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## The construction of alienated students and students at educational risk : a study of the justice and education discourses in Western Australia

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**The Construction of Alienated Students and Students at Educational  
Risk:  
A Study of the Justice and Education Discourses in Western Australia**

**By Melanie Zan  
Diploma of Education  
University of Western Sydney**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of  
Master of Social Science (Participatory Action Research)**

**At the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences  
Edith Cowan University**

**September 2004**



### Abstract

This thesis locates, examines and interprets the written sources of information guiding how delinquent school-aged young people are viewed in relation to their education in Western Australia. The study involved an examination of texts discussing post industrial socio-historical events and current policy, practice and research in relation to students who are alienated from school, including those who have criminal histories. An exploration of the discourses assembled around the construction of Western Australian school-aged offenders as alienated students revealed an ongoing assumption that children and youth from low socio-economic backgrounds are often governed as low school achievers who are less likely to complete compulsory schooling. In the documents examined leaving school early was regularly discussed and linked to unemployment, poverty and criminal activity. This thesis presents an interpretation of the role these discourses have played in the construction of Western Australian school aged offenders as alienated students (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.503).

The theoretical and methodological framework underpinning the study takes a post-positivist, constructionist position and places the study firmly within an interpretive research context. The methodology draws from the work of Foucault in relation to how discourses shape knowledge and have a powerful influence over the social structures in which people are governed as citizens. The study also uses a critical hermeneutic approach where I acknowledge how my own interests and biases influenced the way I interacted with the literature examined.

The justice and education discourses were examined in one Western Australian education district in order to place this study of discourse in a sociohistorical context. The metropolitan education district chosen provided a range of education and justice documents describing the ways in which collaborative efforts between the Departments of Education and Training and Justice construct school-aged offenders as alienated students (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 1999 and Submissions for Y2000, 1999). The justice texts highlight how the construction of school-

aged offenders as alienated students is still partial and is mostly taking place in alternative education settings because mainstream schools are not able to cater for their needs (Ansell 2002, p.5; Kraljevich 2002, p.3; Rose 2003).

A documented commitment to inclusive practice and an agreed evaluative system established by the two government agencies is suggested as a way of providing data for the development of evidence based models of best practice. In using documents to create knowledge of best practice in the education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia there is a real possibility for conscious, planned improvements to how this group of highly alienated young people are brought back from the margins of society. In addressing their alienation in a deliberate and documented manner, school-aged offenders in Western Australia would be given increased opportunity to gain an education and move towards the world of work instead of being constructed as unemployed, poor and likely to become involved in criminal activity.

**Declaration**

I certify that this thesis does not, to best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature

Date

  
10<sup>th</sup> September 2014

### Acknowledgements

In memory of my Father, who taught me to find answers to my questions.

There are many people who have contributed to this study by giving their time, providing information, expertise and critical comment. To my friends, Ruth Saunders, Karen Voyce, Kathy White and my Mother for saying the right things at the right time and inspiring me to finish what I start. My sincerest thanks also go to Darry Bonjolo for challenging me to think more deeply and giving me his honest and professional views on the content of the thesis. In addition I would like to acknowledge the technical expertise of Jennine Croft whose patience I greatly admire.

A number of people from the Department of Justice and the Department of Education and Training provided valuable documents and suggestions for this thesis. Without their assistance and advice the thesis could not have included a local, Western Australian perspective on the education of a very alienated group of young people. Their input has been integral to the completion of this study and I thank them for their time and interest.

And finally, I wish to thank Dr Jan Gray for the suggestions and guidance she gave over the time spent completing this thesis.

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## SECTION ONE- OUTLINING THE STUDY

This study addresses the construction of alienated students in the justice and education discourses in Western Australia. The ongoing discourse on the education of delinquents in post industrial western societies and Western Australia in particular, is examined. The study is directly concerned with the ways in which the discourses on poverty, crime, early school leaving and student alienation have emerged and influence the current ways in which young offenders are constructed as students.

The thesis is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the philosophical and theoretical framework underpinning the study. This is followed in the second section with an examination of the discourses assembled around delinquency and schooling. The socio-historical features within these discourses are illustrated in relation to school-aged delinquents and convicted juvenile offenders. In the final section a Western Australian perspective is provided through the examination of how these discourses are currently constructing school-aged offenders in one metropolitan education district.



## Chapter One

### *Introduction*

The concept of delinquency and student alienation in the western speaking world has been documented since the industrial revolution. From an examination of texts a perspective is developed on the current Western Australian education discourse on how compulsory school-aged alienated students, who are also convicted juvenile offenders, are constructed within the Western Australian education discourse. The terms 'school-aged offender' and 'delinquent' are used interchangeably throughout the thesis to name young people of school age who have been convicted of crime. These labels are used to describe the population of young people who are constructed as subjects of the discourses being examined and have been convicted of crime in the Western Australian Children's Court. The thesis is concerned with the construction of these young people in policy and practice in the Western Australian education discourse on student alienation. I chose to examine the discourses that are assembled around, and construct, a particular population of Western Australian young people, not focus on issues of gender, ethnicity or ability within the alienated student category.

With reference to Western Australian school-aged offenders it is well documented that Aboriginal young people are highly represented in the Western Australian justice system and are often alienated from school (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/abled/pedagogy/ccu.htm>; [http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/content/files/AG\\_report\\_2003\\_01.pdf](http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/content/files/AG_report_2003_01.pdf); Beresford 1993, pp.27-28; Beresford & Omaji 1996, pp.52-69; Antrum 1998, pp.17; Sercombe, Omaji, Cooper & Love 2002, p.59; Haslet 2003; Beresford & Partington 2003, pp.203-205). However, this thesis does not examine this social phenomenon or the experiences of the young people themselves. Nor does it directly focus on the difficulties associated in working with school-aged offenders who are alienated from the Western Australian education system. Rather, I decided to explore the generic themes that have influenced the discourses assembled around student alienation and school-aged offenders and map how this has influenced the education and justice discourse on the education of school-aged offenders in Western

## Australia.

This chapter outlines the history of the relationship between delinquents and schools, dating back to the industrial revolution. My experiences as an employee with the Western Australian Department of Justice (DOJ) are outlined in order to locate the study within a socio-historical context. The use of historical literature, online text, research, policies, reports and evaluations to form an understanding of how a number of discourses can work together and make it possible to describe, know and regulate delinquent young people in Western Australia is also presented. Commentaries on how the relationships between delinquents and schools continue to be played out in the present education policies constructing school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia provides the framework to structure and conduct this study.

### *Background To The Thesis Topic*

The thesis synthesises the historical role of education in relation to delinquency in history and traces its continuance through to the Western Australian justice and education discourses operating in a Perth metropolitan education district. The documented events and practices around how school-aged offenders in Western Australia were educated during the late 1980s to the mid 1990s in Western Australia provide an insight into concerns for these young people and justification for further research. The history of the relationship between delinquents and schools and the governing role education continues to play in post industrial Western countries makes it possible to locate the importance of this thesis in a Western Australian professional context.

Concerns during the 1990s, about Western Australian school-aged offenders not receiving an adequate education, provide a local commentary about the relationship between delinquency and schooling in Western Australia. This underpins the issue being examined. These concerns about school-aged offenders not completing school, not having functional literacy and numeracy skills, not being able to access the labourmarket and not

returning to school once they had dropped out were extensively discussed in Western Australian discourse (WACOSS 1990, pp.23-24; Bonjolo 1991, p.5; Wilkie 1991, p.70; WALA 1991, pp.11-12; Wilkie 1991, p.10, Milmo 1994, pp.18-20; SSCEET 1996, p.3). The thesis charts the documented shifts in education policy in relation to how school-aged offenders may now be included in the Western Australian education system when they are constructed as alienated students.

The school is an important social institution where children and young people have been governed and defined since the industrial revolution at the turn of the nineteenth century (Carrington 1993; p.xv; Danzinger 1994; Sercombe 1996, pp.7-8; Mc Cormack 1996, pp.7-12; Bessant et al 1998 pp.8-15). The education discourse on delinquent students developed alongside a number of other discourses that aim to regulate the lives of delinquents (Sercombe 1997, p.1). The documented socio-historical background to the creation of universal education and its relationship with the labour market, state welfare and poverty and the juvenile justice system and its relationship to crime and rehabilitation form the foundation of this study. These discourses are examined in this thesis in order to trace the development of policies constructing school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia.

The current state government policies on students at educational risk and alienated students document the possibility for a very alienated group of school-aged young people to access education and receive recognised qualifications from within the Western Australian school sector. This had not been standardised practice until the launching of the new Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) policies on students at educational risk (EDWA, *Making the Difference: Students at Educational Risk*, 1998), legislative changes (School Education Act, 1999) and the recent introduction of guidelines for schools placing students in alternative programs (DET, 2003, *Alternative Programs*).

### *Professional Interest And Motivation*

Key issues emerging from the literature reviewed for this study were confirmed by my professional experience in the education placement of school-aged offenders in Western Australia. This professional experience, gained whilst working with the Department of Justice for over a decade (1993-2004), suggested that a power relationship between schools and delinquents existed in Western Australia. The power of schools to include alienated students, or not, and the power of school-aged offenders to upset the smooth running of schools was suggested in everyday work practice. Further to this, the social consequence for school-aged offenders of not gaining recognised credentials from school was concerning.

My professional experience also highlighted how school-aged offenders were often alienated from school and the possibility of full-time, stable employment. A shift in the discourse on the education of young people of school age who were not attending school and who were involved in crime was emerging in the late 1990s. Developments and changes to education, justice and welfare policies in Western Australia in the 1990s provided a framework from which I began to examine these discourses in a professional sense and later in academic endeavour.

The primary issues of interest to me revolved around the changing power relations between schools and delinquents in the post industrial socio-historical context. I became increasingly interested in the influence of texts including education and justice legislation and policy. I was also interested in how these texts determined schools' construction and categorisation of students in order to contain them or refer them elsewhere. I collected literature in the form of legislation, policy, government reports and academic research in a professional library and these texts informed the starting point chosen. A focal point within the literature collected was the documented degrees to which schools and the state education system in Western Australia were required to provide an education to all school-aged youth including those whose delinquent behaviour alienated them from school.

### *Aim*

This study locates, examines and interprets the written sources of information guiding how delinquent school-aged young people are viewed in relation to their education in Western Australia. In doing so, the thesis focuses on post industrial socio-historical events and current policy, practice and research that discusses students who present difficulties to schools and their education. The study explores how these documents, as data, create the rationales and justifications for how school-aged offenders have been and are being educated in Western Australia. An interpretation of how school-aged offenders are constructed as alienated students within the education discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australian is also developed within the thesis.

In exploring documents constituting the discourses about the education of delinquents who are alienated from school a new perspective on how Western Australian school aged offenders are being educated is constructed. This knowledge is the result of the interaction between myself and the texts and the understanding I developed during the interactive research process (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.18). I also implicitly understand that the knowledge created throughout the research process and composed in this thesis is but one perspective of many that can be gained on the topic chosen (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.503).

There is a social justice agenda guiding and motivating this study. It is anticipated in building a new perspective on the socio-historical factors leading to the current state of the education of Western Australian alienated students who have criminal histories that the areas in which this population of young people are not so well catered for may be brought into relief and attended to in future policy and practice. Through a constructivist, interpretive process, this study examines where the current education policies on students at educational risk construct school-aged offenders as alienated students and suggestions are made as to how they may be applied to improve the transition of school-aged offenders from the justice system and custody to their local school.

## *Significance*

The significance of this research lies in the ways socio-historical factors, perceived to be embedded in how we understand delinquency, and the role of schooling are interpreted and linked up to the current Western Australian education context. The social construction of the youth category, the delinquent, the school and the justice and welfare systems over the last two hundred years is charted in this thesis. The study highlights where these associated discourses have connected and influenced how compulsory school-aged alienated students and delinquents in Western Australia have been described and educated over the last couple of decades.

The thesis commences with an overview of the history of the governance of delinquents in a general sense and then explores the relationships between the emergent discourses on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime. How the delinquent is constructed within these discourses is examined in such a way as to see how the discourses have contributed to the ways school-aged offenders are known and governed within the current education discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia.

The discourses on early school leaving, student alienation and students at educational risk are also explored in the body of the thesis in order to map how the current Western Australian education policies have been shaped by these discourses. Documented factors influencing Western Australian education reform are also examined to show how local discourses have contributed to the current ways in which school-aged offenders are educated in Western Australia.

The study concludes with an exploration of the Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk as it is applied in one Western Australian metropolitan education district between 1998 and 2003. This examination of the documentary information in legislation, policies, research, reports and online information indicates where the education discourse in Western Australia has changed in the last decade and to what extent school-aged offenders are now constructed as alienated students and students at

educational risk. The knowledge created within the research process is connected to and situated within the wider ongoing discourse on the relationship between delinquency and schooling and forms a critical theoretical perspective, that may have influence on the future direction of the discourse on the education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia.

This study draws on a decade of field and policy based experience gained whilst I was working with school-aged offenders who were alienated from school and had formal contact with the Department of Justice. During the course of my work, I observed how young people often talked about their reluctance to participate in education and mostly refused to go to their local school. As an Education Officer with the Department of Justice during the 1990s, my role was to negotiate education placements for school-aged offenders with the understanding that most of them would not, or could not return to their local school. In 1996, a Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Educational and Training stated:

Data from the alternative education programs [in Western Australia] indicates that many of the students referred to them have an offending record, have not been attending school for some time and are involved in substance abuse. (SSCEET 1996, p.42)

It is documented that the life issues faced by these young people outside the education context often caused problems in the school setting (Placier 1993, p.380; Mc Connack 1996, pp.1-10). In attempting to find placements suitable for school-aged offenders with their local school, it became increasingly clear that these young people did not see themselves as students of their local school nor did the school see them as members of their mainstream school population. This was confirmed in the 1996 Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Educational and Training regarding truancy and exclusion where it was stated:

Many repeat recidivist offenders are under school leaving age and are known as 'street kids'. They do not attend school and for a variety of

reasons have nowhere permanent to live. (SSCEET 1996, p.42)

### *Boundaries Of The Study*

The socio-historical context influencing the way in which school-aged offenders are educated in Western Australia is examined in this research; however, there is no direct reference to these alienated youth as the 'target population' or subjects directly providing case study data. The discourses assembled around young people known as educationally at risk and alienated students are the object under investigation in this thesis. This thesis is informed by the literature discussing alienated students who commit crime in Western Australia.

The emergence of the students at educational risk and alienated student categories within the education discourse has made it possible to study the socio-historical events and thinking, from which the term 'alienated student' has been constructed. In tracing the discourses influencing the current students at educational risk policies in Western Australia, this study is concerned with how the education, welfare, justice and the labour market discourses on early school leaving, unemployment and marginalisation are still, changing the ways in which alienated school-aged offenders are educated in Western Australia.

The school-aged offenders referred to in the documents examined are described as usually having wider social issues affecting their lives; poverty, criminal activity, and family breakdown to name some of the problems recognised by schools. These forms of social disadvantage and alienation are described within the education and associated discourses on delinquency, poverty, marginalisation and crime as contributing to young people becoming alienated from school (Szaday 1989). The ways in which these issues are used within the education discourse show how current changes in education policy concerning students at educational risk have been informed (Vardon 1996, pp.3-5; Netolicky 1997, p.1; Barnett 1997, 1; Clayton 2000, pp.1-9; Carpenter 2003, p.1).



### *Research Questions*

This research explores the socio-historical conditions that have contributed to the shifts in the Western Australian education discourse from practices of excluding and alienating delinquent students to retaining them and adjusting educational structures and curriculum to better cater for their interests and needs. The main question addressed throughout this thesis is how are alienated students constructed within the justice and education discourses in Western Australia?

In order to answer this question the following sub questions will be addressed:

- How does an understanding of the socio-historic background of the relationship between schooling and delinquency contribute to the current construction of alienated students within the education system in Western Australia?
- How do the discourses on early school leaving, poverty and crime contribute to the current construction of students at educational risk and alienated students within the education system in Western Australia?
- How do the justice and education discourses in Western Australia work together in the construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students?
- How are the current education policies concerning alienated students in Western Australia constructing school-aged offenders?

### *Structure Of The Thesis*

This thesis is presented in three sections, reflecting the historical relationship between delinquents and education and emerging patterns within the discourses assembled around the construction alienated students in Western Australia. The first section, containing

chapters one and two, outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks and the motivation for this study.

The four chapters in the second section (chapters three to six) chart the discourses assembled around the education of delinquents since the industrial revolution. How these discourses have contributed to the current construction of alienated students in the Western Australian discourse on students at educational risk is discussed. A detailed examination of the socio-historical background on the construction of youth and delinquency in post industrial, western speaking countries is provided within this section. A study of the creation of compulsory universal education in the United Kingdom in 1870, a separate justice system for juvenile offenders, the regulation of children from working class backgrounds with the institution of a state welfare system gives a background to the themes operating within the discourses on early school leaving, student alienation and students described as at educational risk.

The Western Australian socio-political context is explored in chapter four. The historical factors of the 1980s and 1990s that impacted on the education and framing of Western Australian school-aged offenders is introduced to position the study in the Western Australian context. The discourse on early school leaving and how it has shaped the student retention agenda in Australia is examined in chapter five to demonstrate links between the Western Australian context and the wider discourses on low school achievement, unemployment, poverty and juvenile crime.

An overview of the discourse on student alienation forms the basis in the final chapter within this section. Chapter six discusses the construction of delinquents as different to mainstream students. An insight into the role of education reform, the retention of alienated students and the policies that address alienation under the wider definition of students at educational risk is also presented.

The five chapters in the final section of the thesis (chapters seven to eleven) discuss the reforms to Western Australian education that have made it possible for school-aged

offenders to be constructed as alienated students. Factors influencing shifts in education policy that relate to the construction of alienated students in the Western Australian education discourse are examined in chapters seven and eight. In chapter nine the ways in which the discourses on delinquency, early school leaving, student alienation and the Western Australian students at educational risk policy (1998) have documented the shifts in the ways school-aged offenders are constructed as alienated students are examined. The textual sources from one metropolitan education district in Western Australia are examined to provide examples of the discourse in action.

The relationship between the Western Australian education and justice systems is explored in the final two chapters to find how school-aged offenders have been constructed as alienated students up to the end of 2003. In the final chapter the ways in which school-aged offenders have been constructed as alienated students is discussed. Suggestions for the ways in which the Western Australian Departments of Justice and Education and Training can continue to collaborate in discourse and practice are offered.

### *Summary*

My professional interest in the socio-historical background of the relationship between delinquency and schooling that informs this study has been the central theme framing this thesis. The aim, significance and boundaries of the thesis explain this in relation to the chosen topic and sub questions. The next chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks used to guide the research process and construct the narrative presentation of information.

## Chapter Two

*Theory And Method*

Interpretive, constructionist studies are, by nature, incomplete. Reality and truth in research is the product of an academic construction of understanding and I acknowledge this thesis offers one perspective on how the current Western Australian education policies concerning alienated students have come about. In this context I have chosen to conduct a qualitative study and the thesis is presented in a narrative form. This is because my interpretations of literature and the perspective presented on the socio-historical background contributing to the current Western Australian education discourse on student alienation relates to how school-aged offenders are being educated in Western Australia.

There are many viewpoints in the social world and it is full of changes (Crotty 1998, pp.42-65). The method of analysing documents within discourses used in this thesis was selected because discourses are also pluralistic and discontinuous in nature (Carrington 1993, p.xv). In this thesis, themes and shifts in discourse are mapped, interpreted and presented. Consistent with Carrington's (1993) view on the importance of analysing discourse, Crotty (1998) says:

In discourse [*analysis*] the beliefs, norms and values that are taken for granted in everyday interaction are expressly thematised and subjected to critique. (p.144 *italics mine*)

The thesis applies such an approach to the discourses on the education of alienated school-aged offenders in Western Australia. In accordance with Crotty's (1998, pp.6-9) suggestion that the epistemological and methodological approaches used to carry out research fit together, through the interpretation of information about the education of alienated school-aged offenders found in documents, a new academic perspective on a social issue is constructed within this thesis.

### *Why Choose A Qualitative, Interpretive Approach?*

Postmodern sociological theory and method allows me to explore a chosen slice of social phenomenon, acknowledge personal interest and motivation and define the boundary of the topic being studied (Babbie 2002, pp.8-10). By understanding that the knowledge constructed in this study as one interpretation of social phenomenon within a wider social context, I accept that there are multiple perspectives to any given social issue. The perspective created in this thesis is made up of my interpretation of the socio-historical factors found in the literature forming discourses that have lead to the current situation concerning the education of alienated school-aged offenders in Western Australia (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.18).

I have chosen to present the information contained within this thesis as a narrative that explains one viewpoint gained from text based enquiries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.1010), on how alienated students and school-aged young people with criminal histories are constructed within the education discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia. This study of text and discourse is itself part of a wider, ongoing discourse of interpretive studies (Gergen & Gergen 2000, p.1025), that have been presented in the narrative genre. This postmodern presentation of research is described by Fontana and Frey (2000) as researchers' renditions of events (p.661), and in the case of this thesis, the narrative text produced was chosen as the most effective medium to outline the information constructed during the research.

It is understood that the texts studied during this research could be interpreted in a variety of different ways. The ambiguity, contradiction and multiplicity of research findings are features of how qualitative methods construct knowledge (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.503). Therefore, this constructivist, interpretive study is one reading of the continuing development of knowledge about how school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia have been and are constructed within education discourse. The mapping of the discourses associated with the education of school-aged offenders is very much an inquiry into the various narratives and power relations (Hunt & Wickham 1994, pp.13-20), which have shaped the current policies and practices around the education of

alienated students in Western Australia. Sercombe (1996) agrees and explains:

Young people at the moment are being subjected to an extraordinary range of processes directed at disciplining, training, subjecting the individual (or in Foucault's terms, the body) through extended schooling and other training. (p.19)

To better understand the policy decisions related to the education of school-aged offenders alienated from school in Western Australia it is necessary to explore the construction of the current discourse on students at educational risk. An interpretive, constructionist paradigm is the most appropriate approach to developing this understanding because it allows for the use of a "range of interconnected, interpretive methods" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p.19).

This interpretive study accepts that there may be multiple perspectives on the construction of school-aged offenders as subjects of the Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk and alienated students and there may be a number of solutions devised to improve how these young people are retained in education. Consistent with these theoretical and philosophical concepts, this thesis is my informed interpretation of the discourses surrounding the construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students in the Western Australian education discourse.

### *A Critical Research Agenda*

The nature of this study involves the analysis of official documents and research that contributes to the current discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia. Hodder (2000) states:

Such texts are of importance for qualitative research because, in general terms access can be easy, low cost, because the information may differ from and may not be available in spoken form. (p.704)

A formal Foucaultian approach to discourse analysis, in the archaeological sense, is not undertaken in this research. Rather, the discourses related to and assembled around the delinquent, the school-aged offender and the alienated student at educational risk are mapped to construct a narrative account of the socio-historical factors that have lead to current education policy reform in Western Australia. The purpose of this is to bring into focus the connections between the powerful narratives that have worked together and shaped the Western Australian education policies and practices that have begun to include alienated students as students at educational risk.

Consistent with Foucault's (1972, p.38) and Hunt and Wickham's (1994) thinking on discourse formation, this thesis is concerned with tracing:

the emergence of 'discourses'; how did it come about that some particular way of organising thinking, talking and doing about some selected topic took the form and content that it did? (Hunt & Wickham 1994, p.7)

Further to this examination of the discourses connected to the policies on students at educational risk in Western Australia, this thesis also draws on a critical research agenda that aims to suggest where the current education policies and practices that impact on school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia may be improved. In accordance with the definitions of critical theory (Held 1980, pp.161-173; Kincheloe & McLaren 2000, p.288), an interpretation of information found in the documents that make up the discourses is used to answer the research question. The potential for further positive changes in the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students is also highlighted. Drawing from Gubrium and Holstein (2000) this study agrees that:

If we make visible the constructive fluidity and malleability of social forms, we also reveal a potential for change. (p.503)

The tracing of the discourses on delinquency and schooling has allowed me to examine texts documenting the education of delinquents and alienated school-aged offenders in Western Australia in their socio-historic context. Hodder (2000) states:

Text and context are in a continuous state of tension, each defining and redefining the other, saying and doing things differently throughout time.  
(p.704)

The value of examining the socio-historic context in the literature as data has been the possibility of highlighting a grouping of discourses (Foucault 1972, p.29) around the topic of the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school. Tracing the descent of those discourses, and the socio-historic events that have shaped the conditions making it possible for the way these young people are currently educated in Western Australia, assists in the creation of the constructivist and critical perspectives taken in this thesis.

### *Multiple Perspectives And Limitations Of The Study*

The critical hermeneutic research approach also assists in addressing the research question in that my personal and professional biases are known to have been shaped by the socio-historical factors that have lead to my understanding and choice of research topic, theoretical framework, methodology and data (Schwant 2000, p.193). The tracing of discourses and examination of the socio-historical contexts, documented within the literature studied, is used to construct a picture of how the education of alienated students who are also offenders in Western Australia is changing and how their education could be improved. Gubrium and Holstein (2000) explain that:

The aim of analytics of interpretive practice is to document the interplay between practical reasoning and conversational machinery entailed in constructing a sense of everyday reality on the one hand and the institutional conditions, resources and related discourses that substantively nourish and



interpretively mediate interaction on the other. (p.497)

Acknowledgment is given to how interpretive, qualitative research is underpinned by how the assumptions interpretivist researchers:

blend their own observations with the self reports provided by the subjects.  
(Denzin & Lincoln 2000, pp.18-19)

In this research the interaction between the documents as data and my own perspectives result in the construction of new knowledge on the topic of how education policy builds a picture of the extent to which school-aged offenders are discussed in discourse as alienated students in Western Australia. In the analysis of documents talking about students at educational risk, patterns within the discourses assembled around alienated students who are also school-aged offenders are brought into view. This study maps these discourses and their shifts and whilst doing so, the structure and themes reflected in the data emerge and were not known to me prior to starting the research process (Punch 1998, p.60).

My professional experience has highlighted the alienation of school-aged offenders from education and the subsequent negative social consequences both for individuals and the community. Links between delinquency, low educational achievement, poverty and crime can be seen to work in such a way that some young people below the age of fifteen in Western Australia are disadvantaged socially and economically. It has been well documented that difficult to manage students in school settings have not been adequately provided for by the Western Australian education system in the past (WACOSS 1990, p.23; Sirr 1992, p.11; Milmo 1994, p.21; SSCEET 1996, pp.vii-xii; Kilpatrick 1996, pp.19-22; Spillane & Wheatley 2001, pp.7-12).

This study does not aim to speak on behalf of school-aged offenders as alienated students or document their experiences as alienated students. I acknowledge the choice of theory and method in this thesis does not provide a fixed and expert form of universal truth

and the claims made do not assure a pathway to preventing juvenile crime or school non-attendance. Consistent with Janesick (2000), my professional interest and personal biases are integral to framing this thesis. Therefore:

Regardless of the researcher's point of view, and quite often because of that point of view, the researcher constructs and frames the question for inquiry (p.382)

The methods chosen to answer the thesis question in this thesis have been selected to connect my interests, basic epistemological assumptions and aims within an academic context. I acknowledge that the post structural perspective constructed during this study is limited in that it does not build a perspective comprising of the experiences of alienated school-aged offenders, educators or justice workers. Nor do their views and biases directly influence the direction of the research process. Although an analysis of discourse is carried out during the research phase, the study is not concerned with investigating the power relationships that shape and are shaped by discourse. As this is not a Foucaultian study, and a genealogy of the discourses assembled around delinquency and schooling is not carried out, acknowledgement is given to how populations are constituted as subjects of discourse. This thesis focuses on the knowledge, as a product of power, that makes it possible to construct Western Australian school-aged offenders as alienated students.

### *Tracing Discourses In Their Socio Historical Contexts*

The analysis of discourse in this interpretive study "centres on the interplay not the synthesis of discursive practices and discourses-in-practice." (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.497). An analysis of the socio-historical context underpinning the current education discourse on students at educational risk and student alienation in the Western Australian context is conducted and how school-aged offenders are now constructed as students. Where this may be improved is also discussed.

Qualitative, postmodern researchers describe discourse as “the political economy of knowledge construction.” (Danzinger 1994, p.179). Our knowledge is constructed in a socio-historical sense by the language and texts framed within our underlying values about what is true and what can be said (Bessant et al 1998, pp.3-19, 195-209). The social construction of knowledge and what is considered to be true is produced by people who have the power to legitimise what is being said, written and portrayed (Danzinger 1994, p.179).

What is ‘sayable’ and counted as truth must also be considered alongside what is not ‘sayable’ and what kinds of knowledge are excluded precisely because the underlying belief systems in place at the time do not allow for it to emerge. (Carrington 1993, p.xv). During this study the shifts in the ways the Western Australian education discourse constructs and describes the education of delinquents and alienated students are highlighted. In doing so, it can be seen in policy how the documents on students at educational risk now make it possible to talk about (construct knowledge about) school-aged offenders as alienated students with welfare and justice issues, where this was not the case fifteen years ago. Netolickey (1997) provides an example of how these students can now be discussed in Western Australian research and says:

The issue of youth truancy and crime was perceived to a central problem to the district...It was believed that encouraging truants back into education would diminish offending behaviours, such as petty crime, vandalism and graffiti often indulged during absence from school. (p.1)

Socio-historical contexts are themselves socially constructed and categorised by people; experts, theorists, academics and education professionals are examples of those who occupy privileged positions in society and shape how and what we may understand about the social world (Hunt & Wickham 1994, p.7). Social scientists have created ways of making sense of social history and the present, and have also at times, intended to predict the future. The construction of the youth category, the adolescent and the delinquent since the industrial revolution has been founded in what Cohen (1972, p.9) described as ‘moral

panic' about young people being seen as threats to the existing social values and acceptable social norms. Discourse is more than just talk. Carrington (1993) explains discourses as:

the frameworks of knowledge and power, which delineate the conditions of the possibility of speaking and writing. Discourse is not just how we speak to one another, although it can be, it is more a question of what is sayable and what gets counted as truth. (p.xv)

In the analysis of discourse the ways in which a society is governed through what is considered to be true is explored. Discursive devices such as policy and academic research are sources of knowledge and tools of governance. In accordance with Carrington (1993) this study “analyses the shifts and disruptions in the order of discourse” (p.xv) around the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia and positions the study in a socio-historical context. In this study, the way in which school-aged offenders have been constructed within a number of discourses, is charted and documented in a narrative form.

