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Abstract

Under the auspices of its 'Education Revolution', the Federal Labor Government is currently implementing a national curriculum for schools. Representing an important intervention into educational practice and governance, the Australian Curriculum offers a unique research opportunity, providing substantial scope for the examination of the changing systems and school-level practices entailed in large-scale curriculum reform. Research into the Australian

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Curriculum also presents a valuable opportunity to develop educational research methodologies that attend to the complex and multifaceted processes of curriculum reform, from systems to classrooms. Taking two of the disciplinary towers of modern curricula (English and mathematics) and Australia's two largest jurisdictions (New South Wales and Victoria) as the focus, this article draws on a three-year Australian Research Council Linkage Project to outline an approach to researching major curriculum reform.

Keywords

Curriculum policy, curriculum development, national curriculum, research methodology, English curriculum, Mathematics curriculum

Introduction: Australian curriculum pasts, present and possible futures

Keeping to their election promise, in 2008, shortly after being elected, the Australian Labor government announced the policy arrival of the Australian Curriculum (AC) (Rudd & Gillard, 2008). This was, of course, not the first attempt at creating a national curriculum in Australia: a number of Australian governments, including the directly preceding conservative government, have made various overtures toward centralised curricula (Collins & Yates, 2009; Reid, 2005). In recent decades, alongside the long-standing and vigorously defended tradition of State/Territory legislative independence around education, an apparent bipartisan agreement for a national approach to schooling had already brought some, albeit limited, collaboration. This has included various federal statements such as The Hobart Declaration (1989), The Adelaide Declaration (1999), and most recently the Melbourne Declaration (2008), as well as the identification of national essential skills and knowledge -- 'Statements of Learning' -- in English, mathematics, science and civics and citizenship in 2003. The AC, therefore, is part of a political and educational history that extends further than the election campaign banner of the 'Education Revolution' within which the AC was initiated.

It is important, however, to recognise the significance of the AC as the most recent episode in this history. Unquestioningly it is the most advanced attempt to develop and implement an Australian national curriculum. Across Australia's eight States and Territories, AC curriculum documents are already guiding systems-level policy planning. As this federal level intervention intersects with the legislative requirement for State and Territories to produce their own curriculum documentation, the contents of AC documentation are reiterated across the different jurisdictions and sectors, and to varying degrees are becoming enacted by teachers and schools as they trial, prepare for, and enact it. Having ministerial agreement across the States and Territories, the AC marks a critical political and educational event that speaks to a long-held governmental agenda of federalising public service provision (Harris-Hart, 2010). Previously, the individual traditions of, and legislative requirements for, curriculum development in the States and Territories had contributed to limited national collaboration (see Seddon, 2001; Yates, Collins, & O'Connor, 2011). Undoubtedly, it is a noteworthy historical 'moment'. In many ways, this is a not-to-be-repeated opportunity for educational researchers with interests in pedagogical, organisational, and policy aspects of large-scale curriculum reform. Coming as part of a broad federalisation agenda that includes a range of

corresponding reforms, such as national testing (see Lingard, 2010), the AC has implications for classroom teachers and for educators and policy bureaucrats working at all levels in State and Territory systems, in government and non-government sectors.

Taking up this unique research opportunity, our Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project investigates the development of the AC¹ and the practices of its enactment as it becomes realised in systems and schools. We take as our focus two of the fundamental building blocks of modern schooling curriculum – English and mathematics, which, along with history and science, constituted the first suite of subjects developed for the AC. We concentrate attention on the emergent federal authority in schooling curriculum and on two States, NSW and Victoria. Aimed at creating a research orientation that attends to the multifaceted dimensions of reform, our research is guided by the principal question: how, and in what ways, are the AC mathematics and English curricula interpreted and enacted as they move across the education field, in systems and in schools? Reflecting on the research consequences of this question, we explore and respond to the methodological challenges that come with such a research focus. Our aim in doing so is to promote discussion surrounding the nature and form of research on the experiences, practices, and enactments of curriculum reform across the multi-sited education field: in the offices of boards of studies, in departmental meetings, in staffrooms, in classrooms, and through political agenda, policy documentation, textbooks, testing regimes, formal meetings, institutional protocols and cultures, informal discussions, and ultimately teaching and learning activities.

