The Representation of Asia in Victorian Senior Secondary History Curriculum

by

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Abstract

This study examines the intersection of two contested areas within school curriculum: history and Asia. The content of history curriculum is regularly debated in Australian public discourse and the study of Asian histories has been valorised by national education policy for a number of decades. Yet, targeted research on Asia-related history is lacking. Attention has focused on Asia education policy and problematic constructions of ‘Asia’ and Australia’s relations with Asia (Halse, 2015; Henderson, 2015; Pan 2015; Rizvi, 2015; Salter 2013; Singh 1996; Walker 2010).

However, these tensions have not been comprehensively examined in relation to the representation of Asia in history curriculum at the state level, even though Asia has featured in Victorian secondary school history curriculum for fifty years. Thus, this study asks: How is Asia represented in VCE History curriculum policy processes and how might this representation be explained? It tackles this task by examining nearly three decades of curriculum for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in the final years of schooling in Victoria, Australia. The study is especially timely in a period of significant reform that has involved the integration of the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History units with revised VCE History units. It analyses the political and socio-historical contexts in which the stated curriculum was developed and analyses the enacted curriculum to elucidate the complexities that shape the curricular decision-making of VCE History teachers.

Theoretically, this study offers a curricular history of the present (Foucault, 1977 & Popkewitz 2011). It blends historical inquiry with critical policy analysis, drawing on Foucauldian (1972) notions of discourse, the enactment research of Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) and Chen’s (2010) conceptualisation of Asia as method and deimperialisation for reconceptualising Asia. Data comprise of documentary sources and interviews conducted with VCE History teachers and policy actors from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria (HTAV) and the Asia Education Foundation (AEF). Discourse analysis of the
data involved tracing the discourses and discursive practices that give shape to Asia-related history in the past and present.

In VCE History curriculum policy processes the representation of Asia continues to shift in relation to the political, economic, intellectual, cultural and educational discourses that intersect during the socio-historical context in which the VCE History Study Design is created. The interpretation and enactment of Asia-related history is further framed by the discursive practices of VCE History teachers, which are shaped by tensions between their philosophical and pedagogical ideals, and their individual and collective historical consciousness. The thesis analyses the pragmatic ‘realities’ that arise from the curricular customs of the VCE and discusses the implications of situated school contexts and broader education policy discourses for curriculum policy.

The study contributes to understanding the symbolic power of the stated curriculum and the complex and contradictory discursive practices of teachers that influence why some histories are enacted and others are not. Based on this analysis, it is proposed that Asia-related VCE History curriculum could be more inclusive of diverse histories, narratives and perspectives, as some units have been in the past. The thesis argues that the curricular reimagining of Asia requires a critical and holistic understanding of curriculum policy processes if we are to move beyond outmoded representations of Asia towards more dynamic, relational, reflexive and interculturally rich understandings.
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 Overview

This thesis examines the intersection of two contested areas of secondary school curriculum policy: history and Asia. Each is regularly debated in national conversations. In the case of history, these debates often revolve around the politics of national narratives and national identity, or are spurred by political intervention in history curriculum. Discussions about the need to learn more about the histories and cultures of Asia often relate to Australia’s economic, strategic and cultural relations with Asia. This is demonstrated by the attention given to the development and review of history in the Australian Curriculum and also the prioritisation of Australia’s engagement with Asia in education and curriculum policy over a number of decades. Such debates raise important questions concerning the what, why and how of Asia-related content in history curriculum. Despite this ongoing public and political discourse, senior secondary Asia-related history has not been the focus of in-depth research in Victoria, or Australia. The ways in which Asia is defined and the meanings or values attached to the idea of ‘Asia’ are also regularly contested and open to multiple interpretations, making it an ambiguous concept. Thus representations of Asia shift according to perspective, context, time and place. In this context history curriculum can become a key site for the production and circulation of perspectives on the histories of Asia and Australia’s relations with Asia.

Further, this study examines the representation of Asia-related history in the curriculum policy processes of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). It analyses the political and socio-historical contexts in which the stated curriculum or written curriculum has been developed. This includes thinking about the sorts of histories, narratives and perspectives that have been included or excluded, raising questions about the types of values and worldviews that might be inherent in history curriculum.
However, there is a big gap between what is intended by official curriculum documents and what is actually taught and assessed in schools. The *enacted curriculum* – the parts of the curriculum selected and interpreted by teachers – is also investigated to elucidate the complexities that shape the curricular decision-making of VCE History teachers.

Overall the study aims to contribute understanding about the symbolic power of curriculum and the reasons why some histories are enacted while others are not. It investigates the complex practices of teachers in relation to school and state contexts, as well as wider national and global policy contexts. Although the different ways in which history/History can be critically engaged has been debated (Parkes, 2011), throughout the thesis history is only capitalised when it refers to History as a specific school subject or a specialised term.

History curriculum has undergone significant reform at the state and federal levels in Australia recently with the introduction of the first ever national curriculum framework, the *Australian Curriculum: Foundation* (pre Year 1) – *Year 10* and the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary* (Year 11 and Year 12). In the past, school curriculum has solely been the responsibility of State and Territory curriculum authorities. In Victoria, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) is the independent statutory body responsible for the administration of curriculum across all levels of schooling. Students receive the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) upon successful completion of their final years of secondary schooling. The majority of students complete it over Years 11 and 12 as a pathway to higher education and employment. The official curriculum document of a VCE study is called a Study Design and the term study is synonymous with subject or discipline. Thus a significant portion of the analysis in this thesis focuses on various iterations of the *VCE History Study Design*.

In 2015 the VCAA released a new *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2015a) outlining the curriculum guidelines for a suite of new and revised history units that incorporated the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History*. Prior to this, the
drafting of the Australian Curriculum had begun in 2008, following the election of the Labor government in 2007. A national curriculum framework in the areas of History, English, Mathematics and Science from Foundation to Year 10 was ready for implementation at the start of 2012, although States and Territories followed different implementation timelines. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for administering the Australian Curriculum and reports to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council. The *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* was published at the end of 2012 and following a state-wide consultation phase in 2013-2014, was integrated into the *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2015a), which was ready for implementation in schools in 2016.

In the VCE, units 1 and 2 are mostly undertaken in the first year (Year 11) and units 3 and 4 are mostly undertaken in the second year (Year 12). In the final two years of schooling students are typically 15 to 18 years of age. The current *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2015a) is composed of 13 units from which schools can select a senior history program. The most popular units in terms of student enrolments are Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History and Units 3 and 4 Revolutions. The rationale of the current *VCE History Study Design* begins: “The study of VCE History assists students to understand themselves, others and their world” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 6). This study seeks to critically examine VCE History curriculum in order to provide an insight into what might be meant by this claim.

The positioning of Asia in history curriculum has shifted over time. The histories of Asia have been embedded in Victorian secondary history curricula for many decades, though with varying emphases on particular topics and countries. Conventionally, Asia-related history refers to the histories of the countries of Asia and to a lesser extent the histories of Asians in Australia and Australians in Asia. For example, long-standing topics in VCE History include the Chinese Revolution, the Indian Independence movement, the Vietnam War and Chinese miners on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s.
Studies of Asia in schools and Australia’s engagement with Asia have also been the foci of multiple government reports and national policies since the 1970s. The development of *Asia literacy*, or what has more recently been termed *Asia capability*, has been a focus of these policies. The Asia Education Foundation (AEF), which is the major body responsible for providing schools with the Asia-related educational resources, provides the following definition:

> Asia capability means that every student will exit schooling in Australia with knowledge and understanding of the histories, geographies, arts and literature of the diverse countries of Asia. Asia capability is strengthened in students who also learn an Asian language. (AEF, 2016)

More recently the study of Asia has become topical due to the introduction of the ‘Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia’ cross-curriculum priority as part of the Australian Curriculum. It is one of three priorities designed to explore national, regional and global dimensions across all areas of curriculum. The ‘Asia priority’ is organised around three ideas: Asia and its diversity; achievements and contributions of the peoples of Asia; and Asia-Australia engagement (ACARA, 2016a). In addition, seven general capabilities designed to develop knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions are also expected to be integrated across learning areas (ACARA, 2016b). This has implications for senior history curriculum. ACARA (2014b) states, “the senior secondary subjects continue to develop the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities introduced across Foundation to Year 10” (p. 1). The Asia priority and the intercultural understanding capability are seen to have particular bearing on history as a learning area because it is seen to cover topics relevant to developing students’ understandings of the diverse histories and cultures of Asia (AEF, 2013; Hassim, 2013; Stirling, 2009).

### 1.2 Rationale

History curriculum periodically makes the national headlines in Australia, as it does in many other countries. When I began this project in early 2014, history curriculum was in the news again. Federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne had just announced that on behalf of the newly elected Abbot Government, he was
launching a review of the Australian Curriculum. In particular, *Australian Curriculum: History* and the three cross-curriculum priorities were the focus of debate, driven by claims that history curriculum was dominated by left-wing content and lacked proper acknowledgement of the history of Western civilisation and Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage. When asked about history and what students needed to know about Asia, Minister Pyne (10 January 2014) responded:

> You cannot go forward into the future, knowing why Australia is as it is and where we want to go, without knowing where we've come from. And the 200 years since colonisation, Australia has been a Western society here in the Asia Pacific region. It’s very important students understand that. Now, I don't think that Western civilisation is being given the pride of place that it should alongside other aspects of the history curriculum. (para. 21)

Pyne appeared to be signalling that the status quo of Western history was under threat. The debate raised questions about the positioning of a Western metanarrative in curriculum and reinforced the significance of research that seeks to look beyond the ideological sparring of political commentary to analyse the sorts of histories and narratives that are actually represented in official curriculum documents. This study proposes to present a curriculum history that considers the relationship between the policy contexts and the stated curriculum at key moments, showing how these contexts constituted certain conditions of possibility for the production of varying representations of Asia at different times.

Representation and teachers’ content choices regarding history curriculum require further scrutiny because these aspects are often overshadowed by political debate. History curricula attract the attention of politicians and other stakeholders because they are perceived to offer a means for transmitting preferred versions of the past, acting as a type of social glue that binds people to shared values and helping shape historical consciousness (Lee, 2010; T. Taylor & Collins, 2012). Therefore around the world many battles of the so-called ‘history wars’ have been fought over curriculum (Clark, 2010; Parkes, 2007; T. Taylor & Guyver, 2012), even though stakeholders tend to have a limited understanding not only of the curriculum processes they are trying to influence, but also the work of teachers (Luke, 2010; Marsh, 2009).
Examination of representational practices and teachers’ curricular decision-making contributes important dimensions to these political debates that often disregard such complexities.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the symbolic power of history curriculum and the sorts or values that are projected on and by it. Curriculum inquiry is essential for asking questions about the sort of world that is represented by curriculum, for considering what it says about the world and how it says it (Yates & Grumet, 2011). Senior history curriculum cannot provide an infinite range of histories. Decisions about what should or should not be included need to be made by curriculum designers and the teachers who enact it. This raises questions around historical significance, what might constitute a representative sample of the human experience and what is considered culturally inclusive/exclusive curriculum. Stuart Macintyre (October 8 2013), the lead historian involved in developing the initial framing paper of the Australian Curriculum: History advocates that students of all backgrounds should have access to world history curriculum that engages them with difference and with the unfamiliar. However, unless we critically appraise the written curriculum, we can only assume that a range of histories, narratives and perspectives is offered. Developing a curriculum history, as this thesis does, enables patterns in content inclusion and exclusion to be traced over a number of decades. The regular changes made to these iterative documents may appear incremental to teachers and curriculum policy stakeholders. However, the extent to which the content and approaches favoured by history curricula are reoriented over time becomes more visible when a number of curriculum documents developed in quite different contexts are compared.

Questions concerning whose stories are included or excluded and how they are told are of particular interest in multicultural Australia, and for educators around the world. Global mobility continues to intensify and student demographics continue to diversify. The latest census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reveals that for the first time the majority of Australian residents born overseas now come from Asia rather than Europe, with China, India and the Philippines in the
top five most common countries of birth (ABS, 2017). It is estimated that almost 10 per cent of Australians have Asian cultural origins (Southphommasane, 2014, para 10). Victoria is one of the most diverse and fastest growing populations in Australia; 46.8% of Victorians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2017). These shifting demographics have implications for history curriculum, which represents an interface between established national narratives and new cultural literacies:

The emergence and recognition of counter-memories from indigenous, ethnic and national minorities, and sometimes regional neighbours, have interrupted the incontestability of the nation-building project, and prompted re-evaluations of the purpose and practice of History education (Parkes & Vinterek, 2012, p. 54).

Issues of cultural diversity and inclusion as they relate to content and narrative diversity in history education are challenging (R. Harris, 2013; R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Hawkey, 2015; Parkes, 2009; Parkes & Vinterek, 2012; Rüsen, 2002). However, a critical examination of curriculum policy can offer valuable insights into the power relations that underpin the production of historical knowledge and stimulate thinking about the intercultural implications of these relations.

Calls for schools to produce ‘Asia capable’ students for the ‘Asian Century’ make it an apposite time to consider the place of Asia in VCE History. Historical understanding is acknowledged as a key element of Asia capability and it is assumed that Australian students will be provided with the opportunity to engage with a range of Asia-related histories throughout their schooling. Australia’s relationship with Asia has long been a national preoccupation even though the idea that its importance to Australia’s future tends to be viewed as ‘unprecedented’ as Australia’s proximity to Asia is periodically ‘rediscovered’ (Walker & Sobocinska, 2012).

In 2016, the Victorian State Government reiterated its support for “preparing Victorian students for the Asian Century” (Vic. Govnt., 2016b, para. 1). In launching the Leading Asia Capable Schools program, the Victorian Minister for Education James Merlino said: “We know that our economy is linked to Asia and this program
will help make sure students are not strangers to a continent that will be a key part of their lives” (2016, para. 12). Statements such as Merlino’s are indicative of a perception of Asia that is deemed problematic by scholars who critique Asia literacy policy. For example, the foregrounding of the economic rationale, as in this statement, has been criticised for privileging instrumental purposes above humanist and intercultural purposes for learning about Asia (Pan, 2013, 2015; Rizvi, 2015, 2017; Salter, 2013). Here Australian students are assumed to be ‘strangers’ or separate to Asia, which as some commentators suggest, implies an ‘us’ and ‘them’ binary, even though Asian Australians make up a sizable component of the population (Koh, 2015; Martin et al., 2015; Rizvi, 2015; Weinmann, 2015). Moreover Asia is often positioned, as in the above quote, as a homogenous ‘continent’, which some argue assumes an essentialist or fixed view of Asia instead of a more heterogeneous and dynamic view (Chen, 2010; Nozaki, 2007).

It is suggested that discussions concerning Asia education policy tend to overlook Australian representations of Asia (Rizvi, 2017; Sobocinska, 2014a; Walker, 2013b). Some provisional commentary on Asia-related history in the Australian Curriculum argues that Asia has been largely framed by a Western-centric view of world history (Keese, 2013; Percival Wood, 2012), but overall the sort of close curriculum analysis presented by this study has not accompanied this commentary. By focussing on the representation of Asia in history curriculum this study will consider the implications of reproducing and resisting the preferred or dominant meanings attached to Asia. It will also investigate some of the assumptions underpinning these meanings, such as the notions that history curriculum is either too Western-centric, or not Western-centric enough.

This research is timely as well as topical. The study was conducted during a pivotal time for history curricula at the state and national levels. It examines a significant period of transition for VCE History with the integration of the new Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History. This is an opportune moment to survey nearly three decades of VCE History and to talk to teachers and policy actors as they navigate these reforms. The fusing of the Australian Curriculum into state-based
secondary school curriculum is ongoing, which gives the study currency. Therefore it will be one of the first to respond to these changes, providing relevant data for comparison to other States, each having had their own ways of approaching senior history in the past. Changes to senior secondary schooling have significant implications for the work of teachers, particularly the learning of students in relation to the high-stakes examination. High-stakes testing and the nationalisation of history curriculum are global phenomena (Henderson, 2015a; Lingard, Martino, Rezai-Rashti, & Sellar, 2016), so the study aims to provide a point of comparison to education researchers in other countries.

The investigation of teachers’ curricular decision-making is particularly pertinent during this transitionary period while teachers are engaging with new curriculum. In all the debate about the national curriculum, research has not extensively engaged with the enacted curriculum, “on what actually goes on in Australian classrooms” (Luke, 2010, p. 1). While some research has examined the Asia literacy of teachers (Halse et al., 2013), relatively little is known about history teachers’ content choices, Asia-related or otherwise (R. Harris & Burn, 2016). The perceived lack of uptake of Asia-related history is often assumed to be a result of a deficiency in teachers’ experience and preference for more Western-centric topics (Keese, 2013; Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009). This study aims to provide empirical data in this area that has not previously been available. By asking teachers about the factors that influence their enactment of history curriculum it seeks to offer new insights into history teachers’ attitudes and practices concerning Asia-related content and contribute knowledge regarding the complexities of curriculum policy processes.

School curricula manifest within the constraints of social, political and economic contexts (C. Harris & Marsh, 2005). By looking at curriculum policy enactment through the framework of critical policy analysis, the study seeks to “make’ policy into a process, as diversely and repeatedly constructed and/or subject to different ‘interpretations’ as it is enacted (rather than implemented) in original and creative ways” (Ball, Braun, & Maguire, 2012, p. 2). This helps to build a better picture of the complex realities and constraints that shape the work of teachers, and seeks to
connect to wider global education policy discourses, such as those around high-stakes testing, nationalisation of curriculum, teacher performance and the marketisation of curriculum, all of which have relevance beyond history teaching and beyond Victoria. Such an approach builds on a body of Asia education policy analysis (e.g. Halse, 2015a, 2015c; Henderson, 2003, 2008, 2015a; Rizvi, 2012; Salter, 2013; Walker, 2015) in new ways.

Lastly, this study will provide evidence that will contribute to ongoing philosophical debates about the nature and purpose of history education. On one hand, postcolonial and feminist perspectives have brought to the attention of educators the ongoing effects of colonialism and power inequities in relation to race, gender, sexuality, class and political economy on education and historical perspectives (Hickling-Hudson, 2003; Parkes, 2007, 2011; Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006). Postmodern and poststructural theory has also stimulated the deconstruction of historical narrative and historical method, challenging history’s claims to truth and objectivity (e.g. Lyotard, 1984; Munslow, 2006; Parkes, 2014; Yilmaz, 2010). On the other hand, some commentators and stakeholder groups have voiced concern that the legacies of Western civilisation and Australia’s Anglo-Celtic or ‘Judeo-Christian’ heritage have been downplayed or ignored in Australian history curricula and Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) curricula (e.g. Berg, 2010; Donnelly, 2006, 2011c, 2013; Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014; Melleuish, 2010, 2013; Roskam, 2011a, 2011b). Conservative critics feel history curriculum has been diminished by political correctness and attacked by postmodernism (Donnelly, 2004). These sorts of debates require informed dialogue (T. Taylor, 2013). By taking Asia-related history as a sort of curricular yardstick by which these power relations and ideological influences might be compared, this study provides evidence that is relevant to both sides of the debate.

1.3 Research questions, design and methods

The study will investigate the following overarching research question and sub-questions:
• How is Asia represented in VCE History curriculum policy processes and how might this representation be explained?
  o What Asia-related history is available in key VCE History Study Designs from 1991 to 2015 and how does this relate to the policy contexts in which they were developed?
  o What are teachers’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum?
  o What influences teachers’ curricular decision-making about Asia-related history and the VCE History units they teach?
  o What are curriculum policy actors’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum?
  o How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are their implications?

The VCAA (2014b) states: “the curriculum is the common set of knowledge and skills that are required by all students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship” (p. 5). However, providing a definitive definition of curriculum is an impossible task (Brady & Kennedy, 2010; Breault & Marshall, 2010; Goodson, 1994; Marsh & Willis, 2007). Yates and Grumet (2011) describe the elusiveness of a standard definition of school curriculum:

  It encompasses different kinds of focus, including policy statements at the overarching level; curriculum guidelines and frameworks; textbooks; the enacted curriculum of what teachers do and what happens in classrooms; unintended and hidden curriculum relating to school practices and environment; and the issue of what young people themselves receive and perceive as curriculum. (p. 7)

Thus school curriculum might be understood as a multidimensional and complex process. Conceptualising curriculum as a process recognises that it is a dynamic socio-historical construction, composed of multiple systems and practices of knowledge production; it recognises that curriculum is varying translated and transformed at different levels both inside and outside of schools (Moreno, 2006). The focus of this research is principally on the stated curriculum, that is, “what the education departments expect should be taught – usually outlined in glossy curriculum policy statements and syllabus documents” (T. Taylor, 2001, p. 12) and
the *enacted curriculum*, “what teachers actually teach or intend to teach” (T. Taylor, 2001, p. 12).

The study is framed as *history of the present* (Foucault, 1977; Popkewitz, 2011, 2013). History of the present is based on Foucault’s approach to doing historical inquiry as a way of critically engaging with the present (Foucault, 1977; Garland, 2014). This study begins with a problematisation in the present – the representation of Asia – and takes a genealogical approach to tracing the formation of these representations through historical inquiry. By examining how historical practices represent the object of inquiry, the object is made visible (Popkewitz, 2013). In this case, the object of ‘Asia’ is made visible through the analysis of over three decades of education and curriculum policy.

This mode of historical inquiry is blended with *critical policy analysis* and contemporary *enactment research*. Critical policy analysis seeks to analyse the texts, contexts and discourses that shape education policy in relation to the local, national and global spaces in which they operate and the power/knowledge relations in which they are embedded (Lingard, 2009). Conventionally, critical policy analysis has focused on education policy other than curriculum (Lingard & Ozga, 2007). However, as this analysis examines a range of education policies and official curriculum documents, the critical policy analysis framework is extended here to include analysis of official curriculum documents in addition to Asia-related education policies and government reports. Enactment research is positioned within the broader framework of critical policy analysis; it focuses on investigating the interpretive policy work of schools and teachers within their specific contexts (Ball et al., 2012). Ball, Braun and Maguire’s (2012) policy enactment framework is applied to examine the role of teachers as policy actors, who enact rather than implement curriculum policy in schools. An analysis of the perspectives of other policy actors involved in the production of Asia-related curriculum provides insight into another, sometimes unseen, dimension of the curriculum policy process.
Chen’s (2010) *Asia as method* and notion of *deimperialisation* also inform the analysis and provide stimulus for deconstructing and reconceptualising representations of Asia. Asia as method presents a theoretical framework for anchoring Asian histories in Asia and for challenging the dominant Western modes of knowledge production that have tended to construct Asia through the prisms of imperialism, colonialism and the Cold War (Chen, 2010). Deimperialisation challenges researchers outside of Asia to consider how the ongoing historical effects of imperialism continue to impact on ways of seeing the world.

The notion of discourse is central to all of these conceptual tools. Discourses are constituted by groups of statements and practices that are regulated by unwritten rules and structures that have meaning and an effect (Foucault, 1972; Mills, 2004b). These rules and structures shape the way reality is perceived, enabling and constraining what is possible to think and say, or be and do. For example, we will consider how the idea of Asia might be understood as being constituted by discourse through the statements made about it in curriculum policy, or the way in which VCE History teachers are framed by discourses that shape particular ways of thinking and normalise certain practices. Discourses and the rules and structures by which they are constituted continue to undergo change; they are not static (Mills, 2004a). Therefore I am also interested in interrogating how the dominant and counter discourses shift over time and across contexts, which contributes to understanding the fluidity and ambiguity of the idea of Asia and its representation in history curricula.

To find evidence of the presence and effects of discourse, documentary and interview data were collected. VCE teachers from a range of schools across metropolitan Melbourne were invited to discuss their curricular decision-making, content choices and attitudes to Asia-related history in semi-structured interviews. The curriculum policy actors interviewed, included participants from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria (HTAV), the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Asia Education Foundation (AEF). In addition to the framework of
critical policy analysis, a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis was used to analyse historical sources, documentary data and interview data.

1.4 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the research problem and introduces the context of the VCE and the Australian Curriculum. The rationale for the study provides an overall warrant for the research, highlighting that it is timely and topical, investigates elements of Asia education policy and history curriculum that have not been examined by prior research, and tackles important issues around the representation of history content and cultural inclusion. The research questions are presented alongside a brief overview of the research design and the thesis structure.

Chapter 2, entitled Contextualising the study, provides contextual framing for the study by mapping a range of literatures across the fields of Asia education and history education. Part 1: Asia-related history looks at the contestation of the idea of Asia, the Asia-related history curriculum research space and the more extensive area of Asia literacy research. Part 2: The politics and purpose of history curriculum draws on key themes and issues in global debates about history education, including research related to the inclusion and exclusion of content and history teachers’ curriculum enactment. Through an analysis of local and international research, I identify some gaps this study seeks to address.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology and design and maps the literature relevant to the conceptual frameworks. The chapter outlines my philosophical approach, my approach to representation and my researcher positioning. The next section explains the main conceptual framework for the study, based on: history of the present, critical policy analysis and Asia as method. This includes an in-depth examination of discourse, a fundamental concept within the study. The second half of the chapter outlines the methods of data collection and analysis before outlining
the approach taken to the Foucauldian discourse analysis of documentary and interview data.

Chapter 4 is entitled *Asia-related senior secondary history in the twentieth century*. It provides historical background on Asia-related history curriculum policy predating the VCE. Compared to the detailed discourse analysis in the data analysis chapters that follow, it offers a more panoramic overview of changes to Asia-related history curriculum policy and approaches in history education across the twentieth century.

Chapter 5, *Asia-related VCE History curriculum and its policy context 1991-2004*, explores the discursive development of Asia-related history through the VCE History curriculum policy processes through the 1990s and 2000s. As the first of the three data analysis chapters, it analyses three key Study Designs – 1991, 1996 and 2004. The positioning of Asia within each Study Design is analysed alongside the policy context in which it was developed.

Chapter 6 examines the conditions of possibility for the enactment of Asia-related history. Entitled *Enacting Asia-related history*, it is based on the discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews with 15 VCE History teachers, conducted in late 2015. The analysis reveals four key discourses: *professional knowledge; student engagement; alignment* and the *West as method*. The chapter considers how the statements made and the discursive practices to which they refer shape how history is enacted in the context of schools, the VCE and in relation to broader global education policy discourses. This chapter is positioned chronologically between chapters 5 and 7 as the teachers are mostly reflecting on the 2004 Study Design analysed in chapter 5.

Chapter 7, *Asia-related VCE History curriculum and its policy context 2005-2015*, melds the approaches taken in Chapters 5 and 6. The analysis is based on the policy context, the new Study Design, teacher interview data and curriculum policy actor interview data. It examines the development of Asia-related history in the *Australian Curriculum* and then the reform of the *VCE History Study Design*. The
chapter discusses the unique ways national curriculum policy has been translated in Victoria according to established curricular traditions and discursive practices.

Chapter 8 is the closing chapter. Based on a synthesis of the data and arguments presented in the thesis, the research questions are addressed and the limitations of the study are also considered. The final section contemplates the future of VCE History and considers potential approaches that might be investigated further for the reconceptualisation of representations of Asia. In doing so it offers an agenda for further research.

Overall the thesis aims to offer insights into the paradoxical nature of Asia-related history, and the complex ways in which it is shaped by the assumptions, conventions, discontinuities and discursive practices that constitute it as an object of knowledge within Australian history curriculum policy discourse. By examining the practical, contextual, material and discursive ‘realities’ that shape the development and enactment of Asia-related history, the implications for future curricular practices can be better understood.
Chapter 2: Contextualising the study

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter brings together some diverse but interrelated literatures to contextualise the research, introduce relevant concepts and clarify the ways it relates to prior scholarship, including identifying some gaps in the research that this thesis seeks to fill. It is broken into two parts. Part 1 Asia-related history considers the ambiguity of the term Asia by comparing the different ways it has been defined and critiqued. This leads to looking at how Asia has been studied within the small area of Asia-related history curriculum research, which is then compared to the broader field of Asia education research. Part 2: The politics and purpose of history curriculum synthesises the global debates that have contributed to the theorisation of history education and the relevant research, and focuses in on the Australian research context. Overall, this chapter provides further justification for the study’s investigation of Asia-related history curriculum.

Part 1: Asia-related history

2.2 Imagining Asia

The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016a) offers a definition of Asia:

Asia can be defined in geographical terms, but it can also be described in terms of cultural, religious, historical and language boundaries or commonalities. While it includes West and Central Asia, in Australian schools studies of Asia will pay particular attention to the sub-regions of:

- North-east Asia, including China, Mongolia, Japan, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan
- South-east Asia, including Indonesia, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, East Timor, the Philippines and Cambodia
- South Asia, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. (para. 4)

The Victorian Curriculum adopts the same definition (VCAA, 2017). While this offers a delineated set of Asian nation-states, it hints at the underlying contestability of
the idea of Asia. The definition implies there are different ways of defining Asia –
geographically, culturally, historically – but in suggesting “Australian schools will
pay particular attention to...” it also alludes to an underlying bias or strategic
preferences that shape these understandings. However, Asia is even more
ambiguous, contested and fluid than conventional definitions like this might
suggest. This section will start to unravel the idea of Asia by looking at some
historical and contemporary conceptualisations and critiques.

Arguments concerning the impracticality of establishing boundaries for Asia based
on geo-political, cultural, linguistic or philosophical characteristics are well
established (D’Cruz & Steele, 2003; FitzGerald, 1997; Halse, 2013, 2015a; N. Knight
& Heazle, 2011; Martin et al., 2015; Sobocinska, 2014a). It continues to be imagined
in different ways and for different purposes: “‘Asia’ is not a place, yet the name is
laden with history and cultural politics” (Spivak, 2008, p. 9). Nonetheless, certain
tropes have given form to the discourse of Asia.

Asia has long been imagined as ‘the East’. Etymologically the term Asia can be
 traced back to the ancient Greeks who used it to name the ‘hazy lands and people’
to their east that was not Europe (N. Knight & Heazle, 2011). The East/West binary
has taken root, even in Australia where the East acts as proxy for our north. It is
commonly, though not unproblematically, argued that historically Asia is a
European invention: “As the subject invents the object, it is the West that
constructed Asia” (M. Kim & Hodges, 2010, p. 164). These constructions can be
 traced back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when new worldviews
emerged with the Enlightenment and colonial expansion – new knowledge grew
from race theory, historiography, political economy, modern geography, theories of
state and the natural sciences (H. Wang, 2011). From the construction of this
knowledge Europe and Asia were constituted and Europe, or ‘the West’, came to
believe it was the most advanced society on earth (S. Hall, 1992; Said, 1978; H.
Wang, 2011). Asia, or the East came to signify a backward, uncivilized, feminine,
undeveloped, and agricultural space to be colonised, capitalised and Christianised
(Broinowski, 1992b; M. Kim & Hodges, 2010; H. Wang, 2010). Concomitantly, the
West symbolised sophistication, modernity, progress, industrialisation, empire and power. It has been argued that in the twentieth century the idea of Asia became fixed within the ‘universal’ narrative of European modernity and the scaffolds of empire, nation-state and capitalism (H. Wang, 2011). Although challenged (e.g. Fox, 2002), Huntington’s (1993) alternative clash of civilisations model argues that the fault lines of history run deeper than the nation-state and can be understood according to major civilisations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and African.

Based on these sorts of enduring categorisations it could be said: “Of all the European inventions which have transformed the modern global worldview, one of the most successful must surely be Asia” (Morris-Suzuki, 1998, p. 5). Yet the idea of the West is equally one of Europe’s most successful inventions. The discourse of the West has been constructed through “self-comparison with other, non-western, societies (the Rest), very different in their histories, ecologies, patterns of development, and cultures from the European model”, differences which reinforced “the standard against which the West's achievement was measured” (S. Hall, 1992, p. 187).

Said’s (1978) seminal Orientalism has provided a theoretical foundation for understanding how Europe has, in contrast to itself, contrived the Orient as Other. Although Said’s critique referred to the Orient as the Arab and Islamic world, or what might be considered the Middle East today, the notion of the Orient and the discourse of Orientalism have been extended to include colonial representations of Asia. As discussed below, education researchers have critiqued the presence of Orientalist discourse within Asia-related education policy (e.g. Nozaki, 2007, 2009a; Rizvi, 1993; Salter, 2013; M. G. Singh, 1995). In Orientalism European superiority is counterposed to “Oriental backwardness” (Said, 1978, p. 7). Central to the meaning of Orientalism is the treatment of the Orient as something to be dealt with “by making statements about it, authorising views on it, by describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 1978, p. 3). For example,
the representational practices of colonial discourses, such as in art and literature, were said to negatively represent the Other and reinforce stereotyped ways of thinking through their usage over time (Mills, 2004a). Conversely, the discourse of Occidentalism – how the Orient or the Occident stereotypically views the West – provides another lens for investigating how the East and West imagine Self and Other (R. Yang, 2015).

The discourse of Orientalism and corresponding binaries of Orient/Occident and Self/Other draw attention to representational practices and power relations. However, as a discourse it is also problematic because it assumes that discourses are static and unified – it conjures a “generic Western complicity” (Varisco, 2005, p. 5) and a homogenous Orient. While Orientalism (Said, 1978) was ground-breaking at the time, it has been widely debated by postcolonial theorists, criticised over the decades (e.g. Warraq, 2007; R. Young, 1990) and even revisited by Said himself (Said, 1985, 2003). Ashcroft (2001b) points out that a problem with this sort of discourse is that it is unidirectional: “there is no analysis of the self-perception of the ‘Oriental’, no analysis of the fragmentary and contradictory nature nor of the ‘resistibility’ of imperial ideology” (2001b, p. 38). Critiques of Orientalism offer some cautionary reminders for examining Asia as a discursive formation: discourse changes over time according to the contexts in which it is produced; discourse does not erase the possibilities of resistance; and discourse can be heterogeneous, replete with inconsistencies and discontinuities (Mills, 2004a).