Discourse is very much more than the use of language to label external objects, it is the way language mediates the understanding of reality. Therefore, discourses are the language products that are shaped by values and themselves can change the shape of values (Hunt & Wickham 1994, p.7). The ways people conceptualise and behave in relation to social issues are influenced by the discourses on those issues, in that particular context, at that period in time. More than this, Hunt and Wickham (1994) explain the processes within discourses:

produce the kinds of people, with characteristic ways of thinking and feeling and doing, that live lives in specific contexts. (p.7)

Discourses shape the way people think, act and organise their social lives. Large institutions such as schools are sites of discourse where teachers behave in certain ways in accordance with the current thinking and language around schooling and the education of students. Students as the subjects of education governance mostly behave in the manner

expected of them by schools. Young people who are alienated from school during their compulsory years are themselves subjects of discourse and behave and know themselves in accordance with the discourses having the most power over their lives at the time.

In accordance with Carrington's (1993) definition, discourses are "frameworks of knowledge and power" (p.xv). Knowledge and power are important in understanding how discourse exerts control over what can be said and known about social issues. Truth is a central concept in that discourses develop and define social truths. The student considered at educational risk becomes identified as an object upon which a variety of truths may be applied because the discourse on students at educational risk provides a way of knowing and treating that student.

Truths are generated through the acceptance and rejection of some human perceptions of what seems to be occurring in the social world. Truth is inextricably linked with power in the ways some knowledge is considered true and some is not (Hunt & Wickham 1996, p.11). Knowledge exists within and because of discourse. Truths are claimed and power is employed in this process to define the boundaries of what is possible to know. Hunt and Wickham (1996) state:

Truth is not separated from power, rather it is one of the most important vehicles and expressions of power; power is exercised through the production and dissemination of truth. (p.11)

Consistent with Foucault's (1982) approach to tracing the descent of discourse and the socio-historical contexts in which discourses form and change, this study charts the descent of discourse to the current students at educational risk policies in Western Australia. However, the thesis does not seek the origin of the discourses assembled around the education of alienated school-aged offenders in Western Australian schools. It is concerned with a present situation and the social processes that have lead to the current state of social affairs (Harrison 1991, pp.85-89). Further to this, Malpass & Wickham (1995, p.39)

describe discourses as ‘assemblages’ of people, institutions, actions and the social outcomes they produce.

This research is therefore concerned with examining the emergence of the discourse on alienated students as students at educational risk. In doing so, consideration is given to how a number of associated discourses, surrounding the concept of delinquency since the industrial revolution, have contributed to making it possible to examine how alienated school-aged offenders in Western Australia are being constructed as subjects of the education discourse as alienated students.

### *The Construction Of Populations Within Discourse*

The work of Foucault (1982) offers a method of studying the ways in which people participate in discourse and are constructed within it. His thinking provides a way of examining how people are governed by powerful discourses and texts (Foucault 1982, p.777). The means of constructing young people as students or delinquents and subjects of discourse can be seen in the education policies on students at educational risk (1998) and the ways the education system and its associated practitioners deal with young people (DET Alternative Programs, 2003).

The ways in which young people identify themselves in relation to the school and education staff can consist of degrees of compliance and resistance. Sercombe (1996) explains the construction of populations within discourse as how:

a problem population is brought under discipline, how members of such populations are constituted in discourse and in specific institutional practices, and how they are encouraged to see themselves ‘rightly’, to cooperate in their normalisation. (p.55)

People are players in discourse formation, maintenance and dissolution. They carry out the tasks of talking, defining and disciplining populations within societies. People are both

generators and subjects of discourse and power. The process of constructing a population within discourse involves the documented separation, categorisation and objectification of people into subjects (Rabinow 1984, pp.7-11).

The first phase of this process of the construction of people as subjects of discourse involves the division and separation of part of a population from their conforming wider community. The group is seen as deviant, as not conforming to socially prescribed norms and is considered a threat to social stability. Rabinow (1984) states:

Essentially, 'dividing practices' are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion - usually in the spatial sense, but always in the social. (p.8)

The education practice of the removing of compulsory school-aged delinquents from mainstream classrooms to alternative education programs outside the formal state education system is an example of this phase of the process of dividing practices in action (Muncie 1984, p.140). In the second phase of the construction of a population as subjects of discourse, the differentiated population, (ie. difficult students attending alternative education programs), is studied. Science, as a tool to produce legitimate social truths, is applied, knowledge is created and the object of study is classified and named (Rabinow 1984, pp.7-11). This can be seen where students at educational risk and alienated students came increasingly under the gaze of psychologists where their behaviours were observed, categorised and treatment/management strategies and models of best practice were devised (Dyanan 1980, p.17).

Foucault (1982, p.777) explains the role of 'scientific classification' as the means whereby the separated population becomes the object of study. The application of the scientific method is important here as it provides a useful framework to dehumanise the separated population, observe chosen aspects of their behaviour and compile an organised collection of truth claims and generate discourse about them. In the next phase of the constitution of subjects of discourse, those who have been separated off from the

mainstream and studied begin to accept and use the roles and behaviours assigned to them by the governing discourse (Rabinow 1984, p.8).

People's sense of identity or selfhood is formed as a result of the external influences of governance (ibid). Social rights, obligations and expectations shape how we know others and ourselves. The final phase in the constitution of the subject involves the internal acceptance and practice of governing oneself as a subject of the discourses in play around us (Tait 1993, p.44). This final phase of subjectification is the way in which a person accepts the roles and behaviours designated to them as a subject of discourse. The term 'student':

defines young people in terms of a subordinate, but active, position in a powerful institution. (Sercombe 1996, p.7)

However, some young people do not refer to themselves as students. It is well known amongst professionals who work with school-aged offenders who are alienated from school that they tend to refer to themselves using terms other than 'student' such as 'crims', 'junkies' or 'street kids' (SSCEET 1996, p.42). It could be said they are actively living the role that has been discursively assigned through the processes of dividing practices and scientific classification that has occurred in the context of schooling, welfare and justice involvement.

Discourses are intermeshed and a number of discourses are usually operating in the governance of a subject at any time (Harrison 1991, pp.84-89) and there are a number of discourses operating around school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia. The education discourse on early school leavers and students at educational risk, the discourse on unemployment, poverty and marginalisation and the justice discourse on offender education each have a major defining role to play in the governance of this population of young people in Western Australia. The interplay between these discourses and the socio-historic context in which they are enacted provides the slice of social circumstance considered worthy of analysis in this thesis.



### *How Has This Study Been Done?*

This research takes the form of an extensive literature review in which the texts making up the body of literature collected became the object of study. Consistent with Gray (2000), in her study into the culture of Western Australian compulsory education and truancy as a form of student alienation, an institutional culture can be read alongside the documents comprising the discourse. Gray (2000) says:

The “text” of the culture of compulsory education...was a composition of actions, interactions and reactions of all stakeholders, as well as any documentary evidence justifying such actions. (p.62)

According to Crotty (1998) texts may be read in “ways that bring understanding” (p.87) and the language that constitutes texts:

is pivotal too, and shapes, the situations in which we find ourselves enmeshed the events that befall us, the practices we carry out and, in and through all of this the understandings we are able to reach (ibid, p.87)

The examination of documents in the literature review phase not only identified a gap in knowledge regarding the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia, it also provided the data, in a hermeneutic sense (Crotty, 1998, p.87), to be analysed on the socio-historical context informing the discourses around the education of Western Australian alienated students.

Therefore, the content of this thesis is both an extensive literature review and an analysis of texts comprising discourse. The analysis of documents in their socio-historical context required me to look back through the discourse to examine how it has shifted, changed and connected with other discourses in the ongoing production of knowledge and truth in order to govern people (Silverman 2000, p.827; Gubrium & Holstein 2000, pp.493-496). The study achieves this through systematic data collection and examination of literature related to delinquents and school-aged offenders who are alienated from school.

References to other textual sources within literature were used as clues to where the sets of knowledge about delinquents and schooling have come from and how they now relate to the education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia as alienated students in the present. At the commencement of this study the key education documents concerning students at educational risk in Western Australia between 1998 and 2003 were located.

These Western Australian government policies, reports, strategic plans and regulatory frameworks enact contemporary knowledge about students at educational risk and draw from the work of authors of policy from various state and federal government departments and academic research. Checking for and listing the references to other sources of information within these documents enabled me to develop a catalogue of themes patterned around students at educational risk that involved poor school attendance and low academic achievement.

From the general themes on the power relationship between schools and delinquents, the alienating effect of not gaining recognisable credentials from school and the subsequent alienation from full-time, stable employment, a number of associated and contributory sources of discourse became evident. These include the legislation, policy and research concerning the relationship between delinquents and schools; early school leaving and student retention; poor school achievement; unemployment, poverty and crime; students at educational risk and alienated students.

These related discourses collected around the education of school-aged offenders were read as signposts showing the way for deeper research into the socio-historical factors that have connected and play a part in creating the official talk about the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia.

The catalogue of references made from the current Western Australian discourse on students at educational risk were collected from university libraries, Western Australian government departmental libraries (Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice) and the internet. Key personnel involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Western Australian Department of

Education and Training policies on students at educational risk were also approached for advice on locating appropriate sources of literature for this study. These experts on the students at educational risk policy provided up to date documentary information, spanning 1998 to 2003, on new developments and recommended other sources of literature including reports accounting for the implementation of services to students at educational risk in Western Australia.

Student Services personnel in one Western Australian metropolitan education district also contributed detailed written information on the students at educational risk discourse in action across that district. The information provided included reports on outcomes regarding the implementation of the students at educational risk policy in that district and strategic plans describing how the district would maintain and adjust its services to such students. Principals of two schools in this district also offered advice on further sources of information, pamphlets and reports on the particular programs at their school that incorporated school-aged offenders as students at educational risk.

Personnel involved in the delivery of education services to alienated school-aged offenders from the Western Australian Department of Justice were also consulted for advice on reference sources. These teachers, who work in both the custodial and community justice contexts, provided written reports, statistical data, professional presentations and literature on the departmental advisory and advocacy services for the community based and custodial education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia. Department of Justice workers also supplied general information on sources of discourse on offender education in the custodial context.

Such localised documentary evidence, alongside the historical literature on delinquency, made it possible for this study to examine and comment on how the discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia is actually constituting school-aged offenders as alienated students. Geertz (1979), states the value of critical hermeneutic inquiry as:

A continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously. (p.239)

### *Data Analysis*

All of the literature gathered from the various sources was catalogued under the headings of the discourses from which they came, such as the history of the relationship between delinquency and schooling, early school leaving and alienation and risk in the Western Australian. This grouping of literature as data was used to shape responses to the sub questions to form the structure of the thesis chapters and subheadings. An endnote library of references was created using these discourses as topic headings for term lists within the electronic library making the retrieval of references and documents more effective.

Whilst reading the literature collected, a bank of key words was also developed. These keywords were used to conduct further library and internet searches and a more refined, obvious pathway showing how the descent of the assembled discourses was constructed. More importantly, key word searches on the internet and in library data bases focussing on topics such as: juvenile delinquency, young offenders, juvenile justice systems, students at risk, alienated students and juvenile offender education showed the links across the discourses associated with students at educational risk in Western Australia.

The keyword searches assisted in not only identifying the words shared between discourses but also made it possible to look at them in relation to the statements in which they were contained and check how each discourse talked about the education of school-aged offenders, or made reference to student alienation, delinquency and schooling. The use of key words and statements as research tools to locate literature and as an indicator of the discourse in relation to alienated students with criminal histories within each document greatly assisted in focusing research practice and the analysis of literature towards the thesis question.

This research involves the collation of literature as data and the identification of the discourses on the delinquent and the school, early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime gathered around the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia. An understanding is gained through an interpretation of socio-historical factors, within the documents as data, of how the current discourse on students at educational risk has come about. (Crotty 1998, p.144).

### *Summary*

A postpositive recognition of my subjective interest in the topic and an understanding that the data itself has determined the directions and findings of this thesis provides the foundation of this study. Professional interest, in relation to reflexive practice and academic achievement has formed the motivation to undertake this thesis. Working from the perspective that the nature of reality is socially constructed (Hakim 1987 pp.1-16; Crotty 1998, pp.42-52, 66-71; Punch 1998, pp.15, 140-146; Denzin & Lincoln 2000, pp. 5-7,18) an interpretive theoretical framework has been chosen because it allows for the data, and myself as the researcher, to influence the direction, content and knowledge constructed in the process. Underpinning this thesis is my academic claim to truth in a sociological sense and acknowledgement of the nature of my relationship with the topic as interactive and value laden (Guba, 1990, pp.221-27).

## SECTION TWO - THE SOCIO-HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND DISCOURSES ASSEMBLED AROUND DELINQUENCY AND EDUCATION

In chapters three to seven I explore the socio-historical features of the discourses that discuss the relationship between the delinquent and the school. The texts examined highlight how the concept of delinquency developed alongside the emergence of the school and universal education in the 1800s. The ways in which schools have governed and regulated the lives of working class children throughout history is also studied to create a context for the examination of the discourses assembled around delinquency in the late twentieth century, in the western speaking world, will be examined.

These discourses include the bodies of knowledge around early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime. They share common concepts that have informed the current Australian national student retention policies that discuss the education and regulation of disadvantaged, delinquent at risk youth who may also be alienated from school. The more recent socio-historical background of the relationship between delinquent youth and the Western Australian state education system spanning the 1980s to 2003 is also presented in this section of the study. In doing this, I locate the study in a real and current Western Australian context and continue to explore the discourses that document the relationship between delinquents and schooling.

The factors documented in the historical texts examined throughout this thesis indicate four main discourses play a significant role in the ways school-aged, delinquent youth who do not attend school have been educated in Western Australia. The discourses on early school-leaving and student retention discuss the importance of education in relieving poverty and reducing criminality. These reasons are also documented as justifications for educational reform in Australia. The concept of student alienation and the categorisation of such school-aged young people as students at educational risk is explored in this section of the thesis to provide an insight into the emergence of education policies and practices in Western Australia that construct delinquent youth as alienated students.

### Chapter Three

#### *History Of The Relationship Between The School And The Delinquent*

This chapter charts the history of the relationship between the school and those young people considered a threat to society because of their potential for delinquency. The appearance of schools for working class children and separate justice and welfare systems in the early 1800s saw the emergence of a new set of institutional practices and governing agencies that aimed to regulate the lives of children and youth.

With the creation of the youth category within discourse and schooling as a technique of governing young people, working class youth in post industrial western speaking societies were constructed as vulnerable to lives of crime if they were not educated. The industrial revolution and the removal of children from industry to education and welfare is documented as part of history informing and shaping how delinquency is defined and understood and what role schooling has to play in lives of Australian children and youth.

#### *Discourses On Youth, Delinquency And Schooling*

School-aged offenders who are alienated from school feature mostly in the historical literature concerning delinquency, crime and the role of the school in exercising social control (Muncie, 1984; Borowski & Murray 1985; Tait 1993; Bessant, Sercombe & Watts 1998, pp.3-15;). Within the texts examined, historical accounts construct delinquency as arising out of social disadvantage and poverty. The discourses assembled around delinquency also describe the role of education as a means of elevating the poor from their unsatisfactory position in society. Throughout history, delinquents have been periodically contained within and then excluded from schools, indicating shifts in their governance according to the socio-political agendas at the time (Bessant et al, 1998, pp. 8-13).

Schools emerged in the late nineteenth century as a means of governing the children of the middle classes and later the poor. This was followed by the creation of welfare and justice systems in both Britain and Australia (ibid, pp.12-14). The discourses on youth, delinquency and schooling are summarised by Maunders as modern measures of social control in order to preserve hierarchical social structures and regulate a potentially problematic population:

Institutions such as schools, welfare bodies and voluntary youth organisations, worked as instruments to mould the minds, values and morality of working class young people to support and invigorate capitalism and develop a harmonious relationship between the classes whilst preserving the position of the ruling elite. (Maunders 1984, p.17)

The relationship between delinquents and schools is well documented (Corrigan, 1979; Curr.e, 1979; Muncie, 1984; Borowski, 1985; Hixon & Tinznan, 1990; Tait, 1993 Bessant & Watts, 1994; Delvin, 1995). Some texts outline how delinquents were included in the education discourse for the purpose of governing the poor around the time of the industrial revolution (Wundersitz 1996, p.114). In more recent times, the discourse on unemployment and social marginalisation has again highlighted concerns about early school leaving and poverty (Willis, 1970; Corrigan, 1979). This apprehension is part of the ongoing discourse on the governance of working class and poor youth who, since the mid 1970s, are not able to participate in the labour market because of the decreasing availability of unskilled full time work (Oerlemans & Jenkins 1998, p.118).

### *The Juvenile Underclass*

School-aged offenders and delinquents are mostly described in terms of their poverty, low school achievement, unemployment and crime (Muncie 1984, pp.134-137; Petrie, Berry & Smith 1980, pp.52-55; van Kreiken 1991, pp.1-30; Carrington 1993, pp.66; Wundersitz 1996, p.113). The education literature in the late 1980s and 1990s define these young people in terms of their governance by the welfare and justice sectors. Their criminal



behaviour was often associated with alienated students within the discourse on students at educational risk (WACOSS, 1990, pp.23-24;). In the period spanning the 1980s through to the mid 1990s, alienated students were viewed as one of the most disadvantaged sections of a wider population of early school leavers and students at educational risk who were sitting on the margins of both education and employment. The discourses on youth unemployment also describe early school leavers with criminal records as members of an emerging 'juvenile underclass' (Polk 1984; Dwyer 1996).

The discourse on a juvenile underclass is based on two central themes, that of the 'adolescent' and the 'poor' (Bessant 1995, pp. 33-35). Marginalised, or alienated young people in Australia are framed by both conservative right and social democratic left political discourses as a population to be governed to avoid problems associated with youth idleness. This "relationship between state power and those living in poverty, or what Foucault referred to as 'the diffusion of the agencies of governance'." explains the ways in which the state always governs a population considered problematic (ibid, p.33).

Bessant (1995) explains how this regulation of delinquents can be seen in the ways the political left argue that economic rationalist policies have served to further alienate some young people through cutbacks to state provision of free essential services and benefits. From the right, alienated groups exist because of dependence on the welfare state and argue for increases in personal accountability before the law and lifestyle choices. (ibid, pp.33-34).

The metaphors and general descriptions of the members of the juvenile underclass seem to revolve around "their criminality and violence." (Bessant 1995, p.35). It is suggested that the "moral panics" (Cohen 1972, p.9) contained in the discourse on the juvenile underclass highlight the reaction to unemployment. This response is described as taking the form of increases in the retention of students in secondary and post secondary education in Australia. (White 1990, pp.15-33; Sercombe 1996, p.14). The notion of a juvenile underclass is not so new: in fact the history of the formation of the school, compulsory education and the periodic extensions to the school leaving age seem to occur

in response to labour market crises and have featured prominently in the discourse on youth and delinquency (Muncie 1984, p.135).

### *The Construction Of The Youth Category*

The construction and meaning of the term adolescence has been developed throughout history (Springhall 1983, p.20). 'Adolescence' is defined as the stage between childhood innocence and adulthood responsibility. Springhall (1983) notes the language used to discuss adolescence is usually negative and says:

To be 'adolescent' generally means to be juvenile, vulgar, self important and most often just silly in behaviour. (p.20)

The construction of young people as subjects of discourse and how they are governed involves various youth sub-categories, one of which is the delinquent. Such pejorative sub-categories are useful in that they provide a benchmark for socially acceptable norms against which delinquent youth can be contrasted (Tait 1993, pp.40-41). In this sense, the category of the delinquent indicates what is not socially acceptable and on what grounds certain young people may be socially and educationally excluded or included and what techniques of governance are required.

The modern concept of youth is documented as having come about over the last three hundred years (Bessant et al 1998, p.5). The various social and economic operations that have shaped current perceptions of young people are explained by Factor and Pitts (2000) as a:

product of the demographic, social and economic dislocation occasioned by rapid industrial urbanisation. Then, as now, such radical changes raised concerns amongst politicians, the media, police and the clergy about the weakening of conventional family forms and values, the consequent erosion of informal social controls and the drunkenness, vice, violence and crime to

which such anomie gave rise. (p.1)

The commentary comprising the discourse on youth, in particular, youth as a problem population to be regulated, has occurred alongside the creation of a number of institutions within which youth can be regulated. One of these institutions is the school and the subsequent discourse on education that has developed since the industrial revolution has contributed to the emergence of knowledge around youth at risk:

*Schooling As A Technique Of Governance*

In the early to mid 1800s schools were established for middle class youth to provide a skilled labour force to support increasing mechanisation in industry. However the education at the time was geared towards the upper classes and only offered a narrow pathway into the civil and professional labour market. The school of the early 1800s became a means whereby the middle classes could contain their young men and keep them in a state of dependency and moral control (Factor & Pitts 2000, pp.1-4).

Working class young people were gradually moved out of employment towards the late nineteenth century by the increased mechanisation in industry. The movement of working class children from employment was also influenced by the growing middle class social reform agenda based on Rousseau's (1712-1778) ideas of childhood as a time of innocence and the social consequences of the Factory Acts of 1833. (Bessant et al 1998, pp.6-10). The increasing numbers of young people not working or attending school became of concern to the middle class who had transformed the streets from market places, sites of small industry and locations where the working class socialised to:

a place for shopping and the transport of goods, and working class pursuits were not consistent with this new function. (Bessant et al 1998, p.10)

In the early 1800s legislation was introduced to clear the streets of London to make way for a more middle class occupation of public space. With this removal of the working

classes from the streets came laws that resulted in criminal convictions and contributed to the emergence of the youth categories of the 'delinquent' and the 'criminal' in discourse (Sercombe 1996, pp.3-4; Factor & Pitts, 2000, pp.1-2). The social activities of the middle class 'child savers' saw the establishment of schools for delinquents and the implementation of legislation, the Youth Offenders Act 1854, sealed the fate of idle working class youth as subjects of the education/welfare discourse.

The invention of the reformatory for delinquents, the industrial school for potential delinquents and workhouses for the poor saw the beginning of the process whereby the mechanisms of dividing practices, scientific classification and self-formation of the delinquent as a subject of governance was possible (Muncie, 1984, pp.134-137). The use of such separate sites where working class, delinquent and criminal youth could be regulated and educated has remained a feature of the relationship between delinquency and schooling.

This discursive process whereby working class youth became constituted as subjects of governance in the mid 1800s was increasingly apparent with the establishment of compulsory education in England in 1870. Muncie (1984) argues that the Education Act of 1870 was not a benevolent act of philanthropy to provide working class children with a better life, but an effort to contain and train working class youth to be able and willing to undertake factory labour. He argues the provision of state education to the working classes was very much concerned with instilling in them middle class morals and religious practices to dispel any "counter revolutionary tendencies." (ibid, p.135).

The institution of universal education in the late 1800s was met with some opposition from the working classes as they had their own schools, and organised resistance by young people and their parents took the form of strikes, truancy and civil disobedience. This was met with increasing government pressure achieved through school inspections, the need for teachers to be trained and the ceasing of funding to working class schools (Muncie, 1984, p.137). By the end of the nineteenth century both middle and working class youth were contained in schools and considered "potentially delinquent." (Bessant et al 1998, p.13). In

the late 1800s schools for delinquents were formed in Australia based on the British reform models of residential industrial schools and reformatories and such institutions served to both educate and contain “troublesome” children and youth (Wundersitz 1996, pp.113-114).

Schools provided an information bridge for the welfare and justice institutions of the time to intervene and govern difficult, non-attending students (Petrie et al 1980, pp.52-55; Carrington 1993, p.66). That is, schools came to act as sources of discourse on ‘problem children’ and communicated this information to other sites of discourse such as the welfare and justice systems and contributed to the evolution of those discourses and their particular techniques of governance. Muncie (1984) suggests:

State schooling is thus an area of intervention which simultaneously tries to educate neglected youth, control delinquent youth, enforce particular moral standards as universal and ensure that the labour force is both adequately trained and willing. (p.135)

Universal education as a means of governing a delinquent element of the youth population was also documented as located at the centre of a wider network of governing bodies controlling the lives of delinquent youth (Carrington 1993, pp.53-68). These other regulating institutions included those involving the governing of juvenile criminal behaviour and child welfare (Muncie 1984, p.135; van Kreiken 1991, pp.45-60; Wundersitz 1996, pp.113-116; Factor & Pitts 2000, pp.2-4).

### *Delinquency, Education, Welfare And Justice*

The commentary on the history of the school in relation to the education of delinquents and the other forms of governance that were emerging in the nineteenth century is consistently documented alongside the discourses on welfare and justice (van Kreiken 1991, pp.61-83; Sercombe nd, pp.3-4) The ‘child saver’ movement and the work of people such as Carpenter in the establishment of schools for working class children (Bessant et al

1998, p.13), were concerned with importing middle class values to the neglectful and immoral working classes. Alongside the various legislative measures to remove the working classes from the streets and save their children came the ‘criminalisation’ of working class youth and new statutory practices for their control within the justice system (ibid, p.13).

Before the eyes of the law convicted children and youth were separated from convicted adults, evidenced in the Youth Offenders Act of 1854 whereby 1899 juvenile offenders in Britain were imprisoned in separate facilities to adult offenders. Wundersitz (1996) says:

The development of separate institutions for young offenders represented only the first step in the process of developing a different system of justice for juveniles. It was during the same period - the 1850s and 1860s – that the groundwork for a Children’s Court system was laid down. (ibid, p.115)

The justice systems in western industrialised communities began to describe children and youth as different to adults. Therefore, alternative philosophies were applied in judicial decision making processes as they related to youth and Children’s Courts were conceived in the United Kingdom and Wales in 1908, (Factor & Pitts 2000, p.2).

The schooling of the working classes was both a reaction to youth idleness and concerns of a perceived threat to middle class sensibilities. This was complemented by a middle class reformist welfare agenda. The assemblage of the reformist activities of the middle classes in relation to education, welfare and justice must also be viewed in the wider political context (Finer & Nellis 1998, p. 60). The development of an increasingly industrialised society and the growing role of the state in ensuring liberal democratic values in its citizens is central to understanding the education, welfare and justice discourses that have lead to a current knowledge about the governance of school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia.

A framework of understanding the role of government in producing citizens is useful in explaining the power of the state and it may be applied to the role of the school in governing delinquents. Meredyth and Tyler (1993) describe this process and state:

Foucault has traced a shift from a Machiavellian deployment of the population primarily as a tool in reinforcing the power of the sovereign over territory, to the modern era where the welfare of the population is synonymous with the welfare of the state, and where the condition of the population itself becomes one of the interests and ends of government (p.42)

The application of Foucault's thinking in relation to the role of government in shaping people as citizens highlights the importance of governments in the construction of a population as subjects of statutory, bureaucratic discourses, such as the education discourse on students at educational risk (ibid, p.42). In a similar vein the nation state can be seen as having in its mandate, the power to develop, oversee and police its citizens according to socially prescribed norms; that is, government bureaucracy (Finer & Nellis 1998, p.60). Finer and Nellis (1998) also state that the role of government included the provision and management of "universal social services and education." (p.60) to set a social and governmental benchmark for liberal democratic rights and responsibilities.

### *Compulsory Universal Education*

The enactment of compulsory universal education laws took place in the United Kingdom in 1870 and over the next decade in Australia. Gradually, compulsory education was applied, firstly, to children and later to young people when their labour could be spared (Bessant et al 1998, p.14). The enactment of compulsory universal education alongside the Factory Acts of 1833 were seen to be benevolent measures aimed at reducing the exploitation of children and knowing them as a distinct population, separate from adults (van Kreiken 1991, pp.15 -17).

Universal education was considered both a right and a responsibility on behalf of individual citizens and as such participation in education was seen as "the duty of each individual to improve and civilise themselves for the benefit of the social health of the community." (Rose 1989, p.122). The role of compulsory education in the formation of citizens is described as neither conspiratorial and controlling nor benevolent and emancipatory, but as:

forms of government over youth which operate according to a limited grid of norms and regulations. (Carrington 1993, p.68)

In this sense, it becomes possible to look at the various social conditions making it possible for the governance of young people, arising from middle class intervention, to become embedded in the education discourse.

### *The Child Savers And Child Welfare*

The history of the middle class and state involvement in the welfare of working class children in Western industrial societies around the 1800s, is explained as an increasing belief in the role of education to elevate the working class morality and work ethic to a standard considered acceptable by the middle class reformists (van Kreiken 1991, p.49). Carrington (1993) agrees with van Kreiken and comments on the role of the state in protecting children from exploitation and regulating the activities of delinquents.

She states:

The provision of universal education and the institution of legislation preventing the employment of children [*in factories*], were among the remedies suggested by charitable bodies to protect children from being exploited. (p.67)



Up to the establishment of state governed compulsory education, social reformers went about containing criminal youth in reformatories, delinquent youth in industrial schools and paupers, or pre delinquents, in work houses. The current state welfare systems in western societies arose out of the combination of a number of socio-historical circumstances. Here the relationship between government institutions and 'helping agencies' and the working class family comes to the fore (Factor & Pitts 2000, pp. 1-7).

The main arguments produced within social research about how and why welfare as a form of governance came about and has continued is based on the actions of the middle class upon the working class (van Kreiken, 1991, pp.1-30). However, the interpretation of these interventions seems to vary from the notion of the state as an agency of social control to that of humanitarian protector of the vulnerable in society. The power relationship between the working class family and the middle class reformer saw the evolution of the institution of education as the major vehicle for the governance of working class children to produce moral, industrious citizens. Converging with the development of the education/welfare discourse was the judicial forms of governing working class youth through the court system (ibid, pp. 1-30).

