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Democracy and Bureaucracy

Tensions in Public Schooling

Edited by

Judith D. Chapman and Jeffrey F. Dunstan



Democracy and Bureaucracy

First published in 1990, *Democracy and Bureaucracy* examines the tensions associated with the reorganization of public education in Australia. Contributors explore these tensions through a variety of related antinomies: bureaucracy and democracy, control and autonomy, centralism and devolution. The thesis generally propounded in this book is that democratic structures, participation and school-based decision-making are all elements of school improvement which enable a bureaucracy to be more responsive, less authoritarian, and in control only over the macro issues of policy, thereby leaving to schools the maximum degree of freedom possible for their own determination of principles, policies and practices. This book will be of interest to students of education, pedagogy, public policy and public administration.



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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>		vii
<i>Introduction</i>		
<i>Judith Chapman and Jeffrey Dunstan</i>		1
<i>Chapter 1</i>	Democracy and Bureaucracy in the Organization of School Systems in Australia: A Synoptic View	
	<i>Hedley Beare</i>	9
<i>Chapter 2</i>	Balancing Competing Values in School Reform: International Efforts in Restructuring Education Systems	
	<i>William Lowe Boyd</i>	25
<i>Chapter 3</i>	From Charity School to Community School: The Unfinished Australian Experience	
	<i>Brian V. Hill</i>	41
<i>Chapter 4</i>	Democracy, Bureaucracy and the Politics of Education	
	<i>Grant Harman</i>	57
<i>Chapter 5</i>	Governing Australia's Public Schools: Community Participation, Bureaucracy and Devolution	
	<i>Lyndsay G. Connors and James F. McMorrow</i>	75
<i>Chapter 6</i>	Exploring Trails in School Management	
	<i>David McRae</i>	99
<i>Chapter 7</i>	Democracy, Bureaucracy and the Classroom	
	<i>Garth Boomer</i>	115

Contents

<i>Chapter 8</i>	Democracy and Bureaucracy: Curriculum Issues <i>Christine Deer</i>	131
<i>Chapter 9</i>	Accountability in Changing School Systems <i>Clive Dimmock and John Hattie</i>	155
<i>Chapter 10</i>	Financial Issues in the Tension between Democracy and Bureaucracy <i>Ross Harrold</i>	175
<i>Chapter 11</i>	Tensions in System-wide Management <i>George Berkeley</i>	193
<i>Chapter 12</i>	Reforming Bureaucracy: An Attempt to Develop Responsive Educational Governance <i>Fazal Rizvi and Lawrence Angus</i>	215
	<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	239
	<i>Index</i>	245

Foreword

I commend this book to all those who are committed to the idea of high quality public education. Public education is by its nature controversial. It is controversial because it seeks to express what is best in a culture, to find a worthwhile and workable balance between continuity and change.

In many countries over recent years this has grown more difficult. The nature of our societies, with their recognition of cultural distinctions and their unwillingness to grant undisputed authority, means that there is a more difficult task in obtaining agreement on purposes, on the processes for their achievement and on the validation of that achievement. Where we once had an unspoken consensus, it now needs to be hammered out in a series of processes that can be long and difficult. That is the price we pay for democracy. That price is worth paying.

The edited collection which follows arises from a project sponsored by the Research Committee of the Australian College of Education. That Committee was conscious of the enormous tensions which had been developing in the organization of public education in Australia. They felt that consideration of the issues associated with these tensions could only be handled through an amalgam of personal experience and theoretical insight. That amalgamation has been achieved to a remarkable degree in this book.

The Australian College of Education is fortunate to have had Dr Judith Chapman and Dr Jeffrey Dunstan as the organizing force behind this book. They represent that productive interchange between research and experience which is helping to illuminate some of Australia's educational dilemmas. They have assembled a distinguished and appropriate group for this important task.

On behalf of the Australian College of Education I welcome and

Foreword

commend this incisive and important collection of contributions focused on the issue of democracy and bureaucracy.

