Article begins on following page.

Please note:

Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) licensed copy. Further copying and communication prohibited except on payment of fee per Copy or Communication and otherwise in accordance with the licence from CAL to ACER. For more information contact CAL on (02) 9394 7600 or info@copyright.com.au

Three Pathways to Change in New South Wales Education, 1937-1952

Alan Barcan

University of Newcastle, NSW

Between 1937 and 1952 three differing philosophies for the reform of NSW schooling found expression in three successive ministers for education. David Drummond, the Country Party minister during the Great Depression, wanted to extend the well-established democratic principle of equality of opportunity and the formation of character. He emphasised the improvement of schooling for country children, provision of education for handicapped children, and improved technical education. Clive Evatt, Labor Minister for Education in the early 1940s, focused on the recently publicised doctrines of progressive, child-centred education. An international conference on progressive education had been held in Australia in 1937. Following the 1939-45 war, a third, pragmatic, non-theoretical minister, Bob Heffron, sought to adapt traditional policies to help build a better world, a welfare state, based on improved services which included, to a limited degree, education. But Heffron had to focus on remedying the material neglect of schooling during the depression and war. The outbreak of the Cold War in 1947 undermined idealism and optimism; communists revived the class struggle through strikes and otherwise. The final section of this paper sums up the context of and factors for change in primary, secondary and tertiary education in New South Wales over the fifteen years of this survey.

The economic crisis of the 1930s and the intense wartime mobilisation between 1942 and 1945 restricted the development of education in Australia, but also generated ideas for reform which were to influence education policy. These changes occurred in three stages. Between 1938 and 1942 the easing of the economic crisis and falling school enrolments enabled David Drummond to implement some 'democratic' reforms. Then his successor, Clive Evatt, attempted, less successfully, to implant elements of 'progressive' education' in the schools. A third minister, Bob Heffron, attempted between 1946 and 1952 to incorporate education into current efforts to construct a democratic welfare state. But the post0-war situation was adversely affected by rapidly increasing

primary school enrolments. About 1953 the rising tide of enrolments reached secondary schools, leading to changes which seemed to harmonise with the progressive ideal of 'secondary education for all'. The problems of the secondary school restructure were resolved not by a minister of the crown but by the Director-General of Education, H. S. Wyndham. In the whole period the very strong Teachers' Federation was also exerting pressure, often successfully, on the course of change in NSW education.

These policy makers were confronted with a tripartite problem: was their job to ***reform*** NSW education on democratic (i.e. equality of opportunity) or even progressive (i.e. child-centred curriculum, activity methods) lines? Or was the task to ***repair*** the damages of economic depression and war? Or, as was so often the case, was the principal task to ***respond*** in pragmatic fashion to immediate pressures (such as the demand for a more vocational curriculum in the 1930s or the growth of the school population after 1946)?

The Policy Makers

Until the late 1980s it was rare for ministers for education to take the lead in reforming education. This made David Drummond, and to a lesser degree Clive Evatt, distinctive figures. In the 1980s the Labor minister, Rod Cavalier and his successor, the Liberal Party's Terry Metherell (1988-1990), put an imprint on New South Wales education. Between 1995 and 2005 the Labor premier, Bob Carr, was almost as assertive in education policy as Metherell.

Apart from the intermittent intervention of ministers for education, policy was also responsive to a number of other disparate authorities. The major player was traditionally the Director of Education (elevated to the status of Director-General in 1945), supported by the Head Office of the Department of Education. A strong corps of inspectors acted as the eyes and ears of the Director-General. Two of the most outstanding Departmental Heads were Peter Board (Director, 1905-22) and Harold Wyndham (Director-General, 1952-68). It is significant that since the late 1980s in all Australian states the policy-making role of the Permanent Heads became minimal.

The influence of teachers' unions on education policy has also been significant. Following the New Education Fellowship conference of 1937 the New South Wales Teachers' Federation organised a 'Conference on Education for a Progressive, Democratic Australia'. Its

main thrust was to arouse public support for material reforms. The influence of the Teachers' Federation on policy increased following Labor's victory in the 1941 elections. The government's decision to make union membership compulsory for teachers and other public servants increased the Federation's membership and therefore its finances. Communists soon rose to power within the Federation, and in December 1945 one of their number, Sam Lewis, was elected president. Communist influence weakened after 1952, although the Federation continued to adopt a radical stance on many issues. Since the bulk of the members were primary teachers their interests often dominated Federation policy.[1]

Other important players in shaping education policy were the Public Service Board, which negotiated salary agreements with the Teachers' Federation, and the Department of Public Works which was responsible for buildings and equipment. Treasury's allocation of funds was often crucial in determining priorities. Occasionally major policy decisions also emanated from the Premier's Department. In contemporary Australia neither state ministers for education nor directors-general of state education departments appear to exercise much influence on shaping education policy. Instead, the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and his Deputy, the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, appear to have assumed the reigns of power

Democratic Humanist-Realist Education

In 1937, the educational landscape remained, in essentials, that which had been established at the beginning of the century; it would survive for another thirty years. The educational establishment of the early 1900s was partly based on the Knibbs-Turner reports on primary education (1903), secondary education (1904), and agricultural, commercial, industrial and technical education (1905); but it was a much briefer and more readable report by Inspector Peter Board, published by the Education Department in 1903, which generated the basic reform agenda. Two years later Board became the first Director of Education.

The great reforms of 1904-1916 were hailed as an 'educational renaissance'. A significant degree of 'equality of educational opportunity' was achieved through an 'educational ladder' linking bush schools and primary schools to high schools, which in turn opened a path to the university or the teachers' college. Three important changes which facilitated greater educational opportunity included the abolition of school fees, a simplified examination system, and the provision of a

limited number of bursaries and scholarships, supplemented by a generous supply of university 'exhibitions' and teachers' college training scholarships. A subsidiary ladder linked primary schooling to junior technical or home science schools, thereafter often leading to apprenticeships and technical college courses.

A broad primary school curriculum provided a career open to talent, though most pupils left at the minimum leaving age of 14. The curriculum is best described as a humanist-realist compromise. Focusing on both the human and the natural world, it consisted of some seven subjects, with English (language and literature), mathematics, history and geography the dominant ones. In the primary school nature study was included as a 'realist' subject. Physical training and team sports were intended to strengthen both the body and the mind. No schooling was complete without moral and religious instruction. In government primary schools the teacher took the class for non-denominational scripture lessons and visiting clergymen provided denominational instruction for Church of England, Presbyterian and Methodist children; in secondary schools religious instruction was provided only by visiting clergy. Catholic instructors rarely entered state schools; committed Catholics were expected to attend Catholic schools. The emphasis on literature and history served to provide moral values and citizenship education, and to help the transmission of the nation's cultural heritage.

Two prime objectives of education were identified in the Knibbs-Turner *Report on Primary Education in New South Wales*: 'The supreme aim of education is the development of human character, the cultivation of the body and mind being really ancillary and secondary thereto. The second and subordinate purpose of education is to call into exercise the power of independent thought, and to supply information which shall be at once cultural and useful'. After Board became Director of Education he reissued the 1904 primary school syllabus with a Preface which presented a forthright statement of the new philosophy of education.

> The school aims at giving to its pupils the moral and physical training and the mental equipment by which they may qualify themselves to meet the demands of adult life with respect to themselves, the family, society and the State. By its influence upon character it should cultivate habits of thought and action that will contribute both to successful work and to upright conduct, and, by the kind of instruction it imparts, it should prepare the pupils for taking up the practical duties of life and give them

> tastes and interests that will lead to activities beneficial both to themselves and to the community.

At the end of primary school a Qualifying Certificate examination selected students for entry into high schools and super-primary schools; it also served to allocate bursaries. In the secondary school an Intermediate Certificate examination was taken after the first two years (in 1919 this stage was extended to three years). Those who did not leave after the Intermediate could sit for the Leaving Certificate examination two years later. These examinations strengthened the liberal humanist-realist curriculum, usually consisting of seven subjects: Latin, English, mathematics, history (or geography), French (or German), science (physics and/or chemistry), and physical education. But it is fair to say that in New South Wales, as in Australia in general, 'Fair Average Quality' standards (a phrase used in the grading of wheat) was the mode from the 1910s to the 1960s. Victoria came closest to imitating the English system of extremes of excellence and mediocrity in school standards.

The state government also increased financial grants to the University of Sydney, then the only university in the state, thereby facilitating the establishment of departments of veterinary science, agriculture, economics and commerce, botany, and organic and applied chemistry. Previously the university, had catered for the traditionally 'learned professions' of medicine and law. Now it also provided for the new middle-class professions. The university also recognised Leaving Certificate results for the purposes of matriculation. Between 1909 and 1914 the number of university students increased from 1274 to 1674.

