school (line 22). Although the researcher attempts to position the incoming students as "an unknown quantity" (line 23), the teachers work from knowledge of their current students (students studying SOSE in Year 8) to build an understanding of the learners they are planning for.

Table 13 Small Story 10

Sp.	Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first* **Extract from Planning Day 1, Session 1**	Line
T3:	Whatever we do, let's not do an exam first.	1
T2:	For Year 8?	2
T1:	Yeah.	3
T3:	Can we just not do an exam first?	4
T2:	But within our text types research is also not a strength, a strong point, coming in from primary school.	5
T1:	What about multimodal?	6
T3:	Multimodal might be a better one to do first up.	7
T2:	That's research based though and they are not good with that research.	8
R:	So you are talking about the challenge of your Year 8s being just new to high school and that whole transition from grade 7?	9
T2:	And their lack of development with skills.	10

T3:	And they are coming with –	11
R:	Don't know what they've got –	12
T3:	They are not doing history, they are not doing AC history at the primary school.	13
T2:	Well they haven't.	14
T3:	They are not.	15
T2:	This year they are not?	16
	OK.	17
T3:	So next year's Grade 8s are in the exact same position as this year's Grade 8s are.	18
	They have not done any AC history; they are going to come up with the same gaps.	19
	…	
T3:	No, they are going to come up with exactly the same gaps so we need to allow for that.	20
T2:	So we need to figure out what the least threatening option is perhaps.	21
R:	So these are all the things we have to strategise around.	22
	So that's a biggy isn't it – the fact your Year 8s are an unknown quantity as far as what skills will they have.	23
	And from your past experience – you are thinking we've got to start from scratch?	24
T2:	Very low.	25
T3:	A distinct lack of skills.	26
T2:	It was a big shock [to the students] with the first assessment – many of them did not pass.	27

Building Significance and Connections

This small story gives significance to formal assessment and privileges a narrow range of summative assessment techniques. In this extract teachers discuss exams, research tasks, and multimodal responses. The significance teachers give to summative assessment at this early stage of planning reflects the influence of their institutional setting; teachers are cognisant of their responsibility to formally assess and report on student achievement.

The teachers also give significance to supporting learners as they transition from primary to secondary school. When Teacher 3 suggests "…let's not do an exam first" (line 1) and repeats this shortly after in line 4, they are implicitly asking the group to remember the experience of their current cohort with their first assessment. In line 27 Teacher 2 explains more explicitly to the researcher that the current students struggled with an exam as the first assessment: "It was a big shock [to the students] with the first assessment – many of them did not pass". They consider multimodal and other research tasks but, again drawing on past experience, recall that research is "not a strength" of their current students (line 5). This implies that teachers aim for students to experience success in their first secondary school history assessment. Teacher 2 later explicitly suggests: "So we need to figure out what the least threatening option is perhaps" (line 21).

This small story also reveals that these teachers connect success in history to mastery of historical skills. These teachers' concern with a lack of prior learning to build on (lines 10, 13 & 19) shows they view historical skills as something developed over time and built on each successive year. In the first year of the new curriculum the teachers expect students to arrive at secondary school with limited historical skills to build on. Teacher 3 explains this as "gaps" (line 19) and Teacher 2 expects "a distinct lack of skills" (line 26).

Building Identities and Relationships

The teachers' role as assessors of student learning is highlighted in this story. Language here constructs a tension between teachers wanting their students to experience success as they begin secondary school and their responsibilities as assessors of student learning. For these teachers there is some conflict between these two professional goals. Teachers resolved this tension when later in Planning Day 1

they decide to plan a folio of small tasks focused on particular historical skills and concepts for the first formal assessment instrument.

Small Story 11 *Interesting for us or interesting for them?*

Building Activity

In this small story the group discusses the merits of the topic choices from the curriculum for Depth Studies 2 and 3 and make collaborative decisions about what to teach. They have already decided on the Medieval Europe (c.590-c.1500) topic for Depth Study 1. For the second depth study, The Asia-Pacific World, the options in the curriculum are the Angkor/Khmer Empire (c.802-c.1431), Japan under the Shoguns (c.794-1867) or The Polynesian expansion across the Pacific (c.700-1756) (ACARA, 2013b, Year 8). The teachers have previously decided not to select Japan under the Shoguns as the previous cohort had not shown great interest when they trialled some of this topic. For the third depth study Expanding Contacts the options in the curriculum are: Mongol Expansion (c1206-c1368), The Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa (14th century plague) and The Spanish Conquest of the Americas (c1492-c1572) (ACARA, 2013b, Year 8). The teachers have previously decided not to choose the Black Death, but rather to briefly explore some aspects of this topic in the Medieval Europe depth study. These extracts exemplify the nature of more substantial conversations where teachers consider the constraints and affordances of various topic choices.

Table 14 Small Story 11

Sp.	Small story 11 *Interesting for us of interesting for them?* **Extracts from Planning Day 1, Session 1**	Line
	Extract 1 – Spanish conquest of the Americas depth study	
T1:	I think they would get engaged with sacrifice and so forth but apart from that I don't know how much other connection –	1
T3:	Gold – I love the Spanish Conquest [topic].	2
T1:	So do I but I'm thinking about out here –	3
T3:	I suppose it might seem a bit distant, but it's all about blood and death and gold and money and sacrifices as well.	4
T2:	But they are doing that in the other units as well.	5
R:	Yeah, you've got to think of the balance.	6
T1:	I'd love to do it but –	7
T2:	Otherwise history is all blood and guts isn't it?	8
T4:	That's what history is, isn't it! (all laughing)	9
	Extract 2 – Mongol Expansion depth study	
R:	So we've got Mongol Expansion or Spanish Conquest of the Americas	10
	…	
T3:	I think Mongol.	11
T2:	We can link it to China too.	12
	I know that a few students have asked me about that.	13
T3:	I think some Asian history – they need some.	14
T2:	They need some.	15
T3:	At least the Mongols they are not going to come with preconceived notions of the Mongols.	16

T1:	Oh they might.	17
	Extract 3 – Angkor/Khmer depth study	
R:	Have a think about that second one.	18
	The choices are Angkor Khmer, which is well ancient Cambodia.	19
T1:	Yeah very random.	20
	It would be awesome; it would be really interesting.	21
T3:	Interesting for us or interesting for them?	22
T1:	I like their art.	23
T3:	I think it's fascinating but I can't see the Year 8s enjoying it.	24
	Extract 4 – Polynesian expansion depth study	
T1:	I find the Polynesian Expansion quite interesting.	25
T3:	I would love to do [Polynesia] but it just depends if it's viable.	26
R:	I think you have to be pragmatic too, at the end of the day.	27
T3:	Yeah I know I have quite a bit of background knowledge there, but if it's going to –	28
T2:	I know very little.	29
T1:	So do I – I know nothing.	30
T3:	See any non-history teacher quite probably won't have –	31
T2:	– but then I know very little about a lot of this. (referring to the curriculum documents)	32
T1:	So what's it actually talk about? (referring to the curriculum documents)	33
	So it's the role of the Maori and Rapa Nui society, cultural, Easter Island –	34
R:	I don't think many teachers [in Queensland] have taught this before, this Polynesia one.	35
T2:	Oh I like Easter Island. (referring to curriculum documents)	36
	That sort of stuff's excellent because you can bring in the collapse of societies based on the way that they're prioritising of things.	37
T1:	(reading from curriculum content descriptors) 'The extinction of the Moa in New	38

	Zealand' – so yeah, so environmental sustainability.	
T2:	Yeah it sounds interesting doesn't it?	39
	Although we'll have a lot of kiwi jokes, but yeah it sounds interesting.	40
R:	I've never taught this particular one – can't give you any insights.	41
T2:	(reading from the curriculum) 'The use of religious/supernatural threats to conserve resources, and the exploitation of Easter Island's palm trees.'	42
	That sounds interesting.	43
	Extract 5: Sequencing	
T1:	So it'd go Middle Ages, Mongol Expansion, Polynesian Expansion.	44
T2:	Because that sort of brings it a bit home too for them.	45
	…	
	And if we are looking at environments and so forth it's bringing it home a little bit even if it's not Australia.	46
	So that when we go to Year 9 and they look at the Industrial Revolution to Australia, the focus is all Australian pretty much 9 and 10 so it sorts of brings it back home into this region because it's making the link back to Europe.	47
T3:	Which is the other reason I want to do Movement of Peoples and not Industrial Revolution, because it's a bit more global. (referring to Year 9 course)	48
	…	
R:	Which one are you doing first?	49
T2:	Mongols.	50
T1:	Mongols and then Polynesians.	51
R:	OK.	52
T2:	Cause I think the Polynesian will link very well going into Year 9.	53
R:	I don't think there's any issues with chronology because the Polynesian one spans a fair bit of time anyway.	54
	I can't see any issues with switching it around, the order, and they said at that conference you've got flexibility to do that.	55
T3:	Yeah.	56
T1:	Yep, as you said the Polynesian spans a long period toward the modern period, and the fact is the Mongols will sit somewhere in the beginning of the middle [ages].	57

| R: | And the Mongols is a bit close to the medieval bit that you'll just be doing. | 58 |
| T1: | Yep well what is it, the Mongols –1200s? | 59 |

Building Significance and Connections

To evaluate the options available in the curriculum the teachers make certain things significant to the decision-making, and other things less significant. Teachers' knowledge, experience with topics, access to resources and personal interest are all factors noted but *not* given significance in the evaluation of the topic options. Rather, students are at the centre of teachers' decision-making about the topic choices. Three factors are made particularly significant in evaluating topic options: what students would or would not be interested in, what students would benefit from, and what lends balance and coherence to the course for students (including considering probable topics they will study in Year 9).

In Extract 3, when considering the Angkor/Khmer Empire, Teachers 1 and 3 express a personal interest in the topic (lines 21, 23 and 24). However, Teacher 3 asks: "Interesting for us or interesting for them?" (line 22). Teacher 3 does not believe students will find this topic interesting: "…I can't see the Year 8s enjoying it" (line 24). The lack of any further discussion or consideration of this topic indicates that the group have accepted this proposition and decided to reject this topic option. Similarly, in Extract 1 Teachers 1 and 3 express their interest in the Spanish Conquest of the Americas depth study, but they both also question its relevance and connection for students (lines 1-4). Teacher 1 wonders: "I don't know how much other connection –" and adds: "I'm thinking about out here –" (lines 1 and 3). Further, Teacher 2 suggests the course will lack balance because, if they pick this topic, students will see history as "all blood and guts" (line 8).

In Extract 4, as Teacher 3 suggests, it is factors other than teachers' interest that will make the Polynesian Expansion unit a "viable" choice (line 26). Teachers 1 and 2, despite knowing little about Polynesian history (lines 29-30), begin to identify worthwhile learning as they read the curriculum descriptors. For example, when reading a content descriptor about Easter Island, Teacher 2 notes, "You can bring in the collapse of societies based on the way that they're prioritising of things" (line 37). Teacher 1 notes a link to environmental sustainability (line 38). The only person not to speak in favour of the Polynesian Expansion unit is the researcher. After Teacher 3 makes reference to "viability" questions (line 26) the researcher advises some degree of pragmatism in topic choices (line 27). When teachers mention their lack of knowledge about this topic the researcher also reminds them that, "I don't think many teachers have taught this before" (line 35) and "I've never taught this particular one – can't give you any insights" (line 41). Although not wanting to unduly influence decision-making the researcher is cautioning that this topic may be more difficult to resource and has not been widely taught. However, for these teachers the potential benefits for students outweigh concerns about a lack of knowledge and potential resource constraints.

In Extract 2 the teachers identify why the Mongol Expansion depth study would be of benefit to students. This topic offers the opportunity to teach an Asian history unit that teachers believe is important. As Teacher 3 states: "I think some Asian history – they need some" (line 14). Teacher 2 notes that students have expressed an interest in learning about China: "We can link it to China too. I know that a few students have asked me about that" (lines 12-13). Where engagement was an issue with a previous cohort studying some aspects of the Feudal Japan topic, they

believe students will come to this topic without "preconceived notions" (line 16), supporting likely engagement.

The teachers also make coherence significant in their decision-making and decide to swap the order of Depth Studies 2 and 3. By coherence the teachers are considering chronology, geography and prior and future learning. In Extract 5 Teacher 1 points out that the Mongol Expansion depth study chronologically fits within the same timeframe as Medieval Europe (line 57). Therefore it makes sense to these teachers to complete Mongol Expansion following Medieval Europe. The broad time span of the Polynesian Expansion depth study means connections can be made chronologically to the Year 9 subject matter (lines 47 and 53). The topic geographically also "brings it a bit home too for them" (line 45). Teacher 3 points out that the countries of Polynesia are regional neighbours (line 47). Because it may be possible to make some links to colonialism that is part of the early depth studies in Year 9, completing the Polynesian Expansion last lends some coherence across the years of study. As Teacher 2 argues: "Cause I think the Polynesian will link very well going into Year 9" (line 53). Teacher 3 concurs that it would link to the Movement of Peoples unit in Year 9 (line 48).

Building Identities and Relationships

By putting students at the centre of their decisions about topic choices, the teachers construct themselves as learner-centred educators. They select the topics they think their students will enjoy and benefit most from, even if these might be more difficult for the teachers to prepare. These decisions are arrived at through a collegial process where each teacher has contributed reasons, in the process solidifying their group decisions. In this way they have built a shared commitment to the topic choices, knowing the reasons why each depth study was chosen.

This series of extracts also show how the researcher is constructing a multifaceted advisory role. For example line 10 in Extract 2 shows the researcher facilitating and focusing the discussion on the topic choices; line 27 in Extract 4 shows the researcher raising an issue for consideration; line 52 in Extract 5 shows the researcher ensuring the decision-making rests with the teachers; and lines 54-55 in Extract 5 shows the researcher reassuring the teachers.

Small Story 12 *What would be a good way to start?*

Building Activity

Throughout the planning day teachers have discussed how to best teach the Overview. One of the content descriptors fits logically at the beginning of the course of study: "the transformation of the Roman world and the spread of Christianity and Islam" (ACARA, 2013b, Year 8 Overview). However, the teachers are concerned about beginning the course with this content, particularly as the students have not experienced the Year 7 curriculum this links to. This small story begins with the researcher responding to this concern by asking: "What would be a good way to start? If you weren't trying to do all this overview stuff …" (line 1). (Teacher 1 has briefly left the room and does not appear in this extract.) In the process of answering the researcher's question, the teachers start to construct plans to begin their history course with a focus on historical concepts, rather than content in order to foster student engagement.

Table 15 Small Story 12

Sp.	Small Story 12 *What would be a good way to start?* Planning Day 1, Session 2	Line
R:	What would be a good way to start?	1
	If you weren't trying to do all this overview stuff, what would be a good way to engage them with history?	2
T2:	Objects, and like you know have some of the crime and punishment items and get them to try and figure out what it was used for.	3
T3:	Doing mystery objects.	4
T2:	And handling things, or thinking about things, or imagining themselves into a role.	6
T3:	And watching those kind of clips, the YouTube clips.	7
T2:	Clips, the little role plays and the medieval games.	8
T3:	And history songs.	9
	Yeah, actually being able to play games and the nursery rhyme.	10
	You know the ring-a-rosy stuff.	11
T2:	Because that's what you hear the kids talking about later.	12
R:	So why don't you just start with what you know?	13
	Because we've just identified engagement as a big issue and if we haven't got that we haven't got –	14
T2:	(together) – Anything.	15
T3:	(together) – Anything.	16
R:	– anything.	17
	So why don't you spend the first week on historical concepts but they are related to the Middle Ages?	18
T2:	Mm hm.	19
R:	And later in the term check back on that Overview content	20
	…	
R:	But start with what you know is going to get them to understand 'evidence' and 'inquiry'.	21
T2:	There's the setting out of how your classroom runs with them first lesson as well.	22

	And that can take more than half a lesson sometimes depending on the class.	23
R:	Absolutely.	24
T2:	And then you really need something that's going to grab their attention so they are looking forward to things.	25
	We'll probably lose it a bit as we are trying to rush though things but at least we are starting with a taste of something.	26
R:	So if you took two key concepts of 'evidence' and 'inquiry'.	27
	"What is this evidence, what can it tell me, what can I learn from it?"	28
	That idea of asking questions and inquiry.	29
T2:	Yeah that's it.	30
R:	That's a good start isn't it?	31
T2:	And that's what they enjoy.	32
	Like even at the moment I was saying to X (Teacher 1) with these sources like the picture that you looked at before X (Teacher 3).	33
	I'll put that [picture] up and they'll want to talk for 15 minutes.	34
	It's hands up in the air with them trying to figure out what it is actually about and what houses they think are here and why.	35
	And they want to try and work it out themselves.	36
	When you tell them –	37
T3:	– It's not as fun.	38
T2:	And when they are doing comprehension, their comprehension is very weak in term of written comprehension.	39
	But when they are looking at something visual and they are trying to guess and imagine.	40
	And they know that no one else knows then they really enjoy that and they get very involved in that.	41
R:	Well I think that just sounds like a wonderful place to start.	42
	With not launching into content, but just starting with concepts of 'evidence' and 'inquiry'.	43

Building Significance and Connections

The teachers give significance to student engagement in history connecting it to particular pedagogical approaches. They quickly suggest a range of teaching strategies in response to the researcher's question about what would be a good way to start the course: "objects…get them to try and figure out what it was used for" (line 3); "mystery objects" (line 4); "handling things" (line 6); "imagining themselves into a role" (line 6); "watching those kind of clips" (line 7); "little role plays" (line 8) and "medieval games" (line 8). Teacher 2 knows these activities are engaging "Because that's what you hear kids talking about later" (line 12). The shared construction of engagement as a significant factor in curriculum planning for these teachers is underscored in lines 14 and 16 when the researcher connects this conversation to the work at the beginning of the day (see Small Story 9). The researcher reminds the group "… we've just identified engagement as a big issue and if we haven't got that we haven't got…" and the teachers simultaneously finish the researcher's sentence with "Anything" (lines 14-16).

This small story also connects engagement to feeling positive about the subject at the outset of the course. As Teacher 2 explains at the beginning of the year, "…you really need something that is going to grab their attention so they are looking forward to things" (line 25). The engaging strategies the teachers suggest are represented in juxtaposition to other strategies. Teacher 2 gives the example of how students wanted to figure out what a picture was depicting by themselves, rather than the opposite didactic approach (lines 33-37). Teacher 3 concurs: "It's not as fun" (line 38). Implicit in the many references to engagement is an unchallenged assumption that engagement is linked to learning.

Building Identities and Relationships

The researcher, acting as a facilitator here, has asked two critical questions that drive this small story. The first is "What would be a good way to start?" (line 1). Teachers respond with suggested approaches that show they have many ideas about inquiry pedagogies for history. This leads the researcher to ask another question about how they might resolve their concerns about how to start the course: "So why don't you just start with what you know?" (line 13). The researcher proposes ways teachers could connect their ideas for engaging pedagogy to an historical framework, that is, by focussing on concepts of inquiry and evidence. Teacher 2 has made implicit references to an inquiry approach, offering examples such as: "try and figure out" (line 3),"trying to guess" (line 40),"work it out themselves" (line 36) and "trying to figure out what it is actually about" (line 35). The researcher shows how this is, in effect, working with the historical concepts of inquiry and evidence. The researcher begins to direct the group to a more explicit consideration of historical inquiry using the concepts 'evidence' and 'inquiry' (lines 21, 27 and 29) and explanations such as: "'What is this evidence, what can it tell me, what can I learn from it?'" (line 28). Teacher 2 takes up this idea and relates it to a practical example: "I'll put that [picture] up and they'll want to talk for 15 minutes. It's hands up in the air with them trying to figure out what it is actually about…And they want to try and work it out themselves" (lines 34-37). This shows how this community of practice, through collaborative discussion, is able to connect practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge to inform planning. The researcher's work to encourage the team is also evident in the show of confidence in the teachers' knowledge. The researcher affirms that the teachers' ideas are valid because they relate to historical concepts and encourages them to teach the way they want to (line 42). Through sharing and

integrating these knowledges they have developed an approach to introducing the course that aligns more closely with the teachers' goals.

Small Story 13 *Actually I think that is a really good idea*

Building Activity

The teachers have decided to make the first assessment instrument a folio of smaller tasks. After deciding on the details of Folio Task 1 writing in-role, the teachers turn to Folio Task 2. Their initial idea is for students to design a knight's 'coat of arms' with a justification of their choice of symbols, colours and so forth. One of the teachers has done a similar task before with students and has some resources. The extract focuses on two areas where there was a difference of opinion to be resolved: the validity of the task as an assessment instrument, and the degree of choice offered to students.

Table 16 Small Story 13

Sp.	**Small Story 13 *Actually I think that is a really good idea*** **Extracts from Planning Day 1, Session 3**	Line
T1:	I think it might also be good if they wrote maybe a small justification for why they chose –	1
T2:	They did that too [last time] – they had to justify their choices.	2
R:	So let's go back to those things we were trying to look for in the descriptors [standards].	3
	What will they be able to hit?	4
T3:	OK, I'm just looking at that now: 'Significance –	5
T1:	'– of individuals and groups'	6
R:	Knights – well how will that come through?	7
T2:	Hang on, how will that be clear?	8
T3:	Hmm, yes, well?	9
T1:	Well, within their justification they'd have to probably talk about what it is to be a	10

	knight.	
	Or maybe we'd give them something they actually have to explain, then knighthood –	11
T2:	Why it is important they have a coat of arms to represent them?	12
T3:	So why would they need a coat of arms?	13
T1:	Or how did it come about that they were knighted?	14
	And that way it would give them an opportunity to explain reasons for knighthood, significance of the role within society that sort of stuff.	15
T3:	Is that a going to fit well with the design stuff though?	16
	… (further discussion about how the creative element of the task might work)	
R:	I'm just not sure if you are getting a lot out of the activity for assessment.	17
	It is a good activity, but –	18
T3:	OK, if their justification is about how their coat of arms reflects their role in society –	19
R:	– As a knight.	20
T3:	As a knight – that's what the focus needs to be then.	21
	… (further conversation about how the task can provide more opportunities to demonstrate the achievement standard)	
T2:	Or they can even do why, they even do a justification or an explanation, of why as a knight they need a coat of arms and a serf doesn't – sort of thing.	22
	Why have a coat of arms at all?	23
T1:	Oh yeah.	24
T2:	Justifying their specific elements of –	25
T1:	– The significance of the mark.	26
T3	Actually I think that is a really good idea.	27
	So, why do they need a coat of arms in the first place?	28
	And how does their specific coat of arms represent them as a knight or represent their position in society?	29
	… (further discussion of what task guidelines might include)	
T1:	Again you are limiting.	30
	I understand giving a scaffold for the kids that you know will have these issues.	31
	We'll have kids who will go for it and would like to get into it.	32
T3:	Well maybe we should have the scaffold at a minimum –	33

T1:	– Available.	34
T3:	And if they want to add other things and take it further –	35
T1:	Because you need to give the opportunity for the higher end students to express a higher end understanding in each of these pieces of assessment as well.	36
	… (further discussion)	
T3:	X's worried about stifling their creativity.	37
T2:	We've got to remember that we've got limited time, and we want them to meet [the curriculum standards], they need –	38
	It's not art either.	39
T1:	I understand that as well, but I think about myself as a kid – as a Year 8 student.	40
T2:	Year 8s first go at history?	41
R:	But I think if you had a kid come up to you and say. 'X – I've got a really good idea for an –'	42
T3:	You'd say yeah, if they've got a reasonable justification of course they can.	43
T1:	That's what I'm saying,	44
	I don't want to be like this is their choice and this is only their choice.	45
	I want them to still be able to go outside the box.	46
	Because I know if we were to give this to this current cohort, I know that people like X for example, and X, and those sorts of boys will want to go –	47
	…(further discussion)	
R:	(Intervening) I reckon every teacher can make a call for each individual on that, can't they?	48
	Because you've already really clearly clarified we are not doing this as an art exercise.	49
	We are doing this so that they can, in a graphic way, represent their understanding of the knightly order.	50
T2:	The creation of the shield is only really about –	51
T1:	I'm saying for their significance and their position in society there are elements that they could find outside of the choices that we've given them that they may want to do.	52
T2:	Yeah, and they can do their own research and bring stuff in if they find that.	53
	But it's more about the role of knight at that point in time –	54

The group work through and resolve these two issues together. After some initial discussion of the 'coat of arms' idea, the researcher asks the teachers to consider what assessable elements of the curriculum they are aiming to assess: "So let's go back to those things we were trying to look for in the descriptors" (line 3). Teachers 3 and 1 nominate assessment of "Significance of individuals and groups" (lines 5 & 6). In response, the researcher asks how the task will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate this in line 7. A task design issue is constructed as teachers begin to express doubt in the construct validity of the task. Teacher 2 asks: "Hang on, how will that be clear?" (line 8) and Teacher 3 wonders, "Hmm, yes, well?" (line 9) and later asks: "Is that going to fit well with the design stuff though?" (line 16). Later in the small story after a lengthy consideration of how the task might work, the researcher expresses a concern with the task design (line 17). She is careful to explain that the activity itself is sound: "It is a good activity, but –" (line 18). The addition of the word 'but' with no further elaboration suggests doubt in the task achieving its purpose as an assessment instrument.