Phillip Hughes
President, Australian College of Education

Introduction

Judith D. Chapman and Jeffrey F. Dunstan

Theme

In recent years and in many countries there have been major changes in the organization of public education. In association with these changes there have been substantial revisions to the principles governing the organization and operation of schools and a reshaping of relations between the centre, regions and schools within the education system. In most countries shifts in the locus of educational decision-making have been accompanied by tensions and difficulties. This book examines the tensions and difficulties associated with the reorganization of public education in Australia. Contributors explore these tensions through a variety of related antinomies: bureaucracy and democracy, control and autonomy, centralism and devolution.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries public schools in each of the Australian states were organized in large bureaucratic systems, characterized by a high degree of centralized control, a clearly defined hierarchy of authority, an extensive set of regulations designed to ensure fair, equitable and uniform treatment of members of the teaching service and an efficient, equitable distribution of resources to schools. The operation of this system was rarely questioned. School principals and staff exercised few degrees of freedom. Structures were in place to enforce compliance in curriculum, personnel, finance and facilities administration.

Recently, however, there has been considerable divergence from this pattern as school systems, in response to a broad range of social, political, economic and management pressures, have attempted to decentralize administrative arrangements and devolve responsibility to regions and schools. In so doing it has been necessary for policy-makers, system level administrators and representatives of teachers' and parents' associations to address the considerable tension between bureaucratic concerns for hierar-

Introduction

chy, impersonality, consistency, economy and maximum efficiency, which characterized traditional practices, and the concern for participatory decision-making and increased localized autonomy in the pluralist society of Australia in the late twentieth century.

This book is devoted to an account and critical analysis of these changes. It contains contributions from many who were major actors in this period of change. Their accounts and interpretations, based on insights gained from practical experience, are complemented by the analyses and critiques of leading academics who draw on a range of disciplinary perspectives that are used to inform their commentaries and judgments.

Despite the momentum towards democratic structures reflected in the efforts to move towards decentralization and devolution, bureaucratic structures are still in place in Australia, and in the view of most contributors to this book they are an indispensable requirement in any successful system of administration of public education. The tension emerges in decisions about how much control central authorities should retain and how much autonomy should be granted to regions and schools.

While contributors are generally agreed that schools and regional administrations are increasingly introducing democratic decision-making involving teachers, parents, students and administrators, they also acknowledge that such decision-making is constrained. It is exercised only within the boundaries of government policies and guidelines, although the nature of these guidelines is consistently under review. Differing understandings and interpretations of 'the boundary line' contribute to the difficulties.

Problems also emerge from suspicions about 'motive'. Is the intention in relocating decision-making to the local level supposed to increase democratic approaches, or to contain expenditures and to allocate resources more effectively and with less opposition? To what extent is local decision-making a bona fide endeavour to acknowledge the professionalism of teachers, to make more meaningful decisions about the educational needs of students, and better to match school programs with the wishes and circumstances of school communities? Or is it to be regarded as an abdication of responsibility by government and central administrators?

In any examination of the changing relationships and governance patterns a recurring issue is the question of dual responsibility and accountability. This issue manifests itself in a number of ways, but it is particularly acute for teachers as they attempt to address the tensions that sometimes emerge in responding to the expectations of those with whom they are in vertical relationship (bureaucratic line authority) and those

with whom they are in horizontal relationship (democratic local accountability to principal, school council and school community).

Several contributors argue that the 'democracy–bureaucracy' antinomy is a false dichotomy. Democratic structures apply throughout many modern educational bureaucracies, including state boards of education, regional boards, school councils and a vast array of participative committees. It is structures such as these that are introduced to achieve the goal of 'responsive bureaucracy'. Are these 'less bureaucratized structures' to be located somewhere along the bureaucracy–democracy continuum? Is it appropriate to consider the notion of a continuum? Or are the notions mutually exclusive?

The thesis generally propounded in this book is that democratic structures, participation and school-based decision-making are all elements of school improvement which enable a bureaucracy to be more responsive, less authoritarian and in control only over the macro issues of policy, thereby leaving to schools the maximum degree of freedom possible for their own determination of principles, policies and practices.