Compulsory education, from the late nineteenth century, has brought with it a number of legislative changes that may be seen as furthering the project of governing delinquents. The progression of a separate justice system for young people that arose from the child saving movement of the 1800s contributed to the development of the Children's Court system early in the twentieth century (Wundersitz 1996, p.113).

#### *A Separate Justice System For Juveniles*

By the mid 1800s middle class reformers criticised the judicial systems in western industrial societies for imprisoning children and young people in adult jails (Wundersitz 1996, p.113). The child saving movement promoted the ideas that children and young people were developing socially and emotionally and therefore should be dealt with differently to adults before the law. In order for delinquents to grow into mature, law

abiding citizens the role of the court, as a site of governance, was to imitate a caring middle class parent. Wundersitz (1996) claims that the child saver movement was the basis of the:

'welfare model' of justice, and it is this approach which has to varying degrees, dominated the Australian juvenile justice systems. (p.117)

Trends in the discourses on delinquency in the twentieth century, within the justice systems in Australian states and territories, commenced with a 'welfare model' approach followed by a growing justice agenda (van Kreiken, 1991, p. 23; Gale et al 1993, pp.3-17 & 38-51; Naffine & Wundersitz 1994, pp.235-240; Blagg & Wilkie 1995, pp.16-17; Wundersitz 1996, pp.113-147; Bessant et al 1998, p.211;). With the inception of the first Children's Court in South Australia in 1895, followed over the next decade in other Australian jurisdictions, the welfare focus on juvenile offenders was typified by the need to protect and rehabilitate the delinquent young person. As Maunders (1984) states, the early 1900s saw the establishment of juvenile justice institutions run by state employees whose role it was to oversee court dispositions and intervene in the lives of offenders to help them reform. He claims that:

Probation was established in line with this view. However, in the period between the wars, when the upper class reformers became replaced by bureaucrats in the systems they created, the punitive attitude reasserted itself. This can be seen today in the close administrative relationship, within the Department of Community Welfare Services, of institutions of correction and institutions of care, so close that outsiders view them totally as institutions of correction. (p. 20)

Considering the discourses on middle class child saving in the establishment of universal education in the late nineteenth century and the institution of a separate justice system for juvenile offenders at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is important to look at changes and developments to the dominant discourse on the protection of children and their rights.

To varying degrees the welfare model dominated the discourses on the governance of delinquents in the first half of the twentieth century. The 'law and order' agenda increasingly challenged the success of the welfare approach to dealing with juvenile delinquency and civil rights lobbies originating in America in the 1960s (Naffine & Wundersitz 1994, p.238). These critiques were a response to the perceived failure of the welfare approach in dealing with an escalation of juvenile crime. This discourse was founded on concerns for individual civil rights and criticisms of state intervention into the lives of young offenders as being too intrusive. The civil rights lobby advocated for juvenile justice systems to accord children and young people the rights of adults before the court in terms of 'due process' and 'formal justice', and the 'law and order' lobby pushed for increased punishment as a deterrent to criminal activity (ibid, p. 238).

### *The Rights Of Children*

Another dominant discourse underpinning twentieth century thinking concerning the welfare, education and later, justice issues concerning children in western societies was the discourse on universal human rights and the rights of children and youth. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was announced in 1948 in response to the many atrocities committed in the Second World War and was a formal institution of liberal 'universalist' ideology on an international scale (Heywood 1998, pp. 24-65). The Declaration outlines fundamental human rights, common to all people of all nations and for these inalienable rights be enshrined in government policy and practices to ensure freedom, justice and peace for all people (Kenny 1994, p.263). The Declaration does not have the power to dictate government policy but is more often used as a set of guiding principles when dealing with human social organisation and governance (Brownwell & Allison 1989, p.45).

The rights of children were recognised in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924 and later adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (1959), the Geneva Declaration was further extended and included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The rights of children are recognised within the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (articles twenty three and twenty four), in article ten of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. They are also recognised in the statutes and policies of state and private organisations dealing with the welfare of children (<http://www.unm.edu/~parkman/UN.htm>). These international standards also apply to the:

humane administration and management of the criminal justice system as it affects children and young people. (<http://www.unm.edu/~parkman/UN.htm>)

The main feature of all conventions as they apply to children and young people below the age of majority concerns the institution of legislation, policies and social/cultural practices that promote and protect their best interests at all times:

The Convention also recognises that children require special protection, that they are particularly vulnerable and that they are in the process of maturing towards adulthood. This maturation is seen as occurring within a broad framework of common rights and freedoms but also within a unique family and shared cultural context giving richness of meaning to the child's identity and guidance for his/her development. (Blagg & Wilkie 1993, pp.8-9)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1959 and 1989) outline the principle where children, because of their physical and emotional immaturity, require special safeguards and care in relation to the protection of their dignity and freedom. The aim of this principle is to ensure children fully assume their responsibility as citizens within the human community (<http://www.unm.edu/~parkman/UN.htm>). Australia is signatory to these principles and they are evident in legislation such as the Western Australian Child Welfare Act (1947). Such legislative commitment to the protection of children in the social context is seen where state governance of children and young people is to be carried out with consideration for their best interests in all policy and judicial decision making activities. However, as Bronwell and Allison (1989) state:

As international instruments, Declarations such as the present Declaration on the Rights of the Child are what is known as 'soft law': they are statements of general principles accepted by governments but which carry no specific obligations. They contrast with Conventions, which are binding, 'hard law' requiring a formal decision on the part of individual states to accede to or ratify them. (p.50)

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules, 1985), promote that, where children and young people are involved in crime, their welfare issues must be addressed in order to reduce their offending behaviour and therefore, reduce the need for justice interventions. Where justice intervention is required, detention should be seen as a last option and community based sanctions including diversion programs and community service orders applied where possible.

The human right to an education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These rights are extended to adults, young people and children as a tool for the human realisation of their full potential as active, moral and fair citizens (<http://www.unhcr.org/refugees/education.html>). The right to an education is one of the cornerstones of western societies and is implicit in education policy and legislation. The documented education practices around this concept and policies concerning alienated schoolaged offenders in Western Australia show tensions continue to exist between certain students and schools.

### *Summary*

The documented history of the school and delinquency, the associated institutions concerning the welfare and rights of children and the emergence of a separate justice system for children and youth provides a background from which an understanding of how school-aged offenders in Western Australia are constructed in education policy. In the next

chapter a history of the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia is provided. The shifts in Western Australian education discourse and the documented social events that contributed to education reform are presented in order to show how the current education policies concerning students at educational risk have been shaped.

## Chapter Four

### *A Recent History Of The Education Of School-Aged Offenders In Western Australia*

To provide a context for charting the history of the discourses assembled around school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia, it is useful to explore the socio-historical context that has lead to the recent shift in the Western Australian education policies and practices concerning students at educational risk. The late 1980s and 1990s saw a number of changes to the Western Australian welfare and justice discourses and the national discourse on unemployment, early school leaving and student retention to year twelve. Amidst these changes, the governance of schoolaged offenders in Western Australia also began to change (Bonjolo 1991, p.5; WALA 1991, pp.11-12; Wilkie 1991, p.10; Milmo 1994, pp.18-20).

This chapter outlines the socio-historical context of the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia between 1980 and 2000. The social and political events contributing to shifts in the state welfare, justice and education systems is examined alongside local research that indicated the need for improvements to how school-aged offenders as alienated students were being educated. This narrative description of recent local events makes it possible to explore the socio-historical background to the discourse on the relationship between the delinquent and the school in post industrial England. The description of events in Western Australia sets the scene from which the policies and practices in Australian schools on the education of delinquent students who are constructed as students at educational risk and alienated students can be examined.

### *Alternative Programs*

Young people alienated from school began to be described as students at educational risk across Australia in the 1990s (Spillane & Wheatley 2001, p.10). The alternative

programs in Western Australia that had previously kept alienated students and school-aged offenders off the streets were being developed by the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA). The education of alienated students began to be documented as problematic and as the responsibility to the state education system rather than that of the welfare and justice systems. School-aged offenders who were alienated from school because of their behaviour and skill levels were beginning to be recognised as at risk of never gaining full time employment and thus becoming a welfare burden on the state.

Historically, young people such as those who had involvement with justice and welfare institutions often ceased being known as students once all school supports were exhausted and regular attendance dropped off (Spillane & Wheatley 2001, p.10). It is interesting to consider the period between 1980 to the late 1990s in Western Australia when human service professionals and educators emphasised school-aged offenders' welfare and justice issues over their continuous attendance at school (DCS 1987, pp.1-5; WACOSS 1991, pp.23-24). In the processes and procedures followed by justice, welfare and education departments, during this decade (Wilkie 1991, pp.10-11; Wells 1999, pp.1-8), conditions were created whereby teachers, education administrators, justice and welfare officers could be considered to have contributed to the process of alienation by down-playing the school-aged offender's student status and highlighting their difference and deviance in criminality.

Shifts in education policy and practice regarding students at educational risk and alienated students have occurred (EDWA Plan for Government Schools 1998-2000; DET Draft Plan for Government Schools 2003). It is stated by Justice workers in Western Australia that the inclusion of alienated students in the welfare and justice discourses often seem to coincide with those young people having more to do with the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Development (DCD), in a formal statutory sense, than they did with their local school (Ansell 2002, p.3). Evidence given in a Western Australian Select Committee on Youth Affairs in 1992 stated that:

over 80% of children of compulsory school age who appeared in court on five or more occasions had not been to school for a year. (WALA 1992, p.11)



Alienation from school is documented as part of a wider social process of marginalisation. School-aged young people having regular, formal contact with the Department for Community Development and the Department of Justice often have social, behavioural and academic problems long before alienation from school occurs (Dwyer 1987, p.4; Szaday, 1989; WALA 1992, pp.2-11; Batten & Russell 1995, p. 52).

### *The Possibility Of Inclusion*

The inclusion of school-aged offenders who are at risk of dropping out of school or who are alienated from the education system in Western Australia is now occurring in a more formal and documented manner in response to the requirements of the state education system Making the Difference Policies (1998) and the Students at Educational Risk Strategy (1998). There are direct references made to students at educational risk and the particular needs of alienated students in these education policies. More importantly, school responsibility for the provision of education to such students is clearly stated (EDWA, Making the Difference - Policy and Guidelines, pp.1-11). The Department of Education and Training (DET) in Western Australia (formerly EDWA) announced their commitment to catering for students at educational risk in the policy document, Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000 (1997) and the next such plan is currently in draft form (DET, Draft Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007).

Students at educational risk are clearly identified as an ongoing priority in the planned changes to the education system for this state. The 1997 document also admits the failure of the Western Australian education system in catering for certain groups of students who are considered at risk of not achieving their full potential in the school setting. It is stated:

that at least 20% of our classroom population are not developing the understandings, skills and confidence to achieve their individual potential.  
(EDWA Making the Difference, 1998, p.3)

This policy statement and the associated strategies can also be interpreted as a commitment to address the failing aspects of the school system where the education and governance of low achievers and difficult students has not been so successful (EDWA, *Making the Difference - Policy and Guidelines*, 1998, pp.1-11).

The emergence of the students at educational risk category is a part of a series of related social, academic and political developments changing the way the education community views delinquents. The social and political environment in Western Australia in the 1990s saw a number of related events including changes to the youth labour market and national student retention policies, the closing of welfare and justice state funded alternative education programs and shifts in national vocational education and training agenda.

The convergence of these socio-political factors has contributed to shaping the discourse around students at educational risk and school-aged offenders who are alienated from school. These social events were occurring across a number of discourses associated with alienated school-aged offenders and for the purpose of commencing this commentary the discursive instrument of State education legislation will be addressed first.

### *The Historical Practices Of Exclusion In The 1980s And 1990s*

The discourse on students at educational risk discusses the difficulties experienced by teachers and schools in educating, controlling and governing an often-unwilling section of the general population of students (Lipke 1981, p.373; Tame 1983, p.24; Polk 1984, pp.472-473; Mc Cormack 1996, p.1). The reasons for this are varied. However, a major consideration when moving school-aged offenders out of the mainstream school population has been to protect the 'good students' from 'bad influences' and maintain the general order and proper functioning of schools (Sercombe et al 2002, p.39; Brathby 1998, pp. 16-17). This was clearly stated in section 20g. of the Education Act 1927 (WA) that was the legislation in operation until 1999 when the School Education Act 1999 came into operation. The ways in which certain students who pose problems in mainstream education

settings is contained within the following sections of the Act:

s.20 g. (1) If a person holding or acting in a prescribed class of position is of the opinion that the conduct and behaviour of a child attending a government school is not conducive to the good order and proper management of the Government school the person may suspend the child from attendance at the government school in accordance with and subject to the regulations.

(2) Where pursuant to subsection (1) a person holding or acting in a prescribed class of position...may in addition recommend to the Minister that the child be excluded from attending the Government school.  
(Education Act WA 1928, p. 39)

In the early 1990s in Western Australia evidence given to the Select Committee on Youth Affairs (1992) included information provided by educationalists that:

in a number of cases, school discipline policies had been streamlining the exit of at risk students from school thereby compounding the likelihood of their subsequent entry into a marginalised and criminal lifestyle. (WALA 1992, p.10).

A national enquiry into truancy and exclusion from school across Australia also:

clearly indicates that there is considerable agreement among the key players, education providers, teachers, parents, workers with young people and community workers, that a situation exists where young people are removing themselves from school, or are being removed, that this affects their life chances. (SSCEET, 1996, p.viii)

According to the education discourse, changes to this practice have occurred through the tightening up and standardisation of school practices and procedures regarding

attendance at alternative programs and exclusion and suspension from school by the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET Making the Difference - Behaviour Management in Schools, 2001). There is a clearly documented transition from the practices of excluding difficult students and not re engaging absent, problematic students to a legislative and policy commitment to supporting the retention and participation of students at educational risk and alienated students in Western Australia since 1998 (EDWA Plan for Government Schools 1998-2000; EDWA Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk 1998; DET Making the Difference - Behaviour Management in Schools, 2001; DET Draft Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007). These documents provide the basis for this thesis to trace the shift in how the Western Australian education system is now constructing and including school-aged offenders as alienated students.

Prior to 1998 in Western Australia, some schools worked in official and unofficial partnership with other government and non-government agencies in the provision of small alternative programs for difficult and delinquent students in the early 1990s with funding from the Department for Community Development (Wilkie 1991, pp.10-11). This financial assistance for the state welfare system helped with the costs of providing outreach support services and extra staff. Such programs were usually located off the school campus, thus separating the 'offenders' from the 'students' (Milmo 1994, pp.18-20). The separate provision of alternative education programs for delinquents in Western Australia was intended to be temporary in nature. Dentice, Grindrod, Houlbrook & Ozich (1987) explain this thinking:

The students, at least for a time, need to be removed from a situation where they are failing and to be provided with a program in which they can be successful, and be linked up with their world, their interests and their community. There is a need for them to function in a different setting to restore self-esteem, trust and their interest in learning. (p.1)

Generally, schools had no ongoing formal involvement with school-aged offenders for the purpose of their education once welfare and justice institutions and their programs that were not officially linked with the formal state education system took them up (WALA, 1991, p.49; Spillane & Wheatley 2001, p.10).

The movement of difficult and delinquent students to such programs was also made legally possible by section thirteen, parts four and five of the Education Act 1928 (WA) which gave the Principal of a school the authority to exempt a child from school for that child's continued education or preparation for employment. The assumption was that if a school-aged offender or difficult student was not manageable in the school he or she might be better suited to employment. Such arrangements made in good faith may have contributed to the alienation of school-aged offenders from education and added to their structural disadvantage in the wider social context of further training and employment because of the shrinking youth labour market and availability of full time unskilled jobs (Dwyer 1996, p.11; Bessant & Cook 1998, pp.1-5).

Schools' contributions through the exclusion and alienation of school-aged offenders often occurred with the assistance and agreement of human service professionals employed by state welfare and justice agencies (Petrie, Berry & Smith 1980, pp.53-55; Maunders 1984, p. 14; Brown 1991, p.41). These agencies are documented as providing somewhere for delinquent students to go, and so took up the role of including school-aged offenders by constituting them within the welfare and justice discourses as 'offenders' or 'program participants' or 'young people' and not as students (Wilkie 1991, p. 10; Nicholls 1991, p.155). The documented impact of school-aged young people alienated from the formal state education system and included in the welfare and justice systems is seen as marginalising them from the world of work to a life of poverty (Finch & Nieuwenhuysen 1998, pp.204-205).

Up until 1993, alternative education programs for alienated students were mostly provided by the state welfare system (DCS 1987, pp.1-3; DCS 1990, pp.1-4; Wilkie 1991, pp.10-11; WACOSS 1993, pp.23-24). This meant that these young people had less contact

with mainstream education and its techniques in skilling and controlling students and more contact with welfare funded and justice orientated programs. Pike, Thompson & Thompson (1995) outline the strong agenda of reform for these young people held by these programs. Pike et al (1995) state:

They are designed to develop at risk students' self esteem and abilities to cope with societal pressure. (Pike, Thompson & Thompson 1995, p.53)

The group work approach to providing lifeskills activities was very different to the structured atmosphere of school and generally literacy and numeracy activities were not a major focus (Mason & Wilson 1988, pp.1-8). If literacy and numeracy programs were delivered they did not lead to accredited or credentials recognised in the labour market (WALA 1992, p.50). The alternative programs offered by the welfare system were often funded, managed and run by people from the helping professions, not teachers and staff focussed on the development of participant self-esteem as a technique of governance. The community based alternative programs during the 1990s that were funded to move these young people into employment, return them to school or other training programs found school-aged offenders who were alienated from school mostly didn't return to school or get jobs (Wilkie 1991, p.70; SSCEET 1996, p.3).

### *The Shift In The Western Australian Education Discourse*

Welfare, justice and employment practitioners, in the 1990s, began to point out that school-aged young people who had left education early did not get jobs or keep them, nor could they read, write or do maths confidently and some of them were committing crime (SSCEET 1996, pp.5-7; Ashworth 2000, p.23). In the late 1970s concerns related to youth unemployment and early school leaving began to emerge nationally and within Western Australia concerns about the retention of compulsory school-aged young people became evident in research by Rosier (1978) where he stated:

The data collected before the issue of school retentivity became more urgent in the mid 1970s as a result of increasing levels of unemployment of young persons. (p.11)

With the increasing concerns about youth unemployment in the fifteen to nineteen year old youth category, the links between delinquency, low academic achievement and unemployment began to take shape within a discourse on early school leaving, student retention and marginalisation (Polk, 1984; Sweet, 1988). In the early 1990s the police, media, and welfare commentators were increasingly discussing the connection between compulsory school-aged students truanting from school and juvenile crime (Batten & Russell 1995, p.20).

In 1991 juvenile crime hit the headlines in Western Australia, culminating in the "Rally for Justice" outside Parliament House (Giddings & Walters 1992, p.136; Sheiner 1993, pp.253-256). This very public event worked in combination with other social conditions and played a role in the culmination of statutory institutional changes in welfare, justice (Harding 1993, p.1) and education. The Serious and Repeat Offender's Act 1992 (WA) was drafted and quickly proclaimed. The Ministry of Justice, Juvenile Justice Division was created in 1993 and the separation of the state welfare and justice systems meant that young offenders with welfare issues were to be governed by two sets of legislation and two institutions (Youth Justice Coalition 1990, 41; Wells 1999, pp.1-5).

This shift from a child protection approach to the creation of a justice system to manage criminal behaviour was recommended in Edwards Report (1982) and finally came to fruition in 1993. The Western Australian Minister for Education also appeared to respond to the social outcry about juvenile crime and truancy by providing five year funding for a series of new state funded Alternative Education Initiatives (AEI's) and federally funded Students at Risk Programs (STAR) of their own (SSCEET 1996, pp.120-130). These alternative education programs targeted at risk and alienated students who usually had welfare and justice issues and did not attend mainstream school (Pratt 1993, p.45; Ashworth 2000, p.23). The programs were run by teachers and were modelled on the

group work and community-based alternative programs approach of welfare justice programs and the possibility for offenders to return to school was recognised.

In 1996 a Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into truancy and exclusion was released typifying the emerging discourse around students at educational risk and the associated sociological issues such as criminal behaviour, welfare involvement and alienation from school (SSCEET, 1996). The report supported the need for alienated students to be included in the government school system and for school practices of exclusion to change (ibid. p. ix.). The report stated:

There is a growing concern for the apparently increasingly large numbers of young people who are for various reasons missing out on the benefits of education and possibly on a better future. These are the young people, the invisible ones, who are not even completing Year 10, who are becoming disconnected from education before the age of 15 or 16 when it is legal for them to leave school. (SSCEET 1996, p.3)

As the alternative education programs run by the state education system were only funded for five years, the period spanning 1993 to 1998 provided the foundation for educators to begin to include school-aged offenders, truants and delinquents as part of the alienated student category. In 1995 the Education Department of Western Australia was also actively involved in a national research project focussing on the problem of providing education to alienated students in the middle years of schooling (EDWA Student Alienation in the Middle Years of Schooling, 1995).

This 1995 study brought together a number of lines of thinking in relation to the recognised need to implement changes to the curriculum, school social and age related organisational structures and the identification of students at educational risk (EDWA Student Alienation in the Middle Years of Schooling, 1995). In 1997 a highly influential study provided data that indicated the extent to which some twenty per cent of four to sixteen year old students were not gaining benefit from the State education system and were



considered to educationally at risk. The importance of educational reform regarding the role of the school for the whole student who has diverse needs and issues was highlighted in the Western Australian Child Health Survey (1997) where it was stated:

The role of schools in modern societies has become more complex because of the life circumstances of their students. Some education professionals seek to respond with a retreat to narrow academic goals, highlighting the intellectual role of schooling and declaring other concerns to be others' responsibilities. The Western Australian Child Health Survey paints a complex picture of the interactions of school, family and social conditions which suggests that such a retreat would be self defeating. (Zubrick et al, 1997, p.iii)

The employment and training sectors have also changed significantly over the last decade (SSCEET 1992, pp.19-39; Bessant et al 1998, pp.151-158). The discourse on student retention as a response to the changing youth labour market since the 1970s and the subsequent federal policy shift to the creation of a vocationally competent, credentialed youth workforce has been extensively documented (Dwyer, 1996; Sweet, 1988; Ainley, 1998; Wooden, 1998; McClelland, Maedonald & MacDonald; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002).

This new discourse on youth at risk of not gaining fulltime employment provides a bridge between school education, post compulsory training and the labour market (Dwyer 1996, p. 3-7). It is these discursive links that have also placed pressure on the Western Australian education system to address the retention of severely at risk school-aged youth and those students alienated from the school system altogether. The discourse on students at educational risk sits between the discourses on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime (Daniel & Cornwall 1993, pp.1-14; Batten & Russell 1995, pp.vii-3; Bessant 1995, p.43). The term 'at risk' is:

Used to refer to particular problematic outcomes such as delinquency, pregnancy, homelessness, or substance abuse, but within an educational context, the notion of being 'at risk' specifically refers to those young people considered unlikely to complete school to year 12. (DETYA(b) 2001, p.2)

Young people at risk of leaving school early (before yeartwelve) and not gaining entry into the world of work are identified by a number of distinguishing features (Batten & Russell 1995, pp.1-57). Literature on youth unemployment, early school leaving and student retention identifies these features and they are used to generate regulating policies and practices around non conforming young people including school-aged offenders (Tait, 1995; Dwyer 1995, pp. 61-72; DETYA(a) 2001, pp.2-6; DETYA(b) 2001, pp.19-21).

These young people have generally left school prior to completing year ten, have low academic skills and are often unable to re engage in education or training because of their skill levels and incompatibility with structured learning contexts (Batten & Russell 1995, pp.1-57; Dwyer 1996, p.76). A recent study found that Western Australia, alongside the Northern Territory, had the lowest post compulsory education retention rates (Dusseldotp Skills Forum 2002, p.19).

The federal social security structure supporting the student retention agenda has meant those young people who are below the age of eighteen years not attending "approved activities" will not qualify for benefits (Croce 1998, pp.9-10). Approved activities include further training or school and the assumption is that all young people must be at school until they are at least eighteen years old. Recent research influencing national education policy also states that satisfactory completion of year ten is essential in that it provides students with the academic and social skills necessary to complete the post compulsory years of school states:

Achieving an effective Year 10 level of education is the critical necessary basis for a national commitment to Year 12 education to be a meaningful

objective. This has to be achieved by and within schools. (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, p.24)

Parents will continue to receive the Family Income Supplement for children up to the age of sixteen and the Common Youth Allowance is available for eligible students sixteen and over if they remain at school or move into further approved training (Croce 1998, pp.9-10.). The discourse on student retention and early school leaving also documents youth marginalisation as a result of leaving school before year twelve (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, pp.17-23).

Young people between the ages of fifteen and nineteen who are not engaged in education, vocational training or employment are considered to be involved in 'marginal activities'. Research into early school leaving has identified that a significant proportion of early school leavers are from low socio economic backgrounds, (Ainley 1998, p.18; Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, p.20) indicate a link between poverty, low school achievement and early school leaving. This research also supports the need for shifts in the state policies on the retention of school-aged delinquents in the school system (EDWA Making the Difference, 1998).

The literature shows that the government social security policies support families financially when their children are in education or 'approved activities'. However, young people between sixteen and eighteen years of age who not in employment, school or further training will not be eligible for benefits (DEETYA(a) 2001, p.16). The same young people looking for work will only be eligible for financial assistance when they are over eighteen years of age unless they undertake some kind of labour market program or return to education or training. The issues of concern for early school leavers are documented as the following:

From January 1999, in order to be eligible for the Youth Allowance, 15-17 year olds have to engage in education or training for at least 20 hours per week...For those who have to continue school, the complexity of factors

that influence early school leaving will still be highly relevant....These factors include family and financial constraints, academic failure, boredom, truancy, alienating school environment, poor teacher/student relations and a school culture where the school is not responsive to the students needs. (DEETYA(a) 2001, pp.16-17)

It is evident in the literature that for school-aged offenders, as members of the early school leaver cohort, the availability of programs that suit their learning needs and offer the possibility of re-engagement with education and training that leads towards employment are limited (Holden & Dwyer 1992, p 15; Batten & Russell 1995, pp. 1-2; Dwyer 1996, pp.26-29). Those difficult students who have left school before year ten often do not have the skills required to complete these training programs (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, p.24). It is suggested in the discourse on early school leaving and marginalisation that this population of youth considered to be at risk are still not being adequately catered for in the labour market and post compulsory sectors (Dwyer 1996, pp.76-77; DEETYA(a), 2001, p.30).

#### *The Retention Agenda In Western Australian Education*

Attendance at school and appropriate behaviour through to the end of their fifteenth year is vital in order for alienated students and school-aged offenders to gain the necessary credentials, social skills and acceptable reputation needed to enrol in post compulsory schooling or further training. The discourse on early school leaving uses the term 'at risk' to describe those young people who do not complete post compulsory education and are excluded from entering adulthood with the necessary skills and credentials to gain full time employment (Dwyer 1996, p.6-7; McClelland et al 1998, pp.3-4). Consistent with this view Batten and Russell (1995) state:

In the context of relatively high retention rates, the students who do not complete compulsory secondary schooling stand out with increasing clarity as a minority group who are likely to experience difficulty and disadvantage

in adulthood in comparison with the majority of young people. (p.6)

To meet this challenge, schools are changing their views about excluding non conforming students who may also be school-aged offenders from the school community and professionals from the welfare and justice sectors will need to consider their practices in relation to this as well (DEETYA(a) 2001, p.27-31). In relation to young offenders who are alienated from school, recent research stated the importance of the retention of school-aged offenders in education in crime prevention. In relation to the need to provide retention programs for school-aged offenders Clifford (2002) states:

Over the years, a mounting body of evidence has demonstrated that early school leaving is a significant concern in relation to juvenile offending....In particular, early school leaving is related to the propensity to engage in anti social behaviour. (p.2)

Collaborative efforts between schools, justice and community organisations have been occurring in an official manner since the mid 1990s with the signing of the first Protocol Agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the Education Department of Western Australia in 1996. This agreement and other documentation provide evidence of how the Department of Justice in Western Australia has encouraged the inclusion of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school back into the state education system (EDWA et al 1999, p.10; DOJ 2000, pp.1-2; Kraljevich 2001, pp.1-2; Ansell 2002, pp.1-3).

Partnerships between the Western Australian education and justice systems are still developing and the Department of Justice continues to provide a service where school-aged offenders who are alienated from school are supported to re-engage with some formal type of education because such young people are still not adequately re-engaged by schools (MOJ Agreement Between the Ministry of Justice and the Education Department of Western Australia, 2000; Ansell, 2002; Kraljevich 2002; Rose 2003). The current justice discourse on the education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia continues to raise concern that these young people will not have access to an income or further education and

training once reaching school leaving age and they will be severely disadvantaged in gaining entry into the labour market. Rose (2001) explains:

These young people have a 'vision' of careers and vocations with no substance or experience behind them. (p.2)

Hence the importance of the emergence of the Making the Difference policies (1998) on students at educational risk that acknowledges alienated students, who may also be school-aged offenders, as members of the education discourse and acknowledges their educational needs in relation to their social and behavioural issues.

The failure of the education system as a technique of controlling and governing this group of school-aged young people has been considered by the education discursive community. Recognition of juvenile crime, changes to the social security system and youth unemployment are also extensively documented (Seeman 1959; Lubeck & Garrett 1990; Connell et al 1992; Dwyer 1996; Bessant & Cook 1998, p.6; Sercombe et al 2002, p.35, MacMillan & Marks 2003, pp.52-53). This recognition has influenced the education discourse in the development of categories that describe this group of young people as students at educational risk who are alienated from school. It seems that a firm footing has been gained in policy, at least, and the education reforms in Western Australia are gradually including school-aged offenders as subjects of education governance due to their membership in the alienated student category.

Given the socio-political conditions making it possible for school-aged offenders to be known as alienated students, it is important to explore how the current discourses on education, early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime, in relation to this group of young people, have emerged. The history of the discourses on youth, delinquency and schooling provide a useful insight into one academic perspective on how the current circumstances around the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia has developed.