Once the issue is identified, each of the teachers suggests ways the task may be reframed so that it does assess the descriptor they have targeted. In this way the teachers share the construction of a solution. Teacher 1 suggests: "…they'd probably have to talk about what it is to be a knight" (line 10). Teacher 2 adds to this: "So, [the students would explain] why would they need a coat of arms" (line 13). After discussion, Teacher 3 summarises the decision they arrive at: "Actually I think that is a really good idea. So, why do they need a coat of arms in the first place? And how does their specific coat of arms represent them as a knight or represent their position in society?" (lines 27-29). At this point the teachers have found a resolution to the issue.

The construction of the second issue begins when Teacher 1 responds to the conversation about how the task will be organised by stating: "Again you are limiting" (line 30). For Teacher 1 the choices to be offered to students within the task are too narrow. While they understand that limited options may support some students, Teacher 1 reminds the group about the range of different learners they teach (line 36). Towards the end of this small story Teacher 3 reminds the group that Teacher 1's concern is unresolved (line 37). Teacher 2 offers practical reasons for offering limited choice: time, scope and that the focus is not on the art (lines 38-39). Teacher 1 counters by presenting a range of reasons for more choice related to the learners: "but I think about myself as a kid – as a Year 8 student" (line 40) and offers examples of particular students that Teachers 2 and 3 know who would benefit from a more open task (line 47). As the discussion continues, the researcher intervenes: "I reckon every teacher can make a call for each individual on that, can't they?" (line 47). The researcher then summarises the progress they have made (lines 49-50) which serves to enrol the teachers in the group decision.

Building Significance and Connections

As the group plan this assessment task significance is given to curriculum alignment and student choice. It is the researcher who makes the purpose of the assessment instrument significant and connected to the achievement standards of the curriculum (lines 3, 7, 17). The teachers have developed an idea for the assessment that past experience has been shown to be engaging, but the researcher encourages the teachers to consider how the assessment aligns with the curriculum. This leads the teachers to clarify for themselves that the task they are designing will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the targeted aspects of the curriculum achievement standard.

Teacher 1 brings attention to the issue of student choice. Two teachers favour a more pragmatic approach connecting limited choice to greater focus and therefore better demonstration of the achievement standards. The other teacher favours a more open task, connecting more choice to greater engagement and therefore more opportunity for students to "get into it" (line 32). In making their arguments regarding the degree of choice, teachers make reference to individual students they all know to explain their reasoning. Teacher 1 cites particular students to argue for more choice (line 47). Although not shown in this extract, Teacher 3 uses the example of another student to argue for fewer choices: "Can you imagine giving a task like this to (student) – [they'd] change [their] mind six times about which symbol [they] were choosing –" (Planning Day 1, Session 3).

Building Identities and Relationships

This small story shows how the group work through points of contention in a collegial way. The participants listen and respond to each other's standpoints and reasons and come to a shared understanding and resolution. The teachers listen to the researcher's reservations about task validity, offer their own reasons to support their views, and decide to go ahead with the task. In the second issue, where the teachers' opinions differ, they listen and respond to each other's arguments with respect, eventually agreeing on the non-negotiables that all will adhere to (related to the purpose of the task) and leave the decisions about the degree of choice to individual teachers.

This small story illuminates aspects of the researcher's advisory role. The researcher draws on her experience in assessment design to urge the teachers to clarify the purpose of the assessment. The researcher also recognises when an issue is taking too long to resolve and steps in to bring the issue of degree of choice to a close.

Acceptance into the group is necessary for the researcher to be privy to these more difficult conversations and to make contributions of this nature.

Small Story 14 *It's just the time thing*

Building Activity

During Planning Day 1 teachers made broad decisions about the topics they would teach from the curriculum options, the assessment plan they would implement to make judgements about the achievement standard, and began more detailed planning for the first unit and the first assessment task. This small story begins with the researcher noting, "We are nearly running out of time, urgent priorities?" (Planning Day 1, Session 3). In this extract the group reflect on, and build a shared understanding of, the nature of the planning work still to come. The teachers reiterate the challenges and clarify the values that are important to their planning. Through this small story the participants are jointly constructing a commitment to teach the curriculum content, in a way that prioritises student engagement and supports the development of historical skills.

Table 17 Small Story 14

Sp.	Small Story 14 *It's just the time thing* **Extract from Planning Day 1, Session 3**	Line
T3:	I think engagement shouldn't be [a problem].	1
T2:	Yeah but the whole PowerPoint thing and the comprehension sheet – they just get dead bored with it.	2
T3:	As long as we are covering those things.	3
T2:	Yeah but what I'm saying is do we have the time to do it in another way?	4
	Because the hands on and the group stuff and whatever takes its own toll in terms of time.	5
R:	Takes time.	6
T2:	That's the problem, that's what I'm most concerned about.	7
T3:	At the end of the day the most important thing is to get them engaged and build up their skills.	8
	Yes, I know we have to cover certain content, but I'm still at the end of the day more interested in them being interested.	9
	In an ideal world, yes we'll cover all this stuff.	10
R:	Even if you don't get all that done, I'd feel pretty confident that you've been very faithful to this curriculum.	11
	... (discussion of some topics omitted)	
T2:	It's just the time thing.	12
	Because I know how much the kids drag their feet even copying four sentences.	13
	"We have to copy all of that down?"	14
	So it's really being able to get any depth at all within content in a way that's engaging to them in a single lesson on a topic.	15
	Or even a lesson and a half or two lessons if we are lucky.	16
	As I said from the beginning, my biggest concern is time.	17
R:	Yep, absolutely.	18
T1:	Because we don't even know what we are going to do with Geography and stuff.	19
T2:	That's it as well, that's going through the same sort of pressure.	20
R:	And when you say time are you worried time for you to prepare all that or worried about time to do justice to all that?	21
T2:	Not even time to do justice to that [curriculum] but to keep them engaged and keep the variety there.	22

T1:	And making sure that we are actually giving them the information.	23
T2:	That it's worthwhile.	24
T1:	Yeah.	25
T2:	Because skimming across everything or constantly doing a bit of a PowerPoint and some comprehension is going to – just so – [boring].	26
R:	Mm and I think if you can think to yourself in this batch of lessons about – I don't know, the manor system, the church or feudalism – in this batch of lessons what is my key point that I'm trying to establish here.	27
	Which is about, I guess, society was shaped by these powerful influences.	28
	And keep that key idea right to the front of you mind when you are planning.	29
	That will help you sift what's important to focus on and what can I leave be.	30
T1:	Yeah.	31

Building Significance and Connections

The significance of active, inquiry pedagogies is connected to student engagement in learning. This is built by juxtaposing their preferred pedagogical approaches against more didactic approaches. For example, Teacher 2 observes: "Yeah but the whole PowerPoint thing and the comprehension sheet – they just get dead bored with it" (line 2). However, there is a dis-connect between the strategies they favour and the teaching time available. This constructs time as a significant problem in curriculum implementation. This connection is made primarily through Teacher 2's repetition of references to time as a concern (lines 4, 5, 12, 17 and 22). It is their main concern: "As I said from the beginning, my biggest concern is time" (line 17). Teacher 3 reconciles this tension between the curriculum to be implemented and the teaching time available by focusing on what is most important for them, skill development (line 8) and student engagement in learning: "Yes, I know we have to cover certain content, but I'm still at the end of the day more interested in them being interested" (line 9). Teacher 2 raises the issue of teachers' time to plan, reminding the

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group that issues of time are compounded by their involvement in other work trialling aspects of a new curriculum in Geography (line 19).

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story the teachers continue to construct their professional identities as learner-centred educators. All of the teachers acknowledge that the 'content' of the curriculum is important (Teacher 1, line 23; Teacher 2, line 24; Teacher 3, line 8) reflecting their professional commitment to the task of implementing this curriculum. They also strongly assert a professional responsibility to deliver the curriculum in a way that suits their learners, which is the source of their concern with time in this small story. The researcher expresses empathy with the teachers juggling these dual professional concerns and offers encouragement (line 11) and some advice (lines 27-30).

Small Story 15 *So we ended up doing the recount*

Building Activity

During Planning Day 1 teachers were planning for an unknown group of students, by Planning Day 2 (at the end of the first term) the teachers knew their students well and had completed one summative assessment instrument. In this small story from the beginning of the second planning day, the teachers explain to the researcher a change to their original assessment plan. They had planned a series of small folio items for the first assessment but decided to take more time to do just one task well. Later in the morning Teacher 2 explained their reasoning was to develop, "…something that's going to keep them interested I suppose and not try and overwhelm them too much because they are already – a few of them were semi-having breakdowns about the idea of having assessments in all these different subjects

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and things and getting very panicked about it all" (Planning Day 2, Session 1).
Although teachers had hoped a number of small tasks would be a supportive start to
secondary school, students perceived it differently. In this small story teachers share
their reflections with the researcher and build their own positive story about the first
assessment task.

Table 18 Small Story 15

Sp.	Small story 15 *So we ended up doing the recou*nt **Extract from Planning Day 2, Session 1**	Line
T2:	So we ended up doing the recount but we actually ended up doing two.	1
	So we did it from the perspective of the noble and the perspective of the serf.	2
	Basically it was a day in the life – they talked about events.	3
	So they were trying to use their history terminology and so forth.	4
	Some of them used the same event – I use the event loosely – jousting competition or whatever they've chosen, to talk about how they were different from those different classes.	5
R:	Oh OK, that's perspectives.	6
T2:	Yes perspectives, but they were pretending they were the person.	7
	So we had to really push home it's not the story so much as the language you're using and showing you understand what life was actually like in those times for those people in those times and how they were different [for different social groups].	8
T1:	I had some kids go a bit overboard naming their horses Lightning and travelling off into the sunset!	9
	Had to bring it back cause they had like 500 words.	10
R:	So they wrote what, each one was about 150 words?	11
T2:	Well they were 300 words in the end.	12
	Most of them wrote more than that.	13
T1:	We were actually quite surprised.	14
R:	That's quite an achievement.	15
T2:	My weak kids didn't write anything like that of course but a lot of them did write quite a lot.	16
T1:	I think we set it at 150 or 200 originally.	17

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T2:	150 – 200 but the thing was we looked at the criteria and looked at what the kids had actually written at that length and went, well can they actually achieve an A if we are limiting them to that.	18
	So I don't think we changed the minimum but we increased the maximum to 300 but even then we had some –	19

Building Significance and Connections

In this small story teachers give significance to, and connect, student engagement and the assessable elements of the curriculum. As Teacher 2 explained they developed this in-role recount task as "something that's going to keep them interested" (Planning Day 1, Session 1). The focus on "pretending they were the person" (line 7) suggests trying to make the task more meaningful to students. Teacher 1's description of the length of some students' responses points to student engagement with the task: "I had some kids go a bit overboard…" (line 9). The metaphor 'going overboard' suggests students enjoyed the task so much they needed to be 'brought back' to the curriculum focus, with a more succinct response. The use of the metaphor highlights the teacher's dual focus on engagement and the assessable elements of the task. The teachers also gave significance to the historical concepts in the curriculum. Teacher 2's way of explaining the task to students: "…showing you understand what life was actually like in those times for those people in those times and how they were different" (line 8) required students to use empathy. Asking students to write two recounts about the same event, as characters from two different feudal social classes, encouraged students to think about different perspectives (line 2).

This small story also connects engagement in assessment with student effort and achievement. Both teachers comment positively on the length of student responses (lines 9-10, 12-13 and 16). Teacher 1 recalls, "We were actually quite

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surprised" (line 14). This connects to concerns with student literacy levels identified on the first planning day. The teachers' focus on length is not an argument that longer responses are necessarily better. Rather, the teachers emphasise how the students enjoyed the task and, consequently, were able to fulfil or exceed the requirements of the assessment. Teacher 2 indicates this when explaining the decision to increase the maximum word limit, reasoning that in a creative task of this nature it was difficult to demonstrate an A-standard response in only 150-200 words (line 18).

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story the teachers enact identities as reflective practitioners and the researcher encourages this reflection and willingness to change plans in the light of new information (line 15). She adds to this in later comments during the second planning day, for example, "But I think that first assessment task you did sounds really successful and really good thinking on your feet actually – hang on let's do one thing well if we can't realistically make that other idea work" (Planning Day 2, Session 2).

Small Story 16 *You could look at something more cultural*

Building Activity

The teachers, after auditing what has been taught to date and what they plan for future learning, have identified the content descriptor "continuity and change in society in ONE of the following areas: crime and punishment; military and defence systems; towns, cities and commerce" (ACARA, 2013b, Year 8, ACDSEH051) for a research task where students will choose one of these areas as a focus. However, the teachers believe students are not likely to be interested in researching towns, cities and commerce. In this small story the group construct and resolve a concern about

topic choice. This extract, from the longer small story, highlights two key sub-activities: exploring and then rejecting a suggestion for an alternative topic, and seeking more information to make a decision.

Table 19 Small Story 16

Sp.	**Small Story 16** *You could look at something more cultural* **Extracts from Planning Day 2, Session 2**	Line
T1:	Where you could look at something more cultural like music and writing and literature and architecture, buildings and art – that sort of thing.	1
	….	
T2:	Yeah I only want three topics.	2
T1:	That's what I'm saying – this is the third one that replaces this one so we've got military and defence systems, we've got crime and punishment and we've got one –	3
R:	That is more arts and architecture?	4
T1:	Or something like that, that girls that don't want to look at blood and death –	5
	Or the boys even that don't want to do blood and death, cause I'm quite sure there might be some.	6
	…	
T2:	Yeah and I think, you know, the girls, military and defence thing's probably not going to attract any of the girls but crime and punishment is still pretty interesting regardless.	7
T1:	But it's still very, very violent.	8
T2:	It is but we are looking at medieval times and it is violent.	9
T1:	We are catering them to be biased because everything that we are pointing them to is one sided that this is just the period of violence and death – they don't see anything else.	10
	…	
T2:	I get that the art and culture would be interesting and I'd probably find it more, well actually crime and punishment is pretty interesting.	11
	The problem being I don't know how well it's going to fit into, [the curriculum descriptor] or how easy it's going to be for them to notice continuity and change.	12
	… (further discussion)	
T1:	Well I suppose if we stick with this topic [towns, cities and commerce] what sort of things can we look at now?	13

	What sort of things can we pull out, towns, cities and commerce –	14
	If we were doing that we could look at the churches possibly?	15
T2:	Look at how things were handmade like very, very individualised?	16
	…	
R:	Well I think it would be about what life was like in the towns.	17
	How it was so disease ridden and crowded and –	18
T1:	What about technology – would technology fall under towns, cities, commerce?	19
T2:	In terms of transportation and things?	20
R:	I think probably with commerce it would be about how they organised the trades around guilds –	21
T2:	That might be interesting.	22
T1:	Guild systems might be interesting.	23
	…	
T2:	And then how does that change during the medieval period?	24
R:	I think that was the growth of medieval towns and cities, they grew and became more important.	25
	And commerce became more and more lucrative.	26
	And the tie with the land sort of loosened.	27
	[Before] It was all about the land and your wealth was in your land.	28
T2:	Yeah and the serfs didn't have [any].	29
R:	But some people began to get rich from commerce.	30
	And the Crusades opened up trade routes and demand for new goods …	31

Teacher 1 initiates both the suggestion of an alternative topic, and a return to thinking further about the original topic option. Firstly, Teacher 1 proposes "something more cultural" (line 1). They offer their reasons for the suggestion: that the other two topics (crime and punishment and military and defence) both have a focus on violence (lines 5-6). They argue this is unlikely to interest some students and note that gender may be a consideration (lines 5-6). They add that the two existing

topics provide a distorted view of the past: "…that this is just the period of violence and death – they don't see anything else" (line 10). Teacher 2 acknowledges the other teacher's arguments in lines 7 and 11, but raises a counter argument that the suggested topic may not align well with the particular curriculum descriptor and may be difficult for students: "I don't know how well it's going to fit into [the curriculum descriptor], or how easy it's going to be for them to notice continuity and change" (line 12).

After further discussion, Teacher 1 suggests that they reconsider the towns, cities and commerce topic, "to see what sort of things we can look at" (line 13). Initially, both teachers wonder if they can fit some cultural ideas they have been discussing into this topic (lines 15-16). When the researcher suggests a few aspects of towns, cities and commerce in medieval Europe that may be relevant (line 17-18 & 21), the teachers feel there could be some student interest in this topic (lines 22-23). Teacher 2 again checks that students will be able to identify the concept of continuity and change with this topic (line 24) and the researcher offers a few examples of this (lines 25-28 & lines 30-31). The teachers resolve their concern after they do a little more research and decide that this is a topic that they can interest students in (Planning Day 2, Session 2). Although they ended up back at the original proposition, the time taken to interrogate an idea, collect more information and work through their concerns, helped teachers clarify their understanding of the curriculum.

Building Significance and Connections

The connection teachers make between topic choice and student engagement in assessment drives this discussion. The teachers seek to provide options that will allow all students to find a topic that sustains their interest over a number of weeks. Their concern about topic choice is only resolved when the teachers have determined towns, cities and commerce will interest some students.

The organisational features of the curriculum content are made significant as teachers seek to develop a task around a curriculum descriptor that links one concept (continuity and change) to specified subject matter (crime and punishment, military and defence systems, and towns, cities and commerce). Teacher 2 twice brings attention back to the descriptor in this extract, particularly concerned to ensure that students will be able to observe continuity and change (lines 12 & 24). When they cannot reconcile the idea for a more cultural topic with the targeted curriculum descriptor, Teacher 1 turns the discussion to thinking again about the potential of the towns, cities and commerce topic.

Building Identities and Relationships

In this small story teachers are enacting professional identities as educators seeking to implement the curriculum in a way that engages and supports learners. A collegial relationship is built as the group work through and resolve a concern about topic choices. To do this, the group accept the suggestion of Teacher 1 for consideration and take some time exploring it. They listen to, acknowledge, and respond to each other's arguments and collaboratively assemble more information to support their final decision. In the latter part of this extract from the small story, the researcher is taking up a role as an experienced colleague contributing some additional knowledge to the decision-making task (lines 17-18, 25-28 & 30-31). These teachers are able to resolve a concern through effective processes; however, what they did need was the time to do this.

Small Story 17 *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step*

Building Activity

This small story builds a commitment, and plan, to model the inquiry process the students will engage in with the upcoming research task. The teachers have decided to conduct a 'mini-inquiry' for another of the curriculum content descriptors prior to introducing the research task students will be assessed on. They plan to present an inquiry question, study two or three sources closely together as a class, practice evaluating the sources and taking notes and develop a short response to the inquiry question.

Table 20 Small Story 17

Sp.	Small Story 17 *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step* **Extract from Planning Day 2, Session 3**	Line
T1:	We could even have our own hypothesis and go through the whole thing.	1
R:	Well you could have an answer to the question couldn't you?	2
T1:	Yeah.	3
R:	With a little bit of proof, like a topic sentence with a little bit of proof.	4
T2:	Is that to show them or construct with them?	5
T1:	Show them?	6
R:	Either with or show.	7
T1:	Like a little bit of both maybe – we show them what a hypothesis is, how we formed the hypothesis for it.	8
R:	Or even if don't call it that yet, just call it our answer to our question.	9
T1:	Yep.	10
T2:	Oh OK.	11
R:	'We had a question, we went and looked at a source of evidence and now we've got	12

	an answer based on that evidence.'	
T2:	– 'But one's not enough we are going to look at another piece of evidence to help us.'	13
T1:	So break it down as to how we've done it.	14
T2:	And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step, basic, basic, basic.	15

In this extract from the longer small story, the teachers and the researcher build on the suggestion of Teacher 1: "We could even have our own hypothesis and go through the whole thing" (line 1). The expression 'the whole thing' alludes to the steps in the research process, a reference all the participants in the planning day understand. The researcher reminds the teachers that they have started with a question so it would make sense to answer it (line 2). She mentions incorporating use of evidence in line 4. Teacher 1 makes contributions in lines 8 and lines 14 and Teacher 2 in line 13. The participants also trial what explanations would 'sound like' in the classroom to describe and test their ideas. For example in line 12 the researcher adopts the role of a teacher in the classroom: "'We had a question, we went and looked at a source of evidence and now we've got an answer based on that evidence'" (line 12). Teacher 2 builds on this example, imaging how they would explain the next step: "'But one's not enough we are going to look at another piece of evidence to help us'" (line 13).

Building Significance and Connections

The small story shows the value teachers place on historical skills and the merit they see in modelling as a strategy to develop students' awareness of how a number of historical skills fit together in an inquiry process. Modelling here means both explicitly showing students how to, for example, use a historical source as evidence to support an assertion and encouraging students to participate in co-

constructing responses as a whole class. The teachers use 'show' and 'construct' as shorthand for this idea (lines 5-8). Here the group specifically talk about hypothesis development but they also discussed how they might model developing questions, evaluating sources, taking notes and writing a paragraph.

These teachers also value scaffolding as a strategy to incrementally build students' historical skills. In this small story the group imply a causal connection between breaking larger processes down into steps and conceptual and skill development (lines 8 and 14). Teacher 2 emphasises the need to work slowly and carefully through the steps they plan out: "And we just need to make sure we are doing is step-by-step, basic, basic, basic" (line 15). The use of repetition and the rhythm in line 15: "basic, basic, basic" emphasises the need to support students by gradually and steadily building up understanding one step at a time. The researcher also holds this view of a supportive and gradual approach to skill development, with the suggestion that teachers could initially defer the use of the term hypothesis and focus on conceptual understanding: "just call it our answer to our question" (line 9).

Building Identities and Relationships

This small story illustrates the way this group is able to build on each other's suggestions to make plans about pedagogical approaches. Here they are already in general agreement, but remind each other of their priorities. For example, Teacher 1 emphasises breaking tasks down and explicit modelling in line 14 and Teacher 1 emphasises supporting students through a scaffolded step-by-step process in line 15. By stating what they value before moving on, the teachers solidify their expectations of each other. The researcher here works as one of the team, contributing suggestions.

<center>**Small Story 18** *They are struggling with that part of it*</center>

Building Activity

This small story, from the first session of Planning Day 3, begins with reflection as the researcher asks teachers what successes they have had in the last term. Prior to this Teacher 1 has talked about the challenge of teaching a class where a large proportion needed extra support: "Like two thirds of my class would have – they need a lot more. They are babies even still" (Planning Day 3, Session 1). The use of the metaphor of "babies" (above, Planning Day 3, Session 1) explains their view that students are still at the beginning of their learning in history. Adding "even still" indicates that the teacher feels they have not accomplished all they had hoped for by this stage of the course. Although initially reluctant to reflect on progress, with encouragement from Teacher 2 ("But you still have achievements…" , Planning Day 3, Session 1) and a little prompting from the researcher, the teacher begins to suggest some of the things students are now able to do. The teacher avoids making too great a claim to progress, qualifying statements with "some of them" (line 5). Gradually Teacher 1's responses become less tentative and they use the pronoun "they" more inclusively (lines 13, 17 and 21) suggesting that the whole class has developed a particular level in the use of historical sources.