Recognising that the idea of Asia principally developed through Western hegemonic processes is necessary, but holding steadfast to historical classifications risks essentialising Asia as a product of imperialism and colonialism. McClintock (1995) highlights that imperialism is an ambiguous and contradictory project and thus the categories and representational practices that emerged from it are inadequate for accounting for its legacies. These include binary oppositions such as coloniser/colonised, self/other, centre/periphery, dominance/resistance and colonial/postcolonial (McClintock, 1995) to which we can add East/West and Orient/Occident. Reproducing fixed historical meanings of Asia and fixed understandings of the associated binaries does not account for the complex,
contradictory and evolving meanings attached to Asia, and, in this case, representations of Asia in curriculum policy. Viewing Asia primarily as a product or subject of imperialism diminishes the “analytical value” (Chen, 2010, p. 215) and “efficacy of the idea of Asia” (H. Wang, 2010, p. 986). Yet, as some argue, totally delegitimising the concept of Asia denies the possibilities for resistance and reappropriation of history (Chen, 2010; H. Wang, 2010, 2011). Moreover, continuing to focus critique on the East/West binary relies upon a one dimensional axis between the ‘West’ and ‘Asia as other’ (Yew, 2011). The most effective way of contesting imperial discourse and nationalist rhetoric Ashcroft contends, “is not through a structure of binary oppositions, but an interaction, a counter-discourse, which is not one of exclusion and polarisation but of engagement and rearticulation” (2001a, p. 112). Yew suggests, “alternative axes of alterity” (2011, p. 4) are required. Therefore some argue that the reimagining of Asia requires a reimagining of the European version of ‘world history’ (Ashcroft, 2001a; Chen, 2010; H. Wang, 2010, 2011). These sorts of concerns about the need to reappropriate historical and contemporary constructions of Asia and its positioning in world history are taken up in this thesis.

On the other hand, conventional geo-political definitions based on nation-state borders are neither immutable nor uncontroversial. The United Nations (2012) offers the most expansive delineation of Asia, listing fifty nation states under the sub-regions of Western Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2008) describes Asia as South-East Asia, North-East Asia, Southern and Central Asia; Australia and New Zealand are classified with Oceania and Antarctica. The Australia in the Asian Century White Paper (Aust. Gov., 2012) offers eight indistinct lists that range from 17 to 47 Asian nation-states. However, in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries the ABS acknowledges that “the terms ‘Asia’ or ‘Asian’ are frequently used in Australia in a manner which refers only to the countries of North-East Asia and South-East Asia” (ABS, 2008, p. 20). These regions are not only in proximity to Australia but are home to most of Australia’s largest two-way trading partners: China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia (DFAT, 2014). In contrast, a
British view of Asia and Asians is more likely to be associated with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Collins Dictionary, 2017).

Regional boundaries are constructions, shaped not only by imperialist desires of the past and Westphalian notions of the nation-state but also by capitalism, globalisation and geo-politics. For example, Breslin (2014) argues the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum “is built around a desire to obstruct the emergence of an ‘Asian-Asia’ without the US” and contrasts with “a Chinese preference for a region that it can dominate defined as ASEAN plus three (China, Japan and South Korea)” (para 8, ). Chen (2010) points out that within Asia every nation has a biased regional system of reference – China for example has historically considered itself at the centre of its imaginary Asia. These examples are indicative of “the contingent, circumstantial and discursive nature of boundaries” (M. Kim & Hodges, 2010, p. 165).

The contestation of historical and geo-political meanings of Asia becomes more apparent when the notions of ‘Australia and Asia relations’ or ‘Australia-Asia engagement’ are examined. These terms are frequently used in government and curriculum policy, yet this can be understood as an imagined relationship. In this configuration, Australia, a nation of 24 million people, is ambitiously positioned in relation to Asia, with a population of nearly four and a half billion people across fifty or so nations. The notion of the imagined community (Anderson, 1983/2006) can be applied here to conceptualise how Australia, like other nations, maintains agreed upon conceptions of nation and nationalism through the imagination of a community in which fellow members are not known to each other but are perceived as fellow group members. The notion of the imaginary is drawn upon in analyses of the worldview and assumptions that characterise Australia-Asia relations: e.g. the Australian imaginary (Walker, 2013b); Australian self-imagination (Pan, 2015); and a public-cultural imaginary or policy imaginary (Martin et al., 2015). The thesis explores the proposition that Asia has long been imagined by an Australia that sees Asia as other to its own self-image and investigates how the power relations inherent in this dynamic are projected on and by curriculum.

It has been argued that by self-identifying as separate to Asia, Australian public
discourse tends to construct Asia as the Other (Pan, 2015; Rizvi, 2012, 2015). This perpetuates the dominant view that Australia is in, yet not of Asia (Iwabuchi, 2015; Martin et al., 2015) or in, yet out of Asia (Beeson & Jayasuriya, 2009).

Notwithstanding, the view that Australia could be considered part of Asia has a long history, and Australians have been making choices concerning the future of these relations since the nineteenth century (Walker, 2013b). Indeed it can be argued that these relations predate pre-colonial times. The Yolngu people of North East Arnhem Land in northern Australia participated in a regional trade network with the Macassans, who would annually sail from what is now known as Sulawesi in Indonesia, to catch and process trepang (sea cucumber), a highly prized delicacy in China (Ganter, 2006; Russell, 2004). The legacies of linguistic, artistic, intercultural and social relations suggest that to some extent the Yolngu were economically and culturally part of Asia, distorting the clear demarcation between South-East Asia, the Islamic world and the continent of Australia that the British attempted to maintain.

Despite this history, Australia periodically rediscovers this proximity to Asia (Walker, 1999, 2015). More recently this has been exemplified by policies such as the Gillard government’s Australia in the Asian Century White Paper (Aust. Gov., 2012), one in a long chain of government policies over the last four decades that have called on Australia to strategically position itself in the region (see chapters 5 and 7). Walker (2013a) describes this habit of discovering an ‘unprecedented Asia’ – mostly driven by the threat of invasion or the desire for future prosperity – as a ‘broken narrative’ because Asia continues to be excluded from the dominant narrative of Australian history. Building on this idea, Pan (2015) identifies three dominant modes for the representation of Asia: absence, threat and opportunity. Referring more specifically to Australian historiography, Lockhart (2012) contends that historians have neglected to take Asia seriously or see how it reflexively shapes Australian identity through its proximity to Asia. Australian historians are said to have instead been constrained by an ‘outpost mentality’ that has positioned Australia as a colonial outpost in a decolonising Asia, and have been limited by the power of an imperial narrative that has grounded Australian identity in its British imperial past (Lockhart, 2012).
Australians of Asian heritage are also marginalised in these sorts of constructions. Everyday translocal and intercultural experiences that connect Australia and Asia are often overlooked altogether, and Asian migrant communities tend to be viewed by government rhetoric as economic resources (Martin et al., 2015). Australia is shaped by the global flows of people, languages and cultures and yet mobility is often under recognised in conventional constructions of Australia and Asia. Developments in “the rapid increase of movement, technology-based acceleration and the diversification of space-transgressing connections” (Endres, Mandercheid, & Micncke, 2016, p. 13) have stimulated interest in the way mobilities are shaping societies and nationalisms. Maintaining the dichotomy between an Australian ‘us’ and an Asian ‘them’ is therefore problematic and not representative of the contemporary experiences of Australia and the mundane border-crossing practices that “are constructing ‘Asia’ as part of everyday life in Australia – physically, imaginatively and virtually” (Iwabuchi, 2015 p. xvi). Martin et al. (2015) argue that in order to tackle the separateness and opposition in constructions of ‘Australia’ and ‘Asia’, the social and intercultural richness of people’s everyday lives offer possibilities for the interpenetration of these terms, rather than viewing (Asian) culture as ‘out there’ or in textbooks. Thus investigating representations of Asia-related history requires reflexive thinking about historical and contemporary imaginings of an exclusive Australian identity if it is to be imagined in more inclusive ways (Iwabuchi, 2015; Martin et al., 2015; Rizvi, 2017).

2.3 Asia-related history curriculum

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum in 2012 and the cross-curriculum priority “Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia” (ACARA, 2016a) has generated interest in the connection between studies of Asia and history curriculum. Central to the Asia priority is the notion of Asia literacy. According to ACARA (2016a) “Asia literacy provides students with the skills to communicate and engage with the peoples of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region” (para.3). Australia’s continued prosperity is assumed to lie with Asia’s economic rise: by 2025 half of the world’s economic output will derive from Asia (Laurenceson, 2012).
However, the term Asia literacy has circulated since the late 1980s and was used by FitzGerald and the Asian Studies Council’s report, *A National Strategy for the Study of Asia in Australia* (ASC, 1988; Halse, 2015a). It is therefore not new to curriculum (Halse, 2013). Recent calls for Asia literacy can be contextualised within the enduring historical relationship between Australia and the region. For over a century new generations of politicians and academics have advocated the importance of knowing Asia and developing Asia literacy (Walker, 2015; Walker & Sobocinska, 2012). Others have suggested that the fact that the call for Asia literacy has to be repeated so often is indication of a failure to make any headway in this area (Keese, 2013) and an indication of the ways in which Asia literacy policy has been poorly understood and implemented (Rizvi, 2013).

Knowledge of history is often acknowledged by curriculum policy makers as intrinsic to the conceptualisation of Asia literacy:

> Asia literacy is going to be a key requirement of our young people, as Australia seeks to strengthen its ties in the Asia region and be an effective contributor to the wellbeing of the region as a whole. For this, young people will need broad insight into the histories of the countries of the Asia region, including their shared history with Australia, its complex and diverse cultures and an understanding of the contemporary challenges and opportunities that exist for the region. (ACARA, 2016a, para.3)

In comparison to other subject areas, History is the terrain where proponents of Asia literacy seek to stake a claim (e.g. AEF, 2013; Henderson, 2011, 2012c; Keese, 2013; Percival Wood, 2012; Stirling, 2009). For example, in its report *Achieving Intercultural Understanding through teaching of Asia perspectives in the Australian Curriculum: English and History*, the AEF (2013) notes that History provides substantive context for exploring Asia perspectives and allows students to appreciate that in a globalised world, people have hybrid identities. History is also identified as one of three curriculum areas within the new Victorian Curriculum most suited to developing knowledge about Asia (VCAA, 2017).

At the time that the Australian Curriculum was in development, key proponents of Asia-related history advocated the view that History was a logical site for the development of Asia knowledge. For example, speaking at the New South Wales...
History Teachers’ Conference Anthony Milner (2011), Professor of Asian History, said:

A history curriculum for our times must certainly help Australians to think about the task of carving out a specific role for our country in the Asian region. It should provide a serious introduction to the histories and cultures of the countries around us – a sense of how they differ from us, and where we share interests and values. (p. 9)

His comment also hints at an implicit acceptance of the us/them binary. Henderson (2011) encapsulates the educational significance of the relationship: “the Australian Curriculum presents a strategic moment to embed Asia in the history curriculum and prepare our students for a future shaped by the emerging regional and international contexts” (p. 7). Conversely, some conservative commentators were concerned that such developments would diminish the position of ‘Western’ history. For example, Melleuish (2010) argues that Australia and Asia is not at all relevant to Australians understanding their cultural heritage and instead suggests that a comparative study of Australia and America would be more significant. Allsop (2010) also laments the opportunity lost by not using Western civilisation as a unifying theme for Years 11 and 12 which means “students will still leave Year 12 with less historical knowledge than they deserve” (p. 22). These sorts of debates have characterised the context in which Asia-related history curriculum research has been undertaken and will be explored throughout the thesis.

At both the state and national levels, Asia-related history has been the focus of few studies at the senior or lower secondary school levels. Studies of Asia in Year 12 (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009) was commissioned by the AEF and concluded that the take up of Asia content in Year 12 across Australia is very low. Based on 2007 curriculum data from all States and Territories it found that “it is only a small minority of (Year 12) students who undertake content or focus on Asia” (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009, p. iii). In Victoria, Australian History and Revolutions were the two units identified as being inclusive of content about Asia (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009). The researchers suggest that across Australia, most of the content on Asia relates to Australia or has a Western focus, with the Vietnam War being a prime example (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009). They note that it is difficult to gauge the
extent to which Asia content is enacted as not much is mandated. Nonetheless they claim “teachers are not likely to select material with which they themselves are unfamiliar or may have never studied” (Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009, p. iii). However, this assertion is not empirically or theoretically supported as the report did not investigate patterns of enactment of curriculum. While the report may have been useful for the purposes of the AEF, it only looks at one dimension of Asia-related senior curriculum. The gaps left unattended by the research are addressed by this thesis, including analysis of the policy contexts and conditions in which curricula are developed and empirical data about teachers’ curricular choices regarding Asia content.

Some commentary has offered an initial or surface-level response to the position of Asia content in the Australian Curriculum. Percival Wood (2012) extends the analysis of senior history curriculum from inclusion to representation. Although she does not apply a theoretical framework, she provides a brief historical overview of national approaches to history education more generally and analyses how Asia is represented in the first draft of the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History, released in May 2012 (see Chapter 7). Percival Wood (2012) concludes, “the Asia blind spot in our history books and current teaching... is symptomatic of the broader absence of Asia in the Australian story” (p. 342). Similarly, Keese (2013) presents an audit of Asia content in the Australian Curriculum: History F – 10 and argues that although it offers choice it “will most probably lead to history being dominated by a Eurocentric approach” (p. 25).

The extent to which curriculum and its enactment can be dismissed outright as Eurocentric and Western-centric is debatable. Curriculum processes are more complex than these generic labels would suggest. Henderson (2012a) is more optimistic than the others because in her view the Australian Curriculum: History presents teachers with the opportunity to embed interculturally rich approaches to Asia. Her analysis of how the teaching of Asia has shifted over time enables her to make a distinction between past Orientalist approaches and how representations of Asia are dealt with more critically in contemporary Australian classrooms, especially through the development of historical thinking skills (Henderson, 2012a). This
points to the value in curriculum content analysis that considers substantive and procedural knowledges in relation to each other.

Asia-related history curriculum has been researched at the state level, though not in the Victorian context. Kuehnel (2012a, 2012b) analyses 30 years of transnational history curricula in New South Wales (NSW) and Western Australia (WA), although Asia-related history is not his primary focus. Kuehnel’s examination of the discourse of centre and periphery found that even though studies of European civilisations had retreated, they still dominated history curricula and that: “Perspectives on Asia can be seen as a product of a negotiation between power and distance or between centre and periphery” (2012b, p. 174). For example, he shows that the centre periphery power dynamic has shifted from Europe; powerful empires like China are now bestowed greater cultural power, and ‘lesser powers’ remain on the periphery, unless they are close to Australia, like Indonesia. His study is valuable for illustrating the dynamic nature of discourse, however, his comparative analysis does not provide scope for a detailed contextual analysis of the geo-political policies and changes to history education that shaped the conditions that accompanied these shifts. An objective of this thesis is to add Victoria to the knowledge base and address these gaps in policy analysis. A benefit of concentrating specifically on Asia-related history in VCE History is that it allows for deeper contextual analysis and interrogation of the representation and enactment of Asia-related history, beyond simply its inclusion or exclusion in the stated curriculum.

Research and literature relating directly to VCE History is minimal. Asia-related history has not been the subject of any in-depth Victorian studies and this will be the first comprehensive empirical study to focus on VCE History. Clark’s (2006) research provides some commentary on the 2003 VCE History Review but only centres on national narratives in Australian history. A few recent commentaries (Casham, 2014; Catton, 2013; Cocks, 2016; Habgood, 2014) in the Victorian History Teachers’ Association’s journal, Agora, discuss VCE history. Some work has also looked at the broader differences in state curriculum cultures and argues that it is timely to examine these distinctions as the Australian Curriculum is introduced (Yates, Collins, & O’Connor, 2011). The geographical and demographical differences
between States mean they have quite varied curriculum histories and forms of certification in the senior years (Yates et al., 2011). For this reason an in-depth study of the Victorian context will provide a point of comparison for research in other States and Territories.

Across the literature there tends to be a dominant view that even if Asia-related content and topics are available, teachers are most likely to shy away from them because of a lack of knowledge, confidence and interest (FitzGerald, 1997; Ingelson, 1989; Keese, 2013; Macintyre, 2010; Percival Wood, 2012). As Keese (2013) says, “most teachers will stay with what they are happy with, and that means European History” (p. 26). Similarly, Salter (2010) contends, “for many, Indigenous perspectives and Asia literacy pose seemingly insurmountable barriers, demanding knowledge and familiarity they may not have” (p. 6). At the time the Asia priority was announced, there was little empirical evidence to substantiate these sorts of statements. The Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce (Halse et al., 2013) has since addressed this gap to some extent. It revealed that primary and secondary teachers rated their Asia literacy expertise and confidence to teach Asia literacy lower compared with teachers of Asian languages (Halse et al., 2013).

Only a few studies beyond Australia relate directly to this thesis. One investigation (An, 2016) of the representation Asian-Americans in history curricula in the United States concludes that Asian-Americans are mostly represented as victims due to being associated with anti-Asian sentiment and laws, or are invisible within the standards. Another study (Hong & Halvorsen, 2010) from the USA, examined Social Studies teachers’ work with Asia-related material and concludes that contrary to dominant representations of Asia and Asian-Americans, the teachers emphasised cultural diversity and were motivated to teach about Asia for humanistic reasons. An unpublished PhD thesis (K. Shin, 2009) presents a postcolonial analysis of Asian history in American schools which reveals that Asian history tends to be dominated by Eurocentric and Orientalist perspectives. Rüsen (2004b) also highlights that non-Western history in the history curricula of schools and universities is limited or only taught in the context of Western imperialism and colonialism. These studies indicate interest in the symbolic power of curriculum, and that the representation
of Asia is an educational concern in other parts of the world, particularly in multicultural nations like the USA and Australia because of its potential to reveal how nations see themselves in the world.

The trend towards negative or Eurocentric representations of Asia in the international studies raises similar issues to those reflected in the Australian research discussed above. Overall this analysis of Asia-related history curriculum research reinforces the need for an in-depth study of senior Victorian history curriculum and its enactment.

2.4 Asia literacy research

There is a more extensive body of literature on studies of Asia and Asia literacy policy than that which focuses on Asia and history curriculum. Overall these publications fall into the following categories: teacher and principal capacity; developing an Asia-literate teaching profession; curriculum; pedagogy; policy and students’ attitudes, values and learning (Halse & Cairns, in press). Most significant to this study is some of the recent work on teacher capacity (Halse et al., 2013); curriculum (Erebus, 2002; Henderson, 2004; Koh, 2015; Peacock, Lingard, & Sellar, 2015; Percival Wood, 2012; Salter & Maxwell, 2016; Weinmann, 2015; Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009); policy (Halse, 2015a, 2015c; Henderson, 2003, 2008, 2015a; Pang, 2005; Salter, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015b); the history of Asia-Australia’s long engagement (Walker, 2010, 2013b, 2015) and critiques of Asia literacy (Martin et al., 2015; Pan, 2013, 2015; Rizvi, 2013, 2015, 2017). Two unpublished theses have addressed this area: Curtis’ (2010) curriculum history of Asian Social Studies in NSW 1967-2002 and Quinn’s (2005) overview of four key Asia education policies from 1970-2002. In contrast, this thesis focuses on Asia education policy up to 2015 and thereby aims to fill a chronological gap in doctoral research on this topic.

In terms of policy analysis, the distinction between analysis for policy and analysis of policy (Gordon, Lewis, & Young, 1977) is useful for interrogating the purposes of Asia literacy. According to Lingard (2009), analysis of policy is analysis that “sets its own research agenda and does not take for granted the policy construction of the
problem, which policy seeks to address” (p. 228). This is evident in analyses of the construction of Asia literacy as a policy problem (Halse, 2015c; Salter, 2013, 2014b). A ‘policy problem’ is one that does not achieve the policy’s desired goals because the conditions aspired to by the policy do not align with the conditions produced by the policy’s implementation and a ‘wicked policy problem’ arises when the conditions of the ‘policy problem’ become so entangled that a solution appears impossible (Halse, 2015c). Halse (2015c) argues that the confluence of conditions – including systemic, economic, political, educational, philosophical and ideological factors, and the influence of specific policy actors and competing purposes – have made Asia literacy a wicked policy problem over nearly four decades of Asia literacy policy. This thesis explores these policy contradictions and paradoxes as they relate to history curriculum.

There are other reasons why Asia literacy policy has been a problematic and ongoing concern on the Australian curriculum agenda. Henderson’s (2003, 2007, 2008, 2015a) policy analyses provide important contextual information about the various stages, debates and policy actors that have shaped the development of Asia literacy policy, particularly during the 1990s. Most recently Henderson (2015a) argues that Australian education policy has aligned with the OECD knowledge economy model and is characterised by the following: a federalist approach to education policy and governance; the nationalisation of curriculum; a focus on teacher professional standards; and the continued positioning of Asia literacy as of economic and strategic benefit to the national interest. Pang (2005) compares Asia literacy policy in Australia, New Zealand, the EU, the USA and Canada. He suggests that all these policies position Asia as an economic challenge and are therefore motivated by instrumental concerns and governments’ desires to stay competitive – a rationale he argues is unsustainable. Rizvi (2013, 2015, 2017) concurs and speaks of a lack of conceptual clarity around Asia literacy, a point also made by others (Halse, 2015a, 2015b; Salter, 2013). Salter (2013) argues the policy problem/solution configuration has effectively problematised Asia and presented Asia literacy as an economic solution. Unlike some other policy analysis she incorporates teacher interview data to explore teacher perceptions about the “trickiness” of enacting Asia literacy (Salter, 2014b). Her case study of a Queensland
secondary school reveals that despite teachers being enthusiastic about Asia literacy, many are reluctant to engage with it for fear of getting it “wrong” (Salter, 2014b). In contrast, my research does not focus on Asia literacy per se but considers it as one of several conditions of possibility in the development and enactment of history curriculum.

Other studies provide analysis for policy or policy service (Blackmore & Lauder, 2011), whereby the policy problem is taken as given (Lingard, 2010). For example, the Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce (Halse et al., 2013) was commissioned by Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations and managed by the AEF with the aim “to inform future decision making for policy and practice by providing empirical, research-based evidence” (Halse et al., 2013, p. 2). While this sort of institutional and governmental support is necessary for large-scale national research and the production of valuable empirical data, by being closely aligned with official policy it is constrained in its capacity to contest it. Much of the research conducted or commissioned by the AEF can also be viewed as analysis for policy because the bulk of it aims to build demand for Asia literacy, as demonstrated by the What Works series (AEF, 2014c), commissioned reports (Owen, Ling, Andrew, & Ling, 2006; Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009) and occasional papers (Hassim, 2013; Kirby & Suggett, 2012).

Another distinct area of the literature is commentary that critiques Asia literacy as a curriculum policy imperative. Despite the ongoing presence of this counter discourse over a number of decades, such concerns continue to raise questions about the power/knowledge relations in which Asia literacy is contested. Issues raised by critiques of Asia literacy in the 1990s included concern over Orientalist constructions of Asia, the promotion of simplistic binaries (East/West, us/them), economic rationalism as a key driver of Asia literacy and the reproduction of inequitable power relations (see Nozaki & Inokuchi, 1996; Rizvi, 1993, 1996, 1997; M. G. Singh, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; M. G. Singh & Miller, 1995; Williamson-Fien, 1994a, 1996). Decades later these “awkward questions” (M. G. Singh, 1996a, p. 54) are still being debated (see Halse, 2013, 2015c; Koh, 2013; Martin et al., 2015;
Nozaki, 2009a; Pan, 2013; Rizvi, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017; Salter, 2013; Salter & Maxwell, 2016; Takayama, 2016). Nozaki (2009a) has called for counter-hegemonic approaches for teaching about Asia, and argued for curriculum and pedagogy that teaches about the ways “power works through relations between people, and between different elements of identities by stressing the multiplicity and fluidity of such relations and identities” (p. 152). Similarly, Rizvi (2017) speaks of the need to assist students to develop a greater sense of self-reflexivity in regards to understanding how their own identities are both historically constituted and socially dynamic, and are linked to representational practices which position the other according to relations of power.

The fact that Asia literacy has maintained its contentious position on the Australian education policy agenda over decades ensures that it is a curriculum policy area that continues to warrant critical examination. Problematising representations of Asia within a very specific curricular context points to new directions in which these critical conversations can be taken.

Part 2: The politics and purpose of history curriculum

2.5 Global debates

This analysis of Asia-related history also taps into wider debates that drive the work of history education scholars around the world. History curriculum is contested terrain and political intervention into the design of history curricula is an international phenomenon (Clark, 2006, 2010; Guyver, 2011; Henderson, 2015b; Lévesque, 2005; Parkes, 2011; Phillips, 1998; T. Taylor, 2013; Vickers, 2005). It is often noted that “of all school subjects, it is history that attracts the most intense level of political interference in democracies and dictatorships alike” (T. Taylor, 2013, p. 227). However, the notion that curriculum is political and bound to ideology, is neither new nor limited to history (Apple, 1979; Giroux, 1981; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). Curriculum can embody particular interests and are often the product of struggles between dominant and subordinate groups (Apple, 1988). Moreover, debates about curriculum content are ongoing and are
usually contests over what versions of history, cultural values and the nation matter most (Luke & Deng, 2008). History curriculum tends to be viewed as ennobling when reflecting one’s own ideological imperatives and seditious when reflecting the preferences of others. Notions of ownership and authority over history are therefore intrinsic to discussions about the purpose of history education and provide the broader backdrop to this study.

In addition to the destabilising influences of postmodern and poststructuralist thought, globalisation has contributed to the undermining of old certainties and historical metanarratives that previously sustained conceptions of national identity and citizenship. Carretero et al. (2014) highlight that “the collapse of great stories has revealed the relevance of individual historical identities, new nationalisms and the emergence of historical accounts that oppose official narratives of the nation-state” (p. 2). In part, national history curricula might be considered a response to these fears concerning migration, as they enable new forms of citizenship and national identity to be developed in relation to the global (Yates, Woelert, Millar, & O’Connor, 2017). Thus history education researchers have become increasingly interested in the impact of globalisation and nationalism on the politics of history education over the last decade (Clark, 2010; Guyver, 2011, 2014; Hutchins, 2016; Parkes & Vinterëk, 2012; T. Taylor, 2013; VanSledright, 2008). A proliferation of edited collections related to these issues further highlights their global significance (see Carretero et al., 2014; Davies, 2011; Guyver, 2016; Jones & Vickers, 2005; Nakou & Barca, 2010; G.-W. Shin & Sneider, 2011; T. Taylor & Guyver, 2012; Wilschut & Symcox, 2009; Zajda, 2015).

Worldwide, history curricula have represented battle zones for various ‘history wars’. In Taiwan, recent shifts in leadership and cross-strait relations have influenced a Sinocentric revision of history curriculum, resulting in significant student protests that included the occupation of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education offices in 2015 (G. Smith, 2015). Sinocentric history curriculum has also been a concern in South Korea (Kang, 2012) and Hong Kong (Kan, 2007; So, 2016; Vickers, Kan, & Morris, 2003). In Britain there has been a sustained political struggle
for the ownership of history curriculum over the last three decades (Ashby & Edwards, 2011; Phillips, 1998; Phillips & James, 2000). More recently, English Education Minister, Michael Gove, reignited controversy with his quest to re-establish a neo-Whig, British metanarrative within the national history curriculum (Guyver, 2014; J. Smith, 2017). Likewise, in the United States cultural conflicts ignite feuds for ‘ownership’ of history curricula and a number of large American states are purported to exercise disproportionate bias and control (Erekson, 2012; Fischer, 2014; Levstik & Barton, 2008; Stearns, 2010). Public policy is said to have resulted in the dominance of the history-education-as-collective-memory model, which aims at Americanising and securing allegiance to the nation-state (VanSledright, 2008, 2011). In part the historical thinking concepts framework (Lévesque, 2008; Seixas & Ercikan, 2011; Seixas & Morton, 2012; Seixas & Peck, 2004) and discussion of historical consciousness emerged in response to debates in the 1990s about the purpose of history education and the role of national history in Canada (Osborne, 2003).

A significant component of the literature on history curriculum in Australia is focused on the legacies of the ‘history wars’ on history education, particularly during the period of John Howard’s prime-ministership (Ashton & Hamilton, 2007; Clark, 2006; Henderson, 2005; Leadbetter, 2009; Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Parkes, 2006, 2007, 2011; T. Taylor, 2004, 2009, 2012). The debate centred on the interpretation and representation of the British colonisation/invasion of Australia and the contestation of national identity. Splitting along the ideological lines of liberal left and radical right, each side accused the other of trying to distort and misuse history (McKenna, 1998). Prime Minister John Howard and those on the right criticised what Professor Geoffrey Blainey termed the ‘black arm band view of history’, that is: overly gloomy or negative accounts of Australian history, particularly regarding the treatment of Indigenous people. For this group, history curriculum was regarded as too politically correct, biased and postmodern: “The impact of the culture wars has been profound. Subjects like history and civics are rewritten to enforce a politically correct, black armband view” (Donnelly, as cited by Doherty, 2004, para 4). However, as Don Watson, Prime Minister Keating’s former
speech writer, warned in 1997: “The employment of this black armbands charge is probably quite dangerous. It will be a very sad thing if it begins to affect school curricula” (as cited by McKenna, 1998, para. 64).

Clark (2006) argues that public anxieties about Australian history and memory politics are intensified by pedagogical imperatives, ideology and rhetoric, all of which are projected onto school history and the child as a conduit for the nation. Although the focus was mostly on Australian history, the varying stages and debates of the history wars provide important context for the development of VCE curriculum and the Australian Curriculum (see chapters 5 and 7). Overall it highlights that history curriculum and history teaching have been the subject of politicisation from both sides of politics. This thesis explores some of the implications of these debates on Asia-related history curriculum and investigates why histories other than national histories are also susceptible to political interference.

At the heart of these debates lies the assumption that history education has a role to play in the formation of national identity by a providing a unifying, didactic narrative. History is often perceived as a social cement that has “the power to bind people to shared values” (Lee, 2010, p. xi). Ferro (1980/2003) argues that the history we are taught as children significantly shapes our image of ourselves and other people, and “marks us for life” (p. ix). Guyver (2016) argues history curriculum can represent a nation as inclusive or exclusive, especially in relation to its neighbours. The perceived transnational power of history education is further demonstrated by the view that it offers a site for post-conflict reconciliation with nations coming together to co-construct textbooks for the purpose of peace building (Ihrig, Korostelina, & Lässig, 2013; Müller, 2011; Z. Wang, 2009; B. Yang, Pingel, Han, & Kondo, 2012).

However, some scholars question the overestimation of history’s power to transform behaviour (see Gilbert, 2011; Lévesque, 2005; Parkes, 2011; Wineburg, 2001). Others highlight that the moral dimensions of history education and the
relationship between history and citizenship are complex and challenging areas but present important issues for history educators to reflect upon themselves (R. Harris, 2017; A. Peterson, 2017). Indeed there is a knowledge gap concerning the relationship between history education and identity formation (R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014).

For these reasons researchers have been interested in examining whether students’ experiences of studying history actually have a substantive impact on their sense of identity, especially to the extent that politicians and other stakeholders believe. The limited research conducted in this space suggests that students’ beliefs about history are at odds with the views of politicians and policy-makers (Grever, Haydn, & Ribbens, 2008) and students generally do not feel personally connected to history curriculum (R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014). Moreover, the extent to which history education can impact upon social cohesion and social division cannot be comprehensively or empirically established (T. Taylor & Collins, 2012). Taylor and Collins (2012) stress that while further theorisation about historical consciousness and social identity is required, there is value in investigating the history education/politics nexus because political interference continues to arise as an issue. Harris and Reynolds (2014) also argue for the importance of better understanding how the needs of students might be met through the ways teachers interpret curriculum and select content. Although this thesis does not examine how students experience VCE History curriculum, it provides some data about VCE History teachers’ perceptions about the impact of curriculum on young people’s dispositions and the extent to which teachers’ decision-making takes into account the needs of students.

The above debates are instructive as they contribute to the theorisation of the purposes of history education and provide useful conceptualisations for evaluating history curriculum. As illustrated by some of the above examples, some stakeholders envisage history curricula as a mode to celebrate national mythology and imprint collective memory. This is considered history for the purpose of cultural transmission (Levstik, 1996). Similarly, it can be conceptualised as memory-history,
which in the past was transmitted via ‘memory fashioners’ – the church, the school, the local community and the state (Lévesque, 2008). The collective memory approach assumes a single preferred version of the past, which is taught for the purpose of “enhancing collective memory” (Seixas, 2000, p. 20). Lévesque (2008) argues that around the world, reactionary memory fashioners – those who Apple (2014) might see as part of the alliance of conservative modernisation – seek to restore established traditions and collective memory, as demonstrated by calls for nationalist history curricula, the promotion of patriotic days and the rehabilitation of nationalist heroes. An example of this in Australia is illustrated by recent calls for the national curriculum to better recognise Anzac Day (see Hurst, 2014), which marks the anniversary of Australian and New Zealand forces landing at Gallipoli at the start of World War I.