The arrival of Progressive Education

The first ideological challenge to the established order in education came as the Great Depression eased. Interest in progressive education received a boost in August-September 1937 when the New Education Fellowship, an English advocate of that educational philosophy, brought 21 overseas educationists to speak at its international conference in Australia. Sessions were held in each Australian capital city, the organisational arrangements for which, were largely in the hands of the Australian Council for Educational Research.[2]

The child-centred schooling and activity methods of teaching favoured by the progressives necessitated the abolition or diminution of

external examinations, a more relaxed approach to the curriculum, and more freedom for teachers. Many advocates of progressive education were dubious of special provision for the intellectually gifted. Their opposition to examinations, enthusiasm for projects or activity work, support for a child-centred rather than subject-centred curriculum, and their preference for social studies over history and geography, also implied a distrust of special provision for the intellectually gifted. If, however, the term 'gifted' was broadened to cover the arts, drama and music, the progressives were more sympathetic.[3]

One should perhaps refer to the original version of progressive education as 'classical', to contrast it with a new version which became powerful after 1967, which might be designated as neo-progressive. The original concept of progressive education retained liberal humanist values such as the building of character. The neo-progressives were associated with such concepts as 'open education', which can be interpreted in four or five different ways. They eschew the inculcation of traditional liberal humanist morality, preferring what they termed 'moral autonomy'.

Although academic educationists were few in number they occasionally contributed to educational debate. R. G. Staines, a lecturer at Sydney Teachers' College, wrote articles in the college publication, *The Forum of Education*, favouring progressive education. In 1943 he enthusiastically commended new teaching methods to replace what he called current inefficient memorization practices. In 1946 he again strongly advocated activity techniques, which would arouse pupils to strive towards an infinite variety of goals and widen the opportunities for teachers to achieve educational objectives.[4]

Between 1943 and 1946, the Australian Council for Educational Research, located in Melbourne, published a series of 11 pamphlets on *The Future of Education.* Some of the authors favoured progressive education, others focused on democratisation. The first, *Education for Democracy*, by J. D. G. Medley, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, set the tone. Medley identified two vital policies: real equality of opportunity and the provision of practical lessons in co-operation. The second pamphlet, *A Plan for Australia*, written mainly by ACER staff, was more radical. Other pamphlets looked at *The Primary School*, *Education for Some*, and *Universities in Australia.* Other bodies also published books or pamphlets on educational problems. A branch of the New Education Fellowship was also established in each state.[5]

But in a pioneering practical society like Australia with a strong working-class ethos, progressive education did not exert much appeal. It was still quite easy to make one's way in the world without much education. The centralised system of government schools, essential for the provision of effective education in sparsely settled rural areas, was a barrier to extensive experimentation with informal progressive methods. External examinations also impeded progressive education. Nor did the extensive Catholic school system favour 'progressive' theories. Catholic thinkers found the views of the philosophical fountainhead of progressive education, the American professor, John Dewey, repugnant. Bishop Matthew Beovich of Adelaide had the NEF progressives in mind when he remarked in 1938: 'So much has been said and written of late about educational reforms, and now and again by educational cranks who, by their startling statements, gain unmerited publicity, that Catholic teachers are inclined to hasten slowly'.[6] Indeed, the large size of many Catholic classes, their strong emphasis on success at examinations, the hierarchical tendency in the Church, and the often limited training of the teaching orders, would have made the progressive curriculum and methods difficult to implement. Catholicism had its own educational philosophy.

Disputation over the way forward in education disenchanted some teachers, while some educationists feared Australia might be in danger of importing the turmoil in policy developing in England and the United States. The critique of progressivism emerging in America was also reaching Australia. While serving in the army I devoured I. L. Kandel's *The Cult of Uncertainty* (1943), an attack on the educational views of John Dewey. Kandel, who visited Australia in 1937-8 and wrote several books on Australian education, advocated liberal education for all American students, with skill-based vocational training only after they had been taught the cultural heritage they shared. This was not unlike arrangements in New South Wales in the first half of the twentieth century.

A Ministerial Enthusiast for Democratic Reform: David Drummond

The choice between democratised traditional education and progressive education found expression in two successive ministers, David Drummond and Clive Evatt. Unlike most ministers for public instruction, they held strong views on education.

David Drummond, Country Party minister for education from 1927 to 1930 and 1932 to 1941, was a Methodist, a denomination known for its social conscience. Drummond knew that only the government system could provide adequate education in country regions (though the Catholic system came close to doing so). Drummond had been educated in state schools and shared Australian democracy's commitment to equality of educational opportunity. He was driven by two powerful concerns: improvement of education in country districts and reform of technical education. To widen opportunities for country children (and to make financial savings) he ensured that junior rural, technical, commercial and domestic science schools in country regions steadily merged with academic secondary schools. But even in 1945 one-teacher schools, almost all in isolated rural areas, still made up 63 per cent of the 2600 government schools in New South Wales.

The economic depression of the 1930s caused a fall in the birthrate and after 1931 primary school enrolments fell almost continuously until 1946. On the other hand, the economic crisis encouraged pupils in post-primary and secondary schools to stay longer, the numbers rising, with occasional fluctuations, until 1944. Many of those who stayed on were interested in vocational subjects. Accordingly, the Board of Examiners, which had been set up in 1912, was replaced in 1936 by a Board of Secondary School Studies with a broader membership; it widened the range of subjects which could be taken at the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations.

In 1938 the Primary Final examination, taken by pupils seeking admission to high schools and marked externally, was replaced in country districts by a 'composite mark' based on an intelligence test and assessment of work in Sixth Class English and mathematics. In Sydney, Parramatta and Newcastle an external High School Entrance Examination selected applicants for high, intermediate high and junior high schools and for those seeking bursaries. In 1943 the High School Entrance Examination was abandoned in metropolitan areas, being replaced by the composite mark system.

Under Drummond several new technical colleges were also established between 1937 and 1939.[7] The Child Welfare Act of December 1939 lowered the compulsory age for commencing school from seven years to six; this change was nominal, since most children started at age 5. The Act also made licensing of pre-schools mandatory. The Youth Welfare Act of 1940 raised the minimum leaving age from 14 to 15 in three annual stages between 1941 and 1943. The minister

argued that this would improve the physical, mental and industrial development of youth but that it would also require 'a more complete and diversified education'.[8]

Clive Evatt: An Erratic Exponent of Progressivism

The NSW elections of May 1941 were marked by unusually large political support for educational reform. The United Australia Party-Country Party government stood on its impressive education record, but Labor promised it could do better. Having won power Labor mounted a major education debate in parliament in November 1941, resolving that 'There is immediate need for a reconstruction of the State education system with a view to providing a more modern programme and more adequate facilities for education in a democratic community'. Their purpose was partly to encourage the new minister, Clive Evatt, and partly to diminish David Drummond's reputation. (In 1933 Evatt had successfully defended a communist teacher whom Drummond wished to penalise after she had praised the Soviet Union following a visit there.).[9]

The advent of Clive Evatt as Minister for Education produced changes. He was a colourful barrister and the brother of the federal politician, H. V. Evatt. He was also one of the few non-Catholics in cabinet. Since the 1880 Act ending state aid to Church schools and the simultaneous creation of a rival Catholic system, it was an unwritten law that no Catholic could be minister for education. The Teachers' Federation, now under radical leadership, was exuberant at his appointment. But everyone was due for a shock.

Clive Evatt added to his reputation for erratic behaviour on a visit to Newcastle Girls' High in September 1941. Telling the pupils 'I regard you as children of one large family', he invited them to 'Call me daddy'. He then underlined his parental role by riding a bicycle around the playground.[10]

Without consulting the Teachers' Federation Evatt abolished corporal punishment. With Federation support, in 1942 he proposed to abolish inspection during the war and to abolish efficiency marks. The Director of Education, J. G. McKenzie, resisted and a compromise inspection system was introduced.[11] In 1943 Evatt called for, and for a while obtained, the abolition of homework. 'The pupil should not have to learn at home what he should learn at school', he said. For some parents this implied a reduction in the role of the family in education.[12]

The changes to the external examination system authorised under Drummond led to the abandonment of the High School Entrance Examination in Sydney and Newcastle in 1943. Allocation of pupils to high schools was now based on a co-ordinate or composite mark, based on the pupil's intelligence quotient and 'scale score' (his/her class-work in English and mathematics). In September 1943, Evatt also announced that the Intermediate Certificate would become an internal school examination. But Cabinet, now alarmed at the Minister's impetuosity, intervened. In 1944 the Intermediate examination was made partially internal. A candidate had to sit for the public (i.e. external) examination in three subjects, one of which was English, and reach a satisfactory standard in four subjects assessed internally. The minimum number of subjects was cut to six and a single grade of pass was introduced. In 1941 the maximum number of subjects to be taken at the Leaving Certificate examination was cut from ten to eight (i.e. 5 subjects with 3 at honours level or 6 subjects with 2 at honours level).