Table 21 Small Story 18

Sp.	**Small Story 18** *They are struggling with that part of it* **Extract from Planning Day 3, Session 1**	Line
T1:	Well some of them can tell me what a source is, and some of them can identify the difference between primary and secondary sources.	1
	There's one or two that are really into history but those kids will be moved up to a higher group.	2
	They've got interest because their family is interested in it – Grandpa talks about it – so they're quite enthusiastic.	3

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	You know one of the boys can talk through the sources really quite well for someone his age.	4
	His literacy is not very high but he's got more of a historic way of looking at things.	5
	Yeah I guess that's the size of my guys in history.	6
R:	That actually sounds like they know that there are such things as historical sources that you get information from, and you [they] can do it sometimes, but not always.	7
T1:	Yeah they struggle to get the information out of the source.	8
	They can describe pictures.	9
R:	Well that's part of it, that's something.	10
T1:	They can describe some pictures.	11
	I know the crime and punishment – most of my kids did that luckily – I know the crime and punishment students haven't struggled too much with looking [at] how it's changed, comparing it to today cause it's, you know, so different.	12
	And they can identify that it was very violent then.	13
	That's the main judgment that they've made that it's violent and it is better now.	14
	But them using source evidence to support – that is tricky.	15
	They can sort of do both, but they can't put them together.	16
	So they can describe the picture and tell me it's violent but they can't have a sentence saying "It was very violent during …"	17
	They are struggling with that part of it.	18

Building Significance and Connection

This small story gives significance to mastery of historical skills and concepts as markers of student progress in history. This teacher shows a strong awareness of the concepts and skills they are trying to develop in history and what students are able to do. They reflect that students are able to explain what a historical source is and can identify the difference between primary and secondary sources (line 1). Students can recognise and understand the purpose of a historical source, and they can develop an interpretation of a source, especially a visual source – but they cannot yet *use* historical evidence: "They can sort of do both, but they can't put them together" (line

16). They explain using an example from the topic of 'crime and punishment' where students can "describe" (line 17) what is happening in a picture interpreting the source, and they can express an opinion (line 17), but they can't express in writing how the source has led them to that conclusion (line 17).

In this small story Teacher 1 makes a connection between literacy and achievement in history. The teacher gives an explicit example of a student who has "more of a historic way of looking at things" (line 5) and "can talk through the sources really quite well for someone his age" (line 4), but a lower level of literacy, it is implied, has impeded his ability to express this historical thinking in a conventional written format (lines 4-5). The teacher notes students can interpret visual sources (line 13) suggesting that interpreting written information is the main challenge. The teacher's reference to sentences in line 21 further implies that some students struggle to express their ideas in writing.

Building Identities and Relationships

A concern for student progress in acquisition of historical skills shows this teacher enacting a professional identity that takes up responsibility for curriculum implementation with a strong focus on their learners. However, here Teacher 1 shows they are somewhat discouraged by slow progress (line 6). The researcher also aims to offer encouragement by a focus on small gains: "That actually sounds to me like they know that there are such things as historical sources, that you get information from…" (line 7) and "well that's part of it…" (line 10). Emphasising her outsider perspective – signalled by "that actually sounds like…" (line 7) – allows the researcher to affirm that the students are making progress. This small story shows that at this moment the teacher is facing challenges in their curriculum implementation

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work. However, they demonstrated resilience and persistence; the same teacher later

emailed the researcher showing great pride in their students' achievements:

> I thought I'd send you a link to our homepage which has a photo and
> blurb about the last AC History Unit we completed. The kids in my
> group were very enthusiastic and I was extremely pleased with their
> efforts, enthusiasm and results. (Email, end Term 3)

Small Story 19 *The questions were a big issue*

Building Activity

This small story constructs a shared understanding about an aspect of practice

– making judgements about an aspect of assessment. As teachers recount how some

students needed significant levels of support to develop appropriate historical

questions for a research task while others accomplished it independently (lines 1-7,

15-16 and 24-25), they build a concern about how to grade this aspect of student

work. Teacher 2 explains their difficulty knowing how to make a fair judgement when

students' final questions look very similar, but the degree of support has varied (lines

8-9, 11 and 13). These concerns are eased as the researcher offers teachers some

practical advice (lines 26 and 27-28), and some reassurance and encouragement (lines

17-20, 31-32 and 34-36).

Table 22 Small Story 19

Sp.	Small Story 19 *The questions were a big issue* **Extract from Planning Day 3, Session 1**	Line
T2:	The questions were a big issue.	1
	…	
T1:	Yeah, so in the end what it ended up for me, for my guys anyway, was circling the key words.	2
R:	And then make a question?	3

T1:	Yeah and making a question – and some of them could do that.	4
	A lot of them couldn't even do that.	5
	So then what I did, I actually gave them, 'So is it a how or a why question?'.	6
	So then we would select and then, towards the end, it was essentially me writing the first three words and then together working out, 'Well which of these words are we going to include?'	7
	…	
T2:	My problem with the questions is marking that, although the process may have been different.	8
	Like if they needed the extra help, if they ended up in the same place and it looks the same to them if they go through their research booklets.	9
R:	They'll think they've all got the same.	10
T2:	Yeah, 'But you got an A but your questions are the same as mine but I've got a C do you know what I mean?' in their heads – [they should get the same grade for that element].	11
R:	Yeah it's the evidence, the concrete evidence that you've got in front of you, might not look too different.	12
T2:	So when I was marking it last night that's what I had difficulty with because yes, you may give them extra guidance, but as students they think that's your job in the class.	13
	They shouldn't be punished for asking for a little bit of assistance, or a little bit of help – that's my fear.	14
	…	
T1:	We've given them a starter, and then we've identified –	15
	And we've given them statements, we've circled the key words, which words need to be in there.	16
	…	
R:	And that's perfect that – the way you structured that and scaffolded that.	17
	You've really taught your students about what our questions are for – to drive our research.	18
	And you've taught them in very minute detail *how* we develop an appropriate question.	19
	I think that's brilliant.	20
T1:	Good. (relieved)	21
	…	
R:	… that's what you're expressing X (Teacher 2) a difficulty, how do I tell the Bs from Cs from As I think?	22

T2:	Yep, because in my head I know that X is a straight A student.	23
	She's amazing and I know she did that completely independently.	24
	I was like that's awesome X, that's well done.	25
R:	Well why don't you write on there [on matrix] 'Independently developed, well done'?	26
	…	
	And there's two types of evidence – there's direct evidence and indirect evidence.	27
	The indirect evidence is your teacher observations, so you just write that on, you annotate the task sheet.	28
	…	
T2:	I think Grade 8s, even if they are not doing very well, if we are fostering a love of history in them, if they are at least interested enough in the topic, that's a success.	29
	…	
T1:	But I also don't want to compromise professionally what I think that I'm required to do either.	30
R:	I think if you've had a conversation about these standards with colleagues and you've gone 'that is the D, that doesn't describe what they've done, that [C] describes what they've done, and albeit with a lot of teaching, that's OK because that's my job to do that' – and you did that.	31
	What that sounds like to me is you've actually accomplished so much with that group.	32
T2:	Yeah, no, I agree.	33
R:	That's what I'm hearing as an outsider just hearing about it.	34
	I don't hear, 'Oh they couldn't do it' or anything.	35
	I hear, 'With a lot of support and help and guidance and teaching, we all got there'.	36
T1:	Most did.	37
T2:	Yeah.	38

Building significance and Connections

These teachers give significance to the skill of writing historical research questions, as part of a wider process of historical inquiry. Writing research questions was a difficult skill to teach; as Teacher 2 explained, "The questions were a big issue" (line 1). Teacher 1 describes for the researcher how some students needed explicit

scaffolds, for example: "And we've given them statements, we've circled the key words, which words need to be in there" (line 16). The teacher found some students required very individualised support as described in lines 6-7. However, the teachers persisted with teaching this skill until the majority of students had developed research questions to guide their inquiry (line 37).

In this small story a connection, and a tension for these teachers, is constructed between teaching and learning, and assessment. The teachers worked to support all learners to develop the skill of writing research questions, yet the teachers express concerns about grading this work because of the varying levels of support offered to students and the possible impact of grading on student motivation. This professional tension for Teacher 1 is most evident in line 30 when they comment: "But I also don't want to compromise professionally what I think that I'm required to do either" (line 30). Teacher 2 also experiences a tension between their two professional duties to teach and assess. They want to encourage students to ask for help when they are learning a skill but fear students will not bother to ask if this means they will get a poor result: "…yes, you may give them extra guidance, but as students they think that's your job in the class. They shouldn't be punished for asking for a little bit of assistance, or a little bit of help – that's my fear" (lines 13-14). The impact of grading assessment on future student motivation and learning is an important consideration for Teacher 2: "I think Grade 8s, even if they are not doing very well, if we are fostering a love of history in them, if they are at least interested enough in the topic, that's a success" (line 29).

Building Identities and Relationships

The two concerns of teachers – how to fulfil a professional responsibility to make accurate judgements about student achievement, and concern for the impact of

assessment judgements on students' motivation and learning – show teachers enacting learner-centred professional identities.

This small story also shows the advisory and support dimensions of the researcher-participant relationship under construction. The researcher uses her experience to reassure teachers and ease this tension between teaching and learning, and assessment. Firstly, she offers some practical advice to appropriately acknowledge those students who have developed questions with a high degree of independence (lines 26-28). The researcher explains that teacher observations can be a valid form of supplementary evidence (lines 27-28). Secondly, the researcher places value on the teaching and learning that has occurred, commending and encouraging the teachers. She describes how important their teaching is to students' more long-term development in history: "You've really taught your students about what our questions are for – to drive our research. And you've taught them in very minute detail *how* we develop an appropriate question. I think that's brilliant" (lines 18-20). The researcher explicitly offers an outsider's perspective (line 34) to reassure teachers: "I don't hear 'Oh they couldn't do it' or anything. I hear, 'With a lot of support and help and guidance and teaching, we all got there'" (lines 35-36). The use of the inclusive pronouns 'our' and 'we' in lines 18-19 suggests the teachers are inducting students into the discipline of history. Teacher 1 responds to this feedback with relief: "Good" (line 21).

Small Story 20 *We had our medieval games day!*

Building Activity

In this small story the teachers, with much laughing, recount for the researcher their medieval games day held the previous morning. Teachers had originally planned

a medieval fair but were unable to fit this in due to the extra time required to finish

the research task. However, teachers were determined to ensure the students had an

event to celebrate their learning. Here the teachers use the recount genre to build a

shared story of an enjoyable morning for staff and students.

Table 23 Small Story 20

Sp.	Small story 20 *We had our medieval games day!* **Extract from Planning Day 3, Session 2**	Line
T1:	Yesterday we had our medieval games day!	1
R:	Oh games day, oh good call! (laughing)	2
T1:	Because we had such little time and we had to extend their due date until 9 am yesterday, so we had the games lesson.	3
	And they had like chess and checkers and things in the library with X (teacher) and a couple still working on their assessment.	4
	And X (teacher) did a prisoner and base.	5
	Cause we just went to a website and came up with all these medieval games.	6
R:	Oh that's cool.	7
T1:	And bocce – the ball –	8
R:	Yeah.	9
T1:	Then I did marbles, hopscotch, ring-a-rosy and um quoits.	10
R:	Ring-a-rosy!	11
T1:	They actually did! (all laughing)	12
	Even one of the naughtiest boys in the year he held hands and they actually played ring-a-ring-a-rosy!	13
	And they really got into the marbles I found.	14
	And quoits was very popular – but probably the most poorly behaved station (laughing) – because we've didn't have the proper quoits either, we had hula hoops.	15
R:	Oh yeah!	16
T1:	They are throwing it over and the kids are going (miming and all laughing) and jumping!	17
R:	Oh I'm glad you had fun - that sounds good.	18
T1:	They did – and then we finished with tug-o-war and we had class versus class.	19

T2:	My class was terrible. (all laughing)	20
T1:	My class won!	21
	But that's cause they are all the rough, little, less academic students.	22
T2:	I was just like – of course I'm the weakest person ever I can totally match and my kids we're like weaklings. (all laughing)	23
R:	So that sort of brought the whole year level together.	24
T1:	Yeah, and then the girls versus boys was the last thing that we did.	25
	And X (teacher) ran down, so it's like 'Help X (teacher)!' because we were losing.	26
	And I thought we'd lost twice, and then suddenly we just managed – I don't know what happened – I think someone fell over on the boys' side or something.	27

Building Significance and Connections

This small story gives significance to fun and celebration in learning. When the researcher says "…I'm glad you had fun…" (line 18), Teacher 1 replies, "They did" (line 19) indicating that for them the purpose of the event was for students to have fun. However, the enthusiastic tone of the recount and the frequent laughter throughout indicate that the teachers have also had fun. Time and assessment, although only mentioned briefly, are also made significant as the reasons the teachers changed their original more elaborate plans: "We had such little time and we had to extend their due date [for the assignment]" (line 3).

Building Identities and Relationships

Teachers take up identities as learner-centred educators and this small story gives an insight into the relationships teachers have built with their students over the semester. Teachers identify with their classes (lines 20 and 21) and have enjoyed the inter-class rivalry of the tug-o-war (lines 19-27). The activity has also served to connect the whole year level as students of history and involved other teachers (lines 25-27). The researcher is also affirming the teachers' professionalism and

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acknowledging their decisions. For example, when the researcher says "good call" (line 2), she is commending the teachers on their ability to strategise around the time constraints. In line 7 the researcher acknowledges their resourcefulness in coming up with their games. Her comment: "So that sort of brought the whole year level together" (line 24) offers another rationale for including the 'games day' as a celebration of learning.

Small Story 21 *You think they'll just get stuck?*

Building Activity

In this small story the teachers construct an assessment instrument that provides opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do and proactively plan to support the development of literacy in history. The teachers find a sample test provided by their state education department to be a very useful resource, but make some changes to accommodate the literacy levels of some students. As Teacher 4 explains, "I think it's a good place to start and you can edit" (Planning Day 3, Session 3). The series of short extracts in the small story below show some of the ways teachers plan to adapt the test, while retaining the validity of the assessment, and supporting literacy learning in the history classroom.

Table 24 Small Story 21

Sp.	**Small Story 21 *You think they'll just get stuck?*** **Extract from Planning Day 3, Session 3**	Line
	Extract 1 – Attention to curriculum alignment and vocabulary development	
T1:	So they should be able to get, you know, China's relationship with Mongolia and why that's going to –	1

T4:	Well presumably you'd have to teach that as part of the unit about Mongols.	2
T1:	Yeah, I'm not suggesting that we just give it to them [the test] we haven't spoken about it, that would be a bit – (all laughing)	3
T4:	I'm just saying it would be a natural thing to cover as part of the unit about the expansion of the Mongols.	4
T1:	Yeah, as long as we are using that wording isn't it really –'origins' and also 'purpose' that's the other word isn't it 'purpose'.	5
	Extract 2 – Breaking down complex task instructions	
T1:	Can you imagine trying to process all that [multistep task instruction]	6
T4:	No it's way [too much] but it's –	7
T1:	The intent's good.	8
R:	It's definitely what you want.	9
T1:	It's just a way of laying that out so it's not 5 things [instructions] they've got to try and remember.	10
T4:	Well see I would actually break it down into three smaller questions.	11
R:	Into several questions - yeah.	12
T4:	Yeah, but the intent is good.	13
	Extract 3 – Presentation of source material	
T1:	… so here what they are doing is again they are referring [back] to these sources.	14
	So we'll have to put the sources back here again because it's too much for them to go back to where source 1 and source 2 [are] when these are images.	15
	So they'd just write Image 1 is Source 1 I think unless you had the source with it.	16
T4:	What was the –?	17
T1:	So here they've got refer to Source 2 here, so we'd have to have it down –	18
T4:	Oh yeah – oh well I'd have a separate source sheet so that can have the source sheet sitting in front of them all the time.	19
T2:	Yeah.	20
R:	And their paper.	21

T4:	So you'd have source sheet and a question sheet.	22
T1:	But we'd still have to have it here though because they have to write under it.	23
	So we just have double up of that wouldn't we, just have a double up.	24
	Extract 4 – Adjusting task, without changing cognitive demand	
T4:	So, 'Which picture matches source 2'?	25
R:	Well, probably 'is the closest match', because none of them's going to be perfect.	26
T1:	Yeah.	27
R:	I suppose it's trying to get to that idea that these are all artists' impressions, where do artists get their impressions from.	28
T1:	Mm.	29
R:	Well they choose which historical sources they bother to listen to or they completely make it up, which makes it more ridiculous.	30
T1:	And it's not as explicit too, so that will be good for them [a challenge], it's implied.	31
	'Cruel' or whatever else, so this looks like he's wearing military type head gear and his face looks quite angry.	32
	Extract 5 – Simplifying response format	
T4:	If you want to provide an example [in the task instructions] – I probably wouldn't.	33
T1:	Oh cause you think they'll just get stuck?	34
T4:	I would do an example in class but I wouldn't provide an example on the exam.	35
	I would give them uniting the warring Mongol tribes, established an empire, created the great Yassa Law and get them to pick two –	36
R:	The way that it's set out might be what's troubling you more than anything else.	37
	If that was just a list – these are five achievements of Genghis Khan, explain why they are significant – or explain one or two.	38
T4:	Yeah and don't have the table.	39
R:	It's the table that's troubling you more than anything because you are thinking I'll have to teach them to do this table [format] before the test.	40
T4:	So don't do the table.	41

T1:	OK – format. (writing notes)	42
R:	Really all it's doing is saying, [is] give students the opportunity to explain the significance of five things.	43
	Whereas you're thinking if they just explain the significance of one that will tell me what they know.	44
T4:	Alright in my head the question is going to read: 'Genghis Khan was the most significant leader of the Mongols in the 13th century. Pick two of the achievements below and explain why they are significant.'	45
	Extract 6 – Deleting non-essential writing	
R:	Oh that's just copying it out?	46
T1:	It is, and all they are just trying to do is see categorised positive and negative.	47
R:	But they are categorising by putting a P and an N on it.	48
T1:	But I guess if you were doing [that] then a balance, is there more positive or more negative.	49
R:	Mm. (agreeing)	50
T1:	That's just starting to step them in that direction but I don't think they need to do that.	51
T4:	I don't think they need to.	52
R:	– to still be seeing patterns and categorising.	53
	So they don't have to do the labour of it but they still show you the understanding.	54
	Extract 7 – Explicit teaching of literacy in history	
T1:	And the stuff about the horse and the bow and arrow, that's going to be something that they will take note of as well.	55
	Especially if we can get some nice footage and things.	56
R:	And you'll have the videos, yeah.	57
	Re-enactments and stuff.	58
	And all of that is certainly what's in your textbook.	59
	I think some of those literacy lessons, some of these readings in here might be a good focus for that literacy lesson you are going to do.	60
	Some of this textbook reading you could do – (showing page)	61

T1:	Mm, comprehension.	62
R:	– a really close study of a little section of this.	63
	Some of it, you'll find the language is a bit [challenging].	64
T1:	You could even do what X (teacher) was saying with note-taking, to do some practice with note taking and putting things into your own words	65
	And we could even do some writing class notes.	66
	I did it last term with these guys – 'So how would we write that?' and then we write a sentence on the board together.	67
	And then we end up writing a paragraph which ends up longer than it should be for a paragraph because they keep wanting to yell things out for extra examples and things – we've got to put all of these in.	68
R:	But as soon as they've finished that literacy lesson they've also learned about how he united the tribes.	69
T1:	Yeah, cause you can discuss it as you go along, as long as you can keep their focus – if they are engaged enough to be focused while you are doing that.	70
R:	Yeah.	71

In Extract 1 Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 remind each other that they need to ensure the curriculum and assessment align so that students are able to interpret a particular source effectively (lines 1-3). They also point to the need to build students discipline-specific literacies by ensuring they use the terms 'origin' and 'purpose' in their teaching (line 5).

In Extract 2 teachers decide to make a small change to the wording of the question to support students with lower levels of literacy. Teacher 2 observes that one multi-step instruction will be difficult for some of their students to interpret: "Can you imagine trying to process all that?" (line 6). All of the group affirm the value of the question (lines 8, 9 and 13) but Teacher 2 is concerned to find "a way of laying that out so that it's not 5 things [instructions] they've got to remember" (line 10). They decide to break the instruction in a series of separate questions each with a space for a response (line 11).

In Extract 3, the importance of layout is again highlighted with teachers believing that asking students with lower levels of literacy to scan back through the paper to find earlier sources will be time-consuming and confusing. Teacher 4 suggests: "I'd have a separate source sheet so they can have a source sheet sitting in front of them all the time" (line 19).

In Extract 4, the teachers reword a task to make the instruction more straightforward, but they take care to ensure the intent of the original item is not lost and that the cognitive work is the same. Teacher 1 notes: "And it's not as explicit too, so that will be good for them [a challenge], it's implied' (line 31). The students will still read and make reference to the written source as they connect it to the matching visual source.

In Extract 5, the teachers remove a table format for retrieval of the student response, believing it will overwhelm some students. This is because the table format requires the reading of more instructions and an example that students would also have to read. The teachers also consider reducing the length of the response required to two, rather than five, points of significance, believing the concept of significance is still assessed sufficiently (line 45).

In Extract 6, the participants identify that additional copying out is not required to demonstrate the cognition being assessed. Teacher 2 in line 51, and Teacher 4 in line 52 both concur that this is non-essential writing.

Extract 7 is included to illustrate that the teachers, when thinking about how student literacy impacts assessment, also focus on how they will address literacy in classroom teaching.

Building Significance and Connections

The teachers build the significance of literacy as a factor that can hinder some of their students' opportunities to demonstrate their historical knowledge and understanding, and historical skills. The teachers identify three factors when considering how to reduce the literacy burdens in a formal examination:

- Visual layout and cues – the teachers address this on a number of occasions including deleting a table response format (Extract 5) believing it makes a task look more complicated than it is; reproducing sources twice to avoid students having to scan back through a paper (Extract 3); and separating out question and response spaces to support students' interpretation of the task demands (Extract 2).

- Assessment literacies – the teachers are concerned to familiarise students with the vocabulary they will need in the test (Extract 1) and practising how to form a written response to a question (writing paragraphs in Extract 7).

- Validity – in removing some obstacles related to literacy, the teachers are also concerned to maintain the integrity of the original test paper. In Extract 4 the teachers aim to ensure simplifying an instruction, does not mean simplifying the cognitive demand of the task. In Extract 6 reducing the amount of writing has not changed the essence of the cognitive processes being assessed.

While this small story connects literacy with student achievement in history, it also connects literacy learning with student engagement. In Extract 7 the teacher notes that their rural students will enjoy learning about the Mongols' use of horses: "That's going to be something that they will take note of" (line 55). For this reason, it is

suggested as a focus text for a literacy lesson (line 60). Teacher 1 recounts in lines 65-68 one effective way they work on teaching paragraph writing in class, noting: "as long as you can keep their focus – if they are engaged enough to keep their focus while you are doing that" (line 70).

Building Identities and Relationships

The collegial relationships in this school are evident when Teacher 4, who is no longer teaching a history class, re-joins the project briefly in their preparation time to support their colleagues. In this small story the teachers are the experts, not the researcher. The researcher takes a back seat here, with no need to facilitate. The ease and speed with which the teachers made adjustments to the sample test to accommodate the literacy levels of some of their students, reveals deep knowledge of their learners and a concern to provide opportunities for students to show what they know and can do in history.

Small Story 22 *Stuck between a wall and a hard place*

Building Activity

This small story is drawn from the final planning day. Only a few minutes of the working day are left when the researcher turns the discussion to reflection on their work. The teachers and the researcher jointly construct their understanding of curriculum work as a "tricky" (line 8) process of negotiation between sometimes competing professional concerns.

