Specialist Teachers and Curriculum Reform in a Western Australian Primary School in 2002

A Comparative Study of Specialist Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages-Other-Than-English Teaching Professionals

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Abstract

This thesis details research on the first phase of curriculum reform (1999–2004) in a government primary school in Western Australia. The purpose of the study was to examine what progress had been made with the implementation of the Curriculum Framework (1998). The research focussed on Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other than English as specialist teachers working with the Curriculum Framework (1998). Teachers and school administrators, as frontline practitioners, considered their experiences and perceptions of daily practice and provided their perspectives on curriculum reform.

The hypothesis formulated for the study was that with the introduction of the Curriculum Framework (1998) the delivery of these three subjects could be further improved. This study argues that successful curriculum performance of these three subjects traditionally considered “specialist programs” may be more fully supported by becoming aware of the forces influencing Australian curriculum discourse and delivery. Subject knowledge endorsement in this study refers to the transfer of valued knowledge in Western Australian educational systems. It is proposed that if teaching professionals articulated the substance of their educational beliefs and experiences with regard to subject knowledge meaning, place and value, curriculum delivery in primary schools may progress more effectively. Positive learning experiences for all students can be provided through the encouragement of communication and collegiality together with relevant and accessible professional development. These measures can also be supported by mounting whole-school primary programs that engage with beliefs about Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English through collaborative networks and learning communities. Accordingly, curriculum delivery can come within reach of the seamless curriculum anticipated by reform (Curriculum Framework, 1998:6–7).

In this qualitative interview study, the frontline participants included generalist teachers, specialist teachers and school administrators. These educational practitioners were asked to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured discussion that explored their perceptions of specialist teaching and knowledge while employed at Deep Sea Primary School in 2002.
They teachers also commented on how these perceptions may be linked to their experiences of socially constructed and established notions of valued knowledge.

The findings of this study indicated that the progressive implementation of these three subjects or specialist’s areas were characterised by subtle historical, economic, political and social forces. This thesis suggests that, these largely obscured external forces together with individual yet, taken for granted perceptions of what is perceived as valuable knowledge work together to position curriculum rhetoric and curriculum enactment that reflect established perceptions of the knowledge hierarchy. Teachers and administrators at the school often operated within the structures and meanings of conventional teaching practice of subject knowledge as determined by dominant culture in Australia. The findings indicated that school culture in a time of reform re-traditionalised hierarchical patterns of subject knowledge organisation and evaluation. Accordingly, current subject knowledge endorsement in terms of specialist teaching often worked to the benefit of established power relationships typical of post-industrial market economy in Australia.

The findings also indicated that issues pertaining to curriculum prioritisation were influenced by institutional, group and individual experiences of subject specialist knowledge. Poor perceptions of these three subjects could also be generated by experiencing inflexible and inadequate yet established funding and resource patterns in educational systems. Frontline teachers, their school-based roles and responsibilities attached to the teaching and learning of the three specialist areas were typified by rigid school organisation and job structures together with condensed teaching time and community backing.

This thesis argues that progressive, outcomes education requires an articulate and supportive school culture, more funding and the genuine maintenance of quality Music, Health and Physical Education and Language Other Than English teachers. In addition, curriculum implementation would benefit from the promotion of constructivist-orientated student activities within specialist programs.
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of independent research, and that all authorities and sources that have been consulted are duly acknowledged. The content of this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other tertiary institution.

(Helen Stone)

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Acknowledgments go first to the staff members of Deep Sea Primary school, who stirred my interest in the topic of change and opportunity. I would like to thank Murdoch for the time it gave me to grow and learn and for providing employment. Robin and Cal are much appreciated for their efforts. And to my family for warmth and patience…..
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Nature of the Study

This thesis focussed on the progress of curriculum reform in a Western Australian government primary school with a particular focus on Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English teachers. Research was conducted in 2002 when there was a need to investigate how teachers and administrators as frontline practitioners were progressing with the reforms implicit in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) and the Western Australian Department of Education and Training’s *Standards Outcomes Framework* (1998).

Deep Sea Primary School the context of this study is one of 27 primary schools in the Peel Region. Deep Sea is a relatively new school, less than ten years old, and the school offered many aspects required by a qualitative case study. The school was implementing, reflecting upon and documenting curriculum reform in a more quantitative manner using Student Information System (SIS), Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (WALNA). An opportunity for a qualitative assignment to be undertaken was thus presented. Classroom, specialist and administrative professionals were employed at Deep Sea Primary School and were willing to be part of a research project. Having worked as a teacher in a variety of primary contexts, the chance for me to investigate the progress of curriculum implementation with respect to specialist teachers was welcomed.

The study identifies areas in which further support is required for primary schools and staff in what could be seen as curriculum overcrowding and the reinforcement of subject status and hierarchy. It also suggests strategies for innovation and change in order to maximise student learning in the three specialist areas. Specialist, subject specialist or specialist teacher is used under the umbrella term of specialist through the thesis due to its common identity and usage within teaching circles.

The main assumption of this study was that all children are capable of learning these three subjects, along with other aspects of common curriculum articulated for all Western Australian students in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). The second assumption was that teachers could provide for students with different learning styles while setting realistic and relevant goals for learning success (*Draft Plan for*...
Government Schools 2004–2007). It is also particularly important to establish a foundation for constructivist ideas in the early childhood and middle childhood phases of education as part of life-long learning. The third assumption was that primary school administrators could build supportive cultural and organisational structures into workplace timetables and funding arrangements that inspire the teaching and learning of these three subjects. Together these assumptions underlie the belief that Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English are a vital part of a comprehensive and tangible education that develops young citizens’ abilities to contribute to Australian society.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform practice in Western Australian primary schools. Whilst some of the details of curriculum implementation are only relevant to the Western Australian context, an aim is that the research findings will be applicable to other areas of curriculum implementation and educational contexts in Australia.

1.2 Aspects of the Literature Review

An international review and analysis of the educational literature pointed out that literacy and numeracy have, historically, been priorities in primary school education. Nevertheless, subject teachers have been employed within the primary sector since early Victorian era education in a variety of supplementary and itinerant capacities (Thornton 1989:1). Despite a few published studies into the issues faced by subject specialists, there is minimal case study literature of their teaching experiences during recent educational reform, especially in an outcomes-based education context.

The review of educational literature, however, identified the problem of defining teachers’ contemporary roles and responsibilities. In the existing literature, there are dissimilar approaches and divergent conceptualisations about the work that specialist teachers may undertake within subject-centred and Outcomes-based curricula. To date, much of the research on the primary school teaching has not focussed on subject specialists as a professional group (Colley 1989:6) or the provision of specialist programs in primary schools (Downing 2003:1). Hall noted that the topic of specialists and their position in the primary school culture and knowledge hierarchy has become important due to its lack of coverage in the educational literature (Hall 2000:1–3).
Given the amount of specific research and publications devoted to Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English as discrete subject areas, it is notable that there has been a lack of interest in comparative investigation of these three subjects. Given the gap in existing educational research literature, the methodology of the literature review was comparative. Comparison identifies not only the common themes but also unique themes in specialist teacher, generalist teacher and administrator perspectives. Comparison also brings to light the similarities and differences of school cultures and organisational systems that primary professionals work within. The comparative element also helps to identify the remarkably similar organisational structures and processes associated with the teaching and learning of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English in three nations. This investigation has selectively reviewed relevant literature within countries, between countries and mostly from the time when Outcomes-focused education was introduced in — largely, but not exclusively — the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

Thornton’s (1998) article on British National Curriculum in primary education suggested that dominant ideology, social values and knowledge status were residual in curriculum implementation. She alleged:

… a hidden curriculum message for primary teachers … it is better to teach older children, to be identified with maths [sic], science or both and to be male. Unfortunately, the introduction of the National Curriculum has the propensity to reinforce these divisions related to subject specialization through prioritizing the three core subjects, two of which largely and traditionally have been associated with males (1998:1-9).

While the issue of gender is noted, the focus of this study rests on other themes associated with the teaching and learning of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. This thesis takes into account the broader historical, economic, political and social features of Australian curriculum with respect to the three specialist areas. However, the discussion does focus on perceptions of specialist subject knowledge and its treatment and position at the primary school and classroom level.
To date, there have been few ethnographic studies investigating how to best deliver an Outcomes-based primary curriculum or how curriculum documents have been received and implemented by primary teachers. Most of the international literature concerning specialist teachers and curriculum reform is oriented within the specifics of its own context although the use of outcomes education as an umbrella theme in this study aids in comparison. There is also the issue of research from different years and detailing the work of teachers with similar yet diverse roles in the primary sector as reform has evolved. The term specialist teacher is used to describe a teacher that endorses the knowledge relevant to one specialist or one unique body of knowledge in a school.

In Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States there seems to be little comparison or interchange between educational researchers of specialist teachers. Very few studies have applied theoretical analysis to the roles and responsibilities of specialist curriculum and specialist teaching in a government school context. The one major exception is Goodson (1983, 1992, 1994, and 1999) who investigated the social and political undertones implicit in the construction of the geography curriculum in British secondary schools. There is also a body of work that discusses hegemonic control of curriculum in Australia and investigates the interconnectedness of history, economics, politics and the community (Seddon. 2001:301). In general, however, much of the specialist teacher literature is descriptive and aimed at advocacy, ultimately generating rhetoric and unsustainable ideals (Colley 1991; National Arts Education Associations 2001).

In Australian States, Territories and education districts there is also a dearth of information on how to best deliver an outcomes-based primary curriculum or how primary teachers have integrated the curriculum documents into professional practise. Music education has historically and recently been the subject of many major reports (Bartle 1968; Covell 1970; Lepherd 1970; Swanick and Tillman 1986; Gifford 1993; Russell-Bowie 1993; Music Council of Australia 2001; Stevens 2004). It seems, though, that little has changed in Australia’s general ability to deliver a quality music curriculum to primary school students. Joseph’s exploratory account of music teachers’ reactions to outcomes-based education in South African Primary Schools is an exception in explaining why resistance to reform occurs (Joseph 2002).
Larger more recent publications such as the National Review of School Music Education (2005) set out many of the issues influencing the effective delivery of music in Australian schools. A number of DEST publications (the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training) also detail the position of Health and Physical Education curriculum in the States and Territories.

Similarly, Languages Other Than English in the Australian schools has drawn attention from more than seventeen national research projects and continues to be discussed by a small group of Australian academics (Harbon 2000) mostly financed and sustained by the NALSAS (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy) policy. Most of these reports detail the many unresolved issues at the school level in delivering LOTE curriculum to students (The National Language and Literacy Institute 1995). Kleinsasser’s (2000) work is particularly useful in specifying recurring issues facing the teaching and learning of Languages Other Than English in Australia.

DEST, together with State and Territory departments issue reports on the implementation and achievement concerning an outcomes-based curriculum. For example, School Innovation: Pathways to the Knowledge Society 2001 and The Future of the Past: The National Inquiry into School History 2000. However, the amount of reporting on literacy and numeracy strategies indicates an investment of time and funding energy not seen in other specialist knowledge areas. Accordingly, the impact of recent curriculum reforms on the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Educational and Language Other Than English in Australian schools — and particularly in Western Australian primary schools — has not been sufficiently examined. This study gave particular attention to the three specialist areas of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English due to their unique and comparable position in the primary school timetable. This study takes a critical view on aspects of educational transformation and attempts to capture the nature of educational experiences as will be discussed further on in the study.

This study was originally generated from my perspective as a Language Other than English teacher. There were thus opportunities for individual bias in the investigative process that needed to be discarded during the research process. At the beginning of the research process, I was not impartial (Cherryholmes 1988) as I carried theoretical
and experiential conjecture into the investigative environment. For example, one axiom was that Western Australian primary students could be provided with authentic opportunities to enjoy a constructive and stimulating education inclusive of all eight learning outcomes as the curriculum documents detailed. This position was not an attempt to undermine the educational priorities of literacy and numeracy, but acted as a foundation to investigating how the delivery of subject specialist areas could be further improved given the early stages of educational reform in Western Australia. I found through this process that there was a lot more I needed to learn if this journey was to be successful.

1.3 Culture, Curriculum and Classroom

In the context of post-modern notions of multiple perspectives, there are many ways in which curriculum may be considered. Goodlad (1979) has distinguished between the ideal, the formal, the operational, the perceived and the experienced curriculum:

The ideal curriculum represents our best intentions that, which we desire, know and believe we ought to teach. The formal curriculum is that ideal transformed into textbooks, and instructional materials: the stories, songs, images and ideas we present ready made to children. The operational curriculum unfolds in our daily interactions with children in classrooms. The perceived curriculum refers to the teacher’s sense of what is being taught and learned. Finally, the experienced curriculum represents the student’s point of view (Bresler and Thompson 2002: 153).

This study considered:

- international, national, and State and Territory research and information about these five aspects of curriculum;
- the broader influences on curriculum construction and evaluation;
- teaching professionals’ perceptions and practices surrounding the three subject areas.
- the associated processes of curriculum delivery; and
- resultant student learning.
This thesis then posed two questions:

- How and why are the Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English curricula currently organised at the Deep Sea Primary School in Western Australia?
- What are teachers’ perceptions in relation to the progress of curriculum implementation with respect to the three areas of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English in a time of curriculum reform at Deep Sea Primary School?

In addition, the study sought to identify in the school workplace:

- What aspects of innovation and change can be integrated into school organisation and culture to support progressive curriculum delivery of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English?

By undertaking a comparative study, this thesis adds to the literature from all three subjects, which are usually discussed in their own subject context. It is important that structured research be conducted to identify and support the progressive curriculum implementation of specialist knowledge (Norris 2000:17) in Western Australian primary schools. This study also adds to the literature on curriculum reform in the Western Australian educational context. The findings and suggestions may also support improved curriculum implementation as well as improve professional practice. These aspects are discussed in Chapter Five.

In order to understand the meaning and transfer of valued knowledge, analysis into primary school cultures and climates can help bring to light aspects of curriculum that influence the educational ideas and experiences of teachers. Culture refers to the belief systems, values and cognitive structures operating in the school workplace. (Hoy 1990:151) Climate refers to perceptions of formal organisation and informal organisation within the primary workplace. Associated with these notions are personal values and cognitive structures (Hoy 1990:151) that also influence workplace opportunities and experiences as individuals and groups circulate knowledge.

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1 To preserve confidentiality of the participants, the name Deep Sea Primary School is a pseudonym
1.4 Aspects of the Methodology

Deep Sea Primary School, where the researcher was employed in 2001, provided a context for the investigation. All of the participants were colleagues of the researcher. The teachers were valued as individual contributors, although each teacher performed diverse roles and had different responsibilities in the school. Accordingly, a diverse representation of the complex, dynamic (Patton 2002) and innovative nature of modern day teaching could be showcased. There are aspects of positivism in the construction and agency of this project; however, it is more phenomenological in nature as it sought to display consideration of individual teachers’ experiences and their contributions to Deep Seas’ performance during educational reform, not ultimate truths or grand theory (Patton 2002:5). Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of the school and participants.

There were three specialist teachers at Deep Sea Primary School in 2001. Charlotte was responsible for teaching the Music curriculum as a part of the Arts learning area. Karri was responsible for teaching the Health and Physical Education curriculum. Miranda was responsible for teaching Indonesian as Language Other Than English. These three specialist teachers were responsible for delivering curriculum outcomes from the then newly implemented *Curriculum Framework* (1998). In other words, each professional was responsible for teaching or endorsing particular knowledge relevant to one subject. These teachers are considered specialists due to their ability to endorse a particular subject knowledge base.

Using interview data gathered from seven staff members working in the one school. The seven staff represented about 30% of the total staff during 2001. The intention was to ascertain what external and internal forces impacted on the school’s culture and organisation and how these forces then influenced specialist teaching and the transfer of specific knowledge At Deep Sea Primary. Attention was also given to capturing and articulating what was perceived to be innovative and effective teaching and learning and how it was put into operation at Deep Sea primary school to achieve student outcomes. Together with a literature review and the interview narratives, insights and understandings about effective teaching in the three specialist areas were generated.
1.5 Locating Deep Sea Primary School

The Peel Region in the southern corridor of Perth’s suburban fringe comprises 4.4% of Western Australia’s population and has a resident population of 87,791. The Peel area is the fastest growing region in Western Australia, and is expected to continue growing due to the development of business, transport and employment networks associated with the development of the Southern Transit Rail Line. The region has a diversity of small businesses including retail goods and services as well as large businesses; for example, Alcoa and Metro Brick (Peel Development Commission June Report: Peel Development Commission 2004).

The majority of the district’s population is in the “tradesperson and related occupation” group. The area has a young population: children under 15 represent 20.6% of the population. The economy is based on a diversity of industries such as agriculture, tourism, forestry, mining and mineral processing (Peel Development Commission June Report: 2004). A large proportion of the community is employed in the naval services and associated naval maintenance industries. An affordable, coastal lifestyle is further incentive for those families living in the region.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

1.6.1 Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter begins with the theories of social construction, group processes and discourse analysis as they are applied in this study. Chapter Two then addresses issues emerging from educational reform in Australia. Aspects of curriculum relevant to the delivery of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English are examined. The study then defines the roles and responsibilities of particular teachers and the relative advantages of traditional and subject-centred and outcomes-based models of primary school curriculum delivery. The final section looks at the teaching and learning of specialist programs, comparing specialist and classroom teacher’s perceptions and practices. The issues touching upon student learning of specialists are then reviewed.

1.6.2 Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter three describes the research design and data-collection strategies. The rational and overall designs of this qualitative case study are presented. Details
explaining why a comparative stance was taken and how data were collected are included. A synopsis of the research field, participants and ethics are offered. The concluding section looks into issues of validity and reliability.

1.6.3 Chapter Four: Results
Chapter Four reports the raw data from the interview transcripts in narrative form. The narrative style is used so the reader is provided with vicarious understanding of what each teacher perceives to be accurate and meaningful. The coding and categorisation of raw data were collated with respect to the three previously stated themes. This arrangement ensures the arguments and evidence are thematically consistent throughout the thesis.

1.6.4 Chapter Five: Discussion
Chapter Five synthesises the study. It critically analyses historical, economic, political and social features that affect the primary school curriculum prioritisation. Discussion focuses on the school’s funding, organisation, positioning and evaluation concerning the teaching and learning of the three specialist areas. Illustration is made of how and why the three subjects’ curricula are enacted in the school. This section also suggests the implications of the data and discusses future research. Issues related to this investigation but not answered are also considered.

1.6.5 Chapter Six: Conclusion
Finally, the progress of curriculum implementation is summarised, with respect to broader National and State economic and educational concerns in Australia. This includes an analysis of current program organisations and rationales with respect to the school’s culture. The individual experiences, perceptions and practice of teachers are then considered in terms of their links to Australian dominant discourse.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction
The first half of this chapter discusses the way in which specialist teachers have developed since the 1970s in the Australian and Western Australian education sector. Influences on Australian curriculum and the notion of valued knowledge that exists within a hierarchy of knowledge will be considered, Curriculum diversification subject prioritization in curriculum and its design are also discussed. The purpose is to highlight the historical, economic political and social features that impact on the roles and responsibilities of specialist teachers. This section indicates that there is a tradition and a construction informing current school organization and teaching practice in relation to Music, Health and Physical Education and Language Other Than English.

Specialist teachers are variously labeled, subject specialists, specialist teachers, Music, Health and Physical Education and LOTE professionals, or simply specialists. These teachers’ can be found in a diversity of educational contexts and demonstrate variety of operational styles. Accordingly, the second half of this chapter details the roles and responsibilities of specialist teachers in the context of changing educational policy and as schooling has diversified to meet the needs of various stakeholders.

The aim is to show how this group of teachers as a resource has changed from one perceived as a provider of curriculum diversity together with social and cultural enrichment over and above the basic needs of students academic achievement. This thesis demonstrates that specialist teachers are now in a position of being increasingly marginalized in the education process while being isolated from colleagues and policy development. Further more, perceptions of their value in the hierarchy of knowledge can be perceived as being superfluous to the economic priority of literacy and numeracy deemed essential for State and National prosperity and social coherence.

2.2 Curriculum Construction in Australia
In a world where knowledge, information and educational choice are burgeoning, the role of curriculum as a mechanism of socialisation — as well as a provider of
opportunity for future citizens — has drawn critical attention (Groundwater-Smith 2003). There exist various public and private settings where aspects of curriculum contestation and negotiation by professional educators occur. Finding common and effective ground with respect to curriculum construction, evaluation, interpretation, enactment and learning can often be characterised by multiple and conflicting sources of opinion and experience. A practical analysis can demonstrate the diversity of values and differing positions from which curriculum can be constructed, particularly at the primary school level. Consequently, policy and practice can be seen to be two different — and often paradoxical — forces in primary school education (Alexander 1992). It seems that curriculum, in its many forms, means different things to different people.

In order to tease out these differences this study suggests that curriculum is value laden. Curriculum, in its many forms can be seen to represent the hegemonic values of society, which tend to position knowledge differentially in the social context. Primary schools are often a reflection of this broader context and communities tend to mirror the organisation of their surroundings. The positioning of subject knowledge can also be seen to be linked to historical, economic, political and economic factors. The positioning of subject knowledge in the school structure can also be seen to be maintained through funding arrangements, access to time and an evaluative language system shared by interest groups. Contradictory perceptions of curriculum and valuable knowledge (Esland 1971:75) have resulted in diverse impressions of these three specialist subjects. Paradoxically, the enduring image of students singing beautifully, kicking a ball in the sunshine or greeting each other formally in French hide two realities.

The first reality is of policy makers and administrators shifting awareness and funds away from these specialist areas. The second reality is the nominal provision of quality teachers, resources and learning experiences for these three subjects (Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English program DEST, 2003:43–75).

The interplay of forces influencing specialist teachers during educational reform is presented in three thematic layers throughout the thesis. The first theme describes the broader — and frequently obscured — large-scale historical, economic, political and social forces that drive the agendas of National and State educational and curriculum
stakeholders. The theory of social constructionism (Bernstein 1971., Esland 1971) is employed to highlight the vested interests underpinning aspects of curriculum construction.

The second theme details the more localised aspects regarding the primary school organisation of these subjects, school culture, leadership, staffing, timetables and resource levels. Group theory (Napier & Gershenfeld 1989) was used here to help describe how dominant power relations are maintained in the primary school setting. It is proposed that existing power relations influence subject prioritisation and therefore opportunities supporting specialist teachers at the classroom level.

The third theme outlines the individual aspects concerning how each educator perceived the subjects with respect to their position and current operation at Deep Sea Primary School. Discourse analysis (Gee & Green 1998) was employed to capture and illuminate the perceptions and beliefs of teachers about specialist teaching and recent reform. The discourse analysis showed how these teachers' beliefs can be reflexively linked to broader interests.

2.3 Curriculum Reform in Australia

The Australian curriculum documents, realised through State and Territory policy documents, reflect the ideals, skills and understandings that are believed to be significant in Australian society. The ideals, concepts and skills advocated by policy documents are related to common activities of community members and interwoven with the social fabric that informs program content (Stanley, Smith and Shore 1957:83). As a value laden as well as a steering document, the curriculum as a construct may be seen as a socialising instrument aimed at educating the young (Pollard 1996:133) of Australian society. Accordingly, the documents transmit and re-establish the concepts, knowledge and skills acceptable to the conventional social order (Stanley, Smith & Shore 1957:84).
Curriculum constitutes a social technology and infrastructure, which orders the behaviour of relevant social actors (both individuals and groups) and organizes relations among them. These regulatory norms constitute contexts for action which give rise both to particular patterns of agency and to concrete organizations and social structures (Seddon 2001:310).

One of the major roles of Australian education is to provide recruits for the Australian workforce. Furthermore, there is social-role selection, transmission of knowledge as well as a guardianship function (Groundwater–Smith 2003:164). In view of post-modern concepts, schools can sometimes be seen to be characterised by their capacity to impart limited choices together with narrow definitions and flawed concepts to students. Concepts of self-efficacy may also be conveyed through curriculum that repeatedly restricts access to power processes (Pepper 1995:2). Curriculum ideals also influence the distribution of authority, power and value within the communities we live in. Curriculum ideals tend to become institutionalised, and these ideals often regulate the organizational centres of power as well as the constraints to the exercise of that power (Seddon 2001:310). This study aims to investigate the operational processes of these notions by examining the progress of curriculum reform of three specialist subjects in one Western Australian primary school.

2.3.1 Influences in Australian Curriculum

The path of ideal curriculum and formal curriculum reform is based in Australia’s historical progress including a colonial history, political orientation, social growth and position in the global economy (Seddon 2001:310). Even though Federation (1901) provided an Australian portfolio for defence, trade, tariffs and immigration, each State or Territory was responsible for education. This division of power is still evident in the Australian community today through a variety of continuing State and federal contestations. For example, although there are common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia, as well as profiles indicating consensus, there is no national curriculum (Marsh 1997:163). Each State and Territory remains responsible for developing formal and operational curricula appropriate to the needs of its students and context.
The dominance of British migration also influenced the structure and social assessment of Australian schooling. By following a British class model, Australian schooling became stratified into generally two high-fee-paying schools, the Anglican, the Catholic system and the mostly free government schools (Seddon 2001:310–13). Before the introduction of outcomes education, syllabi were developed according to the needs of each State or Territory. These documents were in the main, prescriptive curriculum policy documents guiding the operation of teachers (Marsh, 1995:145–6). In most cases, this syllabus was developed and implemented by State and Territory groups who determined lesson content throughout schools within their jurisdiction.

This stratification of Australian schools along class and resource-provision lines remains a part of the national educational terrain. The disproportionate distribution of educational resources is currently used to promote the rhetoric of “choice” for current consumers of education (Seddon 2001:310–5). Educational choice is a significant educational development, although its analysis is outside the scope of this investigation.

In the late 1960s Australia experienced a change in economic focus. There was a national move away from primary production; the population was diversifying, and different community requirements needed to be met. Educational reform was viewed as an important move to progress as a nation and to maintain Australia’s position in the global economy (Pepper 1995:2–10). However, curriculum reform on all levels could also be seen through the framework of prevailing relations of power. For example, Australia’s push to be industrially competitive and technologically skilled could be seen as a politically and economically motivated agenda driving educational reform. In Australia, global and national trends of student mobility, youth unemployment and Asian-economy movements were also forces that influenced curriculum content. As a result, the national, State and Territory curriculum documents can be viewed as reflecting conservative-dominant cultures, skills and knowledge aligned with the needs of the post-industrial society (Pepper 1995:2).

Two political and economic developments in the late 1960s and 1970s shaped the background for current educational change in Australia. First, there was increased Commonwealth funding for libraries and science in 1972. This marked a significant
attempt at national intervention in State and Territory schooling and governance. Second, the power of lobby groups (including parents, teachers and ethnic communities) challenged the existing pattern of State schooling (Seddon 2001:313–17) in order to have their interests met as stakeholders.

In response to these funding and social developments, national curriculum and pedagogy reforms were part of broader educational improvements. Paradoxically, these were focused on decentralising control together with advocating local and school-based management and decision making (Marsh 1997:170–8). The emphasis on responsibility and choice could also be seen as a concerted effort to move away from a generalised syllabus. Equally, Seddon (2001) argues that an outcomes-based model of education had the effect of changing the character and mode of government regulation from an input model to an output model. Outcomes are the key words which try to measure the result. Seddon then argued that this shift had the effect of re-traditionalising patterns of educational authority (as mentioned) by employing the rhetoric of “choice” underlying the problematic assumption that education is available equally to all Australians.

Educational success within a market-related economy could also be seen to maintain established hierarchies stemming from class-based access to positional goods. As a result, those consumers with the best resources maintained their educational advantage as they were best positioned to perform successfully within the frameworks of accountability and performance (Seddon 2001:320). These are complex notions and further analysis could be the basis of another study.

In response to economic and social demands in the 1980s, the Federal Labor Government initiated moves to create a national framework through the work of the Australian Education Council (AEC). In the 1980s, work was commissioned to begin developing national goals and standards for education. The Australian Education Council was set up in 1989, and it established a common and agreed set of national goals for schooling in Australia in 1993 (MCEETYA 2000). The AEC was also responsible for developing national curriculum Statements and profiles in eight learning areas. These documents represented a consensus for the content and purpose of curriculum relevant to Australian youth across Australian States and territories (AEC 1994). In 1989 the Hobart declaration began a process of nationwide
legitimization whereby eight learning areas were considered central and expected for Australian students (AEC 1994) to learn and prosper in Australian communities.

Although the nationally inspired documents were presented to State and Territory ministers as a national curriculum package, each State rejected in concept national curricula and thus reasserted the role of each State as the dominant stakeholder in the development of curriculum. In general, most State and Territory curricula pursue the outcomes model as well as conform to the stated eight learning areas. However, curriculum contestation persists today as the profiles approach; key competencies and the State-tradition approach vie for curriculum control (Seddon 2001:318). In 1996 the Federal Labor government, the driving force behind national curriculum, lost office to the Liberal–National Party coalition.

Labor’s agenda, which had attempted to tie an economic-instrumental approach to education and training to social justice, was quickly over turned by the incoming government, which pursued less compromised deregulatory, neo-liberal policies aimed at opening educational choice (Seddon 2001:319).

In theory, the process of validating a national curriculum continued for ten years after the signing of the Hobart declaration. The Adelaide “Declaration of Schooling” revisited and repackaged these common goals taking into account results from wide-ranging testing and collaboration with State, Territory and National interest groups (Watt 2000).

### 2.4 Learning Theories and the Curriculum Framework

This segment summarises the three major learning theories as they relate to the constructivist view of teaching and learning that underlies principles contained in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). Pedagogy is the educational theory of how children learn and the practices that control learning in the classroom (Groundwater-Smith 2003:83). In other words, pedagogy focuses on aspects of how children learn and how teachers teach. There is a long history and many developments concerning pedagogical theory. The origins of constructivist theories of learning can be traced to the early twentieth century. Constructivism is a philosophical tenet of educational theory emerging from the original works of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and many
others over the last decade and is the most current theory of teaching and learning in the primary school context. The theory represents a shift from education based on behavioural modes of learning and expression to education focused on cognitive theories (Gagnon and Collay 2005:1–10).

One major modern theory of learning was behaviourism as advocated by B.F. Skinner who viewed the learner as somewhat passive and the individual is a vehicle for responding to stimuli. Teaching applications attempted to create environments that exercised the learners’ cognitive and muscular development through complex activities (vcclitonline.cc.va.us/usingweb/bckgrnd.htm). Although these notions of education are a vital background condition for learning, behaviourism does not fully take into account the existence of learner styles and maturity or cognitive processes that learners bring to problem solving situations. Dewey, one of the first modern educational theorists argued that an interactive and dialogic environment entailed in real-life experiences reflecting multiple perspectives is the key component to constructivist learning theories of education.

The second major theoretical category of learning theory was the work of the cognitive theorists of learning backed by Bruner and Vygotsky (vcclitonline.cc.va.us/usingweb/bckgrnd.htm). These theorists viewed the learner as central in the processing, storing and retrieving of information when discovering knowledge. Teachers were able to manage problem-solving activities through structured exploration and tended towards employing group learning strategies. Vygotsky took this condition for learning one step further and proposed that each individual had a “zone of proximal development”. He anticipated that with the provision of interactive learning opportunities with peers, teachers and motivated research, learners would extend and customize their knowledge base (vcclitonline.cc.va.us/usingweb/bckgrnd.htm) and would therefore learn at individual rates. These theories recognised that learners can go beyond surface learning and, as they matured, learners would seek deep understanding as they explored, organised and synthesised content information. However, cognitive theories of learning tended not to explore the collaborative and interactive nature of learning or to recognise the complexity of the background that learners bring to the educative environment (vcclitonline.cc.va.us/usingweb/bckgrnd.htm).
The third category of learning theory is that of constructivism, which views each learner as unique given that learning is based on a behavioural tenet, which is prior experience. Learning needs to be built on what students know, and teachers would ideally foster peer interaction and continually build upon students’ known concepts. Modern day theorists such as Knowles, Brooks & Brooks (1999) advocate constructivism, and they suggest that schools discard standardised curricula and promote the construction of curricula tailored to individuals’ prior knowledge. Teachers focus on making connections between knowledge bases while encouraging students to analyse, interpret and envisage information in a collaborative and conversational environment. Assessment is viewed as an individual journey considering results and reflection as part of the learning process. Constructivism argues that there is little need for grades or standardised testing given the students position as director of their own learning (www.funderstanding.com). The operation of these aspects of how students learn — more specifically, how they learn the three specialist subjects — with respect to the newly introduced Curriculum Framework (1998) will be discussed in Chapter Five.