Another change, though not of Evatt's instigation, came from the revised matriculation requirements introduced by Sydney University in November 1944. These required a pass in five subjects taken from three of five lists and removed the compulsion to include a foreign language and mathematics. Mathematics retained its popularity, but enrolments in Latin and French declined rapidly. The proportion of Leaving Certificate candidates taking history also dropped from 67 per cent in 1940 to 53 per cent in 1941 and 43 per cent in 1943.[13]

Social studies entered the junior secondary curriculum in 1944. A syllabus had been in preparation since 1938, but its content became a matter of dispute. The Teachers' Federation favoured a more radical approach than the Board of Secondary School Studies. Clive Evatt solved the matter by allowing the Board to produced one course (Course A) and the Federation to produce an alternative (Course B). Teachers could choose between the two. In 1938, 91 per cent of candidates took history at the Intermediate Certificate level. By 1943 this had fallen to 74 per cent. In 1946 64 per cent of candidates for the Intermediate Certificate took history and 10 per cent took social studies.[14]

By June 1944 Evatt's behaviour had proved too much for cabinet, the Education Department, and the Teachers' Federation. His friendship with a Queensland communist parliamentarian, F. W. Paterson, was another reason for his fall from favour. He was demoted, becoming an assistant minister.[15]

While the advocates of progressive education favoured the abolition of external examinations and the introduction of social studies, other factors also contributed to reform. Administrators saw reducing examinations as a means of saving money. The entry of more lower ability pupils into high schools and their retention to the new minimum leaving age of 15 necessitated changes to the curriculum. The merger of disparate schools in rural districts also encouraged change in both the curriculum and teaching methods in previously strongly academic institutions.

Heffron Presides over Post-War Reconstruction

R. J. Heffron, Minister for Education from 1944 to 1960, had no specific policies he wished to impose. Unlike Drummond or Evatt he had no distinctive views on the curriculum or teaching methods. He simply shared the widespread optimism for change. When peace came in September 1945 the nation turned to the creation of a better social order. Education, together with health and other social services, was an essential element in the construction of a welfare state. In many other western democratic countries the 1939-45 war had also produced a strong demand for radical reform in education. Common objectives included the raising of the school leaving age, expansion of secondary schooling, promotion of technical and vocational training, and wider entry to higher education.[16]

But other equally pressing issues included the need to repair the neglect of school buildings and restore the size of the teaching force, both of which had suffered in the period of intense mobilisation. To make matters worse, the rise in the birthrate which started in 1941 led to increased enrolments from 1946 onwards, initially in infant classes and later in primary. The growth of enrolments also intensified with the assisted immigration program launched in 1947. The consequent higher demand for teachers led to the expansion of teacher training. The expanding economy – the start of a long, thirty-year boom – also promoted the growth of technical training, but education had to compete for funds and materials with other segments of the welfare state.

In November 1945, Heffron, told parliament: 'We must educate or perish. The totalitarian nations taught us that the education of youth is far more potent than any other influence in national affairs'. Whether this was true or not, a strong thrust towards 'education for democracy'

was to enhance access to schooling. Some critics might also claim that it adversely affected the quality of education in New South Wales.[17]

A year later, in a book optimistically titled *To-morrow is Theirs: The Present and Future of Education in N.S.W*, dedicated to 'the Parent of to-day, the Guardian of to-morrow', Heffron detailed the four types of schools aided or controlled by the government: nursery, infant, primary and secondary. The government provided free milk each morning for children in kindergarten schools and for about 100,000 children in 350 infant and primary schools, including many metropolitan non-departmental schools. But this was a by-product of the expanding welfare state rather than an educational revolution. Heffron identified the practical improvements being planned but had little to say about the principles underlying policy.[18]

Urgently needed repair work on government schools had to compete with the massive postwar housing schemes which were devouring most of the available labour and materials. The new housing schemes, creating new suburbs, also exacerbated the demand for new schools. The Department of Education provided many new buildings and, as an interim measure, imported aluminium-clad prefabricated classrooms from Britain and stepped up the construction of temporary portable timber classrooms. The first prefabricated buildings arrived in 1950. They proved rather unsuited to the Australian climate; the multiplicity of windows, desirable in cloudy Britain, were less appropriate to sunny Australia. Maintenance costs were also higher than anticipated.[19]

The enhanced demand for teachers, first in infant schools and classes, then in primary schools, required an expansion of the teaching service. This was made difficult because the low birth-rate during the 1930s had reduced the reservoir of potential teachers, but teaching was becoming a more attractive profession. Salary agreements between the Teachers' Federation and the Public Service Board in 1946 and again in 1949 gave government teachers large salary increases; however, women teachers continued to receive only four-fifths of the male rate of pay. A further advance was the repeal in 1947 of legislation enacted during the depression years which removed married women from the permanent staff, thus depriving them of superannuation and the possibility of promotion. From 1948 female teachers or lecturers were allowed to continue teaching after marriage without loss of status, rights or salary.[20]

New training colleges opened at Balmain, Sydney, in 1946, Wagga in 1947, Newcastle in 1949, and Bathurst in 1951. The Labor government

ensured that the four new colleges were all in Labor electorates. Subsequently, colleges were opened at Paddington (1958) and Wollongong (1962). In harmony with the positive outlook of the times, the Newcastle College's emblem showed the burning torch of learning, with the motto *Ad Meliorem Mundum*: Towards a Better World.

Some commentators wavered between innovative and traditional education. In June 1941 Eric Ashby, the English-born professor of botany at Sydney University, urged reforms to educate children for an insecure rather than stable world. In 1942 he wanted to exclude children not fit for study from the two external secondary school examinations, which he believed should be internally assessed. In 1941 and again in 1946 he argued that universities should raise their entrance standards and age of entry. This would limit the number of students they had to accept. He believed that a university education was not a right to which all Australians were entitled.[21]

Non-Government Schools

How did non-government schools react to policy changes in the government sector? Their response was qualified by the fact that they used the same syllabuses and examination systems as government schools. Apart from religious instruction, their curricula were similar. In 1950, 75.5 per cent of pupils in New South Wales attended the 2578 government schools, slightly more than 20 per cent attended the 593 Catholic schools; 2 per cent attended the 42 Church of England schools, while 0.7 and 0.4 and 0.1 per cent attended 12 Presbyterian, 5 Methodist and 9 Seventh-Day Adventist schools. Slightly more than 1 per cent attended non-denominational schools.[22]

Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist schools had a lower proportion of primary pupils than public or Catholic schools, as shown below:

State	78
Catholic	77
Church of England	51
Presbyterian	43
Methodist	42
Seventh-Day Adventist	63
Undenominational	70

The number of teachers of each sex approached a balance in government and Seventh Day Adventist schools, but in the other non-government schools females predominated. In Catholic primary schools teaching nuns numbered 2629; brothers or priests in secondary schools numbered 642. Because the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church had more secondary schools for girls than for boys women teachers outnumbered men.[23]

The Catholic school system shared the pressures of rising enrolments, because of the high birth-rate amongst Catholics and the large number of Catholic migrants coming from Europe. Catholic schools relied on the teaching orders and on some teaching priests; but classes were larger than in state schools.

The Church of England maintained a few primary schools and along with the Presbyterians and Methodists provided a limited number of collegiate schools for boys and for girls. These had smaller classes than Catholic or state secondary schools. These three denominations were content to let the bulk of their adherents attend state schools.[24] Many Church of England, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic corporate colleges were clustered in Sydney. The great strength of the government high schools in rural New South Wales discouraged the establishment Anglican and other Protestant colleges outside the metropolis. Armidale was the only major centre outside metropolitan Sydney with mostly collegiate boarding schools.

As we have noted, after the NEF conference of 1937 the Catholic Bishop of Adelaide, Beovich, rejected the ideas of progressive education. When Clive Evatt was exploring the advantages of progressive pedagogy Father N. Hehir, Rector of Studies at the Catholic boys' college, St Ignatius, (Riverview, Sydney), discussed the changes which might happen after the war.

> It is possible that very little change would be made by us in the general course offered by the College. This course is a fruit of three centuries of work. It was called originally 'a liberal human education', which meant that it was conceived as eminently suited to the development of a truly free man.