In the case of alienated school-aged offenders over the last twenty five years, the dominant governing discourses have been those on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime (Bessant 1995, p.40; Dwyer 1996, pp.74-75; Crooks, Webb, Foister & Williamson 1996, pp.15-17). The school alternatives provided by the welfare and justice sectors and the off campus education programs historically offered a specialised, complementary, convenient holding space for alienated students who may also have been juvenile offenders (Ashworth 2000, p.23). Some of these education programs aimed to address offending behaviour. According to Omai (1993):

Where the mainstream school processes fail to prevent juvenile crime some schools consider specialised alternatives, which are tailored to the needs of students experiencing failure or acute behaviour problems. (p.407)

Full time employment for young people was also more of a possibility. Prior to the mid 1970s young people who didn't fit into the education system could usually find employment as an alternative to school (Sweet 1988; Bessant et al 1998, pp.148-158). Therefore, school-aged offenders could leave school and attend an alternative education program or seek employment because jobs could be found (Oerlemans & Jenkins 1998, p.118).

These young people historically have moved from the education system to the welfare, justice and employment sectors via legislated policy pathways used by educators and human service professionals alike (Ashworth 2000, p.23; Sercombe et al 2002, p.39). How these young people are constructed as subjects of the welfare and justice discourses shows the importance of recognising and naming school-aged offenders as members of the alienated category with the Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk.

### *Factors Influencing Education Policy Change In Western Australia*

The creation and demise of the old welfare/justice alternative education programs in

the late 1990s and Education Department of Western Australia, Students at Educational Risk programs (AEI and STAR) (Chamberlain & Mac Kenzie 1996, p.12) marked the end of one phase of studying students who constitute the harder end of the students at educational risk category in Western Australia. During the period 1993-1998 the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA) collected data on the participants of and services delivered by these AEI and STAR programs and the data collated formed the basis of a new and local body of knowledge (Vickers 1994, pp.1-14).

The information gained during the separation of alternative program participants from the mainstream school population provided much needed data that offered a scientific and legitimate foundation for the creation of a new and local discourse on alienated students. From this collation of data a process of scientific classification followed (Rabinow 1987, pp.7-8) where conditions were right for the official emergence of the students at educational risk policy (1998). The discursive practice of isolating and studying these young people has been taking place in a formal manner over the last decade within the education sector (Vickers 1994, pp.1-14, Swan Education District, 2000; Swan Education District, 2001; Swan Education District, 2002). This generation of discourse makes it easier for teachers to talk about alienated students in education and schooling terms, to use a new language, a new discourse that can be inclusive of school-aged offenders.

The history of the role of the school and the associated discourses in child welfare and juvenile justice in the governance of children and youth (in Western societies since the industrial revolution), provides an interesting place to continue tracing the socio-historical factors contributing to the emergence of the current Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk and alienated students. Lee (1992), a Western Australian researcher, offers insight into the relevance of poststructuralist research in education that is relevant to this examination of the discourse on students at educational risk and alienated students:

In terms of educational research what poststructural theories and methodologies allow is an understanding of the necessary complexity of



the school as an institution and a set of social practices. (p.2)

In agreeing with Lee, this examination of current policies and practices around students at educational risk, alienated students and school-aged offenders acknowledges and incorporates the influences of other related discourses including those concerning early school leaving, unemployment and marginalisation; student alienation and the discourse on students at educational risk and offender education.

### *Summary*

The social and historical conditions that have made this current state of affairs regarding the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students possible are not presented as a simple, linear, static progression of historical events, truth claims and government policy in the following chapters. Rather, they are explained as a combination of social and political events that worked together in influencing shifts in discourse. Key factors documented in relation to student alienation and the education of school-aged offenders included the failure of alternative programs to prepare students for employment, the national student retention agenda, Western Australian justice reform regarding juvenile offenders and changes to the federal social security policies.

The following chapter on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime shows how the labour market, poverty and idleness contributes to the current thinking on student alienation and students at educational risk in Western Australia. The consequences for youth not completing compulsory education or post compulsory education and training is also examined. This leads to an exploration of how young people who leave school early, or drop out before completing their compulsory years of schooling, can also be constructed as alienated from school and be considered at educational risk. The links between these discourses and the commentary on offender education provide an insight into how school aged-offenders are currently being constructed by the education discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia.

## Chapter Five

*Early School Leaving, Unemployment, Poverty And Crime*

The current discourse on early school leaving shows that early school leavers are considered to be those young people who do not complete studies to year twelve and are thought to be at risk of not being able to enter the labour market in their adult life because they have low academic and vocational skills and do not have any qualifications (Sweet 1988, pp.34-35; Smith 1994, p.14; Tait 1995, p.123; Dwyer 1996, pp.1-13; DEETYA 2001, pp.19-32). There are two types of early school leavers (Batten & Russell 1995, p.2) - those who do drop out of school before completing their compulsory education (Brooks et al, 1997), and those between the ages of fifteen and nineteen who do not undertake post compulsory education or training (Dwyer 1996, pp.1-5). This chapter will examine the literature comprising the discourse on early school leaving, internationally and nationally. How the early school leaver discourse tends to focus on fifteen to nineteen year olds who are not attending any education or training, are unemployed or in part-time work only will also be discussed.

The term 'at risk' is used extensively in the texts examined. For the purpose of clarity I will apply the term according to Batten and Russell's definition as follows. The term is:

Used to describe or identify young people who, beset by particular difficulties and disadvantages, are thought likely to fail to achieve the development in their adolescent years that provide a sound basis for a satisfying and fulfilling adult [*working*] life. (Batten & Russell 1995, p.1 *italics mine*)

A proportion of the early school leaver population is also documented as consisting of those young people who, prior to the shrinking of the full time youth labour market in the 1970s, have to stay on at school in the post compulsory years because there are limited employment prospects in the low skilled areas of work (Dwyer 1996, p.7; McMillan &

Marks 2003, pp.3-4). The official talk in national and state policy on early school leaving focuses on negative consequences, such as social disadvantage arising from unemployment and some discursive links are also made between poverty and crime (Batten & Russell 1995, p.20; Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, p.15).

### *Student Retention*

Australian research commentary and critique exists in relation to the aims of national and state government policy, practice and outcomes regarding early school leaving and the associated importance placed on young people making the transition from school to work:

Young people have long been subject to various disciplinary pressures designed to ensure their adjustment and 'proper' engagement as adults and full citizens. For many, work guaranteed that shift towards adulthood and the attainment of an identity as a mature, responsible citizen." (Bessant & Cook 1998, p.4)

Young people not engaged in either education or work represent a problematic population who have too much time on their hands, are naturally inclined towards delinquency and:

'need' to be subject to quite stringent mechanisms as a way of ensuring the successful transition on that path to adulthood (ibid, p.6)

Keeping students at school, up to and past year ten is considered crucial and the retention of fifteen to nineteen year olds in education or training is increasingly being seen as the responsibility of schools (Sercombe et al 2002, n.35). The current agreement within the Western Australian Government to propose raising the compulsory school leaving age in Western Australia from fifteen to seventeen years of age (Carpenter 6 July 2003(a), p.1), is an example of how schooling continues to be used as a regulatory measure in containing

young people and keeping them occupied rather than unemployed and on the streets (Bessant, 1995; Sweet 1998, pp.31-32). Carpenter (2003(a)) states:

It is well known that young people who leave their teenage years with qualifications, or who are still in the learning environment, have a greater capacity to find sustainable employment succeed in later life...However, we currently have too many young people leaving school early, limiting their long term career prospects in the process. (p.1)

The problems associated with fulfilling the federal government policies promising to assist all young people to stay at school, gain skills and credentials, plan for their careers and enter the workforce are well documented. A number of academic and research agencies such as The Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Australian Council for Educational Research and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum have charted the development of these policies and have looked at whether the commitment to all young people has worked (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002). Commencing with their implementation in schools and then the VET sector, the policies on, and consequences of, early school leaving and the changing role of the school is addressed in the NYARS Report on Youth Services for the Year 2015. In this report the school is described as a site of discourse that:

has supplied an educated, disciplined workforce, and has kept young people off the streets. Notwithstanding this, the failure of school is still significant, and the social and economic penalties for the minority of young people unable to be contained by school are escalating (Social Exclusion Unit 1999)...Special attention needs to be given to the question of what happens with those young people who are unable to construct a sustainable relationship with school. (Sercombe et al, 2002, p.35)

The problems associated with achieving the retention of young people in education and vocational training until they are nineteen years of age extends to the consideration of those young people who drop out of school before year ten (Dwyer 1996, pp.75-77; Brooks et al,

1997). Because the international and national discourse on early school leaving mostly concentrates on the retention of fifteen to nineteen year olds the issue of the retention of compulsory school age students requires schools to meet the need of preparing all students, during their compulsory schooling, with the academic and social skills required to remain in education or vocational training until they are nineteen years of age (Beresford 1993, pp.15-25; Batten & Russell, 1996; DEETYA(b) 2001; McMillan & Marks 2003, p.88).

Concern over the importance of providing relevant VET pathways to early school leavers exists with particular reference to young people who leave the school system because they perceive it as irrelevant to their needs or have problems conforming to school rules and teacher attitudes (Dwyer 1996, pp.10-11; MacMillan & Marks 2003, pp.52-53). Dwyer (1996) explains:

there will always be at least some young people for whom, whatever the reasons, a break from schooling will prove necessary. To ignore the fact in our planning for the future would be to reinforce the marginalisation of those who do not continue. (ibid, p.10)

### *The Youth Labour Market*

Underpinning the concern to keep young people in education or vocational training until their nineteenth year is the decrease in the Australian youth labour market (Brown 1991, p.41; OECD Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life: Australia 1997, pp.9-13; Wooden 1998, p.1). The discourse on early school leaving is not new in Australia and the issue of student retention and increases to the school leaving age past year ten was being described in the 1960s (Rosier, 1978a), as a response to the shrinking of the youth labour market. In the late 1980s the Australian youth research sector concentrated on the issue of the decline in full-time work for young people and early school leaving and Sweet (1998) provides an example of this when he describes:

it is clear the decline in the number of teenagers in full-time work has generally occurred at a fairly steady rate over the 1966-86 period, with much of the job loss being associated with periods in which the unemployment growth has been high. (p. 31)

The policies and discourses on early school leaving, students at educational risk and alienated students exist in a wider international political and economic context and Australian education and training policy has been and still is strongly influenced by international economic and labour market trends (Dwyer, 1966, p.1-13).

### *The International Discourse On Early School Leaving*

Current Australian research (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2000; NCVER 2000, pp.2-7; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002) influencing national and state education, training and employment discourses acknowledges international trends from Europe and the United Kingdom. This summary of international trends in relation to governments making policy includes commitments to support young people leaving school and entering the job market. The goals for transition policies set out by the Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are included and clearly indicate Australia's participation in international discourses on youth, education, training and unemployment. Australia, as a member of the OECD, partakes of a global discourse on labour market and economic trends, education and innovation in science and technology. From online sources (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/6/52/2459289.pdf>) it can be seen that international discourse and the OECD influence Australian policy and procedural directions in relation to youth, school, training and work. This is indicated in the following excerpt from a conference paper in 2000:

The purpose of the conference is to have an informal but focussed policy discussion among Ministers on what works best in policies on transition from full-time education to the labour market for young people in the context of

preparation for a successful working life and lifelong learning.

(<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/6/52/2459289.pdf>)

In 1997 the OECD Education Committee released a cross-national report into student transitions from school education to employment in OECD countries. Out of this international study, a detailed overview and evaluation of Australia's education, training and employment policies, the approaches surrounding the transition from school to work and recommendations for future improvements was written and used as a basis for a national review. This 'Thematic Review of the Transitions From Initial Education to Working Life' (1997) looked at secondary school education and identified a national increase in student retention since 1980, changes in youth entitlement to unemployment benefits and recognised how secondary schooling focussed mostly on preparation for university.

The need for broader, vocationally relevant options to be made available to students prior to year twelve in order to reduce youth unemployment and increase their participation in 'acceptable' combinations of study and work, rather than marginal activities was also reiterated (ibid, p.5-13). The early school leaving discourse employs the term 'marginal' to describe young people who are neither attending school nor training, nor are they in full time work. It is also used to describe young people who are 'engaged in marginal activities' including part time work and non labour market activities such as: receiving sole parent or disability pensions (McClelland, Macdonald & Mac Donald, 1998).

### *Credentialism*

One of the main policy justifications given for keeping young people at school until their nineteenth year is the finding that those who leave school before year twelve and do not have a qualification to at least university entrance standard, or a vocational credential to level two in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), are disadvantaged in gaining both part time and full time employment, will be poor in their adult life and will place an economic burden upon the nation (Wooden 1998, pp. 5-6).

The reforms to Australian education and vocational training documented in the international and national discourse on early school leaving and student retention has involved schools, encouraging schools to broaden their views on the provision of vocational and academic studies. (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, pp.13-14). The recommended educational reforms have included the development of policies and strategies for the implementation of a national education and training framework, competency based training and assessment systems in vocational education and training (VET), refocusing education and training to meet industry needs, multiple pathways and flexible delivery methods and equitable student access to education and training (NCVER 2000, pp.1-8).

In line with these reforms, there were discussions relating to ensuring that all students complete their schooling to Senior Secondary Certificate level, engage in career planning and gain some vocational and skills. This was evidenced in the Thematic Review of The Transition From Initial Education to Working Life (1997 pp16-17). One of the major challenges in this country to achieve these reforms is explained as:

the deep cultural value placed on higher education, and the pervasive mindset that secondary schools exist primarily to prepare people for university. (ibid, p.18)

The institution of full service schools and the allocation of adequate funding and resources made available through policy commitment are highlighted as possible solutions to addressing the needs of at risk students (DEETYA(c) 2001, p.8). These students are acknowledged as having a number of problems alongside those related to school attendance and performance. In expressing concern about this situation the OECD documented its concerns in stating:

These are the 15 to 20 per cent of young people who arrive at age 18 neither in school nor in full time employment, typically with weak academic skills, little or no vocational training, and a bleak sense of their own future prospects. (OECD 1997, p.23)



The provision of pathways back into education and training for those young people who lack the necessary skills and qualifications to compete in the labour market were also cited as an important solution for young people identified as "marginally attached to the labour force." (ibid, p.25).

### *Vocational Education And Training*

Australia's participation in international discourses on education and training and the labour market has certainly played a role in the major changes in the VET sector and the increasing links between education and training in a general sense and this can be clearly seen in The Thematic Review of the Transitions From Initial Education to Working Life (1997, pp.29-31). Mainstream student retention rates have increased, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has a national training framework in place and training pathways have become more flexible in their delivery.

However, in the case of alienated students, early school leavers and youth at risk, the report strongly recommends these students be included within overall changes to the education and training sector rather than creating an alternative, separate system. It was documented by the OECD that:

Encouraging marginal youth to remain at school will require a variety of curricular, pedagogical and organisational changes in the lower secondary years as well as years eleven and twelve. (The Thematic Review of the Transitions From Initial Education to Working Life 1997, pp.29-30)

This assertion is revisited in the report on Building Relationships: Making Education Work (2001) and shows that structural changes in schools are recommended to ensure the inclusion of those students who are deemed at risk of leaving school early are established. It is suggested that in achieving such changes:

A comprehensive approach to school change identifies the need for both an 'environment-centred' and 'client-centred' approach. The emphasis on overall structural development that has an impact for all students rather than on providing programs for those deemed to be 'at risk'. (DEETYA (a) 2001, p.31)

The national discourse on early school leaving is derived from the international economic trends in adult and youth labour markets (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2002, pp.14-15) and has translated into a raft of policies aimed at reforming and linking Australia's education and vocational training sectors. This linking has resulted in changes to how young Australians are retained in education and vocational training in both their compulsory and post compulsory years.

### *The National Discourse On Early School Leaving*

Australian education and training reform in the early 1990s (Finn, 1991), concentrated on the development of policies that promoted and instituted the credentialing of a vocationally competent youth workforce, skilled to make the transition from learning to working. This and Australia's participation in the international discourse on assisting young people to make the transition from school to work involved the implementation and restructure of services to youth, streamlining policy across the states and territories and making a commitment to Australia's young people who stay in education and training until they are nineteen years old (Tait 1995, pp.123-124).

Such a commitment indicated that those young people remaining in education or training would be entitled to and supported in further training and entry into the workforce when they have completed twelve years of education. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum paper, *Realising Australia's Commitment to Young People* (2002) shows how this discourse is continuing today by stating:

In an encouraging show of unity Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are *Stepping Forward* (to borrow the phrase from their recent joint declaration) with joint and unilateral commitments to providing *all* young people with the opportunity to access learning and work. These commitments are reflected in a still lengthening string of policy statements. (p. 5)

This national policy platform, arising from the Finn report in 1991, from which the government agenda for the retention of fifteen to nineteen year olds in education and training was launched, set the discourse on early school leaving for the period spanning 1991-2001 and officially shifted the perspective on acceptable school leaving from year ten to year twelve (Tait 1995, pp.132-133).

In 1992 the federal government stated its commitment to the provision of education for twelve years of schooling and the expectation that all young people participate in some form of education or vocational training between the ages of fifteen to nineteen in its One Nation policy. A range of programs was implemented including Career Start Traineeships, Landcare and Environment Action Programs (LEAP) and increased TAFE pre-vocational placements. Other initiatives included the actioning of recommendations from the Cannichael Report regarding the restructure of the VET sector, (Keating 1992, p.15).

### *The Early School Leaving Discourse In Relation To Alienated Youth*

The relationship between a shrinking youth labour market and the policies to increase student retention to year twelve by providing vocational and academic streams in schools is seen to be closely linked in national research. An awareness of how these policies may have worked for the more mainstream student population who have had a reasonable relationship with school is documented (Wooden, 1998; Mc Millan & Marks, 2003). Attention is also paid to those young people who are alienated from school and have little chance of re-entering education or training or gaining employment (Dwyer 1997, p.7; Mc Millan & Marks 2003, pp.90-91).

Comment is made in the national early school leaver discourse on how many full-time employment positions now require some kind of qualification and participation in ongoing training. Those marginalised young people between the ages of fifteen and seventeen who are not attending school or TAFE are also not eligible for unemployment benefits and are required to be in youth labour market programs or return to some form of education and training (for up to 20 hours per week), in order to be eligible for Austudy allowance (DEETVA(a) 2001, p. 16).

Eligibility for this allowance is, of course, means tested against the parental income therefore those young people who do not comply with the requirement to work or study and who are most disadvantaged in doing so (because of their low motivation and skills), do not get any financial assistance from the government and are further marginalised and continue their dependency on their families for support. (Croce 1998, p.8).

Research into early school leaving and evaluations of the national school and vocational training retention and transition policies provide a critique of the effectiveness of youth employment, education and training policies (Dwyer 1996). Such analysis brings forward a deeper understanding of these national policies and Dwyer (1996) states:

This transformation of participation rates in schooling in Australia has had two immediate consequences - a widespread acceptance of a "mainstream myth", and a regulation of early school leavers into a virtual policy vacuum. (p.5)

With reference to the mainstream myth, Dwyer (1996) draws on a number of sources to unpack claims surrounding the increased retention of students and how government evaluations converted figures on retention from seventy seven per cent to eight in ten students remaining at school and later altered the meaning of retention to mean student completion of studies (ibid, p.5). He also refers to findings stating that students from low socio-economic backgrounds continued to achieve lower academic results in comparison to young people from wealthier families and many students were "reluctantly" staying on at

school because they lacked other options such as full-time employment (ibid, p.6).

### *Early School Leaving And Unsupported Transitions*

Other commentators confirm this view on some young people having to remain at school when historically they would have left to enter low skilled jobs and apprenticeships (Dwyer 1996, p.6; Bessant & Cook 1998, p.3, NCVER 2000, p.2.). The backgrounds of early school leavers who are engaged in marginal activities explained by Mc Clelland, Macdonald and Mac Donald (1998) as:

more likely to be early school leavers: to have parents who have occupational backgrounds that are unskilled and manual. (p.2)

This category of early school leavers generally had low school achievement and came from families employed in unskilled and manual occupations, were also highly likely to be Indigenous or homeless (ibid p.2). It was suggested that this group, if they gained part-time employment, tended to have difficulty moving into full-time stable jobs and spent considerable periods up to the age of thirty being unemployed. An improved policy response would include a structured approach involving early intervention during the compulsory years of schooling ensuring the development of adequate skills and improved assistance in the transition from education to training and then to work (ibid, pp.11-23).

The ongoing discourse on early school leaving is still including a request for a federal government commitment to retaining all early school leavers in education and training and then supporting them in their transition to work (NCVER 2000, p.8; Mc Millan & Marks 2003, pp.49-55). It appears that the retention policies emerging in the late 1980s have worked for mainstream young people who could remain at school and not worked so well for those whose relationship with education is difficult (Dwyer 1996, p.11). Recent research demonstrates these concerns:

Australian governments have been committed for over 10 years to provide Year 12 level of education and training to all Australians. In 1992, the Commonwealth government (Prime Minister, One Nation, 1992) explicitly endorsed the goal of full secondary education or its equivalent in vocational education and training for all young Australians. In 2001, *Footprints to the Future*, the report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, calls specifically for a 'national commitment to all young people' (Eldridge, 2001, p.12). (cited in *Realising Australia's Commitment to Young People* 2002, p.13)

The importance of providing relevant, accessible VET pathways to this group of young people in Australia enabling them to re-enter education and training after a period of time is considered crucial to providing for the needs of all Australian young people (Dwyer 1996, p.10).

### *Flexible Pathways*

Flexible, academic and vocational pathways before year ten and for those returning from a break in their post compulsory education and training are cited as necessary in policy and practice if the most marginalised of early school leavers are to be catered for (Banca & Russell 1995, pp.vii-viii). In 1999 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), distinguished between vocational learning (for years nine and ten) and vocational education and training (for years eleven and twelve). MCEETYA describes vocational education and training as an integral part of schooling in Australia in 1999. This policy commitment incorporated an understanding of the importance of offering non academic, vocational pathways to compulsory school aged students at risk and post compulsory school aged students at risk of leaving education before year twelve (NCVER 2000, p.5).

In 2001, a report prepared for the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs on the perspectives of Australian fifteen to nineteen year old at risk youth on education and training suggested a difference existed between young people who have

disengaged from school and young people who have disengaged from education. The difference was that those young people who were disengaged from school still aspired to access training or education outside the school context (DEETYA(a) 2001, pp.7-9).

These young people were found to view themselves as not being competitive in either gaining work or a vocational qualification at TAFE (ibid, p.11). The importance of procedural and structural reforms in schools and the training sectors was again an official feature within part of the discourse on early school leaving and was reinforced with particular reference to those young people most marginalised in this category (ibid, p.14).

The Australian Training Review magazine reiterates the continued concern for this group of early school leavers who may be interested in vocational training but do not have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills nor the willingness to conform to the school environment by stating:

Early school leavers face increasing levels of disadvantage in terms of employment and further training, particularly traineeships, as TAFE places are increasingly being taken by those with higher qualifications resulting in a lack of pathways for early school leavers (NCVER 2000, p.3)

### *The Retention Agenda And Alienated Youth*

The use of vocational programs in schools, in the late 1990s, for students at educational risk and potential early school leavers was found to have limited post-compulsory outcomes and have been criticised for labelling students and maintaining low expectations (DEETYA(a) 2001, p.30). This report detailed responses from young people (who had left school early), explained how many of them wanted to gain vocational credentials but lacked the financial resources, family support, willingness to conform to current school structures and had not accessed career counselling to gain the information needed to plan for their futures. It was stated that:

They want access to alternative ways to their goals of re-engagement, and they want valid, relevant long term training programs rather than short term 'job-skills' programs. (DEETYA(a) 2001, p. 125)

It is documented that the school retention and transitional strategies for fifteen to nineteen year olds, particularly alienated youth, are not working as well as hoped since the late 1980s and that some young people are still not adequately prepared to enter the workforce. A Dusseldorp Skills Forum study, *The Cost to Australia of Early School Leaving* (1999), states that:

Early school leaving very largely takes place after year 9 and in calculating the numbers of young people who left school after Year 9 in 1998 there were, "about 75,000 early school leavers" – including more males than females because of females' notably higher retention rate. (p.13).

Another study by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum in 1998 on youth participation in education, training and employment and the results of national policy stated that student retention had risen sharply in the 1980s, but had slowed in the 1990s (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1998, p.6). Recent research found:

the main reason given for leaving school was related to school or their performance at school. This suggests that while school curricula have become more broad-based in recent years in order to cater for the interests and needs of a broader range of young people, there is still a small group whose dissatisfaction with school life or difficulty in coping with school work prompts them to leave school early. (McMillan & Marks 2003, p.87)

If some young people tend to leave school after year nine (Batten & Russell 1995, p.9), with one year of compulsory schooling remaining (in Western Australia), there are no stable low skilled jobs. If vocational and employment programs do not adequately cater for



the learning and social needs of this group and re-engagement with school or training after a period of time is problematic then the policies are not catering to all early school leavers. Federal government recognition of the ongoing problems associated with the policies and practices around this most marginalised group of early school leavers can be seen in The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce report (Footprints to the Future, May 2001). Recommendations within this report prompted the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), to examine concerns relating to:

at risk or disconnected young people; and while having a broader focus, contribute to building the foundations of support needed to promote the well being, participation and identification of young people in vulnerable circumstances. (Stepping Forward - Improving Pathways for all Young People, 2003)

This policy statement indicates an awareness of a group of young people for whom the policies and strategies aimed at increasing student retention in education and training until they are nineteen years old have failed. They are identified as at risk of becoming disconnected to education, training and work and are called 'vulnerable young people', a new term in the early school leaver discourse. A 2001 MCEETYA Sub-Committee on young people's transitions from learning to work puts forward a number of strategies aimed at increased coordination between national and state policy leading into local school, community and support agency action in the providing assistance to vulnerable or marginalised young people to re-engage or remain in education or training until nineteen years of age.

There is discussion about how the discursive strategies around retaining fifteen to nineteen year olds in education and training has not completely worked. Discursive attention is being paid to that population in order to successfully control and govern them within the education and training discourse. As Sercombe (1997) says:

that [she] techniques of governance – the various means by which the powerful attempt to define, describe, control, understand, contain, discipline, empower, enlighten, organise, repress a subject population- always fail.

Their control is always partial, the resistance of the subject population is always there. (p.43 *italics mine*)

When projects of governance around youth fail, programs for at risk youth are instituted to reconnect them, to bring them back from the margins if they are seen as presenting a risk to the mainstream population, especially through anti-social behaviour and crime (ibid, p.43). The use of the term 'marginalised' to describe those young people within the early school leaver discourse who are not in 'acceptable' combinations of part-time work and study, who are unemployed, who lack academic and vocational skills and are unlikely to enter the mainstream economy can be examined in relation to the discourses of unemployment, poverty and crime.

#### *Marginalisation, Unemployment, Poverty And Crime*

In the late 1990s Australian research into early school leaving continued to draw from the experiences of other western post industrial countries, and in looking at Canadian research, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum report on Australia's Youth: Reality and Risk cited findings that linked early school leaving to poverty and crime (1998, p.20). This indicates there is an ongoing convergence of the discourses on crime and delinquency with unemployment and poverty.

The participation of young Australians in education and training between the ages of fifteen and nineteen has not necessarily guaranteed full entry into the adult labour market and this pointed to the existence of a group within the early school leaver category, named as those most 'vulnerable' because of their likelihood of never having full participation in the adult labour market (Dwyer 1996, pp. 74-75). Their vulnerability is couched in terms of needing the protection of better policies and susceptibility to delinquency. Bessant (1993) says:

Since 1975, young people have been seen simultaneously as a threat as well as being helpless and vulnerable. (p.2)

The work of commentators like Beresford (1993), Dwyer (1996) and Bessant (1993,

1994, 1995) shows attention is being paid in the Australian research community to the minority group (of underage school leavers) within the early school leaver category who have a number of social issues alongside the early school leaver risk factors such as low school achievement, coming from a family with a low socio-economic status, being Indigenous or living in a remote area (Bessant 1993; Batten & Russell 1995; Dwyer 1996). Such talk is part of a strong discursive tradition in the youth research community where the analysis and evaluation of government policy has included reference to links between education, unemployment, poverty and crime. A summary of this discourse follows and leads into the examination of social exclusion captured by the terms used in the education discourse on alienation and at risk.

The links between unemployment and poverty in the 1980s became evident as a result of the changes to Australia's labour market (Crooks et al 1996, p.18). The Henderson poverty line (which is also referred to as the H index) is stated as the generally accepted government measure of income related poverty in Australia (ibid, p.16). This measure arose from the Fitzgerald Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1976) in which overt comment is made that poverty in Australia is linked to the inequities in the schooling system. It is suggested that schools better cater for students from higher socio-economic backgrounds and that early school leavers, who are often from low socio-economic backgrounds, are destined to low skilled, low paying jobs. These jobs have been the ones that have disappeared with the changes to the international and Australian labour markets since the 1970s (Finch & Nieuwenhuysen 1998, pp.203-205).

### *Delinquency, Unemployment, Poverty And Crime*

The role of schools in the creation of youth unemployment and crime is an example of an ongoing form of truth within the early school leaving discourse. Polk states "The absence of future careers and the present organisation of the school are seen as working together to create marginal youth, alienation and ultimately juvenile crime." (1984, p.479). Just under a decade later, further such claims are put forward by Beresford (1993) and are narrowed down. Comment is more specific and it is stated that not all early school leavers

who are unemployed become criminals. Beresford (1993) says:

The critique of the education system made in recent reports into youth affairs have their context in growing official recognition that the incidence of marginalisation among some groups has its social impact in juvenile crime, youth homelessness and unemployment. (p.15)

Claims are also made in other important national and international studies that a cycle of poverty exists and intergenerational, long term unemployment is concentrated in the lower socio-economic levels of Australian society and that early school leavers tend to come from this part of the population (SSCEET 1992, p.83, 120; Crooks et al 1996, p.17; Peck 2001, pp.1-5).