2.5 Constructivist Theories of Teaching, Pedagogy and Learning

The underlying philosophy of learning by experience and accumulation has existed since the days of Socrates and Plato. That is, where the student is an active participant in the process of building knowledge (Palmer 2001). Students who attended Deep Sea Primary School ranged from year one to year seven and were, therefore, a highly diversified group of learners, yet they had a set of common learning features. These Western Australian students brought with them a range of skills, experiences, languages, cultures, philosophies and needs (Groundwater Smith. 2003:55–73). Characteristics of these young learners in the early-childhood phase of learning included an active curiosity about the world around them. Generally in the first three years of school young students:

…. construct and review their understandings through interaction with others, direct and vicarious experiences and the use of their senses (Curriculum Framework 1998:29).

As students move into middle childhood:
…they begin to understand and appreciate different points of view, develop the ability to think in more abstract terms and undertake sustained activities for longer periods (Curriculum Framework 1998:30).

The base understanding of constructivism is that learners construct their own knowledge according to their interactions with the environment. There are four ideas that make up the body of current constructivist learning:

- Knowledge is physically constructed by learners who are involved in active learning.
- Knowledge is symbolically constructed by learners who are making their own representation of authority.
- Knowledge is socially constructed by learners who convey their meaning to others.
- Knowledge is theoretically constructed by learners who try to explain things they did not completely understand (Gagnon & Collay 2005:1–10).

This study outlines some of the connections Deep Sea Primary School has to the larger State and national educational reform experiences (Apple 1995: xxv). It is proposed that an analysis of dominant ideologies, which direct the provision of educational experiences and resources, ultimately reinforces prevailing ideologies. A hierarchy of educational experiences, evaluations and legitimatisations exist in the organisational and belief structures as well as the practice of curriculum at the primary school level. This study explores how these connections currently affect the progress of curriculum reform of three specialists at the school in the first phase of curriculum implementation from 1999–2004.

2.5.1 Outcomes- based Education

Outcomes education in Australia is the next step in the lineage of changing education. This type of education intends to provide opportunities to meet the educational needs of individual students as well as to boost the quality of what students learn (Reed 1998:1–4). Both educational process and product are taken into account with this model of instruction. Students can be provided with opportunities to demonstrate an ability or skill as well as to demonstrate how the result was
achieved when being assessed (Reed 1998:1–4). Outcomes education forms the philosophical basis of the Western Australian *Curriculum Framework* (1998). Within the Framework, there is an increased emphasis on student-centred and constructivist approaches to teaching. Implicit in the documents is the notion that students contribute to and manage their own educational journey (*Curriculum Framework* 1998). Outcomes based education is employed in this study as an umbrella term as it takes into account international educational research that can be viewed as relatively comparable. The term in this study, encapsulates outcomes-based education research, outcomes-focused education research and the international educational literature generated within the context of a national curriculum steered by an outcomes model of education.

### 2.5.2 Curriculum Reform in Western Australia

After 1970 a new dynamic emerged in the deployment of specialist teachers in Western Australia. The Teachers Education Act of 1972 was passed by both Houses of Parliament. Under this new arrangement the Commonwealth could then assist (and presumably influence) teacher education at the tertiary level. Backing on a dollar-for-dollar basis with the States and Territories for capital expenditure and dollar-for-eighty five cents for recurrent expenditure were established. In terms of providing teacher training, diversity was encouraged together with academic autonomy for individual colleges. The Act also supported the corporate notion of decision making with boards and all college members as active participants in the “business” of education (*Ministry of Education Annual Report* 1971:8-11).

One of the first years where curriculum documents advocated choice in terms of discrete subject learning and experiences for students was in 1972. Music documents distinguished between class singing, instrument playing, listening to music, response to music, creative music, as well as simple musical theory. This curriculum was delivered by classroom teachers (*Ministry of Education Annual Report* 1972:10). A junior primary syllabus in Physical Education covering work in gymnastics, games and dance was also distributed to classroom teachers and supported by a two day in-service course. Two specialist advisory staff/teachers were employed to support the implementation of the new Physical Education syllabus in schools and with classroom teachers (*Ministry of Education Annual Report* 1972:10). The Western
Australian State Schools Amateur Sports Association (WASSASA) was groomed as an organization to assist with school sports, athletic and swimming carnivals (*Ministry of Education Annual Report 1972:10*). These initiatives were continued throughout the 1973 school year.

During 1974 some pilot appointments of specialists in Music and Art and Craft were made under the finding that,

> It is recognized that many primary teachers lack skill and interest in these particular areas. Physical Education and Science are two other areas where specialist teacher expertise is of great benefit to the school program (*Ministry of Education Annual Report 1974:7*).

In 1974 the policy orientation in primary schools did not intend to set up primary schools organization of subject specialization. Rather, the intention was that enthusiastic teachers fulfill the role of resource teacher. During this year the two Physical Education advisory staff continued their support of the Physical Education syllabus and teaching notes as well as develop curriculum for junior, middle and upper primary levels of Physical Education (*Ministry of Education Annual Report 1974:9*). School organization was however changing in nature to accommodate program diversification and teacher graduates from a variety of tertiary institutions in Western Australia and Australia.

In some primary schools a certain amount of subject specialization was tried and the result was an improvement in student’s work standards, due to expert teachers doing what they enjoy. The best and most economical results were obtained when resource teachers were employed to plan courses of work throughout the school from years one to seven. In some education districts teachers sometimes worked with three or four schools. These changes to school organization then sparked a need for in-service education, not only for teachers of curriculum studies but for principals and senior staff in order to deal more effectively with schools administration and personal relationships with often itinerant and traveling teachers (*Ministry of Education Annual Report 1975:5*).
Foreign languages received its first mention in the Department’s Annual Report in 1976. Each education region proposed to have its own foreign language and this was to be decided by available teachers and those teachers’ initiatives within the region. The rationale for this policy was the beginning of aligning primary school foreign language courses with their secondary feeder schools and the recognition that children are more receptive to foreign languages at early ages (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1976:10). The Physical Education syllabus grew into areas of learning and advocated Dance, Sail Training and Outdoor Education. Underpinning this assumption was a,

Worldwide acceptance of the value of personal recreation as a contributor to the general health of the nation is dependent upon schemes such as this option program becoming accepted universally (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1976:10).

Due to the perceived success of pilot appointments of specialist Music, Physical Education (Health was added later in 1980) as well as Art and Craft professionals in primary schools strengthening of each program continued in the late 1970’s. Specialist teachers were appointed over and above base staffing formulas, in part to reduce the teacher student ratio (often 40 students to one teacher) and to create a degree of non-teaching time for classroom teachers (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1976:1). In 1977 a number of changes occurred both in Western Australia and Australia. Regionalization in W.A became popular to enhance pooling of resources and relieve administrative pressure and the K-12 concept of Education was discussed. The Disadvantaged Schools Program was delivered nationally thus creating a new pool of funds and a base to exchange ideas or discuss issues. Education further diversified with Pre-primary, Aboriginal Education and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) becoming focus areas. There were 80 specialist teachers of Music, Physical Education and Art and Craft in 1977 (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1977:12).

### 2.5.3 Curriculum Diversification

Central to the dynamics of schools changing their organization and focus in response to Australian and emerging global concerns curriculum diversification and specialist
teachers became more of a visible feature in the educational landscape. Political and financial influence saw the emergence of specialist teachers as a valued yet marginalized resource for schools. During this time the mixed benefits of employing subject specialists in Western Australian schools came to light. On a positive note, the principal and staff enjoyed the extra staffing afforded by subject specialists and were willing to communicate and organize programs to benefit student learning. On a negative note, traditionalism and timetabling could be problems as well as defining the responsibilities of teachers. At times whole school integration did not occur so the specialist experienced isolation, reduced job satisfaction along with limited professional development and promotional opportunities (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1977:12). As local decision making gained more power in primary schools the requests for the over and above basic staffing position of specialists grew. In 1978 there were 437 requests for specialist teachers, 219 for Music, 117 for Physical Education and 101 for Art and Craft (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1978:12). Policy and funding indicated that these expert teachers were a long term scheme. Ongoing curriculum diversity indicated a desire for educational opportunities appropriate to the increasing diversity of Western Australian student needs and interests. At this stage there was the innovative notion of schooling as subjects with strands with associated curriculum materials and units of study (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1978:13).

As the concept and emerging organization of specialist teachers grew in Western Australian primary schools so did the variety and arrangement of programs which were selected by local school committee. The 1979 Ministry of Education Annual Report suggests that the rationale for specialist programs is that with the growing availability of leisure time there is a need to prepare our youth to make good use of this time. Music, Physical Education and Art and Craft have long been a central feature of our culture. It seems there is an assumption that these subjects are not serious pursuits and can be grouped together under the umbrella of “leisure”.

An outcome of these educational values of the 1970’s and 1980 are now realized in the actions and choices of Western Australian citizens and society today. Although significant at the time, when scrutinized the notion of leisure can now be perceived to be relatively valueless. As McKenna comments,
People valued things to do with family and human connection rather than material achievement. When asked the question … What prevents people from satisfying their [non-material] aspiration, the answer was clear, trying to keep up or get ahead….they traded money for [leisure] time (McKenna 1997:158).

The three assumptions of this study suggest that all students can learn the positive value of the three subjects, teachers can transfer the vigorous skills, knowledge and understanding required of these subjects and school culture can build supportive structures for the expression and development of a comprehensive and tangible education that can enrich our society. However, the pressure of “keeping-up” in a consumer and capitalist oriented society may make educational enhancement rather difficult to achieve. Changes to policy and the organization of schooling through the 1980’s indicated the dominance of an economic and a cost effective (out-put model) as a priority of a value laden curriculum.

2.5.4 The Economic Drive and Curriculum Priority
The most apparent trend throughout the 1980’s was the drive to diversify the curriculum in both primary and secondary curriculum. This meant the introduction of a corporate structure in the education sector that enabled curriculum and school operations to be directly linked to the economy. Syllabi were written in 1981 for music and delivered by about 300 specialists in primary schools around the State, swimming classes were delivered to all government primary students year three and above by specialist swimming and Water Safety teachers and the idea of a K-10 health program discussed (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1981:10-17).

Several other curriculum documents and sequential programs evolved in 1982, including classroom management strategies and the organization and programming of subject content from K-10. Music continued to grow and the Daily Physical Education was introduced in the primary curriculum to increase the health of Western Australian students. Foreign languages were introduced in selected secondary schools to reflect world-wide changes in the patterns of language teaching at all levels (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1982:39). The link between
primary and secondary courses of study along subject lines was slowly being established and trialed through 1983. Specialist teachers were often responsible for and accountable for the delivery of many of these documents creating further daily working pressure.

Curriculum review, devolution of decision making, professional development, school climate, corporate planning and public image were some of the organizational features of 1984 as reported in the Annual Report (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1984:21-23). The educational rationale was to meet the needs of individual students in a rapidly changing world. A number of working parties and committees were established. For example one party reviewed the structure of the primary curriculum, time allocation to subject areas and sought out the needs of an output model of education (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1984:21-23). Perhaps it was during this decade that the work required of re-traditionalizing established power relations with regard to education and curriculum was completed. Classroom based music was delivered to the majority of government primary school students but whether by specialist or classroom teachers is not clear. Sixty percent of primary school taught from the Daily Physical Education syllabus. The presence of foreign languages in the primary curriculum sought feedback on individual, community and internal needs community (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1984:90-94). These initiatives formed the foundation behind an emerging outcomes education in terms of specialists.

Later on in the 1980’s it became clear that the Western Australian education sector groomed itself as a major service organization for the government. Values such as Access, Resources, Excellence, Equity, Relevance and other expressions encapsulated the corporate yet devolved structure of schooling (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1985-86:8-19). Music followed a precise and structured curriculum focused on a sequential approach (K-10) to singing, literacy, and listening, aural skills in both primary and secondary schools. Swimming was available to all government school students and WASSASA developed primary school athletic carnivals with six carnivals planned. The multicultural education advisory committee completed a needs survey on learning languages in primary schools and LOTE policy and syllabus was designed for K-12 (Ministry of Education
Annual Report 1985-86:61-63). Funds for this program were withdrawn in 1986, an example of policy makers shifting funds and awareness away from this specialist and specialist teacher area.

2.5.5 The Division of Knowledge

Developments in the latter half of the decade were characterized by the findings of the Better Schools (1987) report amongst others. A further devolution of responsibilities was required of schools as well as increased accountability. The relationship between schooling and the labor market became explicit and focus turned to Australia’s economic position in a world economy and the growth of necessary skills needed to compete globally. A year later in 1987-88 reporting year a National Curriculum for schools was posed and included the division of learning in terms of subject area, criteria for assessment; curriculum was also linked to teaching practice. Skills for Australia guided a concerted effort for nation building and supplying the future workforce. Education was restructured to give life to these ideals and their performance with regard to economic indicators (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1987-88:2-9). Education became a marketing tool for the government’s economic agendas.

National initiatives exerted the strongest influence with respect to the relationship between education and Australia’s economic performance in 1989. Ten national goals and an integrated and unified approach to all education sectors were established to guarantee a more highly skilled workforce. The Western Australian goal was to maintain prosperity and ensure the highest standards in literacy and numeracy (Ministry of Education Annual Report 1989:16-17). It was from this period of time that the relatively uneconomic subjects as determined by the education sector were essentially positioned at the bottom of the school knowledge hierarchy. This thesis suggests that Music, Health and Physical Education as well as Languages Other Than English tended to be sidelined in the system of dominant and valuable knowledge presented to students in Western Australian Schools. In 1988 there were 158 000 students in the primary or K-7 sector. That is, 80% of all of the State’s students had contact with the curriculum and its implicit economic message. This does not include those students in the Catholic and Independent schools.
2.5.6 Towards 2000, Formalising Ideals

Curriculum reform in Western Australian schools tends to reflect national and international trends (Marsh 1997:173). Curriculum reorganisation in Western Australia has been influenced by an economic, political and social climate focused on increased accountability, paired with localised decision making and independence (Australian Primary Principals Association 1999:1–2). Consequently, there has been a process of transforming Western Australian schools in terms of all levels of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (MCEETYA, 2000). With the introduction of the Curriculum Framework (1998), in Western Australia schools in 1998, programs of study were in a State of flux and transformation. To manage reform, a number of goals were defined as achievable targets for schools and administrators.

In response to the agreed national goals for schooling (Marsh 1997:186), The Review of School Curriculum Development Procedures and Processes Report identified three areas of need for Western Australian Schools in 1995:

- a common curriculum direction, a more even spread of curriculum support materials and the provision of professional development aligned with curriculum change to enable schools to develop and adapt curriculum to the advantage of their students;
- a seamless curriculum among the different levels of schooling; and

In 1997 the interim Curriculum Council together with the Department of Education and Training published a Draft Curriculum Framework (1997) seeking public consultation. During this time, the newly established Curriculum Council of Western Australia recommended a range of reform measures including a five-year implementation phase and assessment policy (The Curriculum Council of Western Australia 1997: iii–iv) for the Curriculum Framework (1998). The aim was to implement curriculum reform at a whole-school level in accordance with central directions while encouraging flexibility in local school organisation (Watt 2000:43). This organisational flexibility would enable schools to adapt curriculum to their strengths, diverse contexts and student needs. In 1998 the Western Australian
Government introduced the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) for all government and non-government school’s in the State. The framework — a mechanism of educational reform — was to be fully implemented in schools by 2004 (Forrest 2000:1).

The documents detailed a comprehensive set of curriculum outcomes for Western Australian schools including the ideal elements and formal aims of eight specialists for government school’s Western Australia. Also included were potential learning experiences, teaching and assessment strategies, together with resources and the management of a full curriculum re-development.

The formal documents consisted of an overarching Statement and Learning-area Statements for each of the eight learning areas. The overarching Statement delineated seven key principals and thirteen overarching learning outcomes. Each of the sixty-six learning outcomes was attached to one of the eight specialists, and linked to and supported the overarching educational outcomes (Watt 2000:43). This framework was supported by the Education Department of Western Australia’s *Outcomes and Standards Framework* (1998) and was presented as Student-Outcome Statements and structured into eight specialists. Strands and sub-strands were organised according to eight levels while being described progressively. This style of progressive learning can be informed by individual student development with planning and teaching guided by successive attainment through the eight levels (Watt 2000:43).

The published document also identified common learning outcomes for students, while advocating that “schools and teachers develop their own learning and teaching programs according to their circumstances, ethos and needs” (*Curriculum Framework* 1998:6). Not only did the *Curriculum Framework* require schools to establish their own strategic plans, it also required schools to create professional-development opportunities based on teachers gaining an understanding of the purpose and nature of the document (Watt 2000:43). Accordingly, schools could then develop localised and shared understandings of the outcomes and integrate the specific knowledge and understandings advocated in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). There is no mandated curriculum as such; however the actual manifestation of curriculum in primary schools tends to be fluid due to contextual factors.
During the first stage of reform teachers in all schools as this study indicates were then expected to:

Use the *Outcomes and Standards Framework* to inform planning of educational programs, and to assist and report on student progress in achieving the learning outcomes described in the *Curriculum Framework* (Watt 2000:44).

The *Curriculum Framework* (1998) document articulated the expected roles of teachers as they implement documents. To achieve the goals of outcomes education, a process of change was required. The first stage of curriculum implementation indicated that teachers should go through a process of understanding the outcomes. This process was made up of six interrelated aspects of clarifying what the documents meant, identifying what was new and considering students current level of achievements. These steps help in connecting existing programs to the most recent outcomes, reviewing assessment information and determining students’ achievements in terms of outcomes (*Getting Started Integrated Learning. EDWA, 2000:*2).

The second stage of the curriculum reform and implementation was to decide what needed to change. This included investigating why students may not be achieving outcomes, assessing information needs as well as reflecting on the delivery of concepts underlying outcomes. Furthermore, thinking about how student learning progresses, appraising the appropriateness of learning then reviewing the teaching-and-assessment procedures that may lead to modified learning experiences for students (*Getting Started Health and Physical Education. EDWA, 2000:*2).

The third stage of curriculum reform and implementation was to plan lessons with an outcomes focus. This stage entailed deciding on which outcomes would be the focus and why, considering the needs of all learners. The next step was selecting (or negotiating) learning experiences to provide meaningful experiences for students that have assessment embedded in the experience and using student achievements for future planning (*Getting Started the Arts. EDWA, 2000:*2). Principals working with teams of teachers could then actively integrate decision making from the bottom up and promote consensus building (Keiser & Shen 2000:115–21) in terms of all eight specialists.
2.5.7 Who will teach the students what?
With the establishment of a Western Australian, outcomes based curriculum from K–12, specialist or specialist curriculum delivery — particularly in the primary school — could be seen as becoming more complex (Thornton 1998). A school-based aspect of the development of an outcomes based curriculum was that primary school students were now learning from a number of teachers. As a result, in Western Australian government primary schools, there has been an expanding deployment of specialist teachers. These specialist teachers have been employed to enhance the delivery of the eight learning areas traditionally provided by classroom teachers.

The concern for primary schools is that an outcome based curriculum may generate unyielding boundaries that separate and compartmentalise knowledge into discipline structures potentially fracturing student learning (White 1998:44). In addition, there is the potential that the Curriculum Framework (1998) may become the new educational hegemony where frontline practitioners sideline official documents in order to retain autonomy in the classroom (Petheric & Smith 1996:11). The diversity of interrelated and competing forces is addressed further on in this thesis.

This thesis argues that the specialist teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English are an important aspect of primary students’ education. Specialist teachers present the skills, knowledge and understandings vital to a balanced primary education. Currently in Western Australia, the Curriculum Framework (1998) advocates outcomes based curriculum along subject content, and primary schools must deal with a number of subtle forces arising from this curriculum reform. Reform mandates the introduction of theoretically discrete subject areas in the primary school setting. In turn, this transformation brings a variety of historic, economic, political and socially embedded hierarchies and contestations linked to an economic and output model of education directly into the primary school arena.

2.5.8 Definitions of Specialist teachers and Generalist teachers

The basic logistics and psychological demands of teaching the same subject to different students all day are quite different from teaching a number of subjects to the same students (Lamdin 1992:3).
As a result of curriculum reorganisation in the United Kingdom, Alexander (1992) formally introduced a new classification of primary teachers to assist in defining some of the new challenges concerning primary teachers’ roles and responsibilities. He defined four categories of teachers: the generalist classroom teacher, the generalist/consultant, the semi-specialist and the fulltime specialist. Alexander’s classification seems to be understood as definitive in the literature although “mixed models” exist in schools depending on need (OFSTED 1997:5).

The generalist or classroom teacher in this investigation is a teacher who is responsible for the care of one group of students over a year and who has a permanent classroom and location. Traditionally, these classroom teachers were mostly responsible for all learning areas. Increasingly, however, they are responsible for four or five specialists. In addition, within the collaborative organisation of primary schools, these generalist classroom teachers may be assigned managerial responsibility for a specialist. For example, responsibilities may be shared including leadership or management of a learning area, a cost-centre manager allocated to a learning area or section of a learning area.

The specialist teacher usually focuses on one learning area or subject in the school curriculum and often experiences unique work conditions and experiences. A specialist teacher focuses on one learning area or a section of a learning area as in the case of Music, which is one strand from the Arts learning area. Another specialist may focus on Health and Physical Education or Languages Other Than English. These frontline practitioners work across the school with most year groups and provide release time (OFSTED: 1997:1-7) or, in the Western Australian context, Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT) to the class teacher. In the context of British educational reforms, the specialist teacher may also provide expertise in a subject, promote best practice and organise curriculum content. They can offer a leadership role coordinating curriculum material and professional development for other teachers who may teach that subject. Specialists may also provide for in-service needs and advocate the subject in a range of educational and community networks (OFSTED 1997:4).

The specialist teachers in this study are responsible for teaching the knowledge of one specific subject or one specialist across the school to all students. The teachers’
contact with the students is longitudinal, with one teacher often instructing students for a number of years (Colley 1989:41–5). Subject specialists generally see students in half-hour to one-hour blocks once or twice a week. Teachers often work part time, and they may work with large groups of students together with flexible timetables, resources and conditions (Lamdin 1992).

There are advantages and disadvantages to employing subject specialists. The advantage of the sole classroom teacher is the child-centred focus in the classroom. One teacher can provide a coherent background of support for each student and, over the year, balance his or her educational experience. The disadvantage of the “one class, one teacher” model of education is that one teacher now cannot manage the size and intensity of the modern curriculum (House of Commons, United Kingdom 1989:14–76). The advantage of a subject specialist is that they present a high level of subject-specific knowledge to students. As expected, the quality of subject teaching is almost always better than that of the non-specialist (OFSTED 1997:6). The subject teachers also often have a positive influence on the work of other teachers in the school (OFSTED 1997:6).

The main disadvantage of the subject specialist is that their work may be too isolated from the daily curriculum experienced by the rest of the school. Furthermore, Thornton (1998:4) argues that the increasing use of specialist teachers along subject lines can create a whole-school work environment of professional stratification rather than integration. Similarly, Lacey’s research indicates that increasing subject specialisation has the effect of creating more rules, greater impersonality and the expansion of hierarchies in British primary schools, an aspect that further detracts from student learning rather than supporting it (Lacey 1985:2–17).

As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, specialist or subject knowledge is implicitly evaluated with a place and value in all schools and this tends to be a reflection of social and political values. Perceptions of valued knowledge can be introduced directly into primary school settings through school organisation and teachers perceptions of the worth of particular specialist knowledge. This research indicated that the position of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English teachers will continue to be subsidiary to the generalist teacher if primary school culture and organisation do not actively and positively integrate these
three specialist areas into the enacted, operational and learnt curriculum experienced by Western Australian primary students. Accordingly, the first and subsequent stages of reform may not be realised.

The next section of this chapter details the theoretical framework applied in this study. An analysis of primary Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English teachers in the overall educational process at Deep Sea Primary School indicated a number of broader, local and individual features that determined curriculum enactment, operation and learning. The range and influence of organisational, teaching and learning issues that may be present in the primary school context are then detailed. These issues can be illuminated, not only from international research on the topic, but also from selected research based in high school settings considering Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English.

### 2.5.9 Operating a Primary School with Specialist teachers

The curriculum-reform literature identifies schools, teachers and communities as the key environmental factors (Fullan 1993, 1999 and 2003) in providing effective and relevant learning outcomes for all students. Notions in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) and other curriculum documents argue that a broad education is pivotal in preparing the next generation of citizens to participate and prosper in a rapidly changing world (*Curriculum Framework* 1998: Foreword). Outcomes education has generated a need for subject-specialist teachers with mastery of an area of knowledge, rather than the traditional jack-of-all-subjects as required with a generalist teacher (Anderson 1962:253-260). Upon investigation, it seems that the work of specialist teachers and their contribution to educational accomplishments is uncommon in the literature (Downing 2003; Colley 1989; Lamdin 1992; Lehman 1993). Recent international research has offered evidence that specialist teachers are vital to the operation of modern day primary schools (Murphy, Selinger, Bourne & Briggs 1995; Littledyke & Huxford 1998; Padilla, Fairchild & Valadez 1990; Lamdin 1992; Bresler & Thompson 2002).

Possibly the paucity of Australian research in this area stems from the belief that developing literacy and numeracy is the main function of primary schooling together with socialising children (Groundwater-Smith 2003). Perhaps due to the early stages
of national, State and Territory educational restructuring, there is minimal Australian literature (Bartlett 1992; Marsh 1997) that addresses specialist curriculum implementation with respect to Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English in primary schools. Maybe it has been assumed that because primary schools have traditionally been organised on a “one class, one teacher” model (OFSTED 1997:5–9) the efforts of specialist teachers can be difficult to separate from the achievements of the usual class teacher. Another factor is that primary school teachers are mostly, but not always, trained as generalist classroom teachers, and there are assumptions that generalist teachers will not be responsible for some aspects of specialist curriculum. They are, therefore, not trained accordingly (Russell-Bowie 2002:33).

However, with the introduction of the Curriculum Framework (1998) and the Department of Education and Training’s Standards Outcomes Framework (1998) in Western Australian schools, the roles and responsibilities that teachers can perform, the curriculum they are able to deliver and the pedagogy they can utilise to support student’s learning are open to change and innovation.

Research in this area, however, indicates that there are parallel and contradictory external and internal forces influencing primary school organisation (OFSTED 1997:5). Fortunately, previous research delineates some of the reasons, processes and outcomes as dominant knowledge structures and contents are transmitted, transformed and produced as evidenced in the work of Bourdieu & Passeron 1990. A contribution to meeting the challenge of successful reform can be made by reporting on the condition of curriculum reform in Western Australia of these three specialist subjects.

Primary schools in Western Australia are moving away from the “one class, one teacher” model of curriculum delivery (OFSTED 1997:4–10) and are conveying national and State curriculum goals by designating teachers to take the role of specialist teachers. This does not mean that literacy and numeracy or classroom teachers will forego their position as the front-runners of primary education. On the contrary, the literature suggests that the inclusion of specialist teachers supports the continued success of a good number of educational outcomes (Gardner 1963; Lehman 1993). The intellectual and social benefits of learning Music, Health and
Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English are not in question according to the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). There are the concrete skills, knowledge and understandings being imparted through these subjects. Also, the intangibles of citizenship, creativity, alliance and identity are significant yet less quantifiable outcomes being learnt through engagement with Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English teachers and courses of study.

In Western Australia, there are over 300,000 students in 1,038 government and non-government schools (*National Report On Schooling In Australia* 1999:7) prepared to learn the fundamentals of these three subjects. Primary schools are therefore, in a particularly ideal position to provide first-rate learning experiences given the learning characteristics of early and middle-childhood students. The role of State primary schools as providers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English becomes even more significant in regional and remote areas where optional and external learning amenities may not be available (Cambell-Hicks 2004:43).

At the time of this study a significant portion of students may potentially spend fourteen years at school in Western Australia. During this time, students have opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understandings that assist them to succeed as citizens in society (*Curriculum Framework* 1998:13). This is a complex task given that:

... Society is characterized by rapid technological development, increasing cultural diversity and changing family and institutional structures. Changes in the nature of work, the growing interdependence of world communities, global environmental issues and social, political and economic conditions will continue to pose challenges and offer opportunities throughout the twenty first century (*Curriculum Framework* 1998:13).

The following section outlines the theoretical framework that has guided the fieldwork and interpretation of this study (Patton 2002:79). Elucidating the theoretical aspects affecting the progress of the curriculum implementation of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English in primary
schools sustains the methodology as well as the analysis implications of this thesis (Patton 2002:80).

2.6 Curriculum, Knowledge and Social Reproduction

Cultural behaviours, both explicit and implicit, are reflected in a school’s policy, its curriculum and its teachers’ beliefs. Culture, its transmission and its negotiated behaviours are also evident in teacher relations and student–teacher exchanges (Hollin, 1996:33). In the course of schooling, social and knowledge codes, for example knowledge hierarchies and perceptions of values, are transmitted from teacher’s experiences as students, external norms we conform to, and from the expectations of group membership in schools (Napier & Gershenfeld 1989:5–17). Accordingly, the experience of knowledge, its value and the nature of knowledge — which formally begin in primary school education — largely determine what we accept as true.

An analysis of the curriculum and pedagogical practices may point toward the often invisible curriculum prioritisation, teaching practices and assessment methods that promote the values dominant in a society. An examination into valued knowledge may also bring to light those features of the educational process, especially the enactment of curriculum, that highlight social reproduction and stratification, often noticeable in the quality of students’ learning experiences (Potvin-Cumming 2001:21). Culture and education work together to shape citizens and prepare them to contribute to what is commonly regarded as our traditions and the social order. Neither our culture nor our education is ideologically neutral as both have implicit values that are incorporated into their recognition by a society (Laker 2002:1). This recognition includes different subject areas in education, each one associated with an often-prescribed meaning. Societies and communities through consensus legitimate each area of knowledge and provide each subject with a value and place. The position of each subject is constructed through systems of meaning that are legitimised through educational policy and practice with the aim of perpetuating the commonly held view of what is important to our society (Laker 2002:2).

This study takes a critical view of curriculum. It investigates teachers’ perceptions of the individual subject areas and outcomes based programs offered during the school week and how these perceptions interact with other stakeholders and community
interests (Groundwater-Smith 2003:88–9). A critical view of the curriculum enables the development of effective teaching and learning experiences where the curriculum is negotiated to include, as fully as possible, all eight specialists of the Curriculum Framework (1998). This includes learner autonomy by setting scaffolded goals, creating collaborative learning environments and tasks together with planned time for discussion and reflection (Groundwater-Smith 2003:89). Teachers who are more aware of the different discourses available to them are more likely to be able to assist students to be active in their own education (Grundy 1998).

The next section is arranged so that the first theme — concerning wider historical, economic, political and social forces — is investigated first in relation to social constructionism. The second theme focuses on the school-based aspects of specialist implementation and organisation such as access to resources, funding and time with respect to group processes and theory. The third theme is developed using concepts of discourse analysis which details individual pedagogical practices and perceptions about transmission of valued knowledge and its relationship to dominant discourse.

### 2.7 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism emphasises the power that culture has in our lives. What we experience and learn can be viewed as being culturally rooted, interpersonally forged as well as essentially incomplete (Patton 2002:96). Participants of groups negotiate meaning and identity in life while significant actions are frequently based in a value system. These systems of value are transmitted and transformed through social organisations (Patton 2002:97). Social constructionism was employed to guide a critical analysis of one primary school as it experiences reform because the theory takes into account the views of divergent stakeholders that are positioned differently in the organisational milieu of the schools’ organisational framework.

Bernstein (1971:47), drawing from the work of Durkheim and Marx, puts forth an argument that demonstrated that an analysis of the structure of a school’s organisation and framework can reveal the distribution of power as well as aspects of social control. When analysed, educational conventions embodied in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment can provide insight into teaching and learning experiences available in schools. Bernstein also argued that contextual conventions that we learn
at primary school and become familiar with are typically value laden and conditional (Bernstein 1971:47).

Napier & Gershenfeld (1989:5–17) provide evidence that through experience, group members (for example a class group) learn the significance of “normal world views”. Primary school experiences or instructions provide individuals (in this case teachers and students) with meanings and benchmarks about behaviour and conventions. Groups are created via the familiarity of their experiences, and understandings and group norms regulate the performance of members. It is these experiential and instructional sources of information that act as a mechanism for social control within a society (Napier & Gershenfeld. 1989:115) as well as subgroups and individuals in primary schools.

Teachers’ beliefs about school are often constructed from their experiences as students. Educational experiences reinforced by our experiences in society and community lead us to form impressions about ourselves, our abilities, the nature and value of knowledge, and how learning should occur (Yero 2002:2). Rokeach (1968:5–10) suggested that beliefs are the taken-for-granted, assumed suppositions of social and physical reality. With respect to the power of experience, beliefs can be viewed as judgments and evaluations that we project into and absorb from the world around us. Pajares (1992: 309–15) suggested that beliefs are formed early on in life, can be resistant to change, and are often self-perpetuating as well as related to systemic beliefs. Beliefs can be viewed as generalisations that act to guide behaviour; they have meaning and power.