First, through exploring the particularities of the AC policy context, we outline a broad conceptual and methodological approach for research on curriculum reform. Here, drawing on Bourdieuan field analysis and Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography, we explore the foundations of a research methodology that is capable of attending to the complex and multifaceted nature of curriculum policy production and enactment, from systems to classrooms. Second, in outlining our specific research agenda, we explicate one methodological possibility for researching curriculum reform. In this discussion, we examine the specific methodological dimensions for educational research that works to understand how educational policies are interpreted, criticised, mediated, negotiated, and enacted in everyday system- and school-level practices.

From systems to classrooms and back again: Methodological foundations for researching curriculum reform

Unsurprisingly, the creation of the AC has involved the production of an extensive collection of policy documents and an associated network of diverse policy practices. From the outset, our research needed to grapple with the scale of this major curriculum reform; it is difficult to overestimate the magnitude of institutional policy production mobilised for the AC. Emerging initially from inter-government agreements within the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the AC has become realised through a large corpus of reform practices and documents. This has included establishing the National Curriculum Board (NCB) in 2008, succeeded in 2009 by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), and successive COAG and Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development, and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) inter-government agreements. In addition, AC production and dissemination processes have included the drafting and re-drafting of curriculum 'Shape' papers intended to lay the epistemological and disciplinary foundations for the curricula; national and State/

Territory consultations with various professional associations, teacher unions, individual teachers, academics, and so on; and the creation of interactive web-based curriculum and consultation portals. Adding to the complexity, each of Australia's eight different States and Territories has responded differently to the AC initiative based on their own histories of curriculum development and jurisdictional authorisation practices (see Yates et al., 2011). Subsequently, differing jurisdictional, sectorial, departmental, and ministerial responses have created an array of policy practices and documentation related to the AC reform.

For research such as ours, identifying what is the AC is therefore complex. Curriculum can be understood to include the different jurisdictional and sectorial policy statements; system- and school-level curriculum guidelines; the various interpretations and enactments of the curriculum by teachers in classrooms; the hidden curriculum found in the presences and absences in curriculum texts, and the prioritisation of tested knowledge; and the schooling practices and relationships that ensue from curriculum stipulations (see Apple, 2004; Yates & Grumet, 2011). Each of these has its own potential discontinuities between the planned and enacted curricula (Gehrke, Knapp, & Sirotnik, 1992). We therefore draw on the growing collection of educational research that conceptualises policy as a practice, and thus foregrounds the everyday institutional and discursive practices that come to bear upon policy reform (Ball, Hoskins, Maguire, & Braun, 2011; Blackmore, 2010; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). So the AC is both text and action: powerful in effect as a mandated material document, but a document nonetheless, shaped by complex disciplinary and bureaucratic networks and political decision-making, and multifariously enacted by teachers. Understanding the AC to be part of wider policy agenda, and drawing on Ball's (1997) approach of 'peopling' policy, our research attends to the impact of the AC upon the everyday processes of educational governance and practice in jurisdictions, systems, schools, and classrooms. This involves, as Ball (1997) suggests, exploring the various practices of reform that occur in the production of 'abstract' and 'tidy' policy documents, as well as the practices prompted, shaped, and framed by the same policy documents as they become enacted across education systems (p. 270).

In order to develop a methodology capable of attending to the multifaceted system- and school-level practices of the AC and the mass of policy documentation that surround it, we draw on Smith's (2005, 2006) development of institutional ethnography and Bourdieuan field analysis (Bourdieu, 1990). Finding generative space in opening a dialogue between these thinkers, we extend and build upon the existing educational research mobilisations of Bourdieu and Smith (see Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). We find particular salience in Smith and Bourdieu's mutual concern to focus research attention on every day practices and relations, while also contextualising these within wider social dimensions of power (Bourdieu, 1977, 1989; Bourdieu, Chamberdon, & Passeron, 1991; Smith, 2005). In Smith's (2005) terms, how 'the everyday world of experience is put together by relations that extend vastly beyond the everyday' (p. 1). Despite approaching this methodological challenge differently, we find common ground in Smith and Bourdieu's endeavour to understand and conceptualise social experience and in their methodological starting points. Undoubtedly, the attention Smith and Bourdieu give to the socio-political context of educational practices has particular relevance to research such as ours, which aims to examine the processes of reform across the education field (see Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Sloan, 2009). In addition, Bourdieu's concern to uncover the material, social and cultural exchanges, and the processes of meaning making, that create fields of practice, has correspondence with Smith's concern to highlight the ways in which everyday practices are coordinated and organised by wider