School communities should thus be given increasing decision-making opportunities within clearly stated government policies, together with the necessary support and resources to make such participation successful. Although democratic processes are a necessary part of a participatory system, their mere existence is not sufficient to ensure widespread adoption of a participatory approach to learning and management. An extensive program of professional development, action research and dissemination of ideas and practices is required to support the change process at each level of a system to ensure that both democracy and bureaucracy contribute in their necessary ways to the education of children and the effective outcomes of schooling.

Contents

The collection begins with an historical account of major developments in the organization of public education in Australia. In Chapter 1 the author, Hedley Beare, documents the shift from the highly centralized and bureaucratic administrative systems that organized the provision of public education in Australia in the past. He shows the extent to which moves in the direction of more decentralized structures and democratic practices were accompanied by turbulence and influenced by the increasing professionalization of teaching, the dismantling of large central offices, citizen participation in policy-making, parental choice in schooling, the

Introduction

appearance of councils and boards and the movement towards self-managing schools. The day of single, centralized control of education exercised through a large bureaucracy and located in a state capital city has gone forever, he concludes.

The relationship between the centre and the periphery becomes all the more complex in a decentralized and democratic public education system, argues William Lowe Boyd in Chapter 2. The tensions in Australian education today are similar to those in many developed industrial nations, he suggests. World-wide social, economic and technical trends have generated needs that few existing school systems can meet. Needed reforms are difficult to achieve partly because we often want to operationalize and maximize competing values, such as equity, excellence, efficiency, liberty and choice. Even though Australia and other education systems, such as those in North America, differ radically in the origin and evolution of their school systems, Boyd shows how both face the same need to achieve a balance between competing values.

Issues of values and assumptions underlying education are explored and developed by Brian Hill in Chapter 3. Educational administration is not a value-neutral technology, he claims. Bringing perspectives from philosophy to his analysis of long-term developments in education, Hill argues that centralized bureaucracies have attempted to move towards a professed value-neutrality which disguised the substitution of administrative objectives for goals expressive of the common good. Hill concludes that the myths of technocratic neutrality and ideological neutrality, which had been associated with bureaucratic systems, must be exploded and forceful attempts launched to embed schools more securely in their local communities through the development, at the local level, of negotiated charters of democratic values from which administrative protocols can be devised.

This proposal highlights the need to consider issues associated with the relationship between democracy and bureaucracy from a political dimension. Thus in Chapter 4 Grant Harman examines the political conflicts in Australian education over the last two decades from the perspective of the tension between bureaucratic concerns of consistency, economy and efficiency and democratic ideals of participation and local autonomy. Harman concludes that to a significant extent the conflicts of educational politics in Australia have concerned different value positions regarding democracy and bureaucracy, but they have also been about other value positions related to such matters as the purposes of schooling, morals, the role of the family and individual liberty. In addition, he argues that educational politics in Australia, as elsewhere, to a major extent have been about the competition for scarce resources and the

efforts of interest groups and political actors to win more power and position for themselves.

The participation in public schooling of one such interest group is discussed in Chapter 5. Lyndsay Connors and James McMorro document demands for greater community and parent participation in the governance of Australian public schools that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, when a growing body of educated and articulate parents and teachers, themselves the product of post-war expansion in secondary schooling, began to challenge the legitimacy of the highly centralized bureaucracies which had run public schools for over a century. In the context of the 1980s Connors and McMorro indicate the ways in which the emphasis on economic reform, and the concepts and rhetoric of community participation, developed from collectivist political and social ideologies in the 1960s and 1970s, began to be accommodated in the notion of individualized choice among diverse forms of schooling and to be identified with forms of devolution of decision-making to local school communities designed to place responsibility for managing schools with the consumers rather than the producers of public education. The identification of community participation with devolution of powers to self-governing schools, they argue, has profound educational and political implications for Australian schooling in the 1990s and embodies a direct challenge to the egalitarian ideology which had hitherto underpinned the development of Australian public education.