Esland (1971:73) argued that it is vital to consider teachers’ perspectives in the context of where they work to understand the enactment of curriculum. The schools and classrooms within which teachers work are the places where ideologies, values and opinions are articulated, negotiated and legitimised. Esland (1971:74) like Pajares suggested that an investigation into teachers’ perceptions indicated that occupational perspectives obtain much of their cognitive support from institutional worldviews. Rokeach (1972:5–6) suggested that what teachers believe, in terms of their occupational perspectives, can act unconsciously as filters for teacher behaviour as well as inform their teaching pedagogy. Furthermore, Esland (1971:75) suggested
that the worldviews of teachers are reinforced by the ritual of membership and by prevailing attitudes together with strategies to maintain loyalty.

Deep Sea Primary School provided a dynamic scenario for a study focused on teachers’ perspectives concerning the implementation and progress of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English whilst operating within the domain of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) in 2002. It could do so as “both are directed towards promoting valued knowledge, abilities and attitudes in the learner” (Boomer et al., 1992:33). Language, along with the meaning ascribed to experiences and group beliefs are the ways in which ideologies, values and opinions are articulated, negotiated and legitimised (Esland 1971:73) within the primary school context.

Social constructionism also demonstrates that:

Language inevitably and inherently is built on the assumptions and worldview of the social group that has constructed it and the culture of which it is part (Patton 2002:100).

Gee and Green (1998) expressed the influence of language in its many forms

The worlds, identities, activities and connection these texts, like all texts, build are licensed by specific socially and historically shaped practices and institutions representing the values and interests of distinctive groups of people. If we can use the term “politics” to mean any place where social interests and “social groups” are at stake, then all language-in-use is political in a quite straightforward sense (Gee and Green 1998:145).

When considering the values embedded in the primary school experience and its operations, aspects of power relations are revealed. Ann analysis into the dominant beliefs and values underlying particular discourses reveals the source of power, its orientation, structure and expression. The technique of discourse analysis then helps to reveal relationships of power as they are constructed, located, evaluated, prioritised and maintained in primary schools.
2.8 Discourse Analysis as a Window into Power Relations

Power relations can be analysed using the theory of discourse analysis. Dominant views are often expressed in language and the various communication forms that materialise from a particular culture’s language (Patton 2002:99). In this study it is Western Australian policy documents such as the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) and the Western Australian Department of Education and Training’s *Outcomes Standards Framework* (1998) were critically investigated. The interview transcripts were also scrutinised for their links to prevailing historical, economic, political and social discourses and interests.

Discourse theory is a product of postmodernism. This theory focuses on the hidden motivations embedded in a text. Discourse analysis views the world as inherently fragmented and heterogeneous with a variety of interests operating at any one time (www.gslis.utexas.edu/palmquis/courses/discourse.html). To make sense of any one situation or problem, such as how to improve curriculum implementation, the social and dominant discourse particular to that time must be taken into account. In other words, interpretation and awareness (of the problem) is conditioned by the social surroundings and the dominant dialogue in a specific context. Discourse analysis provides access to powerful literacy. This theory can point to the control centre of the second language or meta-language or the dominant discourse (Gee 1990:153).

The employment and analysis of dominant discourse assists in understanding how culture and language constitute persons and groups as well as how they situate particular individuals and groups in the societal matrix (Lankshear 1997:71). The interview narratives are used as the documents that provide insight into the control centres and power relationships in operation at Deep Sea Primary School.

2.9 Pathways to Conceptualising Curriculum

When communities engage in an essentially socio-cultural act such as schooling, options as to how best impart knowledge are considered. Decisions are made as to how best to construct and arrange information, patterns of behaviour and their fundamental values (Ground-Water Smith 2003:8).
Formal educational knowledge can be considered to be realized through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. Curriculum defines what counts as knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as a valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realization of this knowledge on the part of the taught (Bernstein, 1971:47).

Knowledge as a social construction and the construction of subject knowledge through group consensus has been investigated by many theorists in previous decades (Berger and Luckman 1967). Kuhn (1970) and Hollinger (2000) applied this theory to the task of deconstructing science (Patton 2002:98). Goodson (1983) employed the theory more specifically to deconstruct the position of British secondary school geography. He illustrated the procedure by which dominant interests influenced the construction and funding of the geography curriculum in British secondary schools. Using social reproduction theory, he argued that different sets of knowledge are presented in schools as legitimate knowledge to different classes (Apple 1984:212). It is often the most powerful in society and community who are constructing, organising and funding curriculum to their own advantage and to maintain the status quo.

Goodson further claims that any view of curriculum must be aware of previous historical elements that have led to its present form (Goodson 1992:66). Goodson’s work on British secondary schools charts a historical process focusing on the relationships within subject curriculum. He argued that three mentalities have become embedded in British curriculum. This has had the effect of prioritising certain forms of curricula and advantaging certain social groups. These three mentalities are linked to the three levels of class and generally represent mechanical knowledge, administrative knowledge and abstract knowledge. This notion was first posed by Adam Smith (1779) (cited in Goodson 1992:66) who claimed that this division of knowledge was the link between the division of labor and social position including access to power and resources. As a result social and educational experiences mind-sets and cultures come to life and exist as socially evaluated models of reality. In general, class knowledge (and relations to positional goods) was
related to three main patterns of manual labor, organisational employment and academic service (Goodson 1992:66).

A present outcome of this division and evaluation of subject knowledge is that:

High status knowledge gains its school subject adherents and aspirants less through the control of curricula which socialize than through well established connections with patterns of resource allocation and the associated work and career prospects these ensure (Goodson 1983:198).

Goodson’s later work (1999) delineated the internal relationships between social perceptions of knowledge values, professional groups, teachers, universities and schools that led to the construction of the geography curriculum. Although his analysis centred on the study of geography, his work was a start to building a theory of curriculum. Goodson (1999) also suggested that part of the process of contestation was the limited nature of time and resources. Each segment of the curriculum must preserve their position in the hierarchy of knowledge. Otherwise, that sector may find itself devalued by competing sectors that were constantly jostling for the best position and resource levels (Covaleskije 1999:101).

An Australian example of this contestation and negotiation is embedded in the crowded curriculum debate. The accepted dominance of literacy and numeracy in the primary school arena has drawn critical attention as child-centred and subject-centred models of education (Hall 2000:2) have become negotiated amongst various stakeholders. An outcome of this debate has been that:

… the primary curriculum has intensified and some subject’s status for example the Arts, Health and Physical Education as well as languages has been threatened by an over crowded system (Primary Matters 1999:3).

Although contestation and negotiation of curriculum will continue, this study employed aspects of social constructionism theory to provide territory and voice (www.gslis.utexas.edu/palmquis/courses/discourse.htm) for teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English employed at Deep Sea Primary School. The social constructions that influenced the progress of curriculum implementation that have emerged through discourse analysis provide insight into
how dominant interests operate at the school. The pattern in the division, evaluation and funding of subject knowledge approval then becomes evident. It is a pattern of subject knowledge endorsement that aligns with traditional values and teaching practices. The approach of the following sections is dualist as the argument notes the objective representations of school reality embodied in policy documents but compares and contrasts these depictions with the staff members’ own representations of these realities (Patton 2002:102).

2.10 School Culture Organisation and Group Processes

Group processes and identity theory can provide an understanding of how the perceived, operational and learnt curriculum is organised, contested, negotiated and evaluated by individuals and cliques at Deep Sea Primary School. Juxtaposed, these two theories indicate that each professional practitioner perceives and interprets reality differently. Multiple realities that exist in a modern day school are a combination of each individual’s history, previous experience, present needs and immediate context requirements. In most cases, the multiple and objective realities that exist in a school culture evolve from the projection of subjective states of being (Berger and Luckman 1967:1–34). These subjective realities are often made up of life experiences (for example primary school experiences) that then become knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes (Eiser 1987).

Individuals and groups negotiate, construct and share subjective and objective states of social expectancy among themselves, and this is what makes up the culture of the school. An individual’s sense of identity operates to anchor how that individual perceives and interprets reality (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:5). Tension can arise in a primary school setting within groups as different realities are expressed. However, conventions, social expectancy and group norms are the forces that regulate and maintain group cohesion as well as school culture (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:22). This theory accounts for why resistance to reform occurs and why teachers find it difficult to change the established social order in primary schools.

Stereotypes and our identification with stereotypes are powerful. It may be argued that individual teachers seek to affirm and reconstruct their personal reality in school situations (Berger and Luckman 1967: 1–34). Affirmation and comfort of our perceived identity is captured by understanding and conforming to prescribed roles in
the structure and estimation of particular school-based group memberships. Group membership is achieved by tailoring behaviour so individual needs are met (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:13). Continual communication and interaction between members of the various (often competing groups) involves an ongoing process of defining the relationships and arrangements between members. This system of arrangements has rules, norms and regulatory procedures to its existence (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:22). The physical environment in addition to the social environment also affects the opportunities for communication between the groups as well as the attendance of high-status and low-status group members. Power distribution in a group can also be displayed physically with those high-status members possessing access to superior resources and communication networks (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:44–5).

Many factors increase the attractiveness of group membership including prestige, authority, cohesiveness, ethnicity, size, success and fear. Many of the deciding features of group membership are based on socially constructed values, the criteria of which are shared via informal and formal communication networks. Group membership brings with it the responsibility of expected behaviours and norms that regulate individual performance within an organised unit (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:49–86) existing within each primary school. Just as Bernstein (1971) suggested, norms are one of the significant mechanisms for social control of individual teachers’ (as well as students’) behaviour in the social order of the primary school.

The point is that group members learn through experience the meaning ascribed to behaviour, action or event and its significance for both the individual and the group within the established school culture (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:89–115). Norms are the expectations for behaviour that can be organised and are somewhat shared ideas about how group members perceive the regulation and sanctioning of particular behaviours.

Group norms function to regulate the performance of a group as an organized unit, keeping it on the course of its objective (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:117).
In this study, the objective was to investigate the many levels of curriculum and to capture the nature of educational experiences primary students receive in regards to specialist subject knowledge. This study also critically pursues the operation of prevailing ideologies promoted by the Curriculum Framework and the Department of Education and Trainings’ Standards Outcome Framework.

Together with the explicit and public documentation of norms, there is the substructure of attitudinal and evaluative social forces that demand acceptance to established group norms (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:125). This pressure acts to ensure group survival, raises the predictability of members’ behaviour, prevents uncomfortable interpersonal situations and maintains the group’s central values. This study demonstrates how and why this occurs in terms of specialists during reform.

The act of maintaining the status quo occurs as primary school groups and communities either consciously or unconsciously (Pajares 1992) reinforce prevailing attitudes, values and behaviours (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:147) for their own survival:

Once norms, which are the group procedures or expectations for its members are developed and agreed upon, they are exceedingly difficult to change (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:157).

Identity theory helps understand the resistance that school groups and individual teachers have towards educational reform (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:158). Identity theory examines the self-categorisation of each individual into an identity that is then included into a group. Each individual and group conforms to role expectations, consensus about meanings and the behavioural norms expected of that particular group in terms of the social establishment, society or culture it exists within, (Napier & Gershenfeld 1987:159) in this case a primary school.

Returning to Goodson’s (1999) argument, much of the meaningful activity that governs a primary school role centres on the access and control of resources (Stets & Burke 2000:225). Group processes dictate access by maintaining the meanings, expectations and resources associated with each role. Role identities sustain the complex and dynamic interrelatedness of established social configurations (Stets and Burke 2000:227). An analysis of specialist subject knowledge at Deep Sea Primary
School illustrates how these group processes work to maintain a value laden curriculum.

2.11 The Organisation, Teaching and Learning of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English Curriculum

Literature relevant to understanding the organisation as well as the teaching and learning of the three key learning areas is now critically reviewed. It is proposed that to arrive at a full curriculum implementation and to achieve maximum student learning, frontline professionals could engage more fully with all eight learning areas of the curriculum documents. Furthermore, teaching professionals will be advantaged in becoming aware of some of the organisational structures and pervading perceptions that impact on their daily work practices (Pajares 1992:307–10). The first step in understanding teachers’ beliefs about particular subject knowledge and its transmission in primary schools is to examine the influence of these beliefs. When confronted with change it is best to elucidate perceptions. With concrete evidence of teachers’ views and beliefs, school communities can then better plan, manage and ultimately revolutionise primary school work environments (Fullan 1999).

Primary schools can become “learning organisations” (Senge 1990) and generate school structures where students have opportunities to construct new knowledge from prior understandings of these three subjects over the period of their primary education (Brooks & Brooks 1993). By employing innovative practices in delivering specialist curriculum, lifelong student learning will be supported, and classroom teachers can realise the value of specialist subject teachers. Furthermore, opportunities for trust and appreciation can be cultivated and articulated among all teachers in the primary school workplace.

2.11.1 Dynamic Schools

The progress of curriculum implementation is determined not by the quantity of programs that can be included into the school curriculum but from the point of view of the elements that together constitute quality implementation (Norris 2000:14). These elements are not mutually exclusive. Curriculum reform is seen to be influenced by history and economics, national policy, local educational priorities and
culture together with teachers’ perceptions of professional roles and responsibilities. Undertaking a comparative study requires some order, so studies of Music are addressed first. Second are investigations of Health and Physical Education. Third, studies concerning Languages Other Than English are attended to. Comparison of the three subjects is made thematically throughout this study in the above order.

Alexander’s (1992) work also shows that the introduction of a national curriculum in the United Kingdom in 1987 directly increased demand on the subject knowledge expected of classroom teachers. Curriculum restructure initiated a requirement for subject knowledge teachers to be trained and deployed into primary schools to implement the extensive national curriculum. Accordingly, British teacher-training institutions began to prepare student teachers as “subject consultants” (Thornton 1998) and the debate on child-centred or subject-centred curriculum models of curriculum delivery drew critical attention (Hall 2000:3–7). The next section details selected research in relation to issues in curriculum prioritisation and embedded perceptions in the primary school concerning the place and value of subject knowledge. School-based research on frontline educators’ perceptions of subjects in curriculum is pitched from the occupational perspective of being either a specialist teacher or a generalist teacher. This section provides evidence to support the argument that subject specialist teaching means different things to different people.

2.12 Occupational Perspectives: Specialist Teachers

Our priorities are defined not by what we say but by what we do. The value that we truly place on education is evidenced by the extent to which we allocate our resources to it, not by the amount of flowery rhetoric we lavish on it (Lehman 1993:1).

Primary schools, in general, place a higher emphasis on literacy and numeracy education and a lower emphasis on other specialists. At least half the week is allocated to English and Maths while the remainder of instructional time is spread among the other learning areas (The Sufficiency of Resources for Australian Primary Schools 2004: viii). This organisational approach suggests that there will be insufficient time in the school week to support student learning of particular subjects. This then leads to a situation where educational goals are traded off, one program at
the expense of others (Ridge et al. 2002:1). This is demonstrated in some Australian primary schools where Languages Other Than English programs are withdrawn and “extra” time and resources are invested in literacy and numeracy projects (Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English Program 2003).

2.12.1 Academic Value and Curriculum Prioritisation

Madsen and Hancock (2002) studied issues concerning American primary school music teachers’ retention and attrition rates. A reason American music teachers opted out of the public education system was a general apathy for music, the subject being perceived by students and colleagues as extra-curricula and a respite for “academic” teachers. The perception that their subject was non-academic challenged the professional status of teachers and undermined efforts of advocacy (Lamdin 1992).

Ball put forth the general systemic view in British Primary schools that:

Music has always been a subject backwater in the school curriculum, a matter of little interest to most students and hardly a focus of political controversy (Ball 1995:38).

Lehman (1993:34) asserted that there was a general perception that “the Arts” dealt with the emotions, not the mind reflecting, a misunderstanding of the nature, value and role of the Arts in our society (Lehman 1993:34).

Issues particular to the crowded curriculum can be improved by whole-school planning, encouraging teamwork and fostering positive communication networks among colleagues to support program implementation (Kennedy 1996:82). Morgan, Bourke and Thompson (2002:1–6) suggested that the success of Australian Physical Education programs depended on the way the subject was perceived and valued by those who were responsible for delivering it. Their general argument was that if a fragmented approach existed towards any subject then delivery would be dislocated at the school and class level (DETYA 2000). The point here can be seen in the work of OFSTED, where most British Primary schools pursued a “one class, one teacher” model. These government schools demonstrated an organisational unwillingness and stubborn resistance to integrating expert teachers. British schools pursued this policy even when significant gaps existed in the availability of subjects (OFSTED 1997:1–9).
The survey and interview work of Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) for the Department of Science and Education supported the findings of OFSTED. These researchers found that in British primary schools the roles of teachers were rigidly conceived. In order to improve the growth of subject expertise a greater flexibility of staff deployment in the form of specialty and semi-specialist teachers was necessary. Carr (2002:5) stressed that indifferent Australian community attitudes to Languages Other Than English were apparent, and this was tied in with competing priorities in the curriculum, a misalignment between primary and secondary courses, and a lack of support in tertiary institutions.

### 2.12.2 Provision of Resources for Specialist Teachers

Resources to support teaching are pivotal to the success of programs. High priorities for specialist teachers are the provision of their own workspace and access to high quality resources. Survey results from the National Education Centre for statistics indicated that only 67% of primary schools in America had a dedicated room with suitable equipment for teaching music (NCES 2000:4). In other words, one-third of American schools did not have expert facilities to support the delivery of the music curriculum. OFSTED (1997:3) in the UK indicated that 10% of British schools house less than satisfactory accommodation for the health and sport curriculum, and this restricts the range of the Physical Education curriculum offered. A primary school usually has no subject department (or office space) with which to support and guide a subject specialist teacher. A national survey concluded that there was insufficient data on the status of Western Australian classroom music lessons to make any recommendation as to its improvement. *(The Music Council of Australia 2002:12)* In Western Australia, there are approximately 460 Languages Other Than English positions, yet there is no data as to the provision of resources for these teachers.

### 2.12.3 Allocated Time

Downing (2003:1–3), a research officer for the British National Curriculum Foundation, affirmed that recent revisions in the national curriculum have seen little enhancement to the position of the Arts portfolio. His point was that there was limited time allocated to specialist subjects. For example, *The Times Educational Supplement 2000* survey indicated that the number of primary schools offering
students free music lessons had fallen from 24% to 13% in the last two years (BBC News Friday 17 November 2004).

To counter the issues of compressed timetables and aspects of the crowded curriculum The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the United Kingdom suggested times for a broad and balanced curriculum; however, this has been interpreted by teachers as mistrust, not permission to organise their own curriculum (Downing 2003:2–8). In upper primary in British primary schools (key stage two), the suggestion was English 21–32%, Maths 18–21%, Science 9%, Design 9%, Information and Communication Technology 4%, History 4%, Geography 4%, Art 4%, Music 4%, Physical Education 4% and Religious Education 4%. Some 4–15% of the time is unallocated in order to create flexibility in curriculum delivery. Modern foreign languages failed to get a mention in this article (The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2004).

2.12.4 Providers of DOTT in the Timetable
American research work (Colley 1991:43) suggested that 65% of school principals justified specialist staff, not on academic grounds but as release time for class teachers. This perception placed the professional status of teachers in unclear Territory. This United States interview study revealed that generalist teachers saw the specialist as serving classroom teachers for break time. Furthermore, the generalist lacked a professional respect for specialist work and often had no idea of what happened in classes (Lamdin 1992:163–4). Australian research (Shopen 2001:18) specified that the prime function of Languages Other Than English programs in some Australian primary schools was to supply release time for generalist teachers. She revealed that Australian Languages Other Than English teachers sometimes found themselves representing minority interests and competing for reduced opportunities.
Review of the Australian Commonwealth Languages Other Than English program (2002) suggests that Languages Other Than English is different from other specialists as most teachers are unwilling or unable to teach it. Schools have become reliant on specialist teachers to deliver programs, which contributes’ to a situation in which mainstream teachers feel little responsibility for Languages Other Than English and little commitment to its provision. This lack of responsibility is exacerbated in some jurisdictions where specialists provide Languages Other Than English during release time, thus guaranteeing that they are divorced from the program. (*Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English Program* 2002:75)

The availability of music lesson times has been detailed in the Stevens’ report (2000). This Australian research report detailed that in the Northern Territory, 1.25 hours per week of music instruction was recommended, in Queensland 1.5 hours per week and Tasmania 30–60 minutes per week, while South Australia recommended at least one music lesson per week. The report indicated that there was no mandated weekly music lesson for students in ACT, NSW, VIC or WA, and that program implementation was reliant on the decision of principals. (*The Music Council of Australia* 2002:11).

**2.12.5 Itinerancy and Fractional Positions**

There are a number of issues related to fractional and itinerant positions for subject specialists. Of American schools, 94% offered music instruction; however, this statistic was confounded by who actually delivered curriculum to these schools. In the year 1999–2000, survey statistics revealed that 44% of music specialists taught at only one school; 32% at two schools; 12% at three schools; and 15% of music specialists taught at four or more schools.

American research (Colley 1989) indicated that music teachers instruct each student or group of students for an average of 45 hours per student per year. In general, each student or group of students is allocated about 46 hours of timetabled instruction per year (NCES 2000:5-12). This amounted to only one-twentieth of the time classroom teachers have with students per year (Colley 1989:43). The average music teacher in America taught 450 students (NCES 2000:5-12). The demands of a specialist’s job
can be seen in The Music Council of Australia (2002:11–12) which reports that in Queensland there is one music teacher for every 670 students and in South Australia one music teacher for every 327 students.

The *Student Achievement in Health and Physical Education in Western Australian Government Schools* (1999:1–11) report indicated that separate classes were the usual arrangement for Health and Physical Education. Primary schools had lower numbers of Health and Physical Education teachers, and the study indicated that classroom teachers generally taught Health. In primary schools, there was the opportunity to integrate Health and Physical Education across the curriculum thus increasing students’ contact time. The report was based on the broad assumption that schools provided two hours a week excluding whole-school activities and sport afternoon.

In terms of the provision of quality Languages Other than English programs in Australian Primary schools there was a perception that the teaching of Languages Other Than English was less satisfying because of the sporadic and itinerant nature of positions (*Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English Program 2003:76*). Another problem with itinerancy in Britain was that in some primary schools the work of the part-time specialists was not adequately supervised. Consequently, national curriculum and other standards sometimes failed to reach successful outcomes (OFSTED 1997: 7). This research indicated that itinerancy affected the learning experiences of students.

### 2.12.6 Working with Timetables

Specialist teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English often find teaching schedules difficult to administer. Class sizes, class numbers and the order of classes (for example a shift from upper primary to pre-primary then middle primary on the same day) all generate problems. Challenging timetables result in much time spent reviewing lessons and problems maintaining subject-content continuity. Reduced time with students and the logistics of setting up and packing up materials also generates work pressure for specialists. Constant changes increase teacher stress and add to their sense of exhaustion. An American study (Lamdin 1992) indicated that Physical Education teachers’ resources were
often stretched to the limit. The broad range of instruction that had to be provided to all educational levels and needs was increasingly difficult to maintain.

When specialist teachers take up positions their workload is often weighty, especially for beginning teachers where the delegation of a whole learning area onto one individual teacher often occurs. Colley (1989:46–58) reported that the person was the program. Overwhelming roles and responsibilities could be laden onto a single staff member so that programs existed. Research (Lautzenheiser 2001:43–62) suggested that outcomes-based education and the “back to basics” oratory has seen music teachers respond with a “creative ingenuity and a missionary work ethic” in order to maintain music programs in American schools.

On a positive note, Colley (1989:52) found in her American study of Music and Art teachers that subject specialists were naturally expected to behave in ways that set them apart from other teachers. Principals anticipated more flexibility from specialists. In response to this expectation, specialists drew together collegial relationships seeing global school communication as pivotal to the running of their programs.

Excessive work responsibilities and concerns over merit were also documented in work on the lives, careers and educational status of British Physical Education teachers. Armour and Jones (1999) interview study asserted that, for some Physical Education teachers, the very marginalisation of their job kept them under constant self-assessment. Strict self-evaluation and commitment to their vocation meant that teachers engaged in excessive amounts of work in order to prove themselves worthy educators and to raise the profile of their subjects. Not all Physical Education teachers felt this way. Survey research on Indiana Physical Education primary teachers found that environment and lesson planning were the most important aspects of teaching, while assessment was seen as least important. The implication was that if course content was not significant to the teacher then student outcomes may not be achieved (Lund 2003).

### 2.12.7 Occupational Isolation

Isolation also seems to be an occupational hazard for primary teachers of all three specialist subjects. The literature indicated that there was a lack of professional
interchange and learning, and that teachers did not know what each contributed to the educational process (Dorrell & Lawson 1995:72). Often there was no organisational and political centre that directed the flow of resources. Timetables and expectations were generally “top down” and non-negotiable coming from the principal or administration. In a primary school, there was often no context of “Territory” to develop a subject identity or a place of identity (The Future of The Past: National Inquiry into School History 2000:34–67).

American research (O’Sullivan 1989:261–5) indicated that effective primary school Health and Physical Education teachers were influenced by the politics of inclusion, professional isolation, and a lack of power and the paradox of their professional status. In recent years, curriculum support for Australian Music teachers has been perceived to have disappeared from the educational system (The Music Council of Australia 2002:12).

2.12.8 Professional Development Opportunities
British research into the professional development of Music teachers indicated that they wanted to interact with other Music teachers and asked for professional development that specifically targeted Music instruction in Music classes. The teachers, however, had no solutions to service these needs due to a lack of funding, scheduling and other logistical issues (Conway 2003:1–20).

Similarly, Amour and Yelling (2002) indicated that there was relatively little systematic research on professional development for Physical Educational teachers and advocated the case study as a promising area of research. Most professional development programs in the United Kingdom were sports-specific update courses. Armour and Yelling’s most recent research (2003) suggested the development of school-based learning communities to support curriculum implementation. Their research indicated that most Physical Education teachers were keen for more opportunities, yet seemed unable to conceive of programs that met their needs. A Physical Education professional-development plan disseminated in the United States confirmed that generalist teachers were positive towards the program, yet Physical Education specialists found it easier to implement the curriculum than classroom teachers (McKenzie et al. 2003).
Donato (2003) indicated that professional development for Languages Other Than English teachers in the United States comprised periodic workshops and yearly professional conference attendance. He went on to propose the idea of action research for Languages Other Than English teachers. Other research (Burton and Mickan 1992:1–15) found that action-research projects that language teachers have undertaken in classrooms could become more widespread or incorporated into the professional-development literature for foreign language teachers. Australian efforts in professional development and in-country exchanges for Languages Other Than English teachers were seen as positively assisting their ability to instruct. (Review of The Commonwealth Languages Other Than English Program 2003:76). However, unless teacher development parallels reform then change will be limited (Olsen, 2002:132).

**2.12.9 Program Integration**

Whole-school initiatives and programming through linking instruction can also support the delivery of all eight learning areas in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). Interdisciplinary instruction and cross-curriculum are similar terms that relate the concept of linking learning areas in a comparable context (Wallace, Rennies & Malone 2001:9-15). Wiggins (2001) questioned the belief structures that operated in American schools about the nature of interdisciplinary instruction. He argued that the establishment of interdisciplinary instruction would see the further withdrawal of Music from education. His interview study found that attempting to integrate Music through thematic units compromised the integrity of unique musical concepts. In effect, integration lessened the opportunities for students to profoundly explore the fundamentals of music and violated musical concepts involved in the, often superficial, integration (Wiggins 2001:40–4).

Likewise, a Tasmanian study (Henshaw 2000) of Languages Other Than English in primary schools revealed that although LOTE teachers attempted to integrate the subject with other specialists there were time, attitudinal and staffing problems to initialising the linking process.
2.12.10 Opportunities for Collaboration and Networking
Research into existing whole-school planning indicated that there were few avenues for specialist teachers to collaborate with each other or classroom teachers. Music specialists in American primary schools were allocated 3.6 hours per week planning and preparation time and classroom teachers 3.4 hours in a week. The spread of time allocated to specialists is contentious. These statistics indicated that 50% of music teachers never had common planning time with their colleagues. The other 50% found common planning time minimally or not at all adequate (NCES 2000:5–12). OFSTED (1997:3–4) indicated that the lack of non-contact time for subject teachers (DOTT time) was a significant constraint on the use of subject expertise in British schools. Accordingly, the British research concluded that the lack of non-contact time limited the capacity of experts to share knowledge with colleagues.

The issues stemming, in part, from differential teacher training and a hierarchy of knowledge in the primary school timetable can be illuminated further by detailing previous research into the teaching experiences and conditions of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English specialist teachers. These divisions also influence the quality of teaching experiences provided by generalist teachers of these subjects.

2.13 Occupational Perspectives: The Generalist Teacher
Not only is there pressure from specialist workplace timetables and arrangements that influence the quality of student learning, but a separate set of issues arises when non-specialist teachers instruct Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. Many primary school teachers are trained as generalist teachers, and there is an assumption that they are “not expected to have the skills and expertise to implement music programs and so they were not trained accordingly” (Russell-Bowie 2002:33). The administrators and generalist teachers’ perception towards the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Education and second languages can be shaped by four interactive forces. The first is their own experiences of the subjects as students, where learning the subject was probably intermittent and peripheral to classroom learning. The second is the absence or tokenism of these subjects in their professional training. The third is a lack of knowledge of these subjects’ ability to empower and facilitate creativity. The fourth is the low status of
the teachers and their subjects, both in schools and the professional literature, which prevents staff from renewing their sense of how these subjects may support student learning (Hartzell 2002:92).

2.13.1 Poor Learning Experiences
Russell-Bowie (2003:33-45) researched generalist student teachers’ perceptions of their background and abilities in relation to music and music education. The student teachers came from Australia, Ireland, South Africa, The United States and Namibia. The panel found that generalist student teachers brought poor Arts experiences and negative attitudes towards Music education to teacher-training courses. Austin (1993) found similar results when surveying American pre-service generalist teachers in a mid-western university. He concluded that most generalist student teachers had negative self-perceptions about their ability to teach Music due to experiencing inadequate lessons as primary students themselves. The result of poor primary school Music lessons was a lack of musical subject knowledge in the individual.

Australian research by Morgan, Burke and Thompson (2001) surveyed the influence of personal Physical Education experiences on non-specialist teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about physical education. Their results echoed that of the previous researchers, Positive Physical Education experiences resulted in teachers effectively promoting student activity, while negative experiences resulted in teachers engaging in avoidance behaviours when required to teach Physical Education. Downey sums up the power of prior experience:

Student teachers reflect their own school experience; bad teaching in the primary school … this causes self consciousness, avoidance tactics, a dislike and rejection of the activity with many being used to opt out. Students of this unfortunate background are typical of the many that attend the colleges and gain employment in schools (Downey 1979:6).

2.13.2 Subject Matter Proficiency
Byo (2000) undertook research into classroom teachers’ perceived ability to implement the national standards for Music education in America. Drawing from the work of Cassidy (1993), Mullins (1993) and Reimer (1993), she reiterated that a
teacher’s level of subject matter proficiency was the dominant force in students’ learning. In her survey of American class teachers, she found that teachers lacked subject matter knowledge to teach, the confidence to teach expected standards and believed they had minimal resources available. A three-year ethnographic study (Bresler 1994) revealed similar findings, when non-specialists taught Music; the topic was marginalised and employed as a form of entertainment. The generalist teachers in her ethnography lacked specific musical knowledge and perceived a lack of resources. Bresler’s work also suggested that there was a gap in the Stated Music curriculum and the operational curriculum. A similar study undertaken in Australia (Clarke 1998:1–3) researched prior experiences, levels of efficacy and willingness to teach Health and Physical Education by Bachelor of Education students enrolled in a mandatory Physical Education unit. He found that generalist student teachers perceived themselves as poorly equipped in terms of subject knowledge and physical ability to deliver the New South Wales K–6 Physical Education and Health curriculum.

2.13.3 Conceptual Difficulty

The abstract nature of the knowledge, skills and understanding implicit in the three subjects can also create difficulties in the primary curriculum. Brown (2000) provides evidence to suggest that qualitative knowledge of the Arts required high levels of abstraction before transfer from student to teacher occurred. Conceptual complexity created a barrier to converting the essence of “the Arts” to wider educational relevance. Accordingly, the Arts were marginalised as they could not be reduced to the simple procedural knowledge of other learning areas (Brown 2000; Eisner 1998).

Australian research again suggested that the complex and diverse nature of the Arts indicated that it was difficult to capture the positive outcomes of Arts programs through conventional assessment techniques (Eisner 1999:1-16). In response to the increasing recognition and accountability of “the Arts” in Western Australian schools, Pascoe and Waugh (2001) conducted research into evaluating students’ achievements in Music more objectively. They pointed out that current assessment practices in Music reinforced beliefs among educators that it was not a “real subject” due to a reliance on subjective evaluation (Pascoe and Waugh 2001 90–118). Second
languages have also been perceived as difficult to learn and assess (Kleinsasser 2000), and the rationale of their continuation in primary schooling persists in attracting debate among Australian educationalists (Kleinsasser 2000).