Table 25 Small Story 22

Sp.	Small Story 22 *Stuck between a wall and a hard place* **Extract from Planning Day 3, Session 3**	Line
T1:	… and it is good knowing that you've got more experience because I feel sometimes I'm stuck between a wall and a hard place.	1
	Because thinking about what the curriculum is and what the intent is and what professionally we need to do – and then we've kids here that to me are such little people – and really how do I get them here?	2
	But I don't want to compromise everything.	3
	But then different ways of looking at that, and going, well in some ways, it's because it's coming from somewhere and they haven't really thought about this.	4
	I find it really difficult to marry things up to try and have something [to] make judgements on and being true to what the kids should have in their standards and abilities.	5
R:	What you are both doing is you're negotiating tensions between the stated curriculum and the reality here at school.	6
T3:	Yeah.	7
T1:	Which is tricky.	8
R:	And you're trying to negotiate all that territory in between and make good decisions.	9
T1:	Without compromising things as well.	10
T2:	And I also think it's nice to have someone who's been at other schools like you coming to out here going: 'Whoa don't panic! No one else is doing any better. It's not just you.'	11
	Do you know what I mean?	12
	And that gives us a bit more confidence – it's not that bad. (all laughing)	13
	Do you know what I mean like the kids in X (district) – that's where I was last year they are not brighter than the kids here.	14
	Do you know what I mean, they have exactly the same issues.	15
R:	I used to work in X (district) too for many years at X (school).	16
	I know, it's life, and teachers always want to do the best they can by their kids.	17
T2:	Yep.	18
R:	And they want to do what they should be doing with the curriculum as well and you've just got to find how it can fit together.	19
T2:	(To T1) Like every teacher, do you know there are thousands of teachers out there who are having this issue of, like negotiating the curriculum.	20

T1:	Yeah I know, it's just in the four years I've been here there's been a number of times we've just gone 'Nup, they're not doing anything to do with it. We are going to do something totally different cause they are not able to do it.'	21
	I find that really difficult, so it's finding a middle ground.	22
R:	You've done a lot of this curriculum really faithfully and really diligently.	23
T2:	And I think that one on Polynesia like that's very close to it [the curriculum].	24
	It's really what SOSE [History] should be but the activities like the art – that you and X (teacher) will be awesome at – it reaches our kids in a different way, cause they are not traditionally academic I guess.	25
T1:	Well that's it.	26
	The issue was the time, wanting to do more engaging activities but having enough time for them to do their assessment to a level which you know – because they take so much longer.	27

Building Significance and Connections

Students and standards are given particular significance in this reflection on teachers' planning and curriculum work. The word 'students' does not appear in the transcript but it is clear that students are the constant reference point for this discussion. Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and the researcher all refer to the students as 'kids' (lines 2, 5, 14, 17, 25). Using this colloquial term highlights a nurturing view of teaching as a shared value. Teacher 1 also describes the Year 8 learners in the class as "little people" (line 2), emphasising that this is their first year of high school, a fact given significance at various points throughout the planning days. Here Teacher 1 is suggesting the difficulties some students have experienced are related to the limited time that they have been learning history as a discrete discipline. The rural context is not given significance in explanations of students' difficulty with some aspects of the curriculum. Teacher 2 cites experience teaching at an urban school to argue that the students there were working at much the same level: "…they have exactly the same issues" (line 15).

The small story gives significance to the maintenance of standards through a number of explicit and implicit references made by Teacher 1. The situated meaning of 'standards' in this small story is teachers' overall perceptions of what the curriculum 'expects' of student achievement. The teachers have built this understanding of standards by engaging closely with the achievement standard in the Year 8 history curriculum and making A-E grading decisions. An example of an implicit reference to maintaining standards is the statement by Teacher 1 in line 3 "I don't want to compromise everything". A more explicit expression of this concern to maintain standards is seen in line 5 "…being true to what the kids should have in their standards and abilities". Teacher 1 uses the word 'compromise' twice (lines 3 and 10) and recollects times where they have not done some things in the past because "they are not able to do it" (line 21). The teacher sees the maintenance of standards as an important professional responsibility.

The group make use of a number of metaphors to describe curriculum planning that connects understandings about students and standards. Teachers have experienced some tension as they work to plan a curriculum that meets the students' needs and fulfil what they understand to be the standards of the curriculum. Teacher 1 uses a metaphor similar to the idiom 'stuck between a rock and a hard place' to express their predicament of feeling caught between the dual professional responsibilities to implement the curriculum to a set standard and support the learning needs of students. Teacher 1 says: "…it is good knowing that you've got more experience because I feel sometimes I'm stuck between a wall and a hard place" (line 1). They explain this dilemma further: "Because thinking about what the curriculum is and what the intent is, and what professionally we need to do – and then we've got kids here that to me are such little people – and really how do I get them to here?"

(line 2). The two uses of 'here' in this line, creates a visual metaphor of a gap between the curriculum expectations and the current level of the students, and curriculum implementation work in this context as 'bridging a gap'. The researcher further develops this 'gap' metaphor when she refers to "all that territory in between" in line 9. Teacher 1 extends the metaphor in line 22 suggesting, "it's finding a middle ground".

The researcher describes the act of balancing of priorities by teachers in their curriculum work as a 'negotiation', using technical language drawn from educational literature: "…you're negotiating tensions between the stated curriculum and the reality here at school" (line 6). This definition of the problem is accepted and built upon by all three teachers in the room at this time: Teacher 3 indicates agreement (line 7); Teacher 1 accepts the definition by adding "Which is tricky" (line 8); and a little later Teacher 2 co-opts the term 'negotiating' in line 20.

Another metaphor – curriculum work as a puzzle – is employed by the researcher to explain how teachers accommodate the needs of learners within a prescribed curriculum: "You've just got to find how it can fit together" (line 19). In this way the group adopt a cluster of metaphors to reflect on their practice: curriculum work as 'bridging a gap', curriculum decision-making as a 'negotiation' or 'puzzle', and the professional tension that can result is likened to being 'stuck between a wall and a hard place'.

Building Identities and Relationships

The teachers' reflections continue to build their professional identities as educators concerned with balancing a professional responsibility to fulfil the curriculum and meet the needs of their learners. This small story also shows how the

teachers contribute to shaping the researcher's identity as an experienced educator who has an understanding of 'how things are' in other schools. Teacher 2 makes an explicit connection between experience and the rural context in line 11: "I also think it's nice to have someone who's been at other schools like you coming out here…". Both Teacher 1 (line 1) and Teacher 2 (line 11) suggest that the observations of an experienced outsider is valued by rural teachers who have limited experience in their own school to draw upon. Teacher 2 explains that this "gives us a bit more confidence" (line 13).

This small story also shows the continuing construction of supportive, collegial relationships in this group. In response to Teacher 1's explanation of their difficulty to "marry things up" (line 5), Teacher 2 offers a number of reasons why Teacher 1 should not be anxious about this. Firstly, Teacher 2 says that the researcher has helped them to understand that they are not doing badly. In line 11 Teacher 2 adopts the voice of the researcher to validate their point: "'Whoa don't panic; no one else is doing it any better; it's not just you'". This indicates how Teacher 2 has interpreted some of the comments of the researcher. Second, Teacher 2 cites experience in another context experiencing the same challenges where students were working at the same level as the students here (lines 14-15). Third, Teacher 2 suggests that, "there are thousands of teachers out there who are having this issue of like negotiating the curriculum" (line 20). Finally, Teacher 2 gives a concrete example of where their planning has met the intent of the curriculum and the needs of the students in lines 24-25 pointing out that the Polynesian Expansion unit meets the targeted curriculum descriptors and includes activities that the students will enjoy. All of these comments are made in support of Teacher 2's colleague.

The researcher too aims to offer support to Teacher 1. She does this by showing that she understands and can name the professional tension they are experiencing (line 9). The researcher also shows she understands their professional goals: "…teachers always want to do the best they can by their kids…and they want to do what they should be doing with the curriculum as well" (lines 17 and 19). The researcher is re-presenting the dilemma Teacher 1 faces as a natural, even positive thing, because it reflects a particular professional identity that is valued by the group. The researcher affirms that she believes the teachers have done well with their curriculum implementation work through encouraging feedback (line 23) and a little later in closing the day she remarks: "It's just a privilege to sit in and listen to the wonderful conversations teachers are having, and [see] how hard you are working on this and making sure that these kids get good opportunities; it's just fantastic" (Planning Day 3, Session 3). The collegiality of the group is evidenced here in the efforts to acknowledge challenges, affirm achievements and encourage those who will teach the next semester.

Development of Key Storylines

The analysis of small stories in this chapter shows how particular storylines related to the history curriculum, assessment, learners and rural schooling recurred and were developed across the planning days.

History curriculum storylines necessarily dominated teachers' work on the planning days. Two storylines related to the prescribed nature of the curriculum and school structures such as timetabling, school events and priorities, reporting cycles and term dates were more evident in Planning Day 1 as organisational matters

dominated the early planning phases. Historical subject matter was a frequent topic of conversation as the context for all learning being discussed on the planning days. I included analysis of some small stories developing the historical knowledge storyline where the subject matter was given particular significance, usually because of its interest or otherwise to students. Storylines about historical skills and historical concepts were given much significance in planning across the study, in terms of benefits for students and challenges for teachers. Storylines related to resources, pedagogy and time to plan were not prevalent, likely because the planning days did not focus on individual lesson plans. Time and amount to teach was a recurring storyline throughout the study and a persistent tension for teachers. Teacher knowledge and experience, although a dominant storyline in the interviews, was less of a focus on the planning days.

Assessment storylines were also dominant in small stories from each planning day, reflecting the way assessment regimes influence teaching and learning. This dominance of assessment storylines is likely also connected to the broader level of planning that was the focus of this study. Discussion of assessment design, the purpose of assessment and reference back to the achievement standard recurred throughout, while understanding expectations was discussed more on the first planning day and making judgements more during the final planning day.

Learner storylines contributed to nearly every small story. Teachers' knowledge of their learners, efforts to engage learners, and concern to support the diverse needs of students in their classes, including those with lower levels of literacy, were dominant and recurring storylines.

Rural schooling storylines that so dominated the interview data were rarely raised on the planning days. However, I will show in the next chapter how teachers'

understanding of their rural schooling context was important in shaping their understanding of their learners and, therefore, their goals for their curriculum work for history.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how Gee's (1999, 2005) method of discourse analysis has been applied to analyse representative small stories drawn from the planning days. I have identified how the planning day discussions constructed a particular approach to curriculum planning and decision-making activities, how certain things were made significant and connected, and how engagement in the planning day work also constructed teachers' identities as rural history teachers, my own identity as an advisor, and a particular working relationship. In the next chapter I synthesise these findings across the interviews and planning days to identify a number of key discourses in operation.

Chapter 7 Data Analysis – Discourses in Operation

This chapter reports the final stage of discourse analysis: the identification of discourses in operation across the study. Discourses exist as a pattern of thinking and acting in the world and represent particular perspectives on aspects of the world (Gee, 2005; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The discourse analysis of the small stories in the preceding chapters makes it possible to identify the patterns of values, attitudes, beliefs and actions that cohered to represent a particular perspective on teachers' curriculum work for history in their context. The way activities were built, those things that the community of practice made significant and connected, and the identities and relationships that were built across the action research project reveal certain patterns of thinking and acting related to rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism.

Each engagement in a discourse builds on past utterances of the discourse and at the same time continues to mould and shape the discourse (Rogers et al., 2005). Through reflecting on and participating in curriculum planning for a new history curriculum, the community of practice under study in this research drew on and contributed to particular discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism. In justifying my identification of these key discourses I cite the relevant small stories but, for succinctness, I do not re-quote from the small stories already analysed in the preceding chapters. As the interviewer and as a participant in the planning days I also drew on and contributed to the discourses in operation that I have identified, however I defer explicit discussion of my own role to the next chapter.

Discourse of Rural Schooling

The discourse analysis of small stories shows patterns of representing rural schooling in terms of both challenge and opportunity. At the outset of the study, when reflecting on the curriculum work ahead of them, each teacher made the geographical remoteness of the school community significant and connected to potential constraints for their learners; each used the phrase "out here" to underscore the significance of the distance from the metropolitan capital (Teacher 1, Small Story 1 *Out here*; Teacher 2, Small Story 2 *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history*; Teacher 3, Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job?*). They believed the geographical isolation their students experienced could contribute to a lack of connection with the wider world (Small Story 1; Small Story 4), more limited opportunities compared to urban students (Small Story 1; Small Story 4), and some tendency to insular perspectives (Small Story 1; Small Story 2). As Teacher 2 explained, "X is their world" (Small Story 2, line 12). Aspects of the teachers' thinking about their context reflect a rural-urban binary, as described, for example, by Moriarty et al. (2003) and Roberts and Green (2013).

The remoteness of the school was also made significant in terms of the teachers' professional lives. Each teacher expressed a sense of professional isolation that contributed to a number of challenges for this team of early career teachers. In Small Story 5, *Unless it's ridiculously important,* Teacher 1 describes the difficulty of accessing professional development that is more readily available to teachers in metropolitan centres. These experiences extend on other research that identifies issues for rural teachers in accessing appropriate professional learning (HREOC, 2000; Lake, 2007; Panizzon and Pegg, 2007). In Small Story 6, *And then someone leaves again,* Teacher 3 notes that the frequent turnover of staff in their rural school makes it

difficult to retain knowledge in the school and the high proportion of early career teachers means there are few experienced colleagues to support new staff. In Small Story 8, *But how to make those decisions?,* Teacher 2 explains the challenge of being responsible for curriculum implementation work as an early career teacher with limited experience. These professional challenges are further evidence of the impact of a persistent issue of staffing rural schools as identified by, for example, Campbell and Yates (2011), Roberts, 2004 and Sharplin et al. (2011).

Paradoxically, the isolated rural school context was also understood to contribute to a sense of connection and belonging and collaborative and collegial ways of working. In the interviews each teacher indicated they valued their existing collegial and collaborative practices. These values and beliefs are seen in Small Story 6 *And then someone leaves again,* as the teacher explains how the teachers of history support each other, and Small Story 7 *You guys look to me like you are pretty good at that!,* when the teacher explained they believed that their rural posting encouraged friendship and collaboration. When a teacher joined the school for a one-term contract they were very quickly inducted into the community of practice, as evidenced by their level of involvement in Planning Day 3.

Teachers' ways of working together across the planning days also shaped this shared understanding of the value of collaboration and collegiality. For example, in Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* the teachers each contributed knowledge and viewpoints to the discussion, building a collaborative decision about what topics to select. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* the teachers exercised collegial behaviours such as respectful listening to work through a difference of opinion. Across this project a pattern of supportive, encouraging language and behaviours was identified as relationships were built. For

example, in Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place,* one teacher encouraged and supported a colleague. The teachers also made belonging and connection significant for their students, for example, when planning a celebration of learning for the whole cohort in Small Story 20 *We had our medieval games day!.* As many have argued, including Gannon (2013), Howley et al. (2005) and Reid et al. (2010), rural research can give insufficient attention to the social and cultural dimensions of rural places. The values and beliefs that these teachers draw on, including the importance of connection, support, collaboration and collegiality, offer a deeper understanding of the rural experience.

Discourses are evident in how beliefs and actions cohere in particular ways. Through teachers' assertions in the interviews and their practice during the planning days, it is possible to identify their attitudes, values and beliefs about rural schooling. In this study isolation and associated perceptions of lack of connection, lack of opportunity and insularity – but also connection, collaboration, support and collegiality – were all part of these teachers' pattern of understanding rural schooling. I describe this as a challenge/opportunity discourse where geographical isolation raises challenges, but also fosters connection, collegiality and collaboration.

Discourse of School History

In the interviews teachers articulated a pattern of thinking about the subject history that gave particular significance to the skills and concepts of the history curriculum. Their perspective on school history was consistent with the dominant discourse of school history internationally and aligned closely with the rationale of the official curriculum (ACARA, 2013b; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas, 2015; Thornton & Barton, 2010; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013). The teachers did not see teaching history as a form of cultural reproduction; teachers were more interested in their

students being able to think critically and question evidence. For example in Small Story 2, *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history,* Teacher 2 made critical thinking and inquiry skills and related concepts, such as empathy and understanding different perspectives, significant in teaching history. Similarly, in Small Story 3 *Dogs are better than cats just because they are,* Teacher 3 underscored the value of learning how to interrogate evidence by identifying perspectives and potential bias, and then using this evidence to develop and justify a viewpoint. The teachers did not view school history as an academic subject providing entrée to tertiary pathways (Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job?*); they believed only some of their students would follow tertiary pathways but all would need to be, for example, critical consumers of the media (Small Story 2 and Small Story 4). School history was particularly valued for the transferrable skills and associated concepts learned in history. In Small Story 1, *Out here,* Teacher 1 explained how learning about other people's lives and building more understanding of the historical concepts of perspectives and empathy could support students to apply this to their daily lives. Teacher 3 echoed these beliefs in Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job?*. In Small Story 3, *Dogs are better than cats just because they are,* Teacher 3 believed that historical skills, including research, had general value to students in other school subjects and post-school pathways.

In the small stories drawn from the planning day it is also identifiable that the teachers, in their lived practice, gave particular significance to historical skills and a related set of historical concepts. In Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?*, teachers made a decision to begin the course exploring the foundational concepts of inquiry and evidence. In their planning teachers demonstrated a focus on historical inquiry, and aimed to support students in the development of the

disciplinary skills required to construct understandings of the past. In Small Story 17, *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step,* the teachers aimed to model for students how a set of historical skills are applied in stages through an inquiry process. This included developing questions, evaluating sources, taking notes, developing an hypothesis and communicating an historical argument supported by evidence. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* the value given to developing inquiry questions is evident in the time and effort devoted to teaching this skill. In designing assessment the historical skills they were assessing and the concepts they had taught remained in clear focus as they discussed options. In refining a test in Small Story 21 *You think they'll just get stuck?,* teachers were concerned to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their historical skills. In Small Story 16, *You could look at something more cultural,* the teachers focused on the concept of continuity and change as they evaluated potential student interest in topics.

When reflecting on student achievement the teachers used mastery of historical skills as a marker of progress. In Small Story 18, *They are struggling with that part of it*, the teacher was concerned that some students were yet to acquire some valued historical skills. Where small stories did focus on particular historical knowledge descriptors in the curriculum it was not the historical content per se that was given significance. In Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?*, the series of excerpts shows that significance was given to how well a topic would engage learners, be a good context for learning historical skills and concepts, and contribute to a cohesive and balanced course of study for students.

The teachers in this study subscribed to a shared perspective on history that aligns with the Constructionist orientation described by McCrum (2010) and the

Disciplinary orientation described by Seixas (2000). Across the interviews and the planning day discussions, the concepts and skills of history were privileged over the historical content. Teachers aimed for students to construct their understanding of historical events through 'doing history'. This is evidence that teachers drew on a constructionist/disciplinary discourse of school history. Teacher discussions revealed they shared a deep understanding of the discipline of history that Taylor (2008) and Yilmaz (2008) point out is required for effective curriculum implementation.

Discourse of Teacher Professionalism

The teachers in this study showed a pattern of thinking and acting in the world that sought to balance a professional responsibility to implement the official curriculum, while ensuring they met the needs of their diverse group of learners. This is reflected in both their decision-making activities and the professional identities they constructed.

The teachers' commitment to follow the official curriculum is evident in their efforts to understand the curriculum and continual reference back to the curriculum descriptors during the planning days. Small Story 8, *But how to make those decisions?,* gives particular insight into a teacher's concern at the outset of the project to understand the intent of the curriculum writers. Small Story 11 *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* drawn from the first planning day, showed that teachers were concerned to follow the structure of the curriculum. Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* showed teachers reflecting on the assessable elements of the curriculum to refine an assessment task. Small Story 16, *You could look at something more cultural,* showed how teachers kept bringing their discussion back to the targeted curriculum descriptor. Small Story 18 *They are struggling with that part of it,* and Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* both show how teachers

gave significance to the historical skills identified in the curriculum and persisted in their efforts to teach these skills. Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place,* shows a teacher reflecting on their efforts to accurately apply the achievement standards of the curriculum. Across the planning days teachers consistently took up a professional responsibility to implement the official curriculum, demonstrating the commitment to and understanding of the underlying principles of the curriculum that Kelly (2004) argues is required for effective curriculum change.

Teachers also demonstrated a strong commitment to their learners throughout the project. Learners were made significant to planning and decision-making in nearly every small story analysed. Although teachers' decision-making space in the curriculum was limited (Smith & Lovat, 2003), in areas where they were able to exercise their agency teachers put the learners at the centre of their practice. The needs and interests of learners were the most significant factors when choosing topics from the options in the curriculum. For example, in Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* teachers prioritised topics they felt students would enjoy and benefit from over considerations of their own knowledge of the topic, resources available, extra workload and personal interest. In Small Story 9 *The engagement thing is a big factor for us,* and Small Story 12 *What would be a good way to start?,* teachers made their learners significant to their decisions about pedagogical approaches. When developing an assessment plan, support for learners new to secondary school was given significance (Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first*). Teachers also sought to interest and support learners when developing assessment tasks, for example in Small Story 16 *You could look at something more cultural*. Small Story 15, *So we ended up doing a recount,* shows how reflection on their learners' reactions to assessment shaped the teachers' decision about the assessment

genre. Supporting learners was also made significant to plans for teaching, for example it was significant to plans for modelling and scaffolding in Small Story 17 *We just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step.* Support for learners was also evident in the design of assessment including support for students with lower levels of literacy in Small Story 21 *You think they'll just get stuck?*.

In the discourse analysis of the small stories drawn from the planning days, it is evident that the teachers demonstrated a strong professional commitment to their learners and were committed to implementing the official curriculum. Where teachers were able to exercise their agency, they put the learners at the centre of their curriculum decision-making practices. I identify this as a learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reported the final stage of my discourse analysis – the identification of discourses in operation. Looking for patterns across the analyses of the small stories drawn from the teacher interviews and planning day discussions, I have identified the mobilisation of a challenge/opportunity discourse of rural schooling, a constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history and a learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism. Discourses also interact and combine in particular ways to have particular effects (Larsen, 2010). In the next chapter I build on this identification of discourses in operation. To answer my key research question, I show how these discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism were combined as these teachers worked in a community of practice to plan and make decisions for the implementation of new history curriculum in this rural school.

Chapter 8 Discussion

In this discussion I answer my key research question: *How do teachers in this rural secondary school approach the task of implementing a new national history curriculum, with the support of a researcher?* I used community of practice theory and discourse theory as a framework for the collection and interpretation of the data to provide a comprehensive response to this question. These theoretical lenses offer insights into the complexities of teachers' curriculum work, and assist me to provide a reflexive account of my own participation in this study. I draw on four key concepts of community of practice theory to organise this discussion.

- A key condition for formation of a community of practice is mutual engagement in a joint enterprise.
- A community of practice develops a shared repertoire of practices as it engages in the enterprise.
- A community of practice is a structure for learning how to do an enterprise together.
- A community of practice has different forms of membership (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Table 26, overleaf, provides a summary of the structure of this chapter. I am conscious that the division of curriculum work into separate sections is an artificial construct. I do this to organise the discussion, and acknowledge that the elements of teachers' practice under examination in this case study are interdependent.

Table 26 Overview of Discussion

Theoretical concepts	Curriculum activity	Key findings
Mutual engagement in a joint enterprise	Action research approach	• Action research provided the time and space for mutual engagement in curriculum implementation work for history.
	Shared understanding of goals and purposes	• Teachers built a shared sense of value and purpose around their history curriculum work. • Commitment founded on the teachers' understanding of the value of the history curriculum for their rural students.
Development of a shared repertoire of practices	Decision-making practices	• Teachers focused their decision-making where they had most agency. • Teachers' decision-making practices focused on engaging and supporting learners. • Identification of strategies these teachers used to engage and support learners in history.
	Working through tensions in practice	• Tensions in professional practice were not always able to be fully resolved. • Identification of a positive disposition to change.
	Reifications that supported participation	• Identification of reifications developed in the community of practice to support participation. • Theoretical insights into how reifications support practice and can be understood as 'pieces' of discourse.
	Ways of working that supported practice	• Collaborative, collegial ways of working formed part of the repertoire of practices of this community of practice. • Reporting a thick description of the social dimensions of this rural case study moves beyond deficit discourses.
A structure for learning about an enterprise together	Teacher learning	• The teachers identified significant professional learning needs at the outset of the study. • The design of this study allowed teachers to engage in collaborative learning about real problems of practice. • Time for teachers to talk together about their work was a key element of this type of professional learning.
	Teacher knowledge	• All the categories of teacher knowledge identified by Shulman's (2004) research were essential elements of teachers' curriculum work at this site. • Teacher knowledge was a collective responsibility and a collaborative accomplishment of this community of practice.
Different forms of membership	Participant researcher as broker	• Boundary participation allowed me to connect this community of practice to other educational communities of practice. • Utility of conceptualising an advisory role as brokerage.