In Chapter 6 David McCrae also highlights some of the dilemmas facing those responsible for educational management. 'Democracy' as it has commonly been implemented in schools misunderstands the nature of both 'role' and 'accountability' in school settings, the nature and significance of school leadership, how schools operate and the absolute requirement for both speed and efficiency in decision-making, McCrae argues. He suggests that the mechanisms used to introduce it have been often clumsy, bland and badly focused, and have ignored the necessity for variety and responsiveness to individual situations.

In Chapter 7 Garth Boomer offers an educational perspective on the tensions between democracy and bureaucracy, beginning with a micro-analysis of democracy and the classroom and an analysis of power relationships between teachers and students. 'Democracy' is seen as a problematic term and democratic practices as inevitably contaminated by non-democratic influences. Nevertheless, features of an ideal 'democratic' classroom are postulated and discussed. An examination of bureaucratic structures and practices then follows in relation to the question: 'What kind of bureaucracy would best serve the kind of democratic classroom described?' 'Bureaucracy' is set in the context of political and individual

Introduction

influences and portrayed as 'contested'. The myth of a group of like-minded public servants implacably serving the system is questioned. There follows a depiction of the type of bureaucracy which would be congruent with the democratic classroom previously described. Features elicited include explicitness, negotiation, questioning and reflection. In tension with the postulated ideal, the realities of 'containing and conservatizing rules and structures' are then examined. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the barriers and impulses to reform and action which might improve bureaucracies and promote democratic classrooms.

The educational perspective is expanded in Chapter 8 where Christine Deer examines the tension between centralized curriculum development and school-based curriculum development. She points to the changing patterns of control over the curriculum from the highly centralized state control that existed in the first hundred years of provision of public education in Australia, to the move towards local school-based development in the 1970s and 1980s and, finally, to the emergence of national influence in the production of a set of 'common and agreed goals for schooling' by the Australian Education Council in 1989. In the attempt to achieve a balance between central control and local autonomy on curriculum matters, Deer posits that there are still two fundamental questions to be addressed: 'What knowledge is of most worth for the individual student and for society as a whole?' and 'How can this knowledge be brought alive for students?'

The reader may well wish to keep these questions in mind when considering the issues raised in Chapter 9. Clive Dimmock and John Hattie argue that the forces and pressures for greater accountability in the provision of public education reflect more general societal trends demanding efficiency and effectiveness of performance in the public sector. The authors predict that Australian school systems will spend much of the 1990s fashioning and determining the forms of accountability they regard as feasible and desirable. Emergent patterns and schemes will be a reflection of tensions already existing between the bureaucratic form of accountability associated with centralized ministry control and influence and the democratic model of accountability inspired by participatory decision-making at school and community levels. They suggest that in our attempt at arriving at a satisfactory and workable form of accountability one way forward would be to try to achieve a balance between bureaucratic and democratic elements. Provided these elements are managed in coherent and sensitive ways, the authors contend that it is possible for them to be complementary and to provide a positive and pluralistic pattern of checks and balances.

Proposals for resolving some of the tensions between democracy and

bureaucracy are also put forward in Chapter 10, in which Ross Harrold addresses some of the financial issues involved in the implementation of educational policy. Harrold argues that the instruments used to implement school policy can be either 'hard' or 'soft', depending on the discretion allowed the responding schools. 'Hard' instruments, which include rules, regulations and directives, have been the preferred option of bureaucracies in the past, because they have been easier to devise, cheaper to implement and their compliance easier to monitor. However, they tend to be insensitive to local needs, they suppress local initiatives and they reduce professional responsibility. 'Softer' policy instruments use financial inducements and sanctions to 'steer' voluntary responses consistent with policy goals and give more opportunities for staff and community involvement in adapting policy responses to local situations. Harrold indicates ways in which the use of 'softer' instruments could resolve some of the tensions between democracy and bureaucracy in public education systems. He supports this argument by considering the likely educational impact of educational funding being channelled through families rather than through systems.