In contrast, history for the purpose of cultural transformation seeks to emancipate through the development of critical and historical thinking skills (Levstik, 1996). Its purpose is both cognitive and philosophical. This disciplinary approach aims to provide students with the tools to critically engage with and develop historical interpretations based on the concepts that characterise procedural and substantive knowledge of the discipline of history (Lévesque, 2008, 2016). The approach requires students to learn the disciplinary criteria for discerning a valid historical account (Seixas, 2000) and often incorporates a conceptualisation of historical thinking (Lévesque, 2016; Seixas & Morton, 2012; VanSledright, 2004, 2009; Whitehouse, 2015c; Wineburg, 2001, 2007). Although historical thinking can be defined in different ways, in relation to school history it has come to be characterised by the concepts that emerged from the work of the Historical Thinking Project led by Canadian history education scholar, Peter Seixas. This critical historical literacy model includes the concepts: historical significance; primary source evidence; continuity and change; cause and consequence; historical perspectives and ethical dimensions (Historical Thinking Project, 2017). Chapter 7 examines how this model has been adopted in the VCE.
The disciplinary approach is widely used in the development and articulation of teaching and learning practices, but this approach can be problematic (Counsell, 2011; Fordham, 2016). Disciplinary knowledge is socially constructed and, as such, it has been argued that students need to establish an understanding of the construction of the discipline over time and the social conditions in which it was produced (Fordham, 2016). Thus, some authors contend that a reflexive disciplinary approach should provide opportunity to engage with and critique the tools of historiography and emphasise that the transformative potential of a disciplinary approach cannot be fully realised without historiography (Catton, 2013; Fordham, 2016; Parkes, 2009, 2011; Parkes & Donnelly, 2014; Seixas, 2000). A postmodern approach takes this deconstructive work further by questioning the authority of historical methodology and the extent to which narrative can accurately provide an account of the past (Munslow, 2006). When applied to history education it encourages uncertainty about validity and narrativity; students recognise “how different groups organise the past into histories and how their rhetorical and narratological strategies serve present day purposes” (Seixas, 2000, pp. 20-21).

A key difference between the disciplinary and postmodern approaches is that the latter not only exposes students to the disciplinary tools of historiography, but also considers how “the tools of historiography are themselves historically contingent and positioned” (Seixas, 2000, p. 33). Seixas (2000) and Parkes (2014) acknowledge the philosophical challenges presented by taking a postmodern approach to history education, but both encourage history educators to critically reflect on how they epistemologically deal with conflicting versions of the past, and to critically reflect on the very tools and concepts they use in the classroom.

These three approaches ought not to be read as dichotomies or mutually exclusive. History teachers are likely to blur the boundaries of collective memory, disciplinary and postmodern approaches in their daily practice, or face certain constraints in seeking to challenge or conform to these models. Nonetheless they provide a framework for evaluating the approaches taken to history curriculum at different
points in time and theoretically inform my analysis of the approaches visible in the *VCE History Study Design*.

2.6 Inclusion and exclusion in history curriculum

History curriculum developers and teachers make decisions about which histories should be included or excluded in writing and enacting history curriculum. These decisions often revolve around historical significance: “In choosing what to teach and what to write about, teachers and researchers make distinctions between the historically significant and the historically trivial” (Seixas & Peck, 2004, p. 111). However, such distinctions are not straightforward. The previous section started to show that these choices are often shaped by the socio-cultural contexts in which they are made and are also influenced by dominant historiographical conventions and power relations. The complexities of culture, race, ideology and diversity are also influential and an important consideration for this study.

Ethnocentrism is a concept employed by researchers in this area. It is the belief that one’s own culture is superior to another group (R. H. Kim & Wing Sue, 2017). Ethnocentric history is premised on the belief in the superiority of one culture or nation over another (R. H. Kim & Wing Sue, 2017). It constructs national identity and ideas of togetherness and difference through master-narratives (Rüsen, 2004b); in this sense it is similar to the aforementioned imagined community (Anderson, 1983/2006). In education, ethnocentrism is said to be visible when “the curriculum, teaching methods, and educational strategies present the history and knowledge base of a nation from a monocultural Western European perspective that ignores the presence and/or contributions of other groups in society” (R. H. Kim & Wing Sue, 2017, para. 2). As Rüsen (2002, 2004b) points out though, a sense of self/sameness and other/otherness is expressed in societies all over the world. For example, Westerncentism and Sinocentrism might be considered forms of ethnocentrism. Rüsen (2002) suggests that Western historical thinking needs to grapple with criticisms that it represents cultural hegemony and find new ways of coming to terms with cultural difference.
These issues also intersect with postcolonial approaches to history and education. Broadly speaking, postcolonial theory is concerned with the impact of all aspects of the colonial process. It “makes visible the legacy of European colonialism” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 250) and considers the influence of the ‘master’ discourses of imperial Europe and North America (Ashcroft, Tiffin, & Griffiths, 2005). Much of the research in this area examines curriculum in relation to decolonised or indigenous societies (e.g. Coloma, 2009; Hickling-Hudson, Matthews, & Woods, 2004; Kanu, 2006), although a smaller segment considers the lasting impact of imperialism and colonialism on curriculum in former imperialising societies (Hickling-Hudson, 2010, p. 302; Lin, 2012; Willinsky, 1998, 1999). Willinsky (1998) contends, “we cannot readily sort through and discard the colonially tainted understandings we carry, without devoting attention to how our view of the world has been shaped by imperialism’s educational projects” (pp. 3-4).

Other authors have considered the legacies of colonialism on history curriculum more specifically (Guyver, 2016; Parkes, 2007, 2011), though none have looked at the extent to which imperialism and colonialism contribute to the construction of Asia in curriculum. In particular, Parkes’ (2006, 2007) work on NSW Australian History curriculum during the ‘history wars’ period provides critical insights for this thesis. He demonstrates how postcolonial perspectives offered essential stimuli to Australia’s history wars by challenging the dominant whitewashed mode of representation. Drawing on the postcolonial theory of Spivak and Ashcroft, Parkes (2007) demonstrates how curriculum might be read as a postcolonial text and shows how dominant discourses might be actively resisted through a critical pedagogy that focuses on historiography. By focussing attention on the representational practices of history and historiography, teachers could explore the contested and contingent nature of historical narratives (Parkes, 2007). The conceptualisation of “histories as representation and history as a representational practice” (Parkes, 2007, p. 397) is an idea furthered in this thesis in the neglected area of Asia-related history.
Another related theme in this literature deals with content diversity in history curriculum. Work has been undertaken in the UK largely in response to the debate that surrounded the development of a new national history curriculum in 2013-2014 (Bracey, Jackson, & Gove-Humphries, 2017; R. Harris, 2013; R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014; Hawkey, 2015; Osler, 2009). For example, Harris (2013) examines the tension between public discourse around diversity and history education discourse, and argues that in part, curriculum failed to address diversity due to a lack of clarity in the policy discourse and a clear sense of purpose for history education. Others contend that diversity has become a controversial aspect of British history curriculum because the purpose of history and relationship to national identity is contested, and because there is the danger of some content being seen as tokenistic (Bracey et al., 2017).

Work in this area also draws attention to potential challenges, constraints and benefits of including the histories of ethnic minority and community groups. For example, Hawkey’s (2015) research with students at multi-ethnic schools and mostly white schools in low socioeconomic areas in England considers curriculum diversity through a social justice lens. She recommends exercising caution about making assumptions about students, raises issues around a perceived whitewashing of negative elements in children’s personal histories and warns against tokenistic inclusion of personal history to the detriment of developing powerful disciplinary knowledge (Hawkey, 2015). Overall she argues that if social redistribution and recognition is a goal, a dynamic multi-perspective approach must include developing students’ understanding of history as a form of knowledge with underpinning concepts and processes (Hawkey, 2015).

These points are pertinent to inclusive history content in Australia. A recent study (M. Dixon et al., 2015) on the introduction of the Australian Curriculum: History in primary schools found that in some cases there was a significant disjuncture between the ‘local’ community history and the contemporary demographics of the students. For example, in a school with a large Asian and African heritage student community it was felt that local history did not connect with the experiences of the...
more recently arrived local community (M. Dixon et al., 2015, p. 65). This raises questions about the extent history curriculum caters to the needs and interests of an ever-diversifying student population. However, these studies also highlight that these are complex cultural issues that require sophisticated intercultural responses if tokenism is to be avoided. In addition to providing insight into current debate and research, these issues are also pertinent for thinking about the motivations and implications for the inclusion and/or exclusion of Asia-related history in VCE History curriculum.

A final theme that connects this thesis with other history curriculum research is that which specifically examines teachers’ engagement with and enactment of history curriculum. Husbands, Kitson and Pendry (2003) caution against focusing too narrowly on the role of politics and policy at the macro level at the expense of teachers’ curriculum thinking: “too often curriculum reform and research conceptualise teachers passively” (p. 6). Some researchers have tried to address this gap (Counsell, 2011; R. Harris & Burn, 2016; J. Smith, 2016). Harris and Burn’s (2016) survey study, for example, investigated teachers’ views on what substantive content should be taught in the history curriculum. They found teachers were clear on what they did not want in curriculum, but had less clarity about what they did want, some criticised over-prescription, while a smaller groups voiced concerns about a lack of history of ethnic minority groups and the histories of other countries and cultures (R. Harris & Burn, 2016). This thesis will provide contrasting data about VCE teachers’ content choices, and will build on this work by also considering the discursive and pragmatic influences on teachers’ curricular decision-making.

Two New Zealand studies (Fountain, 2012; Ormond, 2016) on senior history teachers’ curriculum decision-making contribute knowledge in this under-researched area. Ormond (2016) identifies three key challenges teachers face when presented with curriculum reform that offers them greater autonomy: selecting content that fits the external examination requirements; creating programs with breadth and depth; and selecting topics that maintain student engagement. Fountain (2012) highlights that mandated assessment has the most significant
impact on Year 12 History teachers’ practice. The data presented in this study of VCE History will be able to be contrasted with the changes experienced in New Zealand, especially regarding the impact of assessment and particularly in periods of significant curriculum reform.

2.7 The history curriculum research context in Australia

Australian national history has been a prominent focus for research in Australia (Ashton & Hamilton, 2010; Clark, 2004, 2006, 2010; Leadbetter, 2009; Parkes, 2006, 2007, 2011). In regards to state-based curriculum change, much of the research has been conducted in New South Wales (e.g. Carroll, 2006, 2007; Halse, 1997; Harris-Hart, 2002; Parkes, 2006, 2007; Parkes, 2011; Simpson & Halse, 2006), although Western Australia has also been the focus of some studies (Allen, 2004; Kuehnel, 2012a, 2012b; Vidovich & Allen, 2008). *Moments in Time: Investigating the Australian History Curriculum in Primary Classrooms* (M. Dixon et al., 2015) is a recent study that combines documentary research and case studies to examine ‘implementation’ in primary schools in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. There remains a gap in research on Victorian secondary curriculum, which this thesis strives to fill.

In relation to the Australian Curriculum much of the recent literature is interested in the national debate surrounding its development. Debates were initially concerned more so with questions of knowledge and purpose than ideology and content. As previously discussed, the Australian Curriculum includes three cross-curriculum priorities. The application of the priorities in History was criticised by some: "Every subject in the proposed national curriculum has to embrace Indigenous, environmental and Asian perspectives and aspects of the compulsory history curriculum read more like a cultural-left manifesto than a balanced and rational view of history as a discipline" (Donnelly, 2011b, para. 5). A further seven general capabilities were also introduced, namely literacy, numeracy, ICT, intercultural understanding, ethical understanding, personal and social capability and critical and creative thinking (ACARA, 2016b). Here, the intention is to equip young people to be ready to live and work in the twenty-first century (ACARA, 2016b). The challenge
presented by the *Australian Curriculum: History* is it that tries to straddle the traditional disciplinary approach and a futures approach that attends to procedural knowledge that policy-makers consider students will need for the future. Further, students are required to develop two strands of sometimes unrelated knowledges: the skills of the historian, plus generic capabilities requisite for living and working in the twenty-first century.

History education scholars have expressed a range of views on the national History curriculum, though in combination they tend to suggest that the identity of the new history curriculum is in disarray. Tambyah (2011) is critical of the traditional disciplinary approach of the *Australian Curriculum: History* because it is not suited to middle years learners and inhibits the possibilities of potentially richer and more engaging interdisciplinary and integrated approaches. Although Henderson (2012b) acknowledges these concerns, she suggests teachers move to a disciplinary approach and focus on historical thinking because it will allow students to develop the skills ‘to do’ history and ask meaningful questions. Seeking to move discussion of epistemic questions beyond an inward disciplinary perspective Gilbert (2011, 2013) argues history is facing an ‘identity crisis’ identifiable by a lack of consensus about the purpose of history and a framework for knowledge content, which causes problems concerning content selection. Melleuish (2010) suggests the *Australian Curriculum: History* is ‘a dog’s breakfast’ lacking coherence and consistency and contends the content could see students graduating high school with knowledge based on “a disconnected, even bizarre set of places and historical periods” (pp. 34-35).

There was also concern that teachers would find enacting the new curriculum difficult (Henderson, 2012a, 2012b) and would embrace it with varying degrees of enthusiasm and resistance (Kiem, 2013). Despite ACARA’s consultation with teacher discipline groups during the development of the Australian Curriculum, Ditchburn (2012) argues that a lack of direct involvement by educators resulted in the development of a market driven, one-size-fits-all curriculum because it emerged from the neoliberal agenda of federal policy, is overly prescriptive and diminishes teachers’ autonomy. Her critique of the *Australian Curriculum: History* describes it
as a *thin curriculum*, a product which is focused on *the what* – the endpoint, the prescribed skills and knowledge (Ditchburn, 2015). Skills and content are derived from a distant source, based on pragmatic or instrumental concerns rather than theories of curriculum, established values, or that which emerges from the pedagogical practice of teachers (Ditchburn, 2015). In contrast, she contends that a *thick curriculum* is richer and more pedagogically robust because it places *the how* rather than *the what* at the centre of curriculum and resists an over prescription of content, which is instead responsive to local contexts and communities (Ditchburn, 2015). While this conceptualisation offers an original and well-theorised framework for critiquing history curriculum, I propose that it might be better conceptualised as a spectrum rather than a binary denoted by pejorative or positive labels. It does, however, offer some relevant provocations.

The *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014) underscored the ongoing political contestation of history within the national curriculum and drew the attention of history education commentators. Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, launched the review in 2014 not long after the Coalition came to power and selected Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire to lead it (see Chapter 7). History generated much of the controversy and history education scholars examined the implications in a 2015 edition of *Curriculum Perspectives* (e.g. Henderson, 2015b; Parkes, 2015; Whitehouse, 2015a). These debates have shaped the contexts in which history curriculum has been developed at the national and state levels, and a more detailed analysis of their significance will be provided within the data analysis chapters.

Other comparative research considers the implications of the politicisation of national history curriculum in relation to classroom practice and points to some areas to which this thesis can attend. In an analysis of debates around national history curricula in Australia and England, Peterson (2016) points out that the debate around the ‘history wars’ and the teaching of national narratives “largely obfuscates essential tensions central to both history and history education, namely how the teaching of historiography and chronology is constructed” (p. 876). This points to the need to further examine issues of representation at the curricular
level beyond political discourse but also at the methodological level. Similarly, in their comparison of the national history curriculum of Australia and Lebanon, Maaddad and Rodwell (2016) note that the impact of the politicisation of history curricula have not been addressed at the school level: “only empirical research will show how this translates into classroom practice” (p. 93). This thesis expands on these studies by considering the positioning of historiography (see Chapter 7) and teachers’ curricular decision-making (see Chapter 6).

A recently published study comprehensively examines history in senior secondary schooling across various States and Territories. Conducted from 2011 to 2015, Knowledge at the crossroads? Physics and history in the changing world of schools and universities (Yates et al., 2017) includes the perspectives of senior history teachers from across Australia, although it does not look closely at the integration of the national curriculum with established state-based curriculum. The study approaches curriculum more broadly by asking “how should we think about knowledge today?” (Yates et al., 2017, p. 3). It does this by examining the changing nature of disciplines and knowledge, and the regulatory impact of policy across both school and university contexts. The researchers stress the increased politicisation of history and history curriculum as an enduring trend (Yates et al., 2017) – a consistent theme across the literature. The interviews revealed that within this context of amplified debate and national curriculum reform the teachers were above all, emphatic about the value of learning to do historical work: working with historical accounts and sources and developing reasoned and critically informed arguments (Yates et al., 2017). While they attached importance to the development of analytical skills and historical inquiry above content, many of the challenges identified by teachers actually concerned content: the overloaded and prescriptive nature of content in the Australian Curriculum; the lack of time to cover course content; student interest; and the mandating of content at the expense of local needs (Yates et al., 2017). Only Victorian teachers identified issues associated with examinations (Yates et al., 2017), which suggests that high-stakes testing is a particularly significant issue in Victoria. Some of these tensions are elaborated on in my research. An overall key concern raised by the study related to the centralisation of the development and management of template-driven curriculum frameworks.
Both studies interview VCE History teachers; however, my research is distinct because it has a specific focus on Asia-related history, it examines the teachers’ statements as constitutive of discourse and it considers the socio-political context of history curriculum content more so than knowledge.

2.8 Chapter summary

In summary, this thesis aims to contribute to three identified gaps in the literature. First, the problematic nature of Asia as a historical and geo-political construction and its positioning within the Australian imaginary warrants further investigation, especially as its prioritisation within education and curriculum policy is ongoing. Previous research indicates that despite concern over the Western-centric representation of Asia, Asia-related history – particularly in relation to senior VCE History curriculum – has been largely neglected in scholarly analyses. Second, the politicisation of curriculum policy in history education and Asia literacy research has been examined extensively, particularly in response to governmental interference and the development of national curricula. Lacking is research that offers a more intensive and multi-dimensional analysis of history curriculum that goes beyond the politics to consider the complexities of the stated curriculum, the policy context in which it is developed and the conditions and practices that shape its enactment in schools. Third, the VCE or Victorian secondary context has not been the subject of curriculum history or in-depth research, particularly in relation to the new Australian Curriculum: History and Senior Secondary History and its translation and implementation at the state level.
Chapter 3: Research methodology and design

3.1 Chapter overview

This is a qualitative study. Qualitative methods are particularly effective in the service of critical policy analysis because these methods focus on policy as a complex and contested process, open to critique (Gale, 2007; Lingard, 2009; Maguire & Ball, 1994; Ozga, 2000). This chapter outlines the methodology, design and methods of the study. The first half details how the study is philosophically aligned and introduces the key theoretical frameworks: *history of the present critical policy analysis* and *Asia as method*. The second part of the chapter details the methods of data collection and analysis.

3.2 Philosophical approach

Philosophically this study applies a critical paradigm. Critical research is “firmly grounded within an understanding of social structures (social inequalities), power relationships (power inequalities), and the agency of human beings” (Bhavnani, Chua, & Collins, 2014, p. 2). When a critical approach is applied to curriculum, it focuses questions and critique on the normative assumptions and ideological content of curriculum (Luke, 2013a).

A critical paradigm views reality and knowledge as a social construction and examines the ways in which our understanding of reality is influenced by power and ideology (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Discourse is central to the ontological and epistemological configuration of the critical paradigm taken up in this thesis. Discourse does not reflect reality, it constructs ‘reality’ by providing the system which structures our perceptions of reality (Mills, 2004b). More specifically discourse can be understood as “sets of values, practices and behaviours that institute particular realities, establish regimes of truth, and organise particular ways of thinking about the world that shape subjects and subjectivities” (Halse, Honey, & Boughtwood, 2007, p. 222). Foucault (1981) talks about discourse as practices we
impose upon ‘things’. In this study I am interested in examining what ‘things’ are made intelligible by the regularities we impose upon them through history curriculum and teaching. For example, I examine how certain things might be made to appear real by the way they are spoken about, written about, thought about and acted upon, whether this be through the practices or perceptions of teachers, or the statements that are made in curriculum policy. This extends to the way knowledge is conceptualised. As critical theory rejects Enlightenment and modernist notions of absolute truth and posits that all knowledge is constructed, knowledge cannot be assumed to be absolute, objective or generalisable; it is instead viewed as being produced through the expression of dominant ideologies which are maintained by socio-cultural and socio-historical constituted discourses of power (Crotty, 1998; Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Stinson & Bullock, 2015).

Conventionally the writing of history has sought to be impartial, objective and based on ‘facts’. However the deconstructive approach used in this thesis questions the metanarratives of modernity and claims to social truths (Heaphy, 2007). It defines history as representations of the narratives and stories told about the past (Munslow, 2006). Furthermore, if there is no discoverable reality or truth, the very nature of history and historical knowledge, especially the methods by which it is constructed, are open to contestation. Likewise history curriculum has its own tropes and reflects the values of the context in which it was produced. As such, applying this perspective to history curriculum prompts thinking about the overarching story or grand narrative told by the composite stories that are told and left untold by curriculum.

3.3 Representation and subjectivity formation

The ontological positioning of this thesis is also evident in the framing of the overarching research question with its focus on curriculum and representation. I take up a postmodern position that views knowledge, and dominant and alternative ways of ordering the world, as fallible and always open to critique (Scott, 2008). This inherent epistemic uncertainty is one of the reasons postmodernism has been criticised (Scott, 2008). In relation to curriculum, it is argued that a postmodern
approach enables us to view the curriculum processes as part of complex and open systems as opposed to closed systems (Doll, 1989), which challenges the modernist rationale that characterised curriculum development in the twentieth century.

Representational understandings of knowledge are based on the idea that schools transfer knowledge of the ‘real world’ or ‘outside world’ beyond the school through the curriculum and school policies and practices and that this knowledge is stable and transferred from teacher to student (Osberg & Biesta, 2008; Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008). However, this sort of knowledge is based on modernist and realist ideas of representation and a grand narrative that has been unsettled by poststructural and postmodernist thinking, resulting in the questioning of the dominant modes of thinking, representation and power relations (Da Silva, 1999; Green, 2010). Da Silva (1999) shows what this means in relation to curriculum:

In the conception of curriculum as representation, knowledge is not the transcription of ‘reality’: transcription is what is real…. The surface of representation that is the curriculum is a highly contested area. To represent means, ultimately, to define what counts as real, what counts as knowledge... We will be coming close to a concept of curriculum as representation, as a site – a contested site admittedly – of construction of objects of knowledge, if we began to see it, first as a text, as discourse, as sign, as a practice of signification. (pp. 27-28)

To deconstruct curriculum as representation is to expose its architecture, its codes and conventions, its rhetoric, meanings and politics (Da Silva, 1999). In the context of this study, the curricular representation of Asia presents itself as ‘authoritative’ yet offers a constructed, contestable view of the world.

Knowledge is of course central to any analysis of curriculum and its construction is shaped by ethics and history, social and political relations (Au, 2012; Pinar, 2012). As this thesis will explore, these relations are interlaced through debates about knowledge of Asia. Yates et al. (2017) demonstrate how the knowledge question that runs through global and national debates also permeates school history. They argue that an ongoing tension is evident between inward orientations to knowledge and purposes of schooling that are internal to the discipline, and outward orientations and purposes related to curriculum, examinations and employment,
acknowledging that the two are not always mutually exclusive (Yates et al., 2017). These outward purposes are indicative of the curricular shift from academic content knowledge to metacognitive skills, and towards the kind of person, or worker, a student will become (Yates, 2009; Yates & Collins, 2010). This can be thought about in terms of the capabilities that are endorsed by curriculum, such as intercultural understanding, but also in terms of framing subjectivities.

Curriculum plays an important role in subjectivity formation (Green, 2010). Osberg and Biesta (2008) expand:

In this way education purposely shapes the subjectivity of those being educated. It helps students to become responsible citizens, problem-solvers, people able to ‘think for themselves’, and so on. Thus one could say the function of education is to ‘produce’ certain kinds of subjectivities. This ‘shaping of subjectivity’ is generally understood to be achieved through the curriculum (and the pedagogy ‘supporting’ the curriculum). (p. 314)

Lin (2012) describes subjectivities alongside the notion of cultural imaginaries, which she explains as “one’s sense of self, self-understanding, ways of seeing self and others, worldviews” (p. 155). Subjectivities are not fixed, but curriculum is one of the many ways in which young people’s subjectivities are constrained or directed. More specifically, history curriculum can be understood as projecting particular worldviews or subjectivities via particular representational patterns and practices. The study is not concerned with examining how Asia-related curriculum shapes personal identities, rather, it questions the possible meanings of curriculum representations to investigate the sorts of ‘realities’ they represent and the way they frame subjectivities. For example, it will consider how Chen’s (2010) Asia as method seeks to dismantle imperial subjectivities (see below).

3.4 Researcher positioning

In recognising that reality and knowledge are social constructions, I acknowledge that I am not outside of discourse or the processes and practices of knowledge production (S. Hall, 2001/1997; McLeod & Thomson, 2009). My researcher positionality is also shaped by my location within certain geographical, socio-
historical, socio-cultural and socio-political contexts (Bhavnani et al., 2014; Lin, 2015), as the following examples illustrate.

I came to this research as a VCE History teacher. In this sense I have an insider’s perspective of some of the curriculum I am analysing and a first-hand awareness of the contemporary context in which teachers enact the *VCE History Study Design*. Having taught in both government and non-government schools gives me a sense of how socio-economic advantage impacts on teaching and learning in the later years. While undertaking this research I have presented to History teachers in different contexts and also worked with the HTAV to publish a student workbook on the Chinese Revolution. These experiences have influenced my views on history teaching in Victoria and provided additional insight into the role of various history education policy actors.

I acknowledge that as a white Australian of Anglo heritage, my own biases and educational experiences have been influenced by and embedded within the paradigm of Western historical thinking. As a VCE History teacher the curriculum and the English language resources available tended to reinforce the superiority of ‘Western’ perspectives and historians from the Anglophone world. This was brought into sharp relief when I spent some time pursuing my interests in modern Chinese history while living in China.

I am also a product of the Asia literacy policy that I now critique. In 2010, at the time that the Australian Curriculum’s Asia cross-curriculum priority was being introduced, I was provided with a scholarship by the then Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to undertake a Master of Education: Studies of Asia. I then spent a year living in China in 2013, having received a Hamer Scholarship from the Victorian Government that provided funding to study at a university in Victoria’s sister province, Jiangsu. The Hamer Scholarship is described as a “language and cultural immersion program designed to build the Asia-engagement capabilities of Victorians and to help strengthen cultural awareness and partnerships between Victoria and Asia” (Business Victoria, 2017).
Following this I led study tours for Australian teachers and principals to China and Malaysia on behalf of the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and was invited to publish a piece on ‘my Asia literacy journey’ for their website.

These were all wonderful experiences. Nevertheless I became increasingly sceptical of my role as an Asia literacy advocate/ambassador. Even though I was engaging in these exchanges for cultural and educational purposes, at times I felt that the strategic and economic interests driving the development of bilateral relations clouded the intended intercultural aims. Also, while living in Nanjing and Beijing and travelling around China I encountered a huge diversity of historical perspectives and expressions of historical memory – from deeply felt firsthand accounts to the official narratives of the Chinese Communist Party. These experiences led me to question the extent to which historical understanding can and does facilitate intercultural understanding and the limited sorts of historical representations and historiographical positions to which VCE History teachers and students are exposed.

To some extent my personal history conveys the context that generated my research and shapes my positionality. Martin et al. (2015) point out that Asia literacy policy implicitly privileges non-Asian Australians and as a white, middle class Australian I have indeed enjoyed many benefits of Asia literacy policy and been complicit in the power/knowledge dynamic that characterises Australia-Asia relations. In Southern Theory, Connell (2009b) challenges researchers to confront “the hegemony of metropolitan knowledge” and consider “alternative ways of thinking about the world” (p. xi). Utilising Chen’s Asia as method approach challenges me to examine my own subjectivity and position within the structures of knowledge production. Bearing in mind these experiences and the philosophical approach outlined above, my methodology seeks to address issues of power, race and representation.
Conceptual framework of the thesis

3.5 History of the present

*History of the present* offers a mode of critical historical inquiry based on the work of Foucault. The idea is briefly alluded to in *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1972), and developed in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977). In essence it is about considering the continuities and interruptions of the past that are at stake in relation to the present (Fuggle, Lanci, & Tazzioloi, 2015). While it provides a way of writing about the past by using issues and frameworks from the present (Garland, 2014), it is not a form of presentism or an anachronistic form of reading history backwards. As Foucault explained in an interview: “I set out from a problem expressed in the terms current today and I try to work out its genealogy. Genealogy means that I begin my analysis from a question posed in the present” (as cited by Kritzman, 1988, p. 262). Using Foucault’s (1977) logic, I am writing about the history of history curriculum because I am concerned about curriculum in the present, not simply because I am interested in curriculum in the past.

History of the present is an engagement that “undertakes to suspend history itself by making visible the conditions that make possible the thoughts and actions of the present” (Popkewitz, 2011, p. 2). Importantly it is an approach to curriculum history that avoids teleology: “The historical trajectories of today are not the sum of the parts, formed through a singular origin, or emerging from an evolutionary progression” (Popkewitz, 2011, p. 18). In this study I ask what has made the current construal of Asia literacy possible? What has made possible the approach taken in the current *VCE History Study Design*? What continuities and discontinuities have shaped the conditions of possibility for Asia-related history and representations of Asia in the curriculum? Applied to curriculum history this approach unsettles or uproots what appears to be commonplace and natural; it challenges the apparent causality of the history of schooling and curriculum (Popkewitz, 2011, 2013).

Thus the overarching structure of the thesis is framed as a history of the curricular present. First, it begins by taking the representation of Asia in history curriculum in the present as problematic, as detailed in the previous chapter. Second, it
investigates how discourses and practices shape curriculum over time. Third, it considers the continuities and discontinuities of the past so as to denaturalise what might be taken for granted in the present. Lastly, it reveals the implicit power/knowledge relations in order to elucidate how they might be disrupted for transformative purposes, thereby returning to the original problematisation with new insights. Vitally, history of the present complements other elements of my methodological approach including critical policy analysis and discourse analysis.

3.6 Critical policy analysis

Curriculum policy has not been conventionally analysed through the lens of critical policy analysis. As a framework critical policy analysis tends to deal with policy texts other than curricula policy texts, which Lingard and Ozga (2007) describe as a different intellectual field of study. For this reason, relatively little curriculum research has examined curriculum reform from a policy studies perspective. There are exceptions including its application to Physical Education curriculum policy enactment in Scotland (MacLean, Mulholland, Gray, & Horrell, 2015; Simmons & MacLean, 2016); history curriculum change in New Zealand (Rata, 2014); and primary school teachers’ enactment of the Australian Curriculum: English (Albright, Knezevic, & Farrell, 2013). These studies all investigate curriculum policy at critical moments of transformation, indicating critical policy analysis is a particularly efficacious approach for the examination of the complexities of curriculum reform and the effects of curriculum policy.

However, this thesis expands the boundaries of critical policy analysis to include curricular texts and practices to provide both a method for conceptualising and analysing curriculum. First, it enables the development of a multidimensional understanding of curriculum policy processes by providing a theoretical and analytical point of entry from which to problematise policy across multiple levels and moments of activity and effect, connecting the local and the global (Rata, 2014; M. Young, D & Diem, 2017). Second, it provides a policy bricolage, which allows curriculum, other policies and policy contexts to be analysed side by side in the
same framework, thereby providing scope for richer analysis and recognising that curriculum operates within a policy ensemble (Gerrard & Farrell, 2012). Third, it enables critical examination of the complexities of curriculum within material, historical and discursive contexts so that curriculum practices are “seen as both arising out of a set of historical circumstances and as being a reflection of a particular social milieu” (Grundy, 1989, p. 6). Lastly, critical policy analysis takes seriously the complex roles of policy actors and the school contexts in which they enact curriculum (Ball et al., 2012). This section expands on this argument and outlines how critical policy analysis is understood and applied in the thesis.

Critical policy analysis conceptualises policy as ‘the authoritative allocation of values’ and interrogates whose values count in establishing what knowledge and values are important (Ball, 1990; Blackmore & Lauder, 2011; Gale, 2003; Lingard, 2009; Lingard & Ozga, 2007; S. Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). As Prunty (1985) argues:

To ask what counts as knowledge and culture in schools is also to ask, ‘whose values have been validated?’ The authoritative allocation of values draws our attention to the centrality of power and control in the concept of policy, and requires us to consider not only whose values are represented in policy, but also how these values have become institutionalised. (p. 136)

Traditionally education policy has been analysed through rational models, which simplified policy into distinct and linear phases that could be ‘objectively’ analysed and generalised through quantitative research (Blackmore & Lauder, 2011; S. Taylor et al., 1997). However, new policy sociology theory has been shaped by feminism, postcolonialism, postmodernism and globalisation to look beyond the production, reception and effects of policy (Blackmore & Lauder, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and aims to challenge the assumptions that tend to frame policies (S. Taylor et al., 1997).

Conceptualising policy as a process that is contested and political in nature involves challenging the benign definition of a public policy as a government program or course of action, through which a ‘problem’ is ‘fixed’ (Bacchi, 2000, 2009; Blackmore & Lauder, 2011; Ozga, 2000; S. Taylor et al., 1997). Thus critical policy
analysis involves *rereading* and *unmasking* the assumptions of educational policy so to examine how policy problems get defined and positioned in the government agenda (Blackmore & Lauder, 2011; Simons, Olssen, & Peters, 2009). This study will therefore consider how Asia literacy policy has been positioned on the federal government’s agenda according to this problem/solution configuration, and the implications for history curriculum, i.e. as a ‘solution’ to the ‘problems’ of nationalism, national identity and social cohesion.