Poverty is discussed within each of the discourses on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and juvenile crime. Poverty as a linking factor common to each of these discourses is also confirmed by other commentators such as Wilkes (1992), who refers to a number of similar studies in the 1980s (p.50). Other social issues are documented as features of poverty and they include:

a broader set of dimensions such as diet; housing; health care; number of dependent children and the ability to participate in employment, education, recreation, family and social activities. (Crooks et al 1996, p.17)

Poverty and a low socio-economic status appear to increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour "but only in certain circumstances." according to Hazlehurst (1996, p.216). Hazlehurst (1996), like Beresford (1993), is also careful not to generalise and constitute all early school leavers and unemployed young people as destined to lives of crime, however acknowledgement is given to the fact that for some, poverty can contribute to criminal behaviour. In relation to poverty Bessant (1995) says:

Evidence of an emerging underclass refers to links between material and moral deprivation, delinquency and increased percentages in juvenile crime rates. (p.40)

The British discourse on poverty goes even further and makes an overt claim that

poverty and marginalisation produce juvenile crime:

As the British Youth Labour Council (British Youth Council, 1993:19-20) asserted, youth crime is simply one of the most tangible representations of the marginalisation and disaffection [exclusion] felt by young people in society. (Sercombe et al 2002, p.66)

The student retention agenda is considered by some academics as a justification for the increased discursive attention being paid to early school leavers (who are unemployed, not willing to undertake further training or studies and potentially criminal) in order to govern them (Bessant 1995, pp32-45). The policies and commentary on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime draws on a historical source of classical theoretical thinking and acting where deviancy was linked to delinquency and the concern of the middle classes for the reform and regulation of the poor. In the current socio-historical context, unemployed early school leavers are constituted as disadvantaged, at risk and potentially dangerous because they are idle and represent a threat to the good order of society (ibid, 10).

In tracing this thinking back to its academic roots, the work of Durkheim on deviance, anomie and normlessness is seen as influential in the development of the early school leaver, unemployment, poverty, crime nexus proposed by Bessant (1995, p.10). She explains that Durkheim examined the dissatisfaction and loss of allegiance that parts of a population can feel when there is a massive upheaval that brings about change for the worse in their lives. This line of thinking is also seen by Bessant (1995) as having contributed to the current connections between early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime and is seen in the governmental responses to the shrinking youth labour market by increasing school retention and tightening up access to unemployment benefits (p.10).

### *Early School Leaving And School-Aged Offenders*

The increase in student retention across the nation indicates the need for ongoing

attention to be paid to the issue of students leaving school before year ten and those fifteen to nineteen year olds who are not employed full-time or engaged post compulsory education (Dwyer 1996, p.1). This confirms concern that the policies and practices around the retention of students are not working for all young people. There exists a group of young people who are alienated from school before the end of their compulsory years of attendance who will be severely disadvantaged in the labour market alongside those who leave after having completed year ten (McClelland et al 1998, pp.22-25).

Some young people who leave school early, or before the compulsory school leaving age do commit crime and there are references in research that include comments by young people stating that their lack of skills, unemployment and poverty contribute to their criminal behaviour (Daniel & Cornwall 1993, p.3). When directly referred to, school-aged offenders are usually described as extremely disadvantaged when seeking employment due to their lower than average participation and achievement at school and lack of vocational credentials and skills. They are also seen as unlikely to ever return to education or training. Research conducted by the Ministry of Justice in Western Australia cited in a weekend newspaper indicated:

Just 2 percent of prisoners had finished High School - and those figures are equally as bad throughout the country....The National profile also shows 60 percent of inmates were below functional levels in numeracy, reading and writing, and that up to 44 percent were long term unemployed...the school drop out rate in Western Australia was high, with 35 per cent of students across the board not reaching year 12, while the prison population was also increasing up to 30 per cent in the 1998-1999 year pointing to evidence of systematic policy failure. (The Weekend Australian. Felons fail to make the grade at school June 3-4, 2000, p 11)

The power of the early school leaver, unemployment, poverty and crime nexus lies in the ongoing generation of fear of youthful idleness and the potential for dangerous behaviour (Bessant 1995, pp.32-33). Bessant (1995) states:

Although the developers of these constructive schemes, which equate youth unemployment with criminal economies, may be well intentioned and 'on the side' of young people, the primary outcome of their scholarship is the extended governance of young people's lives. (p.43)

With the increasing regulation of young people's lives through the discourses on early school leaving, unemployment and marginalisation comes the creation of professional jobs in the implementation of policy and the practice of control (Tait 1995, p.123; Dwyer 1996, pp.3-10). These professional positions, departments and agencies are part of a continuation of the regulatory mechanisms that came out of the child saver movement and a conservative political law and order agenda that commenced in the early nineteenth century aimed at maintaining social order (Bessant 1995, p.44).

### *Summary*

Policies and documented practices around the early identification of at riskness, early school leaving and student retention provide ample evidence of the ways in which Australian youth have been and are governed by the education discourse. The discourse on early school leaving has been examined because it contains many of the features of the concerns contained within the discourse on youth delinquency, poverty and crime (Bessant 1995 pp.43-44) that emerged in post industrial Western countries. The discursive links between early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime are also connected to the discourse on students at educational risk and alienated student policies in the Western Australia (Thorley-Smith, pp.167-168).

The documented concerns about early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime within the literature examined also shows links with the discourse on student alienation (Dwyer 1996, p.15; Mc Cormack 1996, p.9; Brooks et al 1997, p.1; Finch, 1998, pp.203-205). The national student retention policies commencing in the early 1990s have influenced Australian state education policy in relation to re-engaging and retaining

alienated and at risk students in education during both their compulsory and post compulsory years of schooling. The next chapter charts the documented emergence of the discourses on students at educational risk and student alienation and examines how they also draw on concerns about poverty, the consequences of early school leaving and juvenile crime. The shifts in Western Australian education policy concerning student alienation are also examined.



## Chapter Six

*The Discourses On At Risk, Alienated Students And Offender Education*

The consequences of leaving school before the completion of year twelve are represented in the discourse on early school leaving, unemployment and marginalisation. The associated discourse on students at educational risk and alienated students shifts the focus of the role of school in relation to delinquent school-aged youth inward from unemployment and the labour market towards the school, its organisation and culture (Pellicano 1987, p47), and the individual student (biological, psychological and social features) as the subjects of research and policy.

This chapter concentrates on the development of the terms at risk and alienated as they are applied in the education discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia. These labels provide ways of locating where school-aged offenders are discussed and constructed as alienated students. Compulsory school-aged young offenders are generally described within the students at educational risk categories as alienated students because they generally do not attend mainstream education institutions and require assistance in re-engaging inschooling (EDWA MOJ 2000, pp.1-8; Rose 2003, pp.2-3).

*Alienation*

The education discourse in Western Australia documents the retention and participation of school-aged offenders in schools and alternative education programs. The role of partnership and collaborative measures between the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice feature in the discourse on engaging and maintaining school-aged offenders in education as alienated students. The use of terms such as 'at risk' and 'alienated student', as they are applied to school-aged offenders, intensifies the description of the risk factors that are said to arise from poverty and lead to offending

behaviour. Alienation from school and society is also documented in the justice discourse on juvenile offenders as a possible reason for criminal behaviour.

The term 'alienation' originated in the work of Marx and his criticisms of capitalism (Heywood 1998, pp.124-128). The concept of alienation is central to Marxian economics. It is based on the following premises; workers are alienated from the products of their labour, workers experience little personal control over their labour, the competitive nature of the capitalist work environment alienates workers from other workers, and finally, the depersonalised nature of working alienates workers from themselves (Heywood 1998, p.127).

Links between Marxian economics and social alienation in a general sense, were made by Seeman (1959) and his work saw the official entry of the term 'alienation' into the education discourse (EDWA 1995, p. 21). Commencing with the origin of this term alienation in the socio-political context, this chapter unpacks the various directions taken and linkages made between the current Western Australian students at educational risk policies, the eugenic interpretations of the term in relation to poverty, unemployment and crime and the sociological constructions of student alienation within the social world of schooling (Placier 1993, p.385).

At risk and alienated students form part of the Western Australian education discourse on problem students, early school leavers and students who may not achieve to their full learning potential (Currie 1979, p.1; Placier 1993, p. 380; Batten & Russell 1995, pp. 1-2). This chapter traces the emergence of the at risk and alienated student categories within education policy and examines both terms in relation to how they have been used to understand and construct students who challenge the mainstream education system and school-aged offenders as alienated students.

### *Alienation And Delinquency*

Juvenile criminal behaviour is documented in the discourses on students at educational risk and alienated students in a similar way to discourses on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime (Dwyer 1996, p.15; Mc Cormack 1996, p.9; Brooks et al 1997, p.1; Finch, 1998, pp.203-205;). Essentially, unemployed young people from poor backgrounds who have limited education or training achievements are assumed likely to also be criminal. The at risk, alienation and crime nexus is most evident when the education of young offenders who are alienated from mainstream schooling is discussed.

Implicit in the Western Australian education discourse on alienated students and students at educational risk are the policies and practices concerned with children and youth who are perceived as not participating in education in such a way as to achieve to their full potential (EDWA Making the Difference – Policy and Guidelines For Students at Educational Risk 1998, p. 3). The reasons given for children and young people not achieving to their full potential in school is contested from two major angles within the education discourse.

The first set of truths claim school failure to be due to problems within the individual student, caused by his or her genetic predisposition to problematic behaviour, home environment and socio-economic background (Lubeck & Garrett 1990, p.327; Hemmings et al 1994, p.14). Secondly, research into the school atmosphere, social organisation and curriculum content has challenged schools to reflect on their practices in relation to educationally at risk students (Lipke 1981, p. 370; Tame 1983, p.24; Pellicano 1987, pp.47-49; Beresford 1993, p.15).

By drawing from the medical, psychological and natural sciences as theoretical and methodological frameworks to build truths about students, but more particularly delinquent students, it is possible to see how the education discourse constitutes the working class, disadvantaged and 'different' parts of the student population (Dyan 1980, p.17; Placier 1993, p.385). The educational governance of school-aged offenders by schools is not often documented with direct reference to students who are criminals. However, the role of

educational governance is seen as essential in warding off the potential to become delinquent, particularly for poor students (Dwyer 1996, p.15; Mc Connack 1996, p.9; Brooks et al 1997, p.1; Finch 1998, pp.203-205).

Criminality is named as just one feature of a risky lifestyle that may include homelessness, truancy and family breakdown (Hazelhurst 1996, pp.216-218). For example, the educational governance of severely alienated school-aged offenders is mostly located in the discourse on schooling in juvenile detention centres and community based programs separate to mainstream schools (Cain 1993, p.34; Devlin 1995, pp.29-43; NYARS 1997, p.24). Devlin (1995), in her research into the alienation of offenders from mainstream education describes how:

Prisoners often felt that they were misfits at school. Large numbers of them had serious learning difficulties: 26 per cent reported having problems learning to read and write at primary school....Feelings of rejection and isolation are commonly associated with learning difficulties and serious emotional problems can arise. (pp.29-30)

Devlin (1995) outlines how these issues and social factors outside of school, including family problems contributed to their alienation from school and low academic performances (p.44 & 98). The links between delinquency, poverty, low educational achievement and criminality is continued in the discourse on eugenics and educational alienation.

#### *Eugenics And The Discourse On Delinquency And Education*

The medical and psychological construction of youth as a problem in education can be seen in American studies and research aimed at heading off delinquency and school failure in middle schooling. Mc Connack (1996) states the following in relation to how schools construct delinquent students who do not conform to mainstream education norms of

academic performance and behaviour:

It [*the discourse*] is much more comfortable where it speaks of adolescence as something biological and psychological. The discourses of psychology and medicine tend to conceive of problems and solutions in individual terms. (p.11. *Italics mine*)

Delinquent students are conceived by the medical and psychological discourses as the site of the problem. The problem is not seen to exist in a socio-political context as well. McCormack (1996) makes the link between delinquency, poverty and educational failure with the medical and psychological discourses by demonstrating how they play a powerful role in constituting students from low socio-economic backgrounds as subjects who are somehow a problem and require treatment (ibid p.10). The 'problem' is considered to be located in the young person as a result of biological, social or environmental factors outside the school. This discursive direction has a limiting effect on how students may be known by educationalists (ibid, p.1).

A history of biological-genetic explanations emerged in the twentieth century regarding delinquency in relation to education in Australia (Bessant 1995, pp.249-263). Recent examples of research by Crowe (1992) and Noble (1992) demonstrate this eugenic construction of delinquent students as biologically predisposed, or susceptible to "youthful criminal behaviour." (Bessant 1995, pp.250-251). The re-emergence of this adapted version of eugenics, in the last half of the twentieth century demonstrates the influence the discourse on the construction of problem students and is utilised by educationalists and school psychologists.

The dominant position of the discourse on eugenics in Australian educational psychology research through the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) was well placed to influence social policy by generating truth claims that explained juvenile delinquency (Bessant 1995, pp.255-258). In tracing the emergence of eugenics in the education discourse, Bessant (1995) also says that assertions made by Australian

researchers in this field in the 1950s were based on the use of psychometry and intelligence testing. She states:

Psychometry and the measurement of intelligence are central to the assertions about the links between heredity, intelligence, delinquency and social class. (p.252)

Such assertions concerning social class, heredity and intelligence were also linked to truancy, criminality and poor educational achievement. Underlying these claims was the assumption that such 'maladjusted' behaviours were pathological and their causes were biological and therefore natural (ibid, p.253). The power of such assertions and the pervasiveness of this thinking in the associated professions is suggested as giving rise to a kind of natural professional authority.

The socio-economic background of the student was also considered to influence educational achievement and the middle class culture of schooling was seen to play a role in the alienation of 'disadvantaged' young people from school (Beresford 1993, p. 16). The processes whereby these young people were separated as 'different' and scientifically classified as biologically predisposed to delinquency are evident in the discourse on student alienation and are outlined by commentators such as Bessant (1995), Mc Connack (1996), Lubeck and Garrett (1990), Tame (1983) and Placier (1993). Sociological explanations also exist and they provide an insight into how the current Western Australian education policies on students at educational risk constructed alienated students.

#### *Sociological Influences On The Discourse On Alienation From School*

The socio-historic development and use of the term 'alienation' that has influenced these policies is documented in the social science discourses on social organisation and its related synonyms. Social isolation, marginalisation and estrangement are commonly used in the literature on student alienation from school. Documents by DEET 1995, p. 21; Tame

1983, p.24; Dynan 1980, p.17; Lipke 1989, p. 370; Polk 1984, p.472 provided the information and rationale underpinning the students at educational risk policies in Western Australia.

These sources of literature are used to frame the current policies and provide educators and the Western Australian public with a view of how the state school system constructs compulsory students who do not attend school. Alienation is aptly described in a general sense by Lipke (1989) as a "mismatch between one set of values and another." (1989, p.370). The term has been used in sociology, psychology and philosophy to describe deviant behaviour. In the field of education the term is used to label students who have no personal investment in education (Dyan 1980, p.17).

Seeman (1959) conducted one of the most influential early studies on the meaning of social alienation in 1959. In his attempt to organise the various uses of the term in sociological literature and link historical understandings of it with modern applications, Seeman (1959) established five categories within the meaning of alienation in the study of society (Seeman 1959, p.783). Meaninglessness, powerlessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement are explained as features within the broader term alienation.

Many researchers have used Seeman's (1959) terms internationally and in Australia to explore the concept of student alienation. Seeman's (1959) definition of the alienated student is summarised by Tame (1983) as:

one who feels he can do little to influence his position at school and can see little relevance in his school work to his life after school. (p.24)

One of the accepted roles for the structure and organisation of schools is to prepare students for citizenship in the wider adult community (Durkheim as cited in Lipke 1981, p.371). Alienation in school is described as a direct reflection of alienation in the wider social setting and, for some, alienation is a lifelong experience (EDWA 1995, pp.21-22). Citing Weber's (1958) analysis of the role of the school to prepare students for assuming

their place in the adult social context, Lipke (1981) draws attention to the unequal power relationships between students and teachers. He suggests these examples of governance may contribute to student alienation from education because of the incompatibility between the values of educationalists and students (ibid, p.271).

Some studies of alienation in education settings assumed schools to be smaller examples of what takes place in the wider social context. The process of student alienation from school was also examined from educational psychological and sociological perspectives (Cohen, 1974) and student alienation was proposed as only one example of a more general phenomenon of adolescent alienation in society (Mackey, 1977).

When Reeves (1978) looked at the vocational aspirations of students in relation to curriculum content and academic achievement, he found student motivation to engage with education depended on whether school is seen as relevant to student goals post schooling (cited in Dynan 1980, pp. 17-22). Western Australian research into student alienation suggested schools need to be humane social institutions where curriculum content is relevant to student social and vocational needs and educationalists are challenged to widen their views of the role of schools in students' lives (ibid 1980, p. 96).

The Western Australian education discourse has continued to incorporate many of the above accounts of student alienation. A field study related to middle schooling aimed to find ways to, "reduce the incidence and severity through changes to curriculum, pedagogy and school organisation." (EDWA, 1995, p.20). This research drew from the Dettman Report (1972) where it was stated:

an alienated student is one whose dissatisfaction runs deeper than a superficial dislike of certain school requirements and activities, and is engulfed by feelings of mistrust, misfortune and rejection. (p. 21)

The emphasis of the discourse on student alienation is placed on the combination of the social organisation and socio-psychological factors within schools themselves, the



family and the community setting in which students live from the 1960s through to the 1990s (Seldin (1989), Calabrese (1989), Mau (1992), Hill (1993), Cumming (1994), and Omaji (1994) cited in EDWA, 1995, p. 22-26). Interestingly, only one brief reference to juvenile offending is cited from research by Calabrese (1989) and it is documented as one of a number of 'negative behaviours' evidenced in alienated student conduct alongside truancy, low educational achievement, drug use and suicide (ibid, p. 22).

### *The Emergence Of The Discourse On Students At Educational Risk*

The emergence of the term 'at risk' in relation to education occurred in the 1950s (Currie 1979, p.3), around the same time as Secman's (1959) research into what the term alienation means in the social context. The emergence of both terms within the education discourse on problem students provides an insight into how they have been used within the discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia. Alienated students are constructed by the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia, within the current policies on students at educational risk, as some of the most disadvantaged individuals in our state education system and wider community and:

The cost of not addressing the issue of alienation places an unacceptable burden on the individual student, their families and the society. (DET Retention and Participation Program Funding Guidelines 2003, p.1)

The ways in which the term 'at risk' is used within the education discourse to construct alienated students provides a context within which the term alienated student can be understood and applied to how school aged offenders are being constructed by the current Western Australian education policies.

A study into the discourse on students at educational risk was conducted in 1979 for the Education Department of Western Australia. This thesis summarised research and literature concerning children and young people who are considered to be 'educationally at

risk' (Currie, 1979). The origin of the term was traced by Currie (1979) to the United Kingdom where obstetrics research into infants born to mothers who had used drugs during pregnancy and those who had family histories of 'defects' were more likely to be developmentally 'retarded' and have trouble adjusting to school. The Underwood Report (1955) where these medical/psychological research findings were transferred to the education discourse is cited by Currie (1979) as becoming influential in the major extension of psychological, medical and guidance services to schools in Britain (ibid, p. 3).

Such documentary evidence shows how the term 'at educational risk' was founded in the medical discourse and was concerned with the impact of heredity and physical impairments to a child's overall development. Placier (1993, p.380) confirms this view with a more recent investigation into the semantics of the educationally at risk label and highlights links with the medical field (epidemiology). The meaning of the term 'at educational risk' demonstrates a belief that students from poorer backgrounds are more "susceptible to school failure and criminality" (ibid, p.385).

Research conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1960s linking poverty and its effects on educational achievement, had agendas based on the site of education as one of the most powerful social contexts in which children could be shaped into productive citizens (Currie 1979, pp.5-9). Educational improvement and equality of educational opportunity was believed to be the vehicle whereby poorer students could ascend socially and economically and contribute fully to the polity of which they were members (ibid). Compensatory educational programs, such as 'Head Start' and 'Follow Through' arose in the United States in the mid 1960s as solutions to social inequality. Around the same time in the United Kingdom the findings of an eight year longitudinal study in child health, the 'National Child Development Study' by Pringle et al (1966) and the Plowden Report (1966) influenced the compensatory approach to the provision of education of students considered to be at risk (ibid).

Three major findings of research into students at educational risk are summarised by Currie (1979). Firstly, a child's early development has a bearing on whether that child will

be at educational risk in school. Secondly, the developmental antecedents to that child's degree of 'at riskness' can be empirically measured and finally education itself can reverse many of these developmental problems (Currie 1979, pp. 7-8). Currie (1979) warns that the label 'educationally at risk' is underpinned by the assumption that students at educational risk have average general intelligence and are capable of improving their educational performance with the correct school interventions. Currie cautions readers to use the term 'at educational risk' correctly and not to confuse these students with others who have disabilities (ibid, p.49).

### *Poverty, At Risk and Alienation*

The Australian political and economic climate of the 1950s and 1960s was a time of strong industrial growth and economic prosperity. Educationally there was an increasing demand for secondary and tertiary education and an ongoing social justice agenda in terms of educational access and equality. However, the provision of state education was criticised in the late 1960s for not addressing the needs of students from poorer backgrounds (Connell, et al 1992, p.447). With the Australian Labour Party in Government in 1973 after twenty three years of Liberal leadership, Whitlam's reforms influenced education policy for the next twenty years through the Disadvantaged Schools Program (Connell et al 1992, p.450).

The Disadvantaged Schools Program established by the Australian Commonwealth Government in 1974 drew heavily from the findings and practices of educationalists from the United Kingdom and the United States. The Karmel Report (1973) recommended the permanent establishment of the Australian Schools' Commission, which has survived a number of changes in federal government, state and national education policy and departmental restructuring.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program was later to be known as the Australian National Equity Programs for Schools. Connell et al (1992), in their four year study of the

Disadvantaged Schools Program, found that it had been successful on a number of accounts for the improvement of retention of educationally at risk students. The term 'disadvantaged' was applied to schools comprising of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and Disadvantaged Schools Program funding was allocated to schools in low socio-economic areas. The Education Department of Western Australia renamed their Disadvantaged Schools Program to 'Priority Schools Program' (PSP) (EDWA 1998, p.1).

The Disadvantaged Schools Program targeted funding to schools in poor communities with the agenda of addressing the divide between poor communities and wealthier ones (the 'culture of poverty' and the 'linguistic deficit'), and aimed to include students from minority groups into the mainstream education arena. The Disadvantaged Schools Program moved the responsibility for dealing with 'disadvantage' from the individual child to the school and the local community (Connell et al, 1992). Lubeck and Garrett (1990) summarise this shift as one iteration in the ongoing struggle to define and address the issue of students at educational risk as either structural or

focussed on broader social, political and economic practices or based on a social psychological definition, focussed on individuals. (pp.337-338)

The tension still exists in alternating between the placing of the cause of alienation within the individual student and the belief that school organisation brings about student alienation (Batten & Russell 1995, p.1). The Australian National Equity Program for Schools identifies students at risk as the proportion of students who are likely to leave school before completing year twelve (DEET 1994, p.77). It is stated that the students in question are:

beset by particular difficulties and disadvantages, [and] are thought likely to fail to achieve the development in their adolescent years that would provide a sound basis for a satisfying and fulfilling adult life. (p.77)

In light of this definition, factors outside the school arising from poverty and social disadvantage are said to work with structural issues within schools that create and maintain the need for the students at educational risk category within education discourse (ibid, p.77). The objective stated in the academic sphere and social policy of addressing the issue of 'at riskness' and alienation is for schools to retain problematic students to make productive, employable citizens who, in the wider social world, are willingly governable and see themselves as members of the mainstream community.

### *Summary*

The discourses on early school leaving and student alienation share some common features and these include concerns about unemployment, poverty and delinquency (Thorley-Smith nd, pp.167-168). The discourses on student alienation and educational risk shift the focus from the possible consequence of unemployment and poverty to student needs and school organisation (Pellicano 1987, p.47). The emergence of the commentaries on student alienation and the application of the terms 'alienated' and 'at risk' to students who are experiencing difficulty in school has been contested from two major angles in the literature. The first is the recognised need for reform to school organisation and curriculum (Beresford 1993, p.15) and the second concerns the positioning of the causes for student alienation with the individual student and their social environment (Devlin 1995, pp.44 & 98).

The ways in which alienated students and students at educational risk in Western Australia have been constructed within education policy has been examined in this chapter. The reforms to the Western Australian education system that have led to the inclusion of alienated students in the policies on students at educational risk are described in the next chapter. The ways in which schoolaged offenders who are alienated from school are now being included in the Western Australian education system is examined.

### SECTION THREE – EDUCATION REFORM AND ALIENATED STUDENTS

The historical education practices around alienated students in Western Australia, who may also be convicted juvenile offenders, has seen a shift from their removal to alternative education programs operating outside the formal education system prior to the mid 1990s to their gradual inclusion in state education initiatives towards the beginning of 2000. In the next chapter I examine the factors influencing education reform in Australia. The following chapters chart the shifts in discourse that have influenced education reform in Western Australian that include alienated students who have involvement with the state justice system.

The literature examined maps how Western Australian school-aged youth who were alienated from school in the 1980s to the late 1990s were mostly educated and contained outside the state education system. Shifts in how such young people are increasingly being constructed as alienated students and are being educated in programs conducted by the State education system is discussed. In examining the current Department of Education and Training literature online ([www.eddept.wa.edu.au/sgcr/policy/index.htm](http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/sgcr/policy/index.htm)) regarding the retention and participation of alienated students, I found a documented link between student alienation and criminal behaviour. This is an indication of the ongoing nature of the discourse on delinquency, early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime in operation in Western Australia. The state education discourse is increasingly recognising and documenting the importance of including students who challenge mainstream education policy and practice.

Delinquent young people are now formally discussed in both the justice and education contexts. Young people with criminal backgrounds who are alienated from school are also subjects of the discourse on offender education spanning 2000 to 2003. The justice literature on juvenile offender education, interagency collaboration and the education reports on programs for alienated students in one Western Australian metropolitan education district between 1998 and 2002 provide an insight into how the education discourse is constructing alienated students and schoolaged offenders in Western Australia and governing these young people.

## Chapter Seven

*Shifts In Australian Education Policy Impacting On Alienated Students*

This chapter addresses the shifts in education policy between 1980 and the present, as evident in the national discourse in Australia. Documents that detail the issues, tensions, links and bridges that exist in relation to the education of students who are alienated from school are examined. This general examination of literature is linked to the Western Australian education policy context in order to show how national policy changes have shaped the shifts in how Western Australian education policy constructs alienated students who have criminal histories.

*Economic Rationalism vs Meeting The Needs Of The Individual*

Australian education policy, with particular reference to students from low socio-economic backgrounds who do not achieve to levels anticipated in curriculum, is heavily influenced by the discourse on compensatory education. The compensatory education paradigm in Australia has been fundamentally concerned with the education of poor or disadvantaged students and the improvement, through compensatory funding and school programs, of the education of such students (Connell et al 1992, pp.448-455).

The discourse on compensatory education for disadvantaged and poor students in Australia also influences the current Western Australian policies on students at educational risk. The 'H Index' is used as a way of assessing poverty within a population or locality. Funding allocations made for Retention and Participation Programs (RAPP, under the current Making the Difference Policy) in Western Australian government schools as a part of the Students at Educational Risk strategy are based on schools' calculations of 'the relative socio-economic status of each school using a measure known as the 'H' index. (Bradshaw 2001, p.2).

Australian social research into poor families' educational backgrounds, parental occupation/employment status, residential status and income by Henderson (1970) influenced the development of knowledge and education policy determining which schools were eligible for funding through the Disadvantaged Schools Program (Connell et al 1992, p.449). The Disadvantaged Schools Program also drew on knowledge concerning how the organisation of schools and curriculum can alienate students from low socio-economic backgrounds from school. As outlined by Connell (1992):

More recently educational sociology has emphasised the social bases of school knowledge and the social effects of curriculum and assessment (Whitty, 1985; Apple, 1990). It can now be seen that curriculum is central to the production of social inequality through education; it is, therefore, a key issue about compensatory education. (p.448)

Where education policy concentrates on the consequences of poverty (delinquency, unemployment and crime) and student retention and participation, a tension exists between a humanist agenda that education can relieve poverty and an economic rationalist perspective that says educating the poor will reduce the economic burden placed on the wider population in terms of social security benefits etc (Meredyth & Tyler 1993, pp.226-227).

The benefits of education socially and economically in improving health and parenting, social cohesion, crime reduction and decreasing the associated costs of services in these areas is part of the current international discourse on the impact of learning on reducing crime and poverty (Feinstein 2002, p.3). The retention of students in schools until year twelve and the provision of programs particularly aimed at compulsory school aged alienated students and students at educational risk in Western Australia, is a part of wider labour market and education policy agenda. This agenda is born out of recognition that compensatory programs are mostly all about economic rationalism. Consistent with this view, Pudley and Vidovich (1995) state:



According to the discourses of economic rationalism and human capital, education is but an element of the micro-economy with the role of providing skilled workers for the economy. The assumption is that productivity, efficiency and work orientation will enhance the Australian economy's competitiveness in the international capitalist market place. (p.175)

Although the current students at educational risk policies in Western Australia (Making the Difference - Policy and Guidelines For Students at Educational Risk, May 1998, p.5) describe the importance of the development of individual student potential as a continuation of the rhetoric of the Disadvantaged Schools Program and compensatory education in Australia, the economic rationalist discourse on education making productive and responsible citizens also plays a significant role (Merdyth & Tyler 1993, p.1). Pudley and Vidovich (1995) continue this illustration of discourse and explain it is the state's responsibility to:

facilitate its own economic growth and accumulation for its own financial survival (the state's financial revenues are dependent upon production) and its legitimization. (pp.186-187)

In the case of the portion of the population who are poor and require welfare assistance, policies that acknowledge democratic principles of equity and positive discrimination are applied and are also often in conflict with the conservative capitalist ideas of individualism and competition (ibid, p.186). The current Draft Plan for Government Schools (2003) and the Making the Difference Policy (1998) incorporate a broad range of intended reforms in the areas of curriculum, school organisation, teacher attitudes and approaches, school discipline and the retention of difficult students (Vardon 1996, pp.3-5).