The management of systems is considered in the final two chapters. George Berkeley hypothesizes that changes in management reflect change and reform in the wider public sector, and the nature of much of the change is not peculiar to the administration of education. He illustrates this by reference to the movement from centralized, monolithic, bureaucratic structures to much more diversified and responsive organizations attempting to adjust to their changing public and to the need for more accountable and responsive administration.

While Berkeley offers his analysis from the perspective of one who has been Director-General of one such system, Fazal Rizvi and Lawrence Angus offer a more theoretical perspective in the last chapter. They begin by restating the central problem of bureaucracy, which was so clearly recognized by Weber: 'How to bring democracy under effective democratic control?' They argue that the only way of resolving the tension between democracy and bureaucracy lies in the constant search for ways of reforming organizations to retain some of the virtues of democracy — predictability, precision, impartiality, efficiency — while at the same time enabling them to acquire a character that makes them more responsive not only to the demands of innovation and change but also to the democratically expressed wishes of the community.



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Democracy and Bureaucracy in the Organization of School Systems in Australia: A Synoptic View

Hedley Beare

Terminology

In a strictly literal sense, bureaucracy and democracy cannot exist together because they are mutually exclusive terms. Both words contain the suffix (*cracy*) meaning 'rule' or 'governance'. Bureaucracy is a technical term meaning government by departments (*bureaux*), by dividing the task into several components and then by allowing specialist units each to control the component allocated to it. Democracy, on the other hand, is government by the people (*demos*). In the case of bureaucracy, the government structure is hierarchical with the person at the top of the pyramid finally responsible for the whole function and for the organization which carries it out. Bureaucracy is literally feudal in its design. It is none the worse for being so, but the format should be used only in those circumstances or with those tasks where centralized, top-down control is appropriate.

Democracy, on the other hand, is egalitarian, not feudal. In its most elemental form, it is government through a kind of town meeting or an assembly of all those citizens who make up the city-state. Because decision-making this way is usually unwieldy and quite impractical, democracy most frequently works through representative government. The city-state forms itself into electorates and they each elect someone to represent their views on the governing body of the *polis*. Democracy therefore tends to operate in a committee or parliamentary mode. It is the exact opposite to autocracy (rule by one person), whereas bureaucracy is not. Bureaucracy implies top-down management, whereas democracy implies round-the-table discussion and collective decision-making.

Democracy and Bureaucracy

Because both terms deal with control, with governance, the critical question behind both words is, 'Who has control; who is in charge; who has the power and must therefore accept the final responsibility?' On that issue there has been considerable contestation over recent decades, not the least in education. Among other things, it has fuelled the transfer of children between the government and non-government school sectors.

It would be hard to argue the case that democracy had replaced bureaucracy in the public school systems of Australia, although there have been changes in the governance patterns particularly in the last two decades. The governance issue can be considered from a variety of perspectives, but to understand the nuances in the arguments it is necessary to have some knowledge about the major developments in Australian school systems. In this chapter we take the broad-brush approach and try to identify those megatrends (to use John Naisbitt's term) which have been impacting on Australian education, and which have helped to raise the issues of bureaucracy and democracy.

Transitions in the Economy

It was understandable that bureaucracy became associated with the state school systems from their earliest days. In the decades after the 1870s, when the Australian states — still sovereign and separate — were enacting and implementing their 'free, compulsory and secular' education provisions, the industrial economy was in the process of supplanting the pre-industrial. Australia as a nation moved from a heavy dependence on rural commodities (wheat, wool and mining) during the Victorian era into factory production and into diversified manufacturing industries in the years following the First World War. The organizational form which was almost universal in the industrial state, and which seemed to guarantee its success, was bureaucracy, being preached by writers like F.W. Taylor, Fayol, the Gilbreths and Max Weber.