Conceptualising policy as *discourse* is also central to critical policy analysis (e.g. Allan, 2008; Arnott & Ozga, 2010; Ball et al., 2012; Grimaldi, 2012; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; S. Taylor et al., 1997) and this thesis. Ball’s (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994, 2006, 2015; Ball et al., 2012) work has been a steady influence on critical policy analysis and will be drawn upon throughout this study. Like others, Ball has been influenced by the discourse theory of Michel Foucault and this study also applies a Foucauldian conceptualisation of discourse. This approach differs from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on critically analysing discourses within policy texts on a linguistic level (e.g. Fairclough, 2003; Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2014; S. Taylor, 2004). Gee (2005) highlights the differences between the two approaches to discourse by describing the historical approach of ‘big D Discourse’, and the latter with its focus on language in action as ‘small d discourse’.

Foucault (1972) invites us not to treat “discourses as a group of signs.... but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (p. 49). In other words discourses are the unwritten rules, structures or sets of values and behaviours that shape particular ways of thinking and speaking about things, thereby giving these things or objects form and meaning (Halse et al., 2007; Mills, 2004b). By conceptualising education policy as discourse “we examine how it was possible to think and speak about education and what kinds of practices were involved in the constitution of education as a process of teaching and learning” (Ball, 2015, p. 307). Discourses make certain phenomena visible by categorising they way they are spoken about, and thus things or types people are made the objects of discourse (Parker, 1992). As Ball et al. (2012) explain: “We explore policies as discursive strategies; for example sets of texts, events, artefacts and
practices that speak to wider social processes of schooling such as the production of ‘the student’, the ‘purpose of schooling and ‘the teacher”’ (p. 16).

In this study, curriculum policy is conceptualised as policy as text and discourse. Ball (2015) describes policy as text as “the processes of interpretation and translation of policy through which school actors enact policy” (p. 307) and policy as discourse as “the ways in which teacher subjects and subject positions are formed and re-formed by policy” (p. 307) – these are the taken-for-granted knowledges and assumptions that invoke teacher subjects to think, act, behave and value in certain ways. Notwithstanding, these distinctions are often blurred. Therefore it is helpful to refer to discursive practices to highlight that discourses are sets of practices of knowledge formation that describe what is said and the rules that govern or explain what is possible to say (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014).

Foucault was particularly interested in the rules and structures of discourse and the historical and social context of text or groupings of statements produced within power/knowledge relations (Graham, 2011; Mills, 2004b; S. Taylor, 1997). Power relations are therefore an essential element to understanding policy as discourse. Examining the cultural and political contexts that give form to policy discourses reveals the ways in which policy exercises power through the production of ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ (Ball, 1993; Grimaldi, 2012; Seddon, 2009). Thus, this study proposes to examine the power dynamics of the Australia-Asia relationship and consider how they shape what it means to ‘know Asia’ from an Australian policy perspective. Preferred policy discourses that privilege particular meanings can also become dominant discourses. While these dominant discourses may contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic power inequities, discourse analysis enables the recognition of agency and counter discourses that open up spaces for agency and resistance to dominant ways of thinking, doing and being. Discourses are dynamic; they can be actively reinforced and resisted (Allan, 2008). Consequently, policy discourses transform over time. For example, I will explore this tension in relation to the counter discourses that challenge the dominant discourses that maintain certain metanarratives in history curriculum.
There are criticisms and limitations of policy as discourse. Bacchi argues, “policy analysts who describe policy-as-discourse have at some level an agenda for change” and they “develop an understanding of discourse which suits their political purpose” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 46). Philosophically, this is not necessarily problematic from a critical perspective because curriculum is viewed as an inherently political to begin with and its aim is to be transformative. Another criticism is that those in power are seen to make discourse and those who are lacking in power are constituted by it; hence the subjects of discourse are usually disempowered because the constraints imposed by discourse are overemphasised while the possibilities for agency are under recognised (Bacchi, 2000; Seddon, 2009). However, by their very nature hegemonic discourses can limit the possibility for agency and understanding these constraints is key to understanding how people may be liberated from them. Discourse is therefore a means of oppression and resistance (May, 2014). Foucault (1978/1998) says:

> We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance, a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (p. 100)

Thus discourse is not simply limited to a dominant/dominated configuration (Allan, 2008). Policy as discourse recognises that ideas of agency, resistance and freedom, and the relationship between subject and actor are ongoing tensions (Ball, 2015). This is one of the reasons that the notion of enactment is central to my approach to critical policy analysis.

The critical policy analysis framework employed here also draws on Ball, Braun and Maquire’s (2012) enacting research. The notion of the stated/intended and enacted/implemented curriculum is not new to the field of curriculum studies (see Print, 1993; T. Taylor, 2001). However, How Schools Do Policy: Policy Enactments in Secondary Schools (Ball et al., 2012) offers a fresh model for investigating the nature of curriculum policy enactment. Rather than employ their entire model and methodology, this study borrows key concepts related to enactment as a mode of
critical policy analysis. Ball et al. (2012) contend “policy is done by and done to teachers; they are actors and subjects, subjects to and objects of policy” (p. 3). Research on teachers’ enactment of official curriculum is wanting and without it curricular responses may be based on empirically undemonstrated problems in teaching and learning (Luke, 2010). An exploration of enactment is an exploration of the “diverse and complex ways in which sets of education polices are ‘made sense of’, mediated and struggled over and sometimes ignored” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). Other recent Australian studies have demonstrated that this enactments model can be applied to a range of policy areas (e.g. Hardy, 2014; Salter, 2014a; P. Singh, Thomas, & Harris, 2013). Chapters 6 and 7 examine how teachers and other policy actors make sense of the VCE History Study Design specifically and Asia literacy policy more broadly.

This model also takes context seriously with its examination of “the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). Context is fundamental to any study of curriculum (Kennedy, 2005; Luke, 2008, 2013b) because a complex rendering of curriculum seeks to understand how curriculum works differently across multiple levels or contexts – local, national and global; across cultures, across geography and demography; and across historical timeframes. Context is central to the task of coming to grips with the new eduscapes, not just in the political, ideological and policy realms but in the social contexts of teachers’ daily work and lives (Luke, 2008). An enactments approach enables analysis of macro and quotidian contexts.

Furthermore, the concept of enactment addresses some of the tensions outlined above concerning subjects and agency. Ball (2015) suggests that the text/discourse conceptualisation of policy recognises an ‘ontological duality’; it allows some movement between “the creative agency of teachers, a necessary basis for enactment, and the ways in which policy discourses and technologies mobilise truth claims and constitute rather than reflect social reality” (p. 307). Enactment research recognises that teachers can be independent and innovative policy actors, yet this agency is susceptible to being curtailed when they are tired and overworked (Ball et al., 2012). Grappling with this issue of subjectivity and discourse, Ball (2015)
acknowledges the paradox reinforced by current global frameworks of education reform: “the contemporary educational subject, from pre-school to higher education, is then governed by others and at the same time is governor of him/herself” (p. 310). This struggle requires unsettling what we think but also how we think (Ball, 2015). These theoretical complications are challenging for the novice researcher, but the work of Ball et al. (2012) offers a framework for curriculum policy research that seeks to acknowledge the “jumbled, messy, contested, creative, and mundane social interactions” that “link texts to practice” (p. 2). Such an approach is particularly complementary to discourse analysis of teacher interview data, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 5.

3.7 Asia as method

The literature acknowledges that the idea of Asia has been imagined by the West (M. Kim & Hodges, 2010; H. Wang, 2011; Yew, 2011). This creates a paradox: “Every time we label something ‘Asian’ we are inexorably, though reluctantly, complicit in the reproduction of its existence as a distinct reality and identity [regardless of the provisos and conditions on the use of the term]” (Ang, 2014, pp. 132-133). Yew suggests that different ways of knowing Asia require “alternative axes” (2011, p. 10). Chen’s (2010) Asia as method endeavours to do this. Chen Kuan-Hsing is an Asian Cultural Studies scholar based in Taiwan, whose work draws on critical cultural studies, postcolonial studies, globalisation studies and Inter-Asia Studies.

According to Chen (2010) Asia is the mediating site of the entangled problematic of nationalism, colonialism, cold war structures and the imperialist imaginary. These cultural, political and historical forces entwine with global capitalism, resulting in new economic, historical and cultural meanings of Asia that are fluctuating and contradictory (Chen, 2010). Chen (2010) argues that these entangled forces have shaped how Asia is imagined from within and outside of Asia and explains how Asia has been positioned:

The anxiety over representation is also evident when Asia is seen as primarily a colonial imagination. If Asia is to have analytical value, it does
indeed have to be placed within the frame of world history, but if world history is understood as Euro-American imperialism and capitalist expansion, the agency and subjectivity of Asia are stripped away.... If the legitimacy of the discourse on Asia is discounted, we are left with the old binary opposition between the East and the West, which erases Asia’s rich multiplicity and heterogeneity. Asia as method recognises the need to keep a critical distance from uninterrogated notions of Asia... It sees Asia as a product of history, and realises that Asia has been an active participant in historical processes. (pp. 214-215)

Here Chen acknowledges that the idea of Asia has to a large extent been historically constituted through imperialism, colonialism and other Western-centric discursive practices, but to continue to view it fundamentally as a passive actor would be to deligitimise the very idea, or existence and reality of Asia. Instead, the idea of Asia must be reinterrogated and reimagined as a more complex and sophisticated signifier. Chen invites us to see Asia as not only acted upon by the West, but as an agent in world history. This requires critically re-examining how Asia is positioned in world history.

Chen offers Asia as method as a move towards restoring the agency of Asia and reappraising hegemonic modes of knowledge production. He defines Asia as method as:

The potential of Asia as method is this: using the idea of Asia as an imaginary anchoring point, societies in Asia can become each other’s points of reference, so that the understanding of the self may be transformed, and subjectivity rebuilt. On this basis the diverse historical experiences and rich social practices of Asia may be mobilised to provide alternative horizons and perspectives. This method of engagement, I believe, has the potential to advance a different understanding of world history (p. 212).

For societies within Asia this means shifting their points of reference from the West to other societies within Asia and within the developing world in order to transform existing structures of power and knowledge production (Chen, 2010). By reorienting intellectual points of reference within Asia, he suggests Asian thinkers can examine common issues and problems through localised dialogue and recognise the challenges and difficulties presented by the imbalance between large and small nations, the diversity of the region and diversity of historical experience (Chen,
However, this definition of Asia as method does not make its relevance to this study immediately clear. The potential of this approach for this thesis lies in Chen’s challenge to those situated outside of colonised nations, or outside of Asia, that he argues have a role in mobilising Asia as method through *deimperialisation*. “To peel back the layers of history and expose the imperial desire” says Chen (2010), “is a pre-condition for moving toward regional reconciliation, integration and independence” (p. 198). To achieve this goal, Chen (2010) posits, “the task is for the colonising or imperialising population to examine the conduct, motives, desires and consequences of the imperialist history that has formed its own subjectivity” (p. 4).

To take up Chen’s invitation means acknowledging that Australian subjectivity is indeed shaped by an imperialist history, the effects of which require dismantling. Certainly Australia has developed a more complex response to Asia in recent times, albeit one still rooted in binarism and Orientalism (Rizvi, 2012; Walker, 2010). Notwithstanding, when we examine mainstream Australian worldviews and official policy perspectives towards Asia, the lingering legacies of imperialism and colonialism are perceptible. Through colonisation, the First Australians were dispossessed of their lands and waters and as a British colony Australia inherited and continued to perpetuate an imperialistically slanted and culturally Anglo view of the world and the region. In this sense it saw itself as “a phalanx of Europe and a carrier of the Enlightenment vision”(Nandy, 2008, p. xiii). Yet white Australia has also feared invasion from the ‘yellow peril’ of the north; in effect it has positioned Asia as fearsome and inferior (Nandy, 2003). Since the nineteenth century, this invasion narrative has driven the impetus to know Asia, to know the enemy in order to better protect Australia (Walker, 2010). For much of the twentieth century the policies of White Australia were a clear demonstration of an imperious attitude towards Asia, although as Rizvi (2012) reminds us, were not supported by all. D’Cruz and Steele (2003) suggest that Australia continues to be viewed as a member of a Western alliance of former colonial powers and as such these asymmetrical power relations continue to be felt in the region.

*Deimperialisation* provides a conceptual tool to bridge past and present by
addressing the long-term impact of imperialism. By questioning the effects of an imperial subjectivity and the framing of world history it offers a necessary provocation for history curriculum inquiry. Willinsky (1998) argues that countries such as Australia and Canada have been bequeathed the educational liabilities of empire – “imperialism afforded lessons in how to divide the world” (p. 13). A compelling case for applying Asia as method to curriculum analysis can be made: “Recognising that curriculum is often the site of production and reproduction (but also possible transformation) of imperialist, colonial, and cold war subjectivities, we can propose a tentative research agenda for critical curriculum inquiry” (Lin, 2012, p. 170). The thesis therefore engages with the question: “How do these subject curricula provide the opportunity for critical reflection on imperialism, binarism, colonialism, and their effects on one’s worldviews, cultural imaginaries, and most importantly, structures of desire and sentiment?” (Lin, 2012, p. 170).

This thesis proposes that these arguments are especially pertinent issues for history curriculum in Australia, and are particularly relevant at a time when engagement with Asia is espoused by national history curriculum. The potential of deimperialisation is multi-faceted (Chen, 2010; Lin, 2012). In addition to recognising the long-term impact of imperialism and colonialism, there is scope for greater reflexivity and critique of the cultural imaginary, so that a new national subjectivity can be constituted. Rizvi (2013, 2015, 2017) points to the relevance of Chen’s work in relation to the problematics of Asia literacy: “If Australia is to become part of Asia then it must begin to identify with the region’s projects of decolonisation and deimperialisation” (2013, p. 82).

However, not all of Chen’s (2010) conceptual tools are relevant to this study. In Asia as Method in Education, Zhang et al. (Zhang, Chan, & Kenway, 2015) advise a “‘toolkit’ approach with regard to Chen’s conceptual resources” (p. 172). Chen (2010) speaks of Asia as method as a response to “the tripartite problematic of decolonisation, deimperialisation and decold war” (p. 112). For the purpose of this study the concept of deimperialisation and use of Asia as method for interrogating the framing of Asia in world history are most germane for grappling with the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum. This is different to the way it has
been utilised mostly as a tool for Asian heritage education researchers to inter-reference Asian approaches (see Rhee, 2013; Zhang et al., 2015). Chen’s (2010) Asia as method offers a valuable analytical tool for rethinking the parochialism of Western historical thinking. Importantly, it offers critical theoretical tools and concepts for critical curriculum research such as this (Lin, 2012).

The notions of *interjection* and *interpolation* are central in articulating the role Asia as a method plays as an analytical tool within the thesis. Ashcroft (Ashcroft, 2001b; Parkes, 2007) identifies four reactions to imperial discourse: i) acceptance of the dominant discourse; ii) *rejection* of the dominant discourse; iii) *interjection* through the resistance to the dominant discourse; and iv) *interpolation* or the interruption of the dominant discourse through the destabilisation of the very forms in which it is produced, such as historical representation and historiography. Interpolation offers to challenge the processes of representation and history by disrupting the linear and teleological movement of imperial history (Ashcroft, 2001b). In his postcolonial analysis of NSW history curriculum, Parkes (2007) demonstrates the power of interpolation for thinking about how historical and imperial discourses within history curriculum might be interrupted. Similarly, Asia as method offers an alternative way to “re-vision” (Ashcroft, 2001b, p. 98) the representation of Asia in VCE curriculum policy.

In this thesis I use Chen’s conceptualisation of Asia as method and deimperialisation to frame analysis of representations of Asia. They prompt questions about the extent to which curricular representations of Asia enable the following:

- recognise Asia as an active agent of world history;
- view Asia as heterogeneous, relational and dynamic;
- include points of reference that break away from the East/West binary;
- view history from a range of subject positions; and
- consider decolonisation and deimperialisation as ongoing concerns for both former colonised societies and former colonising societies (Chen, 2010).

This approach looks for moments of interjection or disruption of the dominant discourses of Asia. As Chen (2010) highlights and as this thesis explores, the
historical, economic and cultural meanings of Asia are fluctuating and contradictory. Asia as method reminds us to examine these changes and to think outside of the apparent stability of established binaries and discourses.

At the risk of reifying Chen’s (2010) criticism of postcolonial studies and its “obsessive critique of the West” (p. 2), it is impossible to avoid the West as method as a fundamental framework for knowledge production about Asia in relation to history curriculum. Chen (2010) says Western-centrism is “a structure that is indeed difficult to shake loose” (p. 224). The West as method concept proposed here is akin to Hall’s (1992) The West and the Rest: a framework that categorises societies and reinforces a structure of knowledge that forms a system of representation based on binaries such as West/non-West, developed/underdeveloped, progressive/backward (Chen, 2010). This thesis considers the extent to which the concept of West as method is deployed as a framework, reproduced and resisted in history curriculum and the sorts of discourses through which it is constituted. When Asia as method is activated as well as or instead of West as method, it opens up the possibility for multiplying frames of reference within history curriculum and our subjectivity. In this sense, I propose, these are not binary approaches but co-existing analytical frameworks.

Asia as method also has its limitations. Kim (2012) is not convinced Chen’s “Asia-based paradigm” (p. 353) can truly transcend the West as method paradigm. She suggests that by replacing the nation-state boundaries with regional ones Chen embodies some of the assumptions he seeks to disrupt (S. Kim, 2012). Singh (2015) is critical of Asia as method’s “Asia-centric” approach to education research as opposed to more “worldly” approaches that draw on transcultural knowledge co-production and work to internationalise education research. His argument is supported with an example of an Australia-China co-produced language curriculum project. Ng’s (2013) critique identifies another deficiency in Chen’s book – it assumes the definition and problematisation of the term Asia. These criticisms point to a contradiction inherent in transnational work like Chen’s – attempts made to redefine boundaries or structures often reinscribe new boundaries or structures. Asia as method encourages alternative modes of knowledge production and
perspectives within Asia, but does not, or cannot, dismantle entrenched systems of power and knowledge production on a global scale. These tensions underscore much larger epistemological issues that cannot be unravelled here. However, they do point to the value of seeking to make sense of these relations, structures and objects of analysis through discourse.

3.8 Bringing the frameworks together

These three theoretical frameworks – history of the present, critical policy analysis, and Asia as method – come together to provide the conceptual and analytical framework for the study. Their methodological complementarity is evident in the way they philosophically correspond with the overarching critical paradigm. In addition to theoretically aligning with each other, these frameworks provide theoretical perspectives and concepts that are unique to each and can be applied in different ways and at particular moments in the thesis. This study addresses complex educational and socio-historical issues and therefore requires a complex conceptual framework that provides a range of lenses through which these issues can be interrogated. Ball (1993) argues, “in the analysis of complex social issues — like policy — two theories are probably better than one... What we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories” (p. 10). The idea of a theoretical toolbox stems from Foucault (1975), who invites us to use his theories as tools rather than unified theoretical frameworks: “All my books ... are little tool boxes ... if people want to open them, to use this sentence or that idea as a screwdriver or spanner” (as cited in Morris & Patton, 1979, p. 115). The various concepts of each framework provide tools to investigate different elements in the study, as outlined above, but are also interconnected across the chapters through the common thread of discourse. Moreover, there is consonance between them in the problematisation work they facilitate.

This eclectic approach is advantageous because it allows for a range of theoretical perspectives to be applied and enables a multidimensional examination of curricular change that suits this curricular context at this time. Therefore this thesis is not simply a standalone curriculum history, policy analysis, discourse analysis,
curriculum content analysis, or postcolonial analysis. A more dynamic approach provides a range of tools to investigate the intersection of the fields of history education, education policy, curriculum inquiry and studies of Asia. The sorts of questions raised by the theorists in these areas prompt new ways of thinking about the research problem and generate questions to guide critical analysis.

Methods of data collection

3.9 Documentary research

Documentary research provides a significant proportion of the study’s qualitative data and will be used primarily to address the sub-questions: *What Asia-related history is available in key VCE History Study Designs from 1991 to 2015 and how does this relate to the policy contexts in which they were they developed? How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are their implications?* Documentary sources provide essential data for both the historical and contemporary components of this study. Analysed as texts that purport to depict ‘reality’ (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) documents provide valuable data for historical and genealogical research and for tracing discourses in history curriculum policy.

Four types of documentary sources were used. The first type is composed of VCE Study History Designs. Four key VCE Study History Designs (VBOS, 1994; VCAA, 2004, 2015a; VCAB, 1991) were selected because each is representative of a critical curriculum moment, the significance of which is outlined as they are analysed. The second group is composed of Asia literacy and curriculum policy documents, which include government reports; planning documents and official curriculum documents published by curriculum authorities; and publications/reports from education departments and education organisations. Most of these documents date back to the early 1970s although some earlier sources are also drawn upon. The third group is five decades of journal articles from *Agora*, the journal published by the History Teacher’s Association of Victoria (HTAV) and includes literature and commentary concerning developments in history education and Asia literacy from
across the decades.

*Agora* provides a valuable source for tracking the history education *zeitgeist* at a discursive level. First published in 1967, the HTAV (2017) notes on its website: “from the first issue Agora has remained a cornerstone of the service the Association provides its members, and it now features a peer-reviewed section” (para. 4). While subject associations provide an important source of evidence for historical research in education (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000), *Agora* does not represent a comprehensive archive for history education in Victoria, nor can it claim to be representative of all history teachers. The authors/teachers are more likely to represent those who were/are highly engaged and experienced. Thus it provides a snapshot of what is purportedly happening in some history classrooms. Since the early days, historians and history education academics have also consistently contributed, which means articles also reflect wider developments in history education research. Bearing these strengths and limitations in mind, *Agora* is fruitful for the purpose of critical policy analysis and discourse analysis. It represents a significant object through which history in Victoria and particularly ‘good history teaching’ is formed. Curricular texts, such as textbooks, however, are not considered. Despite offering a rich source of data, their *direct* target audience is students. In contrast, the *direct* target audience of Study Designs, policy documents and *Agora* are teachers who *enact* history curriculum.

3.10 Interviews

Interviews with teachers and curriculum policy actors were used because they are a highly effective method for engaging people in the sharing of their perspectives (Mertens, 2010; Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). This method allowed me to directly tap into the language, practices and values that constitute the discourses engaged by teachers and policy actors. Importantly, it allowed me to gain insight into curriculum enactment by examining the discourses that shape teachers’ curricular decision-making through analysis of the discourses they engaged in the interviews. Benefits of the semi-structured interview include a flexible and fluid structure that allowed
for some questions to be outlined in the interview guide, but also allowed for additional topics to emerge interactively as the dynamics of a conversation were developed (Brenner, 2006; Mason, 2004).

3.11 Interviews with teachers

VCE History teachers were interviewed to collect qualitative data to address the following research questions: What are teachers’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum? What influences their decision-making about the VCE History courses they teach? Engaging teachers in enactments research ensures that they are not “written out of the policy process or rendered simply ciphers who ‘implement’” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2).

The sampling frame comprised of Victorian metropolitan secondary schools, which were selected using maximum variation sampling to ensure a range of teacher voices was included from diverse school settings and contexts. Schools were stratified according to government, independent and Catholic sectors and the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage value (ICSEA value). ICSEA is a scale used to compare schools by establishing the level of the school’s educational advantage. The average is set at 1000, so a score close to 800 indicates a very low level of educational advantage for students at the school and a score close to 1200 indicates a very high level of advantage (ACARA, 2014a). Schools with low and very high ICSEA values were included in the study, although most were around the average range (see Table 1). Statistics from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2014) were used to calculate the proportional selection of schools according to school type/system. Based on a sample of 15 schools, this equates to 8 government schools, 4 independent schools and 3 Catholic schools.

Recruitment methods followed Human Research Ethics Guidelines (Deakin, 2010) requiring self-identification of participation in response to a flyer. Based on the stratified sample, 40 schools and their principals were sent the flyers (see Appendix C) and asked to distribute these to VCE History teachers for their consideration. As a
result of this process, the final sample of 15 teachers from 11 schools is introduced in Table 1. Teachers and schools have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

**Table 1: Teacher Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>ICSEA Value 2015</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Units Currently teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Lilly Pilly Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>&gt; 30</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Lilly Pilly Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>5 - 10</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Yellow Gum Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1138</td>
<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>Banksia Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>10 – 15</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamish</td>
<td>Banksia Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>10 – 15</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Hakea Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Hakea Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Blackwood Secondary College (government)</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
<td>Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>Acacia Catholic College</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>5 – 10</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janette</td>
<td>Acacia Catholic College</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>20 – 25</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Australian History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalia</td>
<td>Grevillea Catholic College</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>10 - 15</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Red Gum College (independent)</td>
<td>1024</td>
<td>10 – 15</td>
<td>Twentieth Century History; Revolutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview questions were open-ended to encourage participants to talk expansively about their perspectives and experiences (Brenner, 2006). One group of questions focused on unit design and content selection, another on Asia-related content in VCE History and another on VCE History curriculum reform (see Appendix D). Teacher participants also completed a demographic sheet to gather data about their school context, role and teaching experience (see Appendix B). Interviews varied from 40 minutes to 75 minutes in length and were recorded on a Zoom portable voice recorder. They were conducted at the participant’s choice of location in order to provide a comfortable and natural setting, typically a classroom or a nearby café.

### 3.12 Interviews with policy actors

The purpose of interviewing policy actors who engage with curriculum within the context of production (Bowe et al., 1992) is to address the question: *What are curriculum policy actors’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum?* Purposive sampling was used to identify representatives from organisations that play a direct role in curriculum reform, such as the VCAA and ACARA; those that play more of a stakeholder role such as the History Teachers Association of Victoria (HTAV), and the Asia Education Foundation (AEF); and those with a more systemic function such as the then Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV). The DEECD, CEO and ISV declined the invitation, with all three organisations suggesting that they did not have a suitable representative who could
provide in-depth responses in relation to Asia engagement and/or history curriculum. In contrast to the past, the DEECD no longer has a role for a Studies of Asia curriculum manager as it once did. Because these actors are well-known in the schooling domain and their contact details are publicly available, recruitment was through individual contact, with first contact being made via email correspondence.

With the consent of their organisation, four organisational representatives participated. A curriculum manager from ACARA who had been involved with the development and review of Humanities in the Australian Curriculum participated in a telephone interview. The VCAA Curriculum Manager Humanities and Social Sciences provided a written response to the interview questions. A director of the AEF participated in a face-to-face interview, as did the Executive Officer of the HTAV. Due to their specific roles, the participants were advised that they might be identifiable. However, throughout the thesis they are referred to as a participant representing the organisation, rather than by name or pseudonym. The open-ended questions (see Appendix F) were modified depending on the organisation and role of the individual. Generally the questions focused on the contribution the organisation makes to curriculum policy production and reform, their views on curriculum enactment and the organisation’s perspectives about Asia engagement and history curriculum. Although this was a small sample, all of the participants were senior staff commenting on their expertise and active involvement in the development of history curriculum or Asia literacy policy.

Methods of data analysis

3.13 Discourse analysis

Any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses [that is, the transference of discourse(s) from one person / social group to another], along with knowledges and powers which they carry. (Foucault, 1970/1981, p. 64)

Foucauldian discourse analysis is not a straightforward method with discrete steps and processes. Similar to critical policy analysis, coherent descriptions of discourse analysis based on Foucault’s theorising can be difficult due to his reluctance to
clearly define a research method (Graham, 2011; Kendall & Wickham, 1999).
However, it is a fitting method for this study because it is highly compatible with the
aims of critical policy analysis. As indicated by the above quote, a Foucauldian
approach is concerned with the way meaning is transmitted and appropriated
through discourse, and is also concerned with the power relations that shape
knowledge production. Foucauldian discourse analysis examines how the
statements which construct an object become systematised and the effects of this
systemisation (Parker, 1992). It is particularly apt for the analysis of problematic
constructions such as Asia because through discourse analysis we start to see how
‘Asia’ is made to appear ‘real’ through the statements made about it in the context
of history curriculum and how these meanings change over time. Throughout the
thesis the discourse analysis is articulated in different ways and levels. At times the
formation and articulation of specific discourses are detailed specifically and at
other times the discourse analysis works alongside the critical policy analysis
framework to provide an overarching analysis of the discursive construction of Asia-
related history.

Rather than apply “Foucauldianistic type paradigms” to discourse analysis, Graham
(2011) encourages “looking to and building on the insights of others” (p. 6) to assist
with methodological clarity. I have therefore integrated some steps and analytical
questions from a number of sources to develop an interpretive process. Initial
analysis was based on LeGreco and Tracy’s (2009) discourse tracing method.
Influenced by the work of Foucault, discourse tracing “analyses the formation,
interpretation, and appropriation of discursive practices across micro, meso, and
macro levels of analysis” (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, p. 3). While I drew on some of
these steps (see below), the distinction they made between meso, micro and macro
was artificial for the purpose of this study. Thus I integrated three of LeGreco and
Tracy’s (2009) steps – the chronological ordering of data, a close reading of the
ordered data and reading the data through the literature – with guiding questions
from Graham (2011), Thomson (2011) and Parker (1992). The discourse analysis of
the data included the following stages:
1) Chronological ordering: The documentary data (i.e. policy documents, the VCE History Study Designs and other literature) were organised chronologically. This was important for placing the Study Designs in their policy and socio-historical context. The interview data were transcribed verbatim and managed through Nvivo software.

2) Close reading of the ordered data: A close reading of the ordered data sought to examine the discourses evident and how these discourses enabled and constrained ways of thinking and speaking. At this point discourses were located by identifying what Foucault calls statements: “one looks to statements not so much for what they say but what they do; that is, one questions what the constitutive or political effects of saying this instead of that might be?” (2011, p. 667).

Guiding questions posed by Thomson (2011) were constructive for analysing discourse within the texts, including the interview data:

1. What is being represented here as a truth or as a norm?
2. How is this constructed? What ‘evidence’ is used? What is left out? What is foregrounded and backgrounded? What is made problematic and what is not? What alternative meanings/explanations are ignored? What is kept apart and what is joined together?
3. What interests are being mobilised and served by this and what are not?
4. How has this come to be?
5. What identities, actions and practices are made possible and/or desirable and/or required by this way of thinking/talking/understanding? What are disallowed? What is normalised and what is pathologised? (para. 4)

Parker’s (1992) criteria for distinguishing discourses also prompted thinking about the following points:

- how the objects of the study (i.e. ‘Asia’ or the ‘History teacher’) are described and put into words and then analysing this talk as discourse (i.e. Asia literacy discourse or the discourse of professional knowledge);
- the ‘reality’ or role the object of discourse is permitted to take up, which prompts thinking about the subject positions that are permitted within the discourse, or what is able to be said in the discourse;
• the view of the world presented by the discourse and how other discourses might run counter to the dominant ways of regulating meaning;
• the interrelationships, the tensions, the overlaps and similarities and differences between discourses;
• other texts in which the discourse occurs and is talked about;
• when discourses emerge and how they change to show how they are historically located and not static; and
• the institutions, narratives or power relations that are sanctioned and reproduced or subverted and resisted by discourse.

3) Reading the data through the conceptual frameworks and other literature: Le Greco and Tracy (2009) suggest reading the data through questions “informed by past literature, guiding research questions, and the close reading of the chronologically ordered data” (p. 17). Once I had a clearer idea of the sorts of discourses operating in the texts and interviews, I analysed the data in relation to the conceptual frameworks of Asia as method and critical policy analysis, and also drew on other scholarly literature in order to connect to other established discourses and points of comparison.

Ball (2015) notes a shortcoming when doing policy discourse research. An imbalance between text work that concentrates on the statements being said, rather than the formation of the statements or how they are made possible means some studies purport to be doing Foucauldian discourse analysis when they are instead focusing on language and text instead of discourse (Ball, 2015). This study responds by identifying the signs that denote the discursive construction of Asia within policy texts and analysing the policy contexts that formed these discourses. Importantly, it considers the effects of discourse and takes seriously the structures and rules that enable and constrain particular subject positions.

3.14 Ethics

This project was constructed in accordance with Deakin University’s Human Research Ethics Guidelines (2010). Based on the National Statement on Ethical
Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) it is framed on the principles of respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence. Deakin University Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG) granted ethics approval and the required modules on human research ethics were successfully completed.
Chapter 4: Asia-related senior secondary history in the twentieth century

4.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some background on Asia-related history education in Victoria to contextualise the more detailed discourse analysis in the chapters that follow. This chapter examines developments in history education and schooling across the twentieth century more broadly and the policy history of Asia-related curriculum more specifically in order to introduce the policy historiography (Gale, 2007) or discursive archive (Ball et al., 2012) from which constructions of Asia-related history begin to emerge in the Victorian context. Policy historiography can be described as “both a general term that encompasses a range of historical discourses and as a more specific term that refers to one particular collection of these” (Gale, 2007, p. 384). Similarly, the discursive archive refers to “a history of other policies, other languages and other subjectivities” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 6). Engaging with policy historiography prompts examination of specific historical moments and the socio-historic and socio-educational conditions in which policy develops (Gale, 2007). The four sections of the chapter consider developments in school history and Asia education policy in the early twentieth century, the 1960s, the 1970s and 1980s. By taking a chronological approach I am not seeking to narrate the evolution of Asia-related history in Victoria but instead consider some of the relationships that shape curriculum policy processes over time and highlight particular moments in which the dominant modes for the representation of Asia are established and contested. This will provide points of reference for other chapters in the thesis.