Firstly, I discuss how the use of an action research project encouraged mutual engagement in the enterprise of curriculum planning and decision-making. I explain how the community of practice mobilised and connected their discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism to shape a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the enterprise. Second, I identify how the community of practice, through the entwined processes of participation and reification, built a shared repertoire of practices that supported the decision-making work of the group. I show how the discourses the community of practice drew on, and connected, shaped their approach to decision-making and underpinned the reifications developed to support participation. I also identify the ways of working that formed part of the repertoire of practices. Third, I discuss how this community of practice learned about their enterprise of curriculum implementation together. I show how they collaboratively assembled the range of teacher knowledges needed to make their curriculum decisions, in the process learning together about the new curriculum and how to implement it. Fourth, I discuss the membership of the community of practice. I particularly focus on my own membership role and theorise this as brokerage. Discourses can also interact to have particular effects and combine to form new hybrid discourses (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 1999, 2005; Larsen, 2010). I conclude this chapter by identifying how the community of practice – through their historically and socio-culturally located practice – constructed a hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place.

Mutual Engagement in a Joint Enterprise

Action Research Approach

A community of practice is one where members are mutually engaged in a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). The research design was framed around an action research project to support a focus on practical issues of curriculum implementation, while allowing me access to teachers' planning work. The school identified implementation of the Year 8 history curriculum as the focus of the project and this became the domain of this community of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The action research approach adopted in this case study established a social setting which afforded my involvement alongside teachers in the task of curriculum planning and decision-making – that is, our mutual engagement in a joint enterprise. The planning day structure that was negotiated with the school quarantined time out of the busy school routine for teachers to prioritise their collaborative curriculum planning work. This arrangement provided the sustained interaction Wenger (1998) emphasised as an essential feature of a community of practice, and the investment of time that Smith and Lovat (2003) argue is required for teachers to build an understanding of any new curriculum.

Shared Understanding of Goals and Purposes

Important to mutual engagement is a shared understanding of the nature of the enterprise and the commitment of each member (Wenger, 1998). As Wenger (1998) noted in a study of medical claims workers, even when working on tasks mandated and regulated by others, a community of practice develops its own understanding of the enterprise. Although working with a national curriculum document, the teachers in this study developed a shared understanding of the implications of their context for

their curriculum work (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Wenger, 1998). Discourse theory enables a clear explanation of how this community of practice shaped its own understanding of, and commitment to, their enterprise of implementing a prescribed national history curriculum. In the previous chapter I identified the discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism mobilised by the teachers. As Larsen has illustrated (2010) discourses interact to have particular effects. In this study the way teachers connected these three discourses shaped their goals for their curriculum work.

The teachers valued history as a subject that could foster a greater sense of connection to the wider world through learning about how people lived in other times and places. In Small Story 1, *Out here*, Teacher 1 explained their belief that students were "…so secluded from a lot of the things you would take for granted" (line 2). History was seen as a way to broaden students' view of the world: "…that's the thing that history does *for these kids* is that it opens their eyes a little bit to the world around them" (line 2, italics added). Teacher 2 echoed this idea; they explained that history is important for "Getting a sense of the world, *particularly* out here. Getting a sense that there is a larger scope of the world around them" (Small Story 2, lines 3-4). The teachers understood that the selection of particular topics in the history curriculum could build a sense of connection for their students, mitigating potential negative impacts of geographical isolation.

The teachers also valued the historical skills of the curriculum. They perceived that their rural students faced more limited post-school options than urban students and understood that the suite of historical skills privileged in the curriculum had transferrable applications that would benefit students in their school and adult lives. In Small Story 2, *It's something we do in such a unique way in history,* the teacher

explained their belief that students needed to develop critical thinking skills: "I have noticed – again, more out here than I did in the urban setting – the way kids just take for granted what they are told" (line 18). They emphasised the value of the critical inquiry skills taught in history: "…I just think that ability to question the world and question what you are told and question the way you look at things, that's something that's so – it's something that we do in such a unique way in history" (Small Story 2, lines 6-7). Similarly in Small Story 3, *Dogs are better than cats just because they are*, Teacher 3 emphasised the value of the skills of source analysis (line 1), research skills (line 20) and using evidence to justify a decision (line 13). They hoped a student would be able to say: "…'Well we can see from the evidence here that this seems to be the stronger point'" (line 14). The teacher suggested these skills are "…really beneficial across subjects" (line 22) and believed they helped students "in general" (line 22).

Teaching history was also seen as an opportunity to discuss values and concepts such as perspectives and empathy that they thought would be of benefit to their rural learners. Teacher 3 pointed to perspectives in Small Story 3 *Dogs are better than cats just because they are* (line17), and Teacher 2 to perspectives (line 5) and empathy (line 25) in Small Story 2 *It's something we do in such a unique way in history*. In Small Story 1, *Out here,* Teacher 1 identified some "close-minded" attitudes among students that they connected to the isolated rural context (line 14). They explained their view that "…it's *our job* to go, well, history is a way of understanding other people and opening your mind" (line 16, italics added). They added: "…trying to get that sort of – that core empathy and those sort of values into the history curriculum is quite kind of important" (line 22). Here a connection was built between their professional responsibilities, the historical concepts in the

curriculum and their understanding of their rural learners' needs. In this way the teacher is combining their discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism to build a sense of purpose around their curriculum work.

The literature emphasises that a commitment to and an understanding of the purposes of any new curriculum is essential for successful implementation (Kelly, 2004; Dilkes et al., 2014). Curriculum implementation can be understood as a process of transforming and re-contextualising the official curriculum for a particular learning context (Brady & Kennedy, 2003; Briant & Doherty, 2012). This study extends on the literature providing an explanation of the nature of these teachers' goals for their learners in history, and particularly *how* a sense of purpose and value around curriculum work in history was constructed at this particular site. Although the teachers' discourse of school history aligned closely with the rationale of the official curriculum and drew on the dominant discourse of school history internationally (ACARA, 2013b; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Seixas, 2015; Thornton & Barton, 2010; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013), their commitment to the new history curriculum was shaped by connecting this discourse of school history with the needs of their rural learners, in their local context.

For these teachers, the subject history offered their students ways to mitigate some of the perceived constraints of their geographically isolated rural context. Roberts (2013, p. 90) suggests curricula are increasingly "placeless"; this study shows how these teachers found ways to connect a prescribed curriculum, written far from their remote rural school, to their learners' needs. The teachers constructed their own understanding of their enterprise that was relevant to their local context. Wenger's (1998) observation – that even when others have established tasks for a community,

the members of a community of practice still make their own meaning of their enterprise – is evident in this case.

Development of a Shared Repertoire of Practices

Communities of practice develop a shared repertoire of practices that is specific to their context (Wenger, 1998). For these teachers, the remote rural school context and the particular group of students beginning high school in the first year of implementation of the new history curriculum provided the historical and socio-cultural context in which the repertoire of practices developed. A repertoire of practices is realised in the complementary processes of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998). In this section I discuss:

- the factors teachers made most significant to their decision-making practices

- the teachers' ways of working through tensions in practice

- the reifications built by this community of practice to support participation

- the collaborative and collegial ways of working that supported practice.

Although I discuss these four elements of the repertoire of practices separately, they are interdependent. The teachers' shared discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism were mobilised in the enactment of this repertoire of practices.

Decision-Making Practices

The participating teachers were implementing a prescribed curriculum that was more strongly framed than they had previously experienced, and consequently where their decision-making space was limited (Boote, 2006; Smith & Lovat, 2003). Teachers took up their professional responsibility to implement the official

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curriculum, but also sought to identify where there was flexibility for them to exercise agency in curriculum enactment. This is evidenced in their practices of focusing on engaging and supporting learners when making topic choices, selecting pedagogical approaches and designing assessment.

Engaging learners

While teachers understood history to be very important for their rural students, they were also very aware that some students viewed history as irrelevant and were consequently disengaged. For example, in Small Story 4 *How is this going to help me with my job?,* the teacher pointed out that some students did not see the relevance of history and made a tentative connection to the rural context ("And I'm not sure that's [isn't] the case everywhere, but I guess I'm noting that it's fairly common out here", line 10). They believed their teaching needed to engage learners to overcome this perception of irrelevance (line 14).

A focus on student engagement in learning history was highlighted as a key planning priority at the outset of the first planning day. In Small Story 9, *The engagement thing is a big factor for us,* each teacher emphasised the importance of student engagement; Teacher 3 identified this as "my single biggest issue" (line 5). Throughout the planning days student engagement was given great significance; it was a regular touchstone in conversation and a factor in most curriculum decisions as evidenced in the analysis of Small Stories 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 22. The concept of student engagement, as used by these teachers, had a situated meaning of interesting students in learning, encouraging attention, focus and effort and was implicitly connected to improved learning outcomes and achievement. The importance teachers placed on student engagement was underscored in Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?,* when each teacher affirmed the researcher's

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synopsis of the discussion: "…we've just identified engagement as a big issue and if we haven't got that we haven't got – anything" (lines 14 & 17). In Small Story 14, *It's just the time thing,* Teacher 3 expressed a commitment to teaching the content of the curriculum but saw student engagement as the priority: "I know we have to cover certain content, but I'm still at the end of the day more interested in them being interested" (line 9). Teachers made engagement a significant factor in their decision-making around topic choices, pedagogical approaches and assessment design but it was balanced against the professional responsibility to implement the official curriculum and accomplish their goals for their rural learners. In this way the teachers were mobilising their learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism.

Topic choices

Likely student engagement was an important factor in teachers' decisions about topic choices from the curriculum, but they also sought to identify other learning benefits of potentially engaging topics. Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* illustrated some of the ways teachers evaluated the curriculum depth study topic options – by trying to determine what students would be interested in and what students would benefit from, within the constraints of the curriculum structure. While the teachers considered the Angkor/Khmer depth study interesting, Teacher 3 did not believe the students would be engaged: "I think it's fascinating but I can't see the Year 8s enjoying it" (Small Story 11, line 24). Therefore this depth study option was quickly dismissed. The Spanish Conquest of the Americas depth study was also rejected because teachers did not believe students would have much connection with this topic (lines 1& 4). Other depth studies judged to be interesting to students were further evaluated to identify additional benefits. The Mongol Expansion depth study was considered interesting and beneficial to students. It would provide

some opportunity to talk about China as Teacher 2 had noted some student interest (line 13). Additionally this topic supported teachers' interest in expanding students' view of the world and discussing values. This was exemplified in Teacher 3's point: "I think some Asian history – they need some" (line 14). The Polynesian Expansion depth study was also judged to be interesting to students. Teachers further evaluated its merits and chose this depth study despite my own expression of caution, their awareness of limited resources, and most having little knowledge of the topic. Apart from likely student engagement, the depth study offered the added benefits of allowing for discussion of environmental sustainability and a contribution to course cohesion for students as it "…brings it back home into this region" (Teacher 2, line 47) and would link to the Year 9 course to follow. While necessarily constrained by the way knowledge was organised in the curriculum, the teachers aimed to choose from the depth study options available by giving most weight to what the students would be interested in, but also identifying other learning benefits. Teachers favoured a topic if it was engaging and also had some other identifiable learning benefit for students.

Pedagogical approaches

The teachers sought to enact active, hands-on, inquiry-based pedagogies that they believed fostered student engagement (and therefore positive learning outcomes) and also aligned with their focus on historical inquiry and teaching the disciplinary skills of history. In Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?,* Teacher 2 pointed out that to begin a course: "…you really need something that's going to grab their attention so they are looking forward to things" (line 25). The teachers highlighted the pedagogical approaches they believed were most engaging; pedagogies focused on concepts of evidence and inquiry, rather than historical

knowledge. Teacher 2 gave an example of how inquiry engages students in learning: "It's hands up in the air with them trying to figure out what it is actually about…And they want to try and work it out themselves" (lines 35-36). The engaging pedagogies teachers favoured aligned with historical inquiry approaches of school history.

Assessment design

Student engagement was also a key factor in decision-making about assessment. When designing assessments teachers sought to select topics and tasks that would be engaging, while also focusing on the purpose of each assessment task to ensure it would provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the aspects of the achievement standard they wished to assess. They reasoned that if an assessment task were interesting, students would exhibit greater application and achieve well. Teachers connected engagement, application and achievement as exemplified in Small Story 15 *So we ended up doing the recount*. The teachers explained that they chose an in-role recount as the assessment genre to encourage student engagement in the task, while also ensuring the content descriptor about feudalism and the historical concept of perspectives were foregrounded in the task design. They reported that students did apply themselves to the task noting some even went "a bit overboard" (line 9). In Small Story 16, *You could look at something more cultural,* the teachers sought to offer engaging research topic choices to sustain student interest over a number of weeks, but also looked to ensure the topics presented a balanced view of the historical period under study and were suitable to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate understanding of the targeted historical concept of continuity and change. In assessment design decisions, the teachers balanced a concern for student engagement with a need to ensure the assessment tasks validly assessed the curriculum achievement standard.

The teachers' experience that some students may be disinterested and not see the relevance of history echoes concerns others have reported in the literature (Clark, 2008; Foster and Padgett, 1999). This study shows the significant impact of this concern on teachers' planning work, giving evidence that at this site teachers were intent on designing a curriculum plan that was as engaging as possible. Focusing on where they had flexibility, the teachers sought to select engaging topic choices, pedagogical approaches and assessment tasks. In doing so, they always balanced student engagement with other factors. They aimed to select interesting topics, but also beneficial ones in terms of learning outcomes for their rural students; they chose engaging pedagogical approaches that aligned with the inquiry approaches underpinning the history curriculum; and they strove to make assessment engaging, but were also concerned to maintain the validity of assessments. In these ways the teachers connected their discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism in their decision-making practices.

Supporting learners

The analysis of the small stories drawn from the planning days shows that teachers strove to identify approaches to pedagogy and assessment that would best support their learners, while still ensuring alignment with the curriculum descriptors and achievement standards. In the first stage of the study, the teachers were initially planning for a group of twelve-year old learners they were yet to meet. They did, however, have some knowledge of the incoming cohort. Teachers knew that their cohort would not bring from their primary school learning areas, discipline-specific learning in history. Small Story 10, *Let's not do an exam first,* particularly references the lack of prior learning exacerbated because this was the first year of implementation of the new curriculum (line 19). On the second planning day teachers

reported that their classes were a diverse group of learners requiring varying levels of support, some particularly with literacy. In Small Story 18, *They are struggling with that part of it*, one teacher described how a learner could think historically, but literacy deficits impacted on communicating understanding in history: "His literacy is not very high but he's got a more historic way of looking at things" (line 5). The participating teachers' efforts to ensure they adopted the most supportive approaches to the curriculum were grounded in their learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism and what they valued about the subject history for their rural learners.

Supportive pedagogies

The teachers valued modelling and scaffolding as pedagogies to support the development of historical skills. In Small Story 17, *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step,* the teachers aimed to teach students how to undertake aspects of research by co-constructing a model response together with students and breaking a larger research process into small steps. One teacher particularly emphasised: "…we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step, basic, basic, basic" (line 15). Their knowledge of the learners informed the decision to focus on a slow and supported development of skills. The teachers understood learning history as a process of 'doing history' and saw their teaching as steadily building students' capacity to apply a set of inquiry skills. This aligned with the rationale and content descriptors of the official curriculum, but implementing the curriculum for a cohort with diverse learning needs in a finite teaching time gave rise to a significant tension in practice.

Supportive approach to assessment

When selecting assessment techniques, teachers were concerned about providing support for students while introducing them to more formal summative

assessment tasks. Teachers took up their professional responsibility to assess and report accurately to parents and caregivers on student progress against the curriculum year level achievement standard. Teachers were also acutely aware of the needs of their learners: they knew that their students had limited prior learning in the disciplinary skills of history; they understood that some would struggle with the literacy demands of certain assessments; and they also understood that some would find a formal assessment regime threatening and disengaging. Small Story 10, *Let's not do an exam first,* explicitly illustrated the concern teachers had with supporting students' engagement with a formal assessment regime. To ensure students experienced a positive start to high school, they aimed to choose an assessment technique that would not overwhelm students. Teacher 2 explained their goal: "So we need to figure out what the least threatening option is perhaps" (line 21). They decided on a cumulative folio of small tasks. By Planning Day 2 teachers were making assessment decisions for students they knew well. In Small Story 15, *So we ended up doing the recount,* the teachers explained why they changed the assessment technique. They felt at that stage of the course their students would focus better on one engaging, substantive task that targeted one curriculum descriptor: "…something that's going to keep them interested I suppose and not try to overwhelm them too much…" (Teacher 2, Planning Day 2, Session 2). Small Story 21, *You think they'll just get stuck?,* illustrated the teachers' determination, and capacity, to ensure a test was accessible for students. They aimed to minimise literacy hurdles, while retaining the rigour and intent of the original test.

It is acknowledged in the literature that school history is a cognitively challenging subject for students, with considerable literacy demands (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Henderson, 2011; McTygue & Tindall; Mountford & Price, 2004;

Taylor, 2008). This case study provides an account of the experience of educators who well understood and grappled with this reality. The teachers' goals for their rural learners and their understanding of the subject history underpinned the support strategies they chose. The ways teachers connected their discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism at this site can be seen in teachers' practice of trying to identify, within the constraints of the curriculum and schooling system, the pedagogies and assessments that would be most supportive of their rural learners.

Working Through Tensions in Practice

When making curriculum decisions teachers sought to balance what would engage and support learners, while fulfilling the requirements of a prescribed history curriculum. A number of tensions in practice emerged as teachers sought to balance sometimes-competing priorities.

Teaching historical skills

The teachers experienced a tension between the value they placed on the historical skills of the curriculum, and the challenge of supporting their learners to achieve mastery of these skills. Teachers shared a constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history that largely aligned with the curriculum and the dominant discourse internationally of school history. The challenge of realising this type of history in the classroom is well documented (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Henderson, 2011; Husbands et al. 2003; Lee, 2005; Taylor, 2008). From the outset of the study teachers understood that this curriculum work would present them with challenges. While the teachers identified the importance of historical skills and concepts for their rural learners, they understood these were not easy skills to teach. They were aware that students would bring only a limited amount of discipline-specific learning to their

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history classes from primary school (Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first*). In Small Story 3, *Dogs are better than cats just because they are,* Teacher 3 foreshadowed these challenges but also expressed determination and a commitment to their curriculum work: "That's often the way of it, is that the things that are difficult are the most important things" (line 4). During Planning Day 3 teachers reflected on the difficulties some students had experienced with the application of historical research skills. In Small Story 18, *They are struggling with that part of it,* the teacher explained some students struggled to evaluate sources and draw evidence from sources to support historical arguments. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* a teacher recalled the difficulty some students had developing suitable research questions. In Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place*, one teacher expressed concern about the gap between the curriculum standard and some students' current skill levels: "Because thinking about what the curriculum is and what the intent is, and what professionally we need to do – and then we've got kids here that to me are such little people – and really how do I get them to here?" (line 2). This teacher showed resilience and persistence in the face of this challenge and in a follow up email they explained to me that students' skill development continued to improve in the next term:

> …I'm sure the first semester did help many, especially in terms of making inferences, identifying bias and using evidence to support their judgements. They tended to do better at the source analysis than some of the recall questions [in the test] (depth was an issue for some – they knew about it but couldn't communicate enough detail) so we'll work on that this coming term. (Email communication)

Catering for all learners

The diverse groups of learners in classrooms meant implementing the curriculum while catering for the needs of all was a challenge. For example, in Small

Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* one teacher argued for more choice and looser scaffolds to engage students who would respond to a more open task, while another teacher argued for limited choice and more scaffolding to support other learners. Teacher 1 argued to prioritise engagement remarking: "We'll have kids who will go for it and would like to get into it." (lines 30-32). Teacher 2 argued for fewer topics and tighter scaffolds to facilitate support: "We've got to remember we've got limited time, and we want them to meet [the curriculum standards]…" (line 38). While the teachers disagreed, both drew from a learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism to build their arguments. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* the challenge of working with a diverse group of learners was also evident. Teacher 2 described one student able to develop research questions without support (line 24) and Teacher 1 explained the intensive individualised teaching some students required to form their research questions (line 5). The teachers remained committed to supporting their learners and persisted in their efforts to ensure all students could develop research questions (lines 7 & 37).

Teaching and assessing

The teachers also experienced tension between supporting students and assessing the official curriculum. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue*, the teacher was concerned to make accurate assessment judgements but also feared that these judgements may discourage the learners: "They shouldn't be punished for asking for a little bit of assistance, or a little bit of help – that's my fear" (line 14). This teacher saw success as encouraging learning: "I think Grade 8s, even if they are not doing very well, if we are fostering a love of history in them, if they are at least interested enough in the topic, that is a success" (line 29). In Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place,* one teacher felt their responsibilities as an assessor

of learning sometimes left them conflicted with their goal to support student learning. They described feeling "stuck between a wall and a hard place" (line 1), suggesting a 'no-win situation'. This teacher was acutely aware of the difficulties some students were experiencing with the curriculum and was working to support them, but was also concerned to assess accurately against the curriculum standard: "I find it really difficult to marry things up to try and have something [to] make judgements on and being true to what the kids should have in their standards and abilities" (line 5). Tensions in practice did emerge as teachers strove to teach and assess the new curriculum, in a finite amount of teaching time, while meeting the needs of a diverse group of students. In Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place,* a number of metaphors are used to explain the tensions teachers felt in balancing sometimes-competing priorities. In my support role with these teachers, I described curriculum work as a 'puzzle' (line 19) to be pieced together and as a 'negotiation' (line 6) suggesting some give and take is needed. These metaphors encouraged perceiving these challenges as difficult but potentially resolvable.

Time to teach

A persistent tension for teachers was teaching the curriculum in the way best suited to their learners, in the teaching time available. The teachers regularly identified time as a critical factor in being able to enact appropriate pedagogies. The pedagogical approaches the teachers valued for their learners required more teaching time than didactic strategies. For example, in Small Story 9 *The engagement thing is a big factor for us,* a teacher explained that the engaging pedagogies they favoured required more "face-to-face time with the students" (line 19). Similarly in Small Story 14, *It's just the time thing,* as they concluded the first planning day a teacher remarked: "Because the hands on and the group stuff and whatever takes its own toll

in terms of time" (line 5). Further they emphasised the potential challenge of achieving depth of learning in the time available: "…it's really being able to get any depth at all within content in a way that's engaging to them in a single lesson on a topic" (line 15). In this small story, from the end of the first planning day, teachers reflected together and acknowledged the challenge ahead of balancing their goals against the time available; this had the effect of consolidating their commitment to their task. Nonetheless, this tension in practice was evident throughout the study as teachers strove to implement the curriculum within the allocated teaching time, while keeping the needs of their learners at the centre of their practice. At the end of the third planning day Teacher 1 reflected: "The issue was the time, wanting to do more engaging activities but having enough time for them to do their assessment…" (Small Story 22 *Stuck between and wall and a hard place*, line 27).

Boote (2006) identified a number of areas where teachers exercise their professional judgement when mediating the curriculum including: interpreting the intent of the curriculum, making choices from the options available, deciding how to prioritise elements of the curriculum, accommodating community concerns and being true to their own values. This case study deepens understandings about the enactment of professional judgement because it makes visible examples of how these teachers worked through tensions in practice, seeking ways to balance their priorities as they made their curriculum plans for history. As Marsh and Willis (2007) note teachers' curriculum planning is complex and difficult to explain as a simple procedure. The small stories show ways these teachers worked through a number of tensions in practice, providing a deeper understanding of the complexity of teachers' curriculum work. While it was not always possible to fully resolve these tensions, these teachers demonstrated resilience, persistence and a commitment to supporting their learners.

These qualities align with the characteristics of a positive disposition to change –
qualities of commitment, motivation and goodwill – identified by the research of
Dilkes et al., (2014).

Reifications that Supported Participation

As they participated in their enterprise of making curriculum decisions for
history, the teachers built reifications around certain aspects of their practice.
Reification is the process of distilling a set of complex ideas into what Wenger (1998,
p. 58) calls "thingness". In this community of practice complex ideas were reduced to
concepts that were readily understood by all members. Dryzek (2005) defines a
discourse as a shared understanding of an aspect of the world; a reification can be
understood as a shared understanding of an aspect of practice. I view reifications as
'pieces' or traces of the discourses in operation. The curriculum, historical skills,
engagement and assessment were key reifications built by this community of practice.
These reifications were identifiable in the stories co-constructed – in the situated
meanings of utterances, and in things that were made significant and connected by the
group. Teachers understood the full range of ideas that were connected to their
reifications because they shared the same discourses of rural schooling, school history
and teacher professionalism. These reifications supported practice, as simple
references in discussions were able to encapsulate a complex set of understandings.