institutional processes and social relations (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). Beyond this, the individual contributions of Bourdieu and Smith offer distinct, yet complementary, methodological foundations.

Bourdieu's field analysis provides the conceptual and methodological tools with which to examine the 'configuration of relations' that come to bear on the AC reform: the macro, meso, and micro relations that occur in the moment of major policy reform. Here, the concept of field – bounded spaces and networks of activity and understanding – helps situate the AC within its broader educational and socio-political context (see Blackmore, 2010; Rawolle, 2010). Field analysis highlights the interrelationships between institutions and the people working within the field, and the constant debate and contestation that occur in the delineation and demarcation of educational practice, or the 'logic of the field' (Naidoo, 2004). Field analysis therefore provides a means to understand the realisation of the AC as the product of competing discourses and institutional forces that work their way through the education system to and from the classroom. Here, the accompanying Bourdieuan concepts of habitus and capital bring methodological focus. Understanding how reform is 'peopled' through the animation of taken-for-granted 'schemes of perception, thought and action' (habitus) (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 14), for example, draws attention to the diverse networks of practice that rely on assumed collective notions of 'best practice'. Similarly, field analysis can assist in tracing the ways in which the AC reform processes share, exchange, disregard, or exclude particular knowledge and skills through their various institutional and professional mechanisms of knowledge production, consultation, and dissemination (cultural and symbolic capitals) (see Bourdieu, 1991).

Complementing Bourdieuan field analysis, Smith's institutional ethnography brings further methodological focus to the exploration of the enactment of curriculum policy. Centering on institutions and institutional work practices, Smith's methodology offers a generative pathway for research interested in understanding the processes of reform in systems, schools, and classrooms. While Bourdieu understands institutions (education departments, curriculum authorities, universities, schools, etc.) as playing a fundamental role in the education field, Smith provides concrete ways forward for researching the practices of these institutions. Having particular import is Smith's foregrounding of 'textual governance' – the ways in which work practices are increasingly framed by texts (DeVault, 2008, Hamilton, 2009). Institutional ethnography suggests the need to use AC policy texts – their content, and the understandings, interpretations, and enactments of them – as a fundamental methodological starting point (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013; Nichols & Griffith, 2009). We therefore draw on two primary methodological features of institutional ethnography: texts-in-action and intertextual hierarchy (Smith, 2005). First, texts-in-action involves tracing specific policy texts, such as AC policy, across different contexts to explore how they are used, interpreted and understood. Second, intertextual hierarchy involves analysing the power relations that come to bear on such policy texts. In other words, we identify which policy texts are prioritised and which are considered redundant within the processes of AC production and enactment. Used together, texts-in-action and intertextual hierarchy reveal how particular policy texts do, or do not, carry authority and meaning in the everyday practices of those involved in the reform, from policy makers in bureaucratic positions to principals and teachers.

Taken in dialogue, Bourdieu and Smith afford a methodological approach to researching curriculum reform that attends to its multifaceted dimensions: the wider socio-political context of education policy, management and governance; the underlying knowledge and

practice assumptions contained in curriculum policy texts; the diverse institutional positions and exchanges that feature in the AC reform process; the shifts in institutional inter-relationships and practices; the implicit and explicit demands on schools and teachers; and ultimately the opportunities and challenges presented by the reform across systems and schools. In constructing such an approach, we draw in particular on institutional ethnography to develop rich in-depth engagement with the curriculum reform process. Rather than simply analysing the reform process from afar, in order to access the everyday system- and school-level understandings and practices of the AC, our approach works from the presumption that the research must be embedded within the everyday practices of those involved in AC enactment (see Campbell, 2005). Our methodological orientation therefore includes interest in exploring AC in, and as a, practice.