2.13.4 Academic Value and Status
On a more positive note, a survey of American classroom teachers (Sunders & Baker 1991) examined their perceptions of useful musical skills and understandings. The results indicated that practical musical skills were those that enabled the class teacher to facilitate the subject as a supplement to other specialists. Music was perceived as practical when recreation and transition periods occurred in the class timetable. Enthusiasm to instruct can be determined as generalist teachers …

… often teach the content of a subject according to the values held of the content itself. As with self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura 1968), this combination of affect and evaluation can determine the energy that teachers will expend on an activity and how they will expend it (Pajares 1992:309–10).

Roth and Solomon (2002:1–16) investigated generalist primary teachers’ perceptions of their ability to raise their students’ activity levels. The research on American in-service teachers found that the physiological (e.g. tiredness) and affective (e.g. mood or daily disposition) of the teacher altered the immediate ability of the teacher to motivate students in Physical Education classes. In addition, personal enthusiasm, investment in the program and the availability of contextual time also raised issues that influenced teachers’ capacity to influence students’ activity levels.

2.13.5 Valued knowledge
Work in Korean primary schools (Kim & Taggart 2004:69–84) identified that the low status of physical education programs, teachers’ disengagement from the subject matter and with a lack of Physical Education pedagogy led to two features of teacher behaviour. First, teachers had a limited view of their responsibilities for implementing Physical Education programs. Second, teachers seemed to be part of a sustained silence surrounding Physical Education in Korean primary schools.
A solution advocating improved curriculum articulation and improved assessment of specialty subjects was put forth by American educators. Houtz (1997), a Seattle reporter, wrote that American superintendents suggested that generalist teachers work in their primary classes four days a week. For generalist teachers, the fifth day could be used for planning, training and parent meetings. On the other hand, the fifth day could be for librarians, physical education, computer experts, and teachers of Art, Dance and Sport who would provide hands-on activities. The rationale for this plan was that the four days with the classroom teacher were “chock full of academics” (Houtz 1997:1-4).

2.13.6 Avoidance Behaviour

Generally, non-specialists employed avoidance behaviours when required to teach Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. This resulted in the delivery of inadequate lessons and reinforced a taken-for-granted cycle of neglect that students then received as the learning experience (Morgan, Burke & Thompson 2001:1–26). Colley’s work (1989:52) indicated that generalist teachers felt that they lacked the time, interest, support, preparation and knowledge to teach Music or Art and simply preferred a specialist to take responsibility for the subject area. Research on the position of Music in American primary school concluded that:

The most striking result of this study is the generalists’ near complete rejection of the music standards based on limitations of time, resources, training, ability, perceived responsibility and interest. Their responses also indicate a reliance on the music specialist for effective teaching of most of the standards (Byo 2000:5).

The Australian Stevens (1998) report also stated that there was a “relaxed” interpretation of Music instruction with the advent of the Curriculum Standards Framework. A recent report on Music in Australian Schools reiterated the themes emerging from previous research: either generalist teachers teach the subject, volunteer parents or those with some musical ability teach music. The perceptions were that music is used to release classroom teachers (The Music Council of Australia 2002:12).
2.13.7 Roles and Responsibilities
Curriculum reform has also seen a shift in the roles and responsibilities of both teachers and administrators who assist with the implementation of outcomes education along subject content lines. Often there is a conflict associated with having a role of a combined subject leader, cost manager or administrator. Role conflict occurs when a class teacher who traditionally identifies with one class also assumes the role of subject leader. The additional role often requires out-of-class time or additional non-contact time (with their class) to complete their other role. Many classroom teachers experience a day of multiple work activities in close juxtaposition that is often stressful (Michelson and Harvey 2000:2). The role of class teacher and subject leader adds complexity and stress to an already hectic day. Competing roles also create a time-use dilemma.

Research indicated that generalist teachers often experience guilt when outside the classroom (Watts and Castles 1993:306), and this added a further pressure to their duel role. An interesting and relevant piece of research from Britain (Russel 2002:1) asserted that private tuition for Music, sports and languages was becoming one of the “most important yet unacknowledged factors” in a student’s school performances. She went on to argue that no one was interested in collecting such information on private tuition. This was because parents were disinclined to admit their investment, and teachers would rather take the credit for the students’ achievements. Consequently, this practise could be seen to disadvantage working-class children and skewed the validity and reliability of league tables.

2.13.8 Administrators and Specialist Curriculum Evaluation
In general, the newly introduced outcomes-education approach has generated a claim for more assessment and reporting. This demand for accountability has put pressure on school staff as there is an expectation that teachers demonstrate progress in all learning areas (The Sufficiency of Resources for Australian Primary Schools, DEST 2004:vii). Many school administrators are at a disadvantage when having to articulate explicit standards and targets for learning in subject areas as they have limited knowledge of the newly mandated learning areas (Wallinger 2000:40). Research suggested that principals were unsure in assessing Physical Education programs as lessons were not always held to the same academic standards of other
subjects (Pranzo 2002:68–71). Her American study (Wallinger 2000:40–52) found that principals were not proficient in effectively assessing foreign language teachers due to their outdated understanding of Languages Other Than English methodology. Furthermore, some Australian principals were often unsure that the actual language skills of Languages Other Than English teachers were proficient enough to teach effectively (Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other Than English Program 2003:76). Some administrators viewed the expert knowledge of specialists as an opportunity to enrich their own understanding. More often that not, though, they advocated the specialist teacher’s expertise as an excuse for their own lack of understanding, interest and commitment to the subject. It was often the case that these administrators were responsible for assessment of the specialist program (Colley 1989).

In summary, generalist and administrators possess inadequate learning and teaching experiences of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English, both as primary students and during their tertiary training. These teachers enter the workforce with minimal subject knowledge and are poorly prepared to grasp the conceptual difficulty of these three specialities. Consequently, teachers accumulate poor perceptions of the subjects’ status as well as their academic value in the curriculum. Many teachers avoid teaching Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. They justify their actions with arguments based on the crowded curriculum, their own lack of ability or a complete delegation to the current specialist. Administrators are often not qualified to assess specialist teachers, and this may contribute to the overall lack of effectiveness of communication and belonging in the school of teachers.

2.14 Learning Opportunities for Students
Research concerning the quality and availability of students’ learning experiences during curriculum reform indicated a number of opportunities for curriculum improvement. A study of Luxembourg primary schools (Kerger 1988) assessed the impact of the newly introduced, subject-centred curriculum. The research indicated that a subject-centred curriculum promoted educational fragmentation and led to the atomisation of student learning thus contributing to primary school failure. In a similar vein, work in British primary schools (Thomas 1995) indicated that a
timetable was one way of organising learning, arranging the essentials and imparting knowledge. However, the study claimed that timetables were also used to prescribe and evaluate the curriculum, giving rise to its hierarchical nature.

Unfortunately, that is a practice that encourages the beliefs that it is possible to establish a taxonomy in which each aspect of the curriculum can be dealt with separately in its own periods and even worse, that these separate parts add up to the whole. Opportunities for reinforcing one stand of learning by connecting it with others are diminished and may be even lost (Thomas 1995:18).

In 2004, the United Kingdom News Telegraph reported on the British Government’s five-year plan to reintroduce Music into the curriculum. The push for raised standards in literacy and numeracy had resulted in a contracted schooling experience and educational opportunities for students. Parents responded by asking for programs that enriched their children on a myriad of levels. Families needed the enhancement of Music, the Arts, Sport and foreign languages. However, the rationalisation for the reintroduction of Music was so that experts could teach students thus allowing class teachers to pursue other activities (Helm and Lightfoot 2004:3–7).

This occurs, in part, when Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English programs are taught in primary schools where there is a mismatch in the time allocated and the achievable curriculum for both students and teachers. For example in British Primary schools, the time allocated to these three subjects was inadequate to provide sufficient learning (OFSTED 1997:3–4). The outcome of this time disparity for Music was demonstrated in British research:

Too often lessons … which are good, [sic] activities are disjointed; they begin and end abruptly and although pupils are active, it is not made clear to them what they are learning and how much progress is being made (OFSTED 1997:8)

An unfortunate scenario was recorded in Ireland where it was reported that “the provision of a high quality, creative music education is still not realised in the Irish Education System” (Joint Committee on Education and Science DEST 2000:1). American research clearly showed that the amount of time students spent with the
subject matter (in this case, a study of Physical Education) has a high correlation with student achievement (Paese 1985:22).

A significant effect of itinerancy and program fragmentation were that students were not always prepared psychologically for lessons (Colley 1989:81). Itinerant specialists were not always aware of the day-to-day problems that particular students may be having (Rogers 2001:30). Problems were often minor in nature and included being disinterested in subject content, talking, whispering, giggling, distractions, fiddling and ignoring instructions (Rogers 2001:30).

The issues here were the continuous and cumulative effect of dealing with the behaviours as the specialist juggled 24 or more different classes per week. It was not the magnitude but the longitudinal and collective confrontation that irritated, frustrated and ultimately exhausted the specialists (Fields 2000:74–5). Rapid staff turnover and sometimes radical changes in teaching style and personality led a lack of learning continuity, hence additional program disintegration.

Another unfortunate scenario was the key finding of a report evaluating school language programs. The finding stated that the Australian education system was consistently failing to deliver any worthwhile proficiency in languages (Summary of the Languages Other Than English report DEST 1998).

The issue of student attainment varied considerably between schools. This was a reflection of the principals’ and teachers’ expectations as well as the supportiveness of school cultures towards the learning of the particular subject. School cultures and communities determined whether particular subjects were serious academic pursuits or not and if they were allocated a position to progress from (Primary Matters 2003 1–3).

Bergin delineated five individual and situational factors that influenced students’ interest in class:
The individual factors are belongingness (which include cultural value, identification and social support), emotions, competence, utility-goal relevance and background knowledge (which include a hole in the schema). The situational factors are hands on, discrepancy, novelty, food, social interaction (which includes visible author) modelling, games puzzles, content, biophysical, fantasy, humour and narrative (Bergin 1999:87-98)

If teachers integrate these educational features into their instruction, this can lead to lessons where students are engaged and interested in learning (Bergin 1999:87). This is an ideal that some specialty teachers may find unattainable given the job structure and perceptions that surround the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. Carr (2002:9) provided an analysis of the gender aspects of learning another language. She argued that boys have a disaffected attitude towards languages due to the perceptions that languages are feminine. Recent research in the United Kingdom revealed that students perceived classical music classes as boring and elitist (BBC News Friday 17 November 2004).

A few studies have investigated parental and community attitudes towards learning Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. Parents and community member’s attitudes to schooling were recorded by the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and revealed that 90.4% of parents and 89.6% of the community regarded literacy as very important to schooling. Moreover, 85.4% of parents and 77.9% of community regarded numeracy as very important. Life skills rated 67% from parents and 59% from the community (Parents and Community Members Attitudes to Schooling 2003: Executive Summary).

Music, though, has an important place in the education of students. The Music council of Australia (2002) conducted a random telephone survey that revealed that 55% of the populations believe that Music is a hobby:
With regard to young people, almost two thirds of the populations (64%) would completely agree that music is an activity that children can enjoy all their life. Furthermore music was viewed as being able to develop a child’s sense of creativity (58%) and that a school band was a good way of developing such skills (56%) (The Music Council of Australia 2002:1–2).

In combination, these student, parental and community perceptions may work against the progress of curriculum implementation in the primary school.

### 2.15 Summary

In summary, the application of social constructionism as a theoretical framework assists in capturing and acknowledging the differences in broader curriculum stakeholders and professional perceptions of curriculum reform (Patton 2002:102). The theory also allows access to power structures that are often invisible in everyday primary school practice and are couched in education rhetoric.

This review has also provided information about the state of the curriculum implementation of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. It has identified areas that require support for schools and teachers. The literature has revealed a complex array of forces that operate to influence the success of curriculum implementation. The teaching of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other than English is characterised by inadequate resource levels, difficult teaching schedules, itinerancy and intense workloads and definable occupational perspectives that act to stratify teachers and learning into often competing groups. Insufficient teacher training and professional development opportunities, together with the situation of being a provider of Duties Other Than Teaching, also influence the progress of curriculum implementation. In general, school organisation is only beginning to be supportive of subject specialist programs in terms of whole-school planning, allocating sufficient time to accomplish aims and time for staff to communicate.

A unique set of teaching and learning circumstances are created when non-specialist staff members are responsible for delivering Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English curriculum. Administrators and generalist
teachers’ inadequate experience of — and pessimistic perceptions of — subject knowledge endorsement in the school operation contribute to a generally unsupportive school culture. Low levels of subject-matter understanding result in most staff members avoiding the subjects or delivering derisory lessons. The learning of the subjects is characterised by reduced time in the timetable, program fragmentation, staff turnover and a lack of student, parental and community engagement.

The use of semi-structured interviews, as described in Chapter Three, attends to the way that language and perceptions become operational in the primary school workplace. Narratives presented in Chapter Four provide insight into the social construction of workplace relations as well as touched upon the implicit dynamics of bureaucratic and the existence of knowledge hierarchies. The frontline professional stories provide insight into critical aspects underpinning curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. These indicate the nature and orientation of power relations (Patton 2002:102–3), and why and how they are played out within the school culture.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was used to examine program organisations together with the perceptions of frontline teachers and administrators concerning the progress of curriculum reform in a Western Australian government primary school in 2002. Each section details the methods used to evaluate which school structures and cultures supported both curriculum implementation and teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English at Deep Sea Primary School. This chapter also describes the methods used to access and represent staff members’ beliefs regarding a subject-centred curriculum and subject knowledge endorsement.

First, relevant aspects of qualitative research and the suitability of the case study for this study are explained. The data-collection approaches are then explained. Second, details of how the naturalistic method of enquiry adds to a fuller understanding of the case study site are provided. Third, ethical considerations and methodological limitations are discussed before moving on to a description of the data-analysis approaches. Finally, the reasons for creating narratives and the theory behind this style of data presentation are detailed.

To successfully realise curriculum reform, the way that specialist programs are organised and thought about in the primary school needed to be analysed (Fullan 1999). Although the degree of curriculum implementation cannot be measured in absolute terms, this study focused on beliefs about — and the organisation of — Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. It also studied how they affected curriculum reform. Pressure from bureaucracy, the limitations of funding and resources, and school-based perceptions of subject knowledge endorsement can be seen to work together against transformation (Stringer 1999:189). However, there are combinations of identifiable school-based features together with an understanding of the power of collaborative efforts that can be investigated to capture successful reform efforts. To generate understanding, one place to start was to ask frontline professionals and administrators about the role they saw themselves playing in the process of reform. Semi-structured interview questions provided insight into how educators perceived the contributions they made in the
school environment. One way of illuminating the experience of curriculum reform was to gather, transcribe and then juxtapose the experiences and opinions of frontline teachers and administrators. Analyses of the educators’ dialogue then helped to identify the most supportive organisational practices and spell out the most effective viewpoints so curriculum implementation could be supported.

3.2 The Case Study

A case study approach provided a suitable interpretive framework. Its advantage was that both participants and audience could be located in a specific context (Lather 1991:36). The one-school focus assisted in obtaining authentic understandings of how teachers realised their roles and responsibilities in the school. The teachers’ and administrators’ sensitivities could then be examined in an in-depth, holistic and contextual basis (Merriam 1998:26–47). This study was limited to one school where outcomes-focused education was actively being implemented. This brings up issues of generalisability that will be addressed later in this chapter.

Case studies are flexible and accessible to the needs of differing audiences. Burns (1997) asserted that case studies were a useful way of understanding the process of education because:

… classroom tasks are accomplished with prior suppositions, beliefs and anticipations. Inevitably these perspectives are shaped within the larger social and political contexts (Burns 1997:297–8).

This investigation attempted to explain the underlying reasons and processes that affected the everyday teaching experience of teachers and administrators working at Deep Sea Primary School in 2002. Intuition or “tacit knowledge” is a fundamental attribute of behaviour and has been defined by Polanyi (1996) “as that whole set of acceptances which are logically prior to any assertion of our own” (Tesch 1990:69). In view of discourse theory, implicit thoughts, interpretation and taken for granted meanings (especially those implied and unspoken) emerged from the interview narratives. The complex interaction, operation and enactment of staff members’ beliefs and their instructional efforts in implementing the Curriculum Framework (1998) could then be illuminated.
Smith (1990) suggested that what made teachers’ beliefs authentic was the system of knowledge, the formation of culture and the relations of power in which these individuals were located. Consequently, teachers’ beliefs constituted truth for the individuals that subscribe to them in that particular setting. Examining the teachers’ viewpoints and the interaction of those viewpoints offered insight into the creation of social meanings about subject knowledge endorsement, that is its, place and value in the primary school. In addition, it yields an understanding of the consensual social order and the contestations to that order that prevail (Burns 1997:301) regarding the implementation of the three specialist subjects at the school.

### 3.3 The Rationale of a Qualitative Case Study Methodology

To investigate how curriculum implementation of the three subject areas in Western Australian Primary schools can be supported and improved, a qualitative, case study method was employed. This approach was chosen as it permitted school life to be experienced as it occurred in its natural setting (Burns 1997:297). It also allowed an examination of real educational situations as they unfolded in the primary school workplace. The design of the study emerged flexibly (Patton 2002:137) and adapted itself to enquiry as understanding deepened and new paths of discovery materialised. The variety of perspectives captured in the collected data shed light on the complex nature of the school culture being studied. The sampling was purposeful, and each narrative scenario was constructed to be information rich (Patton 2002:143) with reference to existing staff cultures and teaching practice employed at the school. Accordingly, teachers’ personal observations and interpretations are part of the overall findings.

### 3.4 Data Collection

#### 3.4.1 Deep Sea Primary School

Preceding any formal investigative contact with the school, a research proposal and a three-year research time frame was granted by the Ethics Committee at Murdoch University. A copy of the research proposal with a confidentiality guarantee attached (to be signed) was posted to each participant to formally secure his or her participation in the study. The signed consent notes of each participant were
collected and returned to the Ethics Committee. An example of this form can be viewed in Appendix A.

The Principal of Deep Sea Primary School was then contacted in writing to ask if a variety of school documents could be collected as a source of information for this investigation. The types of documents included the school plan and policy, school budgets and staff timetables. Documents associated with different subject areas were collected, including subject-area rationales and report forms. Maps of the school grounds were also available. The document analysis was comparative in that different subject areas were examined and compared for their relative standing in terms of budgets, resources, time allocation, students served and location in the school grounds.

3.4.2 The Participants

This case study aimed to understand the experiences of teachers and administrators in the process of reform, so critical-case sampling was adopted. The participants involved were chosen to capture the multiple views and behaviours representative of the school’s culture and climate (Hoy 1990:1–3). The selection of the participants included three specialist, two generalist and two administrative points of view from one school. Five women and two men were interviewed, reflecting a typical gender mix in a primary school (Staffing Projections DETWA: 2001). A profile of each participant is offered in the next chapter. Each participant offered information on their teaching history and views in response to questions. This purposeful sampling aimed to capture heterogeneous worldviews thus building complex and contradictory data and increasing the validity of interview outcomes (Patton 2002).

The interviews aimed to capture perceptions of reform, organisation and experiences of daily practice considering Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. The interviews also sought to reveal aspects of dominant discourse and how traditional and established interests are put into operation in primary schools to achieve particular student outcomes. As mentioned, each participant has been given a pseudonym for confidentiality.

Principal: George

Deputy Principal: Samantha
3.4.3 The Interview Procedures
The primary method used in this case study was an in-depth, semi-structured interview. The interview provided an opportunity to gather each respondent’s data. This included prior education, life experiences, beliefs and personal data such as age, years of teaching. Merriam suggested that it was the combination of these variables as well as the school culture that added up to sustain a teacher’s worldview (Merriam 1998:70–5). This study did not seek to take into account age, gender or socio-economic status in the final discussion as these factors were not considered significant to the exploratory nature of this investigation.

3.4.4 The Naturalistic Process
A semi-structured, open-ended interview (see appendix D) reinforced the naturalistic enquiry process (Patton 2002). Before the commencement of the interview, another consent form was signed by the participant and the researcher. This consent form granted confidentiality and the right to withdrawal without question if need be. The interviewees were asked to comment on their educational experiences and their philosophy about subject specialty. There was a conscious intention that interviewees did not feel manipulated. The interview questions were posted to each participant a couple of days before the interview commenced. The goal was to create time for reflection on their potential answers. During the interviews “bland encouragement, low inference paraphrasing and active listening” was used so that participants were more likely to disclose what was true to them (Carspecken 1996:158–60). The interview instrument was structured so participants disclosed their opinions while still conscious of the interview process. The production of possibly “leading Statements” was thus avoided (Carspecken 1996:160-162).

To ensure confidentiality, the interviews took place in a neutral environment. By holding the interview outside of the school, the superficial effects of the work
environment that were potentially obtrusive were played down. The intention was to enter a comfortable “value free” place such as the participant’s home or a favourite cafe (Gillam 2000:26). The five female respondents were interviewed individually in an environment outside of the school grounds. The two male respondents were, however, interviewed within the school grounds citing time limitations as the reason. Each interview took about one hour and each individual’s responses to the interview questions were taped. Accessing a relatively “value free” context assisted the participants to be as honest as possible. It also combated the possibility of intrinsic bias. Individual discussion outside the school also offered the advantage of obtaining contradictory evidence from each participant (Yin 1994:84).

The guarantee of confidentiality both verbally and in writing can increase the rigor and authenticity of data. The use of individual pseudonyms in the narratives aimed at protecting each individual’s identity and assisted in concealing the actual surrounds of the school (Gillam 2000:27).

There was a limit to the number of interview participants, as Deep Sea Primary School was relatively small and there were time restraints with this type of project. The predetermined and focused nature of the interview schedule ensured that the teachers’ time was spent productively. The same open-ended questions were asked of each participant thus systematic and thorough data were obtained. By recording the interview conversations, all of the participants’ responses were captured verbatim (Carspecken 1996:160–5). A transcription of each participant’s responses reduced the risk of selective interpretation during the interviews that may have occurred with note taking (Lincoln and Guba 1985:330). Biases that may have occurred from asking different questions from different participants were then also minimised. Accordingly, efficient data analysis could be completed (Patton 2002).

### 3.5 Ethical considerations and Methodological Limitations

Conventional qualitative investigations employ the four concepts of internal and external validity, together with reliability and objectivity to maintain legitimacy within the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The trustworthiness of this study was established via the comparable concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985).
3.5.1 Credibility

The credibility of this investigation was increased as the researcher engaged in five interrelated activities (Lincoln and Guba 1985:329).

1. Twelve months were spent working as a LOTE specialist teacher at Deep Sea Primary School. The initial six months were spent somewhat naively experiencing the school culture as it evolved. In the following six months, the researcher engaged more critically with all the staff members as they came to terms with implementing the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) in view of outcomes education.

2. A field journal was maintained, so a wide-ranging portrayal over time of staff members’ teaching and learning experiences, perceptions, educational efforts and communications could be accumulated.

3. As data built up, significant themes could be coded and categorised (Patton 1990:390–1) then employed as a basis to direct the literature review and final narrative product.

4. Time was spent with a number of critical reviewers to ascertain potential sources of bias, such as identifying the researcher’s implicit assumptions.

5. A discourse analysis was completed on the interview transcripts to illuminate the educators’ and administrators’ perceptions and experiences of reform at the school in 2002.

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability needed to be established to locate this study (Lincoln & Guba 1985:329). Transferability relates to the concept of external validity. Le-Compt and Goertz (1982:31–2) asserted that each case study was unique in time and space and could not be reconstructed due to the fluid nature of human dynamics. In support of establishing validity, Patton (1990:471) indicated that investigations could come within reach of external validity as case study understandings generated from within their own contexts are an essential aspect of qualitative research. Accordingly, this account has provided specific information on the location, time period and participants of the study. The provision of relevant details adds to a general transparency in terms of the results and assists the reader in transferring and
generalising findings to a situation with which they are familiar. The intention was not to create a template for duplication but to allow understandings to be drawn by the reader within the boundaries nominated in this study (Merriam 1982:169)

### 3.5.3 Dependability

Dependability is comparable to the more established concept of reliability. This notion refers to whether this particular investigation could possibly be duplicated, and the concept has two related facets (Merriam 1982:170). External reliability refers to whether an independent researcher would discover the same phenomena given the same or similar setting. As will be discussed in the interpretation of results, it is likely that another researcher would find comparable themes although he or she may not be able to collect similar data as school cultures and staff shift from year to year. However, by comparing emergent themes from the literature review and from the heart of the narratives, the authenticity and reliability of the findings can be maintained as legitimate.

Internal reliability refers to the consensus between participants (Le-Compt and Goertz 1982:31–5) about the forces that affect their day-to-day teaching experiences. As will also be discussed in the interpretation of results, the main themes regarding the organisation, teaching and learning of the three subjects indicated a significant consensus among most, although not all, of those teachers and administrators responsible for implementing the three subjects in view of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998).

### 3.5.4 Confirmability

Confirmation of findings needs to be drawn from the recorded experiences of the participants rather than from the author of the study. The instruments used in the collection of data included pilot interview studies, consent forms and interview schedules (Stake 2002). (Samples of these forms can be found in appendix B, C, D, E.) The process of collating data and building the resulting narratives are detailed in the next section so that the reader may trace understandings to the raw data. In writing the final report, there was a conscious effort to eliminate rival explanations and to explicitly state when intuition and induction were part of the conclusive process (Le Compt & Goertz 1982).
There is a need to discuss the potential for bias and limitations within this study. There is a general opportunity for the misrepresentation of individuals’ personal viewpoints regarding the interview information. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) named this phenomenon the “halo effect”. That is, informants may tend to present themselves in the best light, advocating educational rhetoric, not actual happenings that they may have experienced first hand (Olson 2002:129).

During the exploration stage, my role changed from one of LOTE teacher or staff member to that of researcher. Having worked along side each other for a year, the participants knew something of my background, and I knew something of theirs. Interviewees made conscious choices regarding what they wanted to share in the taped interview, another potential source of bias. However, some teachers were not cognizant of their perceptions towards particular subjects or the routine external forces and their impact in the primary school organisation. Some teachers found it difficult to articulate their motivations in terms of teaching practices. Not all teachers had the same understandings of the tacit knowledge operating in the school thus providing evidence of different cognitive and organisational experiences between individuals (Mayer 1999 15–20).

### 3.6 Data Analysis: The Narrative Style of Presentation.

At the completion of the first stage of research, part of the data consisted of seven fully transcribed interviews. The data in this form indicated the common bonds that teachers held. All of the interviewees shared a common school environment, and the Principal and Deputy shared the bond of an administrative point of view. The Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English teachers shared the bond of being specialist teachers with a unique timetable and job responsibilities. All of the participants at some time in their career shared the bond of being a classroom teacher. In light of the gathered responses and the multiple points of view, a search for compelling themes drawn from the literature review and interview transcripts provided a strategy for data analysis. Each interview transcript was cross-examined for common themes between participants. Next a list of general themes, negative cases, key comments, and comparable and contradictory experiences was compiled.
Discourse analysis is evident in the construction of the narratives. Each narrative is constructed to expose the forces, conscious or unconscious, that affected the daily work experiences of each educator. Hazy social values and norms, unquestioned educational experiences, hierarchical frameworks, imperceptible time management strategies, behind-the-scenes funding decisions, and latent communication networks went from an obscure position to a clear position. The thematic arrangement further acted to expose the constructedness of the stories to reveal a sense of what was valued in terms of existing systems of meaning about subject knowledge, place and value. There was the aim of presenting data that allowed the reader to access practices and perceptions that immobilise some educators to the advantage of others.

Reform, if it is to succeed, needs to steer away from reinventing socially determined cultures and stereotypes and open up to discourse, texts and viewpoints that are positioned in the dominant discourse. Furthermore, narratives assist in conveying issues experienced by the frontline professionals into a field of negotiation and contestation that validates and legitimises the reality of their experiences (Meerwald 2002). Narratives are employed as a method that brings to light the tacit knowledge and imprecise structures operating within Deep Seas Primary School culture. Recent research on capturing our beliefs indicates that, “We shape our world and ourselves by telling stories” (Hyden & Overlein 2004:250).

Narratives are stories that are told, shared, constructed and depict our own sense of reality. Following Mishler (1999), narrative in this study avoids classification as definition may impinge upon the enthusiasm and idiosyncrasy of what each participant offered in the interview. The narrative in this study was employed to provide meaning to each professional educator’s experience (Hyden and Overlein 2004:251). That experience was managing the implementation of the Curriculum Framework (1998) and coming to terms with a subject-centred curriculum at Deep Sea Primary School in 2002. The narrative was used to create a decipherable voice, with multiple perspectives that spoke about the issues significant to teaching and learning experiences relevant to the realisation of the three specialist subjects.

These issues included the current organisation of specialist programs, perceptions of particular subjects, working within a primary school culture and notions of how the work place could be improved to further support all frontline professionals. Each
individual educator provided an account, which has been authentically reconstructed using the participant’s own words. These words have been lifted directly from the raw interview data. Each account has a different perspective and is reflective, therefore conveying a sense of realism (Patton 2002).

3.7 Reconstructing the Interviews

Inductive analysis and creative synthesis were employed to reconstruct the narratives thematically (Patton 2002). Simple English was used to immerse the reader in the significant themes and interrelationships that emerged from the data. Details and specific information were included to help realise and explore each teacher’s and administrator’s point of view (Patton 2002). Each narrative is coherent in terms of the emergent themes that affected each participant’s viewpoint and willingness to support and implement the Curriculum Framework (1998). However, contradictions are found in each narrative. The juxtaposition of the seven narratives provides the reader with access to the cognitive processes of each individual. The stories make explicit the intimate knowledge, tacit insights and considerations that each professional accorded to their roles and responsibilities (Hayano 1979) in a primary school implementing educational change. The narrative was also used as a strategy to position the voice of the specialist beside those of generalists and administrators. This is a distortion of reality. There are far fewer specialists in most primary schools compared to generalist teachers. In this study, the specialist was represented as half the story in order to give representation to their perceptions and experiences in the primary school environment in which they are traditionally marginalised.

In summary, a qualitative, case study methodology helped to make clear to the reader the impact and complexity of competing elements in the primary school workplace. This methodology also assisted in understanding the implied forces influencing school organisation as well as the reasons for the embedded teaching and learning experiences. Consequently an understanding of how individual and group perceptions of subject knowledge endorsement and expected practice that tend to re-traditionalise dominant relations of power can be captured.

By understanding what was in operation at Deep Sea Primary School in 2002, this study provides a pathway to access and develop prospective areas for rejuvenating
school cultures and teaching practice as well as supporting proficiency in student learning in Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. The one-on-one, semi-structured interviews yielded authentic and “richly descriptive” data representative of each teacher’s belief system (Patton 2002).

Lincoln and Guba (1985:329) suggested that when source respondents agree to honour the reconstruction then the reader should also be satisfied with the credibility of the data. Accordingly, the themes that have emerged from the discourse analysis can be accepted as genuine. Despite the “one off” nature of the interview the participants’ narratives (using pseudonyms throughout) provide a vicarious experience of the issues at hand for the reader (Stake 1995). Having described the rationale, design and methodological context grounding this study, the results are offered in the next chapter in narrative form.
Chapter 4: Narratives

4.1 The Principal: George

Before becoming the Principal of Deep Sea Primary, I had done just about everything in the classroom. Most of my time was spent teaching from grade one through to seven as well as being a support teacher for all of those grades. I have also had roles as a library teacher and a computing specialist. The Western Australian Government Schools Computing Branch have employed me as an education officer, a curriculum writer and in the writing of material for TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] computing in Western Australia. Since the 1996 inception of Deep Sea Primary School, I have been the Principal; that is seven years now. This job is exciting, and I reckon the role of leadership is shared. Whoever wants to take on a leadership role can! Leadership is shared through negotiation with teachers, deputies, administration and office staff.

The Department of Education and Training, as well as the community, have a strong influence in the educational priorities Deep Sea provides. At the parent-and-citizens meetings, there is a consensus that the community wants more specialist teachers; for example, in the areas of Art and Physical Education. Fulfilling those wants is a fine line starting formula that the school starts with. However, the Education Department has a set formula set aside based on the number of students in the school. The school has to work out what staff we have and what specialist areas are required. For example, Indonesian is a systemic priority, and so Languages Other than English will stay. Library may change; we look at it from year to year. There is also the broader view that specialist teachers are vitally important in sustaining the role of the classroom teacher. For this school, it is in areas where the classroom teacher does not have skills.