The curriculum

The curriculum document reflects a particular perspective on school history
that largely aligned with the teachers' constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school
history. As a document that connected the work of these history teachers with other
Australian teachers also engaged in similar work, the curriculum can also be

understood as a boundary reification (Wenger, 1998). Teachers' reified the official history curriculum imbuing it with authority and regarding it as something that they had a professional responsibility to implement. This reification of the official curriculum can be seen as a piece of the teachers' discourses of teacher professionalism and school history. References to the curriculum were associated with prescribed content and a rationale that aligned with the teachers' discourse of school history; therefore discussions were not focused on debating the content descriptors, rather they were on attempting to interpret the intent of curriculum and 'cover' the curriculum content. For example, in Small Story 8, *But how to make those decisions?*, the teacher makes reference to "…what *they* want you to cover" twice (lines 7 and 10, italics added) and was concerned to understand the intent of the curriculum writers, remarking: "…that may not actually be the intent of the curriculum writers" (line 17). Throughout the planning days teachers made regular references back to the curriculum document to ensure each descriptor was taught. For example, in Small Story 16 *You could look at something more cultural,* the teachers focused their discussions on a particular curriculum content descriptor that they had yet to teach.

Historical skills

The participating teachers reified a complex set of disciplinary skills required to conduct historical inquiries including developing historical questions, locating and interpreting sources, evaluating sources of evidence, detecting bias and justifying an historical argument with evidence. Because these teachers shared a constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history they all understood the depth of meaning attached to references to historical skills. In the interviews teachers foregrounded the value they placed on the historical skills of the curriculum (Small Story 2 *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history;* Small Story 3 *Dogs*

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are better than cats just because they are). In Small Stories 10, 13, 17, 18, 19 and 21 historical skills were given significance in planning. For example, in Small Story 17 *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step*, the teachers planned to work through a mini-inquiry with students to model how historical skills fit together in a research process. However, the teachers did not need to spend time debating the merits of historical skills. Teacher 1 said: "We could even have our own hypothesis and go through *the whole thing*" (line 1, italics added). Because they had reified historical skills, the full meaning of "the whole thing" – as a set of historical skills that constitute a research process – was understood by the group. The reification of historical skills reflects a part of the teachers' constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history and can be described as a piece of this discourse.

Engagement

The complexity of the teachers' shared understanding of the concept of student engagement can be seen as a reification of this community of practice. 'Engagement', for these teachers, is a set of connected understandings about how interest, sustained attention, motivation and learning might be accomplished. Teachers regularly made use of this reification in planning discussions. The connections teachers made between interest, enjoyment, effort, learning and achievement are exemplified in Small Story 21 *You think they'll just get stuck?.* A reading about the Mongols' use of horses was selected as a focus for an explicit literacy lesson because teachers believed their rural learners would find the topic interesting, thus improving focus in the literacy lesson while contributing to development of subject matter knowledge and achievement in the planned test. First the teacher noted student interest: "And that stuff about the horse and the bow and arrow, that's going to be something that they will take note of as well" (Small Story

21, line 55) and then explained the focus on literacy and relevant historical knowledge this would foster: "…cause you can discuss it as you go along, as long as you can keep their focus – if they are engaged enough to be focused while you are doing that" (line 70). Across the planning days the teachers were able to cite 'engagement' and proceed with their discussion without needing to explain all the connections they made with learning. This shared understanding of engagement reflects an aspect, or trace, of the teachers' learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism.

Assessment

Assessment was given significance in these teachers' planning. It was one of the first things they discussed on the first planning day (Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first*) and a focus of Small Stories 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21 and 22. Teachers reified 'assessment' as formal assessment of learning and attached a suite of understandings to the term. This included assumptions about assessment genres typical in secondary school (Small Story 10), more and less difficult assessments (Small Story 10), the appropriate length of assessment (Small Story 15 *So we ended up doing the recount*), that the work would be graded (Small Story 19 *The questions were a big issue*), and the importance of the achievement standard (Small Story 22 *Stuck between a wall and a hard place*). This reification of assessment can be understood as an element of teachers' discourse of teacher professionalism where they had a responsibility to assess accurately against the achievement standard and report at regular junctures in the school year.

These key reifications were concepts that all participants understood and that the group made significant to their practice. As such they were 'givens' in their discussions. Teachers did not constantly interrogate the merit of the curriculum, did not need to repeatedly explain the value of historical skills, did not need to debate

whether engagement was important and did not question their systemic requirements to assess and report against the achievement standard of the curriculum. In this way the reifications built by the community of practice supported their practice of planning and decision-making. These reifications can be identified as originating in the perspectives the teachers had on school history, rural schooling and teacher professionalism, and are evidence of the complementarity of community of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and discourse theory.

Ways of Working that Supported Practice

Collaborative, collegial and supportive ways of working were an integral part of the repertoire of practices of this community of practice. Teachers brought their existing collaborative practices into this community of practice that was particularly focused on history curriculum planning for Year 8. The analysis of relationship building across the small stories shows that collegial relationships were under constant construction. In the interviews each teacher expressed a commitment to collaboration. Teacher 2 explained that the small town environment led to social connections that supported their collegial approach: "…we are all friends outside school we see each other all the time" (Small Story 7, line 6). Small Story 7, *You guys look to me like you are pretty good at that!*, indicated that the teachers had already established a practice of working in a small team pooling their expertise, experience and energies. The teacher suggested that the value they placed on collaboration was a response to the isolated rural school context and the practical needs of this early career teaching team. Working in a small secondary school, teachers had responsibilities across a number of subjects and year levels and collaborative planning was a support to all: "It just saves a lot of time, and a lot of our energy" (line 9). They also looked to one team member with more subject matter knowledge as needed. As

Teacher 2 explained: "…we call on (teacher) a lot for that, just to get [their] advice" (line 19). The teacher did not believe they would have the same experience in a large urban school (line 31).

Teachers in this study made decisions on the planning days collaboratively, after consideration of each other's viewpoints, and all took ownership of the decisions. For example, in Small Story 17, *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step,* each teacher made a contribution to their plan to teach inquiry skills in incremental steps. As the group built on each other's suggestions and articulated what it might 'sound like' in the classroom, they constructed a shared commitment to their plan. Respectful dialogue where colleagues sought to listen to each other's arguments was a characteristic of their practice. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* the teachers resolved a point of contention by listening to concerns, trying to offer counterpoints and suggestions and finally agreeing on a compromise when non-negotiables were clarified.

Colleagues were also supportive of each other's efforts. Small Story 22 *Stuck between a wall and a hard place* provides evidence of collegial support as teachers reflect on the term. Humour and fun were also a part of this collegial way of working. On many occasions teachers shared laughter to ease tensions. For example in Small Story 9, *The engagement thing is a big factor for us,* when they consider the engaging pedagogies they favour and the time constraints, they recognise the challenge they face and share a wry laugh. In Small Story 20, *We had our medieval games day!,* the resilience and commitment of these teachers, who had experienced some challenges during the term, was evident as they prioritised and enjoyed time celebrating learning with their students.

These small stories all point to affordances that the teachers in the data linked to their rural context. The literature reports the real challenges of teaching in rural schools (for example, HREOC, 2000; Lamb et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2013), but Gannon, 2013, Moriarty et al. (2003), Reid et al. (2010) and Roberts and Green (2013) are among those who call for a greater focus on the social dimensions of rural places to counter disabling deficit discourses. These small stories drawn from both the interviews and planning days provide an account of productive ways of working that were fostered by this rural school context.

A Structure for Learning About an Enterprise Together

Teacher Learning

Communities of practice are social structures for learning where members are learning how to do the particular shared enterprise of the group (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Considerable teacher learning is required to support the implementation of any new curriculum. As noted in the literature, the success of any new curriculum is dependent on the teachers charged with implementing it (Briant & Doherty, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Kelly, 2004). The location of this school meant that these teachers experienced a sense of professional isolation, an issue that was more acute given the task of introducing a new history curriculum. A teaching team made up of early career teachers, teaching a subject for which some had no professional preparation, is a common scenario in small rural schools, well documented in the literature (for example, Green & Reid, 2004; Kennedy et al., 2009; Roberts, 2004; White & Reid, 2008). The participants in this study were in many ways a typical rural school teaching team. The teachers made experience and professional preparation in history significant to their work, foregrounding their

limited experience and professional preparation in the interviews (Small Stories 5, 6, 7 & 8). Two of the four teachers involved across the study had no professional preparation in history. In Small Story 6, *And then someone leaves again,* the teacher expressed concern about the lack of subject-specific experience in the school: "…it can be very difficult when none of the teachers are teaching the subject they're trained in and as a first year [teacher] they are the only one" (line 13). Both of the Heads of Department who oversaw the history curriculum work across the duration of the study were experienced in different learning areas and were interested in involvement in the project because of the potential to offer subject-specific support for their teachers. Teacher 3 in Small Story 6 recounted their experience of frequent staff turnover and the high proportion of early career teachers posted to the school and noted that, "it can be frustrating" (line 11).

As they prepared to implement the new curriculum all three teachers interviewed identified unmet professional development needs and underscored the value of profession learning directly related to their curriculum work for history. They echoed the findings of many studies that suggest the most valuable professional learning is that which is embedded in practice and directly related to the specific work teachers are engaged in (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullan, 2007; Hall & Scott, 2007; Long, 2012). Teacher 1 in Small Story 5, *Unless it's ridiculously important,* identified particular professional learning needs related to the practical implementation of the curriculum (line 13), appropriate resources specifically linked to the topics under study (line 23) and clarity around assessment expectations (line 16). Teacher 2 in Small Story 8, *But how to make those decisions?,* particularly identified a need, as an early career teacher, to know how to make decisions about translating curriculum documents into curriculum plans for the classroom: "For me

just knowing how to unpack curriculum and turn it into something useful for the classroom, that's been my single biggest [need]" (line 1). Teacher 1 in Small Story 5 noted that while the school was supportive of attendance at professional development it was still difficult to access in terms of cost and time out of school (lines 1-3).

Although these teachers tended to equate professional learning with formal structured programs, to which they had limited access (Small Story 5 *Unless it's ridiculously important*), the establishment of this community of practice, with my support on the planning days, brought teachers together to learn through and in practice about the process of curriculum implementation. As Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) noted, time for teachers to collaborate and learn together about issues of practice is an effective form of professional learning. Similarly, Sparks (2013) has identified teachers learning from each other as an important form of professional learning. The action research approach provided the time and social space for a community of practice to develop and for teachers to learn together about how to implement the new curriculum.

As teachers talked together and pooled their knowledge to make their curriculum decisions they were learning together about the new curriculum and how to implement it. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* teachers were learning about how to design valid assessment through discussion of how their task would provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the targeted aspect of the achievement standard. As they discussed options for starting the year in Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?,* the teachers were learning more about the historical concepts and skills that underpinned the curriculum and about different pedagogical approaches from colleagues. As they evaluated potential topics in Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* teachers were reading, talking

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about and re-reading the curriculum descriptors building their knowledge of the curriculum content descriptors.

The reflection embedded in action research cycles is a key driver of learning in practice (Zuber-Skerritt, 2001). Typically action research cycles are conceptualised as beginning with planning; however, in this study the planning days typically began with reflection as teachers discussed their goals (early Planning Day 1) or recounted what had happened since my last visit (beginning of Planning Days 2 and 3). These reflections focused mostly on teachers' understandings of the needs and interests of their learners. Other reflections leading to action occurred between planning days and were sometimes recounted to me. This is seen in Small Story 15, *So we ended up doing the recount,* when teachers explained why they decided to make a change to their original plan for assessment in response to feedback from students. As reflective practitioners teachers were prepared to make changes to their plans as they learned more information about their students (Schön, 1983).

As this community of practice went about their decision-making practices of discussing the curriculum, offering suggestions, sharing knowledge, evaluating suggestions and working through problems, the group was building their knowledge about a new curriculum and how to implement it. At the outset of the study, in Small Story 8, *But how to make those decisions?,* Teacher 2 expressed concern about the upcoming task of curriculum implementation in a series of rhetorical questions: "…what do I keep? What do I cut? Where should my focus be? ... But how to make those decisions? What am I basing those decisions on?" (lines 11-15). In this community of practice the teachers worked this out for themselves through engagement in their joint enterprise and the practices they developed to support their decision-making. This case study provides further evidence of the efficacy of action

research approaches in promoting learning that is collaborative, grounded in real problems of practice and directly relevant to teachers' learning needs, as advocated by, for example Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), Fullan (2007), Long (2012) and Sparks (2013). It highlights the value of devoting time for teachers to talk and learn together about their practice in this rural school where it was difficult for teachers to readily access more structured programs.

Teacher Knowledge

Teacher knowledge and knowing has a critical effect on all aspects of teaching (Connelly et al. 1997). Taylor (2008) and Yilmaz (2008) have emphasised the importance of history teachers' knowledge of the discipline of history. Pendlebury (1990) and Phelan (2009) point to the importance of deep situational knowledge in effective decision-making. Shulman's (1986, 2004) work on teacher knowledges describes the different range of knowledges teachers apply in their curriculum work. The evidence gathered from this study's teacher community of practice demonstrated that all the categories of teacher knowledge described by Shulman (2004) were essential elements to accomplish their curriculum implementation work:

- Content knowledge

Teachers drew on content knowledge throughout the planning days particularly to evaluate the suitability of certain topics for their learners. This is seen for example in Small Story 16, *You could look at something more cultural,* as teachers and the researcher discuss what subject matter might be included in the towns, cities and commerce topic.

- General pedagogical knowledge

Teachers' knowledge of the engaging pedagogies cited in Small Story 9, *The engagement thing is a big factor for us,* is evidence of how general pedagogical knowledge was used to inform decision-making. The teachers in Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?,* began with suggestions for engaging pedagogies drawing on their general pedagogical knowledge, and gradually linked these to historical concepts.

- Curriculum knowledge

Knowledge of the Australian Curriculum document was built throughout as teachers regularly referred back to the curriculum descriptors and discussed what they would look like in practice. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* they focused closely on the curriculum descriptors when discussing the alignment of learning and assessment, and in Small Story 17, *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step,* they used knowledge of the historical skills of the curriculum. Teachers also drew on wider curriculum knowledge. In Small Story 10, *Let's not do an exam first,* one teacher contributed their knowledge of the Year 7 curriculum to inform their planning. In Small Story 11, *Interesting for us or interesting for them?,* teachers made use of one teacher's knowledge of the Year 9 course to help design a cohesive program.

- Pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge was regularly employed as teachers discussed the best ways to teach the skills of historical inquiry. This was exemplified in Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* when they recounted how they taught students to develop inquiry questions and in Small Story 17, *We just need to make*

sure we are doing it step-by-step, when they were discussing how to teach an inquiry process.

- Knowledge of learners

The teachers' knowledge of learners permeated every small story. Small Story 10, *Let's not do an exam first,* drew on knowledge of one cohort of students to inform the teachers planning for the next. The teachers used knowledge of the interests of Year 8 students to choose topics in Small Story 11 *Interesting for us or interesting for them?.* In Small Story 15, *So we ended up doing the recount*, teachers explained how they changed their assessment based on their developing knowledge of their learners. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* they used their knowledge of individual students to argue for different approaches to assessment. In Small Story 21, *You think they'll just get stuck?,* teachers utilised their knowledge of the literacy capabilities of the learners.

- Knowledge of educational contexts

The teachers had a deep knowledge of their own specific rural schooling context that was articulated explicitly in the teacher interviews, for example in Small Stories 1, 3 and 4 as teachers explained to me their teaching context 'out here'. The professional isolation the teachers sometimes experienced points to the limits of their knowledge of the wider educational context. Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place,* shows that teachers saw me as contributing knowledge of 'how things are' in other schools (line 11). I discuss my contribution to the knowledge of the community of practice in the next section.

- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values

The teachers knew the goals and purposes of the history curriculum and shaped them into their own understanding of their enterprise. The teachers formed a

strong sense of the value and purpose of their history curriculum work for their rural learners. This underpinned their decision-making discussions during the planning days.

The accomplishment and evidence of teacher professional knowledge is generally depicted in the literature as an individual responsibility (for example, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). However, this study presents an authentic picture of the reality of teaching in this school as strongly collaborative; teachers shared their knowledge and experience to make their decisions. As Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) argue: "Communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognizing that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this" (p. 4). This "collective responsibility" is clearly evidenced in the small stories as each teacher contributed knowledge that the community then built on. For example, in Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* each member of the group contributed ideas to refine a task for better curriculum alignment. In Small Story 21, *You think they'll just get stuck?,* each participant contributed suggestions to improve access to a task for students with lower levels of literacy. It was also evident at times that my knowledge was of value to the decision-making of this community of practice, for example offering some advice and reassurance in Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue*. This case study extends understanding of the application of teacher knowledge in curriculum decision-making by showing how, in this rural context, teacher knowledge was viewed as a *shared* responsibility of the community of practice. This sharing of knowledge supported teacher learning. The use of an action research approach

facilitated building this community of practice and establishing this professional learning environment.

Different Forms of Membership

Community of practice theory also focuses analytic attention on different membership roles. This teaching team evolved as members moved in and out of the group over the life of the project. Community of practice theory recognises that members of a community of practice are not all on the same membership trajectory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). My own role was periodic, joining the teachers on site for three planning days and one interview day and maintaining some email contact. The teachers' work continued between and after my visits, as they applied, reflected on and adapted their plans in their day-to-day teaching. In this study I theorise my own role in the project as a form of brokerage, where I was afforded sufficient legitimacy to participate in the planning days but would never be a full member.

At the outset of the study I saw myself taking a role as a participant researcher. Participant research has significant benefits in action research approaches in terms of facilitation but there are also complexities in adopting dual roles as researcher and participant that must be managed carefully (Fletcher, 2008; Grant et al., 2008; Mackewn, 2008). When conducting the semi-structured interviews I took up an identity as a researcher interested in learning more about the work of history teachers in rural schools. During the planning days I took up an advisory role.

Through the interviews, the teachers began to induct me into their understanding of their enterprise as they explained their views about the history curriculum, their rural context and their professional responsibilities. I saw that my own perspective on school history and teacher professionalism aligned to a large

degree with the teachers' views and I came to understand their discourse of rural schooling and the ways they were making connections between their understanding of their context and their perspectives on school history and teacher professionalism. The alignment of our discourses supported my capacity to take up a role as a participant in the teachers' community of practice during the three planning days. The interviews, designed to help me understand the teachers' perspectives, also allowed the teachers to learn about me. As these interviews unfolded I began to construct my role in the upcoming planning days as an experienced colleague able to offer support to the teachers as they engaged in their planning. For example in Small Story 5, *Unless it's ridiculously important,* I constructed my identity as an experienced colleague who understood the issues the teacher explained and indicated my willingness and capacity to offer support.

Working within the project did give me a deep insight into teachers' work at this site, but my role was clearly different to the teacher participants. It was a multifaceted advisory role that saw me working at various times as facilitator (for example, Small Story 11 *Interesting for us or interesting for them?)*, encourager (Small Story 18 *They are struggling with that part of it*; Small Story 22 *Stuck between a wall and a hard place*; Small Story 14 *It's just the time thing*; Small Story 15 *So we ended up doing the recount*; Small Story 19 *The questions were a big issue)*, experienced colleague (Small Story 9 *The engagement thing is a big factor for u*s; Small Story 14 *It's just the time thing*; Small Story 16, *You could look at something more cultural)*, mediator (Small Story 13 *Actually I think that is a really good idea)*, advisor (Small Story 19 *The questions were a big issue*), and critical questioner (Small Story 12 *What would be a good way to start?*; Small Story 13 *Actually I think that is a really good idea)*. However, the role of advisor or researcher as participant is

insufficient to describe the way I navigated my participation in this community of practice. The concept of brokerage from community of practice theory offers a more suitable way to theorise my role (Wenger, 1998).

Participant Researcher as Broker

My role in the community of practice is best understood as brokerage because of my boundary participation in this community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Although warmly welcomed into this community of practice, it was always clear that I was never to be a full member; this was not my school community, and these were not my students to teach. The team of teachers, who formed the community of practice to engage in their curriculum work, were all full members because they were all jointly responsible for the implementation of the curriculum. As anticipated from the literature, in a small rural school with high staff turnover, the membership of the community of practice changed across the life of the project. Although the membership changed, the community of practice persisted because the enterprise – the curriculum work – went on. When a new teacher on a short contract joined the project they were operating as a full member with equal influence on decision-making by the third planning day. While it may be hypothesised that the rural context with a high staff turnover and close community connections facilitated this, the membership trajectories of individual teachers were not a particular focus on this study.

My own membership of the community of practice occurred through the knowledge I could bring to the group from my connections with other professional communities of practice. As conceptualised by Wenger (1998), a broker is someone who works across communities of practice, building connections and bringing elements of one practice into another community. Brokers are never on a trajectory towards full membership; they work in boundary areas, connecting the community of

practice to a broader constellation of practices. In the community of practice under study in this research, the work continued on without me between my visits, and yet on the days of my visits the teachers and I were mutually engaged in the curriculum work. My participation provided a means for these teachers to connect with the wider community of history teachers.

The small stories reveal a number of occasions where the teachers were reassured by my comments because I brought a wider perspective to the group. These teachers valued my experience of 'how things are' elsewhere. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue*, Teacher 1 responded with relief (line 21) when I pointed out the value and appropriateness of their teaching strategy: "…You've really taught your students about what our questions are for – to drive our research…I think that's brilliant" (lines 18-20). In Small Story 12, *What would be a good way to start?,* I encouraged the teachers to trust their own judgement in deciding how best to begin their history course. I was able to affirm for teachers that their ideas aligned well with the curriculum in developing the historical concept of evidence and foregrounding inquiry and encouraged them to teach the way they thought best for their students. My experience teaching in a range of schools lent weight to my words of encouragement and reassurance. In Small Story 15, *So we ended up doing the recount,* I affirmed that teachers had made a good decision in changing their assessment task in the light of new information. In Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* I emphasised my outsider perspective to offer support, explaining: "… as an outsider just hearing about it. I don't hear, 'Oh they couldn't do it' or anything. I hear, 'With a lot of support and help and guidance and teaching, we all got there'" (lines 34-36). In Small Story 22, *Stuck between a wall and a hard place*, Teacher 2 explicitly referenced the value of bringing my experience to the group: "It's nice to have someone who's been at other

schools like you coming out here going: 'Whoa don't panic!" (line 11). In this small story Teacher 1 noted "…it is good knowing that you've got more experience" (line 1) and Teacher 2 said my involvement "gives us a bit more confidence" (line 13). These examples illustrate how I operated as a broker connecting this local community of practice with a wider community of history teachers. In Small Stories 17, *And we just need to make sure we are doing it step-by-step,* I drew on my experience teaching history with the year level to offer suggestions that aligned with the teachers' goals to model a mini-inquiry. In Small Story 13, *Actually I think that is a really good idea,* and Small Story 19, *The questions were a big issue,* I drew on my experience as an educational adviser to encourage teachers to clarify the purpose of their assessment instruments and offer some advice about making judgements.

The most significant point in conceptualising my role and clarifying my thinking about the group's expectations of me was the understanding that a brokerage trajectory is never a trajectory towards full membership (Wenger, 1998). The teachers were the full members of this community of practice, and were the real experts in their local context. Participatory research can run the risk of the researcher 'overstepping the mark' presuming to know the answer for a particular context. My role was to facilitate, support, encourage and advise if requested, but the final curriculum decisions always remained with the teachers. For example in Small Story 12, my question "What would be a good way to start?" (line 1) invited the teachers to provide the solution. This research demonstrates the value of brokerage as a framework for clarifying the participant researcher role and can inform the work of others researching with schools and teachers or working in advisory roles.

Discourses Intersecting

Certain patterns of thinking about rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism were identified in the discourse analysis. Discourses intersect and combine in complex ways and new hybrid discourses can be created when discourses are woven together (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2005; Larsen, 2010). This study shows how this community of practice wove together their particular and shared perspectives on rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism. Teachers connected the needs of their rural learners to valued elements of school history. This was further connected to teachers' professional responsibilities to meet the needs of their learners while also implementing the curriculum as intended within the institutional frameworks in which they worked. In the practice of making curriculum decisions, this weaving together of a challenge/opportunity discourse of rural schooling, a constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history and a learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism constructed a hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place. This hybrid discourse was specific to the particular socio-cultural and historical context. Another group of teachers, even in the same school, could draw on and connect different discourses to make meaning of their work.