It is hardly surprising that school systems adopted the model which was at the time considered so effective elsewhere in business and industry, the more so because the model delivered the very qualities which Australian education needed at that point in its development. To ensure an even quality in all schools scattered across a vast land, an education bureaucracy imposed control from the centre, particularly over the supply of resources — the chief of which were teachers. At a time when those same teachers were variable in their qualifications and their competence, the centre assumed the role of prescribing the nature and content of

the curriculum, and of policing its implementation. When local communities consisted of people with little knowledge or experience of education, the centre provided coordination, quality controls, planning and the setting of priorities. The critical quality check at the key points in the educational continuum — at the passage from elementary to secondary, at the school 'leaving' level and at the transition from secondary to tertiary study — were centrally set external examinations which seemed to certify uniformity in educational attainments. In short, bureaucracy seemed to serve the systems well at a time when paternalism, the 'father knows best' approach, was probably appropriate.

After the turn of the century the same decisive action from the centre was required if the Australian states were to capitalize on the 'new education' movement and the extension of public education beyond elementary schooling. In the first two decades of the century each state moved to introduce a secondary school system which could run parallel with the independent schools which until then had monopolized the post-school sector, and had thereby controlled who did or did not proceed into the universities. It was the states also which established teachers' colleges and introduced teacher training during these decades.

Especially in the period following the First World War technical education became a priority. If the Australian economy were to shift into technically sophisticated factory production, it was an expanding technical education area, including apprenticeship training, which would make possible the re-gearing. The public utterances of the Directors of Education of this time contain many references to the German system for training technicians, always with the implication that Australia should copy that system. Without central planning and financing, it is doubtful whether the nation could ever have effected the transition.

Centralization in Australian education was therefore understandable throughout those years from the 1870s until the Second World War. In comparative studies Australia often features as the archetype of central control, but observers understood why it had to be like this. In 1938, for example, the year before the Second World War began, the international scholar I.L. Kandel (1938: 48) could observe that the high degree of central control had 'resulted from the recognition that voluntary initiative and local autonomy had failed . . . to attain a moderate standard even of elementary education.' By 1955, however, another visitor, Freeman Butts (1955: Ch. 2), could question whether such tight centralism was any longer appropriate in Australia.

In retrospect, because it was identified so closely with the industrial economy, it was almost inevitable that bureaucracy should go out of favour in educational organizations with the onset of the post-industrial

Democracy and Bureaucracy

economy, and especially after the 1960s. The wartime Prime Minister John Curtin had signalled a new national orientation when, at the height of the Pacific campaign and with Australia facing the prospect of invasion from the north, he turned without regret to the United States as an ally more to be relied upon than Great Britain. By the time the Whitlam government was elected in 1972, Australia had developed a stance independent of Britain in key areas like foreign affairs (the recognition of China, involvement in Vietnam, new diplomatic relationships with Indonesia, sponsorship of nationhood for Papua New Guinea, an alliance with USA) and trade (less reliance on European markets, new trading relationships with Japan, China, Taiwan and Korea). To compete in a sector of the globe where some of the most vigorous new economies were developing, Australia could survive only by making a rapid accommodation to the new international economic order.

Put bluntly, a business which operates on bureaucratic lines cannot compete in a post-industrial economy which guarantees survival only to those firms which are flexible, which can make quick, strategic decisions, which encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, which value creativity rather than conformity, which give their members the power to take local decisions and to exercise initiative, and which regard the people in the organization more as partners than as property.

These qualities abound even in those post-industrial organizations which appear to be huge, international and multifaceted. They have discovered that there are better models of organization available than bureaucracy. The centre does not necessarily know best. While there are some frameworks, probably centrally devised, which all will honour, and while there is a set of priorities (some of them literally global) which all members of the firm must observe, it would be presumptuous, if not arrogant, of those at headquarters to think they should or even could impose controls on all the day-to-day operations of the firm, or monitor all the activities of its several parts, or make all the strategic decisions for all the company's members. In short, the post-industrial business world also appears to be a post-bureaucratic one.