These shifts in Western Australian education policy are heavily influenced by the national student retention agenda and local pressure for a more equitable approach to the education of alienated youth who have limited opportunity in the current labour market due

to their lack of recognised skills, experience and credentials (Wooden 1998, pp.5-6; Sercombe et al 2002, p.35). As stated by Dwyer (1996):

Available research and commissioned reports on youth unemployment, have highlighted the seriousness of the situation confronting those young Australians who, for whatever the reason, chose or feel compelled to leave without completing school after – or even before – the school leaving age (p.10)

Given that the retention of students at risk has been an ongoing educational agenda linked to labour market conditions and drawing on research into the social and educational effects of poverty (MCEETYA 2001, pp.1-6), it can be said that the current Western Australian discourse on students at educational risk is another iteration of attempts at the governance of delinquents as the subjects of the discourse on poverty, unemployment and crime.

What has recently changed is the inclusion in Western Australian education policy of the possibility of delinquent students gaining marketable credentials through schools and Registered Training Providers (RTOs) such as TAFE instead of attending alternative programs which offer no recognised educational outcomes (Polk 1984 p.462; Netolicky 1997, pp.1-2; SCRCSSP 2000, p.35; DET 2003, p.1).

### *Factors Influencing Educational Policy Change*

The discourses on early school leaving, student alienation and retention have worked together in influencing the shift in the mid 1990s in Western Australian education policy on students at educational risk. However, the discourse related to truancy was very powerful in the generation of knowledge about the need for changes to school structures and organisation, curriculum flexibility and teacher attitudes in order to re-engage alienated students and retain those at risk of dropping out (WACOSS 1990, p.23; Sirr 1992, p.11;

Milmo 1994, p.21; SSCEET 1996, pp.vii-xii; Kilpatrick 1996, pp.19-22; Spillane & Wheatley 2001, pp.7-12).

Student connectedness to school, family, peer group and the community is identified by Spillane and Wheatley (2001, p.10) as crucial to preventing early school leaving and alienation from school. The recognition that not all students wish to prepare for university in their post compulsory education is also explained. As Spillane and Wheatley (2001) explain, the re-focus of school curriculum to incorporate the preparation for the world of work is seen as a protective factor in addressing student alienation:

For students who may not be academically proficient, and for whom there is marginal room for improvement, it is particularly important that schools provide vehicles that promote a sense of belonging, by providing opportunities to develop and demonstrate other forms competency, including work study, technical skills and involvement in visual, musical and dramatic arts. (p.10)

In Western Australia in the late 1980s pressure was mounting regarding the number of young people truanting from school and becoming involved in crime. A report into poverty in Western Australia revealed:

Truants and young offenders are especially disadvantaged in gaining access to employment and training because their participation in education has been interrupted or ineffectual. (WACOSS 1990, p.23).

Student observations on the reasons for alienation from school and truancy described how "the teachers did not know, like or understand young people....Classes were too big for slow kids, much work was unexplained, they were made to feel dumb" (ibid, p.23). In 1990 the Western Australian Council for Social Services (WACOSS) called for the establishment of a special school for chronic truants and young offenders that was to be run by the Education Department. It was also recommended that the curriculum be flexible and

vocationally orientated and focus on building self esteem as a way of "compensating for the educational disadvantage of these people." (ibid, p.24).

In the 1990s the alternative programs run or funded by the Department for Community Services and (later) Juvenile Justice met this need and the Education Department and schools actively supported their existence by making referrals or endorsing referrals made from welfare and justice personnel (DCS 1987, pp.1-2; Wilkie 1991, p.10; Nicholls 1991, p.157, Bonjolo 1991, p.5, Omaji 1993, pp.403-7; Milmo 1994, pp.6-22). The decrease in full time work for fifteen year old school leavers meant that they stayed on at school but research by Williams et al (1993) indicated that the retention of disadvantaged students had limited improvement (cited in Abbott-Chapman 1994, p.17).

Calls for the state education system to take up the responsibility for the provision of such programs also occurred as summarised by Milmo (1994) in her research into the provision of alternative education to school aged delinquents in the northern suburbs of Perth, Western Australia. She explains:

Participants [*in this research*] felt that the Education Department needed to be more involved with the development of an alternative program in terms of funding and resources. (Milmo, 1994, p.21. *italics mine*)

In 1996 the federal government Inquiry into Truancy and Exclusion From School in Australia revealed there had:

been no uniform, national statistical measure of the number of young people under the legal school leaving age who 'go missing' from school for whatever reason. (SSCEET 1996, p.vii)

It was also found that some schools monitored student absenteeism but this was not a formal, standardised requirement of schools across the country. The Inquiry found that key

stakeholders involved with truants and schools agreed that a standardised approach to data collection, policy development and changes to schooling was needed (ibid, p.vii).

From this national inquiry came recommendations that have had a direct influence on Western Australian education policies and practices around the identification of students at educational risk, alienated students, truants, exclusion and suspension from school and behaviour management in schools. It is suggested that:

School disciplinary legislation, policy and procedures include a precise and consistent statement of the grounds and procedures for each category of exclusion of students from school. (SSCEET 1996, p.x)

Recommendations also included pressure on all Australian state governments to offer flexible curricula in order to cater for post school destinations other than university and to train teachers to understand and adopt a more inclusive, pastoral care approach to dealing with difficult students (ibid, pp.33-35).

### *Summary*

The documented changes in Australian national education policy stemming from the retraction of the youth labour market since the 1970s and concerns about youth unemployment, poverty and crime (Daniel & Cornwall 1993, p.3; Bessant 1995, p.10) have resulted in a raft of education reforms relating to the retention of students at educational risk and alienated students (Tait 1995, p.123; Dwyer 1996, pp.3-10). The influence of economic considerations regarding youth unemployment (Pudley & Vidovich 1995, p.175) and concerns about delinquency and schools not providing adequate education programs for alienated students in Western Australia, (WACOSS 1990, p.23) contributed to education reform in Western Australia. The history of how alienated students and delinquents have been educated in Western Australia also provides an insight into the sociohistorical background on the education of school-aged offenders and alienated

students. This is covered in the next chapter along with the factors leading to education reform in Western Australia that has seen the construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students in the *Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk* (1998) policies.

## Chapter Eight

*Education Reform Impacting On Alienated School-Aged Offenders In Western Australia*

The history of how delinquents and school-aged offenders have been educated in Western Australia also offers insight into how the thinking on low educational achievement, poverty and crime has progressed and has contributed to keeping such young people alienated from mainstream schools. This chapter examines the Western Australian socio-historical background on how alienated students who are also school-aged offenders have been educated.

School-aged offenders who are alienated from school in Western Australia have been the subjects of the assemblage of the discourses that explain delinquency as a product of poverty and early school leaving resulting in unemployment and crime. It is the ways in which Western Australian delinquents and alienated students are documented as at risk - that is, at risk of not achieving at school, at risk of leaving school early, at risk of being unemployed and at risk of being poor and criminal that show this. There is a history of a provision of alternative programs for school-aged offenders in Western Australia. It is evidenced in texts examined for this chapter that these alternative programs have historically existed outside of the Western Australian state education system up until the late 1990s (Rankin 1927, p.201; WA Child Welfare Department 1962, p.58).

Western Australian research exists where the need for alternative programs and the outcomes they achieved with alienated school-aged offenders is documented. These texts also provide insight into the factors influencing the shift in the Western Australian education discourse on alienated students that took place in the mid 1990s (WACOSS 1990, pp.23-24; Bonjolo 1991, pp.28-29; WALA 1991, p.12; Milmo 1994, p.21). The reform of the Western Australian education system in the 1990s that has seen the gradual inclusion of school-aged offenders by constructing them as alienated students under the Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk policy (1998) is also examined. This

shows how the education discourse in this state is now constructing Western Australian school-aged offenders as alienated students.

### *Alternative Programs For Alienated Youth In Western Australia*

The history of alternative programs for delinquents in Western Australia provides documented confirmation that until the mid 1990s school-aged offenders and delinquents were not educated within the state education system. An early piece of evidence found in the literature regarding alternative education programs for poor children and delinquents in Western Australia is found in Rankin's *History of the Development of Education in Western Australia 1829-1923* (1926). His summary of Philanthropic Schools is extensive (ibid, pp.204-209). His comments on the Salvation Army facility near Armadale, in the 1920s describes the provision of alternative education programs and specialised treatment services for problem children separate to the mainstream schools of that time:

The Army has in full working operation, a clinic at the Margaret Richard School, under a trained psychologist, Mr T.B Hill MA, who devotes his time to coax out on scientific lines, the slumbering faculties of the children. The Home tries its best to make useful productive citizens of the boys. (1926, p.201)

The provision of special programs for delinquent students in Western Australia in the 1960s also highlights the agenda of making good and productive citizens who work hard:

As a remedial measure for offenders in whom the delinquent pattern is not fixed but who need to be turned away from delinquent behaviour, day or evening attendance centres have considerable merit....The program for an attendance centre should not be aimed at entertaining those who must go there, but should demand physical effort and work of a constructive nature. (WA Child Welfare Department 1962, p.58)



Dynan's (1980) study of Western Australian alienated student views on education (pp.8-12) provides a history of the alternative school or program for disaffected students and those who are alienated from the formal education system. She cites the work of Broad (1977) in the United Kingdom in describing these alternative programs as separate from the school and Staples (1977) in the United States where the alternative programs provided remedial education, motivation and self esteem raising activities and career education for problem students (ibid, p.9-10). Dynan (1980) also quotes Staples as saying that alternative programs for alienated and delinquent students are "keeping more children in school and freeing them from alienation and apathy." (p.10). However, Spillane & Wheatley (2001) warned of the danger of relocating difficult students to alternative programs in saying:

placement in alternative educational settings can result in schools avoiding their responsibility to critically reflect on their policy, ethos and pedagogical practice and provide a model of schooling that is inclusive and nurturing for all students, irrespective of their academic or social skill levels. (p.10)

In Western Australia the discourse on alienated and at risk students historically described how these students fail in mainstream school settings and how school fails them. The comments of a Deputy Principal from a school in a low socio-economic area of Perth are quoted in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Youth and the Law (1991), captured the views of many educators regarding difficult students. This educator claimed:

that 30% of the children in the area were 'at risk'. These children were said to have 'failed' in the education system in that they had not met even the basic educational requirements. These students show little initiative, motivation or the desire to achieve at their school tasks. They are disruptive and, consequently, many have received continuous reprimands, isolation periods and suspensions after the implementation of classroom management techniques. (p.12)

Western Australian students also expressed the difficulties they experienced when seeking assistance from school and welfare professionals. Quoted in research (Underwood, White & Omelezuk 1993, pp.26-27), these alienated students in Western Australia described the ongoing tension between them and the major institutions in their lives that they said contributed to their social alienation and criminality.

In Western Australia school-aged offenders who are alienated from school have occupied two parts of the justice discourse on offender education, mostly in the commentary on community based alternative programs and to a lesser extent education in the juvenile detention and remand centres. The general theme of early school leaving, poverty and crime exists in Western Australian research and is evidenced in a Department of Justice Report evaluating a program for repeat offenders in the community where the causes of offending are connected. It was stated in the Newman Report (1996) that:

causal sequences are superimposed on the general developmental sequence – for example where parental mishandling leads to truancy, which in turn leads to unstable job record, which in turn leads to adult crime. (Newman 1996, p.18)

It is documented that school-aged offenders who are alienated from both school and employment are more likely to move into offending behaviour and such causal factors have underpinned the creation of community based, preventative alternative programs for school-aged offenders (Semmens 1987, p.116; Giddings & Walters 1992, p.139; Ozich 1992, p.147). The Western Australian Department for Community Services report on the need for an alternative education program in the northern metropolitan area provides an example of the policies and practices in this state in the late 1980s (Dentice, et al 1987, pp.1-2).

In this report, details are given of twelve to fifteen year old students "whose educational needs were not being met by the existing school system." (Dentice et al 1987, p.1). The report shows that the school-aged students who were alienated from the state

school system and were either at risk of or were offending needed to be accommodated by short term alternative education programs that provided opportunities to improve self esteem, build confidence in the learning process and prepare for the world of work (ibid, pp.1-2).

In this report, staff in the Department for Community Services suggested programs for schoolaged offenders needed to bear little resemblance to school and provide work experience and links to local resources. The overall aim of such programs was to the provision of:

a stepping stone from a position of failure towards a productive use of traditional and alternative forms of education within the community.  
(Dentice et al 1987, p.12)

The following summary of Western Australian initiatives and research projects shows how school-aged offenders who are alienated from school have been regulated and contained within alternative education programs and how the welfare and justice discourses made this possible.

The Western Australian Department for Community Services provided funding to community youth organisations to run Local Offender Programs (LOPs) and School Support Programs for at risk youth and school-aged offenders in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kids and Crime, 1989). These programs were instituted across the state in 1989 by the Western Australian government "to tackle the 'juvenile crime' problem." (Wilkie 1991, p.10). These programs were auspiced by community agencies, not schools and generally received referrals for schoolaged offenders who had appeared before the Perth Children's Court a number of times (ibid, pp. 10-11).

The aims of these programs for Western Australian delinquents were to reduce the numbers of twelve to fifteen year old offenders not attending school, link them to employment and local support services and to provide positive leisure activities in order to

divert the participants from re-offending. The Community Based Education Program (CBEP) and the Mc Call Community Support Program, located in the Western Australian metropolitan area, were other such services run directly by the Department for Community Services. The Mc Call program provided educational and support services to children and adolescents considered at risk of self-harm and offending, who were alienated from their families and community and had been victims of abuse.

The Community Based Education Program was established in 1988 by the Western Australian Department for Community Services for school-aged youth at risk having official contact with the department for welfare and/or offending issues. Worksyde was also "one of the primary prevention programs in Western Australia aimed at addressing juvenile crime." (Nicholls 1991, p.155). Although its focus was to place post compulsory school-aged offenders in employment, this service identified:

a significant trend towards referrals in the fourteen to fifteen year age group who are offenders. (Nicholls 1991, p.157)

The Parkerville Employment, Education and Training Program provided education and employment focused services to twelve to eighteen year old at risk youth who were in "crisis" and "at the end of the line" in relation to schooling and their community (Parkerville Children's Home 1993, p.2). Many of these programs continued into the mid 1990s and local research into the provision of them continued to use the terms at risk and alienated in relation to potential and convicted twelve to fifteen year old offenders in Western Australia.

The institution of a State government school for chronic truants and young offenders was also put forward in 1990 as a solution to the provision of education to school aged offenders in Western Australia because it was found that the school curriculum was irrelevant to their needs and teachers' approaches to such students were alienating (WACOSS 1990, pp.23-24). A description of a variety of programs to cater for school-aged offenders who were alienated from the formal education system is given in the 1991

Western Australian Legislative Assembly report on Youth and the Law. Comment is made that existing school based initiatives for at risk students had not “targeted the serious recidivists because school is alien to them.” (WALA 1991, p.49). The recommendations that followed in this report suggested the provision of programs that address low literacy and a ‘second chance’ at gaining an education and preparing to enter the labour market in the community setting (ibid, p.49).

Teachers in the northern suburbs of Perth felt they could identify compulsory school-aged students who were at risk of dropping out before year ten and that a coordinated policy and operational effort was required on behalf of the Education Department and schools to address the problem of students leaving school before the end of their fifteenth year (Bonjolo, 1991). Bonjolo recommended the development and resourcing of early identification strategies and support mechanisms for students identified as at risk of alienation from school. He also suggested Western Australian schools learn to make links with community services who support school-aged youth at risk and adapt curriculum and school management structures in order to make schools less alienating to some of their students (ibid, p.5).

School aged young people involved in, or considered at risk of offending attending alternative programs in the northern suburbs of Perth in the 1990s, were assisted with self esteem raising activities. However the short-term nature of many of these programs, venue availability and limited academic and vocational resources meant the students were not necessarily work ready nor were they able to return to mainstream schooling (Milmo 1994, pp.18-20).

The alternative programs currently offered in this state continue to operate with increased attention to the development of literacy and numeracy skills and links with schools and the gaining of recognised qualifications (EDWA Making the Difference, 1998). The Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk and alienated students is a continuation and refinement of the research, policies and practices that have arisen regarding alternative programs for delinquents in the 1980s and 1990s.

*Education Reform In Western Australia Since The 1990s*

The shifts in the Western Australian education discourse in the 1990s, as summarised by Vardon (1996, pp.3-5) included widespread departmental staffing and administrative restructuring, legislative reform, enhanced linkages with the community and increased resources. These shifts included: Local Area Education Planning, a Curriculum Improvement Strategy, the Students at Educational Risk Strategy, improved Learning, Teaching and Management through Technology, better Professional Development and career mobility opportunities for teachers and enhanced accountability for education outcomes and expenditure through a Quality Assurance Strategy (ibid, p.5).

In order to meet the national and state target of the retention in education or training of ninety per cent of students to their twelfth year (Carpenter 2003(a), p.1), changes to how Western Australian schools managed truancy and difficult student behaviour in particular had to be specifically addressed. Comprehensive instructional policies, strategies and accountability structures related to funding were developed and resistance to change was anticipated by the Director General of Education in Western Australia (1996), when she indicated:

Reform however stops at the school gate, slowed by union guarded work practices, busy teachers who are needing more time and some disagreement over the nature of school reform. However, right now all states and territories are moving to reform school systems in response to federal funding policies. (Vardon 1996, p.5)

The review of Western Australian Education Act 1928 commenced in 1994 and the education Minister at the time explained, “the system it oversees these days bears little resemblance to the system it was written for nearly 70 years ago.” (Barnett 1997, p.1). The Objects of the new School Education Act 1999 outline the rights and responsibilities of education staff, students and parents in the delivery of education for all Western Australian

students from kindergarten to year twelve (Hall 2001, p.5). In the new Act, access to education is detailed as a right of every school aged child in Western Australia as is:

The need for government schooling to be sufficiently comprehensive to meet the educational needs of all children. (Hall 2001, pp.5-9)

These are both principles underpinning the legislation and Regulatory Frameworks (2000) guiding the delivery of education in Western Australia. Whilst this legislated commitment to the education of all students, including alienated school-aged offenders exists, Gray (2000, p.27) highlights a number of operational concerns arising from the assumption that legislation and policy has the power to compel parents to ensure their children attend school. The retention and participation strategy is one of the discursive means by which schools and education districts are being made to account for and manage change. A range of measures within the education discourse on students at educational risk involve the standardisation and recording of the practices of education professionals in the retention of alienated students in some form of recognised education placement.

The practice of 'procedural fairness' in schools is also a means of regulating school behaviour management practices and it is explained by Hall (2001) as:

A method of making decisions that affect a person in an unbiased way and that affords the affected person the opportunity to be heard. [*procedural fairness*] Should be a part of every decision that affects the rights of students and staff [*and*] Is expressly referred to in provisions of the Act and Regulations eg. Panel process, suspension of students. (p.8. *italics mine*)

The legislative changes in 1999 and associated Regulatory Framework (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/index.cfm>) included a number of important shifts influencing schools' management of school-aged delinquents. These involved the application of procedural fairness and a comprehensive, standardised documentation system accounting for student suspension and exclusion, non attendance and exemption (Clayton

2000, pp.1-9; DET Attendance, 2000, p.1; DET Behaviour Management in Schools, 2001, pp.1-20; DET Alternative Programs, 2003, pp.1-9). The obligation for schools to provide learning programs for students suspended for three or more days and those difficult students exempted to attend other programs is documented in the Regulatory Framework. It is clearly stated that students presenting problems within mainstream school settings must be referred to alternative programs that incorporate basic educational activities (Clayton 2000, p.6; DET Alternative Programs 2003, p.1).

### *The Policies That Construct Alienated Students In Western Australia*

The major shifts in Western Australian education policy, concerning delinquents, since the mid 1990s have also been encapsulated in the series of strategic plans for government school education in Western Australia. The initial documented shift commenced in 1996 and has continued through successive planning documents to the current Draft Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007.

In the Strategic Plan 1996-1998, the Education Department of Western Australia stated it was necessary to develop:

guidelines for schools to assist them in reviewing current arrangements and planning appropriate education options for students with troublesome behaviours and students alienated from school. (EDWA Strategic Plan 1996-1998, p.1)

The alternative programs for such students also came under the scrutiny of Western Australian education policy makers. They suggested it had become necessary to review "the adequacy of existing alternative education initiatives for students alienated from school and implement improved educational strategies to meet the needs identified," (ibid, p.2).



After this period of evaluation and revision of existing alternative education services for alienated students and students at educational risk in Western Australia, the Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000 was released. From this key document, a number of policies and strategies concerning students at educational risk in Western Australia have surfaced such as, EDWA Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk Policy (1998), DET Making the Difference – Behaviour Management in Schools Policy (1998) and the recent DET Building inclusive Schools (2003). These policies demonstrate the documented shift in education towards the formalised inclusion of alienated students in the state education system. This can be seen in the Students at Educational Risk Strategy under the Making the Difference Policy and Guidelines (May 1998) where the responsibilities of Western Australian schools and teachers are outlined. It states their role includes the identification and provision of education programs to:

those students who may be at risk of not achieving the major learning outcomes of schooling to levels which enable them to achieve their potential. (EDWA Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk 1998, p.3)

This description is expanded to include a commitment to include students with difficult behaviours, who are underachieving and who are not attending school. Further to this, schools must account for the development and implementation of school based initiatives that provide evidence of the policy and strategies in action within the school (ibid, pp.3-5). The policy document outlines the responsibilities of school personnel, parents, caregivers, central office and the various duties associated with their role in the implementation of the change (ibid, pp.6-11).

The Behaviour Management in Schools Policy (1998) as a part of the Making the Difference strategy, arose from a review of schools' behaviour management practices over ten years and responded to "increasing community concern that schools provide a safe and supportive learning environment." (EDWA Behaviour Management in Schools Policy, 1998, p.1). This policy states:

The key to effective student behaviour management is high quality, positive relationships between teachers and students characterised by trust, mutual respect and tolerance. (p.1)

The link between low socio-economic status, challenging student behaviour and the continuation of the discourse on delinquency and poverty is still in play and can be seen in the policy. That schools must support these students can also be seen in a report for the Minister for Education in Western Australia where it was said:

For a variety of socio-economic reasons, there are now an increasing number of 'difficult to manage' students who require special attention beyond that normally available to schools. (Department of Education Services 2001, pp.10, 19)

The Behaviour Management Policy requires schools to devise and document school based behaviour management plans that are consistent with the Objects of the School Education Act 1999. The policy and legislative Objects require the application of the principle of 'procedural fairness' in all decision making practices around retaining difficult students in school and managing their non compliant behaviours on an individual basis (EDWA Making the Difference - Behaviour Management in Schools Policy 1998, pp.1-4; Clayton 2000, pp.1-9; DET Making the Difference - Behaviour Management in Schools 2001. pp.1-6).

The assumption implicit in the application of procedural fairness is that individual students whose behaviour presents a problem in the school setting will be involved in the development of an individual behaviour management plan with involvement from caregivers, teachers and other relevant people. The policy recognises the importance of teachers understanding they:

have a responsibility to encourage positive social participation and self-discipline. Effective teachers provide inclusive, flexible and relevant curriculum to address both social and academic learning outcomes for the students as described in the Curriculum Framework. (EDWA Making the Difference - Behaviour Management in Schools, 2001, p.3)

The impact of this policy (re named the Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy in 2001) in practice has seen a reduction in student suspension and exclusions from schools. The Minister for Education and Training (2003) stated:

Since the Gallop Government implemented its Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy in 2001, the number of suspended students has fallen by 16 per cent. (Carpenter 2003(b), p.1).

A reduction in class sizes in the middle years of schooling, a wider range of curriculum options, including Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools and professional development for teachers in behaviour management techniques have been an integral part of the reform of education in Western Australia that can address some of the needs of school aged offenders in the education setting.

Carpenter (2002(c)) stated “In time, all of these things will make Government schools even more relevant and attractive to students.” (2002(c), p.2). The language of this statement demonstrates how the reform is seen as an ongoing process that fully acknowledges the need for change within schools in order to achieve the target of the retention of ninety per cent of Western Australian students between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years (2003, p.1; DET Draft Plan for Government Schools, 2003-2007, p.2).

The ongoing reform of Western Australian education also includes the new discourse on inclusivity. Schools are now required to devise policy, procedures and accountability measures that substantiate inclusive practice in the areas of curriculum flexibility and school organisation (DET Building Inclusive Schools, 2003, pp.1-13). This policy is

currently being explained to teachers and school principals via a state wide professional development program (Swan Education District Council Report September 2002, p.2). This new component of the education discourse, which has the potential to impact positively on school-aged offenders in Western Australia, draws from the Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/whatsnew.htm>). It has emerged from the discourse on students with special needs. The policy expands this concept by making a link between the concept of inclusivity and equity and access:

When we talk about inclusive schools we are talking about equity and access for all students including students at educational risk and students living in poverty (DET Building Inclusive Schools 2003, p.9)

The connections between the School Education Act 1999, the Curriculum Framework, the Students at Educational Risk and Behaviour Management in Schools policies and the Retention and Participation Plan funding for schools' programs for difficult students, all focus on stemming the previous exclusionary practices around delinquents and challenging students who do not see university as a suitable post school destination (DET Building Inclusive Schools 2003, p.18; DET Draft Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007) (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/stratplan/pages/context.htm>). Giorcelli (2002) states:

as school personnel we are legally and ethically bound to respond appropriately to the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students. (DET Building Inclusive Schools 2003, p.21)

The obligation to include students who are alienated from school in the state education system and make the necessary pedagogical, behaviour management and organisational changes required to meet their needs is clear in education policy. Shifts are being made in order to provide alternatives to academic post compulsory pathways and this includes the VET in Schools initiatives.

*The New Link Between Education And Vocational Training*

The provision of vocational education in Western Australian schools can also be linked to the ongoing national education discourse on student retention (Lugg & Saltmarsh, 2002, p.1; Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2003, p.1; Carpenter 2002(d), p.2). However, it appears there is concern across Australia that school-aged alienated students are not necessarily gaining the social and academic skills required to undertake vocational education and training (VET) in their post compulsory years. Further concern still revolves around these students being catered for in alternative settings that don't necessarily prepare them to return to school or training. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum (2003) outlined their concern by stating:

Our sense is that the educational needs of a sizeable number of young people are not being well catered for in conventional learning settings during the compulsory years of schooling....A distinguishing feature very often of these [*alternative*] settings is an attempt to develop a stronger connection with practical skills related to the world of work. (p.1. *italics mine*)

School-aged offenders are usually positioned in the education discourse as alienated students and early school leavers who are impoverished and unlikely to be competitive in the labour market. These young offenders also often identified as students who are more interested in practical, work orientated programs that are seen to lead to employment. The VET in Schools initiatives, supported by MCEETYA (the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education and Youth Affairs) has grown and aims to provide vocationally orientated students with recognised units of competency from national training packages that are within the Australian Qualifications Framework (Carpenter 2003(e), p.1; MCEETYA 2003, p.1).

A VET in schools program must meet minimum national standards and is accountable to the respective State Training Board. Therefore VET in Schools programs in Western Australian schools must be undertaken as a part of the Western Australian Certificate of

Education and provide credentials that lead to a nationally recognised qualification (MCEETYA 2003, pp.13). Structured Workplace Learning can be a part of a school based VET program where students spend time in real or simulated workplaces and this time is counted towards unit completion within a nationally recognised training package. Another initiative aiming to retain students in education and training is the School-Based New Apprenticeships program that commenced in 1997, which "must be a part of the students broader study towards the secondary school certificate." (MCEETYA 2003, p.20).

The VET in Schools agenda in Western Australia is closely linked with the national push for schools and TAFE Colleges to work together as a way of arranging local education and training solutions and providing a range of flexible pathways to all students (DET Draft Plan for Government Schools 2004-2007, 2003; Carpenter 2003(1), p.1). The linking of education and training sectors at a government level is also a part of the international discourse on early school leaving and Australia has been one of the first OECD countries to do this at a federal level. The OECD Thematic Review (1997) stated:

Australia was the first OECD country to merge separate departments of education and employment through the establishment in 1987 of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET, and since 1996 DEETYA) with the addition of Youth Affairs. In recent years, several States have made similar mergers. (Thematic Review of the Transitions From Initial Education to Working Life: A Country Note – Aus 1997, p.4).

In July 2002 a review of Western Australian student retention recommended the merging of the Western Australian Department of Education and the Department of Training (Tannock 2002, p.4; Carpenter 2002(1), p.1). This merger is another phase of education reform in Western Australia and is seen by the Minister for Education and Training as:

the most appropriate means of achieving a coherent and cost effective strategy to improve the retention of fifteen to nineteen year olds in education and training beyond Year 10. (Carpenter 2002(f), p.1)

In relation to school aged offenders as alienated students the merge of departments and the VET in Schools initiatives are seen as "critical in providing opportunities for groups traditionally under represented in employment, education and training." (Carpenter 2003(d), p.1).

### *Summary*

The reforms in Western Australian education from the mid 1990s continuing into the present illustrate a shift in the general discourse on the retention of all students, including those who are considered problematic by schools in terms of behaviour and attendance. Such documented reforms and subsequent changes in education practice make it possible to look at how the new policies relevant to school aged delinquents are being played out in a Western Australian metropolitan education district. In the next chapter, the ways in which compulsory school aged offenders are constructed within the discourse on students at educational risk as alienated students will be examined. The documented responses to the Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk Strategy (1998) and the developments in the Retention and Participation Programs (RAPP) in an education district are used to chart how the discourse constructs, includes and accounts for the education of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school.

## Chapter Nine

*Students At Educational Risk Policy And Alienated Students In The Western Australian Context*

With the education reforms in Western Australia and the Students at Educational Risk Strategy, as a part of the Making the Difference policies, the education of students with criminal backgrounds is now clearly considered the responsibility of state schools and districts (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, p.9; Bradshaw 2001, p.1). In this chapter literature constituting the current education discourse in a Western Australian metropolitan education district, in the period 1998 to 2002, is examined to see how alienated students with criminal histories are constructed. Documentary evidence of the inclusion of these young people within the discourse beyond 2003, in the education district studied, was not available from the education district concerned because evaluation reports had not been finalised.