Larsen (2010) described discourses as frameworks for social activity: "Discourses offer us frames, definitions and structures through which to view, experience and make sense of the world" (p. 209). In this study the hybrid discourse that teachers mobilised shaped a common understanding of, and commitment to, their joint enterprise of curriculum implementation, and underpinned their shared repertoire of practices. Dryzek (2005) explains that discourses "…provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements and disagreements" (p. 9). I argue that this community of practice was able to operate successfully because the members all drew on this

shared discourse. This includes my own membership as a boundary participant. Teachers inducted me into their discourse of rural schooling and I came to the study sharing their discourse of school history and teacher professionalism. Because of this alignment of perspectives, my involvement and support in the community of practice was accepted and in the process I too came to contribute to the construction of this hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my answer to my key research question – *How do teachers in this rural secondary school approach the task of implementing a new national history curriculum, with the support of a researcher?* I conclude that this community of practice (with myself as a periodic boundary participant) constructed a hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place that formed a foundation for their planning and decision-making. This discourse shaped teachers' goals for their learners and constructed decision-making as a collaborative and collegial process, giving particular significance to engaging and supporting learners, in the process reifying the curriculum, engagement, historical skills and assessment. An outcome of the community of practice was learning together about the new curriculum and building knowledge of how to implement this curriculum in the particular rural school context. I have also discussed my own membership in this community of practice and have argued that conceptualising this type of advisory work and research as brokerage and boundary participation acknowledges and builds on the local expertise of practitioners who possess a deep situational knowledge of their context (Pendlebury, 1990; Phelan, 2009; Wenger, 1998).

In answering my key research question in this chapter I integrated discussion of my subsidiary research questions that focused on particular aspects of the study:

1. The task under investigation: *How do these teachers make their decisions about curriculum and pedagogy for the new history curriculum?*

2. The context of the study: *How does the rural socio-cultural context of this school impact on teachers' work?*

3. The processes undertaken: *In this study what impact does the researcher, and the research design, have on the teachers' curriculum planning work?*

In the discussion I have explained how teachers in this place (Question 2, the rural socio-cultural context) came together with myself as an advisor (Question 3, the process established by the research design) to undertake planning and decision-making for a new curriculum (Question 1, the decision-making for the new history curriculum). In the next and final chapter I particularly attend to Question 4 as I discuss the implications for practice of this case study:

4. The goal of the research: *How does this study inform the provision of support and continuing professional learning for teachers?*

I also explain how this study contributes to knowledge of methodology and new applications of theory. I also acknowledge the limitations of this study and point to areas for further research.

Chapter 9 Implications of the Study

This study has investigated how a team of early career teachers in one rural school context learned together about how to implement a new curriculum for history. A key goal of this research was to build knowledge at the intersection of four fields of inquiry – curriculum change, history curriculum, rural schooling and teachers' work as mediators of the curriculum – to inform the provision of support, and continuing professional learning, for teachers. In this chapter I identify how this case study contributes knowledge in these areas. Although discussed separately, in practice these different aspects of teachers' work at this site were interconnected. I acknowledge the limitations of this research and suggest areas for further inquiry. I also discuss how the research methods used in this study may have relevance for qualitative researchers in educational and other fields and identify the contributions this research makes to the development and application of theory.

Implications for Practice – Knowledge

Rural Schooling

It has been argued that rural schooling is under-researched and that there is a tendency to homogenise the rural schooling experience and reduce it to a set of data that mostly highlights problems and underachievement (Gannon, 2013; Roberts & Green, 2013; Sullivan et al. 2013; White & Reid, 2008). This study addresses the imperative to attend to the specificity of rural contexts and the social and cultural dimensions of rural places in rural schooling research (Moriarty et al. 2003; Reid et al. 2010; Roberts, 2013; Roberts & Green, 2013; Sher & Sher, 1994; Sullivan et al., 2013; Thomson, 2000). It contributes another case to a developing knowledge base

that expands understanding of the diversity of rural schooling contexts. The small stories analysed in this study provide a detailed insight into the work and perceptions of one group of early career rural teachers, deepening knowledge of the rural teacher experience. The interviews revealed that the challenges facing rural teachers identified in my review of the literature were a reality for these teachers (Halsey, 2009; HREOC, 2000; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Sharplin et al., 2011; White & Reid, 2008). However, the practice of these teachers during the planning days highlights teachers' resilience and strong commitment to their learners as they worked through tensions in practice. This case study demonstrates the capacity, confidence and commitment of these early career rural teachers, contributing a case study that goes beyond the deficit depictions of rural schooling prevalent in the literature (Moriarty et al., 2003; Reid et al., 2010; Wallace & Boylan, 2009; Young & Kennedy, 2011).

Limitations and future research

As a qualitative case study situated in one particular historical and socio-cultural setting, the specific work and outcomes of this study are not repeatable. Further examples of teachers' curriculum work in a diverse range of rural school settings are needed to assess the extent to which the findings of this study are evident in other sites. The knowledge contributions reported in the following sections offer potential areas of focus for future studies of teachers' curriculum work in rural schools.

Curriculum Change

Research has indicated that teachers can be left feeling alienated and frustrated by top-down curriculum change (Dilkes et al., 2014; Kemmis et al., 2014). It is argued centralised curricula are metrocentric, placeless and can limit teachers' ability

to respond to local contexts (Ditchburn, 2012a; Kelly, 2004; Roberts, 2013; Smith & Lovat, 2003). This study contributes to the body of research monitoring the implementation of the national curriculum in Australia. The experiences of this teaching team, implementing a prescribed curriculum in a rural school setting very distant from the metropolitan centre where the curriculum was written, provide insights for those working to support schools and teachers through curriculum change.

Development of shared goals for a new curriculum

This study has affirmed the importance of teachers developing a shared understanding of the purpose of a curriculum change (Kelly, 2004; Smith & Lovat, 2003). Although these teachers' understanding of the history learning area did align with the rationale of the official curriculum, their commitment to the new curriculum was evident when teachers connected the curriculum to the needs of their learners in their local context. This study extends knowledge of forming curriculum goals by explicating how the teachers connected their discourses of school history, rural schooling and teacher professionalism to shape a strong sense of value and purpose around their history work. This shared understanding of the value of history for their rural learners facilitated teachers' collaborative work at this site because it formed a foundation for their decision-making practices. This points to the importance of teachers clarifying curriculum goals and purposes and how they relate to the local context when implementing a new curriculum, and the need to devote time to building these shared understandings in teaching teams.

Limitations and further study

From the outset of this study teachers shared understandings about their goals for teaching history in this rural context. However, it is recognised that not all teaching teams will come to curriculum work with a shared understanding of a

context or a curriculum. This suggests that further research is warranted to extend knowledge of how a teaching team can build a shared sense of value and purpose for curriculum work that is grounded in the local context.

This research did not investigate individual teachers' professional lives, but it was recognised in the data that teachers in this study were drawing on funds of knowledge to shape their understanding of their context, and therefore their goals for their learners (Hedges, 2012). This suggests future research on how teachers shape an understanding of their goals and purposes for curriculum work would be of particular relevance for supporting teachers in rural schools, where teachers are required to establish themselves quickly in a new community and may need to teach subjects for which they have limited professional preparation.

Teachers as mediators of the curriculum

This research contributes a detailed account of how these teachers worked with a new curriculum that was more strongly framed than previous curricula. With many decisions outside the classroom teachers' control, such as systemic schooling structures and organisation of curriculum, the teachers in this study adopted a pragmatic focus on areas where they had most agency: choosing topics from options available, selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches and designing assessment. The study has identified a range of concerns these teachers faced when engaging with the new curriculum, for example, how to interpret the intent of the curriculum writers, understand expectations for assessment and standards, fit plans to the teaching time available in the curriculum, design valid assessments, and find ways to support students who did not have the prior learning assumed by the curriculum. For this team of early career teachers my periodic support mediated some of these difficulties. Time – to talk about the curriculum, consult and discuss support materials, and work with

an outside advisor – was found to be critical for teachers to learn together about how to implement the new curriculum.

Limitations and future research

This study did not set out to conduct a critique of the new curriculum; rather it investigated what teachers did with the official curriculum. Teachers in this project sought to fulfil their professional responsibilities to implement the curriculum while finding the decision-making space that allowed them to make the best decisions they could for their learners. As urged by Ditchburn (2012a) there is still an imperative for ongoing critical questioning of the outcomes of the national curriculum in different contexts.

Collaborative and collegial ways of working

It was not observed in this study that any one person demonstrated a fixed disposition to change as identified by Dilkes et al. (2014); teachers experienced a range of reactions to the curriculum work across the project. This included times of confidence and enthusiasm and times of frustration and uncertainty. What this study did identify was a repertoire of practices that supported a community of practice to maintain a positive disposition towards change and persist in working through challenges. This small teaching team saw benefits in collaborative decision-making where they were able to pool their efforts, knowledge and experience, enhancing their capacity to undertake curriculum change. Their collegial practices, including respectful discussions, support and encouragement of colleagues, and a willingness to welcome the support of an outsider in an advisory role, contributed to the resilience of this teaching team. This emphasis on collaborative efforts has particular implications for rural school contexts where an individual teacher may have limited experience to

draw on. This points to the value of education employers investing time in supporting the development of such communities of practice.

Limitations and future study

This study did not focus on building collaborative processes; the original participants came to the project as friends and colleagues. They acknowledge in the data that the isolated rural context meant they socialised and worked together regularly. This research did identify the strengths of their collaborative and collegial ways of working. Further research could determine if this experience and learning about how to work with colleagues, that was such a feature of professional life in this rural school, stays with teachers as they move to on to new school settings.

Curriculum Decision-Making for History

In preparation for the introduction of the national history curriculum in Australia there was concern that there would be many teachers of history with limited professional preparation for teaching history (Henderson, 2011; Taylor, 2008). This issue was expected to be acute in rural secondary schools (Halsey, 2009; HREOC, 2000). The rich stories examined in this research inform the work of those preparing teacher education courses in history curriculum and pedagogy, and learning activities for teachers of history. This research makes explicit the thinking and concerns of teachers as they made their curriculum plans for history. What emerged strongly in this case study was that historical content did not drive the work of these history teachers. Rather they placed learners at the centre of their decision-making and emphasised the disciplinary skills and concepts of historical inquiry. The planning day discussions were dominated by consideration of how to make learning and assessment engaging, how to best teach the historical skills and concepts that teachers

believed were so valuable for their learners, how to support the diverse learning needs of the students in their classrooms, and how to support students in a formal assessment program and assess accurately against the achievement standard.

The experiences of this team of early career history teachers, particularly the tensions in practice they navigated, suggest the following priorities as areas of focus for professional learning activities to support teachers of history:

- Strategies to teach the suite of interconnected historical skills as part of a developmental process.

- Engaging and productive pedagogies for history.

- Catering to cognitive differences among learners in the history classroom, particularly strategies to support student literacy in history.

- Designing engaging and valid assessment in history.

Limitations and future research

A detailed investigation at this site into each of the areas of focus identified above was beyond the scope of this case study, but these would be profitable avenues for future research.

This study focused on teachers' plans for curriculum implementation, not the curriculum that was implemented. This suggests that future research could follow teachers from their planning discussions into the classroom to capture the moment-by-moment decision-making of teachers. This could shed light on whether the issues that shape planning outside the classroom are the same as the issues that shape decisions inside the history classroom.

Teachers' Knowledge Growth

Teacher knowledge and curriculum implementation

This study has affirmed the enduring relevance of Shulman's (1986, 2004) conceptualisation of the range of knowledges that teachers draw upon to make curriculum decisions. All seven forms of teacher knowledge were important in teachers' curriculum work for history at this site. This study was able to explicate the complex ways these knowledges were utilised as part of the decision-making process. It provides examples of how a range of knowledges is employed in a real planning situation and particularly highlights how knowledge of learners and knowledge of educational goals, purposes and values were given significance by these teachers.

This rural case study also extends Shulman's work by showing the value of broadening conceptualisations of teacher professional knowledge beyond an individual's responsibility. In this case study drawing on teacher knowledges to inform decision-making was shown to be a collaborative endeavour. Because knowledge was pooled in this community of practice as the teachers discussed their planning, they drew on an expanded knowledge base to make their curriculum decisions. This included my own contributions, for example, sharing knowledge of wider educational contexts. In the process teachers were learning with and from each other about the new curriculum. Conceptualising teacher knowledge as a collective responsibility built through collaboration has implications for supporting teachers in rural schools where individual teachers may have limited experience or professional preparation for a subject they are teaching and where new staff are regularly joining the school community.

Limitations and future research

This case study focused on a small, but changing, team of history teachers and has highlighted the benefits for teacher knowledge growth of working collaboratively. Not all teachers in small schools will have colleagues teaching in their learning area on site, and this suggests a need for further inquiry into how teachers working in isolation can be supported to establish collaborative networks.

Action research and professional learning

In the interviews teachers identified significant professional learning needs as they were about to begin implementing the new history curriculum and explained the challenges of accessing suitable professional development. Their reflections echoed the difficulties of rural teachers accessing structured professional learning reported in the literature (Green & Reid, 2004; Lake, 2007; Lock et al., 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007; Rossi & Sirna, 2008; White & Reid, 2008). This case study contributes an example of how these teachers were able to build knowledge together about a new curriculum and how to implement it when they had the time and space to talk about and reflect on their practice, to share knowledge, and to make and refine decisions together. It provides another example of how an action research approach can be an effective model for learning that is context specific, immediately relevant and grounded in real problems of practice (Piggott-Irvine & Bartlett, 2008).

This study also shows the potential of a mentor model to support the knowledge growth of teachers in rural schools where traditional formal professional learning opportunities are not readily accessible. The action research approach was shown to support the involvement of an outside educator in an advisory role, able to join the project at key stages in planning to support teachers. In this study the teachers were welcoming of, and reassured by, the perspective of a more experienced

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colleague with knowledge of 'how things are' elsewhere. This support contributed to the confidence of the teaching team.

This study also highlights areas of caution when undertaking advisory work with schools and teachers. Of particular importance is clarifying the nature and limits of the advisory role. An external advisor does not have the detailed contextual knowledge of the teachers, is not the person who will do the teaching work, nor the one who will take responsibility for the decisions. I have argued that conceptualising the advisory role as boundary participation helps to acknowledge and encourage the situated and local expertise of practitioners.

Limitations and future research

This research was designed to focus on teachers' work and teachers' knowledge growth. However, my own knowledge growth was considerable as I reflected on my advisory role. Although one research question focused on my own impact on the project, a deeper investigation of advisory work in participatory projects of this nature is warranted to explore more thoroughly the application of concepts of brokerage and boundary work (Wenger, 1998). A self-study approach could provide a useful window on the learning and experience of a researcher in such an advisory role.

Implications for Practice – Methodology

Qualitative Case Study

This research has demonstrated that the case study approach has benefits for investigating rural schooling themes as it, by definition, attends to the specificity of a rural place. However, as White (2012) has cautioned, researching in small rural communities requires careful consideration. This case study design provides examples

of how some modifications to traditional case study approaches were needed to maintain anonymity. First, it was not possible to provide a detailed description of the case study site as is traditional due to the limited number of remote secondary schools in the state; the case study detail is in the reporting of the data analysis. Second, given the small number of participants, rather than provide a description and professional life history of individuals, I focused this study on the community of practice and gave a broad description of characteristics of the group. Third, particular transcription decisions were made to make it more difficult to identify individuals including using numbers rather than pseudonyms and varying the teacher numbers across the planning days. Fourth, in discussion of the data analysis I used 'their' as a singular pronoun instead of the gender-specific 'his' or 'her'. Fifth, in conversations with the school I was mindful of protecting the professional standing of the participants. Studies focusing on individual participants or particular school characteristics would allow different lines of inquiry to be pursued, in which case seeking individual participants across a range of schools or public collaborations with individual schools may be more appropriate.

Action Research Approach

This study has shown the reciprocal benefits for schools and researchers of using action research as a tool for data collection. Educational research projects can be an additional burden on already busy schools and teachers. Developing a flexible research design around an action research framework meant the details of this project were negotiated with the school. Involvement in the project meant that, rather than losing time on a project of peripheral interest to them, the school gained dedicated time for their teachers to focus on planning of relevance to them – with some support. As a researcher, the planning day format provided me access to teachers' authentic

curriculum planning work. In this study the sustained interaction established by the planning day format resulted in a substantial and focused data set.

This study also shows the value of including semi-structured interviews at the outset of an action research project. The data from the interviews were a valuable addition to data collected on the planning days. The interview data allowed the teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs to be more explicitly identified. It also enabled me to begin relationship-building work that would be critical to my role within the project. The interviews with teachers prior to the planning days served to induct me into the community of practice, making my involvement in the project easier as I had some understanding of the perspectives of the participants before the planning work began.

The school and I both benefitted from the research design that focused on teachers' real problems of practice and quarantined sustained planning time via the planning day format. However, collecting data in a concentrated format at the planning day meetings was not without its constraints. The planning days captured planning and some reflections, but the action took place between visits. I was not privy to the moment-by-moment reflections, changes and adaptations that the teachers made to their plans as they implemented them. I therefore conceptualised the planning days as touch points. Also, my involvement as a participant researcher necessarily impacted on the data. For this reason I included a research question that focused on my impact on the project. I also needed to find some interpretive distance when analysing the data, which was achieved by using a worksheet with prompts and referring to my own utterances in third person when analysing the data.

Data Analysis

Method

This study contributes an example of how a process of discourse analysis can be adapted and developed to suit particular circumstances. My approach to discourse analysis embedded Gee's (1999, 2005) discourse analysis methods into a larger set of analytic steps. The discourse analysis method I developed for this case study involved: identification of small stories in the data, selection of representative small stories, discourse analysis of small stories focused on the building tasks of language (Gee, 2005), and finally, identifying the discourses in operation by analysing patterns of activity, significance, connection, identity and relationship building across the analysed small stories.

Small stories

This study has developed a new application of the concept of small stories developed by Bamberg (2004; 2011a; 2011b) and Georgakopoulou (2007; 2008). Aligning with the social construction paradigm of this research and acknowledging the storied nature of human experience, the small story concept was repurposed to reduce the large data set to manageable units of analysis without losing the richness of case study data. Using the small story as a unit of analysis ensured the complexity of the original conversations remained available for analysis.

Discourse analysis

This study has affirmed the efficacy of Gee's approach to discourse analysis of identifying the building tasks of language. Gee (1999, 2005) has encouraged adaption of his method to suit particular purposes and my study contributes another example of how Gee's methods of discourse analysis can be adapted profitably to suit

a particular context, research question and data set. I adapted his sample analysis questions, selected those most germane to this study and developed a worksheet of these questions with prompts. The discourse analysis questions were useful in surfacing the repertoire of practices the teachers developed in their community of practice. Identifying activity building work put a useful focus on decision-making processes by highlighting what teachers were doing in each small story, for example, brainstorming options, making a suggestion, explaining a position or trialling what a teaching episode might 'sound like' in practice. Identifying what was made significant and connected was useful to surface what teachers gave priority to in their decision-making and pointed to reifications that were being built in this community of practice. Identifying how identities and relationships were being built focused analytic attention on the ways of working that formed part of the community's repertoire of practices. When reporting my analyses I further adapted Gee's constructs by conflating significance and connections and identities and relationships as these were closely related in my data analysis.

Identification of discourses in operation

This study has shown a method for identifying discourses in operation. Because discourses are identifiable in patterns of thinking and acting in the world (Burr, 1995; Larsen, 2010), I used the findings of the initial discourse analysis to look for patterns across the small stories. This study has shown how teachers' perspectives on aspects of their work were identifiable in their responses to the interview questions and in their curriculum planning and decision-making work during the planning days. Teachers' attitudes, values and beliefs about their rural context, about the subject history and about their role as teachers showed a pattern of thinking and acting in the world as rural history teachers. It was then possible to identify how these discourses

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were connected by teachers to have particular effects. In this study the participants connected their discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism at this site to shape their understanding of their enterprise and their decision-making practices. This constructed a highly localised hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place. This approach provided methodological tools to attend to what was happening at this site, with these teachers, at this time – that is, to understand the historical and socio-cultural *situated-ness* of the case study.

Implications for Theory

Community of Practice Theory

This study has provided further evidence, in a new context, that community of practice theory offers useful explanatory tools for educational research (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). First, the theory focused analytic attention on how mutual engagement in a joint enterprise was built and realised. This theoretical lens illuminated the significance of the rural context to teachers' understanding of the value and purpose of their curriculum work. Second, attending to the shared repertoire of practices, built through the entwined processes of participation and reification, facilitated the identification and description of teachers' decision-making practices and their ways of working. Third, a focus on a community of practice as a social structure for learning offered insight into how teachers learned together about their curriculum work through and in practice. This study has shown the value of community of practice theory in deepening understandings of the site-specific complexities of teachers' curriculum work.

In this study a fourth application of community of practice theory was the focus on membership roles, in particular my role as a broker. Mayer et al. (2013) and

Akkerman et al. (2008) have found brokerage a useful concept in their studies involving communities of practice. My research provides further evidence, in a different context, of the value of theorising advisory work as boundary participation and brokerage (Wenger, 1998). Analysis of my own participation in this study provides an example of how advisory roles can bring knowledge into one community from other communities of practice. Further, understanding that as a boundary participant I would never be a full member of this community of practice was a helpful construct to guide my conduct throughout the study. It ensured I did not lose focus on the teachers as the experts in their own experience and the ones who needed to be the decision-makers in the process (Grant et al., 2008).

Complementarity of Community of Practice Theory and Discourse Theory

This study has advanced knowledge about the application of theory by highlighting the complementarity of discourse theory and community of practice theory. Discourse theory assisted to make visible *how* a community of practice shaped mutual engagement in a joint enterprise and built a shared repertoire of practices. These teachers drew on and connected particular discourses of rural schooling, school history and teacher professionalism to shape mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of curriculum decision-making for history. These discourses were also mobilised in the construction of a shared repertoire of practices. This participation was supported by reifications that were built out of discourses. I have argued these reifications can be understood as traces, or 'pieces', of discourse. For example, the teachers reified historical skills, and made frequent reference to this in their decision-making practice. The construction of this reification was only possible because the teachers shared a discourse of school history that encompassed a particular understanding of the nature and value of a complex set of disciplinary skills. This

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study has shown how discourse theory complements community of practice theory by demonstrating how discourse analysis and the identification of discourses in operation makes more visible the shared perspectives that support mutual engagement in a joint enterprise and shape the development of a shared repertoire of practices.

Conclusion

This case study research was guided by the key question*: How do teachers in this rural secondary school approach the task of implementing a new national history curriculum, with the support of a researcher?* The early career rural history teachers who were participants in this study accomplished this together, working in a community of practice with myself as a periodic boundary participant. Together they constructed a hybrid discourse of teaching school history in this rural place that was the foundation of their planning and decision-making. The teachers connected a challenge/opportunity discourse of rural schooling, constructivist/disciplinary discourse of school history and learner-centred discourse of teacher professionalism to shape a shared understanding of and commitment to their history curriculum work, and develop a repertoire of practices that involved decision-making as a collaborative and collegial process, giving particular significance to engaging and supporting learners. An outcome of the community of practice was learning together about the new history curriculum and building knowledge of how to implement this curriculum in their particular rural school context.

In this chapter I have reported the knowledge contributions and implications of this study and pointed to areas for further research. This study has contributed to building knowledge in the fields of rural schooling, curriculum change, history curriculum, and teachers' knowledge growth. The rich details of this case inform the provision of support, and continuing professional learning, for teachers. This study

has also contributed knowledge about qualitative research methodologies that have relevance beyond the field of education. It advances theoretical knowledge in showing useful applications of community of practice theory and discourse theory and highlighting the complementarity of these two theories.

This case study found that the oft-cited challenges of the rural schooling context were a reality for teachers in this school. However, this research also highlights the less frequently reported resilience and professionalism of rural teachers. What emerges strongly in this case study is the capacity, confidence and commitment of these early career rural history teachers who worked doggedly for positive outcomes for their rural learners.