Our school is innovative in terms of curriculum reform. It depends entirely on the individual, and the ethos and the culture of the school to how the curriculum is delivered. Most people are prepared to give things a go. We have a broad spectrum of staff: young and mature who thoroughly engage in the curriculum program. Metaphorically speaking, go down the road and you may find new graduates and experienced teachers who are not willing to give anything a go. What we hope we have here is a culture of people being innovative and giving things a go and being
given the opportunity to do it and get it right. That is good. If we get it wrong we have a look and say we can make it better, and we do make it better. Deep Sea Primary has all eight learning areas of the new Curriculum Framework embedded. Obviously, at Deep Sea literacy and numeracy are priorities: the same as every other school.

At Deep Sea, the whole subject-centred curriculum is implemented by a variety of teachers in a number of roles. In this school, the role of the generalist is to improve student outcomes across the eight learning areas. Teachers are to develop learning opportunities for students at their own levels and improve outcomes. If you are in a classroom, you get to know twenty or thirty children intimately. They also have an accompanying responsibility for their particular students.

Generalist teachers need to improve outcomes even in specialist areas. For example, when teachers do math they may call out the answers in Indonesian instead of English. Classroom teachers will also do singing and listening music-type skills. Some teachers also take their classes to the library. These teachers need to have some music, language and library skills; and then they can basically reiterate what the specialist may have done. They should know the subject content of what they teach, whether it is a specialist subject or not. The classroom teacher probably has an eclectic overview for all learning areas.

A specialist role is exactly the same for subject teachers but for their specific learning area. Systemically, a specialist teacher can be a variety of other people, but at Deep Sea Primary School, it is a Music teacher, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English teacher, and the library teacher. The specialist teacher can help with the students’ education with the improvement of outcomes. If you are a specialist, you need to learn about 500 students’ names, so you do not have the same sort of intimacy as the classroom teacher does. That is a choice a specialist teacher makes when they take on a position.

This is a growing school, and room allocation is flexible. It is probably a bit disappointing for my teachers that there is not a specialist Languages Other Than English room. But there is a specialist music room, and a specialist art room and a
library resource centre. When there is no specialist room, it is just a matter of a particular person having to deal with that particular aspect at the time.

All teachers in Western Australia are trained basically across the board in primary school education. Teachers are not trained as specialists. I mean to say that all teachers are trained as generalists and then have expertise in one particular area.

I think the learning processes are the same for each group of teachers.

Every year there is always a problem with staffing, and that does impact on the teaching and learning of specialist subjects. I mean we have had four Languages Other Than English teachers in six years, five music teachers in seven years and two library teachers in seven years. The reason for that is because those people are not permanent. We are a local merit-select school. We attract teachers who are highly competitive, and we have teachers that move on for promotional reasons. There are also professional women in their late twenties who move on to motherhood. The problem of high turnover is that it disrupts curriculum continuity. In addition to a lack of continuity, there is the timeliness of teachers being able to feel effective as well as comfortable in the environment. There is catch-up time. For each new person who is new in the school, curriculum delivery is slowed down. If there is a stable staff there is not that problem every year.

All teachers in the school are given or told where they are teaching, when they are not teaching or providing DOTT time. That is a purely administrative item in order to ensure equity of DOTT across all days and all time slots. There is also a need to ensure collaborative DOTT time across each teaching block; you cannot do it any other way. I think as this school has grown, communication has become increasingly difficult. To remedy this, we just manipulate teachers DOTT timetables, so people in common year levels have time to sit down and talk about levelling and moderation.

There is also the issue of cluster schools for Languages Other Than English teachers. One Language Other Than English teacher may be shared across two schools. That teacher then needs to learn the names of students from two schools together with learning the processes of each school. It can be harder for the Languages Other Than English teacher, and this is peculiar to the part-time nature of their job. With most other learning areas, teachers are appointed fulltime, to one
school or part-time to one school. Languages Other Than English teachers are different in that respect; it can make their life more difficult. But that is their choice. They knew there was a high probability of that occurring when they went into that job.

And sharing, we allow for that sort of time on our professional-development days. Our professional-development days are driven by systemic, school and group needs. The system tells us what to PD teachers on and the school plan tells us what to PD teachers on. In terms of group needs, we survey teachers and find out what they want or what they want to do about something. Monitoring of the learning areas is also established. Currently, the school is just waiting for the finalisation of a standards-and-reporting package to come out for the Department of Education and Training.

At the end of each year, opportunities for organisational change are assessed. There is performance management as people which require leadership skills for their professional growth. Various teachers indicate they may want to take up cost-centres management or curriculum organisation or area administration. As the new school year begins, that responsibility is negotiated between the administration team and the person involved. Resources in terms of finance are worked out by a finance committee at the end of each year for the whole year.

At Deep Sea Primary School, all teachers have the same opportunities, and it is up to the individual whether they take that opportunity or not. A teacher who decides they are going to have lots of influence just needs to be prepared to put their two cents worth in. At the end of the day, it depends entirely on the individual and the school environment they are in. If the school context is stimulating and people enthusiastic, teachers can be encouraged to move along. On the other hand, teachers may find themselves stagnating and recognise the environment offers them no opportunities.
4.2 The Deputy Principal: Samantha

I have been teaching for about seventeen years now. When I think about it, working has been varied, but there have been some breaks throughout my career. The first half of my career was with Catholic Education. My first teaching position was out in the desert, with a remote Aboriginal community. Then I moved to Broome and worked in a high school as a specialist. I worked collaboratively with year eight to twelve teachers to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes as well as retention rates of Aboriginal students. After that, I moved to Christmas Island and worked as an ESL teacher; that is, English as a second language teacher. After that, I moved to Deep Sea Primary where I was appointed as a classroom teacher. I have been here for just over six years; I started when the school first opened. I usually take upper primary, you know, year seven, and now I am also the Deputy Principal. I like challenges.

The Curriculum Framework has a huge scope. It is about how to find out, how to present knowledge to others and sharing knowledge. At Deep Sea Primary, we have implemented change by sharing leadership and employing different approaches and maintaining our knowledge base via committees. Personally, I have always had an outcomes-focused approach to education. I like the Curriculum Framework; it helps to identify my direction and especially with the over-arching Statements. It is defined, and I now know where I have to get. When I am a fulltime classroom teacher, I love the job because you really get to know the kids and develop routines. For me, it is very important that literacy is integrated across the curriculum. Kids need to be able to transfer their skills from one learning area to another. I have a very integrated approach, and it is really important to be able to educate the whole child. I like to do cooking every week, run a social skills program, have guest speakers in and organise excursions. Lots of different things…….

Across the school, there are varying levels of understanding. Some teachers are struggling; they are bogged down with just misunderstanding words. Often they do not look at the big picture and, really, it is about change and how people react to change. Some teachers do not want a bar of it, do not want to change as they feel they are doing okay and see no point in change. There are others who may take a little step and adapt well to change and want to have a go. What it really boils down
to is how well individuals adapt to change and how change is implemented. Teachers have their own interpretation and understandings. There is a background that they bring in to their teaching, and sometimes they forget that the bottom line is the educational outcome of the students and that they should be prepared to try. Before, teachers were bogged down in delivering content in a certain time. Now the change is towards skills and process focus. It is not necessarily about what kids know.

I can see that literacy and numeracy are valued a lot higher than any other learning area, but it varies from home to home. There is a huge spectrum out there. At the end of the day, parents view the specialist as another teacher; they have the same outlook. The parents expect the specialist to adhere to polices established by the school and be expecting them to cover the curriculum. When I was a specialist literacy teacher, the parents perceived me as important. The reason being if the kids do not achieve the literacy outcomes then you know they have trouble in all areas of their life. As an Arts specialist, you know there would be parents who really value the development of the creative, umm, thinking skills of the Arts, Drama, Music and Visual Arts, that sort of thing. Then again, when I was a Aboriginal Education Specialist I would have been perceived as a very important person to the Aboriginal population. To the non-Aboriginal person, they probably did not even know I existed.

The principal is obviously perceived to have the greater status, because he is the principal; he’s the boss. I guess the school culture is the way we operate, our vision, what we want to achieve as well as our behaviours too. Our behaviours are driven by policy, philosophy and personal experience. You know our own skew on the world. There’s lots of factors that determine how we act. I would like to think that the school culture is driven very much by the policies, the routines, the decisions that we have made as staff. The behaviour-management policy of a school really determines its culture. The class teachers obviously adapt the behaviour-management policy to suit their classroom. The specialist has to adapt to each classroom’s behaviour-management policy. They have to have a good working knowledge of the school policy. The specialist also has to have a good working knowledge of every behaviour-management policy in the classrooms.
The role of the generalist teacher in our school is the development of the whole child like the social, emotional and educational aspects. And that is a shared role in collaboration with parents, other staff members and the wider community. Anyone who has contact with that child can then provide the child with the skills and concepts to be an active citizen. I guess the classroom teacher is responsible for, say, six of the learning areas as there are usually two or three specialists in the school. The classroom teacher doesn’t have the skills, the conceptual knowledge to plan, facilitate and assess that area, which is why we get a specialist in.

The role of the specialist, I guess, is someone who chooses to specialise in a particular area of the curriculum. Their role would be to work in collaboration with other staff members to facilitate the skills of that specialty. But you know, you also have to work as a team member and share the vision of the school, keep the school moving forward, help the children achieve the outcomes, the set outcomes. A specialist teacher must have these all-round skills to enable them to walk from one class to the next. In a matter of minutes, they have to be able to adapt their style, content and skills to meet the needs of the students in front of them. It is parents too; they would be expecting the specialist to cover the curriculum. Now the specialist teachers really get to teach across all areas of the curriculum.

I know that specialists are trained as a classroom teacher to be a generalist. Now you have to be ECE trained to teach year 1 to 3, but in years 4 to 7 we all have the same knowledge and skills. I mean I could not teach Languages Other Than English because I do not know a second language, but I reckon I would have a go at Music, so I could certainly do Art. I could do Physical Education. I would not want to teach those areas but I could. I’ve got the skills and knowledge. I think if you specialise in one area, teachers see that area as your professional interest. You are interested in that one area, so they put you in a box. You know they make a judgment; they make assumptions.
The school teachers, they’ll talk with each other, and they will swap ideas. Because you are the specialist they don’t; they may see you as not having an interest in other learning areas. The classroom teacher sees you as only having an interest in that area. I don’t see the classroom teacher going to a specialist unless it is in that area. I think sometimes people can make the mistake that because you are the Music teacher or whatever, that you have no skills or interest in literacy or other areas, that that is not the fact.

The timetabling is a huge issue because it can exclude not just the specialist but the generalist as well. Duty of care is a good example for dealing with the everyday commitments that teachers have. Not that I promote this, but a classroom teacher can say to their person next door, “Look, I just have to duck out for a minute. Can you mind the class for me for two minutes?”. That teacher is handing over duty of care. The other teacher goes “No worries”, and they accept duty of care, so the other teacher ducks out. It is much more difficult for the specialist teacher to do that. The students only have that subject for one hour a week and to loose any aspect of that time is a huge distraction.

The other thing is that specialists have one lesson after another. They carry out DOTT time for the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher has a lot to do, and they do not want to be hanging around and chat with you; they have duties to perform. There is no time to let you know how certain kids are going today, those students’ emotional and social interaction for that day. The specialist has to walk in cold and find it out for themselves. When the teacher comes back after DOTT, the specialist does not have time to say these are the problems I have encountered today. The specialist is due in the next class, and if they are late, the next classroom teacher gets their back up. The classroom teacher may say to the specialist, “You are five minutes late. Where have you been?”. The specialist may remark that they have been explaining a problem with the previous class, but the classroom teacher does not want to hear it. It was not their class, and they are not interested. So in that degree, the timetable does exclude the specialist.
I, yeah, I think it is a very difficult role to have in the school. Because of all the constraints, I guess, like I said before. The specialist is teaching when the classroom teacher is on DOTT. And when the specialist is on DOTT the classroom teacher is teaching. The times you can meet are very limited. There are pressures on the classroom teacher, and they only get 180 minutes of DOTT per week. That time is very precious to them, and if they lose it they get really upset. And I think that is often transferred to the specialist teacher, and that should not be.

The staff are, although, very happy to allow the specialist to have total control of that learning area. However, the specialist is very much on her own in terms of organisation. If there is a specialist teacher, generalists are more likely to relinquish the reins and just allow that specialist to have control because it lessens their load. The classroom teacher role is just expanding all the time. In other areas like literacy — for example, English — there are committees. There are, like, five people on a committee that manage that learning area. But when you are a specialist teacher it is assumed that you will be responsible for the cost centre, and you will be responsible for that learning area, and that deliberation is due to the loading. We don’t expect anything more of the specialist teachers in terms of literacy committee, numeracy committees or learning-technology committees because we think, well, you have that one learning area, and you are managing that by yourself, and that is pretty huge. If you do your job, we do not expect you to do anymore because we think you have a pretty heavy load anyway.

There are so many interruptions in the school year. One lesson a week is very disjointed for the students. There are sports carnivals, or sickness, or leave, whole-school excursions. For the specialist, there is no continuity, sometimes a teacher may not see a class for three weeks, and their programming, their relationship with the students just falls out. If you do not see someone for three week, then everything has to be picked up and bought back in, revision and building blocks again. That really detracts from the specialist role. The specialist teachers are the losers.
We usually develop policies on staff-development days. That is when we are all released, sitting down together and working on either Maths or English from the Curriculum Framework. I often think about the specialist teachers; they have the choice to move between groups, to go where they like. They may not want to attach themselves to a specific group; they may want to learn from each group as they work across the whole school you know, in every class from one to year anyway.

There are parents that really value that as an important aspect of education, and then there are those who do not. There are also parents who say that it is really important that our kids learn a second language in today’s society; our kids are interacting with people all over the world. We do business with people from different countries; it may be important that a second language will improve their chances of employment. Then there are people who say that English is the most powerful language in the world and it is spoken in most countries. Students do not need any other languages; teachers are confusing students and adding to their problems. The degree of value that is placed on education in homes varies.

To be successful and you know, kids cannot see the link, the knowledge, unless it is explicit. And that means the teachers need to be collaborating together. What is learnt about in one curriculum area needs to be integrated into other curriculum areas. When the specialist comes in it is generally for one hour a week. It is going to be very limited unless the kids can see the links and they can practice those skills and concepts in other areas. It needs to continue through the week. The students establish a relationship with the classroom teacher, and it is very difficult for the specialist to establish those relationships because the specialists work the whole school from years one to seven. It is difficult if the students see the specialist handing behaviour management and the associated issues over to me. The kids, you know, get a little sniff that you are unsure and the next thing you know... and it is not going to look good in their eyes. It is against the interests of the specialists to pass responsibility over to me.
There is also the issue of behaviour management. The specialist does not have time to deal with behaviour management of students. Often the specialist sends wayward students straight to the office. From my deputy point of view, I understand that the teacher cannot spend fifteen minutes of that hour on dealing with discipline problems. I do support the specialist teachers; however, the kids think differently of their class teacher “If I muck about, I am going to get sent out of class to the deputy or the class teacher will handle the situation”. There is a lack of respect for you as a specialist teacher in terms of you being able to manage their behaviour, and it deteriorates and deteriorates until there is a big snowball effect.

That one hour a week is not enough in order to establish relationships and manage behaviour, and that detracts from the performance of specialist teachers.

Compounding the time issues is if students have social and emotional problems then they are in no position to gain any new concepts. In every classroom, there are students who have some sort of social and emotional problem. There is a learning difficulty or disability, and many students will be on individual education plans. Unfortunately, these individual plans are not communicated to the specialist teacher, unless that specialist is pro-active and tries to find out more, but there is no time. When the specialist is on DOTT, the classroom teacher is teaching. The collaboration never happens, and every week the specialist goes into the class, and some students are just not achieving, and the specialist tries all these strategies and they never work, and the specialist keeps wondering why. Nobody ever comes and says that student is on an IEP and you should try these strategies. Eventually the specialist comes to me absolutely tearing their hair out and having terrible trouble in the classroom.
4.3 The Foundation Staff Member: Jerry

I have been teaching at Deep Sea since the school opened; that is seven years now. I am what you could call a foundation staff member, one of the original staff members that were appointed here when the school first established. There were only six of us to begin with. My first position at Deep Sea Primary School was a classroom teacher with the middle primary; that is, the year three to five mainly. There are lots of good points with this age group; they still have a lot of interest in learning, but they also have enough background from the junior primary years to be able to launch into things.

I have been teaching for about 13 years now. Originally, I studied history and politics then I went and completed a Graduate Diploma in Education. I started out as a Music specialist in my first job and found this very difficult. The school was particularly rough, and the students were not interested. I had not trained as a Music specialist; Music was an outside interest. I had to bring what I knew from outside musical training and then blend this with the curriculum, and that was easier said than done.

The school culture, it all comes down to our mission Statement that we look after the whole child both socially and academically. In this place, the culture is very positive. We have three or four social programs that run across the school. The other thing is that the school spends its money very wisely. Even with the MIS and technology endeavours, it is directed at the improving the kids learning and social development.

Currently, my job is sort of library teaching; however, because of the structure of the school it is without an IT or ICT specialist, so I do that too. However, I would see myself as a class teacher because I know all the kids and I started out that way here. Generally speaking, the job is very good. I really enjoy seeing the range of kids that come in here. I enjoy seeing them mature from year to year; you get to see how they change. And the job is quite diverse. You teach everything from literature to informational texts and computing, and I also have a lot of adult contact because I deal with all the staff from the school. The main difficulties of the job would be that contact with adults can be really inconvenient at times because people are on DOTT, and they tend to drift in and out and need to talk to you while you are actually teaching a group of kids, which I find kind of disruptive because it happens on a
fairly regular basis. Also, I inherited the computing issues without any formal training, and that consumes a huge amount of my time. Some staff in particular consider me to be here purely as a DOTT provider.

That means that they are not interested in what you are doing or providing for the kids academically, or in terms of your subject content for their students. There can be a lack of support for what is going on in the library in terms of whether people are actually interested in using the time to integrate into their own programs. That is an issue for me as that shows that people are not really interested in making the most of this time and not willing to make use of the services that I can provide in here to support them or the kids.

The other thing is when I need support to chase up work, I do not get that support. That is because library is seen as somewhat disconnected from what is happening in their room on a daily basis. The class teacher may consider that if the kids are booked in then good. That class teacher may not be too concerned if the kids are not producing excellent work at normal standard. Sometimes it is difficult to delineate if that teacher is interested or they just do not care about the standard outside of the classroom. Part of that idea is that for some members what goes on outside of their classroom is seen as more or less of an interference. They are not really interested in following up because they think it is your problem; it is in the library; don’t bother me; don’t bring your issues into my room; simple as that.

The classroom teacher’s role is to provide the kids with, you know, basic, mathematical, language and written skills. I guess so that the students can come to the library and use those skills. I view my role as a supplement to that process. The classroom teacher’s role is also the social development of their students; the classroom teacher negotiates with parents and is there basically to support the kids.

The specialist teachers at Deep Sea, well it depends on the subject area. For example, Music and Indonesian; they are somewhat discreet in that very few classroom teachers have knowledge of those subject areas, so the teaching of them falls back onto the specialist. There is very little integration. An area like mine is more so a generalist area as I feel I can integrate across subject areas and because the classroom teachers have a basic knowledge of what happens in the library and
with ICT. In some schools, they are specialist driven, like there is a really dynamic Music or language teacher, and they can sort of manage to cross the boundaries into normal classroom practice. But in this school, the money has been put into ICT. I organise the network and provide knowledge to teachers as well as teach the kids. My role has become blurred.

Teachers at Deep Sea do not have the same status, and that is influenced by a couple of factors. There is the foundation staff, a few of whom are still here from that first year. We are relied on more by the Principal, possibly more than the newer staff because we know how he thinks and how he works. We have also had a lot of input into policy and development of the school over the last seven years. Then there are key staff members who have multiple cost centres and multiple committee memberships across the school. Some are foundation staff some are not. Then there are those who are considered good classroom practitioners. They are the people who you go to for policy interpretation, questions, difficult parent enquiries and things like that. So, to me, there are basically three groups across the school, if you know what I mean, and I have been here from day one. It would be interesting to get new peoples’ point of view on that, to see how they perceive the structure of the staff.

Collaboration is a very difficult thing to do across twenty classrooms; well, more than twenty classrooms now. You are always going to have a couple of teachers who are really interested and those who are not. How can I put this? The people, who you are generally friends with, socially, tend to be supportive of what is happening in your class. They assist you; you talk about ideas with them. Those teachers you do not have social contact with, you know at recess and lunchtime seem to be less interested with what you’re doing. There really is insufficient time for me to collaborate across all of the rooms, so I tend to pick a number of rooms per term and try to find out what is going on throughout the course of the year and collaborate with them. I do not tend to collaborate with the junior kids as their work is 99% literature based. The middle and senior kids are a bit different because you can get on the net and that expands the available resources that you have.
I am pretty lucky with the timetable because I’m a senior staff and been able to have input into the structure of the timetable. I have been consulted as to the support and construction of the timetable, so I am happy with the way it is designed and built around. The essential thing is that it makes the teacher feel like part of the school culture, and that helps teacher willingness and I am also involved with administration and the programs that run across the school.

The students’ perception of the different subject areas, well, that is a difficult one for me as I have been both a classroom teacher and a specialist teacher over my career. When I started with grade one, seven years ago, those students have all gone; the year sevenths have gone now. It is different for me too as I have always taught classes during the day, so I am not really sure how they perceive the library. However, I believe one of the issues is that as kids have you for only one hour, they sometime think they can get under the radar and not finish work. And sometimes they think they do not have to deal with the problems they are having with completing the tasks. Sometimes they can think they can get away with it, as the work is not always followed up like it can be class.

From the point of view of the other specialist subject teachers, the kids view it as an opportunity to just have an easy time for an hour. Put your feet up, and not do terribly much; there is always that danger. But I think there is that perception that if the specialist teacher does not follow up and - spend the morning just going around and chasing up homework — if it be Music, Indonesian or library skills — then the subject is perceived as an opportunity to put their feet up for an hour. In a way, it is partly because of behaviour management. It is really important to impress on kids early on, that it is another subject, with learning tasks that the students need to deal with, and it not just an hour to give the teacher off. The students need to see that it ties in with the time of their normal classroom. However, it is very difficult to do; it is quite tenuous really.
Resource location and room allocation are important too. The specialist teachers need to feel that they can cope with their subject area, and that comes down to financial allocation. The question is: do we have enough rooms to give the specialist a space to teach? I remember at the old school site, the specialists taught out of a box. I know it is an extremely frustrating process and made you feel somewhat disenfranchised around the place. I think having your own space is an extremely important element of the human part of the school.

But there is also the aspect that specialist teachers divine their own role around the school as well. They need to talk to administration, you need to go in and fight for what you need in terms of your own recognition. Be a bit more forceful about your presence around the place. It is a danger around the place that if you come into the place with a defined space and you stay there then your role is up for challenge if you know what I mean. You have to make yourself known, attend social functions, the staff room and be around at lunchtime and recesses. You have to be seen. If you insulate yourself, people forget your presence and you begin to feel isolated. It is harder for specialists because at Deep Sea specialty teachers tend to come and go. If you come in her then leave two years later you never really set yourself as part of the school culture because you are constantly out of the loop. It takes twelve months to get your feet; two years to get onto a committee. The third year, you may be part of a class. But specialists move on a fairly constant basis. That is where you find yourself in danger of being constantly shut out, because you not there long enough too..

There is also the issues related to high turnover. Specialist teachers are often temporary teachers: they may be reluctant to go country. It is also a systemic issue with temporary teaching; you just get allocated a school and that is it. It is also the condition within which teachers work. But there are also specialist teachers who come from the classroom, they tend to pick up a specialist role and are then retained then the turn up issues never comes up. At Deep Sea, there is really not enough kids to run a whole fulltime program. Some teachers work a couple of hours here, a couple of hours at another school. I mean that has got to make someone’s life feel difficult and unsettled and they leave the profession or they leave the school in search of a permanent position.
At the start of their career, specialists deal with kids on a hourly basis, and it puts a lot of stress on their behaviour management. This is what forces a lot of teachers out of their specialist positions because you do not have a classroom through the year where you have a group of kids where you can define your skills. The first three years are crucial to teachers’ skill improvement. They have a hard time in the job because they do not know how to control kids, don’t know how to deal with administrators, and they move every twelve months. It creates a huge strain on everyone. Dealing with kids on a hour-by-hour basis does not give you the opportunity to create support structures, and it does not give you any opportunity to create any sense of behaviour-management skills or planning skills. All of those things that are taken for granted that the classroom teachers have.

Although, as the school has grown, we have struggled to maintain that positive culture as the school has grown. Now there are more individuals that have input into the school and can lead to development of small groups or lobby groups that do things. With a small school, there is a common focus. I guess in the last eighteen months we were in danger of losing that common focus as the school has grown. At Deep Sea, teachers have equal opportunities if they are here long enough to entrench themselves in the school. Opportunities appear to be there, but with such a high turnover, and teachers do not get to know the specialist teachers so they are less inclined to vote them onto committees. It is just that the specialist is not given the opportunity to show their abilities over the short period of time.
4.4 Junior Primary Narrative: Elaine

I really love being in the classroom. The key I think to successful teaching is to be ultra-organised. This is my fourth year at Deep Sea. I teach the year one and twos. When you are going through university you are aware of the work required of teaching, but you do not have that ever-present weariness that comes with full-time teaching. It is all the outside preparation that impacts on your life. If you become unwell or your children become unwell then things do slide. Then there is the catch up. I seem to be forever catching up, even though I have volunteers and teachers aids in my class. I do enjoy the challenges of teaching and like to keep all the students going forwards.

Our school culture is what everyone, what we all appreciate and do together. The routines, everything that happens within a school, it is all set up. It just is. It is embedded in there and that it just happens because that is the way it is. Everyone else is doing it, so you have got to be really aware of what everyone else is doing, just those little things like. It is also what the community brings in. It is competitive and wanting the best. And it is also how the parents hone in on certain events, your expectations and your impact as well.

At the moment, I am quite happy with the school and how everything is run. I would like the opportunity to move into middle primary one day. It is the junior teachers that establish routines and socialise students. We teach the basics and put the building blocks into place for future learning. Sometimes I feel that the junior teacher area does not receive as much acknowledgment as the senior teachers, especially around graduation time. With the outcomes as they are at the moment, in my eyes, I think it would be a nice idea to have different teachers taking on different roles in different areas because then you can get deeper in and know the outcomes.

It always seems that Math and language take the major roles in my class. I do have a passion for art, and I love to teach. It is just that at my level, the juniors, it is above them. There are lots of things that, not get left out, but just touched upon; you never get deeper because of the limited time frame. Like Art; it is that extra bit. And I thought there would be community uproar when the specialist Sport teacher was withdrawn, but there has not been.
I do not really see myself as being musically orientated, so I have never been tempted to teach music, other than singing or movement or dance in my class. I have never studied a musical instrument or musical notes. I guess with Sport, it is one of those areas I feel I am lacking. Physical Education is just one of those things you have to fit in. I know Sport is needed but it takes a back seat all the time. I was really happy knowing my students had a Sports specialist this year. I was satisfied that my students were getting exposed to Physical Education outcomes in their education without me having to worry, knowing how I am with Sport. I know I should be more aware of the different things.

This is a new school and, when they were building, there was a specialist room for Music, and there is a specialist room for Art as well. I have to organise the students and drop them off at the Music room. Just thinking of our specialist now in Music, I do not really see her, other than on duty and at the door. You actually wait at the door. I do not see what the students are doing in the room. For the students, it is more of a fun thing to go to that specialist teacher. It must be hard for her being only in that room.

My job as a classroom teacher is to ensure that learning is happening and that every student has the opportunity to succeed. Every day I have to encourage, motivate and ensure all the individual educational plans are on course. That all the students are given the best of my ability and their ability to achieve is fully extended. From the schooling process, there are fine motor skills, alphabetical sounds, and sometimes it seems that eight learning areas seem to get on top of you.

All the teachers in this school are perceived as being real teachers. I think the specialist teachers have got it made because they only have to concentrate on the one learning area. They only specialise in that area and, when it comes to reporting, they are lucky enough where they can hone in on that one area. I would not have any idea other than when it comes to portfolio time or reporting time what the students have actually been doing, only if you ask or if you hear a song that they have done. They would be laughing, and I think it would be easier for them because they only have the one area and expectations for that year group or level. Then again, I think that being in one area they are actually isolated from the other learning areas as well.
The Languages Other Than English teacher comes to my classroom, and the students are learning within their own environment. We have Languages Other Than English words and different colours and different meanings within the classroom. Because they come into your room, there is a structure and you actually get to talk to them in passing because they come in one minute before I finish the lesson. That is why I have not mentioned the Languages Other Than English teacher because they come into my room and, for that one hour, I leave the room. There is not that actual process of taking the student to them, picking them up from music. And with the Health teacher, I found I could talk to her and have a look at what the students were doing. Because she came into the classroom, I got to know her more.

Without realising, it is just one of things. We are not asked to collaborate with the specialist, so we do not. Even so, you have to make sure your communication with the specialist is crucial for any program to run. For the specialist, they might have behaviour problems, which you would anywhere, but sometimes you might not mention it. It is up to you. I do not really talk a lot with the specialist teacher there at the moment.

During the year, when we have our meeting, we put our hands up for resources. Music and Sport both get a say. The parents and citizens are quite keen to help you get musical instruments or, say, sport equipment. Which brings me to the conclusion, that next year, I will put my hand up for Science within the school. You just have to let it be known. But there are lots of things on the budget, and we just flounder through with the basics. There has to be output as well, so the parents know, and it has to be in their face. That’s even better if the student comes home and can’t stop talking about what they did at school today.

At Deep Sea, we are all in the same boat when it comes to policy development and that sort of thing. We are all on a professional-development day, and we are all asked for input. It does not matter if you are a deputy or teacher. I know for a fact that we are given the opportunity to State our opinion, to put it down, pen to paper and put it in, so we all have that opportunity. It is like leadership in the school: there is the opportunity to do as much as you want, but you have to realise do you have the time?
In the end, it comes down to time. When it becomes time for Music, getting ready, walking there, and then you need your DOTT time, and every minute is valuable. It is the like that for Science too. Science is one of those areas that trips up. I am the cost-centre manager for Science. I am finding that I do all this extra: buying equipment, sending surveys to staff and students, and setting up incursions like SciTech for the whole school. All these things like phone calls and quotes have to be done in DOTT time. I find by the end of the day you leave the classroom and go home and your family life takes over. Then that night you think, “Wow! I should have made that phone call. It is too late now, so I have to do it in my DOTT time tomorrow”. That is what I mean about always catching up.
4.5 Music Narrative: Charlotte

I graduated in 2001, and 2002 was my first year out teaching. Before classroom teaching, I was employed as a swimming teacher for eight years working with the vacation swimming for the Swimming and Water Safety section of the Education Department. I worked at different swimming pools and centres in Perth. When I was initially offered this job at Deep Sea Primary, I was scared. It was my first teaching job out of university. On my forms, I had put Music specialist down last, and that is what I was offered, and the job was only three days a week. I had this idea that if you did not take the first job you were offered out of university you did not get another offer until the end of the list. I thought I better take the job, but I was really petrified.

This school started off very small with only six staff or so. The school culture is made up of those staff members that have become very cliquey. It is like a small country town which has little social groups. You have to work very hard to become a member of one of those groups, and even then you are still not accepted in some portions of that group. I have not really noticed anything like that at other schools, except for one that had a lot of permanent staff. That school had a lot of new staff that came in every year and then they got shoved off somewhere else.

From what I have seen, this school is run very parrot fashion. The leaders of the school do not want to upset the parents, so because of that reason it is a bit like a popularity contest. Anything that should be addressed in the school is not addressed in the right manner because someone in the parent sector might get all upset. You know, parents start complaining, and the leaders at our school do not like to deal with complaints about things that are happening in the school environment. The parents, if they are upset, go and see the Principal or the Deputies and have a harsh conversation together before seeing the classroom teacher. The principal comes and usually backs down on the teacher rather than standing up for the teacher. There is not always an assessment of the situation from both sides. Sixty percent to seventy percent of the time the parents are listened to and supported. It is like a business; they have to keep the customer happy.
I think the Principal’s role is not so much with specialist subjects but is to be leader of the whole school. In being the leader of anything, you need to motivate people to get along, to better themselves and be open to what other people think and to question things. It is to question people as to why do you feel that way? People are sitting around in their little black hole. Our principal is very much like that. He has his set opinion, and I believe those opinions are not easily changed. Some people do not want to see any differences; they do not want to see that things could possibly work better. By having that set opinion, there is no learning. They are not helping other people out.