4.2 Imperial and ‘world’ history: Asia-related history in Victoria until the mid twentieth century

History was first included in the University of Melbourne’s Matriculation Examination – a nineteenth century version of the VCE – in 1850 (Barcan, 1976).
Through the late nineteenth century and to the mid-twentieth century, history tended to be taught as a linear narrative. Up until the 1940s the symbiotic relationship between school history and imperial culture was maintained by focussing history curricula on Britain (Bessant, 1995; T. Taylor, 2000). The curriculum exemplified European and American history of the mid 1800s and was taught as the ‘history of great men’ (Carlyle, 1993). History teaching worked as a means for the promotion of empire in Britain and the Antipodes (Willinsky, 1998). At the beginning of the twentieth century the main aims of history teaching centred on moral inculcation and the instilment of heritage and citizenship – a didactic role it continued to play over the next five decades, reinforcing what it meant to be a respectful and dutiful citizen (Barcan, 1977; Carroll, 2007). Britain was regarded as the mother country in the decades before and after the Great War and as a consequence British imperial propaganda was a key feature of Australian schooling from 1900 to 1930, exemplified by the pomp and pageantry of Empire Day (Bessant, 1995). In other words history teaching at the time typified history for cultural transmission (Levstik, 1996). However, it was becoming clear that culturally and geo-politically, Britain’s ‘Imperial Century’ was ending. While in Europe the First World War fractured confidence in the moral and economic underpinnings of imperialism, a newly federated Australia was beginning to reimagine imperial relations.

In Victoria during the inter-war period, this British imperial discourse was challenged by calls for a broader world history approach and a move towards the localisation of history curricula and texts occurred. Textbooks began to be published in Australia by Australians and although the influence of Britain on authors remained apparent (Musgrave, 1979), the emphasis on international understanding expanded after World War I (Barcan, 1977). This ideological shift is captured in the report The Teaching of History and Civics in Victorian Secondary Schools (Hoy, 1934). History education was undergoing “a revolution” during the 1930s in both the content and teaching method (Hoy, 1934). It was noted that following the Great War, older national history programmes were perceived as inefficacious in light of new internationalist outlooks (Hoy, 1934). Hoy (1934) stated, “world history has been brought in to supplement, at times even to supplant, purely
British history” (p. 7). The report expressed the apparent disdain felt towards the teaching of Australian history and only one teacher suggested broadening world history to include the “great Eastern Nations” (Hoy, 1934, pp. 29-30). These observations suggest that history curriculum was tentatively starting a process of deimperialisation as desires to expand the dominant worldview projected by school history began to challenge the hegemonic power of British history and imperial discourse, albeit only shifting the focus from Britain to Europe.

The demand for Asia-related history within this narrow reimagining of ‘world’ history was marginal: world history equated to European history. The dominant preference of history teachers was to challenge Australian parochialism through “the history of the older world, on closer knowledge of the centres of European thought” (Hoy, 1934, p. 30). Although the report noted that Australian educators were conservative and not likely to be swept away with new methodological ideas, Hoy (1934) concluded that teachers were beginning to experiment with new methods including taking students’ interests into account and expanding the textbook/lecture method to include project work, films, libraries and pictures. Here the history teacher is constructed as traditional, yet willing to trial new approaches.

The effects of these new approaches were not necessarily immediate. Strong educational ties to the mother country remained until the 1940s (T. Taylor, 2000). During this period history learning was predominantly by rote, teacher-centred and textbook driven. The main feature of history education in the first half of the twentieth century was “the primacy of factual knowledge” (T. Taylor, 2000, p. 843). In his chapter ‘History for the Masses’ Jackson (1949) believes people in Britain described history as a bore because of their memories of school history: “dates and facts, kings and battles, outlines of this and summaries of that, unconnected and indigestible gobbets of the past leaving nothing behind but a faint flatulence of sound and fury signifying nothing” (p. 3). The tedium of facts was also likely to be felt in Australia. Facts were carefully selected in order to justify and maintain the dominant culture, which resulted in generations of students becoming “victims of an obsession with facts” (T. Taylor, 2000, p. 843). This fixation on facts, Britain and Europe may now appear traditional and Eurocentric, yet the desire to localise and
deparochialise history education through new content and methods was relatively radical at the time. Hoy’s (1934) report indicates that during the inter-war period some Victorian history teachers were grappling with the implications of hegemonic shifts, such as the decline of the British Empire.

4.3 Making history relevant: history education in 1960s Victoria

During the 1950s and early 1960s educational policy remained reasonably static, possibly due to full employment and prosperity enjoyed during this period (Musgrave, 1979). Developments in history education up until the end of the 1950s therefore appear more gradual in comparison to the subsequent changes. Internationally, the 1960s was a period of significant development in learning theory and educational psychology that began to have an impact on approaches to history education more specifically. Cognitivism and constructivism began to challenge the dominance of behaviourism in the fields of learning theory and educational psychology and the work of Piaget, Vygotsky, Dewey, Bloom, Bruner and Schwab grew in influence. Attempts were made to apply Piagetian theory in the development of a model of historical conceptual development in children (T. Taylor, 2000). However, researchers were criticised for forcing the restrictive Piagetian stages (pre-operational / concrete operational / formal operational) on the complex process of historical conceptual development (T. Taylor, 2000). Bruner and Schwab’s writings on curriculum had an impact in Victoria, especially Schwab’s conceptualisation of a discipline being divided by substantive (content) and syntactical (method) realms (Neal, 1977). It was the syntactical realm of the discipline of history – the process of inquiry – that gained traction in the late 1960s with emphasis being placed on the training of students in the historian’s craft (Neal, 1977).

The discourse of relevance emerges as the purpose of schooling began to shift and the student population widened. Between 1939 and the end of the 1960s the number of Australian school children more than doubled (Encel, 1976). The impact of this sharp increase in school enrolment and retention rates on curriculum policy became more apparent in the 1960s, resulting in a move towards relevance and
inclusivity (Clark, 2006). Mass secondary education meant education became increasingly accessible and valued across various sectors of Australian society, gaining wider public interest (Barcan, 1993; Musgrave, 1979). In Victorian high schools experimental teaching, which included more open-ended, child-centred approaches, became more common in the late 1960s, in part due to ideological, sociological and pedagogical shifts but also due to significant curriculum reform (Barcan, 1993). Victoria led the way in abolishing the Intermediate Certificate external exam in 1966 and the Curriculum Advisory Board was established in the same year to encourage further curricular change (Barcan, 1993). In 1967 the Victorian Director of Secondary Education, R.A Reed, initiated the adoption of a number of radical principles for curricular reform, such as a focus on individuality, choice and processes rather than content (Musgrave, 1979).

Two distinct approaches to history education also began to emerge: the discipline approach and the new integrated approach. This curricular freedom allowed schools to embrace the integration of subjects under Social Science and Humanities, configurations that favoured more thematic approaches to history education than the previously linear, chronological models (Barcan, 1993). Social Studies – also configured as Modern Studies and General Studies – integrated English, History, Geography, Civics and Politics within courses about the environment, law and order, family, mass media and the like (Musgrave, 1979; Reus-Smit, 1975). In Victorian secondary schools the innovative approach of General Studies, required new norms in classroom practices and it was said to confuse the traditionally divided school and play time because walking, talking and group interaction were actively encouraged during class-time (Reus-Smit, 1975).

More broadly, History within the academy was also in a state of transformation during this period. Originating in Britain, social history, or history from below presented a new way of doing history. In stark contrast to the ‘great man’ approach, history from below – as exemplified by the work of Thompson (1966) – offered new perspectives on the history of the poor, the forgotten and the oppressed (Lynd, 2014). History from below engendered a new sense of historical
agency by challenging the dominant versions of the past and allowing the participants of history to be the co-creators of history (Lynd, 2014). New thematic and integrated history courses also came to prominence in British universities in the late 1960s, including changes to teaching methodologies (particularly in teacher training colleges) that fostered a “sense of joint inquiry” (Briggs, 1978, p. 158) between students and university teachers. Although the relationship between school history and university history was complex, in Britain there was considerable cross-pollination between the two domains, especially via history teachers drawing on their own university history educations (Briggs, 1978). Such approaches did not filter through to history education at the school or university level until later in Australia.

Popular memory and historical imagination tempt us to mythologise 1960s Australia as a golden decade of change – the idealised “Sixties” of the baby boomers’ collective memory (Luckins, 2012). Notwithstanding a generational desire to reinterpret the 1960s as a period of radical transformation, social, cultural and political change at the everyday level was more moderate than it is sometimes viewed in retrospect (Luckins, 2012). History courses at the University of Melbourne during the 1960s were said to be dreary, conventional and Eurocentric according to accounts from past students (Connell, 2012; McPhee, 2012). Students found themselves on the margin of the profession and were less inclined to study history from below (Wotherspoon, 2012). Two seminal texts of the 1960s offered critiques of how Australia had been historically imagined. Donald Horne’s (1964) ironically titled and often misinterpreted, The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties criticised Australia’s lack of innovation. In 1968 the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner (1969) delivered the Boyer lecture ‘The Great Australian Silence’, in which he criticised the national amnesia or “cult of forgetfulness” regarding the erasure of Aboriginal people and their culture. These texts represent a sort of national reckoning that was occurring within the Menzies era, which in effect lasted through three more Liberal prime ministers, and to some extent was not fully realised until the early 1970s.
Towards the end of the 1960s though, students within the Melbourne University Historical Society also began to challenge the assumptions of conservative historians and the discipline of history more vocally, and apply historical perspectives to contemporary issues such as Israel, Vietnam and South Africa (Wotherspoon, 2012). The undergraduate students who established the Melbourne Historical Journal during the 1960s embodied the notion of the historian from below, demonstrating that young historians could write and publish history (Wotherspoon, 2012). According to McPhee (2012) the Sixties, and the political radicalism the decade was supposed to embody, did not really begin in Melbourne until late 1969, following the Vietnam War moratorium. The times were a changing but slowly. The notion that contemporary world events, nearby countries, and more inclusive and honest accounts of Australian history could enrich history education and scholarship also began to grow in legitimacy at the secondary school level.

Since its introduction to Victorian curriculum, rationales for expanding Asian history have been largely driven by a discourse of relevance. Although the reasons for learning about Asia continue to change, the place of Asia-related history is contingent on notions of relevance. Concurrently, the discourse of relevance circulated through conceptualisations of school history. Asian History was first introduced as a stand-alone subject in Victoria in 1966 and within two years became the most widely studied Form IV (Year 10) history subject: 21% of schools covered Asian History in Form V (Year 11) (Education Department of Victoria, 1968). Asian History represented a new direction for history curriculum. According to Bennett (1968), Chief Research Officer for the Australian Council for Educational Research, there was a push for more relevant content that replaced the study of “far off places and battles long ago” with emphasis on the “recent past and on the pupil’s immediate environment” (p. 14). Bennett (1968) acknowledged that at the end of the 1960s “there is a somewhat greater emphasis on Australian and Asian history, less on British and European” (p. 14) and contended that the study of Indonesia’s President Sukarno would be more relevant to students than that of Alexander the Great. Peterson (1969) also noted that Australian universities and cultural institutions were expanding their interest in Asia. Regular articles on Asia-
related history were published in *Agora* during the late 1960s. For example the 1969 volume included articles on Indonesian nationalism; the Taiping Rebellion; China in the twentieth century; a notice from the Australia-Indian Society of Victoria; resource lists on Japan, Indonesia, India and China; and a particularly forward-thinking article entitled ‘Avoiding the Western Clichés of Asian History’ in which Russo (1969) addresses issues around the perpetuation of simplistic cultural clichés, especially in relation to Japan. Within this emerging discourse of relevance, contemporary and historical Asia gained currency as Australians became more culturally curious about the countries much nearer to them than Europe.

### 4.4 New Asia policy and New History: Asia-related history education in 1970s Victoria

The 1970s can be viewed as a significant transitional period. It was a transformative time for Australian international relations with Asia, as well a time of massive change within Asia. The previous division of Cold War blocs was no longer so clear-cut; the Whitlam government re-established diplomatic relations with China in 1972, for example. Significant events in the region included India’s Green Revolution; Indonesia’s invasion of East Timor in 1975; the end of the Vietnam War in 1975; the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979; and the death of Mao Zedong, officially ending China’s Cultural Revolution in 1976, to name a few. Other factors which may have also influenced Australians’ attitudes towards Asia in the 1970s included the cumulative effect of two decades of the Colombo Plan (a foreign policy designed to strengthen relations with Asia); moves towards immigration reform; and the dismantling of the remnant architecture of the White Australia Policy, formalised by the Whitlam government’s policies in 1973 and the introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975. Timorese refugees fled to Darwin in 1975 and in 1976 the first boat carrying Vietnamese refugees arrived. Asian history presented a new immediacy, invigorating the discourse of relevance. Furthermore, many of the ideas about child-centred approaches and relevancy caught up with policy in the 1970s. This was in part due to the impact of Britain’s New History movement and the influence of new social and educational trends that had emerged in the 1960s. History content may
have become less British over the decades but Britain remained influential in regards to new methodological and historiographical approaches.

A move towards educational equality characterised egalitarian education policy developments in 1970s Australia. A major reform to post-compulsory education in Victoria was the introduction of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) in 1970, replacing the Leaving (Year 11 equivalent) and Matriculation (Year 12 equivalent) model, which had been maintained since the 1930s. At a federal level *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973), or the *Karmel Report*, was commissioned by the newly elected Whitlam government and at its core was the belief that schools should provide an equal education for all students. The report supported a move towards more progressive education and was the Commonwealth’s first major comprehensive plan for the provision of primary and secondary education based on goals and priorities rather than *ad hoc* responses (Barcan, 1993; McLaren, 2014). The purpose of secondary schooling expanded beyond being exclusively seen as a primer for tertiary education. Clark suggests, “relevance became the educational ethos” (2006, p. 93). The *Karmel Report* (Karmel, 1973) stated, “schools should offer a sufficiently relevant and attractive program to encourage students to stay to the end of secondary schooling” (p. 15). This shift also had an impact on traditional notions of academic learning. The authority and purpose of knowledge was open to contestation and there was a new emphasis on the development of skills and techniques (Barcan, 1993).

The purpose of learning about Asia and Asian history had also begun to be appraised. An *Agora* article, entitled ‘Presenting Asian History’ (Martell, 1970) analysed the challenges confronting Victorian secondary teachers and the issue of tokenism:

> I feel that where we fall down is in our failure to present Asian History, or Asian Studies, in such a manner as to do true justice. We tend to feel that just by introducing a course on say, Chinese or Japanese or Indian history we are acknowledging the fact there are such histories. There has sometimes been a priggish self-righteousness about the way in which we have introduced them. The courses themselves often constrict, distort and even falsify Asian History by the wilful use of our own Western concepts. For this
reason then, I would suggest that the presentation of Asian Histories needs a new approach entirely (p. 7).

Martell underscores the tokenistic inclusion of Asian histories and his resistance to the Euro-American assumptions and universalising historical narratives indicates that the West as method discourse underpinned representations of Asian history at the time. To some extent his argument has parallels with Chen’s (2010) Asia as method. Martell stressed the “danger of forcing Asian History into the straight-jacket of Christian or Classical historiography” (1970, p. 7) and proposed that courses should instead have greater emphasis on cultural history and the history of ideas. The report, Teaching of Asian Languages and Cultures in Australia (Auchmuty, 1970), raised a similar concern that secondary school Asian history courses were overtly focused on “the relationship of Western nations to Asia” (p. 33).

Studies of Asia became a national curriculum policy concern for the first time in the 1970s. The first major policy The Teaching of Asian Languages and Cultures in Australia (Auchmuty, 1970) was initiated in 1969 by Malcom Fraser as federal Minister for Education and Science in the Liberal Gorton government. Fraser encouraged the teaching of Asian history and languages with the vision that this would “lead to a wider understanding of Asian people, and of our own future” (as cited by Percival Wood, 2012, p. 324).

Notwithstanding this sort of humanist aspiration, the main stimulus for the Auchmuty Report was the significant changes in the economic and geo-political landscape that were drawing Asia and Australia closer, factors that would continue to drive policy into the new millennium (Halse, 2015a; Quinn, 2005). The report argued that it was in the national interest to raise the profile of Asian languages and Asian studies in the school curriculum (Henderson, 2003), but this would require the “reappraisal of Australia’s traditional attitudes towards Asia” (Auchmuty, 1970, p. 11). Compared to the egalitarian and democratic flavour of education policy in the 1970s, Asia education policy justified the development of Asia-related knowledge and skills in political, economic and strategic terms to benefit the national interest (Halse, 2015a). During this period this rationale constitutes an
emerging utilitarian discourse that is propelled by government rhetoric for the development of Asian studies in schools. From this utilitarian perspective, learning about Asia is not inherently valued in and of itself but is seen to have more practical applications – both cultural and economic.

The Asian Studies Co-ordinating Committee was formed as an outcome of the Auchmuty Report. It was the Victorian branch, the Association of the Promotion of Asian Studies, that took credit for the inclusion of Asian History in the new HSC, according to a letter to the Victorian History Association (Crean, 1975). By 1972, 50 per cent of schools were offering Asian History as a Form IV subject and in 1974 it was offered as a senior subject for the first time as part of the HSC. Advertisements in Agora show that the Association of the Promotion of Asian Studies ran courses for teachers of Asian studies during the early 1970s. The Asian Studies Association was established in 1976 with the intention of promoting Asian studies across universities chiefly but the first addition of its journal, Asian Studies Review, included two articles relating to schools (ASAA, 1977). However, by the mid 1970s, the nascent Asian studies movement, heralded by the Auchmuty Report, petered out (Muller, 1996). In the mid to late 1970s articles in Agora relating to Asian history become sparser, with the most discernible themes in Agora being Australian history, social history, local history, using technology in the classroom and teaching methods.

The focus on method was stimulated by the influence of New History as an educational discourse in Victoria during the 1970s. New History offered a balance between content and methodology (T. Taylor, 2000), contrasting with a well-established preponderance for factual knowledge, particularly at the senior level in Victoria (Neal, 1977). The New History movement gained momentum as a consequence of the School Council History Project 13-16 (SCHP) in Britain. Set up in 1972, the SCHP placed emphasis on history as a methodology and discipline with distinct features, processes and structures, and a new focus on inquiry learning and innovative teaching practices (Phillips, 1998). A significant change in practice stemming from the SCHP encouraged students to do history like historians, using primary source materials, such as documents, artefacts and films (T. Taylor, 2000).
Another fundamental change was the development of the *History 13-16* syllabus “based on the uses of the past for adolescents” (Goodson, 1978, p. 43). Such uses included explanation of the present, understanding the complexity of human development and change over time, and connecting to “history around us” (Goodson, 1978, p. 43). The resulting pedagogy was one that encouraged “active learning situations where the teacher ceases to be the transmitter of information” (Goodson, 1978, p. 46). Maitland (1978) encapsulated the recasting of the adolescent from an Australian perspective: “the emphasis has shifted from what is to be taught to who is to be taught” (p. 23).

In Victoria the Secondary History Education Project (SHEP) and Victorian Secondary History Committee drew on New History research from Britain, as well as values education from the United States (Neal, 1977). The uptake of values education was slow initially, as history teachers were unsure about their role in regards to drawing on controversial topics and current affairs, but by the mid 1970s it had gained wider acceptance in Victoria through the implementation of the SHEP (Neal, 1977). The SHEP’s essential principles promoted a shift away from history’s academic constraints towards developing students’ abilities for independent thinking that could be applied to the world around them (Neal, 1977). The history classroom was seen as site for “the development of self awareness and social awareness” (Neal, 1977, p. 5). An example of this approach is illustrated by the *Agora* article ‘Introduction to Asian History: A Form Four Unit’ (Widdowson, 1977). In addition to knowledge, the objectives of the unit elaborated on concepts and skills, including concepts around the relationship between Asian countries and Australia, and the application of history to current affairs (Widdowson, 1977). Bell (1980) said, “these changes were revolutionary in the Victorian context” (p. 13) as the foci were no longer on content or chronology, but on the development of skills and concepts.

Concurrent with the shifts in the pedagogical practices of New History, content was also re-evaluated and reorganised. A more experimental approach to organising learning around themes and greater access to social and cultural history opposed the traditional, chronological approach that had sustained the teaching of grand political narratives (Phillips, 1998). In the mid to late 1970s, history education
started to reflect some of the historiographical developments of the 1960s. New university history courses that focused on race, gender, class and colonialism started to impact on secondary school curriculum (Burley, 2012). Content from social and cultural history provided further scope for the alignment of values and social justice with historical knowledge and understanding. Maitland (1978) said, “[i]n social conflict the point of the ‘losers’ (to use E.P. Thompson’s phrase) will be studied in its own terms as well as in those of the ‘Winners’” (p. 35). The title of an Agora article crudely illustrates this notion: “Give the Losers a Guernsey: A Third Form Australian History Course That Includes the Aborigines’ (A. Knight, 1978). For example, alongside articles on European history there were articles on exploring local cemeteries, women’s studies, streetscapes and urban history, Aboriginal history, local history, school history, Australian sport, the Arab-Israeli war, the year of the child and cultural heritage. Although the content referred to in the pages of Agora do not necessarily reflect the enacted curriculum, it indicates that social and cultural history was consistently promoted from the mid to late 1970s.

The extensive changes to content and pedagogy ushered in by New History were not without criticism or debate, and HSC History enrolments did not increase as a result of the approach. The drop in senior student numbers suggested History was still considered boring, and more progressive educators continued to perceive the subject as elitist and obsolete, owing to its colonial heritage (T. Taylor, 2006). Although some Victorian teachers embraced child activity and less formal lessons, which included excursions, projects, team teaching and open classrooms, “many teachers persisted with the older liberal-humanist approach to history and employed variations of traditional formal lesson-step procedures” (Barcan, 1977, p. 46). Conservative critiques reflected anxieties regarding the political and social values projected by the new educational progressivism and concerns that the child-centred approach threatened the learning process (Clark, 2006). These observations indicate that the discursive practices of teachers do not consistently correspond with emergent discourses or pedagogical innovations. New approaches may be resisted, ignored or reinterpreted, so we cannot assume that their presence signalled wholesale change in Victorian classrooms.
Tension between cross-disciplinary approaches to curriculum and traditional siloed approaches to subjects was a feature of this debate. At the time Bell (1977) argued that subjects must complement each other in the development of students’ conceptual understanding, intellectual skills and understanding of human values. This meant fostering historical inquiry, examining what it is to be human through the concept of historic-cultural conditioning and giving students “the opportunity to explore values in ‘real life’ situations at local and personal levels” (Bell, 1977, p. 9). Changes in the region and Australian demographics meant Asia-related history presented a new, ‘real life’ immediacy. The ethnic composition of ‘white’ Australia began to diversify in the late 1970s and refugees also began arriving from war-ravaged Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

A small study published in *Agora* in 1979 gives an attitudinal snapshot into Victorian students’ worldviews at the time. Entitled ‘Asian History: Student Attitudes and Teacher Approaches’ (L. Dixon, 1979), it was based on the responses from 101 Form IV Asian History students in one metropolitan Melbourne school. Attitudes towards studying Asian History were predominantly positive – prior to starting their study, 66.3 per cent of students said they liked the idea of studying Asian History, while 33.7 per cent said they did not. Dixon (1979) described the positive responses as being split between lukewarm/ambivalent and displaying a positive interest; negative opinions on the other hand ranged from “general resentment at having to study any history to outright resentment and blatant racism” (p. 9). Despite students’ attitudes being supportive in the main, she emphasised the nine per cent of students who were identified as being “openly racist and/or xenophobic” and listed negative student comments such as “I do not like studying Asia because of the refugees that come over and take our jobs” and “I don’t like any foreigners and I don’t think we should learn about foreigners. If we learn about history it should be Australian” (L. Dixon, 1979, p. 10). By stressing these negative comments she implicitly foregrounds the racist attitudes.

Dixon (1979) engages the utilitarian discourse in her conclusion:

> Learning for its own sake is an admirable end; but if we as teachers, make a greater effort to stress the many specific individual and national advantages
to be gained from a serious study of Asian history and cultures our students may begin to see, among other things, its relevance to their own futures... There is an important concomitant to this utilitarian approach. Increased knowledge breeds increased understanding: understanding must inevitably do much to reduce the racism which still exists in this country, as this study has shown. (pp. 11-12)

She advocates a pragmatic response for the benefit of the national interest but by considering the social benefits of studies of Asia in multicultural Australia she also offers an example of a humanist rationale for studies of Asia.

Similarly, the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) advocated studying Asia particularly to promote social cohesion in an increasingly culturally diverse society and globally connected world. Stephen FitzGerald (1978), Australia’s first ambassador to China in the mid 1970s, argued, “we are failing to equip Australians adequately to handle their most immediate environment” (p. 10). Although the Auchmuty Report and studies of Asia proponents, such as the ASAA, recognised the potential economic benefits of a more Asia-connected Australia, up until this stage the purpose for learning about Asia was mostly based on the benefits of cultural learning, tolerance and enhanced communication through language study. However, economics was becoming an ever more powerful driver in the discourse around Australia-Asia engagement. In a speech to Asian Studies academics, former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam (1979) said:

We have the opportunities to participate in the benefits of economic growth of developing Asia... We must broaden our perspective on the region and realise that our neighbours do not represent a “yellow peril” or a “red menace” that will descend upon us in a barrage of pyrotechnic terror. Rather, they represent what may well be our only long-term economic salvation. (p. 26)

This sort of imagery is illustrative of the oscillation between fear and hope that has characterised Asia in the Australian imaginary. The economic instrumentalism evident here, intensified in the decade that followed.
4.5 Towards Asia literacy: Asia-related history in 1980s Victoria

Curriculum leaders continued the call for curricular relevancy and encouraged Victorian History teachers to consider the role of history in preparing students for their futures. This is illustrated by an extensive article in *Agora*, in which Bell (1980), a member of the Curriculum and Research Branch at the Victorian Department of Education, argued for the importance of developing curriculum and teaching approaches in history that were relevant to the needs of students in a changing world: “What are the needs of students? How can historical study meet these needs?” (p. 10). Bell (1980) surmised that the 1980s would bring “a search for new structures in curriculum through which students will be better equipped to face the challenge of the future” (p. 17). Statements like these indicate that the discourse of relevance was repurposed by a utilitarian discourse that valued learning in relation to its practical value in the future. In contrast to Victoria and the UK, Bell (1980) noted that innovations in history curriculum in the USA included new programmes that dealt with “the non-Western world” and presented “a better balance between Eastern and Western cultures” (p. 11). While this represents a dualist reading of world history, more critical perspectives were also published in *Agora* at the time. In a substantial article, McKay (1980) grappled with potential criticisms of studies of Asia. She argued that teachers needed to creatively and critically develop studies of Asia within history education by engaging with the following criticisms: stress on cultural difference and cultural stereotyping; judgment clouded by cultural relativism; monolithic views on culture; romanticisation of the exotic; and failure to reflect on our own Australian culture (McKay, 1980). Her concerns are similar to those raised in *Agora* a decade earlier by Russo (1969) and Martell (1970) and indicate that critiques about the teaching and representation of Asia are longstanding.

*Asia in Australian Education* (ASAA, 1980), or the *FitzGerald Report*, was published by the Asian Studies Association of Australia. It was the first non-government report to provide such an audit and advocate for the need to mainstream studies of Asia for utilitarian purposes in order to serve the national interest (Henderson, 2003; Quinn, 2005). Although it focused mostly on the study of Asia in universities, it made a number of recommendations concerning schools and teacher education,
and urged state and federal education departments to prioritise the study countries in the Asian region (ASAA, 1980). Asianists, such as FitzGerald and his colleagues at the ASAA, recognised that the established humanist and multicultural rationales for the study of Asian languages and cultures, with their focus on social cohesion and cultural enrichment, lacked the potency of the recalibrated utilitarian discourse that emphasised economic and strategic interests. With the presence of the four ‘economic tigers’ – Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea – rapidly transforming the region economically, policy makers were encouraged to align policy in order to meet the demand for skilled workers that could contribute to Australia’s future engagement with its northern neighbours. A utilitarian response to these changes would therefore appear to make sense. Thus, the *FitzGerald Report* signalled a discursive turn towards a more pragmatic approach to lobbying for the diversification of curriculum and Asian language study.

The Asian studies movement reportedly plateaued in the mid-1980s (Henderson, 2003; Muller, 1996), although debate about increasing Asian languages in schools continued (Commonwealth Dept.of Ed., 1982). In parallel, enrolments in Asian History waned in Victoria: in 1981, 10 schools offered Asian History (HTAV, 1981), by 1984 it dropped to only five schools (HTAV, 1984). Asian History was overshadowed by high enrolments in Australian History, followed by European History and Eighteenth Century History.

A similar quiescence is evident in the pages of *Agora*. The June 1983 edition included a report on the Asian Studies Conference attended by ninety teachers (HTAV, 1983); an enthusiastic account of a study tour of China by three Victorian History teachers (Tudball, Hopkins, & Ryan, 1983); an invitation for teachers to visit the Japan Information Service in Melbourne; and a book review of *Indonesia: Foundations of Asian History* (Cairns & French, 1982), a resource co-authored by my father. This burst, however, is followed by a period of dormancy in *Agora’s* reporting on Asia-engagement, which is not awoken until an advertisement for the Australia-China Friendship Society and a Year 10 Asian History unit on ‘Modern India’ appears in 1987 four years later.
The year 1988 could be described as a turning point within Asia education policy historiography, because it saw the activation of the discourse of national self-interest, which coincides with the emergence of Asia literacy as a discourse. Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s Labor government (1983-1991) increasingly sought to valorise the purpose of schooling as part of the larger project of enhancing Australia’s productivity and international competitiveness (Halse, 2015a). During the Hawke era three key national policy documents published by the ASAA reignited debate around the place of Asia in national education policy in the mid to late 1980s (Halse, 2015a; Henderson, 2003). The first, the *Asian Studies Council Report of the Working Party* (Scully, 1986), or *Scully Report*, was an outcome of the ASAA’s continued lobbying. The dwindling of HSC Asian History enrolments in Victoria is reflected in the observation that Asian Studies was deteriorating or remained static at best (Scully, 1986, p. iv). The most significant outcome of the report was the establishment of the Asian Studies Council which developed the second key policy, *A National Strategy for the Study of Asia in Australia* (ASC, 1988), and stimulated a new wave of policy for the promotion of the study of Asian languages and cultures, much of which was supported by the Hawke government (Henderson, 2003; Muller, 1996).

The *National Strategy* is significant because it was the genesis of the idea ‘Asia literacy’, providing a concept around which studies of Asia proponents could start to consolidate a discourse. FitzGerald, then president of the Asian Studies Council, is often credited with coining the term Asia literacy, though it is said to have emerged during the discussions of the ASC during this time (Halse, 2015b). The report argued, “the Commonwealth Government will need to ensure that there is adequate awareness in the community of why it is important that Australia undertake a significant investment to create an ‘Asia literate’ society” (ASC, 1988, p. 20).

To be Asia literate meant “Australians have some understanding of Asian history, culture, geography and economies, are comfortable with Asians in the work environment and that knowledge of an Asian language is unexceptional” (ASC,
1988, p. 32). History is foregrounded in this definition and there is an assumption here that Australians were *uncomfortable* with ‘Asians’. Even though the development of the utilitarian rationale for studies of Asia had gathered momentum through the 1970s and 1980s, there was still not consensus among all stakeholders on the purpose of studying Asian languages and cultures. Friction around the discourse of Asia literacy was evident from the outset. FitzGerald (1988), referred to the need to align Asian studies with the marketplace or “more functional aspects of studies of Asia” (p. 11), while balancing the intellectual, philosophical and analytical goals of studies of Asia in order to “maintain its integrity” (p. 16). McKay (1988) proposed that a policy trade-off was inevitable – cultural learning would be compromised in response to the growing appeal of instrumental rationales.

The discourse of national self-interest dominates in this period. Whereas a more ambiguous utilitarian discourse driven by both cultural and economic and strategic concerns had a strong presence within previous debate around Australia-Asia relations, in the late 1980s a more distinct discourse of national self-interest and rhetoric about Australia’s economic dependence on Asia was taken up by policy actors. In his Australia Day statement John Dawkins (1988a), federal Minister for Education and Training, underscored that “our future is in Asia” (p.13) and therefore “we must look to our self-interest in an increasingly competitive world…. self-interest dictates this policy” (p.13). This was echoed in the words of Prime Minister Bob Hawke (1988) at the Asian Studies Association Bicentennial Conference:

> It is no exaggeration to say that as we enter our third century one of the most important and testing challenges this country faces is the challenge of finding our true place in Asia – of recognising that our self-interest lies in becoming an integral part of our region. (p. 8)

Hawke also took an unscripted moment to acknowledge that the Government was not only promoting studies of Asia for economic purposes (McKay, 1988). These powerful policy actors lend authority to the discourse of national self-interest. Kamada describes the recommendations of *The National Strategy* and the policy
focus on the economic and vocational needs of the nation as an affirmation of “the argument for the Australianisation of education” (1994, p. 8). Indeed it was driven by a perceived need to win over the most intractable but necessary converts in the business community, infused with their traditions of social conservatism and market liberalism.

The National Strategy also presented a significant moment for the positioning of studies of Asia within the discipline of history. Rather than taking a broad stand-alone area studies approach, it recommended, “the development of the study of Asia in schools from now on must be exclusively within existing subjects and disciplines, including in particular social science, history, politics, economics, geography and literature” (ASC, 1988, p. 24). Thus, potentially school history curriculum had a more substantial role to play in the development of Asia literacy.