Recognising the generative potential for insight across the policy-research nexus, we have therefore embarked on research partnerships with four principal 'industry partners' through our ARC Linkage Project. These include the body responsible for managing the national curriculum (ACARA), a major State-government jurisdiction (New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, NSW DEC), a major State curriculum studies authority (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, VCAA), and a metropolitan Catholic Education Office (CEO Melbourne). Spanning across jurisdictions and sectors, these institutions bring rich histories, vested interests, and present practices of curricula design and implementation. Of course, there are clear and obvious complexities – and potential limits – in research partnerships with educational bureaucracies. Not least are underlying temporal, and arguably epistemological, tensions that emerge from a 'brokerage' between academic research and the fast-paced pragmatic domain of policy production and dissemination. In light of the indeterminate relationship between policy intent and implementation, we remain aware of the wider political dynamics that come to bear on the relationship between academic research and policy directives (Ozga, 2008; Whitty, 2006). And yet, such a partnership has the potential to engender critical insights that traverse research and policy imperatives. We aim to move beyond analysing political agenda in educational reform as articulated in (de-personalised and often anonymously authored) policy documentation and ministerial announcements. Instead, the reform process becomes unraveled, contextualised, and 'peopled' through the diverse networks of men and women whose everyday work practices constitute the reform field.

Research directions for understanding the policy and practice of curriculum reform

Charting our own research terrain within the broad and expanding AC policy reform event, Smith and Bourdieu have assisted in focusing our methodological attention. First and foremost, our research is motivated by a belief in the significance of the multiple layers of work that education systems aim to align as they instigate a major curriculum reform. The impact of a curricular intervention such as the AC has substantial ramifications in and beyond classrooms for various levels of administration and policy production. With institutional ethnography and Bourdieuan field analysis, our approach works to understand the processes of curriculum change through engaging with its practices, at all levels in the education field, from systems to schools. With this in mind, in this section we outline the methodological features of our approach and the various aspects of our research.

Our approach can be conceptualised as having three over-lapping and interconnected research phases. Through explicating this research design, we explore the dimensions of research that attends to the macro, meso and micro processes of policy production and enactment.

Exploring the potential impact of the AC: Phase I

In order to understand the diverse AC enactments across the education field, the first phase of our research examines the AC policy paradigm, existing curriculum practices, and the emergent and anticipated impacts of the AC. Working with Bourdieuan field analysis, this phase can be taken to constitute a mapping of the field, in which AC policy production and dissemination processes are explored. Alongside this, using institutional ethnography to explore the diverse AC policy understandings and enactments, this phase also works to understand the existing authority of curriculum policy, and anticipated AC effects, at system and classroom levels. The guiding research questions for this phase of the research are:

- (1) What sources of documentation relating to the AC do educators, teachers, and bureaucrats use, and how do they interpret this documentation?
- (2) What is seen as the impact of the AC initiative on curriculum management in systems, schools, and classrooms?
- (3) What support do bureaucrats, educators, and teachers call for to enact their own roles, and the roles of colleagues in other contexts, in this curriculum initiative, and what transitional phases do they foresee?
- (4) What new knowledge is seen as required and what processes are proposed for gaining this knowledge?
- (5) What constraints are anticipated in addressing expectations of the AC and system-based interpretations?

To answer these questions at the system-level, semi-structured interviews and focus groups are providing us with insights into the preparatory actions policy agents are already undertaking in anticipation of the AC. Focusing in particular, but not exclusively, on the federal level, NSW and Victoria, interviewees include policy bureaucrats, curriculum writers, independent curriculum consultants, professional association and union personnel, and educational departmental staff across different sectors. These interviews and focus groups provide the opportunity to discuss people's everyday work in developing policy documents, their understanding of the reform process, and their interaction with other policy makers and institutions in the education field. With institutional ethnography texts-in-action and intertextual hierarchy, here we trace the types of documents that carry authority and meaning in the everyday work of systems-level AC enactment (see DeVault & McCoy, 2006). Alongside this, and with Bourdieuan field analysis, analysis of interview transcripts points to the underlying, and shifting, understandings that policy makers have about current curriculum practices in schools and classrooms: in other words, the dynamics of the logic of the field within the reform process. To give context, we complement this with documentary analysis of policy texts. Drawing on Bourdieuan-based critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough, 1998), this aspect of our research aims to understand how texts ascribe responsibility and agency in relation to the AC

implementation. In other words, if curriculum policy texts carry meaning and authority in shaping educational practices, what meanings and authorities are they conveying in their content and structure?