Not everyone is thought of as equal standing here. There are those that do not fit in; they have different opinions to the major group. If you do not agree with what those of the major social group are saying, if you have a different belief or a different thought or you do things in a different way, then they will try to sway you. If you do not come around to their way of thinking then you are sort of outlawed, if you know what I mean. The outlawing is just like back stabbing. It is the grapevine, the gossip line. Just people talking then going off to share the story with their best friend then it becomes like a well known secret. I think it is fair for people to have their own opinions but I do not think it is fair that they should push it on to others, and that is what a couple of the people in the group do.

I believe there are two types of teachers. There are the lifelong learners: people who try and better themselves, open to suggestion and doing different things and opportunities. Then there are those people who, as soon as you approach them, are instantly shutdown. I probably find that second group offensive or obtrusive. For example, when I try to approach them they shut down in front of me, and I instantly get my back up. I feel like I am not doing my job properly or I have not approached the situation correctly. Sometimes they cannot see their faults, whereas I like to be able to see my own faults. A lot of teachers at Deep Sea do not reflect on their action or what their words might be doing to people or making them feel.
If I remember right, in primary school we had Music lessons just like we do these days. There was no Music in high school, not which remains in mind. It was a good experience with Music at primary school. I can remember playing with lots of instruments and singing a lot and assembly performance. The music teacher would work with the classroom teachers. Our classroom teachers were the ones that actually took us for music, or sometimes there would be somebody in our group of classes that would come and take us for music. There was also that sing program where the kids sit down and listen to music on the PA. When I was at school, it was basically writing and math, and that was about it.

When I took the job I just felt that I did not know anything; I did not know if the kids would know more than me or not. I had studied music at university but only really touched upon it. The compulsory Music unit at university was cool, so I enrolled in another four units after that. Being a mature-age student and working for ten years and the rest, it has been a long time since I touched upon music. At the beginning of the year, I did not like teaching music because I did not really understand, and was not sure if I was doing the right thing or not. As the year progressed, I realised the kids knew less that what I did so my confidence grew.

Classroom teachers at Deep Sea Primary are in charge of teaching seven out of the eight learning areas. There are lots of roles we play: to care for the children, a motherly role, a nurse role and a disciplinarian. You are the person that gets to know these human beings and tries to make them a better person and also understand themselves. There is about ten or fifteen minutes a week that we might play games or revise what the Music or Indonesian specialist has done or whatever. But I do not think that actually happens in most classes, I do not really know about that. Even in my teaching career, I am not sure if that revision will continue to happen in my classroom purely due to a lack of time. I believe that there are some classroom teachers that still live by the theory that they should teach a lot of writing and math. I mean, obviously, you should teach more of that stuff. But you also need to incorporate stuff like honesty and Art. As teachers, we are meant to build on those skills as well.
I think specialists are exactly the same as classroom teachers. In most cases, they have gone through exactly the same training and they have a university teaching degree. Sometimes they come into teaching through some other manner. A lot of the times they may have been classroom teachers and then become specialists or they have been specialists who become classroom teachers. Some have taught in different countries but we all still have that background of teaching. We are all teachers just teaching different subjects. With a particular group of teachers as well, I tended to ignore or avoid a situation. I always wanted to do things in a round about way, which made my job harder. Eventually I was constantly thinking who am I going to get in trouble by doing this? Whose back am I going to get up by doing this? I still managed to get things done in a round about kind of way, but that is just my personality coming out. I tend to avoid conflict situations as much as possible. One day, one day we will have to change things.

When I first started this job, it was three days a week, or 0.6 then it was four days a week, or 0.8 fractions, and I did not work on Mondays. But Mondays were our staff meeting days, so I was never there for staff meetings, and that made me feel like I was not included. My Music room was quite large and had lots of cupboard space for all the Music resources. Before we came to this new school, the Music and Indonesian teachers were expected to travel around to all the classes. Those teachers did not have any particular area where they could store their particular resources, not that I was aware of anyway. The Languages Other Than English specialist does not have a room, as such, where resources are available to them.

As the Music teacher, there are some classroom teachers that practice recorder for me thus the students become better at learning the skills. As the Music teacher I just advised the classroom teacher and set them up with a recorder practice sheet and, if they could do something, then that would be appreciated. But I also said that if they could not or if they did not, if they might fit it into the timetable then that would be a good help. But you know it was not expected of them. The specialist teachers don’t get any time to go and collaborate with each particular grade or anything like that. So I think that’s a problem there.
From my own experience, I would whine about the DOTT time of a music teacher. If there was a ten-minute gap, they would give that you as DOTT. You just cannot do anything in an extra ten minutes. After recess, I had ten minutes DOTT; after lunch twenty minutes DOTT. All of that added up to quite a lot, but I never got anything done. I really needed that time in a block. I spent a lot of time out of school getting stuff ready because I never had a block of time at school to do it in. The other thing is that when other teachers were sick or they could not get any relief staff the Music timetables was all suddenly cancelled. What I had programmed for might not get done. This happened in terms two and three when there are a lot of teachers sick. I found I was jumping around a lot, and that meant I started to avoid things, if that makes sense.

The specialists come in once a week for an hour and take the kids. That subject teacher is to spend whatever time is allocated to them each week to teach their specialist area. We have Music and Indonesian at our school. The Indonesian teacher will come in and take the kids for an hour and teach them about Indonesian language or culture and also help to backup their language ability. That happens purely through the kids’ speaking and listening skills. When the kids learn about Indonesian numbers and things like that, it also has to do with numeracy.

There are some specialists that have to move from room to room. Last year, I had half an hour for Music and there was talk the Music room would not be available any more. I actually bought that up and said it would be impossible to even run a Music lesson. By the time you get to the classroom, that is five minutes, you leave for the next classroom that is five minutes so the kids get twenty minutes for Music for the week.
That timing really detracts from being included in the school learning environment. The way people get along is based a lot in their behaviour-management skills. If the specialist lets the students get away with stuff the classroom teacher would not, or if the specialist is harder on the kids than the class teacher, then there is a mismatch. If the students can see that the specialist and classroom teacher get along then the kids are more likely to learn and behave for the specialist. The kids will be good because they know there is a relationship between the specialty teacher and their teacher. If the students can see there is tension, you know they are not friends or not talking they think the specialist is not going to tell me off and it is not going to get back to the classroom teacher. Students pick up that no one is going to find out that they are rude or nasty in Indonesian or Music or Physical Education. I believe you need to have a little get-along farce in front of the kids. Kids are little human beings, and they can sense tension between adults, even if they do not understand it. They sense it is there.

And there are also our professional-development days. At the moment, our Languages Other Than English teacher is not working on Fridays, so he does not have to come to our professional-development days. Then there are the extra duties, when there is an athletics carnival. I was expected to come to school but not for Music. I was given other duties. I had to sit in a faction bay all day.

When it comes to assessment, the Music and Indonesian reports are completely not involved in the school reports. Each specialty is expected to make their own checklist and give it to the classroom teacher. There is no place for a comment or anything like that. It is not actually considered a part of the report. It is a separate piece of paper. If it got lost travelling from school to home, the parents would not even know that it was supposed to be part of the school report. I am under the impression that because of the new curriculum framework that are being worked on, they are also developing a new school report that is going to be standard across Western Australia.
I believe that, as a specialist teacher, if you are moving from year to year, it would be hard to get to know that many children in such a short amount of time. Now that sounds silly, considering you are there for a year. But as the Music teacher, I taught nearly 400 kids, and I still do not know half of their names. When it comes to assessment, you need to assess them then write it down on a checklist. You just cannot spend half an hour assessing from a checklist because you are not actually doing much teaching. I think that as a specialist teacher there should be at least a two-or-three-year contract, so you can get to know the kids and see if they are improving. Over one year, you can only give your personal opinion. If you are only in a job for a year, it is very hard to assess kids on music and, I was like, I did not want to upset anyone. My strategy was to stick them in the middle. At the end of the year, I applied for merit select to get my permanency. Music was my second preference after classroom teaching. It did not worry me if I was going to be the Music teacher or classroom teacher.
4.6 Health and Physical Education Narrative: Karri

I have been teaching for nine years now. Ever since I qualified in the Northern Territory, teaching Physical Education has always been part of my working life. For a long time I lived up North. I got married, had twins and, recently, my mother died, so we moved back to Western Australia. I worked at Deep Sea Primary for a year. When I began at the school, it was for ten weeks only; that is, for first term only, as part of a short contract. The school was just barely finished, and there was a lot of uncertainty about staff and student numbers.

The school culture changes every year. It is a fairly rigid culture here. It does not really matter who comes in or out. Unless that person fits the Deep Sea mould then they are not going to fit in, no matter what. I really think subject success in particular is how the whole school approaches them. Every year Music has the choir. Physical Education has athletics carnival, basketball, cross-country and swimming, amongst other activities. There are also book week and book fairs to match the library. But with Languages Other Than English, it does nothing. There is no prestige. There is nothing. There is no open competition. There should be a national education — Languages Other Than English challenge — where everyone gets involved not just the Languages Other Than English teacher. The Languages Other Than English teacher may do the organising, but the classroom teacher does the work, like a cooking day.

I enjoyed teaching Physical Education at the school on a teacher–student level as the behaviour of the students was exceptional. I did not feel that Physical Education was valued by all the staff. I felt that I was just one of the extra teachers, one of the extra staff. It sort of came across that the Physical Education position is not as valued as everyone else’s little portfolio. I think the specialists were probably seen as not hard workers. You are seen as having an easier job. The reason being is that you only teach the same thing but to different kids. Being a Sports teacher, you are seen as having a cruiser job because you are out there in the sunshine. I would quite happily be a Physical Education specialist any time because the kids love Sport, and they love playing games, and they love that break from their monotonous routine.
I do not think that all teachers have the same status in primary schools anywhere. There is a system, a hierarchy. You have the Principal, the Deputy, senior teachers level threes then the aides. Part of my job was to also teach Health and, in the afternoons, I was responsible for a year six class. But I did not have any input into the subjects I was to teach, I was told. I was just basically told that I did not have to teach Maths and English. In that role as a classroom teacher, I would have preferred to have worked in collaboration. I felt a bit undermined by the male teacher I had to work with. His approach to me was that I was just the teacher and he was the deputy. He would have parent interviews and not tell me about them, not even what was said. A lot of the parents went over to him. I would not split my time like that again. It is too hard, and you have to work with someone you do not know. It made me nervous all the time.

Being the Physical Education teacher means that you get all the responsibility. There is this belief that all you really have to do is lay out your Sports timetable. Once you get into the flow of it, there is no thought in planning; it just grows. There is no stress involved, and this is not the reality. It is not easier. At Deep Sea, there was another teacher who was cost-centre manager. If I wanted equipment, I had to ask the year three teacher for it! Whereas I was the one in the sports shed every day, and I knew what we needed and what we did not need. I might have put up my hand to be the cost-centre manager for Physical Education at the beginning of the year, but I did not get the position; and that, to me, was ridiculous. However, I also think time plays a role; you have to earn respect from your colleagues. If I had of stayed on at the school then, in a couple of years, I could have been cost-centre manager.

For a classroom teacher, you have to be on a committee for starters or some sort of group. To me, it is the more the merrier. A couple of times I thought I had something to bring along, and because I was not one of those people in the group, it was cut and dry. You are not in the group, so don’t. Those class teachers who were in a block or were team teaching would do their thing together. Even though I volunteered, the peers in that group voted on your eligibility. I have never seen a school operate like that. Another point was that the year four–five teachers would organise a tennis clinic for their two classes and not tell me anything about it. Then one morning a person would be there. The teachers would say, “Do you mind if we use the
basketball–tennis courts for the rest of the week?”. If those teachers had told me beforehand I could have organised a coinciding striking program, which can enhance the student’s skills. The teachers were not willing to share with me. Previously as a Sport teacher, I would organise the clinics and run them with the teachers. In this case, the class teachers would get Physical Education time then special Physical Education time with the professional-development tennis person, and to me that was just rude.

The only problem I have when I am a specialist teacher is that I do not actually feel like I have a home. I like having a little classroom. It makes me feel comfortable, and instead of having a great big undercover area and dusty sport shed that is full of spiders. A classroom reflects who you are, and it provides the kids with a sense of who you are. In my opinion, the Music teacher probably felt left out at the beginning of the year too. I think she felt a bit lonely in her little Music room as I did in my little sports shed. As I have experience teaching, I sort of knew that feeling of being lonely and a bit sad each day. This is because you do not have you own room or own home. Even though I did share a classroom, I did not feel it was mine. When the kids come to either Music or Physical Education then there is one set of rules. As specialist teachers, we spend the first five minutes reminding the kids of the rules and what their behaviour expectation needed to be like for the next fifty-five minutes.

When I began at the school on the short-term contract, the first-term timetable was ridiculously unorganised. It was set up by the Deputy who had not given it to me and did not think about me or my position. Once it was established I was staying for the rest of the year I went to the Deputy and said, “Look, we really need to change this. Here is my suggestion”. I asked to have all the early childhood on this day, all the middle and upper on these days, and so we set the week up. I started off with all the younger ones at the beginning of the week and I taught the entire upper primary at the end of the week. And it worked out perfectly. We also organised DOTT time: the first half hour every day as well. That DOTT time gave me more preparation time and I was far more organised in the afternoon. I think all specialists should be able to make up their own timetables. When I first got to the school, I thought how am I going to keep up with these people? I had never been in a school that was so strict and rigid, and for the first few days I thought “What have I let myself in for?”. 
When you do not have that home, if you are revolving, no one can actually see what you could do. You are just the person who pops in once a week. It was like that with Languages Other than English. Because the Languages Other than English teacher did not have a classroom, that is just another way of showing that Languages Other than English was not important enough for a classroom. There was a spare classroom in the school and it was not given to the Languages Other than English teacher. She was put in this tiny little storeroom. Because the Languages Other than English teacher travels to each classroom there are like fifteen sets of rules. It makes it difficult, trying to adapt to so many rules. Some teachers did not agree with the way she taught their kids. The class teachers did not like her strategies. I also think that the hierarchy did not treat her appropriately, and they are the role models. If the school hierarchy does not treat all of the teachers properly then neither do the followers.

If the community views subjects as important then they want their kids to strive in that area. Communities view Music as important, especially if the families are musical themselves. Sports must be important, as I have never worked in school that does not have a Sport teacher. But with languages, what is the point? In Darwin, it was a set rule: we all learnt ESL and Indonesian because Indonesia is our closest neighbour. In Western Australia, why do all the kids learn different languages? What is the point? For what purpose? There is Indonesian, Japanese, French, Italian; the kids have to start from scratch when they change schools or go to high school, but obviously that is a departmental thing. I think the kids should all learn one language across the board. At Deep Sea Primary, you could tell that this community was their world. They loved going to the beach, and they love their safe little home with the pool and the four bedrooms and the en-suite. These people are not interested in what is outside their own little world.
4.7 Languages Other than English Narrative: Miranda

I love teaching; I think it is great. It has been my main job for about fifteen years now. I have worked all over the world doing lots of different contracts. My first appointment was with the Department of Education in Western Australia with the Swimming and Water Safety section teaching swimming. My original degree was in Physical Education. I worked the whole State: up north, Port Hedland, Shay Gap, Geraldton and Shark Bay as well as down south: Esperance, Margaret River and Windy Harbour. Eventually I became a centre supervisor in charge of five teachers and about two hundred students.

While travelling overseas, I taught English as a Second Language in Japan for a couple of years then Swimming in the summer camps in America. It is quite different teaching in the freshwater lakes as opposed to the open beaches in Australia. A really interesting job was working with specials needs in Switzerland for six months. I am still not sure who learnt more. When I was at university, I studied Asian politics as a minor and spent a total of about six months living in Indonesia. I picked up quite a bit of the language and culture while there and have returned to various islands in Indonesia a dozen times over the last ten years.

Two days before school commenced in 2002, the Education Department telephoned me and asked if I would like a three day or 0.6 fractions a week job at Deep Sea Primary. I took the job as I had a twenty-month-old baby at home and was confident enough to put her in day care while I worked. My husband thought it was a good idea to get out of the house too. I thought the job was great in the beginning as I was fresh to it, plus it was a new school. I love teaching languages and being able to explore culture and language and interpretation all day. I was really keen to get the message of languages across. In think it is important that students know that there is something else out there other than their present reality. As the year progressed there were so many barriers to me being able to deliver the curriculum. As time marched on, I got more and more frustrated and more negative as I found my efforts thwarted and fruitless.
When I met the Principal, he was really short, and I thought that was funny, so I had this big smile on my face. I was nervous too which made me giggle. He welcomed me to the school staff and took me across the school to my room. It was this little room tacked onto the end of one of the blocks. It was nicknamed the cave. I shared the room with a lovely lady who worked as a teacher’s aid. It had a telephone and a desk. My first impression was embarrassment it was really dark in there. And not one person came in there all year. The only person was the Deputy Principal, and that was only when she wanted to change the timetable. I found it all quite isolating and embarrassing. I would have been much happier in a wet area or the library. There was a spare classroom. I would have been so happy to be allocated that classroom. I did not care if it had computers or not as I had a laptop and I could have had a bit of Territory. But the cave, it was a joke among the staff, and I did not think that joke went down very well at all. That first day really took the smile right off my face.

There is a hierarchy working at the school. It is like the generalist teachers have the core values as they teach the core subjects, and the students think that too. Some teachers are considered more worthy than others. For example, the longer you have been at Deep Sea the more power you have. The subject that you teach also affects your status in the school. It influences how seriously you are taken as a teacher. The school culture that year was chaotic. It was the first year in a purpose-built school. There was lots of computer problems, new staff, and new students. Everyone had to step out and make it work, and if it was not working make it look like it was. Stress levels were really high, and there was a lot of sorting out to do. It was quite a big year.

The role of the generalist teacher in this school is to oversee and balance the students’ learning. To take care of them, make sure they are happy and their home life is understood. The teacher also works the politics in the class, making sure their behaviour is reasonable and manners are being used: the whole socialisation role I guess. Now there is outcome-based education, they make sure the kids get to know the things they need to know and that content is negotiated across the different levels. The classroom teacher has the students most of the time.
For most teachers, literacy and numeracy are the two big subjects. As long as there are good benchmarks in those areas then you are seen as being successful. I do not think that learning is always about accountability in literacy and numeracy. I believe that learning can be more individual. I am talking about human values and human expressions, and Languages Other than English is a fantastic vehicle for learning about our humanity. Most teachers do not see it like that, so you are relegated to the ranks of filling in DOTT time for them. Music may be the same. It is seen as a bit airy-fairy. The kids have a bash on a tambourine or listen to some classical music. It is just not taken seriously.

Because the teachers are thinking or doing or saying stuff about specialist subjects, the students are picking up on it. The students are actually learning the point of view of the teachers. Is that the hidden curriculum? I am not sure. Students are actually learning how to differentiate and evaluate different subject knowledge via their classroom teacher. I do not think that is fair, I think teachers’ sub-textual knowledge of what is valuable learning and what is not valuable learning should be questioned. That is because I think learning is lots of different things, not just literacy and numeracy.

The specialist teachers also need to take care of the kids and ensure everything is running smoothly in class. For example, the students’ behaviour needs to be handled. The specialist has a more concentrated knowledge of the subject, a deeper knowledge that can be shared with the students. I think that the specialist has a greater breadth of knowledge than the classroom teacher may hold of that particular subject. The subject teacher’s role is to take the students at particular times.

When I began the job, the expectations were not defined at all. I did not know where I was at and no one helped me. There was no mentor teacher, no buddy system. The classroom teachers were too busy to bother with me. Others really resented me when I asked questions. It was like, “Aagh! Don’t you know that?”. The teachers were very resentful of me asking questions. I do not know; there was just this big silence that to this day I do not understand. I found the job really difficult and was not actually sure what I should be doing.
Essentially I worked with twenty teachers and four hundred and fifty students, all of them different. Each one of them has a diverse spiel on what should be going on and dissimilar expectations. I found my role so ill defined I just became decisive and taught in terms of the Curriculum Framework and student outcomes Statements. I think I trod on a lot of people’s toes because of that decisiveness and because I did not negotiate. I did not know that I had to negotiate with everyone.

Other teacher’s thoughts about the Languages Other than English subject area at Deep Sea Primary were quite disturbing. That is what I felt a lot of the time. For example I have blonde hair, blue eyes, have a working-class Australian accent and people would say to me, “Do you come from Indonesia?” That comment always blew me away because I could not see the connection. The whole bi-lingual aspect was just so foreign. I felt really foreign, like I was on the other side or something. I am not sure if the teachers felt threatened because other languages are an unknown thing. It is something they do not know about. So they do not challenge it; they do not go near it. The teachers just left me there; they left me alone; they did not talk to me because I may say something in a foreign language that they do not understand and that made them feel uncomfortable. There was almost distrust. I was not trusted at all because I knew something about Asia, which to me is like really bizarre and paranoid, but that is the way I was taken. I do not think anyone cared about me or Languages Other than English as long as I did my DOTT time, was accountable for the learning area and delivered an Indonesian portfolio sample to put in the back of the portfolio at the appropriate time. No one was interested, and that was it.

Well I am the Languages Other than English teacher and I pretty much feel like the bottom of the barrel. Basically nobody is interested in Languages Other than English. They think it is a waste of time. No one wants to do it, and they think “What are we learning that for?”. I reason there are lots of positives in learning another language. There are employment opportunities with all the Pacific Rim companies, international relationships in terms of trade, culture and tourism. One can come to understand “otherness” and appreciate that not everyone is white, Christian and middle class. “Otherness” is not actually “otherness”; it is also citizens who live and work, and who contributes to our society, which is a really important point that people seem to miss. Literacy can be increased as a second language can refine and
define aspects of communication and literacy. It can also be fun, and you can
discover gems of knowledge within global communities that enhance your own life.
But I do not think everybody believes that these things are important, and that
influenced the quality of my working day.

I really tried to connect with teachers, such as linking Indonesian lessons with
classroom themes. I tried to integrate their class theme into the Indonesian lessons,
for example insects or oceans. I attempted cross-curriculum, and each term I
planned to do one of the learning areas from the student outcomes. I do not think
other teachers really knew how Languages Other than English could contribute to
the learning process because it is new. Languages Other than English have only
been compulsory in the curriculum for three or four years, and I think teachers feel
out of their comfort zone with it. I believe that the teachers do not know how to deal
with languages because they have not learnt a language themselves or have never
travelled. Languages Other than English perhaps made them feel uncomfortable but
they never question why.

However, no one had time to speak to me. In my DOTT time they were teaching, and
in their DOTT time I was teaching. There were not enough resources to link most of
the lessons anyway. When the class teachers had block time to collaborate, they just
said, “Don’t worry about it”. They did not want me there. I found it impossible to
deal with fifteen classroom teachers, and not all of them liked me. If you do not like
someone, you are not going to make an effort to collaboratively plan lessons. I did
try to make contact with all of the classroom teachers, but they are not interested as
they do not want to miss out on their DOTT time.

In terms of timetabling, it was just a half-hour block in junior primary twice a week
or an hour block in middle- and upper-primary once a week. I was just moving all
day. You are here then you are gone, and everyone knows this. When you walk into a
class, there is a mixed message. The classroom teacher looks at you and bolts out the
door because it is their DOTT time, and they are busy and the students are dislocated
and uncomfortable with this drop-in stranger and go, “Uhh, not Languages Other
than English”. In that set time, there is often no commitment to learning or
communication. It is just kill time. Look out the window then they do not have to deal
with me for another week. The students do not take you seriously. I did not have enough time each week to get to know the kids and their idiosyncrasies.

Behaviour management was the biggest issue. The upper-primary boys were the worst. They never did the work, even after negotiation. Always speaking out, swearing, logging onto different Internet sites. It made it really difficult to teach anything when all I did was address behaviour. The kids say, “What do we have to know this for?” They have no sense of working overseas, or going to university to be an engineer and working in Malaysia or taking a trip to Bali. The students fall back on their class teacher for a model of reality and a language to speak that they understand. Anything else, especially a transient teacher, they resist.

There were other problems with moving from class to class and having a fractional timetable. One of the year seven teachers moved a computer outside the classroom into the wet area. I need both of those computers when I teach as information communication technology is an important skill to acquire. I could not use that computer nor could I have students outside the room as I could not supervise them. Often I would be the only teacher in that block, and the students are being irresponsible. There is no buddy class or other teachers around to support you and the students knew that. And when there was a group of pupils next door, the class teacher would slam the concertina doors shut because of the noise levels. It is really difficult to learn and practice speaking a second language in silence. It is not just about reading and writing it is about speaking and listening and experimenting. To me, it is about meetings and greeting and trying different foods.

Relationships with the administration staff was really strained too. There was one example where I enrolled at university to complete an online-learning course so I could receive my formal qualification to teach Languages Other than English. I wanted to be a real, numbered Language Other Than English teacher, not just a no-number Languages Other Than English teacher. It was important for me to be recognised professionally. One of the supervisors at university had completed a PhD on Languages Other Than English in government schools about embedding Languages Other Than English programs. Using her work, I made up this little PowerPoint presentation and gave it the Deputies and the Principal. It may have taken them two or three minutes to flick through and consider some of the issues
emerging from the presentation. I received no comment at all. I thought that was really strange. The Principal put the disk back in my pigeon hole with “TA” written on a post it note. There was no reaction at all, no feedback. I was trying to indicate to the administration I was aware of some of the barriers influencing Languages Other Than English, and maybe we could improve the situation. I was really disappointed, and I did not understand why there was no response and why the other teachers did not want to get some ideas and strategies up and running.

At the end of the year, when requests went in for more funding with the funding committee, Languages Other Than English received nothing. Music received $5,000, and Library received $10,000 and Physical Education received $5,000 to buy resources. I though, well come on, a couple of hundred dollars to buy some sarongs or kites or something would be nice. But the really sad thing is that the committee cut the budget by 50%. The budget went from $1,000 to $500. This is a specialist area, same as Art, same as Music with fifteen different classes a week. $500 through 40 weeks with 450 students is just not enough. It is just not enough to run a program. The paper resources in the library were very thin on the ground. There were ten laptops, which I would have loved to use so the students could access Indonesian MTV or Indonesian newspapers but I could not manage it. I had to wheel them around hour after hour, set them up and shut them down and get them going, deal with all the technological problems it was just impossible. I had actually booked the laptop computers for a day a week, but the year-one teacher complained to the Principal as it clashed with her program, so I got bumped.

The same woman got angry with me one time as I booked the TV to watch an Indonesian video at a time when she wanted it. It was just impossible to use the resources effectively in a one-hour block, so in the end you just do not. It just can not be done with the resources available.

On occasions, the Languages Other than English program would be cancelled because the school could not get any relief teachers. The Principal or Deputy told me to go down to Kindergarten for a day or two. I am not even early childhood education trained; I did not know the words to the songs. I would loose those days out of my program and the classroom teacher gets paid internal relief for teaching a lesson I set up and organised. Once I organised a colouring activity when I was
teaching relief so the students could carry on with Languages Other Than English. The teacher confiscated the gel pens and black line masters because she thought the activity I had planned was inappropriate. The next four classes could not do the activity as they did not have the gel pens or the worksheets and there was all this confusion. I found it very difficult to make sense of those teachers’ actions. I thought we were meant to support each other.

The parents: well that is hard one because I had no real contact with them over the year, and I am generalising. Parents and community members see you in the schoolyard, and I guess I obviously look like a teacher, so they say “What do you teach?”, and I say “Indonesian”, and they say, “Ah”, and that is the end of the conversation. Some time they may say, “Where did you learn that?” and the reply is “Oh, I lived in Indonesia for a while and studied at university”, and they go “Ah”, and that is the end of the conversation. It was so difficult to get into a conversation, and like I am a really talkative person. The parents do not know anything about it; they think it is just something you do to give the classroom teacher a rest. I have had people come up and ask me when am I going to become a real teacher, which means a classroom teacher. The parents also think if their children want to learn a musical instrument or sing and dance or do sport club it, is an extra-curricular activity, and there are a lot of options out there. How many of us want to learn a different language in our free time? It is too hard. They just want their kids getting good marks in English and Math so they get a job. The rest of it is just for fun.
Chapter 5: Discussion

An investigation into specialist teachers is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, these teachers are participants- if marginal ones in the educative process. They do perform a role, although not always constructed by themselves, in the transmission of valued knowledge to Western Australian primary school students. Secondly, by understanding the work conditions and school cultures that these teachers work within, support can be garnered to assist them with curriculum implementation. This case study sought to appreciate the reasons, process and outcomes by which specialist teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English have been constructed and prescribed a meaning, place and valued within the new *Curriculum Framework* (1998) as well as their roles and responsibilities within primary school operations.

This study has assumed that, in Western Australia, the teachers and students who worked together in the early- and middle-childhood phases of learning were capable of learning Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. Accordingly, it is argued in this thesis that specialist, generalist and administrative professionals can provide positive and constructive learning experiences throughout this receptive stage of primary education. This can be done by first developing collegiality and communication amongst teachers. An inspiring school culture supported by consistent organisational strategies can then act to support the delivery of quality specialist curricula. Together these elements can help craft a progressive and vital education for Australian citizens so that future generations may construct a multifaceted and inclusive society.

This discussion is structured in three thematic layers. It first identifies significant, yet understated, historical, economic, political and social forces in the development of educational policy and discusses their influence on the outcomes-based primary school curriculum. This section assists in answering question one: How and why are the Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English curricula currently organised at Deep Sea Primary School in Western Australia?
Second, linked to the broader findings, the school-based evidence is analysed in order to answer question two: What are teachers’ perceptions in relation to the progress of curriculum implementation in the areas of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English in a time of curriculum reform at Deep Sea Primary School? Group theory was employed as a foundation to illuminate power relations and the influence of external norms, social expectancy, group membership and the familiarity of experience which creates group cohesion.

The third thematic layer employs discourse analysis to access each individual’s perception and experience of subject knowledge. These post-modern perspectives and tools provide insight into aspects of power relations and the existence of dominant discourse operating at Deep Sea Primary School. Accordingly, the findings and suggestions generated from the point of view of the frontline teachers and administrators have emerged through a comparative literature review, together with a thematic analysis of the interview data. Throughout the discussion, suggestions are posed as to what aspects of innovation and change can be integrated into the school’s organisation and culture to support progressive curriculum delivery of the three specialist areas.

This study began with an international review of the educational literature. This literature indicated that literacy and numeracy have been a priority of primary school education with Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English often being included in a supplementary capacity. Unlike other studies, this investigation compared the position, status and daily work conditions of subject or specialist teachers in three nations. A comparative stance enabled the analysis to bear out similarities and differences between and within countries as well as subject areas. Teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English have tended to fall into their own category of analysis and consideration, and they were sometimes detached from more dominant pedagogical paradigms and theory. Much of the literature is varied, particularly in the primary school context, although the umbrella term of outcomes-based education assists in comparison. This thesis has provided systematic analyses of subject-knowledge, specifically, Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. It thus addresses a gap in the literature. Accordingly, each part of the literature review has outlined
many educational concerns, drawing primarily on research literature from the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

5.1 Curriculum in Australia: Contextualising the Research

The evidence from the literature review suggests that because of history, economic prioritisation and a capitalist grounding in public education, the “core” or “main” curriculum is constructed with reference to literacy and numeracy (Colley 1991). The implicit assumption of this subject prioritisation is that particular valued positions about ways of knowing and associated importance of subject matter and school organisation are put into operation (Wallace et al. 2001:10). Consequently, subject matter not aligned with literacy and numeracy is placed lower in the knowledge-and-value hierarchy as well as the school society (Watkinson 1992:7). The Principal mentions in his interview Indonesian is a systemic priority…..There is also the broader view that specialist teachers are vitally important in sustaining the role of the classroom teacher. For this school, it is in areas where the classroom teacher does not have the skills. The implicit message here from the Principal is that success in literacy and numeracy knowledge and understanding is the most outstanding skill for success in the public, subject areas outside of this are to sustain mainstream areas of Australian society.

This is especially so for community, parents, peers and individuals. The Deputy mentions that…. I can see that literacy and numeracy are valued a lot higher than any other learning area. While comments of this nature are shared by each interviewee, for example, Jerry the foundation teacher says that the students, The kids view it as an opportunity to just have an easy time for an hour. The LOTE teacher says of the parents, They just want their kids getting good marks in Maths and English so they can get a job. While Charlotte mentions that, If the community views subjects as important then they want their kids to strive in that area. Communities view music as important, especially if they are musical themselves. Sports must be important; I’ve never worked in a school that doesn’t have a sport teacher. But with languages, what’s the point……
Success in “other” specialists also tends to be seen as one of innate skill (Hall 2000) or of extra-curricular support (Russell 2004). The year one teacher mentions that *It always seems that Math and Language take the major roles in my class. My students were getting exposed to Physical Education...without me having to worry, knowing how I am with sport....* The specialist teacher perhaps begins the job with a pre-determined set of unarticulated yet consensual and dominant criteria about the value of subject knowledge. It is the hierarchy, the meaning, place and value of particular knowledge that influence their ability deliver curriculum at the primary school level. It is these subtle social agreements and determining criteria that this study has endeavoured to articulate and explain.