The body of literature, from the Western Australian metropolitan education district informing this chapter, provides examples of how school-aged offenders, categorised as alienated students, are being constructed within the education discourse on students at educational risk (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, pp.1-6; EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan 1999-2000, pp.1-3; EDWA Swan Education District Council Report 2002, pp.1-8; EDWA Swan DEO Student Services Operational Plan 2003, pp.1-4).

It is apparent within policy and evaluation texts that the Western Australian government education system now identifies those school-aged students who are alienated from school and if school measures fail to re-engage them in mainstream classes, these students are referred to a Department of Education and Training (DET) run alternative program in a Western Australian metropolitan education district (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan (RAPP) Funding Summary for Principals 2001, p.3). This trend is identifiable in written discourse, in the Western Australian metropolitan



education district chosen for this thesis. Documented opportunities for delinquent students involved in crime who will not attend mainstream schools, now exist where they may address literacy and numeracy problems and gain recognised credentials in supportive learning environments within programs for alienated students.

### *A Local Response To Education Reform*

The students at educational risk initiatives in one metropolitan education district in Western Australia include the development of strategic processes whereby policies are documented and implemented in schools, databases track students at educational risk and alienated students' attendance and progress. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and case management practices occur at a school and district level. Documentary evidence of school interventions is collated and teachers are involved in a professional development program to improve their understanding and skills in teaching and managing difficult students in their classrooms (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, pp.1-6; EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan 1999-2000, pp.1-3; EDWA Swan Education District Council Report 2002, pp.1-8; EDWA Swan DEO Student Services Operational Plan 2003, pp.1-4).

In 1999 the metropolitan education district researched in this study developed a Retention and Participation Plan in which it was stated the District was to provide "District programs to cater for severely alienated students in years eight to ten." (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan 1999-2000, p.1). This saw the provision of alternative education programs for students at educational risk who were considered very alienated from mainstream education and some who would have had involvement with the justice system because of their criminal behaviour.

Within these programs individual education plans that aimed to be more inclusive, with a flexible, student-centred approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills were employed by teams comprised of teachers, social/youth workers, Aboriginal Family

Support Officers and school psychologists (ibid, p.1). The district had also commenced a database on alienated students detailing school intervention strategies, improvements in student literacy and numeracy and collaborative efforts with other agencies (ibid, pp.2-3). At a district level network meetings were established for school staff coordinating the retention of students at risk in schools. The purposes of such meetings are to share resources, information and support between staff working with severely alienated students in the programs for category three and four students at educational risk (EDWA Swan Education District Council Report September 2002, pp.1, 3). Another district initiative demonstrating how students at educational risk, alienated students and school aged offenders are now increasingly catered for by the state education system has been the implementation of online resources and examples of best practice and strategies were made available to schools and teachers online (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/SAER/content.htm>). "Successful practice models and strategies" were also published in a district newsletter and distributed throughout schools (EDWA Curriculum and SAER @Swan, Semester 2, 2002). Professional development for schools in inclusive education has also occurred (EDWA Swan Education District Council Report September 2002, p.2).

This professional development strategy and sharing of best practice models provides insight into how this education district recognised schools, teachers and school structures were not equipped or trained in how to deal with the engagement and retention of alienated students. The delivery of professional development by Department of Justice staff who work in the area of juvenile education services to schools also shows that education systems and staff needed assistance in how to work effectively with alienated students and school-aged offenders in an education context. Rose (2001) provides an example of such an initiative:

The CBEs [*Community Based Education Officers*] have been working on a team project to improve client accessibility to Education Department schools. Each officer is working on a part of an overall PR package that can be delivered to Principals, EDWA District Education Services staff and other mainstream staff in the metropolitan area. (p.2 *italics mine*)

The allocation of staff positions dedicated to either working directly with or assisting school staff to deal with students at educational risk and severely alienated students began gradually. The changes to staffing concerned with the engagement and retention of students at educational risk and alienated students in the Western Australian education district examined is documented as commencing in 1999 and is evidenced in a report on interagency collaboration where it was stated:

Joondalup and Swan Education Districts are in a transition period and any changes are contingent upon the proclamation of the new Education Act....The position of District Attendance Coordinator provides support to the Manager and Coordinators of Student Services, particularly in developing and implementing district level programs to ensure student retention, participation and engagement. (Attendance and Interagency Collaboration 1999-2000 1999, p.8)

The district Students at Educational Risk Project Officer, Inclusive Education Officer and School Attendance Officers and an Aboriginal Psychologist are also documented examples of the employment of specialists who draw from and contribute to the education discourse on students at educational risk (DET Swan Education District Student Services Operational Plan 2003, p12). These education personnel contribute to the knowledge schools and teachers have regarding the education of alienated students who may also have criminal backgrounds. These staff work within a framework where difficult students are categorised and constructed as students at risk along a continuum of the severity of their alienation and support requirements (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, pp.2-4).

#### *Categories That Construct School-Aged Offenders As Students At Educational Risk*

The Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk strategy (1998) provides documented guidelines from which students who are not achieving in school may be categorised and identified. The categories offer education personnel a list of student

features through which such students can be labelled and known and subsequently be included as part of the school community. The Western Australian Department of Education Student Services branch works with education districts to:

"Empower schools to achieve their goals by developing a shared vision, district strategic plan and enabling strategic and coordinated use of existing EDWA and interagency collaboration and consultation." (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, p.2)

Four categories are used to identify students at educational risk and alienated students, covering all students from kindergarten to year twelve in Western Australian government schools. The 'SAER' categories construct problem students according to the severity of their issues with engagement, participation and achievement at school. The four categories are:

#### Category One.

Mainstream - Including students who are achieving at about their potential and are generally benefiting from their schooling.

#### Category Two.

Underachieving/early "at risk" signs - These students are underachieving according to their potential and show early signs of needing support.

#### Category Three.

Students at educational risk - These students are involved in low work output, and may experience a range of behavioural, family and mental health problems

#### Category Four.

Severely at risk/alienated students - These students are alienated from the school setting and suffer high levels of attitudinal and/or behavioural

difficulties involving a sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, nonlessness, isolation and self/social estrangement. (EDWA Swan Education Office Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, pp.2-4)

The groupings commence with those students still attending mainstream education, who are recognised as vulnerable to falling behind their peers academically and behaviourally (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, pp.2-4). Such students are seen as requiring extra pastoral care for a short period of time due to issues such as family difficulties, learning problems or difficulties with peers. Responses to these Category One students at educational risk include in school early identification strategies, sound classroom practice, professional development for teachers in assisting such students and district monitoring of school interventions (ibid, p.2).

Category Two students are considered to be underachievers who are showing early signs of being at risk (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, p.3). Safety net programs, collaboration with relevant external agencies and individual education programs are examples of schools' obligations to provide intensive support. Schools are also required to keep a database of Category Two students, document case manage intervention and officially monitor progress (ibid, p.3). Increased school accountability and district provision of staff development and extra resources to schools is evident in the documentation (ibid, p.3).

Criminal activity, poverty and low academic achievement are considered some of the possible features of Category Three students at educational risk. It is at this point the official inclusion of school-aged offenders in the education discourse can be seen. Category Three students at educational risk are described as students who:

Will often experience a range of problems which may include attention problems, mental health problems, low academic competence, family relationship and economic problems, deviant peer group behaviours e.g.

drug, alcohol, truancy, suspensions leading to exclusions and in some cases, criminal activities (*Child Health Survey, 1997*). (EDWA Swan Education District Strategic Plan For SAER & RAPP 1998-2001, p.2)

Once identified, these students (who may also be identified as offenders having involvement with the Department of Justice) are regulated through individual case management and individual education plans and supported through school based programs (on or off campus). These alternative programs specifically designed for students at educational risk and are run by schools, with district advice and support and funded through Retention and Participation Program monies. Category Three students may also be placed in School to Work programs as an alternative to those programs aimed at returning students to mainstream schooling or keeping or retaining them in the alternative placement for a long period of time (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, p.3).

Category Four students at educational risk are described in this discourse. This description explains these students as being at high risk of criminal activity, drug use, suspension and exclusion from mainstream school, chronic school phobia and or unacceptable behaviours. School aged offenders are constituted within both Categories Three and Four of the continuum of severity within the students at educational risk discourse in Western Australia (EDWA SAER Plan: Swan Education District 1998, p.3).

#### *Educational Placement Of Category Four Alienated Students*

These four categories exist alongside another set of documented categories that separate the chronological and developmental phases of students' years of schooling (EDWA Swan Education District Strategic Plan For SAER & RAPP 1998-2000, pp.4-7). The 'early childhood' category refers to students in kindergarten through to year two. This is followed by the 'middle primary' years and these groupings include students in years three to five. The 'middle' years in schooling incorporate students in years six to ten and it is within this category that school-aged offenders as alienated students at educational risk begin to emerge as part of the education discourse (Student Alienation in the Middle Years

of Schooling, 1995; EDWA Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, pp. 4-7). An alienated student with a criminal history is described as a young person:

whose behaviours involve one or more of the following; chronic truancy, drug abuse, involvement with Juvenile Justice and exclusion from all schools. (EDWA Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, p.7)

This documented link between education and justice in Western Australia provides an insight into where the education discourse begins to include commentary on school-aged offenders as alienated students (EDWA Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, p.7).

The Retention and Participation Programs (RAPP), in the Western Australian metropolitan education district examined began to identify and document education involvement with school-aged offenders. This localised literature discussed how these young people:

needed intensive case management and re-engagement through an alternative program. (EDWA Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, p.9)

The recognition of the need for schools and the district education office to assume responsibility for the identification of local alienated students, the provision of on campus early intervention programs for such students and the referral of those young people to the most appropriate programs is evident in the documentation available spanning 1998-2003 (EDWA Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, p.13; EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan Funding Summary for School Principals 2001, pp.1-5). In 2002 it was reported:

The two off-campus programs, Balga Youth program (12-13 year olds) and the Cyril Jackson Youth program (14-15 year olds) continue to provide an effective service for students with multiple issues who are severely alienated from mainstream schooling. (EDWA Swan Education District Council Report 2002, p.3)

One of the most important shifts in responsibility for the education of alienated students and school-aged offenders in this district between 1998-2003 can be seen in how alienated students are identified and referred to a local alternative program after they have been enrolled at a school and all attempts to engage such students have failed. This shifted the responsibility from other agencies, such as the Department of Justice and Family and Children's Services, from making direct referrals for alienated students who were also their clients to alternative programs. This change in approach to the referral of school-aged alienated youth to district programs was found to be documented for the first time in the literature available from this education district where it was stated:

Referrals can only be received from EDWA employees within the Swan District. (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan (RAPP) Funding Summary for Principals 2001, p.3)

This district intake committee is responsible for ensuring schools have tried to re-engage alienated students in mainstream school settings. Documented evidence of the strategies and outcomes of such attempts must be provided along with any information about student involvement with the Department of Justice or the Department for Community Development. The composition of the intake reference committee for the district alternative programs who assist in the:

selection and prioritising of students to be involved in these programs includes: schools and district representatives and other agencies. (Swan Education Office: Students at Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, p.4)



The standardising of the identification of school-aged offenders as students at educational risk within the alienated student category (or Category Four) demonstrates that, in 2003, the education discourse constituted school-aged offenders as subjects of educational governance. It is clearly stated that:

Schools are expected to take responsibility for all students at educational risk and will only be able to involve the district SAER [*students at educational risk*] program after all avenues at the school level have been applied. (Swan Education District Strategic Plan for SAER and RAPP 1998-2001, p.11. *Italics mine*)

Schools are now required to account for interventions aimed at re-engaging students who are identified as Category Three - students at educational risk or Four - alienated students. Such young people will now have to be case managed by their local school until specific, documented criteria are met. The outcome of meeting these criteria may result in a referral to a local alternative education program in the education district studied during this thesis.

#### *Local Programs Constructing School-Aged Offenders Alienated Students*

The programs catering for Category Three and Four students in the metropolitan education district studied in this thesis, address the educational and social needs of students who may also be school-aged offenders. Annual reports from these programs document student involvement with the justice system and interagency case management practices applied in supporting these school-aged offenders in program placements (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 1999 and Submissions for 2000, 1999; EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 2000, 2000; DET Retention and Participation Program Funding Guidelines 2003).

For example, in 2001 seventy five percent of the year seven and eight students attending one of the district alternative education programs for category four severely alienated students, in the Western Australian education district studied in this thesis, had involvement with the state justice system (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Submissions 2001). These programs are required to account for the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills. A program in the district examined, that had school-aged offenders in attendance at the time of their funding evaluation, documented improved student literacy and numeracy in comparison with baseline data received at referral (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 2000). The flexible provision of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) was also described as an innovative means of catering for the individual needs of each student (ibid, p.3).

The district programs catering for Category Four alienated school-aged offenders are required to keep statistical data on student educational outcomes, attendance and participation (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 1999 and Funding Submissions for 2000). Follow up and outreach services are highlighted as part of a raft of strategies employed by program support staff. Youth Workers, Aboriginal Education Workers and Psychologists are employed to maintain student engagement in education and provide support to students and families in dealing with issues that might impact negatively on school attendance and participation (ibid, p.5). A program in the district examined, described a seventy-four percent attendance rate for alienated students participating in the program. This indicated a significant increase in the attendance in some type of formal state operated learning context (ibid).

### *Summary*

The discourse on students at educational risk in the Western Australian metropolitan education district, between 1998 and 2002, documents a range of ways in which school-aged offenders can be constructed as alienated students and catered for by the state

education system in alternative education programs (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 2000). This shift towards the mandated inclusion of alienated students in schools and education programs designed to meet the specific needs of students at educational risk and alienated students, began to occur in the mid 1990s and was evidenced in the emergence of policies concerning students at educational risk across the state of Western Australia (EDWA Plan for Government Schools 1998-2000, 1997; EDWA Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk, 1998).

The subsequent development of local strategies and implementation of these policies has been examined in this chapter in one particular education district in Western Australia. Documented initiatives indicate the inclusion of school-aged offenders in alternative education programs and the gradual development of services, strategies and accountability measures regulating how alienated students are managed in the education district studied (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 2000; DET Retention and Participation Program Funding Guidelines 2003).

The re-engagement in education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia is strongly advocated and supported by Department of Justice education personnel (EDWA Attendance and Interagency Collaboration 1999-2000, 1999; EDWA & MOJ 2000; EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-1-2; Kraljevich 2001, p.1; Ansell 2002, pp.2-4; Kraljevich 2002, pp.3-4). The links between the discourses on alienated students and offender education, as a discourse in its own right, is explored in the next chapter. The ways in which both discourses draw on the assumptions that low school achievement, unemployment and poverty contribute to offending behaviour is also examined.

## Chapter Ten

*The Justice Discourse On The Education Of Offenders And Alienated Students*

The relationship between the Western Australian Departments of Justice and Education and Training regarding the education of school-aged offenders has been increasingly documented. The official texts produced by these two government departments in the form of policy, reports, research, public presentations, professional development material and planning documents spanning the period 1998-2003 are examined in this chapter in order to map how the two discourses have shaped the current construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students in a Western Australian metropolitan education district.

The discourse on the education of offenders in custody and in the community setting has been shaped by the same discourses as the Western Australian policies concerning alienated students. The first part of this chapter charts the links between the justice discourse on the education of offenders and the literature assembled around delinquency concerning education, poverty and crime. The chapter then concludes with an examination of the interface between the Western Australian justice system and the Department of Education and Training regarding the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students.

The literature informing the first part of the chapter spans the period from 1990 to 2003 and the documents obtained from the Departments of Justice and Education and Training in Western Australia cover the years, 1998-2003 only. This is due to consideration being given to the confidential nature of student data as mandated in section seventeen of the Young Offenders Act (1994, p.16) and the availability of finalised reports at the end of the data collection period in August 2003.

*The Justice Discourse On Offender Education*

The education of offenders appears as a discourse in its own right within the justice context in Australia. Links exist between the justice discourse on offender education and the discourses on early school leaving, unemployment poverty and crime. The 1991 Commonwealth Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry into Adult Community Education claimed:

of all the disadvantaged people who face barriers to their participation in further education and training, those in the prison system are amongst the most neglected. (p.113)

The discourse on the education of offenders as a distinct population focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through prison vocational training (Cain 1993, pp.34-35; Semmens 1998, pp.2-18). The documented information about the education needs of offenders of all ages is linked to the dominant discourses on student retention and the effects of poverty and social alienation (Semmens & Oldfield 1999, pp.3-7; OTE 1999, pp.11-12). Commentary such as this applies to offenders in both the community and custodial contexts. The retention of difficult students by schools was being discussed at national and state levels in the early to mid 1990s (Batten & Russell 1995, p.20; Smith 1994, p.14; Dwyer 1996, pp.1-13). At the same time the concurrent Western Australian discourse on offender education included the suggestion:

That offenders of all ages are given access to structured, accredited and meaningful training that is outcome driven in regard to industry and individual needs. (Sirr 1992, p.11)

The commentary in policy and research regarding offender education tends to focus on two areas, prison education and community based programs. Custodial education concentrates on the building of functional literacy and numeracy skills to raise self esteem and then participation in vocational training is encouraged in order to prepare offenders for employment upon release (WACOSS 1990, pp.1-13; Semmens & Oldfield 1999, pp.3-7;

OTFE 1999, pp.11-12). The push for a credentialed workforce in education policy and the practice of school retention, the decrease in unskilled, full-time work for young people and links between poverty, educational disadvantage and crime over the last twenty years exerted an influence on both the education and justice discourses (Semmens 1998, pp.1-18) on how school-aged offenders have been and are now educated in Western Australia.

In the 1980s and 1990s in Western Australia, community based programs for at risk and alienated students who may also have criminal histories, concentrated on the development of self esteem, linking participants to relevant local support services, attempting to return them to school and developing employment seeking skills (DCS 1987, pp.1-2; Wilkie 1991, pp.10-11; Milmo 1994, pp.18-20). In relation to issues faced by these community based alternative programs in placing participants in education Milmo (1994) explains:

That it may be feasible for some young people to return to school, while for others it is no longer a practical option. Many programs at the moment aim to get young people back to school. It is also unlikely that these young people can return to school immediately and cope with the routine when they have been absent for a lengthy period of time. (p.19)

### *Low Educational Achievement, Poverty And Crime*

Both custodial and community based offender education services work with the idea that low school achievement and poor literacy and numeracy skills can lead to a lack of recognised credentials. The combination of these factors is documented as contributing to poverty through unemployment and that this can lead to crime (Edwards et al 1992, pp.7-23; Brathby 1998, pp.16-17; Forster(ed) 1998, pp.1-3; Coleman 1999, p.4). An example by Giddings and Walters (1992) demonstrates this by saying:

crime remains disproportionately attributed to those groups in society affected by factors such as homelessness, poverty and unemployment...At present the term 'at risk' is widely used by crime prevention administrators and includes youth affected by poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, family separation, sexual and emotional abuse, unemployment, illiteracy and social isolation. (pp.136-137)

International, national and Western Australian research on the role of education in the rehabilitation of offenders discusses the concept of risk in relation to causal factors; that is, to uncover what has gone wrong, explain why some young people commit crime and come up with appropriate interventions and solutions (WACOSS 1990, pp. 8-9; Forster (ed) 1998, p.i; Parsons 2002, p.29). The documented commentary on the education of offenders, within the justice discourse draws on the historical assumption that uneducated, unemployed, idle and poor young people are likely to become criminals, as does the discourse on students at educational risk (Brathby 1998, p.16; OTFE 1999, pp.10-12). School-aged offenders and adult offenders are described within the justice discourse as coming from poor, dysfunctional families, having low literacy and numeracy levels due to underage school leaving and having little chance of succeeding in the labour market (Semmens 1981, pp.9-15; OTFE 1999, pp.12-13; YACC 1999, p.31).

Sercombe et al (2002) identify student alienation from education, psychological and social dysfunctions within individual young people and their families as factors that can contribute to delinquency (ibid, p.63). The offender education discourse deepens the knowledge of social disadvantage, risk and alienation through a focus on the consequences of poverty in detail: unemployment, homelessness, family dysfunction, drug use and welfare issues such as abuse and neglect on individual and community wide levels are given as examples of this. Northcott (1994) provides an insight into the thinking on family dysfunction and delinquency:

- (a) the relation between genetic vulnerability and later delinquency is strengthened in the presence of family conflict;

- (b) the relation between perinatal risk and later anti-social behaviour and delinquency is strengthened in the presence of low socio-economic status (SES) and measures of family adversity;
- (c) the relation between marital discord and later behaviour problems is strengthened in the presence of poor parenting;
- (d) the relation between insecure attachment and later anti-social behaviour is strengthened in the presence of poor parenting or negative environmental factors such as unplanned birth, life stress and low social support;
- (e) the correlates of low SES interact to heighten risk for delinquency; and
- (f) the effects of community-wide low SES on delinquency are mediated by family interaction variables. (p.92)

The justice discourse on offender education in Australia relies heavily on explanations from the welfare and education sectors to explain youth crime. These deficits work with the process of alienation from the school and the community towards the custodial education context (Beresford 1993, p.18; Parsons 2002, p.30) In 1999 a report on Partnerships in Youth Crime Prevention in Queensland, many participants are documented as agreeing that:

the impact of poverty on crime is via the impact of the family....One of these [*risk*] factors which is a precipitating or vulnerability or risk factor for juvenile crime is child abuse and neglect. (p.31. *italics mine*)

Malcolm (1999, p.31) also agrees the family circumstances of juvenile offenders and truancy from school, high youth unemployment and poverty can be seen as risk factors



possibly correlating with juvenile offending behaviour (pp.21-32) and Edwards (1992, p.7) emphasises how low literacy skills are linked to juvenile offending. A Victorian study of year nine at risk youth in 1999 also found that:

Teenagers are more likely to become involved in crime, self-harm and drug abuse if they are exposed to family conflicts, failure at school and alienation in the community. (OTFE 1999, p.4)

The discourse on offender education draws on the same socio-historical factors, such as low educational achievement, unemployment and poverty as the education discourse on at risk and alienated students (Semmens 1998, p.5). Both bodies of knowledge embedded in text are concerned with understanding and addressing delinquency through education and training. The documented strategies aiming to re-engage school-aged offenders in education can be found and mapped in the Western Australian education district chosen for this thesis (Kraljevich 2002, p.3). The collaborative relationship between the Departments of Justice and Education and Training in one local area, in the period spanning 1998 to 2003, provides detail as to how school-aged offenders are being constructed as alienated students and educated within Western Australia.

### *Interagency Collaboration*

The documented interactions between the Department of Justice and The Department of Education and Training in Western Australia, concerning the education of school-aged offenders, in the district selected for this thesis is contained in a number of reports and agreements (Vickers 1994, p.13; EDWA Attendance and Interagency Collaboration 1999-2000, 1999; EDWA & MOJ 2000; Kraljevich 2001, p.1; Ansell 2002, pp.2-4; Kraljevich 2002, pp.3-4). The efforts of particular staff in both departments regarding the placement and support of school-aged offenders in the most appropriate learning environment, within the education district studied, are also documented in a number of these reports and provide examples of how school-aged offenders are being constructed within the education

discourse in Western Australia (Rose 2003, p.5; Ansell 2002; Kraljevich 2002; EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Submissions 2001).

The justice focus in the literature concentrates on securing and supporting the education placement of school-aged offenders as evidenced in the following quote: A Department of Justice education staff person stated:

I have found that many referred DOJ clients do not have an educational placement, are not engaged in an alternative educational pathway, or are loosely monitored or listed as truant. These findings are not limited to one specific educational district but across the metropolitan area. (Kraljevich 2002, p.3)

The education discourse regarding the placement of alienated students, in the metropolitan education district chosen for this thesis, focuses on the retention and participation of such students in local alternative education programs (Rose 2001, p.4; DET Swan Education District Office Student Services Operational Plan 2003). Therefore both government agencies are concerned with educational placement. The justice workers are concerned about identification and re-engagement with schools and education staff concerned with retaining these young people in an education setting. The body of literature examined provides evidence and examples of how school-aged offenders have been, and are currently constructed as students at educational risk in the education district selected and how the justice discourse describes its advocacy role. For example:

Many Ministry of Justice clients [*school-aged offenders*] are not engaged in school....Officers of the Education Department of Western Australia and the Ministry of Justice have identified policy and procedures to facilitate the ready acceptance of each agency of their respective responsibilities. (EDWA & MOJ 2000, p.1 *italics mine*)

The collaboration between the Department of Education and the Ministry of Justice was recently revisited and formalised in August of 2000 (EDWA & MOJ 2000, p.2). This memorandum of understanding records the commitment between the two departments to share education-based information in support of the retention of school-aged offenders, who are alienated from school, in education in Western Australia. The relevant mandates of each agency related to the carriage of education and justice, are detailed and linked to the respective governing legislative Acts (Young Offenders Act 1994; School Education Act 1999).

The main thrust of the agreement is the formalisation of how the Department of Justice staff assist Department of Education and Training staff to carry out their statutory duty of providing education to school-aged offenders (ibid, p.1). The appendix to this protocol agreement between the two agencies contains quotes from the School Education Act (1999) from the sections of the legislation that detail the responsibilities of the state education system in relation to all students, including alienated students and school-aged offenders (EDWA & MOJ2000,p.2).

In 1999 a local interagency report on how the Education Department of Western Australia, the Western Australian Police Department, Department for Family and Children's Services and the Ministry of Justice documented and formalised the processes that the Education Department of Western Australia would "implement to ensure student attendance at school." (EDWA Attendance and Interagency Collaboration 1999/2000 1998, p.2). This report included the education district concerned in this thesis and stated that

An interagency focus through cooperative networking may provide the best outcomes. It allows for the matters/issues of a particular case to be discussed and appropriate strategies developed and implemented that meet the needs of individual students. (p.12)

It also outlined the responsibilities of schools in that district to maintain information systems on the status of such students and how the school was retaining students at

educational risk (ibid, p.10). This documented agreement between key Western Australian government agencies was raised by the Select Committee on Youth Affairs: Youth and the Law (WALA, 1991) and related to the provision of appropriate curriculum and alternative programs for compulsory school-aged students at risk who were not attending school in Western Australia (EDWA Attendance and Collaboration 1999-2000 1998, pp.7-10).

Documentation relating to the sharing of information between the Department of Justice and the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia regarding school-aged offenders as alienated students indicates concern about achieving:

increased educational and training opportunities for young offenders.  
(Juvenile Education Services. Young Offenders and Confidentiality:  
February 2003, p.1)

The tension caused by justice staff not being able to disclose the nature of the offences committed by alienated school-aged offenders has been a concern for some years (Rose 2001, p.4). The Protocol Agreement between the two Departments (EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-2) states that the nature of the offences committed by school-aged offenders cannot be disclosed to schools. This is clearly stipulated in the Protocol Agreement and is consistent with the requirements of the Young Offenders Act (1994) (Juvenile Education Services. Young Offenders and Confidentiality: February 2003, p.1).

The difficulties that arise concerning the sharing of information about the crimes committed by school-aged offenders and the potential duty of care issues in an education setting is often clarified for an education audience in the Western Australian juvenile justice literature. Rose (2001) explains:

CBEOs [*Juvenile Justice Community Based Education Officers*] often encounter difficulty in schools with confidentiality. Some Principals and other school-based staff insist that they must know the nature of the offences before enrolling a student. The CBEO must make it clear that this is against

the law and this information will not be given. (p.4 *italics mine*)

The ongoing elaboration of the role of the Department of Justice staff in supporting the education of school-aged offenders in suitable education placements continues (EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-2; Rose 2001 pp.2-6; Kraljevich 2001, p.1; EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-8; Ansell 2002, pp.2-3; Kraljevich 2002, p.3; Juvenile Education Services 2003, p.1). Justice reports on the interface between the Department of Justice staff and schools, with regard to the inclusion of school-aged offenders as students at educational risk, document improvements and ongoing problems. It appears that schools are described by justice staff as still requiring encouragement to adequately address the needs of school-aged offenders as alienated students:

As schools are becoming increasingly focussed on self-management, intervention from the District Office is minimal regarding a young offender's educational status unless encouraged by a CBEO [*Juvenile Justice Community Based Education Officer*]. (Ansell 2002, p.3 *italics mine*)

The justice and education discourses intersect on the issue of interagency collaboration in engaging and supporting alienated school-aged offenders in education placements in the district chosen. The literature from each agency discusses school-aged offenders; the education discourse doing so within the students at educational risk polices and the severely alienated student category; the justice discourse doing so within the context of reducing re-offending and stemming the possibility of further social marginalisation.

### *The Justice Discourse And Alienated Students*

The Western Australian justice discourse on the education of school-aged offenders falls into two categories. The first describes how school-aged offenders are supported by justice staff (Community Based Education Advisory Officers or CBEAOs) to access appropriate education placements across the Western Australian metropolitan area. This literature outlines justice staff practice and describes ways in which they work across both

the justice and education systems in promoting and supporting the education of alienated school-aged offenders (Ansell, 2002; Kraljevich, 2002; Rose, 2003). The second concerns the education of school-aged offenders remanded or serving custodial court sentences in the state juvenile detention centres.