The post-industrial economy depends heavily upon the information and the services sectors; education is centrally placed in both. By and large, the public education systems responded, as they always seem to do, by borrowing their modes of operation from business. The way they did so in the period between the wars has been well documented in Callahan's *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (1962). So in a spate of 'restructuring' through the late 1970s and 1980s, virtually all Australian school systems were remodelled in terms of 'corporate management' ideas, together with all the accompanying vocabulary.

Transitions in Teaching

The movement away from strictly imposed bureaucratic procedures and centralist controls was also fed from the 1950s onwards by the campaign to win full professional status for teaching. The reforms around this period were extensive. The short courses of teacher training were abolished; the admission point to pre-service education rose to matriculation level; teacher education programs increased in length and complexity; the training institutions were distanced from the employing authorities, and were upgraded into diploma-granting and then degree-granting colleges; people without a teacher education qualification (even if they were graduates) were not permitted to practise as teachers; in-service education programs burgeoned, and almost all teachers participated in them; higher degree courses became prevalent, and an increasing number of teachers acquired the Master of Education degree; and teachers became so well regarded (in spite of the popular rhetoric of the newspapers and politicians) that literally thousands of them quit schools to take good positions in businesses, the public services and in their own companies. It was a remarkable achievement that teaching should have become virtually a graduate profession in the short space of about twenty-five years.

The status was hard-won. A turbulent period in the 1960s and early 1970s saw teacher militancy in all states, and some bitter and protracted strikes largely fought on the basis of securing working conditions more in keeping with the new sophistication among teachers, better remuneration for professional work, protection of children from unqualified instructors, and a wider recognition of the responsibilities which teachers were being asked to shoulder. The militancy has left a legacy of public cynicism, but the gains from collective teacher actions are in retrospect historic.

The consequence was that teachers began to tolerate much less domination from the centre. Professionalism invested them with the confidence to demand greater autonomy in the way they worked and were organized. They were well enough educated now to know what needed to be done in particular schools and with individual students. Guidelines are acceptable in a profession, but prescriptive rules are not. Most important of all, the bureaucratic framework puts the client at the very base of the hierarchical pyramid, in the most powerless position where centralized control takes precedent over individual need, a situation intolerable in professional terms where responsiveness to one's client subsumes all other considerations.

It was not that the persons in authority positions wanted the service to be like this; they usually did not, because they were professional

educators too. It was the model which was inappropriate. From about the mid-1950s, therefore, it became clear that school systems could be organized in ways more sympathetic with the professional service being given. A variety of developments occurred through the 1960s and 1970s. The position of School Inspector — for decades, indeed since the previous century, a powerful authority figure — all but disappeared, replaced by curriculum consultants (collegial rather than status positions), new school-based reviews, peer or panel assessments for promotion purposes, and increasing responsibility on the principal to be a professional counsellor to staff. School-based decision-making (SBDM) implied the devolution of power and initiative to individual schools. A plethora of consultative bodies came into existence, ranging from project teams and task forces to high level committees like the New South Wales Education Commission, the Victorian State Board of Education and, of course, the national Schools Commission.

An Educated Parent Population

When the 'free, compulsory and secular' Education Acts were being passed in the Australian states during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the view abroad was that to bureaucratize education was in part to save schools from the limited vision of the pupils' parents. In the Victorian Parliament, for example, J.W. Stephen, who introduced the 1872 Education Bill, stated that 'one of the paramount principles of the Bill' was to ensure that 'the whole management and control of the education system should be vested in the Minister' and that 'the less parents, and particularly uneducated parents, had to do with the management of the schools, the better' (quoted in Badcock, 1988: 230). The compulsory attendance clauses were inserted in the Acts to ensure that parents could not withhold education from their children, who could otherwise be put to work, often as cheap labour in their father's business. Teachers welcomed the centralization of staffing arrangements, removing them from the vagaries of appointment by local citizens; the move also guaranteed that over time there would be some uniformity of teaching standards across the country, including in those remoter areas which, on their own, could have been badly disadvantaged. The system was deliberately paternalistic.