He opposed the American multipurpose school. 'We are not likely to adopt the theory that one can be said to educate a man when one merely trains his hand or eye.'[25]

In the 1920s and 1930s a number of Australian schools, mainly girls' colleges, experimented with an American progressive scheme, the Dalton plan. Ascham School (undenominational girls' school), the Presbyterian Ladies College, Darlington School, and Turramurra College in Sydney all introduced, often in modified form, the Dalton Plan. This required individualised learning rather than class teaching. Each student worked on an assignment to be handed in each week or even fortnight. (Ascham still uses the modified Dalton Plan).[26]

The Rev. C. T. Parkinson, headmaster of The King's School, Parramatta, became president of the State branch of the New Education Fellowship and proposed in September 1938 to introduce progressive education in this Church of England school. But the staff and parents objected, enrolments fell, and Parkinson resigned in January 1938.[27]

In the 1950s two historians of non-state schools wrote assessments of their condition. In his definitive history of Catholic education in Australia, Brother Ronald Fogarty saw the Catholic system as the state's *de facto* partner, bringing great satisfaction not only to Catholicism but to society as a whole, 'buttressing by its relative independence a precarious pluralism, enriching by its insistence on ultimate values an age of spiritual impoverishment'. C. E. W. Bean's high-minded account of the independent and other corporate boys' schools of Australia boldly depicted them as moulding the character of boys in what the great founders of such schools saw as the best 'tradition of our people and of humanity', providing a stress 'on the humanities, on understanding and tolerance, on self-knowledge and self-control, on service'.[28]

Not all headmasters were so confident. The new headmaster of Newcastle Boys' Grammar School, L. N. Allen, told the local Anglican Synod that 1950 had been extremely vital, for three reasons:

> … firstly, the complete and well-deserved survey of the financial history of the school inaugurated by Synod; secondly, the impact of a continuous rise in prices on the economy of the school, and the method adopted to absorb and deal with this impact; and thirdly, the recrudescence of the old question of the *raison d'etre* of such schools in the modern Australian community.[29]

The new democratic spirit was sowing doubts about the validity of the independent schools. By contrast, the headmistress of Newcastle Girls' Grammar School regarded her school's finances, academic work,

educational aims and enrolments as satisfactory.[30] Though she did not admit it, her school was outclassed by Newcastle Girls' High School, one of the academically best-performing public high schools in the State.

The Welfare State Assists Handicapped Students

The zeal for improvement resulted in a better deal for previously neglected groups: the handicapped, Aboriginal students, students in remote areas, and migrant children.

As early as 1932 Opportunity C classes had been founded for mentally superior primary school pupils. Special classes and special schools for handicapped children were foreshadowed when in 1940 the Department opened an Educational Clinic at Head Office 'for children with complex learning difficulties' beyond the capacity of school counsellors. Referrals were made by school principals, school counsellors, Health Department officers, and parents. Children were given individual tests of ability and attainments, and schools were notified of suggested remedial programmes. The first clinic in a country area opened in Newcastle in 1952; others opened later at Canberra, Parramatta and Wollongong.

From 1946 the Department permitted deaf children with a hearing aid to enrol in infants classes. In March 1948 it established eight Opportunity D classes, each consisting of up to ten deaf pupils, in primary schools.[31] The implementation in January 1948 of the 1944 legislation on blind and infirm children led to a significant expansion of special schools. By 1950 there were 33 special schools in operation.

The Catholic Church maintained two residential schools for deaf children, one for boys at Castle Hill, Sydney, and one for girls at Waratah, Newcastle. It also had two residential schools for blind and partially-sighted children at Wahroonga, Sydney. New approaches to the teaching of the deaf were signalled when in 1948 the Newcastle school changed its name. Under a new principal, Sister Walsh, the non-oral inference of the 'Deaf and Dumb Institution' was replaced by the less conclusive 'School for Deaf Girls'. Alongside the older manual method (sign language) attempts were being made at oral methods to encourage the use of speech. In 1948 a more modern teaching technique, the Fitzgerald Key for development of written language, was introduced into the Catholic schools for the deaf.[32]

For many years children with physical disabilities could obtain education through the Correspondence School. In 1946, 208 of the 5210

children taking primary courses were handicapped, as were 80 of the 667 taking secondary courses. This compared favourably with Victoria, where 164 pupils with physical disabilities were taking primary courses and 25 were taking secondary, and Queensland, which had 183 such pupils in primary courses and six in secondary.[33]

Attempts to Reform Aboriginal Schooling

By June 1944 the number of 'full blood' Aborigines in New South Wales had fallen to 594, but the number of 'half-castes' had grown to 10,022. Only 40 full-blood and 505 half-caste Aborigines were nomadic.[34] At the end of the 1930s the Department of Education had some 40 Aboriginal schools, mostly in sub-standard buildings. Some Aboriginal Reserves also had Mission Schools. These were staffed by untrained teachers who only taught up to Third Grade level until the syllabus was extended to Fourth Grade in 1940. In 1937 David Drummond echoed the widespread opposition in rural areas to Aborigines attending public schools in a ministerial memorandum which stated: 'It is desirable that where a number of aboriginal children are attending the school they should be segregated from the ordinary school pupils and provided with education in a school set apart for the purpose preferably at an aboriginal settlement'.[35] One of Clive Evatt's innovations was to reinforce the right of Aboriginal children to attend public schools, but implementation was left to the steadier hand of his successor, Bob Heffron. In October 1944 the NSW *Education Gazette* advised teachers that Aboriginal children were to be admitted to an ordinary public school 'notwithstanding the existence of any special school for Aborigines in the district, or any decision for general exclusion of Aborigines from the public school concerned'. From 1946 the production of a medical certificate stating that the Aboriginal child was generally healthy and clean gave unexempted children admission to state schools. Despite some upgrading in the quality of education of Aboriginal children, it continued to be sub-standard. It was often interrupted by the migratory habits of Aboriginal families as well as by ill-health, and many children continued to leave school at age 14 functionally illiterate.[36]

Improving Schooling in Isolated Areas

The small one-teacher school had been a characteristic of Australian education throughout the nineteenth century. For many country

children the horse was the most common way of getting to school. In 1904, in an effort to reduce the number of poorly-taught and poorly-maintained one-teacher schools, the NSW Department had introduced a subsidy scheme for conveyances (horse-drawn vehicles and, later, buses) to bring children to more centrally-located schools. Between 1910 and 1945 the number of one-teacher schools fell from 2100 to 1650 and the number of pupils being conveyed rose to approximately 5000.[37]

In 1943-46 a Commonwealth body, the Australian Rural Reconstruction Commission, submitted ten reports, the last two of which made proposals for educational change. The Commission wanted to see the teaching of rural skills in small one-teacher schools and the creation of agricultural secondary schools in local towns. It was disappointed that many parents favoured the existing 'cultural' curriculum because it offered their children the chance of escaping from the farm. Many local communities valued their one-teacher school as the sole 'centre of interest' in the neighbourhood. One of the Commissioners, S. M. Wadham, Professor of Agriculture at Melbourne University, told a NSW administrator, perhaps unfairly, that as regards rural education the state was the most backward in Australia.[38]

But education policy was not a Commonwealth responsibility. In New South Wales better roads, improved buses, more generous subsidies, and greater educational expectations, as well as a drift of population to towns and cities, brought a decline in the number of small schools. Until 1950 the Department paid seventy-five per cent of the cost of conveying country children to school by bus. Thereafter free transport was provided. The 1450 small schools still made up 57 per cent of the 2548 government schools, and over 20,000 pupils were conveyed daily to schools.[39]

One member of the pioneer 1949 session of Newcastle Teachers' College recalled his first appointment to a small school. Notified that he was 'teacher-in-charge – Maree River via Kempsey', Ron Cox disembarked bleary-eyed at Kempsey Railway Station early one morning in late January 1951. After enquiring at a newsagency how to reach Maree River school to no avail, he ultimately located a taxi driver who said he would take him to a point near a flooded river.

> I couldn't believe my eyes. This was a school – my school. There, behind a sadly leaning wire fence it stood –A building of sorts, made of fibro, dirty grey up to half way, which I realised later was the height of the last flood. Most of the windows were broken. It stood in a field of paspalum

> grass at least three feet high, and further away were two smaller leaning structures which I guessed must be "the dunnies" or cesspits about which we'd heard in [college] lectures.[40]

A laconic farmer led Cox to a boat and after about fifteen minutes they arrived at his boarding house. His room contained a bed, a rudimentary dressing table and a wardrobe. There was lino on the floor. The walls were unpainted fibro, and the roof was unlined. Washing facilities were provided outside by a dish on a stand. Bath night was on Saturday, in a large tub in front of the fire. The teacher had first turn. The pupils provided no trouble. The challenge lay in the living conditions and the dilapidated state of the school. But times were changing. One-teacher schools were steadily being closed.[41]

Educating Migrant Children

Following the inception of large-scale assisted immigration in 1947, migrant camps were established. One of the largest, the Greta Migrant Camp in the Hunter Valley, opened in 1949 with 1500 'Balts', representing some 12 nationalities. By 1951 the camp accommodated 7000 people. Before it closed in 1960 some hundred thousand residents had passed through it. English classes were held for adults, mostly women; the men were away working during the day. There were two camp schools for children, the Department of Education providing the teachers. Since many of the migrants were Catholics –Poles were particularly numerous –a Catholic school also existed from January 1950 to December 1959. It reached its peak attendance of 210 children in the mid-1950s.[42]

Teaching at Greta was a memorable experience. In 1951, having completed her two-year course at Newcastle Teachers' College, June Gibson, aged 19, was appointed to one of the two state schools. She lived in the camp, ate in the communal dining room ('The Mess') and washed in the 'ablution block'. The corrugated iron buildings were pleasant in summer but cold in winter.

> I'll never forget my first day of teaching. Standing before me were about 20 five and six year olds who didn't have one word of English. I tried marking the roll and not one child showed any recognition of my pronunciation of their names. Finally I resorted to singing "Twinkle, twinkle little star", with the appropriate actions and their laughing enthusiasm soon had me feeling confident about the challenge ahead.