While Australians were being encouraged to consider future relations with their increasingly nouveau riche regional neighbours, two significant historical occasions prompted deep examination of questions of national identity in the mid to late 1980s. In 1985 Victoria celebrated 150 years of European occupation, and in 1988, Aboriginal Australia mourned the bicentenary of the European invasion. Both events were potential boons to the history teacher. As a child of the 1980s these historical occasions provided me with many exciting occasions for ‘ye olde’ colonial style dress-up days and bush dances; however, the jingoistic enthusiasm that pervaded my primary school experience ran parallel to postcolonial discourse on Australian history of indigenous dispossession.

Some of these tensions are evident in the pages of Agora and suggest that this apparent interval in Victorian history educators’ engagement with Asia-related history should not be mis apprehended as a period that focused solely on nationalistic flag-waving. For example, the colonial clichés of the ‘Pioneers from the Past’ (Caris, 1985) is juxtaposed beside an article that flies in the face of the Aboriginal-non-agricultural-nomad-myth and details the Gunditjmara people’s development of aquaculture systems over thousands of years. In the same issue
‘Correcting the John Batman Myth’ (Barrett, 1985) challenges the colonialist ideology of the grazier and mass Aboriginal killer, who purportedly signed a treaty with representatives of the Kulin nation. The titles of other articles give further illustration of a growing postcolonial discourse: ‘A Multicultural Perspective to the 150th Anniversary’ (Wright, 1985), ‘The Problem with Cook, Convicts and Gold’ (Duggan, 1985), ‘An alternative view of the Bicentenary’ (Triolo, 1988) and ‘Teaching Australian History from Assimilation to Multiculturalism’ (Cop, 1988). During this period history teachers demonstrated a growing capacity to critique Australia’s past, an approach that conservative commentators warned would impact on children (Clark, 2006). This emerging postcolonial discourse is also evident in the new VCE History curriculum that was in development in the late 1980s and is analysed in the following chapter.

In the late 1980s Australia was also looking towards new international horizons as it sought to insert itself into the Asia-Pacific geo-political community (T. Bennett, 1992). Its relationship with China underwent significant shifts especially, some of which are reflected in the way Chinese history was represented in Victoria. During the 1980s soft power initiatives and cultural diplomacy contributed to China’s policy of opening up and Australia actively courted China’s friendship (S. Harris, 1995). Opportunities for mainstream Australia to partake in Chinese history and culture coincided with the growth of two-way trade between the nations during the mid to late 1980s and these bilateral links are reflected in Agora. An open letter to history teachers from the Australia-China Friendship Society promotes its aim of enhancing understanding between the countries (ACFS, 1987). Though not a Chinese production, Bertolucci’s The Last Emperor brought the final days of the Qing Dynasty to cinemas in 1987 and the fact that it was reviewed twice in Agora (Matthews, 1988; Quanchi, 1987) signals popular culture as a new influence on representations of historical Asia. Two bicentenary gifts extended Chinese soft power more directly. The Australia-China Friendship Society presented a 50-metre hand painted scroll that depicted 200 years of Chinese-Australian history, symbolically titled Enduring Harvest. A more memorable gift came to Melbourne – the loan of two giant pandas. In December of the same year the National Gallery of
Victoria opened its spectacular ‘Dragon Emperor: Treasures from the Forbidden City’ and was promoted by a two page spread in *Agora* (NGV, 1988, p. 37).

The positive soft power effects of such entertainments, however, were undone by the events of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in Beijing in June 1989. The Hawke government vigorously responded by granting permission for 42,000 Chinese students to stay in Australia and enforced trade sanctions against China until 1991. During the following few years the only articles in *Agora* that featured China were ‘The Beijing Massacre: An Inquiry Unit’ (McDonald, 1990) and ‘Role-playing with a Difference: Tiananmen Square June 3/4’ (Hepworth, 1991). These examples suggest that history education is sensitive to changes in the broader geo-political context.

The 1980s drew to a close with the release of the third key Asia literacy policy document by the ASAA: *Asia in Australian Higher Education: Report of the Inquiry into the Teaching of Asian Studies and Languages in Higher Education* (Ingelson, 1989). While it focused on higher education, the *Ingelson Report* (1989) recognised that “teaching about Asia and its languages is part of the Australianisation of curricula” and it posited that if Australians are to “manage their future as part of the Asian region... Asia literacy must be widespread” (p. 13). Teacher education was identified as a key target:

Secondary school curricula have only a small amount of Asia content, but even when teachers have a choice to include the study of Asia in, for example history or geography, few do so. This is largely because their own education ignored Asia (Ingelson, 1989, p. 15).

The ongoing presence of Asia in history curriculum in Victoria since the late 1960s challenges this assumption that Asia had been disregarded by Victorian curriculum but points to curriculum enactment as a tension within Asia education policy. Despite the urgings of the *Ingelson Report*, by 2001 undergraduate study of Asia had not risen near to the goals set in 1989 (ASAA, 2002). Halse (2015c) highlights that all three documents – the *Scully Report*, the *National Strategy* and the *Ingelson Report* – constructed Asia literacy within a ‘problem’ and ‘solution’ binary: “Each laid out a plan for building national capacity in the languages and studies of Asia
and repeated the now familiar call for a national agenda for Asia literacy” (2015c, p. 17).

Federal education policy began to have a substantial impact upon state curriculum policy and the general health of history education from the late 1980s. The catalyst for the changes was the report *Strengthening Australian Schools: A consideration of the focus and content of schooling* (Dawkins, 1988b). The document articulated a new corporate federalism and the “shift from an earlier more liberal-progressive perspective to a strongly instrumentalist approach to ‘re-form’ schooling ‘in the national interest’” (Lingard, O’Brien, & Knight, 1993, p. 231). Together with the principles of fairness, equity and access, education was somewhat incongruously reframed in economic terms, linking it firmly with national growth and the discourse of national self-interest (Clark, 2006; Lingard et al., 1993; Yates & Collins, 2008). Curriculum systems needed to be efficient, accountable and understood in explicit outcomes or observable competencies, all of which were factors behind the push by Dawkins for a national curriculum (Clark, 2006; Yates & Collins, 2008).

Thus, in the spirit of economic rationalism, the Australian Education Council, composed of state education ministers, was steered towards the creation of an economically efficient national curriculum (C. Collins, 2011). The signing of the inaugural *Hobart Declaration of National Goals for Schooling* in 1989 had implications for history curriculum as it was agreed that states would centralise curriculum and content under eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs): English, Mathematics, Technology, Science, Languages Other Than English (LOTE) the Arts, Health and Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE). The sweeping SOSE configuration included economics, business studies, geography, politics and a diluted form of history under the ‘change and continuity’ strand. Despite fierce opposition from historians and history teachers, SOSE became the *status quo* in most Australian States and Territories in the compulsory years during the 1990s, although New South Wales was atypical in maintaining history as a discrete subject as part of a core curriculum (Burley, 2012). Just as history curriculum in the senior years was about to undergo radical rejuvenation through the development of the
Victorian Certificate of Education, it contracted in the middle years under the SOSE amalgam, the implications of which will be examined in the following chapter.

4.6 Chapter summary

Rather than understanding developments in Asia-related history in Victoria and national Asia education policy as a linear trajectory, this chapter shows that key socio-historical moments and certain contextual conditions of possibility play a part in the formation of policy responses and curricular and pedagogical practices within history education. Furthermore, there are moments of recurrence, disjuncture and resistance that challenge assumptions about educational progress and hegemonic discourse. Victorian curriculum leaders have intermittently expressed feelings of being in the vanguard of ‘revolutionary’ history education practices (Bell, 1980; D. M. Bennett, 1968; Hoy, 1934), while new approaches have also been equally disregarded.

These innovations, or lack thereof, challenge the assumption that history education reform can be traced along a uni-directional flow from traditional to more progressive practices. This historical analysis also demonstrates that history teachers and curriculum leaders have embraced, slowly at times, new international trends. While school history expanded beyond the moral and patriotic edification of British imperial history towards world history and New History approaches, this ‘world’ remained essentially Anglo as educational innovations were imported predominantly from Britain. Nevertheless, this chapter also shows that interest in non-traditional histories and Asia-related history was sporadic across the twentieth century, and was often shaped by quite different rationales, such as international peace in the interwar period, social cohesion in the late 1970s and economic self-interest in the late 1980s. Although the reasons changed, a common thread through these rationales was a discourse centred on notions of relevance.

Asia held a mostly viable position in Victorian secondary curriculum from 1966 until the 1980s – well before it officially entered mainstream political rhetoric and Asia
literacy discourse. A range of Asian countries were included in curriculum, but there is evidence to suggest that binaristic and Western-centric representations of Asia critiqued in a number of articles in *Agora* (Martell, 1970; McKay, 1980; Russo, 1969) were prevalent. These critical perspectives also indicate that the dominant discursive mode for constructing Asia-related history has long been resisted by those who advocate for more diverse and complex representations, not unlike the approaches advocated by Asia as method. Likewise, as competing purposes for learning about Asia were reflected in discursive shifts that increasingly privileged economic imperatives for Asia engagement, they do not necessarily indicate outright consensus among policy actors. This is indicated by the expanding gulf between cultural and economic arguments within the utilitarian discourse, which was followed by the powerful discourse of national self-interest. The next chapter will build upon this policy historiography by examining the official curriculum documents of the VCE History.
Chapter 5: Asia-related VCE History curriculum and its policy context: 1991-2004

5.1 Chapter overview

As the first of three data analysis chapters, this chapter tightens the focus in on the discursive construction of Asia-related history through the 1991, 1996, and 2004 Study Designs and the policy contexts that created the conditions of possibility for their development. It addresses in part the sub-research questions: *What Asia-related history is available in key VCE History Study Designs from 1991 to 2015 and how does this relate to the policy contexts in which they were they developed? How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are their implications?* Overall, the aim of the chapter is to scrutinise how certain discourses work to constitute curriculum policy constructions of Asia and to investigate what conditions make the artefacts of curriculum (im)possible (Popkewitz, 2015; Reynolds & Webber, 2004).

5.2 Analysis of the 1991 VCE History Study Design policy process

The introduction of the VCE’s very first *History Study Design* states: “the histories included in the study encompass present history teaching practice and encourage curriculum innovation” (VCAB, 1991, p. 1). The *History Study Design* (VCAB, 1991) and the new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) embody the discourse of curriculum innovation prevalent at the time. According to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB), Victoria was attempting an “ambitious” and “fundamental” reform to senior secondary schooling unlike anything seen in other states (VCAB, 1988, p. 1).

The development of the VCE was driven by a clearly defined social agenda. A more comprehensive and inclusive model for schooling in the non-compulsory years aimed to increase participation and open up university as a pathway for those beyond the social and economic elite privileged by the HSC (Teese, 2014). Following
“a prolonged and agonising debate” (Barcan, 2003, p. 120) over the plans to replace the HSC, the VCE was fully implemented in 1991 under the educationally progressive Kirner Labor government. At the time, universities alleged the lowering of standards would follow from the change. In contrast, the Victorian Secondary Teachers’ Association applauded the model for challenging the elitism of the HSC’s academic studies, university control over senior secondary curriculum and assessment, and the emphasis on examinations (Barcan, 2003; J. Keating, 2011). The VCE introduced radical changes. In place of examinations, standardisation and ranking, most of the assessment was conducted internally by schools through statistical moderation (Teese, 2014). Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) were introduced to accommodate diverse student abilities and a wider range of studies were provided (VCAB, 1988). Paradoxically the history units or subjects offered in the post-compulsory level expanded dramatically while history in the compulsory years was curtailed under the new SOSE curriculum (see previous chapter).

The federal education policy agenda continued to endorse the position that the purpose of schooling was instrumental and economic (Halse, 2015a), a position which was clearly expressed through the rhetoric of national self-interest that steered Asia literacy policy. By the end of the 1980s, federal policy rationales for expanding studies of Asia in schools had been subsumed by the discourse of national self-interest, which was reinforced by *Australia and the Northeast Asia Ascendancy: Report to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade* (Garnaut, 1989). The *Garnaut Report* further increased the tensions around government utilitarianism and ignited academic debate about the limitations of economic definitions of ‘Asia’ (Henderson, 2003; Muller, 1996). It argued for setting Australia’s macroeconomic agenda within the context of the expanding economies of Northeast Asia, and it argued that at the microeconomic level the study of Asian languages and cultures would assist Australia in becoming more internationally competitive (Henderson, 2003). Chapter 14 of the report outlined that an investment in education was fundamental to “Australia’s long term success in getting the most out of its relationship with Asia” (Garnaut, 1989, p. 33). It used survey data from a McNair opinion poll – a major Australian polling organisation – to show that in Victoria support for increasing the teaching of Asian history was low.
It would seem public opinion was not aligned with the policy agenda. In response to such attitudes it was argued that “all students should be exposed at school to serious study of Asian history, geography, economics, politics and culture” (Garnaut, 1989, p. 33).

The establishment of Asialink in 1990 indicates the government’s commitment. Asialink was formed as a joint initiative of the Federal Government’s Commission for the Future and the Myer Foundation, a philanthropic organisation. Its original purpose was to develop strategies to educate the public about Asian cultures and societies through community awareness, education, arts and business, including developing resources for primary and secondary schools (Henderson, 2003).

An expanding awareness around the role of Australian engagement with Asia in relation to history curriculum was also evident in the collaboration of curriculum policy actors. The HTAV and the Curriculum Development Centre established the Asian Studies Project in 1989 to bridge the national Asia literacy agenda and state-based curriculum. Victorian history teachers were invited to contribute material to a resource booklet and discussion paper (HTAV, 1989). The aim was “to explore ways and means of increasing the Asian content, and shifting emphasis in the curriculum area of history to reflect Australia’s new consciousness of its place in the region” (Hoban, 1990, p. 6). Such commentary demonstrates that the discourse of regional engagement present in the Ingelson Report and Garnaut Report was starting to be taken up in history curriculum.

Initial take up of the emerging Asia literacy discourse by policy actors is evidenced in the concern expressed in the Asian Studies Project discussion paper that Australian students were “Asia illiterate” (Hoban, 1990, p. 6). Students either left school having never done Asian history or were left wanting more (Hoban, 1990). Existing senior history courses about Asia were perceived as being more difficult and less engaging than other histories, and overall it was felt that incentives for staff and students were needed to better legitimise Asian history (Hoban, 1990). The apparent need to legitimise Asian history suggests these histories had to
compete with established Western-centric histories even though Asian history had been available in Victorian curricula for two decades. One of the assertions from previous reports regarding the enactment of Asia-related history was refuted:

Teachers do not feel it is their lack of competence or confidence that is the root cause of Asia’s poor showing. Contrary to popular belief, it is a customary part of their experience to prepare themselves to teach new things. (Hoban, 1990, p. 6)

The assumption being challenged here continued to surface throughout subsequent years, and is scrutinised further in Chapter 6. The discussion paper was emphatic about “increasing Asian perspectives in History” (Hoban, 1990) and the claim that the HTAV was committed to “addressing many of the issues raised [by the Asian Studies Project] and encouraging effective resource development” (1990, p. 6) is demonstrated by the inclusion of six unit outlines on Asia-related history in the following seven editions of Agora from 1990 to 1991.

Several articles in Agora engaged with issues of representation of Asia. In ‘Teaching About the Vietnam War – a Practical Guide’ Sutherland (1990) cautions against “teaching problems” which include: “developing a balanced picture of the topic and recognising bias... reconciling the divergent views... developing a Vietnamese perspective as well as an Australian perspective...” (p. 30). Similarly Vannata (1991) notes in her article ‘Vietnam: A Teaching Unit’ that “it is hoped that the inclusion of a Vietnamese perspective will assist in providing an all-round view of the conflict as well as cater for any Vietnamese students” (p. 19). These examples indicate that some teachers were attempting to redress the dominant Western-centric perspective and provide a more inclusive approach.

The new VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991) was in development just as the Asia literacy advocacy phase (Halse, 2015a) drew to a close. This phase extended from the 1970s to 1990 and was distinguished by a succession of reports that advocated for the establishment of studies of Asia and Asian languages in schools (Halse, 2015a). Henderson (2003) encapsulates the discursive shift at the federal level during the late 1980s and early 1990s: “the intellectual and philosophical emphases for the study of Asian languages and cultures in the education system were
gradually overshadowed by the broader utilitarian and economic policy priorities” (p. 27). Correspondingly, VCAB (1987) claimed the new VCE was “a curriculum geared to contemporary social and economic needs” (p. 13).

5.3 Analysis of the 1991 VCE History Study Design

The new VCE History Study Design outlined the curriculum in the non-compulsory senior years and was implemented in stages from 1987 to 1992. The fully accredited version, published in 1991 and accredited until 1994, is referenced here but is substantially the same as the 1990 draft version. The inaugural VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991) represents a critical curricular moment because it sought to “encourage curriculum innovation” (VCAB, 1991, p. 1) by encouraging teachers and students to do history in a different way in the senior years. The emphasis on the discourse of innovation in the Study Design offered a counter discursive approach to history. However, it also suggests this innovative approach was in tension with the established conventions of the West as method discourse, as will be demonstrated.

Teachers and students were offered an array of histories and some alternative approaches to select from. Most students undertook units 1 and 2 in Year 11 and units 3 and 4 in Year 12, but there was flexibility for students to undertake units 3 and 4 in Year 11. A learning area or subject area was called a study, and the study of History was comprised of 21 units, which were akin to individual history subjects (see Table 2). No units were compulsory. Although units 1 and 2 were separate and could be varyingly combined across semesters, units 3 and 4 were organised as a year-long program of study. The subject matter was not stringently prescribed. Each VCE History unit was organised by areas of study (AOS), which were outlined through a handful of dot-points and presented examples of historical contexts pertinent to the particular period or theme (see Table 2). These historical contexts – sometimes events, movements or nation-states – were illustrations rather than prescribed topics thereby providing opportunity for VCE teachers to tailor courses to the specific needs of their student cohorts because VCAB (1990) identified “the needs and aspiration of the students” (p. 11) as the first key factor for VCE History
teachers to keep in mind when developing a course.

### Table 2: Units in the VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Areas of Study</th>
<th>Selection of historical contexts / topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Local History</td>
<td>AOS1: Family Life</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Patterns of Local Economy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Community Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: History of Migration</td>
<td>AOS1: Reasons for Emigration</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Interaction and Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Twentieth Century History (1900-1945)</td>
<td>AOS1: Crisis and Conflict</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Social Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Cultural Expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Twentieth Century History (since 1945)</td>
<td>AOS1: Ideas and Political Power</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Social Movements</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>AOS3: The Growth of Internationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Imperialism and Colonialism</td>
<td>AOS1: Indigenous Culture and Conquest</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: The Colonising Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Resistance, Reactions and Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: ‘Liberty’ and ‘Authority’</td>
<td>AOS1: The Nature of Established Authority</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Dissenting Groups and Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Change and Continuity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Technology and Change</td>
<td>AOS1: The Background to Technological Change</td>
<td>Any historical context/s relating to the themes may be selected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Technological Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: The Impact of Technological Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Australian History</td>
<td>AOS1: Culture and Identity</td>
<td>Courses should be based on selected topics or themes appropriate to the objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: Economy and Society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS3: Social Life and Social Practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS4: Power and Authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Culture and Contact in the Pacific</td>
<td>AOS1: Pre-European Pacific Society</td>
<td>An investigation of pre-European societies in the Pacific, with particular reference to Polynesia and Melanesia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS2: European “Discovery” of the Pacific</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AOS3: The Impact of European Settlement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AOS4: From Colonialism to Independence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: History</td>
<td>AOS1: Sources of Knowledge</td>
<td>Courses should be based on selected topics or themes appropriate to the objectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Study Design also looks somewhat radical in comparison to what came before and after it because of its distinctive philosophical orientation. A section from the introduction of *History: Course Development Support Materials* (VCAB, 1990) is quoted at length here to really illustrate its orientation:

History is the study and practice of making meaning of the past. It is also the study of the problems associated with establishing and representing meaning. The History Study Design has at its basis the notion that there is no one definitive story of the past waiting to be uncovered. Around significant historical events and issues there have been competing meanings. However one meaning has generally been accorded legitimacy and represented more often than other meanings. The History Study Design encourages students to gain an understanding of established versions and to question and analyse them. It is based on the notion that courses will integrate ‘the story and its critique’ rather than the idea that students have to be immersed in the story before they can engage in critique. The Study Design requires resources used in courses should reflect the variety of ways historical meaning has been represented (such as history textbooks feature films, documentaries, oral histories, commemorations) and the ways in which these representations compete with each other. (p. 1)
Representation and students’ capacity to question and critique history are foregrounded. History is framed as contested and problematic, evidenced by an emphasis on “evaluation of historical interpretation and representation” (VCAB, 1991, p. 1). The Study Design encouraged students to respond “creatively and critically” to historical representations – including critically examining sources in terms of “the interest/values/implications” that they reflect – and to understand the “importance of social memory and its role in society” (VCAB, 1990, p. 2). The overall tone and aspirations of these documents encouraged a strong sense of inquiry, critical thinking, creativity and contestability.

To some extent the 1991 Study Design resonates with historiographical developments in its contemporary context, albeit in a simplified form. Representation is a concept at the heart of postmodern thinking (W. Thompson, 2004) that questions the capacity of accounts, historical or otherwise, to represent reality (Munslow, 2006). When the Study Design was conceived, postmodernism was well established on the theoretical map (Bertens, 1994). In the 1980s a new postmodern historicism, influenced by poststructuralist literary theory emerged; it attacked the metanarratives that characterised modernity, questioned the status of historical evidence and expanded the range of historical sources that could be deconstructed (Munslow, 1997; W. Thompson, 2004). Metanarrative or “a narrative about narratives” (Munslow, 2006, p. 200) presents a master narrative or story told about human knowledge and history (Munslow, 2006). In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard (1984) postulated: “I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives” (p. xvi). White (1973) introduced the concept of metahistory to historiography in the early 1970s as a strategy for questioning the authority of historical narrative. Within Victorian history curriculum policy and discourse, a dominant metanarrative or a West method approach had largely shaped Asia-related history, in which the West was represented as hegemonic and the principle reference point in the narrative of world history (see Chapter 4).
Just as ‘history from below’ was absorbed into history education in the 1970s (see Chapter 4), the Study Design may have been informed by elements of contemporary approaches that took a less rigid approach to narrative and were open to multiple perspectives. Parallels can be drawn with analysis of the radical 1992 NSW Years 7-10 History Syllabus, which included social histories, women’s perspectives and indigenous perspectives (Parkes, 2009). The conditions that made it possible for these ‘new histories’ to make their way into the syllabus were influenced by the effects of ‘history from below’, which was not constituted by postmodernism per se, but the discourses compatible with postmodernism: neo-Marxism, feminism and multiculturalism (Parkes, 2009).

The 1991 Study Design is inclusive of social histories, as well as the “historiographical and methodological issues which underlie the work of historians” (VCAB, 1991, p. 1). This reflects Seixas’ (2000) argument that conflicting interpretations concerning the ‘best story’ of the past can be approached with a postmodern orientation in school history that “reflects uncertainty about the notion of a ‘best story’” (p. 20). He suggests that a postmodern orientation does not “arrive at a “best” or most valid position on the basis of historical evidence as to understand how different groups organise the past into histories and how their rhetorical and narratological strategies serve present-day purposes” (pp. 20-21).

The postmodern inclinations of the 1991 Study Design are hinted at – students were encouraged to challenge the notion of history as definitive, and to question how and for what purpose it becomes established and legitimated. As the following examples show, the Study Design provided some opportunities to grapple with these critiques and also show how elements of history curriculum continued to be framed by more conventional reference points.

Tentative steps were taken to identify metanarrative as an historiographical issue: “the story must be re-opened, re-examined and disputed” (VCAB, 1990, p. 2). Most of the units were thematic rather than chronological. They tended to focus on big ideas and concepts rather than the narratives of traditional setting-specific
approaches to history. This is illustrated by titles such as Unit 2 Liberty and Authority, Unit 2 Technology and Change, or Unit 4 The City in History (see Table 2). Content was not prescribed in units 1 and 2; teachers could select any historical event or context that was appropriate to the outcomes of the course, as shown by the right hand column in Table 2 and units 3 and 4 offered a range of historical contexts that could be selected. This flexible approach to content was described as “not conventionally named or organised” (VCAB, 1990, p. 3).

Students were also encouraged to grapple with historiographical issues and to expand their skills in analysing and developing historical interpretations (VCAB, 1990, 1991). For example, the VCAB espoused a “method for active learning” (VCAB, 1990, p. 2) that encouraged critical examination of a range of sources and indicated “the single textbook approach is not appropriate” (VCAB, 1990, p. 2). Such an approach is congruent with Levstik’s (1996) explanation of history for cultural transformation: “At the classroom level, instruction would shift from an emphasis on ‘a story well told’ (or, the story as told in a textbook), to an emphasis on ‘sources well scrutinised’” (p. 394). However, some of these ‘innovations’ for active learning and thematic approaches, share similarities with the New History discourse of the 1970s (see Chapter 4) indicating the periodic reappearance of discursive practices over time.

When the units are analysed more closely, inconsistency between approaches to Asia-related history highlights the tension between the established West as method discourse and the discourse of innovation. The units on imperialism and colonialism provide scope to challenge the dominant discourse of Western metanarrative because Europe was not taken as the essential reference point. This is illustrated by the following examples:

- Unit 2 Imperialism and Colonialism focuses on “the moral and political issues associated with the colonisation of one people by another”, including understanding “the ways in which societies remember their imperial or colonial past, and the role of that memory in society” (VCAB, 1991, p. 29).

AOS1 Indigenous Culture and Conquest examines pre-colonial society in
order to recognise the “sophistication inherent in the organisation and culture of these peoples” (VCAB, 1991, p. 30). AOS2 The Colonising Experience encourages an analysis of the power structures and ideologies that enabled colonial control. AOS3 Resistance, Reactions and Outcomes focuses on anti-colonial movements, including “the long-term effects of colonial experience and the process of de-colonisation” (VCAB, 1991, p. 31).

- Unit 2 ‘Liberty’ and ‘Authority’ explores anti-colonial movements and the use of inverted commas in the title signals the contestation of these terms. Similar to the above unit, the colonising or colonised societies are not prescribed and therefore any colonial experiences in any period could be examined.

- Unit 3 and 4 Culture Contact in the Pacific represents Pacific societies as hybrid, agentic and dynamic. The use of *culture contact* as the conceptual framework of the unit signals that the unit set out to challenge notions of cultural isolation and challenge misconceptions about Pacific culture being “somehow fixed and self-perpetuating until ‘disturbed’ by European contact” (VCAB, 1990, p. 86). This framework instead views culture contact as a continuum of cross-cultural interaction (Cusick, 2015) and is underscored by the use of inverted commas in AOS2 European ‘Discovery’ of the Pacific.

The foregrounding of indigenous perspectives and the structuring of units from the pre-colonial to de-colonial reflects a resistance to the representation of imperialism and colonialism as teleological processes of modernist European history. Despite the language of the units sometimes being clumsy and of its time, with references to the ‘West’ and the ‘third world’ and ‘these peoples’, the approach is reminiscent of a deimperialised (Chen, 2010) approach to world history because they position the societies as active agents within world history, rather than just products of colonialism. Such an approach to Western metanarrative signifies a move closer to
doing postmodern history (Chakrabarty, 2000; Munslow, 1997) and may also represent an awareness of contemporary developments in postcolonial discourse.

Developments in postcolonial theory contribute to the historiographical conditions of possibility during the period the 1991 Study Design was developed. For example, during the 1980s the work of Spivak and the Subaltern Studies Group drew attention to the representation of oppressed groups, particularly in South Asia (Gandhi, 1998). A connection to this literature is seen more directly in the VCE History resources listed in the course support material (VCAB, 1990) as a number of texts by Chakrabarty, a postcolonial historian and member of the Subaltern Studies Group, are referenced. Writing in the influential *White Mythologies* Young (1990) notes that the deconstructive work of postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism centred on the deconstruction of the “the concept, the authority, and assumed primacy of, the category of ‘the West’” (p. 51). To some extent the orientation of the above units enabled the hegemonic status of the West to be challenged and provided space for students to recognise counter narratives and discourses, depending on how the curriculum was enacted by teachers.

The counter discursive approach of the above units is not consistent throughout the new Study Design; not all units are designed in a way that overtly challenges the European culture contact model. The following examples are inclusive of Asia to an extent but are more evocative of the West as method discourse with its universalising worldview and metanarrative of scientific progress:

- Unit 2 Technology and Change does not prescribe topics and is inclusive of Asian societies. China and Japan are the only examples of technological repudiators: “in some societies, decisions were made not to adopt available new technology and restrict exposure to it, as in medieval China and Japan” (VCAB, 1991, p. 42). This contrasts with numerous examples of England’s “technological change and modernisation” (VCAB, 1991, p. 42). The West is tacitly positioned as the harbinger of modernity and technological advancement, in contrast to Asia, which is positioned as backward and isolationist. Although this pattern is not embedded in the aims of the course,
it indicates how the specific examples provided can inadvertently position the West as superior.

- Units 3 and 4 History of Western Ideas include the knowledge of: “how people in different times in the western world have interacted, organised their societies and given meaning to their world” and “an awareness of power, race, gender, class, ideology in the history of western ideas” (VCAB, 1991, p. 67). Sample contexts include a History of Mathematics, the Enlightenment and Feminism. Opportunity to evaluate concepts like power, race and ideology provide opportunity to critically evaluate the category of the West, however, the unit does not provide scope for comparisons with non-Western histories or the cross-pollination of ideas across the globe.

- Unit 3 and 4 The City in History requires two topics to be selected from: Classical Athens, Classical Rome, Renaissance Florence, Renaissance Venice, Modern New York, Colonial Calcutta or Colonial Shanghai. The prefacing adjectives – classical, Renaissance, modern, colonial – signpost a Western-centric way of seeing the world, in which Asian cities are not explored in their own right but through the prism of colonialism. In a short report in Agora on a meeting of ‘Asian History teachers’, it is noted that “there was a lot of interest in and enthusiasm for the City in History using Shanghai and Calcutta as case studies, but the feeling was that teachers and schools lacked the resources to implement this exciting possibility” (Williams, 1991, p. 12). This contrasted with a report from ‘European History teachers’ which said teachers felt well-resourced and were likely to study Florence and Venice (Williams, 1991, p. 12). This highlights a material effect of the West as method discourse – a lack of textbooks and source material for the Asian cities in comparison to well-resourced European cities – and the symbolic effect – the binaristic labelling of Asian/European History teachers.

These units represent a Western way of viewing the world and provide evidence of the underlying presence of political historicism. Chakrabarty’s (2000) notion of
political historicism offers a critique of the predisposition to consistently take Europe as the starting point of history which in effect accentuates the distance between the historical time between the West and the non-West and legitimates the idea of civilisation in the colonies. It is almost impossible to avoid the universalising concepts of modern European thought and history which include notions of scientific rationality, citizenship, human rights, social justice, democracy and so on; they are an inevitable and ubiquitous part of Western historical method and discourse (Chakrabarty, 2000). Yet these units illustrate how curriculum design is constrained by the material conditions, historiography and imagination of the West as method, and how these work to reinforce particular discourses, even when they are available for critique.

On the surface, there was provision to include Asia-related histories in almost every unit of the Study Design. The discourse of regional engagement articulated within the Ingelson Report (1989), the Garnaut Report (1989) and the Asian Studies Project (1990) is vaguely referred to in the introduction of the VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991):

This study introduces students to a range of thematic and chronological histories. These major areas and themes are of importance to Australian students in the late twentieth century: the history of Australia (including local history and Koori history), the history of the region of which Australia is a part [emphasis added], European history which provides the cultural roots of a large part of the Australian population... (p. 1).

The History: Course Development Support Materials (VCAB, 1990) provides a sample Asian History course:

- Unit 1: Imperialism and Colonialism – India;
- Unit 2 Liberty and Authority – Gandhi;
- Units 3 and 4: The City in History – Colonial Shanghai and Colonial Calcutta;
- Units 3 and 4 Nationalism and the Modern State – Indonesia and India (p. 4).

The emphasis here is on India. Although few Asian nations are included, the limited inclusion of China is concurrent with the period in which Australia-China bilateral relations were cooling (see Chapter 4). While the units on colonialism and nationalism provided scope to challenge the West as method metanarrative by
critically evaluating the short and long term impact of imperialism and colonialism, this sample Asian history course is still framed largely by a colonial narrative because these units are centred on the processes of colonisation.

We cannot know what historical contexts teachers chose, however, Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History illustrate how the Study Design tacitly encourages the study of Euro-American contexts over Asian contexts. AOS1 Crisis and Conflict could examine a range of events and places and AOS2 Social Life and AOS3 Cultural Expression provided scope for cultural histories and trans-Asian histories to be enacted, but the examples listed in the unit descriptions are Euro-American: World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, turmoil in Germany, T.S. Eliot, D.H Lawrence, Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, Lang’s *Metropolis*, Stravinsky, Bartok, Billie Holiday, Scott Joplin, the surrealist and the Dadaists (VCAB, 1991, pp. 18-19). Unit 2 Twentieth Century History provided the only Asia-related topic suggestion: the Vietnam War, which sits within a Cold War context and focuses on Western intervention. This highlights two tensions. The open-ended nature of these areas of study means the responsibility for content selection lies entirely with the teachers. But, the specific type of examples provided, limit the subject position available to them when making these decisions about content.