Connecting systems-level research and analysis with school-level curriculum enactment Phase I also explores NSW and Victorian teachers' current curriculum practices and the emergent impacts of the AC on teachers' work. Taking a mixed-method approach, semi-structured focus groups and surveys with English and mathematics primary and secondary teachers allows for in-depth qualitative understanding of current curriculum practices alongside wider quantitative insights. In parallel with the system-level interviews and focus groups, this aspect of the research aims to identify the critical curriculum documents for teachers working in various geographical locations, socio-economic and cultural contexts, and jurisdictions and sectors. Taking up institutional ethnography and Bourdieuan field analysis across the multiple sites of education systems, here we focus on the policy practices – the texts-in-action and intertextual hierarchies, the particular logics of the field and capitals – with relation to teachers' curricular work and understandings. For example, using extracts from the English and mathematics curriculum in the focus groups opens space to explore teachers' initial responses to, and interpretations of the new AC documentation, and their anticipations for its impact on their everyday practice (see Flores & Alonso, 1995; Roche & Clarke, 2009).

Emerging out of the focus groups, the development of surveys helps contextualise the focus group data with responses from a wider cohort of teachers. Surveys provide a useful snapshot of current uses of curriculum policy texts and supplementary materials (such as text books) and teachers' responses to the AC. Developing four related surveys each for mathematics primary, mathematics secondary, English primary, and English secondary presents opportunity to explore commonalities and difference across disciplines and schooling levels. It is important to note that in using a combination of opportunistic sampling and the advertisement of the surveys through professional networks, we are left not with a view from a representative sample of Australian teachers but rather a broad indication of current practices that could inform the next stages of our project. Together with the documentary analysis, focus groups, and interviews, the data generated from Phase I assist to orient and direct the subsequent research phases. Providing crucial insight into the ways curriculum reform issues are framed, conceptualised and discussed by educators, bureaucrats and teachers, and into the wider policy paradigm within which the AC is situated, Phase I forms the foundation for Phases II and III.

Exploring AC enactment: Phase II

In the second phase of our project, the research turns more specifically to AC enactment through working with schools and systems to understand the impact of the AC reform. Here we are interested in the challenges presented by the AC, as well as the potential for the reform to create opportunities for reflection upon, and development of, teaching and learning practices. Termed within our project as research 'initiatives', this second phase of the research endeavours to understand the localised practices of major curriculum reform through working collaboratively with those charged with its 'implementation'. Thus, while the research focus for this phase is linked to the analyses and findings from the first phase, the initiatives are explicitly collaborative in orientation: they aim to bring teachers, educators, and bureaucrats together with the researcher team to examine, reflect, design, and

support different aspects of curriculum enactment. Initiatives will therefore take place in both schools and systems, with a focus on NSW and Victoria. Working with our research industry partners, in many ways these initiatives constitute the crux of the research partnership: through working with our research partners (ACARA, NSW DEC, VCAA, CEOM) we are granted access to systems- and school-level personnel interested in exploring the repercussions for practice of the AC. Embedding the research within the everyday practices of AC enactment across systems and schools allows us to explore the points of tension and the challenges and opportunities that the AC presents.