In general the literature outlines that since the turn of the 21st century the character of Australian Schooling has changed on many levels. An analysis of Australian curriculum ideals suggested that colonial structures adapted from a British model of schooling (mostly for the masses) and have predisposed current primary schooling towards a religious and fee paying, government or independent model of education. In turn, the distribution of knowledge and privilege implicitly includes notions of occupational, economic, together with notions of social place and value. Charlotte the music teacher mentions, *When I was at school it was basically writing and math and that was about it..* The evidence of this study indicates that the ideals of literacy and numeracy for the masses are still currently are embedded in curriculum. Miranda the LOTE teacher speaks candidly, *There is a hierarchy working at the school, It’s like the generalist teachers have the core values (implicitly meaning, literacy and numeracy) and the students think that too. Some teachers are considered more worthy than others....The subject you teach at school also affects your status. It influences how seriously you are taken as a teacher. Perhaps it can also be said that it is these ideals and teacher’s perceptions of academic legitimacy are transacted and transmitted in the classroom.*

### 5.1.1 Dominant Discourse

Public primary schools are the place where young citizens learn about cultural concepts of power, knowledge and status (Stanley, Smith & Shore 1957). The Deputy Principal states that *I would like to think that the school culture is driven very much by policy, the routines, the decisions we make as a staff.....The specialist staff*
School culture actively promotes the ideals of dominant views of power, knowledge and status through its policy and decisions making processes of which the specialist teachers are often absent. Some staff members are not cognizant that the “natural order” should be up for review. The Junior Primary teacher Elaine adds. "Our school culture is what every-one, what we all appreciate and do together. The routines, everything that happens within a school, it is all set up. It just is. It is embedded in there and that it just happens, because that’s the way it is."

This thesis has shown that concepts of power and status are embedded in perceptions of subject knowledge and its relative worth with respect to an established hierarchy of knowledge (Goodson 1999). Although Australian curricula are presented as an output model with an outcomes focus, the new documents can be seen as reinventing traditional hierarchies of knowledge to the benefit established power groups.

This study provides insight into how a small section of historical, economic, political and social-educational goal seeking is transacted at the primary school level. In Western Australia an outcomes based curriculum introduces a value laden curriculum into the primary sector, the *Curriculum Framework* (1988:13) “reflects contemporary thinking about what students need to learn in order to lead successful and rewarding lives in the twenty first century”. On a broader level the Deputy comments: "then there are people who say English is the most powerful language in the world and it is spoken in most countries. Students do not need any other languages; teachers are confusing students and adding to their problems." Bureaucratic organisation in the new millennium emphasises expert and specialist knowledge, and specialists teachers are an increasing utilised resource for delivering, building and linking knowledge in a functional manner for primary school students.

As Seddon (2001-311) indicates Australian schooling remains stratified along class and resources provision lines. The evidence from this study indicates that although curriculum content ideally and sometimes formally advocates the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English, schooling at the public primary level, such as Deep Sea is geared towards transmitting conservative-dominant cultures as well as skills and knowledge aligned with the needs of a post industrial Australia (Pepper 1995:2). Charlotte the music teacher comments that "I believe that there are some classroom teachers that live by the theory that they..."
should teach a lot of writing and math. I mean, obviously, you should teach more of that stuff. Not even the specialists are convinced of their value to student’s education outside of social and industrial demands of literacy and numeracy.

Deep Sea Primary School is located in a industrial community that tends not to value the “Arts” or “Languages” due to these subjects irrelevance to their lifestyle and consumer patterns. The opportunities to change these perceptions are limited given attitudes and work arrangements for specialist teachers. As the LOTE teacher mentions, specialist subjects are seen as a bit airy-fairy...It is just not taken seriously. A conclusion of this study is that Deep Sea primary school students will probably grow up and gain employment in positions that expect literacy and numeracy to be an individual’s main asset together with what they accumulate as a result of their lifelong connection to the market economy.

Chapter Two highlighted some of the ideals, organisational frameworks and daily work experiences through which teachers deliver specialist curriculum. However, the evidence also revealed that ideals, organisational frameworks and efforts of specialty teachers can be limited without the support of systemic and institutional forces as well as whole-school initiatives, small groups and individuals with access to power and resources. Miranda the LOTE teacher best gives light to this issue No-one had time to speak to me, in my DOTT they were teaching and in their DOTT I was teaching. There were not enough resources to link the lessons anyway. When the class teachers had block time to collaborate, they just said “Don’t worry about it” they didn’t want me there. Other’s really resented me when I asked questions. It was like “Aagh! Don’t you know that? The budget went from $1000 to $500...It’s just not enough to run a program. I got more and more frustrated and more negative as I found my efforts thwarted and fruitless.

5.2 History, Tradition and Curriculum, in Western Australia

With the introduction of outcomes-based education in Western Australia, primary school organisation has become more complicated; schooling at the primary school level has diversified. Consequently, the many curricula agendas have become more obscured. New issues and problems have evolved, and the expressions of rhetoric and reality have become increasingly complex if not stratified (Thornton 1998). The
popular, yet misleading, image of singing students, sunny Physical Education classes and children willingly engaged with foreign languages is difficult to shake. All teachers mention the centrality of *behaviour management* in the running of the school. This is especially true among sections of the Australian population who believe that Music is a hobby and Sport is for entertainment, and among those individuals who are regretfully xenophobic or intolerant to the multicultural aspects of our communities. The Principal George, states the reality *obviously, at Deep Sea literacy and numeracy are priorities: the same as every other school.* And for those who deviate from this priority his perspective was *teachers may find themselves stagnating and recognise that the environment offers them no opportunities.*

Australian society and, in particular, vocal community interests can perhaps access and sometimes sway primary school curriculum and policy towards their own perceptions of what is education and what is not education regardless of curriculum documents. Charlotte thinks that *the leaders of the school do not want to upset parents, so because of that reason it is a bit like a popularity contest.* The parents, if they are upset, go and see the Principal or Deputies and have a harsh conversation before seeing the classroom teacher.... *Sixty to seventy percent of the time the parents are listened to and supported. It like a business: they have to keep the customer happy.* Parental perceptions of schooling are powerful, and teachers of specialist curriculum may need to advocate their subjects and their worth in a more pro-active manner to combat the issues of community support. Advocacy should be pro-active unlike the Music teacher’s strategy of *sticking them all in middle so as to not upset the parents.* As Karri concludes *they love their safe little home with the pool and the four bedrooms and the en-suite. These people are not interested in what is outside their own little world.*

It is timely that within the first stage of reform in Western Australia there is a need to distinguish between those forces that actually support curriculum implementation and those forces that inhibit effective reform. This is especially the case when dominant ideology, social values and knowledge status are residual in curriculum (Thornton 1998:1–9). In view of this, concerns of what and how to teach future generations were noted, together with public consensus and community perceptions of educational “choice” and what choice means to stakeholders in different social
positions. Moreover, the notions of hidden curriculum and the role of gender in schooling were noted, although analysis falls outside the scope of this study.

5.2.1 Teachers Roles and Responsibilities
Other than Alexander’s (1992) initial classification, there is no solid definition of a specialist teacher, and there are no clear margins as to their roles and responsibilities in schools. The organisational features and dynamic structure of primary schools is too diverse to be clear-cut, depending on shifting student numbers as well as financial and resource consideration. The Principal says every year there is a problem with staffing, and that does impact on the teaching and learning of specialist subjects. I mean we have had four Languages Other than English teachers in six years, five music teachers in seven years and two library teachers in seven years. However, by juxtaposing three specialists at one school, a broader understanding of the issues influencing their daily practice can be understood. The roles, responsibilities and position of specialist teachers and their ability to convey their expert knowledge in the relatively new outcome-based Curriculum Framework (1998) in Western Australia is important to understanding curriculum change and innovation. As most students spend fourteen years in schooling — potentially nine of these in the primary sector — the potential is enormous for an experience of the nature of knowledge, its value, and meaning to be established in the students.

5.2.2 Experience and Valued knowledge
The aims of the Curriculum Framework (1998) and Department of Education and Training’s Student Outcomes Framework (1998) are in accord with the theory of constructivism. The paradox is that school practices are embedded in our experience (Apple 1995). Educational theory recognises that learning consists of a “growing individual [and] on the other hand the social, intellectual and moral values into which the educator is charged with initiating that individual” (Piaget 1971:137). To impart values is one aspect of teaching. Values are norms that allow developing individuals to identify what is obligatory, permitted and forbidden in society. The predicament that Piaget originally pointed out was that teaching is value laden, and schooling is the site of both the transmission and transformation of knowledge (Palmer 2001:40).
Our first educational experiences of subject knowledge generate our beliefs, attitude and disposition towards our implicit evaluation of the subject. It is possible however, to change our impression of subject knowledge by changing our initial experiences of subject knowledge learning. The evidence from this study at Deep Sea primary indicates that the school consistently withdrew support from specialist subject knowledge areas in terms of resource and funding patterns. More time, resources and funding could be used to raise the effectiveness and profile of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English teaching and learning.

Upon deeper analysis, this study suggests that the many levels of curriculum can act as an instrumental influence in the distribution of authority, power and significance in our society (Seddon 2001:310). It is these embedded notions of valued knowledge that are first experienced in primary school education. Samantha the Deputy explains *The students establish a relationship with the classroom teacher, it is very difficult for the specialist to establish those relationships.* The Principal adds, *If you are in a classroom, you get to know twenty or thirty children intimately. They (the teacher) also have an accompanying responsibility for their particular students.* The evidence of this study supports the notion that experience and the ensuing beliefs about knowledge, its nature and power in society are — as Pajares (1992) argued — resistant to change, often self-perpetuating and linked to systemic beliefs. The Principal speaks about *systemic priorities...Equity of DOTT....and departmental policy* as informing the schools operations.

Groups are formed by interest factions at primary schools and maintained by the familiarity of experience based in a social and cultural value system. Jerry a foundation staff member recalls that, *teachers at Deep Sea do not have the same status...., there are basically three groups across the school.* He also mentions that the position of specialist teachers comes with the expectation that specialist teachers *divine their own role around the school* however, he offers advice on the contrary *that opportunities only appear to be there.* For those enthusiastic teacher’s curriculum can be delivered effectively yet contestation or change is difficult due to school organisation, and isolated job structure and funding. As the Deputy Samantha says *eventually the specialist comes to me absolutely tearing their hair out and having trouble in the classroom.*
Charlotte, the music teacher, mentioned that *Music was just like it was when she was at school*, a perception that does not match the reality of resources but certainly the provision of time. It can possibly be argued that teachers’ educational experiences and, therefore, their occupational perspectives are quite resistant to change (Bandura 1968). It would seem that Esland’s (1971) view on occupational perspectives is supported by the findings of this research as the school and classroom are places where dominant ideologies, values and opinions are articulated, negotiated and legitimised. The School teachers, they’ll talk with each other, and they will swap ideas. Because you are the specialist they don’t....

Groups based on their identification with the more powerfully perceived literacy and numeracy learning areas maintain and re-create power structures that advocate this knowledge base. Charlotte mentioned the power of the gang who had the ability to make or break teachers if they did not conform to the established cultures and value systems existing at Deep Sea Primary School. This point ties in with the Principal who states that *At the end of the year, opportunities for organisational change are assessed. There is performance management....* These comments indicate that those who are deemed culturally suitable are re-employed and those who do not fit in are passed back to central office for re-appointment to another school.

### 5.3 Curriculum Contestation and Social Reproduction

Primary schools are bureaucratic systems. Ideas are shared among groups with the link often being our formative educational experiences. Familiar and shared experiences often guide our identification with groups and memberships with groups (Napier & Gershenfeld 1986). Identity is, by and large, expressed through professional roles and responsibilities and, more importantly, provides access to status and capital resources in the school system (Goodson 1999). It would seem at Deep Sea Primary School identity is how an individual is perceived, Samantha speaks about identity *I think if you are a specialist in one area, teachers see that area as your professional interest. So they put you in a box... they make a judgment....*

At Deep Sea Primary School, the evidence indicated that subject knowledge meant different things to different people. This study revealed that, for a variety of reasons, defined groups at the school held unique and identifiable perceptions considering subject specialist knowledge. Unlike long-serving administration staff or generalist
teachers, specialist teachers may have qualified and experienced an abstract, complex and creative education that they value as well as an expert university training or professional career with their chosen knowledge base. Therefore, this study has proposed that specialist teachers often believed in and attempted to pass on skills, knowledge and understandings often far removed from the educational experience and perceived nature of knowledge and its value perceived by non-specialist teachers. Miranda the LOTE teacher advocated LOTE there are lots of positives, employment in the Pacific Rim companies, international relationships in terms of trade, culture and tourism.....understanding otherness....citizenship..... it can be fun you can discover gems of knowledge...I do not think everyone believes that these things are important. Dominant discourse and the prioritisation of literacy and numeracy were the top knowledge areas that were valued at Deep Sea and for those who contested this school culture and value system were marginalised and restricted in their ability to deliver their specialist curriculum. To advocate and succeed in teaching a specialist knowledge base was to upset the status quo.

5.4 Deep Sea Primary School

At the school level, which is focus of this study, perceptions of the broader, socially constructed occupational perspectives and educational experiences of professional practitioners include long-established beliefs about Australian education and its guiding principles and beliefs about primary school conventions. For example there was a general consensus amongst the teachers that learning about literacy and numeracy were the real purpose of primary schools and efforts to diversify the curriculum or serve stakeholders outside of conservative and economic knowledge base went unsupported. The perception that specialist teachers were support teachers is such an example.

These educational conventions tend to be legitimised through a range of national, State, Territory and school-based policy documents. They are also legitimised through funding, while being maintained at the school level through group processes that have a propensity to preserve the current dominance of literacy and numeracy programs. The evidence from this study suggests that at Deep Sea Primary School, there exists a relatively unquestioned hierarchy of knowledge, together with somewhat indisputable or difficult-to-challenge group and individual views of
curriculum content and delivery. As Elaine the junior primary school teacher remarked, *That’s just the way it is*

Investigating the influence of school and program organisation job structures, school culture, funding and the provision of time together helped in understanding the forces that preserve conventional curriculum perceptions and experiences at the primary school level. By drawing attention to the power of primary school educative experiences of valued knowledge, teachers may be more aware of the discourse that operates in the workplace and better serve the diversity of students as well as their individual needs. During reform, newly developed learning cultures (Senge 1994) can also integrate more fully to support specialist teachers. Communication, collegiality and sharing information are good strategies to begin with.

### 5.4.1 Leadership

All staff members recognised the authority of George, the Principal, and Samantha, the Deputy, in the administration of the school and generally stated that George had *the last say*. It would seem that the views put forth by the principal would be not be contested by any of the groups at Deep Sea lest their position in the school hierarchy be questioned. Cohesive group of teachers, articulate and collaborate with each other as they recreate primary school organisations and cultures. These perceptions of *how it should be* are manifested through each professional’s language and their perceived potential to perform within the dimensions of established workplace organisations, resource paths and acceptable practice together with expectations of student learning. However, the narrative evidence suggests that the assumption that all teachers and students are capable of instruction in and learning of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English is not widely held. Samantha recalls *The classroom teacher doesn’t have the skills, the conceptual knowledge to plan, facilitate and assess that area, which is why we get a specialist in.*

In terms of groups conforming to the whole-school hierarchy, there were many similar views that all teachers possessed. All teachers agreed that specialist, generalist and administrators are *real teachers*, all having achieved accreditation at a reputable tertiary institution. Likewise, all teachers agreed that specialist teachers do indeed have a greater depth of knowledge in one particular subject area, more so than
the generalist teacher. There was also an acknowledgment that specialist teachers worked on a different timetable and time was in short supply for communication or collaboration.

Although each specialist teacher utilised aspects of these innovative teaching-and-learning strategies, traditional models of teacher-oriented learning dominated in the school culture. Over the course of the year, each specialist felt pressure to conform to established models of instruction that steered away from constructivist theories of learning and tended towards narrow definitions of individual expression and empowerment, together with study programs detached from daily experience. Miranda, the Languages Other Than English teacher, expressed her initial resistance to such cultural pressure. Finally, however, she succumbed in the latter half of the year due to the impossibility of program success without support from the school or community. Karri, the Health and Physical Education teacher also expressed her anxiety over the job-share arrangements with her line manager who also held the position of second deputy. This study suggests that administrative, generalist and specialist frontline professionals engage with the process of curriculum reform and outcomes education and articulate their taken-for-granted assumptions (Pajares 1992) about valued knowledge.

5.5 Program Organisation

Schools are complex and dynamic work environments, and there exists pressure to deliver an exhaustive set of programs to students. There are many agendas in primary schools that may well contend with the needs of specialist staff. Time for learning literacy and numeracy are prioritised in the school and make up about 50% of the timetable. Often there is only one, or a fractionally appointed, specialist teacher in a primary school, which reduces their visibility as well as their time with students. The specialists voiced a need for improved communication networks and negotiation about acceptable curriculum content. Miranda the Languages Other Than English teacher remarked that no-one talked to her and she was perceived as being at the bottom of the barrel. This tended not to be a concern for the administrators and generalist practitioners, however, who perceived their main challenge was with imparting learning skills to assist their students’ general social and intellectual development in terms of literacy and numeracy. These teachers worked in pairs or
small groups to advocate their knowledge base. The issue of *duty of care* and how it is shared between teachers illustrates this point. Specialist teaching and teachers tended to be perceived as too insignificant or marginal to the educational process to draw serious critical attention from the majority of Deep Sea staff members. This point supports the interview work of Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) whose work suggested that the roles and responsibilities of specialist staff were rigidly conceived and undervalued. Samantha unwittingly remarks *Specialist teachers are the losers.*

5.5.1 Opportunities to Teach and Learn

The effectiveness of specialist teachers in delivering the curriculum and participating in school decision-making processes is dependant on the way their jobs are structured and their access to resources, most particularly, time and communication networks. Karri, the Health and Physical Education teacher, felt that some teachers were *just rude* as they did not inform her of tennis clinic times or needs. She also mentioned the communicative tension between a male member of staff and herself.

Job structure also influenced how colleagues categorise the specialists’ roles and responsibilities. Specialist teachers in this study expressed dissatisfaction with their ability to deliver positive knowledge, skills and abilities in their subject areas that maintained satisfactory outcomes as described in the policy documents. This can be seen as an issue related to the positive learning experiences of the specialist teachers as well as their optimistic perceptions of praiseworthy subject content in the early and middle years of schooling. Miranda listed a number of advantages of learning second languages however, this view was countered by generalist teachers who thought that students needed to learn English first before introducing a second language.

5.5.2 Curriculum Prioritisation

Curriculum prioritisation and the related crowded curriculum debate also brought to light another aspect subject knowledge endorsement. That is, the over-abundance of information delivered to students in the early- and middle-childhood phases of educational development. Students developing their own perceptions may tend to filter out learning not directly related to economic survival as their parents may.
Children also need time and space to filter the volume and variety of educational experiences available to them in modern schooling in Western Australia. Whilst the same may be said about modern life in a technological era, the provision of “down time” so students may reflect is of vital importance. However as Elaine, the junior primary teacher expressed, *If it [the program] is not in their face and students not excited and talking about it* then program invisibility or marginalisation may occur.

An over-abundance of curriculum material and initiatives, much of which was important yet compressed into the yearly program, detracted from the substance and standing of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English. Generalist teachers, administrators and students enjoyed the novelty and designer-style funding of short and edgy programs such as Music Evita, Science Alive, drug-awareness campaigns and tennis clinics. In contrast, specialist teachers found their programs disregarded as students were bussed off to excursions at the zoo or lined up together in the undercover area to practice boot scooting or Edu Dance. These specialist teachers were often required to supervise “left overs”; that is, those students who were unable to attend particular functions or gatherings. Whole-school initiatives such as book week, swimming lessons or interschool athletics carnivals also tended to impact on the availability of consistently good quality and relevant specialist instruction. Samantha says *For the specialist, there is no continuity, sometimes a teacher may not see a class for three weeks, then everything has to be picked up and bought back in, revision and building blocks.* The provision of internal relief is another example Miranda says *On occasion, the Languages Other than English program would be cancelled because the school could not get any relief teachers. The Principal or Deputy told me to go down to the Kindergarten for a day or two. I am not even early childhood trained. I would loose those days out of my program and the classroom teacher gets paid internal relief…..*

**5.5.3 Resources**

For specialist teachers who may pursue competency-based programs and skills with specific and challenging outcomes in Western Australia primary schools, the actual financial and capital investment in certain subjects may be perceived as less than supportive. Government primary schools often do not possess a stockpile of reliable and quality resources, relevant to student needs and appropriate to the new learning
outcomes, these resources are often specific to the specialist’s task and expensive. This is especially the case for Languages Other Than English. This is the newest addition to mandated curriculum documents and attracts the least financial support from federal, State, Territory and local jurisdictions. Funding was the pivotal issue for Karri. She perceived it as ridiculous that she was required to ask for funds for her Health and Physical education program from a year-three teacher who held the purse strings. The most powerful groups of classroom teachers also had power to influence and mediate the less powerful specialist teachers.

A compounding issue is that the specialist teachers were encouraged to develop their own programs and teaching strategies in order to soak up some of the delegation of responsibility apparent with school-based decision making. However, Charlotte, Karri and Miranda indicated that the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English were not funded or resourced enough to support student learning, neither on a short-term nor long-term basis. The consequence of minimal resources and funding was that teachers invested their own time and money in supporting their own programs. This then created job stress as well as job dissatisfaction. Not only did Charlotte, Karri and Miranda comment on the difficulty of outsourcing, they found accessing school-based resources on a regular basis also tricky. Miranda’s speaks of her frustration $500 through 40 weeks with 450 students is just not enough.

The broad generic resources of the school and the permanent location of these resources in the library or wet areas generally supported student learning with respect to literacy and numeracy. The budget in appendix F shows Library resources $20 000 library consumables $3000 Mathematics $6000 English General $7000. Comment was made that generalist teachers also had their own pool of resources networks; therefore, they did not need to share or communicate with specialists except when the generalist had a specific requirement that could often not be met by the specialist. However, when Charlotte, Karri and Miranda expressed their need to communicate with generalists, the request was often ignored. This was often met with low prioritisation, an unsatisfactory outcome or frustration due to avoidance. In turn, Charlotte, Karri and Miranda were again required to create, buy or invest their own time and money in resources for student learning.
Access to the school’s hardware, software and library resources were restricted, given that each of the specialist teachers were new to the school and had minimal knowledge of the school’s technology or information-management systems. Miranda, the Languages Other Than English teacher, comment about attempting to use the laptops demonstrates this issue.

Charlotte, the Music teacher, was, however, adequately satisfied with her purpose-built Music room, facilities and instruments, although she expressed concern in the event that the room was to be used for other functions. In contrast, the Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English specialists expressed dissatisfaction with their teaching facilities. Both expressed a need for purpose built facilities that were new, fresh and connected to the school’s technology and information systems. Karri mentioned *Because the Languages Other Than English teacher did not have a classroom, that was just another way of showing that LOTE was not important enough for a classroom......there was a spare classroom....... but she was put in this tiny little storeroom.*

With less need to teach the whole curriculum, due to the increasing use of subject or specialist teachers, there was a greater need to provide specific resources and time to the specialist curriculum than is currently in operation. Finite funds and pressure on physical spaces meant that each group of teachers actually competed more rigorously for materials to service a wider section of learners rather than specific-learner needs. This then negatively affected the potential for positive, subject-specific, learning experiences of students. Jerry considers curriculum implementation *Dealing with kids on an hour by hour basis does not give you the opportunity to create support structures and it does not give you the opportunity to create any sense of behaviour management skills or planning skills. It puts a huge strain on everyone. All of those things are taken for granted that the classroom teachers have.* Furthermore, an increase in professional competition and environments of stratification along distinct subject lines would be foreseeable. As Hargreaves (1994), Lacey (1985), Thornton (1998) and White (1998:44) have suggested, the potential for an outcomes based curriculum to compartmentalise knowledge and potentially fracture student learning becomes a reality.
5.6 Time Allocation

5.6.1 Time
Whilst the three specialists that were the focus of this study were perceived differently and saw a variety of teaching practices in the primary school culture, it was evident that time was of prime importance. Time as a commodity provided a basis for the continuity, stability and permanence of specialist programs throughout the year. Time, however, was the most important feature at Deep Sea Primary School, and all teachers felt it was in short supply. Whilst acknowledging the importance of including all eight areas of the new curriculum — and that they would benefit from being better trained and resourced to teach all the curriculum — the administrators and generalist teachers were unanimous that time was the major factor in their involvement with Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English programs.

5.6.2 Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT): The Specialist
Problems with the specialist timetable began with the negotiation of Duties Other Than Teaching time in terms of administrators and generalist teachers’ needs and preference. Specialist teachers are Duties Other Than Teaching providers and generalist teachers are receivers of Duties Other Than Teaching time. Administrators and senior teachers could occasionally take advantage of the extra time allocated for organising various plans and programs; and this added to the complexity of Duty Other Than Teaching time allocations, who could receive time and how that time was divided.

Teachers’ Duties Other Than Teaching time was arranged in ten- and twenty-minute lots; whereas generalist teachers’ Duties Other Than Teaching was arranged according to a different model of year group collaboration and regular time without student contact across the week. This non-contact time with students was allocated with a minimum of 30 minutes and often occurred in 60-90 minute blocks. Much more could be achieved with this amount of time than in the 10 minute blocks afforded to specialist teachers. Charlotte reflects on the situation from my own experience I would whine about the DOTT time of a music teacher. If there was a ten minute gap they would give it to you as DOTT…All of that added up to quiet a lot but I never got anything done…. George, the Principal, had the view that these
arrangements were fairly unyielding and unable to be changed. He says *you cannot do it any other way* His reasoning was that workplace agreements dictated the models of time arrangement, and these agreements had to be followed as mandated by the union or particular government department. This comment suggested links to established power structures and relations of power, which, in turn, influence access to knowledge and intern power structures.

Charlotte, Karri and Miranda as specialists indicated that Duties Other Than Teaching was a problem as its arrangement restricted their access to generalist teachers, administrators, students and communication networks. Time could be seen to seen to maintain the boundaries of certain power groups. This aspect is implicitly supported by the Principal, *I think as this school has grown, communication has become increasingly difficult. To remedy this we just manipulate teachers DOTT timetable, so people in common year levels have time to sit down and talk about levelling and moderation.* Charlotte, Karri and Miranda’s individual accumulative time also meant that they could not pursue various teaching tasks without fragmentation. As Charlotte said, it *was impossible to do anything in ten minutes* and this added to her load of out-of-school-hours planning and the creation of resources. She adds *I spent a lot of time out of school getting stuff ready because I never had block time at school.* The provision of non-contact time for specialist teachers to collaborate with administrators and classroom teachers could support all aspects of school timetabling as well as being a prerequisite in the formation of whole-school communication networks where all stakeholders are able to articulate their needs and wants.

For the teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English their peripheral position in the timetable set them outside the daily contestations and negotiations of teacher perceptions and practice as well as limiting their information on individual students. This study indicated that available time to access the Principal, the Deputy and senior teachers — the key knowledge and skill brokers in the school culture — were prioritised to the advantage of the generalist teachers and, thus, the knowledge they advocated. Jerry indicates that *teachers have equal opportunity here as long as they are here long enough to entrench themselves in the school….but with such high turnover and teacher do not get to know the*
specialist...the specialist is not given the opportunity to show their abilities over the short period of time...Given their advanced positioning in school organisation, timetabling resources, funding and committee memberships, administrators and generalist teachers were able to determine curriculum priorities in order to maintain their positions. They did this while drawing on the services of specialist teachers to sustain their particular positions in the school culture. Generalist teachers have up to twenty times more time in the day to impress students with their views on what is socially acceptable, while students were encouraged to provide loyalty to their class teacher.

The increasing use of specialist teachers may tend to reinforce this loyalty, with respect to access to particular teachers and their and in terms of classroom teachers evaluations of subject knowledge. Specialist teachers have less time and resources to create opportunities to impart valued knowledge, abilities and attitudes (Boomer 1982) that could then potentially support their knowledge areas in the curriculum. Towards the end of the year Charlotte mentioned that I was jumping around a lot, and that meant I started to avoid things, if that makes sense. In this study, specialist’s teachers displayed added dissatisfaction and frustration with matters of student’s engagement and loyalty more so than did the generalist teachers.

Specialist teachers must also complete for available (and limited) appointment times with other teachers, external service providers (such as the school psychologist) and community members. Often the time delay to collaborate with administration in order to negotiate decisions and program direction leads to a case of too little too late. This is particularly evident in case of students’ behaviour management. Jerry, the library and ICT teacher remarked on the snowballing effect in particular reference to student behaviour management.

Thomas (1995) argues that a timetable is one way of organising learning and arranging the essentials to impart knowledge. The timetable although is often used to prescribe and evaluate the curriculum.

Unfortunately, that is a practise that encourages the belief that it is possible to establish a taxonomy in which each aspect of the curriculum can be dealt with separately in its own periods and even worse, that these parts add up to the
whole. Opportunities for reinforcing one strand of learning by connecting it with others are diminished and may even be lost (Thomas 1995:18).

A future study or investigation may shed light on some of the more subtle aspects of a fragmented curriculum and timetable and student learning.

5.6.3 Isolation
Whilst doing their job as specialist teachers, it was characteristic that Charlotte, Karri and Miranda worked in isolation, independently of classroom teachers. This meant that access to leadership, advice, support and mentors were sometimes awkward. Whilst seeking access to the Principal, Deputy or senior staff, the specialist teachers were often frustrated at their inability to collectively solve problems or organise quality time to talk about issues related to teaching and specialist programs. This led to situations were individual specialist teachers were responsible for decisions that were made in isolation from the generalist teaching staff. This sometimes led to further problems with program implementation. Miranda mentioned that when herself and another teacher both requested the television, the class teacher became angry with her, mentioned her advanced rights to access the television and left Miranda without a television to complete her video lesson in Indonesian.

Established patterns of communication and school cultures were also not always communicated to specialist teachers, as decisions were not made collaboratively. Furthermore, the isolation that specialist teachers perceived as part of their job was compounded by the daily complexity and ever-changing ad hoc arrangements of generalist staff. This included generalist teachers’ movements such as professional development, sickness, students’ behaviour and meetings out of the school that the specialist may not have known about.

5.6.4 Incorporating Specialists
Apart from employing specialist teachers as support staff, primary schools could also more fully develop and integrate the generic teaching skills of specialists. Deep Sea Primary School had made some provision for this integration as each specialist teacher had her timetable arranged so that each teacher worked a full school day. The majority of their time was allocated to teaching specialist skills, knowledge and understanding of the specialist subjects; however, Charlotte, Karri and Miranda had
at least a half-day portion of each week working with individual students to strengthen their social or literacy skills. Charlotte, the Music teacher, worked half a day with a special-needs student. Karri, the Health and Physical Education teacher, worked each afternoon with a year-six class delivering Technology and Enterprise, Society and Environment, and Art programs. Miranda, the Languages Other Than English teacher, worked half a day with individual students strengthening their literacy skills. This making up of time was generally welcomed however; the “extra” or “supplementary” nature of this arrangement also imparts a value perceived as subsidiary.

The evidence suggests that support for these half-day arrangements from administration was also minimal as was communication with class teachers and professional development opportunities. At times, contrasting motivation and infrequent communications with George and Samantha hindered Charlotte, Karri and Miranda’s inclusion into the school culture. The viability and effectiveness of whole-school planning and idea sharing amongst staff could be infrequent or occurred when Charlotte, Karri and Miranda were absent. Charlotte recalls that there are professional development days. At the moment our Languages Other Than English teacher does not work on Fridays, so she does not have to come to our professional days. With their make-up of full days, each specialist teacher tended to work in isolation (in the wet area or other places outside of the regular classroom) with each particular student or group of students.

There was also an expectation embedded within the school culture that George, Jerry Samantha and Elaine mentioned; in that specialist staff would take full responsibility for the whole learning area. This comment was under the justification that generalist staff were unable to do so for a variety of reasons. Samantha, the Deputy, also mentioned that there was not the expectation that specialist teachers were involved with the running of the school due to their already heavy load. Charlotte, Karri and Miranda also mentioned that there tended to be little negotiation in terms of the definable roles and responsibilities for new or specialists teachers. Perhaps these perceptions are bounded to power groups and exist to control the exercise of power by specialist teachers.
There is an opportunity for incorporating specialists into the school culture as well as building positive perceptions of accessibility and collegiality. Perhaps the specialist teachers could perform their non-specialist skills in class with students and teachers? This may then provide further grounds for familiarity and trust and, perhaps, reduce some of the negative perceptions associated with itinerancy. Further research into the advantages and disadvantages of “pull in” and “pull out” programs for students in need of individual assistance will shed further understanding on the success on this arrangement.