The first ever *VCE History Study Design* (VCAB, 1991) was ambitious. Theoretically, the open-ended structure and content of units presented a high degree of latitude for teachers and students. While it delivered some of the curriculum innovations it promised, it also followed established conventions. Historiographically it was innovative, encouraging students to critique historical representations and to question established versions of what Seixas (2000) describes as the best story. Although postmodernism and postcolonialism are not directly referenced, their intellectual influence permeates the overall approach of the study – a feature criticised by conservatives as overly relativist and revisionist (see below and Chapter 7). Further, the Study Design included a range of Asia-related content, although there are some incongruities in the way Asia-related histories are represented or framed. Units that provided scope to resist dominant metanarratives were more
likely to represent Asia as an active participant in world history rather than a product of imperialism and colonialism.

5.4 Analysis of the 1996 VCE History Study Design policy process

The 1996 Study Design (VBOS, 1996) was the third major iteration of the VCE Study Design and saw the introduction of Units 3 and 4 Asian History. It represents a significant curricular moment because it is one of the few distinguishable moments when VCE History curriculum unambiguously intersects with the national Australia-Asia agenda. This curriculum document is produced at the apex of Asia literacy policy development, right in the middle of the Asia literacy ‘golden age phase’ of 1991 to 2005, which was characterised by significant Asia literacy government initiatives (Halse, 2015a). The following analysis shows how these conditions were conducive to the inclusion of stand-alone Asian History units, despite the ongoing philosophical frictions that marked Asia literacy discourse in the mid 1990s and a steady decline in student enrolments in senior History.

The increased uptake of the discourse of Asia literacy through policy rhetoric and the heightened value placed on engagement with Asia under Paul Keating’s Labor government is illustrated by two significant federal government policy initiatives in the early to mid-1990s: the establishment of the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) and the Asian Languages and Australia’s Economic Future (Rudd, 1994). By the time Paul Keating became Prime Minister at the end of 1991, adoption of the new regionalism meant Asia had become a well-established national policy priority and Asia literacy was integral to the government’s macroeconomic reform (Henderson, 2003, 2008). Consequently, economism dominated and constrained the discourse around the study of Asian languages and cultures (Henderson, 2003, 2008). Keating (2000) was convinced that “our future lay comprehensively in Asia” (p. 15) and expedited foreign and domestic initiatives to support this agenda, including in education. The founding of the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) was one significant step in this direction. With a substantial investment of $3.5 million dollars over three years from the Department of Employment, Education and Training, the AEF
aimed to promote studies of Asia across the curriculum (Muller, 1996). It soon became an established and influential nexus between Asia literacy policy and school practice (Halse, 2015a).

In comparison to previous government reports, significant outcomes stemmed from the *Asian Languages and Australia’s Economic Future* (Rudd, 1994), or Rudd Report, commissioned in 1992 by the Councils for Australian Governments (COAG) and authored by Kevin Rudd, then Queensland’s Director General of the Office of Cabinet and later Prime Minister. Bipartisan support for the Rudd Report, and its national strategy for Asia literacy, was unprecedented and ended decades of inertia from Australian governments and the education system (Henderson, 2008). The report argued:

> Both dimensions - cost competitiveness and cultural literacy - are critical to Australia securing its economic future in the region and the world. For these reasons, Australia requires an export culture which is "Asia literate" - i.e. one which possesses the range of linguistic and cultural competencies required by Australians to operate effectively at different levels in their various dealings with the region (Rudd, 1994, p. 2).

Although both the cultural and economic dimensions are acknowledged here, the desired cultural competencies were essential to trade and strategic purposes. Much less emphasis was placed on studies of Asian cultures and languages as a social imperative that could counter racism and contribute deeper intercultural understanding to multicultural Australia (Erebus, 2002). In recognition of East-Asia as “the power-house of world growth” (Rudd, 1994, p. 18) the report argued for a focus on Australia’s top export markets and recommended “that the overall four priority languages for future expansion through the Australian school system be Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean” (Rudd, 1994, p. v). As a result Commonwealth funding was allocated and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Taskforce in 1994 to oversee the implementation of the NALSAS Strategy.

NALSAS also influenced the nature of the discourse around engagement with Asia in education. The tensions apparent in the discourse of the late 1980s characterised by competing cultural and economic rationales (see Chapter 4) were recast in the
form of a discord between Asian studies advocates and Asian languages advocates. Asian studies proponents claimed that the infusion approach – integrating studies of Asia through discipline-based learning – was cheaper and less disruptive to school programs (Henderson, 2003). However, the study of languages, above cultures, took precedence in the economic rationalist argument and reverberating government rhetoric, despite the acknowledgement of the need to develop both linguistic and cultural competencies (Henderson, 2003).

A lack of consensus continued to distinguish the Asia literacy project. While NALSAS might have appeared to be a successful policy response, the gulf between its intent and its implementation signal it as a policy problem (Halse, 2015c). Bilateral agreements were adopted by the education authorities of all States and Territories (Erebus, 2002). However, behind this apparent collaboration, the federal government struggled to gain unequivocal support across all jurisdictions (Erebus, 2002; Halse, 2015c). The privileging of languages was reinforced by a Commonwealth funding model that allocated 60 per cent to Asian languages and 40 per cent to studies of Asia, with States only contributing 10 per cent of their funds to studies of Asia (Erebus, 2002). Variances in the form and level of commitment resulted in the inconsistent realisation of the goals of NALSAS (Halse, 2015c).

Further constraints included: the federal government’s limited ability to monitor spending and outcomes at the state level or address the shortage of language teachers; a crowded curriculum; a lack of teacher expertise and professional learning; limited resources; and a general lack of support for Asia literacy from school leaders and systems (Halse, 2015c).

During this period, a counter discourse developed comprising critiques of homogenising constructions of Asia and Asia literacy. Broinowski’s (1992b) *The Yellow Lady: Australian impressions of Asia*, for example, argued that prevailing perceptions of Asia were Eurocentric. Her keynote address to a HTAV conference was published in full in *Agora* and in contesting the very label of ‘Asia’, which she argues needs to be placed in inverted commas, Broinowski (1992a) contends history educators should not ask “is our future in Asia?” but rather they should reveal to
students “that our past, too, has always been in Asia” (p. 31). Other scholars highlighted the racism inherent in the Orientalist positioning of the Australia-Asia relationship and the general ambivalence towards addressing it in Australia; externally Asia was framed as the Other and internally Asian Australians were positioned as the Other (Nozaki & Inokuchi, 1996; Rizvi, 1993, 1996; M. G. Singh, 1995, 1996a; M. G. Singh, 1996b; M. G. Singh & Miller, 1995). Lo Bianco (1996) expresses the sentiment of this counter discourse:

For ‘Asia-literacy’ to succeed, optimally it will need to be conscious that it raises questions of Australian identity, inevitably plural and multivocal, with many and diverse ways of being Australian which interact with knowledge of ‘Asia’ in far more hybrid and productive ways than the authorised versions imagine or allow. (p. 58)

Unlike the economic rationale of NALSAS, such critiques reframe Asia literacy within deeper discussion of national identity and reconfiguring dominant constructions of Asia. Williamson-Fien (1994a) argues, “we need to deconstruct the discursive frameworks through which we ‘see’ ‘Asia’ and translate it to Asian studies” (p. 68). Having a deeper awareness of these ‘discursive frameworks’ enables these commentators to take up a subject position that is resistant to and critical of the dominant meanings attached to Asia.

The AEF’s Studies of Asia: A Statement for Australian Schools (AEF, 1995b) represents a more discursively complex response than NALSAS, as it reflects the dominant rationale for Asia literacy but also taps into the above counter discourses. Its significance to the integration of studies of Asia within the discipline of history is indicated by the inclusion of an edited but lengthy version of the statement in Agora (AEF, 1995a). The extensive consultation process that involved the collaboration of States and Territories necessitated a more balanced approach to Asia literacy. Considering the political nature of curriculum and funding, it was crucial that the AEF keep Asia literacy on the state and federal agendas (Halse, 2015c). First, it appeared to strike a balance between the languages or studies debate. Studies of Asia had a place “in all learning areas” (AEF, 1995b, p. 1), noting “where possible, in-depth studies of particular Asian societies should be accompanied by a study of the language” (AEF, 1995b, p. 10). Second, it identified a range of cultural, economic, strategic, political, social and global influences within
the educational rational without hyperbolising the economic rationalist position (see AEF, 1995b, pp. 4-7). Third, it framed ‘Asia’ in inverted commas as “a contested concept” (AEF, 1995b, p. 9), foregrounding the need to develop students’ understandings of the region’s “diversity and complexity” (AEF, 1995b, p. 9). Last, the statement reflected some awareness of the problematics of Australian identity politics, albeit in a limited way. The fact that the national statement was said to be seen by some as “a de facto national policy” (Erebus, 2002, p. 5) is suggestive of the growing authority of the AEF, and its perceived role as a an intermediary between government policy and schools.

At the same time the place of history in the curriculum was being eroded. In 1972 approximately 14,000 Year 12 students were enrolled in HSC History; by the mid-1990s enrolments had declined significantly, as illustrated by Table 3 (P. McPhee, 1995; Teese, 2014). The trend runs counter to the rise in senior secondary retention rates, which increased well beyond the goals set by the Blackburn Report (Blackburn, 1985) from around 30 per cent in the early 1980s to just under 80 per cent in the mid 1990s (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004). This was partly due to the 1991 recession, a lack of fulltime employment and increasing economic aspirations to complete school (Teese, 2014). In comparison to the HSC, VCE students had a much wider range of studies to choose from.

### Table 3: Units 3 and 4 VCE History Enrolments

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian History</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>3,310</td>
<td>2,948</td>
<td>2,582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Koori History</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revolutions</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,479</td>
<td>1,698</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>1,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The City in History</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The History of Western Ideas</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationalism and the State</strong></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>7,693</td>
<td>6,369</td>
<td>5,991</td>
<td>5,485+</td>
<td>5,398</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maryellen Davidson, Board of Studies (as cited by P. McPhee, 1995)
The decline in senior history enrolments was ascribed to the influence of SOSE but a closer look at the socio-economic context reveals other possible reasons. They are also important for understanding how Asia-related history was positioned in the Study Design in this period. First the gradual erasure of history in the years 7 to 10 SOSE configuration (see Chapter 4) was thought to have a significant impact on VCE History in the early to mid 1990s. Loss of subject identity was blamed on a drop in students choosing history in the post-compulsory years (T. Taylor, 2012). The concern for the health of history among history educators in Victoria was reflected in *Agora*: ‘History Matters!’ (Kernot, 1995), ‘Promoting History in Your School’ (Zanella & Lane, 1995), ‘The State of History in SOSE’ (Cupper, 1995), ‘The Decline of History – What Can Be Done?’ (Gray, 1995).

Second, this apparent crisis in school history can be considered within its socio-economic context. In his keynote address for the 1995 HTAV conference published in *Agora* Professor Peter McPhee (1995) from the University of Melbourne’s School of History does not blame SOSE. McPhee (1995) argues that history’s parlous state in schools could to a large extent be attributed to students choosing new subjects like Business Management, Legal Studies, Psychology and Health instead of History. An implication of his argument is that attitudes towards new and old subject areas are an effect of the economic rationalist discourse. Such choices reflect the market values of “the hegemony of economic rationalism in public discourse” and a failure “to convince students that the skills that they acquire through studying History are applicable to many rewarding forms of employment” (1995, p. 8). He also attributed decline in Year 12 enrolments to universities offering grade loadings to students that studied Languages and Mathematics in VCE (P. McPhee, 1995). When this is put in context with the above Asia studies/languages debate, studying an Asian (or other) language provides a more tangible reward than the study of Asian histories and cultures in VCE History units.

This points to the paradox of secondary History as a potential site for Asia literacy development. On one hand, economic rationalism and the discourse of national self-interest that dominated Asia literacy rationales contributed to an expectation that history subjects could play an instrumental role in nurturing understanding of
the region’s histories and cultures. On the other hand, the same forces appeared to be persuading students to select subjects that were perceived to have demonstrably instrumental purposes.

Third, changes made to assessment in the VCE in the mid 1990s shape the conditions of possibility for curriculum development and enactment. In late 1992 the State Labor government was replaced by Jeff Kennett’s conservative government, which had campaigned on reform of VCE assessment, a reform that was championed by the Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University (C. Collins, 2011). The new government appointed the Victorian Board of Studies (VBOS) in 1993, which proceeded to make major changes to assessment including the reinstatement of traditional external examinations (Teese, 2014). Results now constituted 50 per cent internal assessment and 50 per cent external assessment (C. Collins, 2011). Standardisation renewed the emphasis on performance in external examinations, which consequently superimposed the old hierarchy of subjects of the HSC onto the VCE (Teese, 2014). The impact of the regime of external exams on teachers’ discursive practices will be considered in more detail in Chapter 6. This change occurred at the same time as a resurgence of conservative accounts of Australian history.

Thus the last significant influence on attitudes towards history education was a combination of intellectual, historiographical and ideologically tinged debate. The discourse around the ‘black armband’ view of history that later took shape as the ‘history wars’ emerged in this period. In 1993, Blainey labelled the critical approaches to Australian history, and of leftist historians, as the ‘black armband’ view of history because they were overly negative, which gained him support from conservative commentators and politicians on the right (McKenna, 1998). Proponents of the black armband view were said to prefer the term European ‘invasion’ rather than ‘settlement’ and emphasised the wrongs experienced by Aborigines; this contrasted with the traditionalist ‘three cheers’ view that celebrated European achievements (T. Taylor, 2012). This ideological debate connected to wider historiographical changes in the discipline of history. Australian historian Keith Windschuttle’s (1994) The Killing of History, a controversial text
related to the ‘black armband’ debate, presented a critique of postmodern history and warned that critical and social theory may render historians and “their discipline extinct” (p. 38). In his discussion of the decline of VCE History, McPhee (1995) considered the possibility that postcolonial and postmodern history hindered the potential take up of VCE History because it challenged the authority and certainty of historical narratives. Nonetheless he was excited by what these intellectual and historiographical developments meant for historians and History teachers.

The intersection of these developments and state politics had implications for the representation of VCE History curriculum content. Aligning with the traditionalist view, the conservative Kennett government requested that the newly formed VBOS remove the word ‘invasion’ from the revised Study Design in 1995 (Clark, 2006). The manager of the History Study Design, Maryellen Davidson, reflects on the involvement of government members on the curriculum accreditation committee: “It was seen that there was too much use of the concepts of class, gender and race—too much ‘kowtowing to political correctness’” (as cited by Clark, 2006). This suggests that the previous Study Design was perceived as overly politically correct and the content of the new Study Design was designed to correct this perceived weakness.

Thus the VCE History Study Design (VBOS, 1996) was published at a time of heightened political support for the expansion of Asia literacy across the curriculum and heightened political interest in the representation of historical narrative in curriculum, but at a time of significantly low student enrolments in history.

5.5 Analysis of the 1996 VCE History Study Design

The introductions to the 1991, 1994 and 1996 Study Designs remained almost identical over the years, except for the addition of the words “Asian history” (VBOS, 1996, p. 5) in the introduction of the 1996 iteration. It unambiguously stated: “These major areas and themes are of importance to Australian students in the late twentieth century: the history of Australia (including local history and Koori history),
Asian history – the history of the region of which Australia is a part” (VBOS, 1996, p. 5). The VCE History Study Design (VBOS, 1996) was accredited for the 1997 – 2000 period. Considering the declining trend in enrolment figures, introducing a new unit to compete with dwindling numbers in other units was a brave move, and was an indication of the sway of the Asia literacy discourse generated by NALSAS and the AEF. The content and structure of subjects was largely retained from 1991, although Units 3 and 4 Nationalism and the State and Units 3 and 4 Culture and Contact in the Pacific were removed. Their discontinuation indicated they were unsustainable, which was possibly due to some of the reasons indicated in the previous section. Also with the reintroduction of the exam, enrolments in units 3 and 4 needed to be significant enough to warrant VBOS administering an external exam. The new Asian History Units 3 and 4 (see Table 4) will be the focus of analysis in this section.

Table 4: Units 3 and 4 Asian History Areas of Study (VBOS, 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Area of Study</th>
<th>Historical contexts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>AOS1: Religions and Philosophy</td>
<td>This area of study examines the religions and philosophies of an Asian country prior to European contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>AOS2: State and society in Asia</td>
<td>China: Manchu, 1644 – c.1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>India: Mughals, c. 1525 –1707</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia: Malacca sultanate, c. 1400 – 1511</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Japan: Tokugawa, 16003 – 1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Korea: 688 – 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam: Le dynasty, 1428 – 1789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>AOS3: The Age of Imperialism</td>
<td>This area of study focuses on the colonial experience on one Asian country or in the case of Japan in response to the fear of Western domination and consideration of its invasions of neighbouring states in the first half of the twentieth century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>AOS4: World War II and beyond</td>
<td>This area of study focuses on the effects of World War II on one Asian country and the transformations of the post-war era.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the structure and content of these units reveals strengths and limitations in their representation of Asia. As discussed in Chapter 2, the labelling of Asia has long been problematic. These units underscore the paradox presented by the concurrent labelling of Asia as a homogenous or monolithic signifier but also as separate nation-states approached as separate isolated national studies. Units 3
and 4 Asian History provided “a framework in which to develop a detailed historical understanding of one Asian nation – China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea or Vietnam – based on Asian and European perspectives” (VBOS, 1996, p. 62). These are the only VCE units across all the Study Designs in which an entire year can be dedicated to an in-depth study of one country, except for the Australian History units. While this might be considered a strength because it allows for a rich and comprehensive investigation, it is also a limitation because it does not provide an opportunity to develop historical understandings of broader regional connections, including with Australia. The delineation of the study of religions and philosophy according to modern nation-state borders is quite different to the thematic approach of the 1991 Study Design. However, this approach may have been a strength in the eyes of teachers and VBOS administrators because a single national study is more convenient to resource.

While viewing nation-states separately recognises the diversity of Asia to some extent, one country is not representative of ‘Asian history’. This tension is illustrated further by the essay questions in the exam:

Were religious and philosophical beliefs always important in the governing of Asian countries before the nineteenth century? Answer with reference to the Asian country and the period of history you studied.

‘Nationalist movements in Asia after 1939 were united and effective in the attempt to overcome foreign imperialism.’ Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Provide evidence from the history of the Asian country that you studied. (VBOS, 1997, pp. 56-57)

The first part of the essay question implicitly fuses Asia as a region, yet the governance of Asian countries or nationalist movements in Asia are examined through one single country. Thinking about this another way, the study of nationalist movements in Italy would not be seen to exemplify European history. It is a reminder of the inadequacy of the label ‘Asian History’ but a label nonetheless that is more convenient for curriculum designers than explicitly differentiating between Indonesian history, Korean history or Vietnamese history, for example.

To some extent this conceptualisation of Asia in the Study Design reflects the way it
was conceptualised in its contemporary policy context. It does not grapple with ‘Asia’ as “a contested concept” (AEF, 1995b, p. 9) as encouraged by the AEF’s national statement. It is however, more representative of the discourse of regional engagement and national self-interest which prioritised Australia’s key trading partners. The six nations that may be studied – China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea or Vietnam – correspond with the discursive Asia represented by Australia-Asia policy in the mid 1990s. Outside of this context they each represent intrinsically fascinating and worthwhile sites of study, and were probably some of the better-resourced options in terms of learning and teaching materials. However, at the time, Japan was Australia’s top trading partner, Korea was number two, China was number five and Indonesia was number eight. These selections also corresponded with the (trade) languages targeted by NALSAS: Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean. The potential for economic rationalism to skew Australia’s approach to studies of Asia had previously been acknowledged: “Because economic rationalism has an economic base, only some parts of Asia are held to be of “real” importance: those that are economically important to Australia at this time” (Reeves, 1992, p. 66). The fact that Asian History was introduced at a time of decreasing enrolments also underscores that national Asia education policy was a powerful and relevant force on Victorian history curriculum.

The approach to studying national histories in isolation as a mode of studies of Asia attracted criticisms in the 1990s. In the Agora article entitled ‘Teaching Asian History – Changing Old Approaches’ Davis (1992) observes that “Asian history still tends to follow traditional chronological content-based approaches in many schools” (p. 30) instead of more innovative and integrated inquiry models. Williamson-Fien (1994b) was critical of studies of Asia being studied within traditional disciplines, particularly history with its politico/military focus. She argued that because history struggled to incorporate new and challenging issues and alternative voices, Asian studies should be a separate subject with goals similar to feminist studies and cultural studies – enabling the interrogation of old knowledges and the creation of new ways of knowing. Lastly she contends that Asia is nearly always studied separate to Australia and other societies, which denied “the extent to which Australian culture and society are already Asianised” (Williamson-Fien,
The transformative capacity of historical method is questioned here due to its established prejudices and traditional approaches. Moreover, these views exemplify the humanist defence of studies of Asia, which valued cultural enrichment over the government’s utilitarian emphasis (Henderson 2003).

An overriding West as method approach in effect positions Asia as weak and passive, which is also evident through the use of Europe as the central reference point. The 1996 Study Design notes that the study is based on Asian and European perspectives and the unit rationale states, “understanding is to be directed at developing an appreciation of cultural perspectives prior to European contact with Asia and the development of imperialism and colonialism from a colonial and indigenous perspective” (VBOS, 1996, p. 62). The language assumes the juxtaposition of a single colonial perspective and a single indigenous perspective, maintaining “the simple binary of coloniser and colonised” (C. Hall, 1996).

Throughout the descriptor for AOS1 it is stated no less than three times that it refers to the dominant religions and philosophies “prior to European contact” (VBOS, 1996, pp. 63-64). The framing of each area of study tends to maintain a Eurocentric culture contact model. Cusick (2015) argues such an approach “has fuelled a Euro-American ideology that indigenous cultures, indeed non-Western cultures, must give way to the spread of ‘modernity’ as represented in the European and North American concept of the world” (p. 15). The binary is also evidenced by references to “the East” in contrast to “Western societies” (VBOS, 1996, pp. 64-65). This highlights the persistence of political historicism in which European contact represented the touchstone for configuring historical processes in Asia.

The positioning of Asia as submissive and inferior is another limitation, even though there is an attempt to consider the strengths of Asian societies. For example, in AOS2 State and Society in Asia, it says:

This area of study builds on area of study 1 by examining the political and economic foundations of one of these societies in the period prior to European invasion. What were the strengths of these societies? What vulnerabilities can we detect that contributed to their subordination by
European invaders who had initially come as merchants and missionaries? (VBOS, 1996, p. 64)

This formulation connotes an attempt to redress imperialised understandings but the discontinuity in the language reinforces a power dynamic in which Europe is superior. AOS4 World War II required regional relations to focus on “ways in which World War II continues to feature in the popular and international relations of the states of Asia” (VBOS, 1996, p. 66). The foregrounding of political and economic motivations for imperial collapse is common according to Craggs and Wintle (2016), who have highlighted that “in many studies of the post 1945 world, decolonisation remained demoted to a subplot feeding into more prominent narratives of European post-war reconstruction, the Cold War and the ascendancy of the United States” (p. 4). Furthermore the units’ disproportionate emphases on the colonisation of these Asian societies and the limited attention given to the processes of decolonisation, further privileges an Eurocentric view of the world and supports the point that Asia tends to be viewed as a colonial imagination (Chen, 2010; Craggs & Wintle, 2016).

It is tempting to read the inclusion of Units 3 and 4 Asian History as emblematic of the Asia literacy golden age phase or as a perfunctory attempt to validate the discourse of national self-interest with more “history of the region of which Australia is a part” (VBOS, 1996, p. 5). However, it is worthwhile remembering that Asian history had been a consistent option in earlier Victorian history curricula. Either way it did not remain; the units were relegated from Year 12 to Year 11 in the following Study Design (VBOS, 1999), morphing into Unit 1 Imperialism in Asia and Unit 2 Nationalism in Asia. Overall, the Asia represented by these units is largely rendered by a colonial worldview, confined to the borders of the nation-state and enmeshed in the discourse of regional engagement.

5.6 Analysis of the 2004 VCE History Study Design policy process

The 2004 Study Design is distinct from its precursors. At the macro level the ‘golden age’ of Asia literacy policy was beginning to fade (Halse, 2015a). John Howard’s
neo-conservative Coalition government replaced the Keating Labor government in 1996. Under the Howard government the public and political discourse around history education focussed on Australian history, that is, national literacy rather than Asia literacy. The ‘history wars’ discourse was rekindled under Howard, who brought Blainey’s black armband metaphor to national prominence (Parkes, 2007). Underlying racial tensions were also contributing to the national mood. In the late 1990s, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party had come to national prominence, fuelling fears about increased immigration with populist rhetoric about an ‘Asian invasion’ which Hanson described in Parliament as Australia “being swamped by Asians” (as cited by Koleth, 2017, para. 2). For some, Hanson was echoing the sentiments of conservative critiques of multiculturalism (Koleth, 2017).

In response to the growing disquiet about SOSE in 1990s and the approaching centenary of Australian federation, Dr David Kemp, federal Minister for Education, announced a National Inquiry into School History in November 1999. The first federal inquiry of its sort, this was unusual because curriculum was not a federal responsibility. A national civics survey revealed that only 36 per cent of survey respondents could recognise Edmond Barton as Australia’s first Prime Minister (Clark, 2006). The Howard government was concerned that young Australians were lacking in civic knowledge and largely ignorant of national history.

Led by Associate Professor Tony Taylor, the National Inquiry into School History drew on an extensive review of national and international research; interviews with curriculum officials and stakeholders; teacher focus groups; school visits; and a survey across all Australian states and territories (Burley, 2012). One of the discussion questions was: “Does the curriculum adequately reflect Australia’s role as a member of the Asia-Pacific region and as part of the global community?” (as cited by Percival Wood, 2012, p. 327). This indicates there was some interplay between the Asia literacy discourse and history curriculum but as the foci of the summit were Australian history and the impact of SOSE, it was a peripheral concern. Consistent with the government’s purpose for the investigation, Taylor’s (2012) team concluded that SOSE had been detrimental to the distinct identity of History...
and to effective history teaching. In Victoria in particular, the loss of subject identity was believed to have had a negative impact on senior enrolments during the 1990s (T. Taylor, 2001). Based on the analysis of the conditions of possibility for history curriculum presented in the previous section the continued problematisation of SOSE means that other important contextual, socio-economic and historiographical influences may have been overlooked.

In 2001, The Future of the Past report was presented to Minister Kemp and as a result the National History Project was launched and the National Centre for History Education (NCHE) was developed. For history teachers, a key contribution of the inquiry and the NCHE was the development of professional development resources, including the comprehensive Making History: A Guide for the Teaching and Learning of History in Australian Schools (T. Taylor & Young, 2003). Making History made an important contribution to the development of history pedagogy, bringing Australia somewhat up to speed with international developments in history education research.

Asia policy shifted under the Howard government. Howard adopted an “Asia-first, but not only Asia” approach to trade and diplomacy which resulted in a reaffirming of defence and trade alliances with the United States and Britain and sought to distinguish the conservative Coalition from the Asia-enmeshment policies of the Hawke-Keating era (Halse, 2015a, 2015c; National Archives of Australia, 2016). Initially the Coalition continued to support NALSAS through the implementation of the NALSAS Strategic Plan 1999-2002 (Curriculum Corporation, 1999). In 2002 the Review of Studies of Asia in Australian Schools (Erebus, 2002), a report commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, found that “the position of studies of Asia in Australian schools has been significantly enhanced since the commencement of the NALSAS strategy” (Erebus, 2002, p. vi). However, it also suggested that this work was in danger of being wasted unless further strategic funding supported studies of Asia to a level of sustainability (Erebus, 2002). One quarter of schools were not teaching about Asia at all and another quarter only superficially (Erebus, 2002, p. vi). Furthermore a lack of teacher knowledge was seen to be “the greatest barrier to further
implementation” (Erebus, 2002, p. vi). Despite recommending continued funding to the end of the next NALSAS program cycle in 2006 (Erebus, 2002, p. vii), the Howard government announced that the $120 million NALSAS funding would instead terminate in 2002, providing a convenient cut in federal expenditure at a time when the government sought to restore its budget surplus (Halse, 2015c; Henderson, 2008). Rudd (2002), former chair of the NALSAS taskforce, accused then Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, of “a huge act of national vandalism” (para.5).

The discourse of national self-interest that propelled Asia engagement had lost currency under the new government. This is illustrated in the title of the report *Maximising Australia’s Asia Knowledge: Repositioning and Renewal of a National Asset* (ASAA, 2002). Published by the Asian Studies Association of Australia, it recognised that “Australia’s capacity to understand its nearest neighbours and largest trading partners is stagnant or declining” (ASAA, 2002, p. xv) and recommended, “renewed efforts to embed the study of Asia in Years 11 and 12 curriculums in all states and territories and to ensure the study of Asia is part of the training of all future teachers” (ASAA, 2002, p. xv). Kathe Kirby (2004), then executive director of the AEF, noted that despite the solid progress made by the AEF, the current fragility of studies of Asia in the curriculum presented serious challenges. The cessation of NALSAS compounded the general recognition that Asia across the curriculum was vulnerable in the long term (Kirby, 2004). Funding for Access Asia programs fell by 80 per cent and teacher participation in professional development declined by 75 per cent (Kirby, 2004).

In contrast to these anxieties and the marginalisation of Asia literacy discourse, the presence of Asian history in fact increased in the pages of *Agora* throughout the early 2000s, in the form of articles and entire editions dedicated to Asian history. The third Asia dedicated edition of *Agora* – subtitled *Studying Asian History* – contained a surfeit of articles on both Asia and Asia-Australia related histories. The HTAV President observed that although the study of Asia had experienced mixed fortunes over the past decade he was optimistic because “VCE has had a long and close connection with Asia” and “builds on a love of the area nurtured by History
teachers in the years leading up to VCE” (Danks, 2002, p. 1). A fourth dedicated Asian history edition followed in 2003, in which the AEF promoted its strong partnership with the HTAV (Welch, 2003).

At the national level there was the sense that Asia literacy policy had lost momentum as public discourse was more focused on the contestation of Australian history and the politics of national identity. Nonetheless Asia-related history was a well-established feature of Victorian history education.

5.7 Analysis of the 2004 VCE History Study Design

The 2004 VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2004) represents a critical curricular moment. First, it is significant because of its longevity. Unlike previous Study Designs that typically had a four-year accreditation period, the 2004 version enjoyed a protracted lifespan from 2005 until 2015, largely due to the introduction of the Australian Curriculum (see Chapter 7). In 2000, VBOS transformed into the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) following the election of a new Labor state government led by Steve Bracks. This follows an established pattern of new Victorian governments instituting their authority over State education by changing the name of the curriculum authority. Second, the 2004 Study Design is notable because it was a more prescriptive document than previous Study Designs despite a reduction from 21 units in 1991 to 12 units (see Table 5).

The discourse of relevance of the late 1960s through the 1970s (see Chapter 4) manifests in a new millennial form. This is illustrated by the overall purpose of the 2004 Study Design: “This study builds on a conceptual and historical framework within which students can develop an understanding of the issues of their own time and place” (VCAA, 2004, p. 7). Replacing specific reference to Australian history and the history of the region with the more ambiguous, yet contemporaneous, “issues of their own time and place” is premised on a desire to make history more relevant to students. Relevance is certainly a theme that emerged in interviews with teachers who enacted this document, and will be expanded upon in the next
chapter. Possibly reflecting a new twenty-first century zeitgeist, it may have been influenced by a need to make sense of the fears of the present, exacerbated by the West’s ‘war on terror’ on the ‘Islamic East’ from the early 2000s onwards. Notable changes to Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History included the new AOS3: Issues for the Millennium, and an expanded range of content examples that were somewhat more inclusive of the Middle East than previous Study Designs. At the time it was suggested that globally history education was influenced by a growing awareness of the acceleration of history (Lévesque, 2005). The magnitude of recent world events felt closer than ever before as the gap between the past and the present drew closer in terms of the impact of events and how they were communicated through mass media (Lévesque, 2005).

Table 5: VCE History Units (VCAA, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Areas of Study</th>
<th>Selection of historical contexts / topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Applied history in the local community</td>
<td>AOS1: People and place&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Investigating community history&lt;br&gt;AOS3: The community historian at work</td>
<td>A selected local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Conquest and Resistance</td>
<td>AOS1: The colonising experience&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Resistance: National liberation leaders and movements&lt;br&gt;AOS3: The new nation</td>
<td>China, India, Indonesia, Indochina or Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Twentieth Century History (1900-1945)</td>
<td>AOS1: Crisis and conflict&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Social life&lt;br&gt;AOS3: Cultural expression</td>
<td>Historical contexts from 1900 to 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Twentieth Century History (since 1945)</td>
<td>AOS1: Ideas and political power&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Movements of the people&lt;br&gt;AOS3: Issues for the millennium</td>
<td>Historical contexts from 1945 to 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Koorie History</td>
<td>AOS1: Living black&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Caring for country&lt;br&gt;AOS3: Struggle for rights</td>
<td>Themes in Koorie history and contemporary issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: People and Power</td>
<td>AOS1: Power and authority&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Dissenting groups and challenges&lt;br&gt;AOS3: Change</td>
<td>One or more contexts in which challenge and change have occurred, and the people and groups that undertook this change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Australian History</td>
<td>AOS1: A new land: Port Phillip District 1830-1860&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Nation, race and citizen 1888-1914&lt;br&gt;AOS3: Testing the new nation 1914-1950</td>
<td>Contexts relating to the four periods of time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several changes contributed to the Study Design’s more prescriptive appearance. These include the introduction of outcomes, tighter timelines and a greater level of detail to scaffold teachers in the development of programs and assessment. Outcome-based education (OBE) was embraced as the preeminent curriculum framework by education policy and curriculum developers at the national and state levels (Watt, 2005) and was influenced by standards-based education in the United States, particularly the work of Spady (1994, 1998). Victoria introduced outcomes in 1995 through the Curriculum and Standards Framework (VBOS, 1995) in the compulsory years of schooling, but outcomes were not integrated into the VCE History Study Design (VBOS, 1999) until 1999. Donnelly (2004, 2007a, 2007b) was a particularly vocal critic of OBE regarding it as “a progressive, left-wing view of education” (2004, p. 63) that made curriculum imprecise, vulnerable to teachers’ whims and difficult to measure in comparison to the traditional syllabus approach which was succinct, measurable, utilised testing and was strictly based on year levels.