Both parts of the justice discourse on the education of school-aged offenders detail the general education needs of these young people and how they are to be met in schools (Ansell 2002, pp.3-4, Kraljevich 2002, p.3; Rose, 2003). The six monthly reports by the CBEAOs detail the placement of alienated school-aged offenders in education and the data in the reports viewed showed that none of these young people were attending their local mainstream school (Ansell 2002, p.5; Kraljevich 2002, p.6). All school-aged offenders contacted by the Community Based Education Advisory Officers in the district studied attended alternative programs and it was said in one report:

It is very difficult to access suitable alternative education, vocational training options to engage and retain marginalised youth at risk. (Kraljevich 2002, p.5)

Through the organisation of professional development for school principals documented in the justice literature (Kraljevich 2002, p.7; Rose 2003 p.2) it was anticipated this sharing of information between departments would:

give school staff a greater understanding of the part that education plays in assisting young offenders to reduce offending behaviour. (Rose 2003, p.2)

In describing school-aged offenders who are alienated from school Rose (2003) says:

many of the community based and exiting detention clients - have not attended an educational institution since primary school; have little formal education; have poor literacy and numeracy skills; have low self-esteem and are educationally unmotivated; believe educational goals are unobtainable

and unnecessary; have a current lifestyle that is not conducive to education. (Home, drug and support issues) and have mental health issues such as depression and self-harm issues. (p.2)

An important point made alongside the education needs of school-aged offenders in gaining functional literacy and numeracy skills and school socialisation skills is that the most alienated school-aged offenders have not gained any experience of the world of work (Rose 2003, p.2). School-aged offenders in custody are considered the most marginalised of the population of such young people in the justice system and this is most obvious in the long-term consequences of not attending school and gaining basic skills due to not attending school. According to Rose (2003):

The young people involved in the justice system have little or no experience in workshops or vocational 'taster' programs. Therefore it is very difficult to counsel these young people into a career structure until they have transitional experience. (p.2)

The Western Australian justice discourse on juvenile offender education focuses on the provision of intensive, adequate education experiences in the custodial setting. These learning experiences are documented as addressing the educational, vocational and social needs of offenders, as a specific group of young people within the general student category, in Western Australia. The documented linking of school-aged offenders in the community to local schools and alternative education programs provides evidence of an ongoing collaboration between the Departments of Education and Training and Justice. The commentaries of these two state institutions found in official texts demonstrates that school-aged offenders are being constructed as alienated students in Western Australia and that there is potential for future improvement.

### *Summary*

The justice texts regarding the education of offenders between 1980 and 2003 document the ways in which the discourses on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime have shaped the emergence of the alienated student category within the Western Australian education discourse. It is evident in official texts that school-aged offenders are now constructed within policy and the alternative education contexts as alienated students and measures continue to increase their re-engagement and retention in the Western Australian education system. The ways school-aged offenders have been constructed within the discourse on students at educational risk have been mapped in one metropolitan education district during this study. The documented interface between the state education and justice systems has also been examined and the collaborative strategies employed and tensions that exist have been discussed.

Finally, the links between the education of alienated students in the Western Australian juvenile custodial facility and schools is examined and an insight is gained into where the discourse on students at educational risk in Western Australia does not formally construct school-aged offenders (in detention/jail/custody) as alienated students. This offers an indication of where further developments in the collaborative relationship between the state education and justice systems can occur in order to secure the education of school-aged offenders in custody with their local school or education district upon release.

The final chapter of this thesis provides a summary of the key issues, within the discourses examined, that have shaped the current education policies in Western Australia that began to construct school-aged offenders as alienated students towards the end of the 1990s. The findings gathered during the research process are also discussed in relation to how the discourse on alienated students in Western Australia could be more inclusive of school-aged offenders who are alienated from school.



## Chapter Eleven

*Discussion, Conclusions And Recommendations**Summary of the Issue*

The thesis examined how the documented socio-historical background on the relationship between delinquency and schooling has played a role in shaping the current construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students in the education discourse in Western Australia. The interplay between the socio-historical assumptions made about delinquents and schooling since the industrial revolution and events in Western Australia since 1980 regarding the education of school-aged offenders has been linked in this thesis to highlight the ongoing connections and tension between education and delinquency.

The relationship between delinquency and schooling was examined and it was found that those assumptions in discourse concerning low school achievement, unemployment, poverty and crime have influenced the construction of Western Australian school-aged offenders as alienated students were very influential (WACOSS 1990, pp. 23-24; Tait 1995, p.123; Dwyer 1996, pp.3-10; Sercombe 1996, p.14; Spillane & Wheatley 2001, pp.7-12; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2003, p.1). This was followed by an examination of Western Australian education reform and an analysis of how the justice and education discourses construct schoolaged offenders as alienated students in one metropolitan education district.

The thesis provided one perspective on the interplay between discourses that have influenced the construction of Western Australian school-aged offenders, as delinquents and alienated students. The research process revealed that there were a number of commentaries within which this population of young people have been discussed and governed since the industrial revolution (Muncie, 1984; Borowski & Murray 1985; Tait 1993; Bessant et al 1998, pp.3-15). These narratives include the connected roles that education, welfare and justice play in the construction and regulation of the lives of delinquents. The role of education in governing the children of the working class has been a

particular focus of this study. The ways in which children and youth from poor families have been constructed as delinquent and different was a consistent feature in the literature examined (van Kreiken 1991, p.49; Finer & Nellis 1998, p.60; Factor & Pitts 2000, pp.1-4).

The discourses on early school leaving, student alienation and students at educational risk discuss the importance of retaining students in education. Student retention is considered important because it is documented as a solution to youth unemployment and therefore the national retention agenda is justified in that it is presented as a means of reducing poverty and crime (Polk 1984, p.479; Crooks et al 1996, p.18). These discourses also contain commentaries that continue to construct young people from working class backgrounds, who are also convicted offenders, as unsuitable for mainstream education settings and need to be regulated in alternative learning contexts (Omaji 1993, pp.403-7; Ashworth 2000, p.23; Clifford 2002, pp. 2-7; Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2003, pp.1-2).

### *The Inquiry Process*

A variety of textual sources were used as the data informing this thesis. Within the literature examined, evidence of discussion about student alienation in relation to delinquents was found and used to trace how alienated students with criminal histories have been constructed within education discourse. Early in the thesis, I explain how I used academic research, conference papers government reports, evaluations, policy, legislation and online material in this thesis. Within these texts I found a number of common themes assembled around the relationship between delinquency and schooling. The assemblage of associated discourses provided me a way of structuring this thesis by using each discourse in chapter headings. These bodies of knowledge, in textual form, were then used to explore how one population of young people have been labelled, described and governed as subjects of discourse.

The study comprised three sections in which I firstly outlined my motivation to conduct the research and described the theory and method chosen. In the second section, I

examined the discourses assembled around delinquency and schooling. In the final section of the thesis, I examined how these discourses are operating in the Western Australian education and justice systems. The discourses on students at educational risk and alienated students in one metropolitan education district in Western Australia were explored within text to find how school-aged offenders are being constructed, governed and educated by the Western Australian education and justice systems.

### *Schooling And Delinquency*

The documented socio-historical background on the creation of compulsory universal education in the late 1800s in Britain and how the children of the working classes became increasingly regulated (Muncie 1984, p.135) provided a starting point for this thesis. The emergence of the discourses on child welfare and a separate system of justice for children who commit crime, in the 1800s in Britain, offered me a way of beginning to examine the relationship between Western Australian school-aged offenders and the state education system.

The role of education as a means of social control (Bessant et al, 1998, pp.3-15) and the emergence of the youth category' over the last three hundred years (ibid, p.5) is documented as having contributed to the creation of the category of the delinquent within discourse (Carrington 1993, pp.53-68). By gaining an understanding of the history of compulsory education, I was able explore how the theme on poverty, low school achievement, unemployment and crime linked with my professional experiences.

Whilst researching the documents containing the history of delinquency and schooling since the industrial revolution, I identified commentaries that explained the role of compulsory education in relation to delinquency. Compulsory education was documented as concerned with the economic and moral containment of the children of the working class in order to ward off their criminal potential (Muncie 1984, pp.134-137; Bessant et al p.13). I also found where this discourse translated to the Australian context and examined the

documented role of alternative education in the Western Australian context spanning the period 1980 to 2003.

The British model of specific education facilities for the children of the working class, who were considered delinquent and criminal, was instituted in Australia in the mid 1800s (Wundersitz 1996, pp.113-114). These reformatories, residential and industrial schools were the first examples of alternative education settings for delinquents. These young people were separated from the mainstream schools and regulated as a population in need of gaining middle class values in order to avoid lives of crime (van Kreiken, 1991, pp. 61-83; Sercombe nd, pp.3-4; Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2003, pp.1-3). I also found during my research how the institution of universal education contributed to the development of the discourse on problem youth and linked up with the discourses on child welfare and juvenile justice in the mid nineteenth century (Bessant et al 1998, p.13; Factor & Pitts 2000, pp.2-4).

The creation of institutions concerned with compulsory education, child welfare and juvenile offending in the late 1800s and their location within post industrial western history, provided me with a way of framing the events concerning the education of delinquents in Western Australia between 1980 and 2003. I also examined the history of welfare, justice and education institutions and the use of separate education settings for school-aged offenders. During this phase of research I identified similar patterns in the provision of alternative education programs in Western Australia (Dentice et al 1987, pp.1-2; WALA 1991, p.12; Wilkie 1991, p.10; Milmo 1994, pp.18-20; EDWA Making the Difference, 1998).

Texts concerning the Western Australian alternative education programs for school-aged offenders run by the welfare and justice systems were also examined. I found many Western Australian narratives which stated the importance of the provision of education to school-aged offenders and how this was failing up to the mid 1990s (EDWA Strategic Plan 1996-1998, pp.1-2). The literature examined contained criticisms of these Western Australian welfare and justice alternative programs for not returning these young people to school, not adequately addressing their academic needs or effectively linking them to

employment (Dentice et al 1987; Wilkie 1991, p.70, WALA 1992, p.50; Finch & Nieuwenhuysen 1998, pp.204-205). Recognition of the difficulties faced by alternative education programs is also documented as arising from lack of ongoing funding and these programs being of lesser importance than mainstream schooling in terms of educational administration and support (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 2003, p.1).

The exclusion of school-aged offenders from school to these justice and welfare alternative education programs was documented as contributing to the social alienation of delinquents in Western Australia and decreasing their chance for successfully entering the world of work (Petrie et al, 1980; Maunders 1984, p.14, Brown 1991, p.41; SSCEET, 1996, pp.5-7; Ashworth 2000, p.23). The consequences for Western Australian school-aged offenders of not being included in the state education system became increasingly clear to me. Western Australian literature on the alienation of school-aged offenders to alternative programs that had no firm academic or vocational outcomes, in the 1980s to the mid 1990s, introduced me to the discourses on early school leaving, student alienation and the concept of educational risk.

The discourses on early school leaving, students at educational risk and student alienation were examined to find links with how school-aged offenders had been constructed within these discourses. The commentaries contain and continue the themes on how school-aged offenders and delinquents have been constructed as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and need to be contained in learning settings separate from mainstream schools. The current commentary on the Western Australian Retention and Participation Programs for alienated students in the education district examined, describes the provision of alternative education programs for alienated youth, some whom are offenders and mostly come from low socio-economic backgrounds (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan 1999/2000, pp.1-3; Bradshaw 2001, p.1).

The discourses on student alienation and early school leaving also included commentaries on the need for change within education systems in relation to curriculum, pedagogy, organisation and administration to better cater for all students' needs. The use of alternative education settings is also documented as problematic. Spillane and Wheatley (2001) warn that:

Placement in alternative educational settings can result in schools avoiding their responsibility to critically reflect on their policy, ethos and pedagogical practice and provide a model of schooling that is inclusive and nurturing of all students, irrespective of their academic and social skill levels. (p.10)

Low school achievement, leaving school before the end of the compulsory years and coming from a poor family is extensively documented in the Western Australian discourses on students at educational risk and student alienation in Western Australia as contributing to unemployment and poverty and increasing the possibility of juvenile crime (Zubrick et al 1997, pp. 60,62; EDWA Swan Education District Strategic Plan For SAER & RAPP 1998-2001, pp.2-3; Department of Education Services 2001, pp.10, 19; <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/saer/policy/index.htm>). This demonstrates the ongoing nature of the historical discourse that connects low school achievement with poverty and crime in the present Western Australian governance of school-aged offenders as alienated students.

### *Early School Leaving, Poverty And Crime*

The discourses on early school leaving, poverty and crime connect around the idea that unemployment is often the result of an incomplete education (McClelland et al, 1998, pp.22-25). Poverty and crime were also documented as the result of unemployment. The descriptions of how young people who leave school before having completed their compulsory years of education assume they are at risk of not being able to get sustainable employment, that they are likely to be poor and are therefore, are more likely to commit crime (Polk 1984, p.479; Beresford 1993, p.15; Dwyer 1996, pp.74-75).

A cycle of underachievement in education, which is documented as leading to unemployment, poverty and criminal activity, is still described as common to the children from working class families and low socio-economic backgrounds (Bessant 1995, p.40; Hazelhurst 1996, p.216; Siercombe et al 2002, p.66). The discourse on the relationship between delinquency and schooling was found in the research to continue to focus on the regulation and governance of the children of the poor (SSCEET 1992, p.83; Peck 2001, pp.1-5).

The current Western Australian education discourse on students at educational risk draws on the national and international early school leaving discourse (Tait 1995, pp.132-133; NVCE 2000, pp.2-7; Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002). Both discourses concentrate on the retention of students through to the completion of their post compulsory years of school. The discourse on early school leaving focuses on young people making a smooth transition into the labour market and the discourse on students at educational risk concentrates on keeping young people from leaving school prior to completing the compulsory years of their education (Dwyer 1996, pp.1-13; Wooden 1998, pp.5-6).

The Australian student retention agenda, which officially commenced in the early 1990s with the Finn Report (1991), was a response to the shrinking Australian youth labour market since the mid 1970s (Sweet 1988, p.31; Brown 1991, p.41; Wooden 1998, p.1). This indicated that the student retention agenda is a means of reducing Australian youth unemployment statistics (Crooks et al 1996, p.18). The national push to keep students at school until their nineteenth year has also placed pressure on state education systems to address the retention of students at educational risk and alienated students who are below the compulsory school leaving age (Dwyer 1996, p.10; DEETYA(c) 2001, p.8, 23-25, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2002, pp.14-15).

The failure of schools to provide for the academic and social needs of alienated students in the learning context and the difficulties that alienated students pose to schools, in terms of their behaviour and needs, is widely documented in Western Australian,

national and international literature (Seeman, 1959; Dynan, 1980; Tame, Lipke, 1981; 1983; Polk, 1984 Connell et al, 1992). The Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk: Who Are They (1998) document provides a detailed bibliography of texts and authors on the subjects of students at educational risk and student alienation. These reference sources link the discourses on early school leaving poverty and crime. Together these bodies of knowledge influence the construction of alienated students within current Western Australian education policy.

The legislative and policy changes in Western Australia in the 1990s regarding students at educational risk show that the retention of alienated students and those considered at risk of not achieving to their full potential is a response to the concerns about youth unemployment, poverty and crime detailed in the early school leaving discourse (EDWA Making the Difference- Policy and Guidelines for Students at Educational Risk, 1998, pp.1,3).

The Western Australian research on students at educational risk and student alienation also documents a deeper analysis of the reasons for student alienation and risk. Issues in relation to school organisation, pedagogy, curriculum and the individual student are presented as factors explaining the problem and education reform texts document possible solutions (Cumie, 1979; Dynan, 1980; Bonjolo 1991). Educational failure and student alienation are also documented in the students at educational risk (1998) literature as having serious long-term consequences such as unemployment, poverty and crime (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/sacr/policy/index.htm>). This commentary demonstrates that the themes on low school achievement, unemployment, poverty and crime are still influencing the current education discourse in Western Australia.

### *The Justice And Education Commentaries In Western Australia*

During the research process I found the Western Australian Departments of Justice and Education and Training had a range of texts documenting how the two departments work together (Making The Difference – Students At Educational Risk, 1998 EDWA & MOJ



2000; Kraljevich 2001, p.3; Ansell 2002, pp.2-4; Rose 2003, pp.2-3). In examining this literature the extent to which school-aged offenders are constructed as alienated students was described. Texts comprising the discourse on offender education indicated the theme on low school achievement, poverty and crime was also embedded in the ways offenders were constructed as students (Edwards et al 1992, pp.7-23; Semmens & Oldfield 1998, pp.2-18; Brathby 1998, pp.16-17; Forster (ed) 1998, pp.1-3; Coleman 1999, p.4). In examining this justice discourse similarities between how alienated students are constructed within the Western Australian education discourse and how offenders are constructed as students in the discourse on offender education were revealed (Semmens 1981, pp.9-15; OTFE 1999, pp.12-13; YACC 1999, p.31).

The commentaries on early school leaving, unemployment, poverty and crime were found, in my research, to be common to both Western Australian justice and education systems as sites of discourse. These two sources of text both draw on the historical assumption that uneducated, unemployed young people from low socio-economic backgrounds are more prone to lives of crime (Rose 2003, p.2-3; Bradshaw 2001, p.2). The education discourse focuses on retaining at risk and alienated students in school in order to avoid poverty and crime. Concerns about the consequences of early school leaving leading to unemployment and poverty were found to within the literature gathered discussing the education of school-aged offenders.

The offender education discourse was found to focus on the remediation of low educational attainment followed by vocational training as forms of rehabilitation (Sirr 1992, p.11; Cain 1993, p.34-35; Semmens 1998, pp.2-18; Sercombe et al 2002, p.63; Rose 2003, p.4). This justice discourse on offenders as students provided this thesis with examples of commentaries supporting the notion that an adequate school education can decrease the possibility of delinquency and criminal behaviour (Beresford 1993, p.18; Semmens 1998, p.5; Parsons 2002, p.30). The justice discourse achieves this by discussing school failure as a factor contributing to delinquency and the attainment of an education in a justice context as a part of an offender's rehabilitation.

*Key Texts Connecting The Current Western Australian Justice And Education Discourses*

Documentary evidence of where the Departments of Justice and Education and Training have collaborated in addressing the education needs of Western Australian school-aged offenders demonstrated how the regulatory features of discourses are always incomplete in practice. The Protocol Agreement (2000) between the two departments explains the statutory position of both agencies in relation to school-aged offenders in Western Australia. Justice texts indicate that there are still difficulties in placing school-aged offenders in schools (Ansell 2002, p.5; Kialjevich 2002, p.3; Rose 2003, p.2) and the current education policy concerning students at educational risk (1998) stipulates that the state education system must provide for the needs of all students (Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk Policy 1998, pp.1,5). At this point, both documents function separately because they each address specific issues.

The Protocol Agreement (EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-2) between the Western Australian education and justice systems describes the statutory obligations that each department must abide by in relation to the education of school-aged offenders. This official document is a primary text that explains the core business of both institutions and how each agency can work together in assisting school-aged offenders to access an education in the state of Western Australia. This document constructs school-aged offenders as 'students' and describes the responsibility of the Department of Education and Training in the provision of education to these young people in the community context (EDWA & MOJ 2000, pp.1-2).

The Making the Difference - Students at Educational Risk Policy (1998) implemented in the education district chosen for this research, also provides a way for the school-aged offenders discussed in the Protocol Agreement (2000) to be categorised as a certain type of student. School-aged offenders who were described as alienated from school, in the documents examined were depicted in both justice and education commentaries as requiring alternative types of learning environments. These young people were also described as requiring alternative educational resources and teaching approaches because

mainstream settings were described as not able to adequately meet their needs.

An examination of the documented interaction between these two institutions, regarding the education of delinquents in Western Australia, revealed that although the current education policies and guidelines make it possible to construct school-aged offenders as alienated students it may not be occurring easily in practice. Rose (2003) captures this dynamic in her conference presentation to educators of students at educational risk in Western Australia. She describes how school aged offenders are constructed as alienated students from a Western Australian justice perspective and comments on the dilemmas faced in practice between the two agencies. Rose (2003) states:

Many of the young people I come into contact with are no longer part of any school community. This means total alienation for a group of young people. We know that schools have a legislative responsibility to provide an education program for compulsory school aged young people. There is no doubt that many schools do the best they can for at risk young people. Despite this, when we are trying to find a place in a school for the young people that are with us [*the justice system*], it is often impossible to find a place in a school for young people alienated from school. (p.2 *italics mine*)

It is clear that discourse can construct populations within categories and document regulatory practices that aim to govern the population in question. However the implementation of these techniques of governance and the resultant construction and regulation of problematic populations takes time and involves a series of social and psychological processes (Sercombe 1996, p.55). Projects of governance, evidenced in legislation, policy, frameworks, agreements and accountability reports are not sources of information about the effects of their implementation. Other sources of discourse, such as evaluation reports, provide an account of the practicalities of dealing with change and how populations become constructed and governed by discourse.

Examples of the issues surrounding the implementation of the current students at educational risk policy (1998), and the regulation of school-aged offenders as alienated students by both departments, demonstrate that projects of governance are always partial and resistance to change occurs (Malpass & Wickham 1995, p.37; Sercombe 1997, p.43). A shift in how school-aged offenders have been educated has occurred and there is opportunity for deeper collaboration and further improvements in the inclusion of school-aged offenders in the Western Australian education system.

The Western Australian students at educational risk discourse has been put into practice in the metropolitan education district chosen. School-aged offenders in this education district are presently being identified as category three or four alienated students by education and justice personnel and are regulated under the local student retention strategies (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Plan 1999-2000; Kraljevich 2000, p.3).

The students at educational risk discourse in this district, regarding student alienation, identifies juvenile offending as one of the consequences of not finishing school and a feature of a delinquent lifestyle that may also include family dysfunction, drug use, homelessness and behavioural difficulties (EDWA Swan Education Office Students At Educational Risk Draft RAPP Plan 1999, pp.2-4).

Alienated students have also been constructed within the students at educational risk policy (1998) document as different from mainstream students in that they have particular curriculum, teaching style and learning environment needs. It was found that in the metropolitan education district examined in this thesis, Category Four alienated students with criminal histories were documented as attending district alternative education programs (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 2000; EDWA Swan Education district Retention and Participation Funding Guidelines 2003) This demonstrates a continuation from the late 1800s to the present Western Australian education context of the historical governance of delinquents in separate, alternative learning settings (Wundersitz 1996, pp.114-114; Bessant 1998, p.13).

*How Are Alienated Students Constructed Within The Justice And Education Discourses In Western Australia?*

I assembled data from a wide variety of textual sources. I provided one perspective on the connections and continuing themes concerning the relationship between delinquency and schooling since the industrial revolution and the current Western Australian education discourse. The emergence of the Western Australian education policy concerning students at educational risk (1998) influenced by the national student retention agenda (Finn, 1991) has made it possible for school-aged offenders in Western Australia to be constructed as alienated students. However, the ongoing advocacy and assistance given to schoolaged offenders from staff employed by the Department of Justice is documented as very important in ensuring that all school-aged offenders are linked to education according to the School Education Act 1999 and the Protocol Agreement (2000) (EDWA & MOJ, 2000; Kraljevich 2002, p.3; Rose 2003, p.5).

Both the education and justice discourses in Western Australia draw on the same socio-historical background regarding the relationship between delinquency and schooling. These two discourses apply their regulatory mechanisms differently – education focuses on the retention of students at educational risk and alienated students in order to avoid delinquency and unemployment. The justice discourse on offender education constructs offenders as students in order to remedy academic difficulties and prepare for release into the community or re-engage them in some form of schooling in their local area (Rose 2003, p.1).

The education and justice commentaries agree that low school achievement and early school leaving contributes to young people being at increased risk of unemployment. Both discourses also agree that unemployment and idleness can lead to criminal activity. The Western Australian education policies and strategies concerning alienated students demonstrate an ongoing discursive theme that discusses the tensions that exist between schooling and delinquency. That is, education as a technique of governing and regulating the lives of children and youth only works for some (Dwyer 1996, p.10).

The poverty that arises from unemployment is documented in the education and justice discourses as contributing to criminal lifestyles. The justice discourse on offender education concentrates on this theme on how low educational achievement contributes to early school leaving and unemployment (Devlin, 1995). This discourse documents the assumption made that the development of functional academic and vocational skills is a means of breaking the cycle of crime by preparing offenders to enter the work force. Education is discussed as a rehabilitative tool and a way out of a life of crime (Sirr 1992, p. 11).

The justice and education discourses in the Western Australian education district chosen for this thesis document a range of ways in which collaborative efforts between the Departments of Education and Training and Justice have constructed school-aged offenders as alienated students (EDWA Swan Education District Retention and Participation Funding Annual Report 1999 and Submissions for Y2000, 1999). The justice texts highlight how the construction school-aged offenders as alienated students and students at educational risk is still partial and is mostly taking place in alternative education settings because mainstream schools are not able to cater for their needs (Ansell 2002, p.5; Kraljevich 2002, p.3; Rose 2003).

This documented situation makes it possible to consider future options that can be shaped by the ways the current justice and education discourses are constructing school-aged offenders in Western Australia. In acknowledgement of the power of texts to influence the direction of discourse I make the following recommendations in agreement with Dwyer's belief that:

There will always be at least some young people for whom, whatever the reasons, a break from school will prove necessary. To ignore the fact in our planning for the future would be to reinforce the marginalisation of those who do not continue. (Dwyer 1996, p.10)

### *Recommendations*

The justice texts show that, whilst collaboration between the state justice and education systems take place, it is still often necessary for justice workers to alert education professionals when school-aged offenders, (in custody or the community) are not engaged with any education placement (Kraljevich 2002, p.3). This shows a need for further collaboration that focuses on formalising the construction of school-aged offenders, whether in custody or on Community Court Orders, as students at educational risk who are alienated from the state education system.

The Protocol Agreement (2000) between the Departments of Justice and Education and Training documents a commitment to the collaboration between the two institutions in Western Australia regarding the education of school-aged offenders. Accompanying this agreement, the state education system now has a way of constructing school-aged offenders as alienated students under the Making the Difference – Students at Educational Risk Policy (1998). By using these two key texts the justice and education staff concerned with the identification of, placement and delivery of education to school-aged offenders could develop and document local policy and procedures that take into account each agency's core business boundaries and mandated roles.

Such a partnership commitment from the Departments of Education and Training and Justice in Western Australia would ensure a uniform, accountable approach to defining needs and setting practical, professional boundaries around the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students. A documented commitment to inclusive practice and an agreed standardised record collection systems established by the two government agencies would also provide data for the development of evidence based models of best practice. Given that it is well documented that Aboriginal school-aged young people are highly represented in the Western Australian justice system and this group of young people are also alienated from school (Beresford 1993, pp.27-28; Beresford & Omaji 1996, pp.52-69; Antrim 1998, pp.17; Sercombe, Omaji, Cooper & Love 2002, p.59; Haslet 2003; Beresford & Parington 2003, pp.203-205; <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/gbted/pedagogy/ecu.htm>;

[http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/contents/files/AG\\_report\\_2003\\_C1.pdf](http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/contents/files/AG_report_2003_C1.pdf), it is crucial that an accountable record system and collaborative strategy that attains real outcomes be established.

In creating knowledge, through discourse, about what works best in the education of school-aged offenders in Western Australia, there is a real possibility for conscious, planned improvements to how this group of highly alienated young people are brought back from the margins of society. From the discussion of the findings of this analysis of how the Western Australian education and justice discourses are constructing alienated students, I make the following recommendations. It is anticipated they may influence the future directions of how the Western Australian education and justice discourses construct and educate school-aged offenders.

- The Protocol Agreement between the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Justice (2000) in Western Australia be reviewed in order to officially link the two institutional discourses. The dialectic process of linking the two agencies' mandates would result in a new, conscious and deliberate policy that relates to the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students.
- The Making The Difference – Students at Educational Risk Policy (1998) be included in the reviewed agreement in terms of how students may be identified and managed as alienated students. This will constitute the official construction of school-aged offenders as alienated students within the students at educational risk discourse.
- The alienated student category be used to describe school-aged offenders who are formally identified as alienated from school by the Departments of Justice and Education and Training. A formal definition and identification process could then be established within both the justice and education discourses in Western Australia.
- The reviewed Protocol Agreement recommend that each education district in



Western Australia establish local agreements with the appropriate Department of Justice personnel that outlines agreed procedures and practices. This would produce a means of officially identifying and placing school-aged offenders in suitable education placements or highlighting the need for establishing such suitable placements.

- That standardised reporting and evaluative measures be established across Western Australia regarding the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students. This would result in the development of evidence based, best practice models that could be shared between justice and education professionals across Western Australia.
- That regular meetings be held between justice and education personnel responsible for policy and practice development take place. This would ensure that both departments are meeting their core business requirements and taking steps to review and manage the practical issues that arise in the education of Western Australian school-aged offenders who are alienated from school.
- That an action research project (Stringer, 1996) be undertaken to implement the recommendations above. The development of appropriate evaluative measures around the provision of real education support services and programs for Western Australian school-aged offenders will provide an opportunity for the creation of evidence based models of practice that account for the improvements in student literacy, numeracy and recognised vocational skills.

### *Conclusions*

One of the main purposes of conducting this research was to identify and suggest improvements to how school-aged offenders in Western Australia are educated in accordance with a critical hermeneutic approach (Geertz 1979, p.239). The other aim of this

thesis was to bring into focus the powerful commentaries that have shaped the current construction of Western Australian school-aged offenders as alienated students within the education and justice discourses. Exploring the discourses around delinquency and schooling has made it possible for this thesis to contribute to the future direction of discourse in relation to the education of school-aged offenders as alienated students in Western Australia (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.503).

Discourses are, themselves, fashioned by the discourses preceding them and they also shape the discourses ahead of them (Foucault 1972, p.29; Danzinger 1994, p.79; Punch 1998, p.60; Hodder 2000, p.704). They provide an indication of the belief systems underpinning social practices and can control what is known and accepted as true (Carrington 1993, p.xv). The perspective created throughout the research process has demonstrated the ongoing nature of the theme that assumes low school achievement contributes to unemployment, poverty and juvenile crime (Bessant et al 1998, pp.3-15). It also became evident that this theme is still operating in the current Western Australian education and justice discourses (Rose 2003, p.2; (<http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/saer/policy/index.htm>)).

This thesis provided one perspective on the construction of alienated students within the education and justice discourses in Western Australia and has demonstrated that discourses only partially achieve governance over the populations they aim to regulate (Malpass & Wickham 1995, p.37; Sercombe 1997, p.43). The Western Australian education and justice discourses are to some extent constructing school-aged offenders as alienated students under the Making The Difference – Students At Educational Risk Policy (1998) and the Protocol Agreement (2000).

There is no official documented recognition between the justice and education discourses that applies the alienated student category to school-aged offenders. A shift in the Western Australian discourses that currently construct school-aged offenders as alienated students demonstrates the malleability of discourse and possibility for improvement and change (Gubrium & Holstein 2000, p.503). In addressing the alienation of Western Australian school-aged offenders in a deliberate and structured manner, these

young people would be given increased opportunity to gain the education required to compete in the current Australian youth labour market. This would result in a deliberate shift in justice and education policy and practice that could promote Western Australian school-aged offenders in moving towards the world of work instead of being constructed as unemployed, poor and likely to become involved in a life of crime.

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