> They learned English at an astounding rate (much quicker than I struggled to learn German).

Their school uniforms were unusual. 'Most of them had come from cold countries and almost every child was wearing gum boots and many of the boys leather pants'. The teacher used a schools radio programme, 'Creative Movement Through Music', conducted by Heather Gell. 'During the first few minutes she exhorted us to remove the children's shoes. Fifteen minutes into the lesson we were still trying to prise off the gum boots'.[43] Many of the Greta refugees found employment in the area, so that local public and Catholic schools had a significant number of pupils with a migrant background.

Relaxation of Examinations

The democratic spirit aroused by the recent war against totalitarian regimes, the new interest in progressive education, and the strong demand for adolescent labour encouraged relaxation of the examination system. But the new democratic spirit was not the only force producing changes in the examination system. The increasing number of candidates made external examinations more cumbersome to administer and more expensive. The relaxation had significant implications. The questions set in external examinations helped define the curriculum, teaching methods and standards, often more than official syllabuses and inspectorial comments. They also provided pupils with a motivation for work.

As pressure of numbers became a problem in primary schools, social promotion began to replace promotion on academic merit as measured in yearly class tests. A hint of change came in 1951 when in primary and super-primary schools the traditional term 'class' was replaced by the broader concept of 'grade'. Social promotion or automatic annual progression became the norm. However, in large schools the classes were graded on ability: better performing pupils were put in the A class, the less talented went into the B, and so on. Opportunity classes catered for both significantly retarded and highly talented pupils. Separation of the sexes may also have helped to sustain standards. While infant classes were co-educational, in large primary schools single-sex classes were the norm. The more rapid growth of maturity in girls than in boys may have helped their superior level of achievement.

When in 1944 the Intermediate Certificate examination at the end of Third Year secondary school became partly internal the number of subjects for which candidates could present themselves was cut to a minimum of six and a maximum of eight and the grading of passes into As and Bs was discontinued. Students had to sit for three papers externally, one of which had to be English. Passes were required in four subjects, at least two of which had to be external. In 1949 the examination became completely internal. The Board of Secondary School Studies ruled that pupils attending approved schools would be awarded the Intermediate Certificate on the recommendation of the principal. The candidates had to attain an acceptable standard in four subjects. Approved schools were Departmental schools and those recognised by the Bursary Endowment Board. Thus pupils in some Catholic and non-state schools still had to sit for an external Intermediate Certificate examination.[44]

As a result of internal assessment, Intermediate Certificate standards began to vary from school to school. The pass rate jumped from about 80 per cent of candidates in the 1940s to about 88 per cent in the 1950s. Not everybody was happy with these changes. In July 1950 the *Australian Teacher*, published by the Teachers' Guild of New South Wales, an association of teachers in private schools, complained that abandoning graded passes reflected a tendency towards 'levelling down' and mediocrity. The editor urged teachers to fight the national indifference to 'a job well done'. The greatness of a country, he wrote, is measured very largely by the calibre of its great men.[45]

The Department of Education, concerned at the disturbing repercussions of the new arrangements, announced in 1953 that it planned to reintroduce an external examination for the Intermediate Certificate. The Teachers' Federation vigorously opposed this and called for a general enquiry into secondary education. This was one factor leading to the establishment of the so-called Wyndham Committee of 1953.[46]

The Leaving Certificate at the end of Fifth Year, which the University accepted for matriculation purposes, also underwent some relaxation. In 1941 the Board of Secondary School Studies had reduced the number of subjects to be taken for the examination from a maximum of eight to five or six (covering not more than eight papers). In addition, it had increased the number of acceptable subjects, thus encouraging specialisation. It remained an external examination; the pass rate remained stable: 75 per cent in 1948, 74 per cent in 1951. However, the

stringency of this examination was relaxed when some exam papers increased their internal choice. The curriculum in the senior secondary school, and to some degree in the junior years, was affected by changes in the style of Leaving Certificate examination papers and by further changes in the university matriculation requirements in 1945-6 and 1948.

In the early 1940s matriculation candidates had to pass in four subjects, including three at the higher ('A') level. These subjects had to be chosen from four groups: (1) English; (2) mathematics; (3) one of seven ancient or modern languages; (4) one of mechanics, history, or eight science subjects (including geography). Entry into the faculties of Arts and Law required a pass in Latin. In 1945-46 and again in November 1948 the requirements were relaxed. A pass was now required in five subjects, bringing matriculation expectations closer to Leaving Certificate realities. There was also no longer any stipulation about the level of pass in any subject. English remained compulsory, but there were now five groups from which to choose the other four subjects. Special faculty requirements were also abolished, removing the compulsion to include a foreign language and mathematics to enter Arts, Science and some other faculties.

These changes had repercussions on the secondary school curriculum. Latin rapidly declined. Ancient history and economics were now grouped with modern history and grew in academic respectability. The acceptable modern languages, which in 1941 were restricted to French, German, Italian, Hebrew or Japanese, now also included Chinese, Russian and Dutch. The new arrangements encouraged specialisation in the secondary school.[47]

The Curriculum: Vocational, Liberal, Progressive?

The changing examination system was affecting the curriculum. Yet a centralised state system was cautious of new educational fashions. When in 1948 the Department of Education authorised a revision of the 1941 primary school curriculum it reiterated many traditional aims. To guide the committees revising individual syllabuses *The Education Gazette* listed eight objectives of the primary school: (1) Health; (2) Moral and spiritual heritage; (3) Character; (4) Social attitudes; (5) Civic heritage; (6) Thinking; (7) Knowledge and skills; (8) Appreciation and experience. The humanist ethos remained strong.

The new 1952 *Curriculum for Primary Schools*, a massive book of 523 pages, provided extensive guidance on the eight courses — Health and Physical Education, English, Social Studies and Scripture, Mathematics, Natural Science, Art, Handicraft and Needlework and Music. It incorporated several features favoured by progressives. By increasing the number of topics in various subjects it forced teachers to make choices. History and geography were incorporated into a new subject called social studies. Projects and central themes (interdisciplinary studies centring on child activity) were recommended. Standards were lowered in arithmetic; formal spelling lists were abolished. Teaching reading through the use of phonics was down-played in favour of the whole word ('look-and-say') method, and short-answer ('objective') tests rather than written answers were encouraged in the belief that this would make assessment more interesting to pupils.

Despite these changes the liberal humanist-realist curriculum survived. The remarks on social, health and character education in the preface to the *Curriculum* retained an emphasis on building character and transmitting the moral and civic heritage. Basic skills and knowledge had a strong place alongside appreciation and experience of culture in the narrow sense of music and art, although a new prominence was given to the health of the individual. The aims of the primary school remained consistent with those of the 1905 syllabus.

The liberal, humanist-realist compromise curriculum also survived in academic secondary schools. *In the junior years* this was revealed by the relative popularity of subjects at the 1946 Intermediate Certificate examination, although it must be remembered that many low ability pupils did not sit for this examination. Of the 39 subjects, English, being compulsory, was taken by all 19,811 candidates. Next came history, attracting 64 per cent of candidates. Mathematics I and II both scored about 51 per cent, combined physics and chemistry 48 per cent, while general mathematics attracted 46 per cent of candidates. The most popular 'utilitarian' subject was business principles, with 42 per cent, closely followed by a liberal study, French, with 41 per cent. There was an appreciable gap to geography, 37 per cent, followed by art, 28 per cent, and technical drawing, 22 per cent.[48]

As already noted, after the Intermediate Certificate examination became wholly internal in 1949, standards began to vary from school to school and the overall pass rate rose. Some schools introduced touches of progressive education in their junior secondary years. Between 30 and 50 per cent of pupils took social studies, introduced in 1944, instead of

history or geography. They were mainly lower ability pupils, though at some schools, such as Maitland Boys' High, the headmaster made social studies compulsory for all pupils in Years 1 to 3. Another 'progressive' doctrine, sex education, was introduced into Maitland Boys' High in 1951 and Newcastle Boys' High in 1952.[49]

N. R. Mearns, principal of Newcastle Boys' High from 1935 to 1944, believed that the school's task was to prepare boys for the professions or to give them skills relevant to local heavy industry, such as engineering, draughtsmanship and metallurgy. 'We do not try to keep boys at school', he stated in 1941. 'Our business is to see them in the work-a-day world.' When his successor, Harold Beard, took office the vocational drive was becoming blunted by full employment; this permitted him to favour the child-centred progressive concern with the individual. 'The modern educator', he said in 1949, 'tried to facilitate the natural growth and development of pupils'. The task was to focus on the boys' physical, mental, social and spiritual growth.[50]

Newcastle Girls' High School emphasised moulding of character rather than vocational proficiencies. The headmistress, Miss E. J. Read, told the girls in 1932 that they came to school 'in order that you may learn that certain standards exist, standards of conduct, of thought, of speech, of feeling'. A small commercial stream was introduced at the beginning of the War. In December 1941 Miss Read reported 'a rush to the commercial classes'. The new openings for women in the wartime labour market encouraged this. At the 1942 speech day the acting principal said that the world of the future would 'call for informed minds, for a sense of civic and social justice and a broad world outlook'.[51]

The increasing proportion of lower ability pupils entering secondary schools for whom Intermediate Certificate courses were unsuitable led the Department of Education to introduce an *Alternative Curriculum for Secondary Schools* in 1951. It encompassed English, social studies, history, geography, mathematics, science, physical education, music, crafts, art and biology.