A hundred years later, the situation had changed fundamentally. A 'secondary education for all' was now practice, put in place after 1945. Commonwealth and State Scholarships had widened the access to tertiary education. The general level of education in the Australian community

was high, and rising. So it was inevitable that both parents and the public would demand more access to the decision-making apparatus of schools. In a sense, education became the victim of its own success. An educated person tends to be more critical and inquiring than someone who is uneducated, more demanding over customer rights, more articulate and informed on issues, more capable of understanding and contributing to policy formation, more politically aware, less inclined to take things for granted or to leave matters to those occupying power positions. An educated population tends to be a 'noisy' population. Generally speaking, it tends to demand if not democracy, then at least the right to participate and to be heard. Bureaucracy and top-down management, especially when they are seen as control from afar, find it hard to survive in this kind of climate.

Was there a point in time when the new organizational patterns (like participation and democracy) supplanted the older ones (like bureaucracy), at least in education? Probably not, but throughout the 1960s and the 1970s there developed a public opinion that education, particularly the work of schools, should not be left to bureaucrats, and that there were several legitimate partners with an equal right to be involved in setting the policy and assessing the outcomes of schools. Teachers constituted one set of partners; as they became better qualified and more accepted as a profession, they expected to be party to the decisions being made about the areas of their professional practice. Parents were a second set; they are para-teachers anyway, inextricably involved in how and what their children learn — a realization which became widespread after the publication of the Coleman Report in the USA in 1966. Once they are of an age where their ideas can be articulated, children, as clients of the schools, can no longer be treated as though they are passive recipients of whatever the school chooses to wheel up to them. Finally, the patrons of schooling, the public who supply its operating finances and resources, can legitimately call the school and its operators to give an account of themselves.

In short, Australia (along with the rest of the Western world) had acquired an educated and therefore an articulate population which demanded participation in the management and policy-setting activities of schools. The most obvious manifestation was the appearance of school boards.

The Advent of School Boards

By the time the Whitlam government formalized the Commonwealth presence in primary and secondary education by setting up the Australian

Schools Commission in 1973, there was a widespread view that the way schools were governed and administered needed to change. Several of the states — notably Victoria and South Australia — were well advanced in creating governing boards for each school. In the two mainland Commonwealth territories, the federal government took action from 1970 onwards to disengage the schools from the states (South Australia and New South Wales) and to create free-standing school systems; both of them incorporated a degree of local control for each school. A NSW initiative to set up school boards foundered with union opposition.

The 'ideas whose time had come' were crystallized in the second chapter of the Karmel Report (Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, 1973), the report of the interim committee set up to be the forerunner of the Schools Commission. For more than ten years thereafter the Karmel Report was the base-line document guiding the thinking and planning concerning Australian education. 'Devolution of responsibility' headed the list of principles. The report argued for 'less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools', basing their case on the premise that 'responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making decisions are the people responsible for carrying them out' (*ibid.*: 10).

The matter of school-based governance was addressed in the Keeves Reports (Committee of Enquiry into Education, 1981, 1982) in South Australia, the Hughes Report (Assessment Panel, 1982) in Tasmania, and the Beazley Report (Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia, 1984) in Western Australia. By 1983 the Victorian Minister could assert in his *Ministerial Paper No. 1* (an evidence of the priority accorded the point) a firm commitment to 'genuine devolution . . . to the school community', to 'collaborative decision-making processes' and to 'a responsive bureaucracy, the main function of which is to service and assist schools' (Fordham, 1983a).

What occurred in Australia was simply part of a world-wide movement. In Great Britain the Taylor Report (Committee of Enquiry into the Management and Government of Schools, 1977) followed hard upon the reconstruction of local authorities and advocated a 'new partnership' for schools through a revision of the powers and membership of the Boards of Governors and Managers. The report led during the 1980s to the Education Reform Acts under the Thatcher administration. At the same time there was a new balance developing in the United States following the tax revolt of the late 1970s which saw a shift in the relative powers of the federal government, the states, the school boards and local schools.

The movement for 'formalized parent participation' was so strong in Europe that Nicholas Beattie chose to make a comparative study of it. In