While highly dependent on the contexts of each setting, initiatives are based on at least one aspect AC enactment, with a focus on the policy effects more generally in relation to the mathematics and English curricula. These initiatives involve collaboration with personnel ranging from teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators or subject-leaders, sectorial or departmental curriculum support staff, regional directors, and so on. Given the diversity of the education sector, initiatives are conducted in many different school and system settings, including different socio-economic, regional, and cultural contexts. These research questions guide Phase II:

- (1) How is curriculum policy settlement achieved across system and school in the context of this one school?
- (2) How do bureaucrats, educators, and teachers approach mandated curriculum change at the system, school, and classroom levels?
- (3) What constitutes current local curriculum practices and how are these impacted upon by the mandated curriculum change?
- (4) How can initiatives connect with, and respond to, the priorities and concerns of those within the local setting?
- (5) What constitutes success for the initiatives for those within the setting, and what are the institutional conditions that are necessary for success?

Both institutional ethnography and field analysis demand that the research remain attentive to overarching considerations of discursive authority and responsibility, and thus the requirement to consider the policy paradigms within which schools enact curricula. In addition, institutional ethnography assists in focusing the initiatives on the impact and use of curriculum policy documentation: which documents are important; how documents impact on practices; who creates documents, and so on. Bourdieuan field analysis turns research attention to the inter-relationships within schools and between systems and schools, and the power relations that underpin these. It therefore prompts us to critically analyse the taken-for-granted understandings of curriculum 'best practice' that proliferate in the setting, and how these are mobilised.

In addition, we also draw upon the growing collection of educational research literature that take a collaborative, context-bound, and reflexive approach to research initiatives (see Barab & Squire, 2004; Kelly, 2004). Critically responding to the evidence-based prioritisation of government research funding, and consequent privileging of 'scientific' approaches in educational research (Lather, 2004), a growing cohort of, mostly US, researchers are arguing for a paradigmatic shift in school-based research approaches. With these researchers, our initiatives take an iterative approach with a flexible methodology. They are 'based [upon] collaboration among researchers and practitioners in realworld settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories'

(Wang & Hannafin, 2005, p. 6). We do this through developing three principle research approaches within each of our initiatives.

First, our research initiatives aim to generate in-depth understanding of AC enactment through working closely with teachers, educators, and bureaucrats (Bannan-Ritland, 2003). Following from institutional ethnography, initiatives start with the needs and concerns of those within the research settings – systems and schools – and are reflexive and iterative, dedicated to collaboration in setting agendas for action. Second, our research initiatives are both exploratory and purposeful: they aim not simply to describe and analyse but to engage. Consequently, research initiatives offer an opportunity to work with those charged with AC 'implementation'. Being iterative, they aim to create dialogue between the researchers and teachers, educators and bureaucrats so as to be responsive and adaptive to the research contexts in systems and schools. Third, initiatives are context-bound. Exploring the particular dimensions of each initiative's institutional setting, our research situates AC enactment within its broader institutional and social context (Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004).

Initiatives involve the collection and analysis of a range of data. Initial interviews with school and system-level staff explore current curriculum practices, approaches to AC enactment, and possible research agenda. As such, our research attends to the localised expressions of the logic of the field and the mobilisations of cultural and symbolic capitals. Accompanying this, using the methodological tools of texts-in-action and intertextual hierarchy, the research initiatives trace the authority of curriculum and policy documentation through analysing the take-up of policy documentation in schools and classrooms. This involves collecting the documentation used and developed in the setting and observing its impact on everyday curriculum practices. This includes materials such as websites, letters to parents, curriculum reporting and accountability, professional development materials, and meeting schedules and minutes. In addition, where possible, relevant school and/or department discussions are attended or audiotaped, and student products are collected to illustrate curriculum enactment in the teaching and learning activities. Most importantly, the development of the initiatives occurs through collaborative discussion with teachers, educators and bureaucrats and centres on developing strategies to address what these professionals take to be the core aspects of AC enactment.