In the senior secondary years the humanist-utilitarian curriculum also survived. At the 1946 Leaving Certificate examination 6717 candidates sat for English, the only compulsory subject. Second in popularity was French, with 52 per cent of candidates. Mathematics I, Mathematics II, and modern history all attracted about 49 per cent, with chemistry not far behind. Physics and general mathematics each attracted 37 per cent, followed by geography, with 32 per cent. Latin (still popular in Catholic

schools) had fallen to 18 per cent, while a new interest had manifested itself in economics, with 991 candidates or nearly 15 per cent of the total.[52]

Dubious Reforms in Technical Education

The technical education system was quite elaborate and highly respected. In 1948 Sydney Technical College and its suburban outposts had 37,935 students. The largest technical college outside the metropolitan area, in Newcastle, had 5,769 students. Third in size was Wollongong, with 1377, followed by Broken Hill with 1,035.[53] The courses were almost identical throughout the state. There were three groups of courses.

Diploma Courses provided for a professional career and were claimed to be approximately of the same standard as a degree course at the university. Entry was at Matriculation or Leaving Certificate standard. The courses were of five or six years' duration. Attendance was part-time, usually about ten hours per week. The award of a diploma of 'Associateship of Sydney Technical College' was made after three years practical experience. Ten diploma courses were on offer.

Trade Courses were intended to supplement experience gained in apprenticeships, and were usually of five years' duration. Admission was at Intermediate Certificate level. They were part-time courses of about 12 hours per fortnight. Six courses were on offer.

Certificate Courses, of which there were eight, covered subjects in which no apprenticeship or traineeship was usually required. These courses included women's handicrafts, home science, commerce, art and health inspection.[54]

Since 1913 relations between the Technical Education Branch and industry had been benign but not close. Drummond wanted to increase industry's involvement in both the financing and control of the technical college system. He started with Newcastle. In August 1935 the *Newcastle Morning Herald* launched an appeal for funds, headed by a donation of £5000 from the Broken Hill Propriety Company. A new Technical College Council was given responsibility for the trade schools at Maitland, Cessnock and Kurri Kurri. In 1936, after the BHP and associated companies provided a loan of £140,000, land was acquired at Tighes Hill, close to a conglomeration of metal factories. A new science building opened in 1938 and work commenced on a new mechanical engineering block. Sydney Technical College acquired similar

autonomy, though it never established the close relations with industry achieved in Newcastle. And it was not till 1940 that the Technical Education Act ratified these changes. The Labor Party was suspicious of control by industry and when it came to power in May 1941 it restored responsibility to the Department of Education.[55] Anxious to improve apprentices' conditions, Labor introduced daytime attendance in 1943. Henceforth the majority of apprentices attended technical college one day per fortnight and one evening per week.

A new momentum for development started in 1945 when the Councils of the Newcastle and Sydney Technical Colleges united to urge more autonomy for the Technical Education Branch within the Department of Education and the establishment of an Institute of Technology, though they said nothing about degrees. The Minister for Education, Heffron, came back from a visit to Great Britain impressed by the idea of an Institute of Technology which would confer degrees. This would leave Sydney Technical College with the advanced trade courses. In November 1945 he announced that the government intended to convert Sydney Technical College at Ultimo into an Institute of Technology granting its own degrees. Trades courses would be offered in suburban colleges. Country colleges would continue as they were. A Development Council for the Institute authorised the introduction in March 1948 of degree courses in civil, electrical, mechanical and mining engineering. The *Technical Education and NSW University of Technology Act*, implemented in July 1949, established a separate Department of Technical Education and set up not an Institute but a University of Technology.[56]

The Department of Technical Education had a total enrolment of 65,000 students and offered 230 courses. It provided 30 diploma courses, 64 trade courses, some post-trade courses, and nearly 100 special courses. Arthur Denning became the first Director of the Department. Autonomy enabled it to diversify and expand. In 1940 the Technical Education Branch spent £626,000; in 1950 the Department's expenditure had risen to £2,175,000, but the establishment of the University of Technology would soon deprive it of almost all its diploma courses![57]

Both the short-lived Institute and the University of Technology shared the site of the Sydney Technical College, an arrangement which lasted for five years. The director of the new University, Arthur Denning, was also the Director of the Department of Technical Education! But the University of Technology rapidly came under the

domination of J. P. Baxter, who arrived from Britain as Professor of Chemical Engineering in 1950. He became Deputy Director of the University in 1952 and Director in 1953. For Baxter, his staff, and his institution, the 1950s were to be a decade of upward social mobility.[58]

The Technical Education Act permitted the University of Technology to establish colleges anywhere in New South Wales and named three places specifically: Newcastle, Wollongong, and Broken Hill. The University anticipated that Newcastle Technical College, situated in the second largest city in the state, would be able to launch a degree course in 1950, but despite considerable publicity only sixteen potential students were forthcoming. Undeterred, the Council of the University of Technology established a Newcastle University College in December 1951. It was to use the fine buildings and facilities of the Technical College and the principal of the Technical College, Ralph Basden, was appointed first Warden of the University College. But was there a real demand for its courses?[59]

In Sydney, the University of Technology enrolled 46 students in 1948, 117 in 1949, and 251 in 1950. Clearly there was no major interest in its courses. But in 1951 enrolments jumped to 3924, when the Minister for Education permitted the University to conduct the Technical College diploma courses in those fields for which university degree courses existed. Thus it obtained some 3500 extra, mainly part-time, students. It also acquired nearly 500 teaching staff from the Department. The University required all students to take a Humanities course, such as English, History and Psychology, something which annoyed many former diploma students. In October 1958 the University of Technology was renamed the University of New South Wales. A year later the University abolished the diploma courses being offered on behalf of the Technical College.[60] Finally, in 1964 the Technical College reintroduced diploma courses.

These tortuous proceedings illustrate how academic empire-building weakened the provision of useful practical technical training. One of Heffron's few education ideas, polytechnics as in the UK, proved a damp squib. It was twenty years before its time, which arrived with the birth of the University of Technology, Sydney, in 1965.

The Uncertain Progress of Higher Education

The Commonwealth government made a major contribution to the democratic widening of access to tertiary education and training when it established the Commonwealth Financial Assistance Scheme in 1943,

providing scholarships for civilian students, and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme in 1944, giving ex-servicemen and women awards to attend universities, technical colleges and teachers' colleges.

Sydney University's democratic liberalisation of matriculation requirements in November 1944 and again in November 1948 produced no immediate decline in standards because of the presence of large numbers of older, mature ex-service students. But enrolments reached a peak in 1948, and thereafter the flow of ex-service students rapidly decreased. In March 1952 the *Sydney Morning Herald* predicted that enrolments would soon revive because of a new tendency to continue formal education. It noted that costs were rising in relation to income and Sydney University was finding difficulty in maintaining academic standards because of the 'insufficient grounding revealed by a large proportion of new students'. About 40 per cent had failed in the recent first year examinations. 'This poor showing [was] widely attributed to the amendment, under outside pressure, of the matriculation requirements by the University in 1944.'[61]

Professor R. B. Farrell, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, who in April 1952 delivered the first of a series of lectures celebrating the centenary of the university, agreed with the newspaper's assessment. 'Large numbers who present themselves for matriculation are incapable of writing a coherent English sentence and barely able to understand one.' The University's matriculation policy 'reveals little belief in the importance of the humanities in a balanced education'. Yet humanism obtained a brief reprieve in the universities, as in many schools. Thanks to the Murray Report of 1957, Commonwealth financial generosity initiated what some academics called a golden age in universities, lasting at least until the late 1960s.[62]

By the early 1950s Newcastle and its suburbs had a population of 140,000 while Maitland had 20,000 inhabitants. In all, a quarter of a million people lived within daily travelling distance of Newcastle. The city seemed ready to sustain institutions of higher education. Newcastle Teachers' College had opened in 1949; by 1954 it had over 300 students. The Central Newcastle Public Library moved to a new building in November 1952, while the Lake Macquarie Council began to expand the number of its libraries. In February 1952 the Newcastle branch of the State Conservatorium of Music opened in temporary buildings. This was the first extension of Conservatorium teaching on a permanent basis outside Sydney. By the end of 1952 local bodies had endowed

conservatorium scholarships to the value of £530. The 163 students enrolled at the beginning of the year had by December grown to 388.[63]

Undoubtedly, the times favoured expansion of higher education. From November 1951 the Commonwealth provided interim financial assistance to Australian universities. From 1953 the proportion of pupils staying on until the Leaving Certificate at the end of Fifth Year began to increase. Enrolments in universities, recently in decline, were rising. The Department of Education, facing a serious shortage of high school teachers, welcomed the possibility that future teachers of English, history, geography, French etc. might obtain a degree in Newcastle and then proceed to the local teachers' college for their professional training.