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Appendix 1 Information Sheet for School

INFORMATION SHEET

This information sheet provides details of the study and explains how your school would be involved. A consent form is attached.

Research Project: A case study of teachers' work to implement the *Australian Curriculum: History*

Who is conducting the research?
Senior researcher:
    Associate Professor Cheryl Sim
    School of Education and Professional Studies
    Griffith University
    ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
    Phone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Researcher:
    Lyn Sherington
    School of Education and Professional Studies
    Griffith University
    ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
    Phone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Lyn Sherington is a PhD student. This research is being conducted as part of her PhD. Associate Professor Cheryl Sim will supervise this research.

Why is the research being conducted?

The aim of this research is to study teachers' work as they begin implementation of Australia's first national history curriculum. The introduction of the new curriculum presents a unique opportunity to conduct a case study of how one group of teachers work to build their understanding of the curriculum and plan for its implementation in their own school context. This study will contribute to understandings about curriculum change, history curriculum, how teachers make curriculum decisions for their unique school contexts, and ways teachers can be supported in their curriculum work.

Why has your school been invited to participate?

This study is attentive to the wide variety of situations in which the new curriculum will be implemented. This research aims to particularly focus on implementation in a rural or regional context where opportunities to attend face-to-face professional development may be limited.

What does participation in the research involve?

Participation in this research project will involve the researcher joining a small team of teachers as they work to implement one unit of the *Australian Curriculum: History*. It does not involve any lesson observations, but rather focuses on teachers' planning and reflection. The teaching team, with the support of the researcher, will develop an action research project that is focused on this curriculum implementation work, and addresses the school's needs and priorities. When visiting the school the researcher will join the action research project as a facilitator and will also be available to offer advice throughout the duration of the project.

The expected benefits of the research

A broad goal of the research is to develop a deep understanding of issues of curriculum implementation in order to identify factors that can inform the provision of ongoing professional learning for teachers. It is hoped that regular contact with the research team during this period of significant curriculum change will support teachers' professional learning as they work with the new history curriculum. A written report on the findings of the research will be provided to the school.

Potential risks

A schedule showing anticipated time requirements at each stage of the research is detailed in the table overleaf, although the final shape of the project will be negotiated with the school. Some TRS funding is available to facilitate the action research project.

Data collection and management

All contributions to the action research project will be de-identified before being securely stored and at all times your school and staff confidentiality will be maintained. The interviews and meetings will be audiotaped. Once the recordings are transcribed, the school and teacher will be de-identified and the audio-files will be deleted. Other materials developed as part of the planning meetings and reflections may be collected and will be de-identified. In any publication and reporting of the research pseudonyms will be used.

Confidentiality

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 http://www.griffith.edu.au/about- griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan   or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

Your participation is voluntary

Your school's participation in this project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw the school from the study at any time. Participation by individual teachers is also voluntary, and any participant may withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions/further information

If you require any additional information or would like to discuss any issues at any time during the project please do not hesitate to contact me at ███████████████████████ or by telephone on ██████████.

The ethical conduct of research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. 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.

Possible plan of the study and anticipated time requirements

*The researcher is able to contribute to the action research project throughout the duration of the project – to be negotiated with the school.

Stage and possible timeframes	Main activity	Anticipated time requirements
Stage 1 Term 4 2012 Planning	Teacher participants complete information sheet Negotiation of dates to visit school	Completion of brief participant information sheet (via email)
Stage 2 Term 4 2012 Establishing the action research project	First researcher visit Short semi-structured interview with participants Meeting of teaching team	Interview (audio-taped) 15 minutes 1 meeting (audio-taped) 2 hours
Stage 3 Early Term 1 2013 Implementing the project	Second researcher visit Project implementation	1 meeting (audio-taped) 2 hours 1 – 2 short reflections (via email)
Stage 4 Mid Term 1 2013 Mid-way through the project	Third researcher visit Reflection and refinement of the action research project	1 meeting (audio-taped) 1 ½ hours 1 – 2 short reflections (via email)
Stage 5 End Term 1 2013 Final reflections on the project	Short semi-structured interviews to reflect on project	Interviews (audio-taped) 20 minutes (via phone, email or Skype)

Research Project: A case study of teachers' work to implement the
Australian Curriculum: History

CONSENT FORM

Research Team   **Associate Professor Cheryl Sim**
School of Education and Professional Studies
████████████████
Phone: ████████
Lyn Sherington
█████████████████████
Phone: ███████

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that involvement in this research will require selected members of the school teaching staff to complete 2 short interviews, participate in planning meetings, and provide occasional reflections via email;

- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

- I understand the risks involved;

- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to the school from participation in this research;

- I understand that the university researcher will author and publish the results of this research, and that anonymity will at all times be safeguarded;

- I understand that participation in this research is voluntary;

- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

- I understand that I am free to withdraw the school from the research 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 the participation of ……………………………………. in this research.

Name of Principal: _____

Signature:_____**Contact email:** _____

Date: _____/_____/ _____

Appendix 2 Information Sheet for Participants

INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for considering participation in this research project with Griffith University. This information sheet provides details of the study and explains how you will be involved. Please sign the attached consent form if you are able to participate.

Research Project: A case study of teachers' work to implement the *Australian Curriculum: History*

Who is conducting the research?

Senior researcher:
    Associate Professor Cheryl Sim
    School of Education and Professional Studies
    Griffith University
    ████████████████
    Phone: ████████████

Researcher:
    Lyn Sherington
    School of Education and Professional Studies
    Griffith University
    ████████████████████
    Phone: ████████████

Lyn Sherington is a PhD student. This research is being conducted as part of her PhD. Associate Professor Cheryl Sim will supervise this research.

Why is the research being conducted?

The aim of this research is to study teachers' work as they begin implementation of Australia's first national history curriculum. This study will contribute to understandings about curriculum change, history curriculum, how teachers make curriculum decisions for their unique school contexts, and ways teachers can be supported in their work.

Why have you been invited to participate?

This research particularly focuses on implementation in rural and regional contexts where access to face-to-face professional development opportunities may be limited.

What you will be asked to do?

Participation in this research project will involve you working with the researcher and your colleagues to plan for and implement one unit of the *Australian Curriculum: History*. It does not involve any lesson observations. This research is primarily focused on your normal work role as a member of a teaching team implementing a new unit of work. Your teaching team, with the support of the researcher, will develop an action research project of your own design, according to your school's needs and priorities. When visiting the school the researcher will join the action research project as a facilitator and will also be available to offer advice throughout the duration of the project.

The expected benefits of the research

A broad goal of the research is to develop a deep understanding of issues of curriculum implementation in order to identify factors that can inform the development of ongoing professional development for teachers in years to come. It is hoped your participation in the project, and collaboration with the university, will support your own professional learning as you work with the new history curriculum. A written report on the findings of the research will be provided to the school. A schedule showing anticipated time requirements at each stage of the researcher is detailed in the table overleaf, although the final shape of the project will be negotiated with the school.

Potential risks

The design of the project aims to minimise additional calls on your time. A schedule showing anticipated time requirements at each stage of the research is detailed in the table overleaf, although the final shape of the project will be negotiated with the school.

Data collection and management

All of your contributions to the project will be de-identified before being securely stored and at all times your confidentiality will be maintained. The interviews and meetings will be audiotaped. Once the recordings are transcribed you and your school will be de-identified and the audio-files will be deleted. Other materials developed as part of the planning meetings and reflections may be collected and will be de-identified. In any publication and reporting of the project pseudonyms will be used.

Your confidentiality

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 http://www.griffith.edu.au/about- griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation in this project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions/further information

If you require any additional information or would like to discuss any issues at any time during the project please do not hesitate to contact me at ███████████████████████ or by telephone ████████████.

The ethical conduct of research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. 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.

Possible plan of the study and anticipated time requirements

*The researcher is able to contribute to the action research project throughout the duration of the project – to be negotiated with the school.

Stage	Main activity	Anticipated time requirements
Stage 1 Term 4 2012 Planning	Potential teacher participants receive information sheet Negotiation of dates to visit school	Completion of brief participant information sheet (via email)
Stage 2 Term 4 2012 Establishing the action research project	First researcher visit Short semi-structured interview with participants Meeting of teaching team	Interview (audio-taped) 15 minutes 1 meeting (audio-taped) 2 hours
Stage 3 Early Term 1 2013 Implementing the project	Second researcher visit Project implementation	1 meeting (audio-taped) 2 hours 1 – 2 short reflections (via email)
Stage 4 Mid Term 1 2013 Mid-way through the project	Third researcher visit Reflection and refinement of the action research project	1 meeting (audio-taped) 1 ½ hours 1 – 2 short reflections (via email)
Stage 5 End Term 1 2013 Final reflections on the project	Short semi-structured interviews to reflect on project	Interviews (audio-taped) 20 minutes (via phone, email or Skype)

A case study of teachers' work to implement the *Australian Curriculum: History*

CONSENT FORM

Research Team   **Associate Professor Cheryl Sim**
School of Education and Professional Studies
██████████████████
Phone: ████████████
Lyn Sherington
████████████████████████████
Phone: ████████████

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include 2 short interviews, participation in planning meetings, and occasional reflections via email;

- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

- I understand the risks involved;

- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;

- I understand that the university researcher will author and publish the results of this research, and that my anonymity will at all times be safeguarded;

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;

- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

- 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 research.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Contact email:** _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

Appendix 3 Extract from Data Map Showing Storylines

Table 27 Data map showing small stories and storylines

When	Small stories	History curriculum storylines	Assessment storylines	Learner storylines	Rural schooling storylines
Interview 1	Importance of history **Small Story 1 *Out Here***	Historical concepts Historical skills Pedagogy		Relevance of curriculum	Staffing Isolation Opportunity Connection
	Established collaborative ways of working	Time to plan Resources		Diversity of learners	Collaboration
	Importance of student engagement	Prescribed curriculum		Engagement Relevance of curriculum	Connection
	Professional learning needs for new curriculum and access to professional development **Small Story 5 *Unless it's ridiculously important***	Understanding curriculum Resources Curriculum structure Prescribed curriculum	Understanding expectations	Diversity of learners Prior learning	Isolation Staffing Professional learning
Interview 2	Importance of history **Small Story 2 *It's something that we do in such a unique way in history***	Historical concepts Historical skills Pedagogy		Isolation Insularity Relevance of curriculum	Isolation Connection
	Importance of engagement	Prescribed curriculum Topic choices Curriculum structure		Relevance of curriculum Engagement Insularity	
	Collegiality and collaboration **Small Story 7 *You guys look to me like you're pretty good at that!***	Time to plan Resources Teacher knowledge/ experience		Diversity of learners	Collegiality/ support Collaboration Staffing

	Challenges ahead in curriculum implementation	Understanding curriculum Resources Historical skills		Literacy Relevance of curriculum	Isolation Access to resources Connection
	Professional learning needs to implement the new history curriculum **Small Story 8 *But how to make those decisions*?**	Understanding the curriculum Time/amount to teach Historical skills Prescribed curriculum Decision-making	Understanding expectations	Knowledge of learners Literacy	Staffing Professional learning Collegiality/ support
Planning Day 1 Session 1	Setting up and clarifying areas of focus **Small Story 9 *The engagement thing is a big factor***	Historical skills Pedagogy Time/amount to teach Resources		Diversity of learners Engagement Literacy Supporting learners Relevance of curriculum	Collegiality/ support
	Clarifying systemic and school requirements including timetable	Prescribed curriculum Curriculum structure School structures Resources Time to plan	Understanding expectations		Professional learning
	Considering assessment requirements **Small Story 10 *Let's not do an exam first***	School structures Historical skills Curriculum structure	Understanding expectations Assessment techniques Achievement standard	Prior learning Expectations Supporting learners	
	Deciding how to treat the Overview	Curriculum structure Prescribed curriculum		Engagement Prior learning	
	Reflecting on what they have done in the past	Curriculum structure Historical	Assessment techniques	Engagement Expectations	Isolation

295

		knowledge Historical concepts	296		
	Deciding to select Medieval Europe depth study	Curriculum structure School structures Historical knowledge Time/amount to teach Teacher experience		Engagement	
	Selecting and sequencing remaining depth studies **Small Story 11** *Interesting for us or interesting for them?*	Understanding curriculum Curriculum structure School structures Teacher experience Teacher knowledge/ experience Resources Historical concepts		Engagement Supporting learners Relevance of curriculum Diversity of learners	Isolation Connection
	Developing an assessment plan for the year	School structures Historical skills Resources	Assessment techniques Purpose/validity Understanding expectations	Engagement Supporting learners	Connection

Appendix 4 Selection of Representative Small Stories

Table 28 Selection of representative small stories

Meta-categories	Storylines	Explanatory notes	Represented in small stories
History curriculum storylines	Understanding curriculum	Reading and seeking to understand the curriculum document. For example: identifying 'intent', where there is flexibility, expectations of depth and breadth of learning.	Small stories 5, 11
	Prescribed curriculum	Seeking to teach all of the material in the curriculum, most often seen as checking what is or is not 'covered' in planning to date.	Small stories 5, 6, 14, 22
	Curriculum structure	Organisation of knowledge in the curriculum, for example: depth study options, selection and organisation of subject matter in content descriptions. Most often discussed as a regulatory or constraining factor.	Small stories 5, 10, 11, 16
	Historical knowledge	Historical subject matter was part of most planning being the context for developing historical concepts and skills. It is particularly noted where the subject matter was given particular significance as important, relevant, interesting etc.	Small stories 13, 16, 21
	Historical skills	Skills related to historical inquiry for example, developing research questions, evaluating sources, communicating knowledge, supporting with evidence.	Small stories 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21
	Historical concepts	Historical concepts in the curriculum such as empathy, perspectives, evidence, change and continuity, cause and effect, significance	Small stories 1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 15, 16
	Resources	Includes resources to help teachers prepare and teach, student access to resources including access to ICT, classrooms, library.	Small stories 5, 9, 11, 13, 21
	Pedagogy	Discussion and decisions about how to teach something. Mostly intentions, as detailed lesson plans not made.	Small stories 1, 2, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21
	Time/amount to teach	The amount of curriculum time provided for history in the timetable as compared to the amount of curriculum content in history.	Small stories 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 20, 22
	Time to plan	Time available for teachers to plan for the new curriculum.	Small story 7
	School structures	Organisation structures of school that impact on planning. Most often related to timetable structures, school priorities, and assessment and reporting timelines.	Small stories 10, 11, 12, 14

	Teacher knowledge/ experience	Knowledge and experience teachers bring to planning. Most often a reference to previous teaching experiences, but also including lack of knowledge and limited experience.	Small stories 7, 11, 21
Assessment storylines *Assessment is artificially separated from other aspects of curriculum due to the significance to these teachers at the broad planning stages.	Understanding expectations	Determining what is a suitable or expected for assessment in Year 8.	Small stories 5, 8, 10, 19, 22
	Assessment techniques	Considering different assessment genres, deciding on appropriate technique	Small stories 10, 13, 15
	Designing assessment	The practical design of assessment tasks, including efforts to select engaging topics.	Small story 13, 15, 17, 21
	Purpose/ validity	Assessing whether a proposed assessment has a clear purpose that can be aligned with the curriculum.	Small stories 13, 15, 16, 21
	Making judgements	Discussion about how to mark student assessments and standards.	15, 19, 22
	Achievement standard	Referring to and checking the end of year achievement standard to inform assessment design, often identifying which aspect of the achievement standard was being targeted in a task.	Small stories 10, 13, 15, 16, 19
Learner Storylines *Where not explicitly connected to rurality	Knowledge of learners	Teachers' knowledge of their students or knowledge of previous students as applied to planning.	Small stories 8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 18, 21
	Prior learning	The learning from primary school that students bring to the study of history in secondary school	Small stories 7, 11, 18
	Engagement	Student interest and application in learning and assessment. Most often seeking to identify this and factor this into planning.	Small stories 3, 4, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22
	Relevance of curriculum	Why the history curriculum is relevant and valuable to the learners, including transferrable skills, cultural value e.g. developing appreciation of difference and tolerance of others.	Small stories 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11
	Diversity of learners	Wide range of students in the class in terms of cognitive differences, backgrounds and interests. Most often regarding learners needing most support or challenge for teachers.	Small stories 5, 7, 11, 16, 18, 19, 21
	Literacy	Literacy levels of students. Most often a reference to low levels of literacy.	Small stories 8, 9, 15, 18, 21

	Expectations	Teacher expectations about what students will or will not be able to do.	Small stories 10, 15, 17, 18, 22
	Supporting learners	Awareness of and attention to supporting varied learning needs of students, including efforts to differentiate learning.	Small stories 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 21
Rural schooling storylines	Isolation	Referring to physical location of school and associated with feelings of isolation, insularity and disconnect for students and professional isolation for teachers.	Small stories 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11
	Connection	Feelings of connection to both place and people (social).	Small stories 1, 2, 11, 20, 21
	Opportunity	Connecting place to opportunity – both opportunities afforded and lack of opportunity.	Small story 1
	Collegiality/ support	Collegial attitudes and support for fellow teachers, connected to rural context by teachers.	Small stories 7, 8, 9, 18, 19, 20, 22
	Collaboration	Reference to a preference for working together, connected to rural context by teachers.	Small stories 7, 21
	Staffing	Reference to high proportion of early career teachers, fewer experienced staff, teaching subjects with limited experience and/or professional preparation, high levels of staff turnover. Associated with need for support	Small stories 1, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Professional learning	Professional learning opportunities for rural teachers, most often a reference to access of formal professional development programs.	Small story 5, 8
	Access to resources	Consideration of how rural context may limit access to some resources including ICT access.	Small story 4

Appendix 5 Sample Discourse Analysis Worksheet

Discourse analysis worksheet (developed from Gee, 1999; 2005)	
Small Story	"The thing is they do need an hypothesis" (Note: this sample is not a small story reported in this thesis)
Reference	Planning Day 2, Session 3, pp. 25-30
Building activities What activity/activities related to the curriculum work is this small story used to enact?	•What is going on here? What is this small story about? •What are the components of this small story? (Sub-activities) •What happens in this small story? (Actions) (Prompt - Are they deciding, considering, comparing, identifying, explaining, weighing up, arguing, suggesting, testing, planning, joking, remembering etc.?)

Teachers are discussing how to teach writing a simple introductory paragraph in history. This discussion prompts consideration of writing a hypothesis. Here teachers are trying to decide the best way to teach students how to develop a hypothesis.

Teachers remember this has been difficult to teach before and expect it will be so again.
Teachers are concerned that a range of topics will mean a range of hypotheses.

Sub-activities – problem explained, acknowledged, solutions proposed, testing what one solution would 'look like' in practice, explanation of why the solution is suitable.
The teachers decide to accept a suggestion to provide a generic hypothesis that students adjust for their topic.

| **2. Building significance**

How is this small story being used to make certain things significant OR not and in what ways? | •What words and phrases seem important?

•What are the situated meanings of these words and phrases?

•What values and ideas are attached to particular words and phrases, and by whom? (Prompt: important, relevant, challenging, accepted, necessary, positive, negative, not valued etc.)

•What is not made significant? (Mentioned or not mentioned) |

Hypothesis
The teachers value the skill of using a hypothesis when presenting historical arguments. Part of the set of historical skills they are teaching.
It is accepted by all participants that a hypothesis is needed. "They do need a hypothesis" line 7
No one mentions the possibility of not developing a hypothesis.

Situated meaning – disciplinary meaning specific to history, not scientific meaning. It is the answer to students' key research question that they have developed during a research process. A synthesis of the results of their inquiry. Answer to their key question. All share this understanding of a hypothesis therefore no need to articulate it explicitly. All place value on it.

Learners are given significance in the discussion.
Stage in their learning in history is a significant factor. Have not worked with an hypothesis before.
Literacy levels of learners – implied (not stated) that writing the introductory paragraph with be a challenge for some, will need a lot of support, seeking simplest way to teach, worried they will leave some students behind if they don't find an effective way to teach it.
'Tricky' used three times in relation to teaching hypothesis (lines 5, 6, 12) "that's going to be tricky to do as a group" line 6

Developmental approach, scaffolding learning
"We'll break down each part [of the introduction]" line 1
"So to nurse them along" line 12 – uses metaphor of nursing to explain how they need to develop this skill in a gradual supportive way.
Final decision offers scaffold - provide hypothesis that just needs topic added, write it together, and encourage more independent development of an hypothesis in semester 2.

3. Building connections How does this small story connect or disconnect things? How does it make one thing relevant (or irrelevant) to another?	•How does this story connect to what comes before and after? •What sort of connections are made in this small story? (Prompt - activities, significance, identities and relationships) •What sort of connections are made to things outside this situation? (Prompt - outside this project, e.g. school, community, wider educational contexts) •What tensions and disconnects are evident in this small story?

This discussion connects to earlier decisions about assessment. The previous written response was more informal (recount) so teachers persist with this more formal response genre.

Teachers connect hypothesis development with needs of learners.
Developing and using a hypothesis is a valued skill (connects to teachers' goals for their learners articulated in the interviews).
But teachers expect their students will find this difficult to do – based on their experience, the stage in the course and cognitive demands of the task.

Tension between what teachers believe students need to learn in history, and what they believe students are ready to learn.

Solution settled on introduces the concept/skill, but offers support. Plan to build on this later in the year.

This discussion may be connected to a wider concern to prepare students for the type of work they will need to do in later years of high school. Do we all assume students need to master the essay genre in secondary school and it is something that they need to start teaching from the first year of high school?

4. Building identities and relationships What identities and what sort of relationships are being enacted in this small story?	•What identities are under construction here? (Prompt - consider roles, positions, knowledge and beliefs, feelings and values) •What sort of relationships are being built or taken for granted (taken for granted or being built? (Prompt - between teachers, between researcher and teachers)

Teachers:
Teachers are constructing identities as particular types of history teachers as their discussion focuses on valued disciplinary skills. Also as learner-centred professionals they take up the challenge of teaching a skill students find difficult and search for the solution that is most supportive of their learners.

Researcher:
Acknowledges their concerns are valid (lines 4, 16, 37) – constructing herself as a colleague who has experienced similar challenges.
Offers advice that they just provide one generic hypothesis for the class to use. "I reckon …" line 18.
Trying to offer a suggestion without exerting too much influence.

Collegial and collaborative relationship is being built.
Evidenced by how each builds on the suggestions of others to reach a decision:
R – line 18 suggestion
T1 – line 19 starts thinking how the suggestion might work
T2 – line 20 building on T1's idea
T1 – line 21 builds on T2's idea
T2 – line 22 adds a bit more
R – continues building on the idea testing what it would 'sound like' in practice
This is a way of working the group take for granted – part of their practice.

A number of half finished statements, missing words indicated by [ ]. Near end of a big day so all tired.
But all understanding each other well and not needing to fully finish off ideas – shared understanding of history and making reference back to earlier conversations.

Appendix 6 Summary of Research Activities

Date	Activity	Notes
April 2012	Research design	Confirmation of candidature
May 2012	Ethics Approval	Research Ethics Database Protocol Number: EDN/38/12/HREC
August 2012	Recruitment	Invitation to participate letter to school principal
		Application to conduct research in a DETE school
		School information letter to principal
		Participant information letter to potential participants
September 2012 October 2012	Informed consent	Collection of school consent form
		Collection of participant consent form
October 2012	Negotiation of final shape of action research project	Year 8 history curriculum
		Phone and email arrangements through HOD
		Meeting with HOD and Acting Principal
29 October 2012	Semi-structured interviews with participants	3 30-45 minute interviews with Year 8 history teachers
30 October 2012	Planning Day 1	3 audio-recorded planning sessions
		3 teachers, HOD and researcher
October 2012 – March 2013	Follow up and organisation of next planning day	Email communication with teachers
		Email and phone communication with HOD
28 March 2013	Planning Day 2	3 audio-recorded planning sessions
		2 teachers, HOD and researcher
		3rd planning day negotiated
March - June 2013	Follow up and organisation of next planning day	Email communication with teachers
		Email and phone communication with HOD
21 June 2013	Planning Day 3	3 audio-recorded planning sessions
		2 teachers, HOD and researcher
July – November 2013	Follow up feedback from participants	Email communication with teachers and HOD
November 2013	Concluding active phase of project	Thank you letters to school and teachers