Exploring AC enactment: Phase III

In the final phase of the project, we bring together the analyses of Phases II and I to consider the nature of curriculum policy settlement in systems and schools, from central offices to classrooms. Specifically, we reflect on and evaluate the initiatives from Phase II, and we analyse the ways in which AC enactment was seen by the local participants as working, or not. Responding to the need for research on curriculum reform to address both systems and school-level practices, this phase of the research also analyses the alignment of reform processes, and the challenges and opportunities such shifts in alignment bring to Australian schooling practice. Consequently, Phase III develops case studies of curriculum policy settlement based on the analysis of the initiatives. Here, our research aims to develop understanding about how, and in what ways, schools, teachers, and systems come to enact the AC. Importantly, drawing from institutional ethnography and field analysis, this phase examines the interrelationships between systems and schools and between the broader policy

field and teachers' work. Phase III therefore reflects upon the tensions and challenges in developing the initiatives, alongside the ways AC enactment can provide opportunities in teaching and learning development. The following are the research questions for Phase III:

- (1) How do the research team, industry partners, educators, bureaucrats, and teachers interpret the case studies of AC enactment?
- (2) How do educators and systems intend the case studies be used, and how are they used?
- (3) Do the case studies prompt reflection on policy or classroom action?
- (4) Do the case studies demonstrate and promote alignments among the various levels of system operation, and, if so, how?
- (5) What particular features of the AC English and mathematics curricula do the case studies highlight?

Importantly, case studies are intended to reflect the richness of the initiatives as they play out in diverse socio-cultural contexts. This includes incorporating a wide range of data sources, such as: interviews with participants; examples of teacher curricula planning meetings; collaborations among primary and secondary teachers around issues of transition and continuity; professional mentoring within classrooms; high-level systemic planning and policy meetings around the intersection of the new curricula with existing state-based practices; or, more generally, examples of professional learning around aspects of teacher knowledge. Simultaneously, institutional ethnography will document the institutional changes across levels, the resistance to, and difficulties with, those changes, and the crucial intervention of authoritative or powerful insiders or outsiders in this overall process (e.g. Farrell & Fenwick, 2007). A Bourdieuan analysis, at the same time, will pay attention to the ways in which social structures and structures of belief arise as these practices evolve (e.g., Albright, Kwek, & Kramer-Dahl, 2007).

Conclusion: Peopling the AC reform

At the time of writing, we are in the early phases of our data analysis. Analysis of policy documentation and interviews with policy makers indicate that within the creation of a new federal field of curriculum authority, there are very different notions of teachers' work in relation to curriculum planning and enactment (see Gerrard & Farrell, forthcoming). Undoubtedly, the AC is creating a range of opportunities and constraints in relation to teachers' professionalism and the sorts of work policy makers anticipate teachers will do with the AC in classrooms across Australia. Preliminary observations on the analysis of the surveys reveal unexpectedly high levels of commonality among primary and secondary educators, teachers across states, and between mathematics and English educators, in the use of formal curriculum and commercial materials for teachers' planning. And yet, at the same time, our initial contact with schools suggests that there are unexpectedly dramatic differences in the extent to which curriculum planning is currently embedded within school processes. Concurrently, there appears to be clear differences in the planning currently undertaken at the school level in anticipation of the AC. Our early observations suggest that some schools are experiencing high levels of 'change fatigue', resulting in volatile internal relationships that, in turn, affect their capacity to plan for, and anticipate, the AC reform.

It is clear then that the AC is an important federal policy intervention in Australian education. Prompting a range of jurisdictional, sectorial, and professional responses, the AC is already becoming animated through a range of system and school-level curriculum planning processes and practices. For educational researchers, this policy event is an ideal opportunity to study how a mandated national curriculum provokes actions by, and relations among, policy makers, departmental staff, and teachers. In this article, we have explored the methodological potential that lies in such a significant reform moment.

Drawing on Smith's institutional ethnography and Bourdieuan field analysis, we outline a methodological approach for examining the localised practices of curriculum reform, from systems to schools. Moving from curriculum policy production in educational bureaucracies to AC enactment in schools, our approach aims to address the multifaceted and multileveled aspects of curriculum reform: from inter-governmental agreements to changes in departmental curriculum support mechanisms, shifts in system- and school-level understandings and practices of curriculum, the implications for teacher knowledge and teachers' work, and the possible implications for teaching and learning in Australian classrooms. Specifically, we outline a three-phased approach that focuses in particular on AC mathematics and English: (1) the examination of the field of policy production and existing curriculum practices in systems and schools; (2) the exploration of localised AC enactment in collaboration with teachers and educational bureaucrats; and (3) reflection upon the processes of AC policy settlement and enactment in classrooms, schools, and systems.

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None declared.

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