Simultaneously, with the granting in 1954 of autonomy to the New England University College of Sydney University, Arts courses commenced in the Newcastle College of the NSW University of Technology. Since the University had no Arts Faculty, the courses were to be supervised by the Arts Department of the newly-established University of New England. Another requirement attached to the University of New England's autonomy was that it offer correspondence courses, something Sydney University was not prepared to do. This arrangement would permit primary teachers stationed in rural areas to qualify as secondary school teachers.

Post-war enthusiasm for a better society ensured that adult education flourished despite the damage inflicted by the Teachers' Federation on the leading provider of adult education, the Workers' Educational Association.

Adult Education Still Strongly Liberal

On the eve of war in 1939 the Workers' Educational Association was the prime agent of adult education in New South Wales. Established some twenty-five years earlier, it offered liberal or general education as opposed to vocational training. It provided its own classes but most of its classes were conducted in association with the University of Sydney's Department of Tutorial Classes, which provided its own tutors. In 1938 the WEA also started a discussion group scheme to serve country areas across the State. In the late 1930s a number of academic disciples of the charismatic professor of philosophy, John Anderson, joined this department or became tutors in the WEA-Tutorial Classes condominium. Their dedication to free, critical enquiry led to a dispute which festered from 1942 to 1944. The communist-influenced leadership of the Teachers' Federation resented criticism of the Soviet Union,

particularly in a discussion course on 'Political Theories and Movements of Today' written by P. H. Partridge, a University lecturer and one of Anderson's outstanding students. The Labor Council and the Teachers' Federation disaffiliated from the WEA but the Secondary Teachers' Association (a branch of the Federation) voted in favour of affiliation. It also requested the government and trade unions to set up their own adult education agencies.[64] Following a conference on 'The Future of Adult Education' organized by the Workers' Educational Association, the government, in 1945, changed the advisory committee it had set up in 1941 into an Advisory Board for Adult Education and increased its funding for adult education generally.[65]

A rapid increase in the number of providers of adult education followed. *A Directory of Adult Education in N.S.W.*, published in 1945 by the Department of Tutorial Classes, adopting a broad interpretation of adult education, listed 15 official bodies (such as the Public Library of NSW), 33 voluntary associations (a varied group, led by the Workers' Educational Association and including the Young Women's Christian Association, the New Education Fellowship and the Henry Lawson Labour College), six drama societies, five churches each with subsidiary affiliated bodies (Church of England, the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches), four clubs (Rotary, Australian Rostrum, Penguin and Sydney Legacy) and 15 learned bodies, led by the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science. The strength of the voluntary associations was impressive.[66]

While the Workers' Educational Association remained a foremost defender of liberal education the growing number of providers concentrating on vocational or hobby and leisure classes reduced its dominance. The WEA's proportion of the state grant for adult education in New South Wales fell from 70 per cent to 29 per cent between 1941 and 1948. However, in most other states Workers' Educational Associations disappeared in the 1940s; the WEA in Tasmania gradually faded away in the 1950s. Only in South Australia and New South Wales did strong WEAs survive. While the WEA was committed to non-political, non-sectarian and non-partisan principles, its democratic structure and the dedication of some activist members made it a champion of liberal education. Amongst its distinctive leaders was W. H. C. ('Harry') Eddy, in the 1930s another outstanding student of Professor John Anderson.[67]

Harry Eddy, Senior Tutor of the Sydney University Department of Tutorial Classes for the Hunter Region from 1945 to 1954, put special emphasis on the provision of liberal studies, particularly literature, history, philosophy and economics. Eddy also exerted a powerful influence as a member of the Newcastle WEA Council, where he had several strong allies, notably Beryl Anderson, secretary of the Hunter WEA. The fact that the Department of Tutorial Classes and the WEA shared the same building assisted their co-operation.

A new participant, the Evening College, appeared in 1946. In 1945 the Department of Education abandoned its Evening Continuation Schools, first established in 1911; the growth of secondary education and the competing attractions of the post-war world made them obsolete. In their place the Department opened Evening Youth Colleges. To widen their appeal it changed the name to Evening Colleges two years later. Oriented towards adult non-vocational and leisure interests, they provided courses for public examinations and general courses in English, mathematics and science, commercial studies, and arts and crafts. A reduction in adult working hours had provided increased leisure and hence stimulated interest in courses with a personal orientation. Up to 1956 the courses were free. The Colleges were concentrated in the Sydney and Newcastle areas and met in public school buildings, usually high schools, the principal being a departmental teacher.

A Summing Up

This survey opened by identifying three possible pathways. Would the policymakers implement reform on democratic or even progressive educational aims? Would they be diverted towards repairing the damages of economic depression and war? Or would they respond in pragmatic fashion to broader pressures, such as the demand for a more vocational curriculum in the 1930s or the growth of the school population in the 1940s? We must conclude that while educational theories did exert deep-seated appeal and though a mild dose of progressive pedagogy was tasted in government primary schools in the 1950s, in general pragmatic solutions prevailed. Some of these, such as comprehensive high schools in the early 1950s, could be clothed in semi-progressive ideology.

Educational developments were influenced by at least four major factors: (1) the existence of a democratic political ideology, seeking to expand equality of opportunity but also, after 1945, to compensate for

the sacrifices of the recent war and of the 1930s depression; (2) experiments with progressive education in a society not yet ready for it; (3) the pressure of numbers in public and Catholic schools, at the secondary level in the 1930s, in infant and primary classes in the post-war years; (4) the beginnings of an economic boom destined to last for a decade and a half, which would bring high employment, thereby reducing for some but not all students the importance of examinations.

The smooth running of educational politics in New South Wales depended on close personal relationships between the minister and leaders of the Teachers' Federation. Apart from brief lapses, the Country Party minister Drummond enjoyed such a relationship. In his time the Federation leadership was still moderate. Evatt, like the Federation, was more radical; but ultimately they grew wary of the Minister's unpredictable progressivism. Heffron held no strong educational views, but the Federation was pleased to obtain improved wages and conditions.

Nor must we neglect the less formal but vital educational roles of other institutions, notably the family (reading to children, listening to children reading, teaching the alphabet, teaching numbers, supervising homework, inculcating moral standards and values), the Churches (religious morality, Sunday schools, youth clubs), the peer group, and radio. But this was an age before the powerful influence of television exercised a formidable influence, positive or negative, on education.

Democratic idealism began to wane with the outbreak of the Cold War about 1947. The victory of communism in Eastern Europe, the establishment of communist rule in China in 1949, and the Korean War of 1950-53 accentuated the darkening mood. At home the communist-instigated coal strike of June-August 1949 dispelled hopes of social cohesion, while the defeat of Labor in the December federal elections revealed a growing spirit of political conservativism.

An American advocate of progressive education who visited Australia in 1954, R. Freeman Butts of Teachers' College, Columbia University, concluded that neither parents' nor teachers' organizations nor the general public were interested in the exchange of ideas, in criticizing practices, or in theories. 'I miss a widespread feeling or ferment or dissatisfaction or criticism.' This was soon to change, but not in a direction favouring progressive education.[68]

By the mid-1950s the appeal of progressive education was waning; in America the Progressive Education Association collapsed. Technological competition with the Soviet Union encouraged a new

emphasis on mathematics and science. In New South Wales the revision of the 1952 primary school syllabus which started in 1957 was marked by a swing back to formal education; the basic elements of the liberal-democratic humanist tradition established in the opening years of the twentieth century were to survive until the late 1960s.

In the period 1937-1952 Australia was still primarily a practical, pioneering country, although the 1950s would bring profound economic and social changes, particularly as the growth of the white-collar, salaried middle-class accentuated the value of education for social advancement. But in the long-persisting pioneering phase, when many people did not need much education to rise in the world, most parents favoured a brief and practical education for their children. The practical and rural character of much of Australia ensured the survival of a centralised system of government-controlled public schools designed to ensure that country children could obtain an education comparable to that offered to children in the cities. This centralisation limited the freedom necessary for progressive education to gain ground but the war years encouraged democratic optimism and egalitarianism which, in turn, drove educational reform.