A further suggestion is that, apart from teaching literacy and numeracy, generalist teachers and administration could involve themselves a little more with the specialist teachers by sharing information. Implicit in the Deep Sea primary school culture was a mentality of supplying information on a “need to know basis”. It was this mentality that acted to reinforce the impenetrability of the many established hierarchies and group boundaries particularly for new teachers.

5.6.5 Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT): The Generalist

Time could also be used by generalist teachers to share information and other resources while they were still teaching. Each team of teachers (such as the Curriculum improvement committee) as well as block of teachers (such as the junior primary, middle primary or upper primary) could economise with their time allocation due to their physical proximity. It was often the case that the generalists had fulltime jobs in one location. The example of duty of care was given that expressed this particular benefit to the generalists and how the specialist teachers were unable to take advantage of this ad hoc arrangement. In addition to this top-heavy economisation of time, when students were away with specialist teachers, generalist teachers could communicate, collaborate and plan without the constant interruptions experienced when students were in class.

During this non-contact time, generalists were able to borrow, put into words, validate, propose and support each other and interpret whole-school plans by consensus. Perhaps this is also when dominant discourse, social expectancy and conformity are articulated. Specialist teachers were not able to economise with their time in the same manner due to their timetables, which did not include the same arrangements of non-contact time. Generalist staff, given their fulltime position,
received more consistent information and tended to share this information, while the specialists’ itinerancy precluded them from these block and team knowledge pools that often included communication arrangements detailing the transmission of valued and shared knowledge.

Samantha and Jerry as an administrative group demonstrated a more positive perception of their own and close team members’ programs, perhaps because they were negotiated and agreed upon with each other. In turn, they advocated literacy and numeracy and “block initiatives” to parents and community with whom they had more daily contact. The generalist staff members as advocates of administrative mandates were more visible and accessible when compared to the rather distant positions of the specialist teachers. These generalist teachers invested heavily in their students. In their daily communications with parents, perceptions of educational needs, wants and values were articulated and negotiated. This produced a situation where the potential for partiality and negotiation of knowledge could occur at the classroom door. Karri felt excluded from her team teacher due to his inability to communicate vital information about the class to her. Often these communications were to the exclusion of the specialists who were frequently teaching in another part of the school. There is clearly a need for all teachers to be involved in the process of working with parents and community so advocacy efforts are fully understood as well as programs’ aims and outcomes, and student-behaviour issues.

The next section details the multiple perspectives of the various stakeholders at Deep Sea Primary School. The specialist perspectives are offered first followed by the generalists and administrative perspectives. The aim is to show the different perceptions of valued knowledge, the manner in which knowledge is advocated, the way in which time is employed to control curriculum discourses and the how teachers group together according to what they perceive as important in the schooling process.

5.7 Occupational Perspectives: The Specialist Teacher

Specialist teachers are committed to their job, and their positive perceptions are mainly generated from experiencing superb learning or teaching of the subject. Consequently, specialist teachers believe strongly in the academic value of these subjects. As the literature suggests professional ability finds expression in
enthusiasm and dedication to all related specialist tasks. The expectation that specialist staff will take full responsibility for the learning area is often taken on board proficiently and wholeheartedly. Often these teachers often resist the integration of their subject material with other curricula due to the “watering down effect” that tends to happen. As a result, for those charged with the responsibility of a specialist area, there is often little support or interest from other staff members. Finding common ground (Colley 1991) with other teachers can also prove difficult for avid teachers due to possessing different experiences of these knowledge bases of which they do not value.

Accordingly, the study indicated that, from the point of view of the specialist teachers’, positive subject evaluation by school staff and access to time are necessary in order to provide positive learning experiences to all students. Charlotte, Karri and Miranda, believed that positive attitudes towards change and curriculum implementation were more helpful than negative ones. This suggests difficulties were encountered when trying to deliver innovative lessons based around student-centred learning and outcomes sourced from the new curriculum documents. Miranda reflects that I just became decisive and taught in terms of the Curriculum Framework and Students Outcome Statements. I think I trod on a lot of peoples toes because I did not negotiate....

Miranda suggested that links to community, real-life issues and relevant events could encourage more support for her Languages Other Than English programs. Outcomes education potentially provides an avenue for this to be developed. For example, inviting speakers into the school, students sourcing relevant artefacts, and information for class discussions could provide a platform for student engagement. Furthermore, the use of the Internet and technology to support learning endeavours could also be nurtured.

This thesis has also demonstrated that specialist teachers are a growing educational resource, although often underutilised in their daily practice and overall contribution to school culture. This study pursued a critical view of curriculum. It can thus be anticipated that knowledge and its value with respect to the three specialist’s areas will be contested. It will thus need to be negotiated at the primary school level if it is
to be transmitted to students and regarded as part of the traditional social order represented in Australian communities.

5.8 Occupational Perspectives: The Generalist

The evidence from Deep Sea primary School suggested that generalist teachers possess unique and identifiable perceptions regarding the three specialist areas. The generalists’ perceptions were perhaps generated from experiencing poor learning or teaching of the subjects in their own education. Consequently, generalist teachers do not have a strong subject knowledge base. Hand in hand with this experience is that classroom teachers have negligible regard for the subjects’ academic value, are not confident in teaching the subjects while being unable to assess the specialists effectively. Inability can find expression in avoidance, and often all related specialist tasks are often delegated to specialist teachers. Karrie explains that…being the Physical Education teacher means you get all the responsibility.

The interview evidence also suggested that generalist and administrative staff at the school possessed potentially poor perceptions of the academic legitimacy of the subjects. The case of having to work with poor resources and inefficient time management within the school culture meant that Charlotte, Karri and Miranda were restricted in their ability to initiate reform or contest the curriculum in any way, shape or form. The integration of these three subjects was, perhaps, not encapsulated within the “normal world view” (Napier & Gershenfeld 1989:5–17) that dictated conventions and traditions of primary schooling in Western Australia.

There was also the perceptions that Samantha and Elaine perceived that Charlotte, Karri and Miranda — the specialist teachers— were there as release time rather than for academic achievement. This suggests role conflict, low subject prioritisation and appreciation. This also suggests Samantha’s and Elaine’s own poor learning experiences as well as their lack of subject knowledge. The Deputy mentioned she could teach some subjects but [did] not want to, and the junior primary teacher mentioned her own lack of musical knowledge and orientation. In addition, she spoke of being pleased that her students could be with a specialist as she was not confident in her own Health and Physical Education skills and abilities.
Investigation into individuals’ learning experiences, perceptions, ideas of teaching practice, identity and group membership provided insight into curriculum reform at Deep Sea Primary School. The evidence suggested that the staff members with the least positive experiences or exposure to specialists or subject content were also those who least supported the specialist teachers. Since generalist or administration professionals’ learning experiences failed to reach any level of competence or understanding of these subjects, the generalists and administrators could not provide any level of support for either the specialist teacher or for student learning. This was demonstrated by avoiding the subject and sometimes the teacher. Elaine, the junior primary teacher, noted that they were not asked to communicate with the specialist so she did not.

Results from the study also indicated that, from the generalist’s point of view, specialist teachers were important to support the notion of educating the whole child in a comprehensive manner. However, it would seem that Charlotte, Karri and Miranda as specialist teachers were not well used or perceived as a resource requiring systemic support. This point was also raised by OFSTED (1997; 2002) as pivotal to the success of specialist programs.

5.9 Professional Development Opportunities

Linking into a wider system of support also proved difficult for specialist teachers. It was also apparent that group processes often restricted these teachers from gaining school based knowledge that could assist their efforts. For example, George, the Principal, mentioned timeliness or catch up time as a process that new staff members must undergo before becoming effective in curriculum delivery. While the provision of organised staff teaching and school-based professional development was considered by all teachers as a more efficient way of assisting each other’s curriculum efforts. This was preferred over the clique-based, block-based, ad-hoc system that currently operated. No doubt, there is a place for both organised and informal sharing of resources and knowledge in an innovative school. The ideal would be a collaborative system where all teachers have access to as much information and resources as possible, regardless of their curriculum area or timetable.
This study suggests that administrative, generalist and specialist frontline professionals engage with the process of curriculum reform and outcomes education and articulate more fully their taken-for-granted assumptions about knowledge and its prescribed value. In turn, as a communicative group of teachers that articulates and collaborates with each other, they recreate school organisation and cultures to advantage generalist teachers rather than specialists due to their position in the school culture. Further impounding on change and curriculum implementation is the competition between interest groups at the school and the implicit evaluation of their roles and responsibility in the school organisation. However, more understanding of subject knowledge endorsement can bolster new learning cultures. This can then assist in the integration of specialist teachers and the knowledge, skills and understandings of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English to the benefit of all stakeholders working with the *Curriculum Framework* (1998).

In reality, seamless curriculum delivery requires effective internal management in an environment of cohesion where staff members act in unison towards curriculum implementation. Whole-school cohesion cannot be achieved if the curriculum is negotiated and constructed to the advantage of the generalist teachers and administrators, while at the same time marginalising the specialist teachers. Social network theory (Leonard & Leonard 2000) may add to a deeper understanding of the issues only touched upon in this study.

### 5.10 Learning Opportunities for Students

Western Australian Primary School students bring a diversity of learning experiences to their educational journey however; they share the common bond of being grouped by age and thus their universal learning features. In general the evidence of this study indicated that there are some excellent specialist teachers in the primary school system, however, most students experience inadequate “specialist” lessons which tends to reinforce a taken for granted cycle of neglect that students receive from their teachers (Morgan, Burke and Thompson 2001:1-26). It would seem that the way Deep Sea Primary School allocated, time, money and resources there was little opportunity for early childhood students to construct and review their understanding of subject knowledge via their senses or through their interaction with peers.
Furthermore, the evidence points to the conclusion that in middle childhood students are not provided with enough opportunities to understand and appreciate different points of view and especially do not have the opportunity to tackle specialists for longer periods. In terms of constructivism more opportunities could be provided for all primary students to physically, symbolically, socially and theoretically construct knowledge (Gagnon & Collay 2005:1-10) in a positive and engaging manner for the subjects of Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English.

Classroom teachers Jerry, Samantha and Elaine provided evidence that “their students” found specialist programs uncomfortable, ambiguous, uncompetitive and irrelevant to their daily needs. These classroom teachers indicated that links to students’ classroom learning experiences were absent, and a number of students deliberately disrupted specialists Charlotte, Karri and Miranda’s efforts to facilitate specialist knowledge in an interesting and relevant manner. Jerry, Samantha and Elaine indicated that students were unhappy with specialist programs, and students perceived that the programs were irrelevant, boring and did not meet their needs. This was especially true when students were already failing with conventional teaching content.

On the other hand, specialist knowledge, skills and understandings could provide a real avenue to support students if operating at their full potential and with whole-school support. This means that schools could arrange programmes where activities are continuous and transitions occur smoothly between classes. Moreover, students can be aware of what they are learning and how much progress they are making. Students could be in the position of deciding what they wish to study and have the time and opportunity to negotiate subject content with specialist teachers. These strategies may help to alleviate some of the problems with students negative attitudes and inappropriate behaviour, especially so with upper primary boys, during classes.

If specialist teachers are to provide positive learning experiences to students then classroom teachers need to directly indicate to students the advantages of specialist programs and act in a supportive manner towards the specialist teachers. As Bergin (1999 87-98) proposes specialist teachers need to belong to the school culture and this belongingness supports student’s achievement. This may be hindered given that
the evidence suggested certain pessimism towards subject knowledge endorsement and its inherent value as dictated by dominant discourse and repackaged by administrators at this school. At Deep Sea, the leaders could re-assess their focus and establish attitudes and practices amongst all staff members to support student learning in all specialists. Leaders could also explain more fully among the class teachers and active community members the positive learning links between specialist or subject knowledge endorsement and literacy and numeracy.

5.11 Summary

This discussion has sought to capture some of the influences that impact on the ability of specialist teachers to deliver the curriculum as advocated in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998). Underpinning these teachers ability to function at the primary school is the historical and traditional pervasiveness of literacy and numeracy as the prime academic focus of Western Australian primary schools. Coupled with this priority is the incidence and familiarity of most teachers experience and beliefs about Music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English. These forces work together to erode the potential of specialist teachers, however enthusiastic, to broadcast the knowledge, skills and understanding requisite of their particular specialist.

As these three specialists are outside the implicitly and explicitly recognised priority of literacy and numeracy the teachers often have little power and are external to power groups that are established according to dominate discourse at Deep Sea Primary School. For many specialist teachers it is a constant battle for survival. Constant requests for funding and resources, finding supporting teachers and administrators, significantly restrict their ability to impart knowledge to students. The finding s of this investigation indicated that administrators and community members have neither the time nor inclination to support or develop these specialists. Each specialist teacher must complete for advice, group membership, cultural and value laden knowledge that may give them more access to policy and decision makers in the school matrix. The job structure and funding arrangements act to limit these teachers in their school actions. Exhaustion, confusion, mixed messages, mis-information and constant movement all mean that these teachers do not have a direct influence on students. Perhaps their influence can be seen in that they act as a
representation, a platform or space, or maybe gives an impression that our schooling is diverse, holistic and is actually meeting the needs of Western Australia students.

The paradox is that, specialist teachers are in the best position to present interesting and distinctive knowledge that can deal with and be sensitive to our rapidly changing society and global issues that our youth are faced with. Music is a basic common denominator of all cultures and society, sport and recreation another, while second languages enable us to communicate both verbally and in gesture. It is vitally important to celebrate our similarities and to not fear “others” or the unfamiliar. It is necessary that specialist teachers maintain their academic integrity and independence and pursue teaching and learning programmes that allow and generate innovation, understanding with the capacity to share and enjoy without prejudice. However, under pressure to conform to bureaucratic agendas and processes, specialist teachers become overwhelmed and less able to learn and generate consensual knowledge that may assist their professional development and positioning the school hierarchy.

As the development of subject specialist teaching indicated, the position and growth of these teachers has been from within the education system and they are therefore dependent on the system and its embedded hierarchy. The presence of local and state staffing formulas coupled with dependence on Federal funding (that must be competed for) often reduces the power of interest groups and individual subject teachers. However, external forces must be adapted to as the finding of this study suggests these forces are largely obscured and difficult to interpret at the primary school level. A sense of insecurity may prevail and short term gains with immediate pay off for specialist teachers and act as a strategy for survival. The variety of contexts and diversity of teaching styles may create a sense of confusion rather that be a sign of progressive curriculum implementation.

Notwithstanding these daily work contradictions specialist teachers play an important role in transmission of valued knowledge in primary schools. They do help shape Western Australian students view of the world and to think and respond to the world in a creative and imaginative manner. If perceptions as to their worth are negative it is because specialist teachers are sometimes thought of as being unconventional educators. These teachers remain important due to their ability to be innovative and
to distribute alternative types of knowledge to students who may wish to enjoy the possibility to experience an abstract and passionate learning journey not provided by traditional content and methods of teaching practises. Specialist teachers can provide an educational opportunity to students generally not within reach through their classroom teacher.

**Chapter 6: Conclusions**

**6.1 Introduction**

Following the stance of Fullan (1999), this study also suggests that change is more likely to occur when perceptions of problems are analysed and primary school workplace tensions acknowledged. This thesis has identified why the day-to-day practice and professional experiences of specialist teachers can be so complicated, especially during reform. At Deep Sea Primary School in 2002, teachers of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages other Than English felt marginalised and undervalued as professionals. At the end of the year, all three specialist teachers choose to move on and gain employment in other positions.

The evidence suggests that subject knowledge endorsement implicit in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) were perceived differently by competing groups at the school. However, the results of this study suggest that conventional patterns of subject prioritisation and delivery have been re-traditionalised (Seddon 2001) within the school culture and climate by administrators and generalist teachers at the school. This was done by continuing to sanction the priority of the more accepted and resourced literacy and numeracy programs.

The specialist programs of Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English continued to be endorsed but only at the margins of the school’s community. The continued marginal endorsement of such specialist programs indicates that obscured historical, economic, political and social forces continue to influence the meaning, place and value of subject knowledge endorsement and the position of programs within the schools’ social order. In other words, the evidence suggests the traditional stratification of knowledge was being reproduced even in an environment of curriculum reform.
It is perhaps the case that generalist teachers and administrators find specialist programs useful in the process of running a school efficiently and conforming to bureaucratic obligations and mandated curriculum. The functionality of specialist programs can be seen to be in line with broader perceptions of subject knowledge endorsement, place and value. Administrative ideals and actions steered by dominant discourse tend to reinforce the “core” curriculum of literacy and numeracy to the disadvantage of other subjects. The down swing of this finding is that the knowledge, skills and understandings offered through the study of Music, Health and Physical Education as well as Languages Other Than English are not passed on to students.

Programs were sanctioned for the benefit of generalist teachers who capitalised on the extra time afforded while specialist teachers engaged their students. Furthermore, conflicting expectations of roles and responsibilities advocated by an outcomes-based education and curriculum and realised by increasing numbers of teachers could sometimes work against school cohesion. At one extreme, administrators believed that opportunity and job satisfaction could be accessed equally by all staff. At the other extreme, specialist teachers found insurmountable barriers when trying to do their jobs.

### 6.2 Curriculum Reform

The effectiveness of specialist teachers in delivering the curriculum and participating in school decision-making processes was dependant on many factors. These included the way their jobs were structured and their access to resources, most particularly time and communication networks. The findings of this study suggest that the fragmented and fractional nature of specialist programs can influence the academic importance and social inclusion of each subject in the school curriculum and culture. Job structure also influenced how colleagues identify specialist roles and responsibilities in the school system.

The evidence suggests that the three specialist programs at Deep Sea Primary School were not successful at teaching students. Charlotte, Karri and Miranda, the specialist teachers, found it difficult to employ constructivist pedagogy in line with outcome education. The academic and social inclusion of these three teachers and subjects were problematic on many levels. The evidence suggests that George’s leadership and program support were weak. Samantha, Jerry and Elaine the generalist teachers
indicated that communications (both formal and informal) as well as school traditions were not openly articulated to new staff members due to the expectations of school leaders. This is one example, of withholding tacit knowledge so necessary to work effectively within school culture.

It was evident from the interviews that the three specialist teachers Charlotte, Karri and Miranda felt disposable. When programs or teachers are perceived by the majority of teachers to be superfluous and futile this attitude can further marginalise the subjects of music, Health and Physical Education and Languages Other Than English teachers. Over the course of the year, a decline in teacher commitment did occur at the school. Specialist teachers often do not stay on and student learning becomes even more fragmented by staff attrition.

School culture may subtly portray a sense of indifference towards enthusiastic, newly trained teachers. This indifference towards Music, Physical Education and Languages Other Than English sometimes becomes embedded in the judgment of students and those generalist teachers who do stay on. As schools grow larger, permanent staff members often become sedentary, while established administrative cultures resist efforts to adapt to new curriculum, styles of teaching, personalities or external educational initiatives. Communication networks become balkanised (Hargreaves 1994:235), and educational rhetoric takes priority in whole-school initiatives. This situation also supports Petheric and Smith’s (1996) proposition that that the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) may become the new educational hegemony and frontline professionals may sideline official documents to retain autonomy in their classroom.

Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative, ethnographic, case-study approach to achieve depth and honesty. Previous literature on specialist teachers’ job structure was the foundation of documenting the daily organisation of specialist programs. The case study, as an interpretive framework, was supported by a theoretical framework that included assumptions from social constructionism, group processes and discourse analysis.

Ethnography was the main tool used to access the perceptions of teachers at the case-study site. The paradox and contradiction of articulating a hidden, yet consensual,
perception of subject knowledge endorsement, its meaning, place and value were presented throughout. Issues concerning dominant discourse, curriculum prioritisation, initial learning experiences, teacher training and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues emerged from the previous research on this topic. Insight into perceptions and the construction, negotiation and evaluation of curriculum, teaching pedagogy and the availability of constructive learning environments in a changing and often hi-tech world also emerged from the interview records.

6.3 Future Directions
The main conclusions of this study are consistent with other qualitative studies in the field regarding these three subject areas. The findings of this study are parallel to the concise primary-subject reports from the United Kingdom. The OFSTED (1997; 2002) reports documented the staffing issues as well as the conditional and time-poor status of each of the three specialists. The role of specialist Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other Than English teachers in other countries has also drawn critical attention, with the aim of improving the delivery of their own outcomes focussed curricula.

Many other international studies have reported similar findings to this thesis including those from New Zealand’s Education Review Office (1984), the Ministry of Education in Canada’s British Colombia (1989), Slovenia (Slosar 2002), Luxembourg (Kreger 1998) and South Africa (Joseph 1999). Hong Kong’s Education and Manpower Bureau (2004) has produced an informative report on school curriculum reform and the implementation of curricula for the eight key learning areas. Future investigation may choose to review the significant studies of the three learning areas in these other countries.

Other subjects perceived to be marginalised have also attracted consideration. These include Science (Swartz 1987; Williams 1990; Olson 1992), Health (Wood 1996; Summerfield 2001; Ridge et al. 2002) and History (DEST, 2001). In addition the Australian Primary Principals’ Association (2000:142) have conducted surveys in regard to the teaching of Science, Mathematics and Technology in Australian schools. In brief, such studies document the issues of a reduction in teachers’ subject knowledge, reduced academic value and relevance, a loss of scholarly identity, problems with the organisation of practical work, reduced funding, and becoming
invisible and sidelined in the educational process. These studies have generated questions related to the role of school leadership and the impact that teachers’ informal networks have on change management (Leonard & Leonard 1999). Future researchers may wish to pursue these and other questions.

An unexplored notion evident in this study is the impact of merit selection and the influence of the central appointment of teachers. Because of educational reform and the development of merit selection as one mechanism of decentralization, it is generally the case that the Principal and other senior teachers are panel members of the merit-select committee. This may be viewed as another supporting structure to maintain established school structures and cultural values attitudes related to dominant discourse yet unique to the Deep Sea culture; whereby, only those who complied with established norms and behaviours were able to stay on at the school. As noted, Charlotte, Karri and Miranda — who were centrally appointed in 2002 — did not stay on at the school as specialists in 2003.

Another uncharted idea is the nature of the “small country town” atmosphere of the community and the school. The perceived disadvantages of isolation, the power of cliques and ultra-conservatism may be offset by familiarity, group consensus and focus as well as the perceived safety of firm boundaries.

An additional unexplored aspect of this study is the potential program acceptance that some specialist teachers may achieve with long-term commitment. Over the years, school cultures may choose to accommodate programs and come to understand the value of specialist subject knowledge endorsement and the enthusiasm and passion of teachers. Conversely, the issue of incompetent specialist teachers and the negative educational outcomes they generate have not been discussed in full. Schools are culturally diverse, and staff change year to year as do relationships of power.

6.4 The Whole is More Than the Sum of its Parts
The seven guiding principles of the Curriculum Framework (1998) advocate an encompassing view of curriculum in Western Australian schools. The framework supports an explicit acknowledgement of core values, inclusiveness, flexibility, integration, breadth and balance, a developmental approach, and collaboration and
partnership. These are the claims to the integrity and distinctiveness of this Western Australian policy document. Nevertheless, policy documents, however ideal, can be seen to be partisan or linked to prevailing assumptions about conventional primary schooling practice and bureaucratic operation that can act as a constraint to “authentic” curriculum innovation.

This thesis has detailed research on the first phase of curriculum reform (1999–2004) in a government primary school in Western Australia. The purpose of the study was to examine what progress had been made with the implementation of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) focusing on Music, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other than English. Teachers and school administrators considered their experiences and perceptions of daily practice and provided their perspectives on curriculum reform. This study set out to show that individuals and groups of teachers could become conscious of, and therefore consider the dominant discourses and power structures that operate unconsciously or go unquestioned at Deep Sea Primary School.

The hypothesis formulated for the study was that with the introduction of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998), the delivery of these three specialists’ areas could be further improved. By becoming aware of the forces influencing Australian curriculum discourse and articulating the importance of educational beliefs and experiences, curriculum delivery can more effectively progress towards a common direction in primary schools. Moreover, by mounting whole-school programs, engaging with the implications of beliefs through collaborative networks and providing positive learning experiences for all students, curriculum delivery can also come within reach of the seamless curriculum (*Curriculum Framework* 1998:6–7) anticipated by reform.

The Statements at the start of the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) and the Department of Education and Training’s *Standards Outcome Framework* (1998) outline the educational outcomes sought for all Western Australian students. As such these statements represent ideals yet to be attained by all primary school students. Without external and internal support, positive educational experiences, and constructive programs, national or State-wide-inspired educational goals and outcomes are outside the reach of many schools and their teachers. This is particularly true for
those schools unable to co-opt community support, adequately resource programs or attract high quality specialist staff. This thesis suggests that, in the interests of student outcomes and abilities, *all* teachers and administrators — not just some of them — must work together to deliver the eight key learning areas stated in the *Curriculum Framework* (1998) not just literacy and numeracy.
### List of Abbreviations

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<td>Australian Education Council</td>
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<td>ALCOA</td>
<td>Australian Alumina Co-operative</td>
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<td>APPA</td>
<td>Australian Primary Principal Association</td>
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<td>DOTT</td>
<td>Duties Other Than Teaching</td>
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<td>DETWA</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training Western Australia</td>
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<td>Education Department Western Australia</td>
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<td>ERIC</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>NAEP</td>
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<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy</td>
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<td>National Foundation of Educational Research</td>
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<td>OFSTED</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<td>SIS</td>
<td>Student Information System</td>
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<td>WALNA</td>
<td>Western Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment</td>
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<td>WASSAAS</td>
<td>Western Australian State School Amateur Athletics Association</td>
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Appendices
Appendix A

Project Title: Perceptions and Practises of specialist and generalist teachers in a primary school context.

My name is Helen Stone and I am a Master of Education student at Murdoch University. Currently I am investigating the perceptions about, and teaching practises of, both specialist and generalist teachers in a primary school setting. You can help in this study by enabling some staff to be interviewed at a time and place convenient to them outside of the school.

It is anticipated that the time for each interview will be approximately 1 hour. The staff members can withdraw without prejudice at any time from the interview proceedings. Any information supplied by the staff during the one-on-one interview is confidential and no names or other information that might identify staff or the case study site will be used in any publication arising from the research.

If you are willing to make it possible for staff to participate in this study, could you please complete the form set out below. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor, Dr Lindy Norris, on 9360 2849).

My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study is to be conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677. The investigation approval number is 2003/223.
CONSENT FORM.

I ________________ have read the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree for some of my staff take part in the activity, however, I know that they may change their mind and stop at any time.

I understand that all the information provided by the staff will be treated as confidential and will not be released by the investigator unless required by law to do so.

I understand that the staff interviews will be audio taped.

I agree that research data gathered for this study may be published provided my name or other staff names or provided information, which might identify school staff or the case study site is not to be used.

Investigator’s Name: Helen Stone.

Full Name of Participant. ____________________

Signature. ________________________________

Date. ________________________________
Appendix B

Dear Interviewee,

Congratulations on your choice to be part of the research. Please find enclosed a rational in part for the choice of qualitative research methodology and a copy of the research questions. Considered reflection about your responses to the investigation questions are integral to the qualitative research process.

“The tension between subject specialism and general classroom teaching will always be present to some extent and is a reflection of the opposition between subject-centred and child centred views of education. What is remarkable is how little research evidence there is to support the arguments on either side. The official literature is full of exhortations and assertions but these do not appear to be built on sound evidential foundations “(Hall, 2002. Section 7).

Research Methods and Data collection.

The primary method to be used within the case study approach is an in-depth interview. Five other teachers and the principal have been asked in person to participate in a one-on-one taped interview. I will be interviewing myself with the same set of questions, as I am also a research participant. The interview provides an opportunity to gather personal data such as age, gender, and country of origin, education and such variables that determine the teacher’s particular worldview (Merriam, 1988. pp, 70-75). To ensure confidentiality the interviews will take place in a neutral environment, eg (café, home setting) and take about one hour with a little extra time for “off the record” comments. An opened ended interview will attempt to set up a naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2002. p, 254) where interviewees are asked to comment on their opinions and experiences from their point of view, where they do not feel manipulated. By holding the interview outside of school grounds the superficial effects of the school that are obtrusive may be down played and the interviewee can offer honest opinions in a value free environment (Gillham, 2000. p, 26. Stake. 2002). Individual discussion outside the school also offers the advantage of obtaining contradictory evidence from each participant (Yin, 1994. p, 84). Each participant will not have access to anything other participants have mentioned (Tripp, 1998. p, 227) increasing the rigour and authenticity of data (Patton, 2002. p, 555). The possibility therefore of intrinsic bias of both researcher and participants can be overcome (Denzin, 1989. 307). A number of issues need to be taken into account when planning interviews and educational research such as the impact of the interviewer on the information shared or the “halo effect” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000) where informants do not give true opinions or present themselves in best light, speaking of education rhetoric (Olson 2002. p, 129) not real school workplace happenings. A change in role from colleague to researcher may also impact on the quality of informant’s disclosure.

Case study research looks at human activity embedded in the real world and can only be understood in context, consequently precise boundaries are hard to define (Patton, 2002). Considering the multiple dynamics of one primary school the researcher hopes to capture the complexity of one particular teaching and learning setting that may then be used for reflection (Gillham, 2000. p, 6. Stake, 2002. pp, 4-7. Patton, 2002). The study does not intent to create definitive conclusions or grand theories but to describe, document and come to terms with a particular phenomena (Patton, 2002) existing in primary schools. That phenomenon as yet does not have a name.

Thanks Helen Stone.
Appendix C

Helen Stone
28 Parkland Drive
Warnbro. 6169.
Ph/Fax 9593 6394

16th June 2003.

E-mail: fino@westnet.com.au

Dear Martin,

It is extraordinary how the time seems to fly by; we are nearly half way through the year. As you know I made the decision to spend this year studying towards my Master degree. Semester one at Murdoch concentrated on research methodology and aspects of research particular to case study in education. This has been really useful information for me, because as you are aware, case study will be the basis of my investigation. As semester two begins it is time to commence data collection and focus on aspects of writing up my dissertation. In order to triangulate data, making the research investigation reliable and valid data will be collected from a number of sources.

Writing up of the dissertation involves information from a literature review, document review and individual interviews. I would like to request access to some school documents to assist me with research analysis. The type of documents I would like to examine are: the school plan and policies, the school budget, documents associated with different learning areas, the school calendar, timetables related to student, staff and community movements and meetings, report forms, last years community survey, a map of the school grounds and perhaps an example of a students portfolio.

Please be assured that these documents will be used only to support my research and confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed with respect to their use within the context of the dissertation. I think the study I am involved with has integrity and is pertinent; hopefully, the findings will be useful for students, principals and teachers as they support curricular change. I am happy to discuss the various options available in order to examine the data. Could you please telephone or email me when convenient in the next couple of weeks to discuss access to the aforementioned documents. Thank you very much for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

Helen Stone.
Appendix D

Interview Questions.

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What type of teaching have you done previously?
3. How long have you taught at this school?
4. What type of teaching do you do at the moment?
5. How do you feel about being a .......... teacher?
6. How long do you see yourself working here?
7. What do you understand the role of the classroom / generalist teacher to be?
8. What do you understand the role of the specialist teacher to be?
9. To what extent do you see the roles of either a generalist or specialist teacher as being different in this school context? Elaborate on..............
10. Are all teachers perceived as having the same status in this school? Tell me more about your perceptions: why or why not?
11. Do you think students perceive specialist and generalist teachers differently in this school? Elaborate.
12. To what extent do you think of specialist teachers as “real teachers”? Why or why not?
13. Do you think parents view the subjects taught by specialist teachers to be as important as other areas of the curriculum? Why or why not?
14. Do you think parents view specialist teachers as “real teachers?” Why or why not?
15. Can you identify anything about the school culture that either supports or detracts from specialist teachers belonging to the school community in the same way as generalist teachers? For example
   - Timetabling
   - Room allocation
   - Resource allocation
   - Reporting procedures
   - Roles and responsibilities
   - Planning processes
   - Subject content
   - Contribution to student knowledge
16. Do you think that specialist teachers have the same opportunity to influence policy development and implications within the school as other teachers? Why or why not?
17. Is there any thing else you would like to add?
Dear

As a suitable time has elapsed between the interview process and writing up the research I would like to personally thank you for your time and effort with this research project. Please find enclosed a copy of your fully transcribed interview.

If you have any comments or concerns regarding the project or the outcomes of the research process, please do not hesitate to contact myself on 08 9593 6394 or the Murdoch Human Research Ethics Committee on 9360 6677. The investigation approval for this project was 2003/223.

Sincerely,

Helen Stone.
### BUDGETS & COST CENTRE MANAGERS
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