ENDNOTES

1. Bruce Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics: A history of organizations of Public School Teachers in New South Wales*, Brisbane, 1975, pp. 158, 162, 171.
2. W. F. Connell, *The Australian Council for Educational Research 1930-80*, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 103-108.
3. E. J. Braggett, *Education of Gifted and Talented Children: Australian Provision*, Canberra, 1985, pp. 12-13; Alan Barcan, "The Australian Tradition in the Education of Talented Children", *First National Conference on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children, Conference Papers*, Commonwealth Schools Commission, pp. 43-4. The conference was held at the University of Melbourne, 28-31, August 1983.
4. R. G. Staines, *The Forum of Education*, Vol. 2, 1943, p. 13. 'The Central Idea of Activity', *The Forum of Education*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1946, pp. 26-7.
5. Connell, *The Australian Council for Educational Research 1930-80*, pp. 143-7.
6. 'Catholic Education in Australia', in K. S. Cunningham, G. A. McIntyre and W. C. Radford (eds), *Review of Education in Australia, 1938*, Melbourne, 1939, p. 104.

7. Andrew Spaull, *Australian Education in the Second World War*, Brisbane, 1982, p. 232.
8. David Drummond, *NSW Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 28 November 1940.
9. Spaull, p. 168; Mitchell, pp. 115-117.
10. Referred to in the *Sunday Sun*, 22 March 1942; Winton Higgins and Duncan McIntyre, 'Call Me Daddy', in Ron Blair (ed.), *Hermes: Magazine of the University of Sydney*, 1965, p. 2.
11. Mitchell, p. 152; Matt Kennett, *The Teachers' Challenge: Professional Standards and Public Service*, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 97-8.
12. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 November 1943.
13. cf *NSW Department of Education Handbooks*, various years. L.C. figures also from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1943.
14. Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, pp. 165-6.
15. A. Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education in New South Wales*, Sydney, 1988, pp. 226-7, 231; cf. Winton Higgins and Duncan McIntyre, 'Call me Daddy', in Ron Blair (ed.), *Hermes*, 1965.
16. R. T. Fitzgerald, *Through a Rear Vision Mirror: Change and Education: A Perspective on the Seventies from the Forties*, Melbourne, 1975, p. 5.
17. *NSW Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, Vol. 92, 6 November 1945, pp. 932-3, cited R. T. Fitzgerald, *Through a Rear Vision Mirror*, p. 5.
18. R. J. Heffron, *To-Morrow is Theirs: The Present and Future of Education in New South Wales*, Sydney, 1946, pp. 21, 25, 28, 36.
19. Jan Burnswood and Jim Fletcher, *Sydney and the Bush: A Pictorial History of Education in New South Wales*, Sydney, 1980, pp. 212, 225; John P. Hughes, "Harold Wyndham and Educational Reform in Australia 1925-1968", *Education Research and Perspectives*, Vol. 29, No. 1, June 2002, pp. 95-6.
20. Matt Kennett, *The Teachers' Challenge*, pp. 108, 112.
21. Eric Ashby, *Challenge to Education*, Sydney, 1946, pp. 4-5, 17, 66, 86.
22. W. C. Radford, *The Non-Government Schools of Australia: A Descriptive and Statistical Account*, Melbourne, 1953, pp. 26, 54.
23. Radford, *The Non-Government Schools*, p. 31.
24. Radford, *The Non-Government Schools*, p. 56
25. *St Ignatius' Centennial 1880-1980*, p.119.
26. R. Petersen, 'Australian Progressive Schools. II Heirs of Homer Lane', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 14, No. 1, March 1970, p. 3.
27 'Parkinson, Chares Tasman (1886-1968)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition*, p. 1.
28. Br Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia 1806-1950*, Vol. II, Melbourne, 1959, p. 479; C. E. W. Bean, *Here, My Son: An Account of the Independent and Other Corporate Boys' Schools of Australia*, Sydney, 1950, p. 215.

29. *Year Book of the Diocese 1951*, p. 182 - Appendix VI, 'Report of the Church of England School for Boys, Morpeth'.
30. Report of Headmistress, 1950, in *Year Book of the Diocese of Newcastle 1951*, p. 182.
31. *Education Gazette*, October 1948; B. L. Crickmore, 'The Academic Education of Deaf Children in New South Wales', Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle, 2000, pp. 127-8, 132, 134.
32. Crickmore, 'The Academic Education of Deaf Children', pp. 141-2.
33. S. A. Rayner, *Correspondence Education in Australia and New Zealand*, Melbourne, 1949, pp. 28, 39.
34. *Year Book of Australia 1951*, p. 586.
35. He repeated this in the Legislative Assembly on 4 May 1943. James Miller, *Koori*, pp. 173, 177, 178.
36. cf Burnswoods and Fletcher, *Sydney and the Bush*, p. 240.
37. Burnswoods and Fletcher, *Sydney and the Bush*, pp. 183, 221
38. Troy Whitford and Don Boadle, 'Remaking the Country: Australia's Rural Reconstruction Commission, 1943-46', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 95. Part 1, June 2009, pp. 66-7.
39. R. M. McDonnell, W. C. Radford, P. M. Staurenghi (eds), *Review of Education in Australia 1948-1954*, Melbourne, 1956, p. 66; History Information Officer, Department of Education and Training, *Government Schools of NSW 1848-2003*, 2003, p. 13.
40. Ron Cox, 'The Fibro School by the Swamp', *Quadrant*, June 2008, p. 92.
41. Cox, 'The Fibro School', *Quadrant*, June 2008, pp. 93-4.
42. Val Randall (ed.), *Greta: The Town and It's {sic] People. 150 Years*, 1993; Christopher Keating, *Greta: A History of the Army Camp and Migrant Camp at Greta, New South Wales 1939-1960*, pp. 66-68.
43. June Porteus (nee Gibson), letter, 18 September 2004.
44. D. Waddington, W. C. Radford, J. A. Keats, *Review of Education in* Australia, *1940-1948*, Melbourne, 1950, pp. 114, 160.
45. Barcan, 'The External Examination and the Teaching of History', *Teaching History*, September 1964, pp. 7-8; leader, *Australian Teacher*, vol. 27, no. 2, July 1950, p. 2, cited Fitzgerald, *Through a Rear Vision Mirror*, p. 129.
46. John O'Brien, *A Divided Unity! Politics of NSW Teacher Militancy since 1945*, Sydney, 1987, p. 49.
47. *Calendar of the University of Sydney, 1941*, pp. 164-5; *Calendar 1945-1946*, pp. 142-143; Calendar 1948, pp. 185-7; Waddington, Radford, Keats, *Education in Australia, 1940-1948*, p. 115.
48. Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education*, pp. 236, 231.
49. *Two Centuries of Education*, p. 231; L. R. Wood, 'A Brief History of 90 Years', *Magpie*, 1974, p. 7; Audrey Armitage, *Newcastle High School: The First 75 Years*, 1983, pp. 128-9.

50. *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 6 December 1940, 4 June 1941; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 2 June 1949, both cited J. R. May, 'Gender, Memory and the Experience of Selective Secondary Schooling in Newcastle, New South Wales, from the 1930s to the 1950s', Ph. D. thesis, University of Newcastle, 2000, p. 294.
51. *Nobbys, The Journal of the Newcastle Girls' High School*, April 1932; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 18 December 1941, cited J. R. May, Ph.D. thesis, pp. 308-9.
52. *Two Centuries of Education*, p. 232.
53. *NSW Statistical Register 1948-49*, p. 570.
54. *Newcastle Technical College*, p. 5; Waddington, Radford and Keats, *Review of Education in Australia 1940-1948*, pp. 139-140.
55. Joan Cobb. *Sweet Road to Progress: The History of State Technical Education in New South Wales to 1949*, Sydney, 2000, pp. 310, 303, 298-9.
56. Heffron, *To-Morrow is Theirs*, p. 70; Cobb, *Sweet Road to Progress*, p. 358.
57. Cobb, pp. 358-9.
58. Joan Cobb, pp. 350-53; A. H. Willis, *The University of New South Wales: The Baxter Years*, Sydney, 1983, pp. 16-37, 46.
59. Willis, p. 128.
60. Willis, pp. 70, 72, 55, 77.
61. leader, 'University Standards in Danger', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 March 1952.
62. R. B. Farrell, 'The Faculty of Arts in the University and in the Community', *One Hundred Years of the Faculty of Arts*, Sydney, 1952, pp. 14, 20; cf E. Gross and J. S. Western (eds), *The End of a Golden Age: Higher Education in a Steady State*, Brisbane, 1981.
63. *Report of the Minister of Public Instruction for 1951*, p. 9; *Report of the Minister 1952*, p. 13; Barry Maitland and David Stafford, *Architecture Newcastle*, 1997, p. 148.
64. E. M. Higgins, *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*, Sydney, 1957, pp. 78-82; Darryl Dymock, *'A Special and Distinctive Role' in Adult Education WEA Sydney 1953-2000*, Sydney, 2001, pp. 17-19.
65. Dymock, *'A Special and Distinctive Role' in Adult Education*, pp. 20-21.
66. Derek Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia*, Brisbane, Queensland, 1974, p. 264; *A Directory of Adult Education in N.S.W.*, Sydney, 1945, pp. 5-7.
67. Dymock, *'A Special and Distinctive Role' in Adult Education*, pp. 132, 37-39, 51.
68. R. Freeman Butts, *Assumptions Underlying Australian Education*, Melbourne, 1955, p. 79.