Contrary to Donnelly’s (2004) criticism, the change resulted in a more explicit articulation of the intended learning as well as the key knowledge and skills required by students to demonstrate the outcomes. For example, Outcome 1 of Unit 1: Conquest and Resistance stated: “On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the means by which colonisers imposed and maintained control” (VCAA, 2004, p. 25). Key Knowledge outlined in dot-points what students needed to know and Key Skills outlined what they should be able to do. Although
this offered greater direction, the content of units 1 and 2 remained relatively open-ended – in most units examples of specific contexts and nation-states were still suggestions. The integration of the ‘Advice to teachers’ and ‘Resources’ sections alongside every unit, however, had a contractive effect. For example, in Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance five historical contexts were presented as options, but the only examples, learning activities and resources provided were for India.

The value afforded to historiography in this Study Design is indicated by its inclusion as a form of summative assessment. Writing about the incorporation of historiography into history curriculum, Kincheloe (2001) describes historiography as the critical examination and comparison of history texts and interpretations, or the “study of the study of history” (p. 593). The previous three Study Designs foregrounded historiography: “Each of the units also introduces students to historiographical and methodological issues which underlie the work of historians” (VBOS, 1996). While this statement was not included in the 2004 Study Design, it is the first to include a historiographical exercise as one of four assessment tasks required for units 3 and 4. The Assessment Handbook (VCAA, 2013c, p. 18) gives an example of a historiographical exercise on China’s Cultural Revolution in which students are required to compare historians’ views as well as first hand accounts, consider differences in interpretations and discuss why historians revised their views on the Cultural Revolution. Arguably, “engaging with histories historiographically becomes a tool to navigate through and between multiple and conflicting historical narratives” (Parkes, 2009, p. 128). In a period of intense political interference in history curriculum, this provision for historiography provides scope to explore the contestation of historical interpretations and narrative without aligning to perspectives that might be considered biased by opposite sides of the political spectrum. Notwithstanding, Donnelly (2006, p. 34) criticised VCE History’s “relative” and “politically correct” approach because it drew on multiple representations and versions of the past.

The various iterations of the Study Design included distinct national histories and space for more integrated and thematic approaches. Although the thematic approach that was initiated by the first VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991) is still
discernable in the structure of some units, such as Unit 2 People and Power (VCAA, 2004), the nation-state continued to provide the main organisational unit for the study of history in VCE. For example, Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance and Units 3 and 4 Revolutions (see Table 5) outline the nations that may be selected.

Methodological nationalism is “the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). Critiques of methodological nationalism have been applied to the social sciences and historiography and it contrasts with the more relational approach of transnational history, which seeks to transcend nation-state boundaries, or critically analyse the processes of making and maintaining them (Epple, 2012; Saunier, 2013). Although the Study Design potentially allowed for a transnational or translocal approach, many of the example historical contexts given reflected the nation-state paradigm, especially in units 3 and 4, which tended to be organised around the study of one nation-state per semester. Transnational history refers to an approach that transcends the borders of nation-states, or that which is not defined as a national history or country specific history (Curthoys & Lake, 2005). The notion of translocality offers a less linear way of recognising the movement of people, goods and ideas across geographical, cultural and political boundaries than more conventional understanding of global history (Freitag & von Oppen, 2014). From a pragmatic perspective, methodological nationalism makes the teaching of history more manageable in terms of structuring courses, resourcing and moderating assessment; however, the potential for transnational and translocal approaches is limited.

There was still considerable scope to explore Asia-related histories in the 2001 Study Design. In Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance, the representation of Asia as both a product and agent in world history is hinted at in the title. The historical contexts were provided: “This unit should be based on one historical context chosen from China, India, Indonesia, Indochina or Korea” (VCAA, 2004, p. 25). The use of Indochina here appears to make sense in the context of a unit focused on imperialism but as a nineteenth century French colonial construct it runs the risk of reinscribing coloniality by blocking reference to the post-colonial nation-states to
which it refers. Two representational features are indicative of underlying political historicism. First, imperial conquest provides the starting point of the unit by examining the “structures which the colonisers established to consolidate their control” (VCAA, 2004, p. 26) and second, only examples of European colonisers are provided. In previous Study Designs these sorts of units had been offered across a yearlong program. The same expanse of content was now condensed into one semester, with no space for exploring the pre-colonial period:

This unit explores the colonisation of one society by another, the interactions between the two societies, the growth of resistance and the establishment of a new nation. It also investigates the problematic nature of nationalism. (VCAA, 2004, p. 25)

Reference to one society, or one culture, in opposition to another, can have the effect of homogenising the coloniser and the colonised. On the other hand, the unit does provide opportunity to deconstruct methodological nationalism. AOS3 The New Nation, looks at “the concept of nationalism and its problematic nature, for example its desire to unify peoples which can result in a denial of their community loyalties and affiliations; including ethnicity, religion and language” (VCAA, 2004, p. 28). This is reflective of a contemporary postcolonial orientation, but postcolonial theory as such is not identified in the Study Design.

The study of social and cultural histories potentially provides scope for the investigation of social and cultural change, which allows societies to be viewed as dynamic, hybrid and interconnected, rather than static and isolated. However, as the Study Design became more compacted over the years, the space for this sort of inquiry decreased. Unit 1 Twentieth Century History 1900-1945 follows almost the same structure as it did in earlier iterations. AOS3 Cultural Expression now made more inclusive reference to the flourishing film industries of “Europe, Asia, the Americas and Australia” (VCAA, 2004, p. 39), yet the examples provided continued to be Euro-American. This has the effect of appearing to be more inclusive of diverse cultural histories but steers teachers towards content valued by the West as method discourse. Unit 2 Twentieth Century History 1945-2000 gives numerous examples of Asia-related history contexts, which mostly have a military/political
focus according to the unit’s themes including: independence movements in Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia; Cold War battles in Korea and Vietnam; the spread of AIDS in parts of Asia; the Indonesian invasion of East Timor; the Chinese invasion of Tibet; and human rights issues in Cambodia (VCAA, 2004, pp. 41-45).

Although patterns of social life and cultural expression could be covered in Unit 2, the examples relating to Asia have a relatively strong focus on conflict and oppression.

Over the years, Units 3 and 4 Revolutions remained similar in terms of content and structure. Some changes included the exam configuration and the introduction of more prescriptive dates, book-ending the content required for each revolution. When the 2004 Study Design was introduced Revolutions had eclipsed Australian History as the most popular unit 3 and 4 subject. In 2005, 4,459 students completed Revolutions, compared to 1,693 in Australian History (VCAA, 2014c). In the same year Russia was the most popular, followed by France, China and America, a trend that remained consistent throughout the lifetime of the 2004 Study Design (VCAA, 2016b). In 2005, 15 per cent of all Revolutions students studied China as one of two revolutions required, which was significantly lower than the 43 per cent that studied Russia (VCAA, 2016b). While the actual number of students that studied China during the decade long reign of the 2004 Study Design increased by a few hundred, this was in proportion to increased enrolments across Revolutions on the whole. One of the notable differences between the revolutions was the depth and breadth, or timeframe, of each. China (1898-1976) required a considerably longer period to be condensed into one semester, compared to the popular and shorter Russia (1905-1924) and France (1781-1795) (VCAA, 2004). The timeframes given to each revolution are shaped by their individual historical contexts, but having to cover nearly eight decades of significant change in pre and post revolutionary China, including historiography, presented a serious volume of substantive content to be covered. This lack of balance in the timeframes covered might imply that Chinese history was not accorded the same level of significance or did not require the same depth of analysis that a more concentrated timeframe allows.
The significantly revised Units 3 and 4 Australian History units made provision for some Asia-related content. In light of the discourse around Australian history and identity politics in the national context of the early 2000s, it is perhaps not surprising that the representation of Australian history was focused upon during the review of the Study Design (Clark, 2006). Clark (2006) observed the 2003 reform of Units 3 and 4 Australian History: “It involved a re-evaluation of ‘the nation’, another stock-take to establish which stories and events remained relevant and essential to Australian history” (p. 71). As discussed in Chapter 2 the tendency to evoke historical relations based on fear and conflict raises ongoing issues concerning the way Asia is imagined in Australian history narratives. This pattern is essential to Australian history: “There is too much in the encounter with Asia that points to beliefs and attitudes that contemporary Australia would prefer not to be reminded of, not least a history of racial exclusivity and anti-Asian sentiment” (Walker & Sobocinska, 2012, p. 18). Conversely, this structure tends to maintain the “outpost narrative”, which “ignores the historical reality that Australian political, cultural and economic interactions with Asian countries are ancient and ongoing, and a fundamental part of what it means to be Australian” (Lockhart, 2012, p. 271).

Units 3 and 4 Australian History reflect some of these tensions. For example, an invasion discourse positions Asian invaders as a persistent threat: “Japanese advances in World War II represented the most serious possible threat to a nation that had always feared invasion from Asia” (VCAA, 2004). Such statements both recognise this history of ‘racial exclusivity’ we would ‘prefer not be reminded of’ but unwittingly marginalise other ‘historical realities’ that include positive cultural relations prior to WWII, and the sorts of interactions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their regional neighbours outlined in Chapter 2. Although the ‘history wars’ made invasion into a politically loaded term, in relation to Asia it was relatively uncontroversial in this historical context. Other opportunities for Asia-related content include AOS2 Attitudes to the Vietnam War and AOS2 Attitudes to immigration/Vietnamese Boat People (VCAA, 2004, p. 90). As argued by Walker and Sobocinska (2012), these representations require historicising but when negativity is the main mode of representation, the effect can be one of imbalance.
During its extended lifetime the 2004 VCE History Study Design provided a curriculum framework for some 60,000 VCE students (VCAA, 2014c). Even though Victorian State governments changed during the ten years the Study Design was in service, it remained relatively stable compared to the regular reforms of the 1990s. As Chapter 7 explores, this is because much bigger curricular changes were taking place on a national level. This Study Design reflects that issues of the millennium had eclipsed the focus on regional history and Asia literacy was no longer the fulcrum of federal educational policy. The discourse of relevance evoked by the overall aims of this Study Design brings to mind the calls to make history more relevant in the 1960s and 1970s. The increased capacity to examine the historical development of Australia-Asia in Units 3 and 4 Australian History, however, was ironic considering that at the time John Howard had called for a more vigorous interest in Australian history as a counterpoint to Asia literacy (Walker, 2010). Overall the dominant mode for the study of Asia continued to be framed by imperialism, colonialism and methodological nationalism, although the inclusion of a historiographical exercise as an assessment task opened possibilities for dominant metanarratives to be deconstructed and historical interpretations to be compared.

5.8 Chapter summary

The curriculum documents used here as artefacts to interpret a history of the curricular present are best described as palimpsests – some parts have been rewritten, some parts have retained considerable traces of their earlier forms and some parts have disappeared altogether according to the discursive conditions in which they were reformed and revised. Similarly the representation of historical Asia reflects palimpsestic changes through iterations of the Study Design and changes in Asia education policy discourse. Although counter discourses and new intellectual movements such as postmodernism and postcolonialism have offered new perspectives for investigating meanings of Asia and Asian histories, the dominant West as method discourse remained pervasive. The design of some of these units may have enabled teachers and students to adopt an approach that frames Asia as an active and dynamic participant of world history, but many others
are equally constrained by an approach which privileges political historicism, renders Asia as colonial imagination and tacitly maintains the superiority of the West or Euro-American historical contexts. In part, this pattern is sustained by the historiographical and methodological traditions of the discipline of history such as metanarrative, universalising concepts like empire, nation-state, and democracy, and a teleological view of world history that places European imperialism at its centre. Together these traditions reinscribe the ‘rules’ of the West as method discourse.

When history curriculum makes space for these processes to be appraised by teachers and students through an assessment of historiography, it is liable to be criticised for being too relative, politically correct and neglectful of structured narratives. Yet when it is seen to downplay these elements it is still representing a particular ideological worldview. Unlike the histories written by historians or critiques by Asia literacy commentators, history curriculum does not openly declare its interests or articulate a theoretical stance. Yet when curriculum documents are examined closely and in relation to their policy contexts, it is clear they are not apolitical or value neutral. Like the practice of teaching, learning or writing history, history curriculum is an “interpretative act” (Parkes, 2009, p. 125) and a collaborative one.

Therefore in the 1991, 1996 and 2004 Study Designs representations of Asia are unstable, as shown by the changing discursive shapes they take and the changing contexts in which they are formed. Overall, these interconnected influences are intellectual, political, economic, cultural, historiographical and educational. In particular the contours of a number of key discourses – innovation, Asia literacy, ‘history wars’, national self-interest, relevance, West as method, postmodernism and postcolonialism – provided the conditions of possibility for the development of these curriculum documents and the sorts of meanings that were attached to Asia.
Chapter 6: Enacting Asia-related history

6.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the conditions of possibility for the enactment of Asia-related history based on the discourse analysis of interviews with 15 VCE History teachers in late 2015. It builds on the previous chapter’s analysis of the Study Designs by identifying the discourses that teachers engage when discussing their content choices and Asia-related history and considering the implications of these attitudes and practices. Therefore it addresses three of the sub-research questions: What are teachers’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum? What influences teachers’ curricular decision-making about Asia-related history and the VCE History units they teach? How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are their implications? Although the teachers operate in unique school contexts, the four interconnected discourses that emerged from the interview data are indicative of certain discursive regularities or unities (Foucault, 1972) that become recognisable in VCE History teachers’ practices and ways of thinking about curriculum. These discourses are both reinforced and, to a lesser extent, resisted by the teachers (Allan, 2008).

First, the discourse of professional knowledge frames the statements concerning expertise, professional experience and personal interest in relation to curricular-decision making. Second, the discourse of student engagement puts students at the centre of curricular-decision making, underscoring notions of engagement, relevance and demographics. Third, the discourse of alignment manifests in the way teachers talk about the inordinate influence the external exam has on assessment alignment, in addition to alignment in regards to whole-school curriculum planning and historical narrative. The final discourse analysed is West as method whereby attitudes about Eurocentric history curriculum are examined. The effects of these discourses on the enactment of Asia-related history are also considered which provides insight into the discursive ‘realities’ that shape how Asia is represented in
VCE History curriculum policy processes. By considering the implications of these discursive practices and by positioning them within wider national and international policy discourses, Foucault’s (1972) question is explored: “what was being said by what was said?” (p. 30).

6.2 The discourse of professional knowledge

The discourse of professional knowledge is a discernable discourse taken up by the participants and is evident in statements foregrounding the value of expertise, qualifications, school-based experience, personal experience and teachers’ own levels of interest in particular content areas. As Janette explained, “a lot of it comes down to the teachers who teach it, their areas of expertise and their interests.”

There are various ways of conceptualising professional knowledge. *Making History: A Guide for the Teaching and Learning of History in Australian Schools* (T. Taylor & Young, 2003) offers a definition of professional knowledge:

> The teacher brings personal and professional histories, knowledge about subject matter and pedagogy, beliefs about students, their families and communities, and ideas about the purposes of teaching history. This professional knowledge frames teachers’ decisions about what content, strategies and resources to select for teaching purposes. (p. 6)

Teachers drew on a combination of elements in this explanation, which differs from other literature that looks at what expert teachers do to develop professional knowledge (Loughran, 2010) or explores the connection between professional knowledge and types of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

The teachers often attributed “expertise” to their choice of historical contexts or content. For example, Bryce said that the choice of the French and Russian Revolutions at his school was based on the teachers’ expertise and he elaborated on the investment he has made in becoming expert:

> I would love the opportunity to teach the Chinese Revolution for example, but I would want to do it properly in the same way that I did my education around the French and Russian Revolutions. I did a year of it in Year 12 and then did four years of it at university and then have taught it now for five
plus years. I feel like I am an expert in that area. Unless I feel that I am an expert in the area I am not going to stand up in front of a Year 12 History class necessarily and go through the hell that I went through as a graduate and bluff my way through something again. (Bryce)

Here expertise is understood as being developed through university qualifications coupled with classroom experience. Similar responses also highlight the need for historiographical knowledge:

Again it probably comes down to teacher expertise. We have been doing France and Russia for eons and in order to really help the students get very high results you need to be a bit of an expert in it, to have read all the key historians. The kids laugh, sometimes they say ‘where is that reference’ and you say ‘oh that is Doyle page 76’ – they laugh, but you almost have to get to that *Rainman* [film reference] kind of level of expertise [laughs]. (Callum)

We can start to see how the ‘expert teacher’ manifests through the discourse. The expectation to help students get high results motivates the development of expert professional knowledge. This highlights that the stakes are perceived to be especially high in VCE, a point that will be examined in relation to the discourse of alignment. These views imply that many VCE teachers set high standards for themselves, or have these expectations imposed upon them. Husbands (2003) notes that in history education, “to teach successfully, teachers must be intellectually capable and well informed” (p. 84). References to the need to play a savant-like role and fear of being the novice again allude to the pressure to develop and demonstrate this intellectual capacity.

A number of reports and commentators have emphasised that teachers lack knowledge to teach about Asia (Erebus, 2002; Keese, 2013; Wilkinson & Milgate, 2009). Yet as alluded to by Bryce, this does not necessarily equate to ambivalence towards Asia-related history in the context of VCE. The process of developing this professional knowledge is complex because it is multi-dimensional. Establishing the expert knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge takes considerable time and effort. Shulman’s (1986) differentiation of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge offers a theoretical basis for the articulating types of teacher knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge “goes beyond the knowledge of subject
matter *per se* to the dimension of subject matter *for teaching*” and centres on “the ways of representing and formulating the subject matter” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). In the history education field, researchers have articulated this in other ways. Deep disciplinary knowledge is acknowledged as essential for history teachers (Levesque, 2015; Vansledright, 2011). Husbands (2003) argues that while detailed content knowledge provides a critical foundation, it is misleading to assume that this is enough to meet the diverse demands of history curriculum. One typology specific to history education is based on three types of teacher knowledge: knowledge about history, knowledge about pupils and knowledge about classroom practices, resources and activities (Husbands et al., 2003). Vansledright (2011) argues that being an expert in particular content areas is important because it “provides crucial advantages” and “opens up the terrain on which decisions can be made” (p. 45). In this sense content expertise can empower teachers in their curricular and pedagogical decision-making.

Teacher interest and passion were seen as significant to teachers’ practices and were often tied to their capacity to engage students. Mary talked about “tweaking” the course according to her own interest and knowledge. Will explained the logic of interest: “most people pick based on what they are interested in, which makes sense because if you are interested in it you are going to be passionate about it and you are going to do a better job,” which also intersects with the discourse of student engagement, “because they will get the most out of their students as a consequence.” Likewise, Callum said, “we teach things better when we are really interested in it, we try to convey that sort of passion to the kids.” Janette reflected, “if you are passionate, in theory they [the students] should get on board with it as well.” Articulating the benefits of passion potentially enables teachers to be more selective about the types of history they teach and permits them to justify their choices in these terms. Conversely, lack of passion was a reason given for changing or avoiding content areas. One participant said they would never teach about France because it is “really boring” and another talked about changing from the Chinese Revolution to the American Revolution “because we are sick of it.” This way
of thinking gives teachers permission to pursue their own interests and passions because it is seen to have positive outcomes on teaching and learning.

While teachers may intuitively connect their personal passions for particular histories with improved student learning, passion is recognised within the domain of education research. For example, passion is a hallmark of Hattie’s (Hattie, 2008, 2012; Hattie, Masters, & Birch, 2016) work on visible learning and is defined by the objectives of the “visible learning – checklist for inspired and passionate teaching” (Hattie, 2012, pp. 23-24). Hattie justifies passion in terms of its effect size and impact on student outcomes, a connection already sensed by these teachers. These passions and interest often have their own histories. Bryce reflected, “my passion for history is based on my experience going right back to high school.” This statement illustrates how the boundaries of professional knowledge may be expanded to a professional knowledge landscape to recognise that teachers’ knowledge is narratively constructed – it has a history (Clandinin, 2015).

Another instance where personal narratives were drawn upon was when teachers talked about a preference for choosing Asia-related topics based on their previous travel experiences. In-country experience was seen to facilitate teachers’ capacity to teach about Asia-related topics:

China is easy for me because I spent a lot of time in China, I used to live there.... If I hadn’t lived in China, I could really foresee greater challenges as far as teaching is concerned but because I am able to draw on personal experiences quite a lot, and through that be able to define it and explain it far more easily than I would have otherwise. (Travis)

For Travis, this experience makes developing students’ conceptual understanding easier. Bryce also referenced his time spent living in Japan in relation to his enthusiasm for enhancing student engagement with Asia and Michael talked about wanting to incorporate teaching about the Khmer Empire because he had been to Cambodia and was going there again. Martha recalled that her interest in teaching about China was amplified by AEF study tour experiences:

I am passionate about it but also now I have been to China three times so that has to inform your teaching. I use photos and I have been to the Luding
Bridge and I have been on a study tour to walk the footsteps of Chairman Mao... Being able to come back and talk to the kids about Red tourism, that’s so cool. (Martha)

Grace also referred to the positive impact that AEF study tours had on enriching her understanding and enthusiasm for Asia-related histories.

An important distinction becomes apparent in the way the teachers articulate the influence of in-country experience in Asia but do not distinguish the influence of travel to other parts of the world on their teaching. Teachers only connected in-country experience to Asia-related content choices. Nobody talked about drawing on their travel to France or Russia to support their teaching of the French or Russian Revolution, or the United States to teach about civil rights. There are a number of possible reasons for this.

First, it relates to the Western historical thinking in which teachers have been immersed and its effect on their historical consciousness. Although there are varying explanations, Rüsen (2002) describes historical consciousness as the way individual and collective memory recalls the past in the present, as a process for generating sense of the past in the present. These responses signal an unconscious level of cultural comfort; they do not feel the need to demonstrate direct experiences with more familiar Euro-American or Australian content to the same extent. This sort of historical content does not require the same sort of first-hand experience; there is not the same impetus as there is ‘to know’ the Asian historical Other. Rüsen (2002) talks about the way the self is temporally and spatially located within the normative and value-laden borders of a cultural habitat that works to differentiate between the self and other, or sameness and otherness. The statements above show that direct experience of Asia helps to start dismantling these borders but does not necessarily break them down: “The perception of the Other becomes more open to influence of actual experience, but is not yet completely protected from ethnocentric narrowness” (Rüsen, 2002, p. 4).

Second, these VCE teachers acknowledge the benefits of their own experiential learning on the learning of their students because they have directly experienced it
but these responses resonate with the broader discourse of Asia literacy (see Chapter 5). The AEF has conducted study programmes to Asia for nearly 25 years and has reinforced the connection between professional learning and in-country experience as an expected behaviour of Asia literacy discourse (AEF, 2014b). This is evident in research commissioned by the AEF (AEF, 2014b; Halse, 1999; Trevaskis, 2013) and documents like the National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools (AEF, 2006). What Works 7: Study Programmes to Asia (AEF, 2014b) states: “study programme participants tend to experience a complex combination of personal and professional transformations towards heightened Asia literacy and intercultural understanding, a greater capacity to develop students’ Asia-relevant capabilities” (p4). This corresponds with a key finding of the national study Asia Literacy and the Australian Teaching Workforce (Halse et al., 2013): “the findings of the research are unequivocal that first-hand experience of Asia has a highly significant and decisive effect on teachers’ overall Asia literacy and capacity to deliver the Asia priority... In contrast, teachers with no direct experience of Asia have significantly lower overall Asia literacy” (p. 113).

Third, the emphasis on in-country experience also relates to Australia’s cultural geography. In her book Visiting the Neighbours: Australians in Asia, Sobocinska (2014b) contends that personal experiences of Asia, often through tourism, have shaped Australians’ popular perceptions of Asia and shaped the cultural context in which official relations between Australia and Asia are sustained. Asian in-country experience is perhaps foregrounded in the interviews because Australians have a history of visiting nearby countries as tourists more so than study tour participants.

Although the teachers spoke of professional knowledge being built on the foundation of professional and personal experience, it was not perceived as being fixed. This highlights a tension within the discourse of professional knowledge – the need to become expert in familiar and unfamiliar content areas, that is, to be an expert and a life-long learner. Natalia said, “history is so broad, you can be an expert in one thing and know nothing about another.” When asked about the things they enjoyed about curriculum planning, the opportunity to explore new topics was
often seen as a positive. Liam said, “it gives me an excuse to learn new things, I am always trying new histories.” Penny enthused: “the content, I think we get very excited about all the topics we get to teach.” Referring to a particular topic as a “massive gap in my understanding of history”, Mary found that the demands of teaching the new content for the first time “was a real learning experience for me, I absolutely loved it.” Despite expertise being connected to feeling confident, many of the teachers expressed a willingness to expand their curricular comfort zones and in some cases this was seen as an imperative. For Callum, “learning new things” should be any good History teacher’s “bread and butter.” Similarly, Travis said, “I don’t mind teaching anything, it doesn’t faze me and I think as a teacher you need to be able to do that.” In this sense professional knowledge can be interpreted as being under construction, not only because the ‘passionate History teacher’ is positioned to enjoy the intellectual challenge of engaging with new histories, but also because they deemed it a professional requirement.

The apparent embrace of life-long learning may be interpreted in different ways. Teachers speak of enjoying the challenge of new material and position themselves as being capable of adroitly developing professional knowledge in new content areas as the need arises. Possibly this reflects a passion for their subject area but also a sort of resilience teachers need to adapt in the face of changing workloads from year to year. This is an underlying pressure: they are at once expected to demonstrate deep pedagogical content knowledge, as well as be committed life-long learners as members of the globalised knowledge economy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). What is more they are required to instil a life-long learning habit in their students. Life-long learning “shifts the focus of learning from knowing that to knowing how” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 84); it is predicated on notions of social and economic efficiency, providing individuals the competitive edge required by neoliberalism. Williamson (2013) describes lifelong learning as a key characteristic of “a futuristic learning society” (p. 95) which is “driven by the need for governments to ensure their people are constantly equipped with the occupational competencies required to remain competitive” (p. 95). The life-long learning ‘norm’ produced by the discourse of professional knowledge insists that VCE History
teachers know *that* – have deep content knowledge or areas of expertise – and know *how* – are able to transfer procedural knowledge to seamlessly move on to new topics or areas of the curriculum.

The operation of the professional knowledge discourse has implications for the enactment of Asia-related history. By holding professional and personal experience in high esteem for content selection, teachers are ostensibly limited by these expectations. Mary said, “when you are new to a subject, your confidence is directly related to what you know.” Natalia said she liked to pick contexts that are comfortable and familiar because it was hard enough to teach familiar history well, let alone that which is unfamiliar. Teachers’ comfort and confidence levels derive from their familiarity with the material, particularly when they are engaging with new curriculum or a new cohort of students and underscores the depth of knowledge required to teach VCE History.

Some teachers referred explicitly to their level of cultural comfort with teaching Asia-related content. Michael pointed out, “it is just easier for a teacher when they are given a new class or new study area to focus on something that is more familiar to them, so to look at the suffragette movement, rather than an Asian study, where language and culture is similar.” Janette quipped:

> It is probably the wrong thing to say. If there is a choice between an Asian and a European thing – gosh I am sounding like Tony Abbott this morning, shoot me now – I will go with that [the European thing] because it is what I am comfortable with and what my area of interest is, but at the same time, if it is there to teach, I am not going to do a deliberately bad job because it is not my interest. (Janette)

By prefacing her statement with the admission that it’s the ‘wrong thing to say’ she is inadvertently recognising the intended effect of the Asia policy imperative – teaching about Asia is the right or expected thing to do. The association of European content with the former Prime Minister, who is known for reacting against ‘political correctness’, reinforces this. Both of these comments illustrate the West as method discourse at work on curricular decision-making: European content is selected at times because it is comfortable and familiar.
Teachers’ assessments of their own professional knowledge influence their curricular decision-making, but this is also constrained by more pragmatic concerns. Martha’s comment brings some of these enablers and constraints together:

So I think one of the things is the passion of the teacher, the interests of the teacher, the knowledge, because we all get a bit scared and we don’t like it when we don’t know things. And with all the best will in the world we are all really busy and so to bring that into my life and learn – and we don’t like to look stupid in front of our children – so, ‘oh I know a bit about China, I am doing China’. (Martha)

The time it takes to learn new content areas was raised by many of the participants. In some ways teachers undertake their own risk-assessment when making choices about exploring new content. Learning new topics or changing units requires a serious investment in time and energy—reading widely, getting across the historiography, developing new teaching strategies and materials, developing assessment and acquiring resources is all consuming and often done after hours and during school holidays. One teacher discussed how rewarding it was to invest in developing a course for Unit 3 and 4 Renaissance Italy, only to be disappointed when it was cut from the latest Study Design. Another said he would be interested in changing to the Chinese Revolution, but that the onus would be on him having to teach himself because the school would not resource much more than one day of professional development. Similar practical dimensions are also evident in the operation of the other discourses identified in this chapter.

Lastly, the underlying relations of power that are exercised within the discourse of professional knowledge show how curriculum enactment is tied to other powerful discourses of education. The power/knowledge problematisation is discernable in this discourse because within the power practices of schools “the practitioner, the professional, is brought into being by the knowledge that makes them expert” (Ball, 2013, p. 35). Teachers traverse the power/knowledge nexus – they are accorded power and authority by their status and expertise. At the same time they are governed – and potentially constrained – by institutional and professional requirements that enforce and delimit these expectations. Professional knowledge is both empowering and disempowering, as teachers testify. For example, teachers
may feel empowered by prior experiences that enhance their sense of professional knowledge, self-efficacy or expertise, such as tertiary qualifications, personal enthusiasms or in-country experience. At the same time if they wish to teach new topics or content areas, they risk diminishing their sense of self-efficacy – and also their material and symbolic status within their institution. The discourse of professional knowledge may therefore constrain teachers’ content choices, even though they express the desire to be versatile and curious life-long learners.

These tensions and power relations are also shaped by official discourses that form the ‘rules’ that normalise (Ball, 2013) ideas about the professional history teacher. In Australia all teachers are required to demonstrate professional knowledge as one of three domains of the Professional Standards for Teachers, as outlined by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Professional knowledge is defined by:

Standard 1: Know students and how they learn.
Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it. (AITSL, 2016a)

The AITSL standards also underpin the requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), the body responsible for teacher registration (VIT, 2016). Thus the AITSL standards have a discursive function that acts to regulate and discipline teachers and the work they do (Ryan & Bourke, 2013; Tuinamuana, 2011). According to Ball et al. (2012) the “discourse of standards works to articulate a particular version of what schooling is and should be – more, higher, better” (p. 74). Although they are referring more specifically to standards for students here, this discourse is also evident in the standards for teachers, which defines “the roadmap” for “effective teaching” (AITSL, 2016a). The commonsense assumptions by which policy rhetoric tends to be guided presumes that standards are a good thing that lead to quality learning and encourage teachers to strive for excellence – and are value neutral. As we can see from some of the statements above, teachers recognise that deep content knowledge aids student achievement; it ‘makes sense’ (Tuinamuana, 2011). However, a more critical engagement with the commonsense assumption reminds us that “teacher standards are part of a wider, more complex web of factors that impact in significant ways upon the work of teachers, and the
learning that happens in schools” (Tuinamuana, 2011, p. 79), some of which are explored further in this chapter. The discourse of professionalism and standards contributes to the way teachers and schools make themselves auditable and become policy subjects (Connell, 2009a), which is said to be symptomatic of the new global education policy paradigm that espouses accountability, managerialism and performativity (Ball et al., 2012; Connell, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). If occupational identity is defined by external institutions or by market pressures a possible effect is the limiting of teachers’ independent curricular decision-making which means they may become less able to respond to the needs of the students in their school contexts (Connell, 2009a).

6.3 The discourse of student engagement

Statements that framed the student engagement discourse privileged student interest, content relevance, and the specific needs of the student cohort or demographic. Together these statements evoke the ‘engaged student’ as the idealised object of the discourse of student engagement. The participants consistently expressed the desire to locate students as the locus of content choices. If and when there was scope to craft programs, the needs of the students were deemed significant to teachers’ decision-making.

Student interest was recognised as a fundamental component of the student engagement discourse engaged by teachers. It is driven by concern about how to make content meaningful:

We have always taken the attitude – what do we think is going to interest our students? What do we think will broaden our students’ horizons? Our content choices are informed by what will interest students; we like to think of History as being a subject that kids can get excited about. (Liam)

Mary discussed the importance of “trying to tap into the interests of the students” and concluded, “I can’t see why you would do it any other way.” Travis explicated: “I collaborate with the students... I like to be flexible because in all honesty, the greater engagement of the student, the greater the outcomes are.”
The logic expressed by these views connects student interest to student outcomes but the teachers’ motivations are necessitated by an underlying need to make history appealing to attract students in the non-compulsory senior years. Students choose to be in their classes and so there is an onus on them to capture their students’ interest and demonstrate the relevance of history. This is possibly motivated, in part, by assumptions that history is boring and irrelevant.

Engaging students is a challenge and Clark’s (2008) *History’s Children* highlighted that many students dismiss Australian history for being boring. Yet, both students and teachers “were equally adamant about the key ingredient for a great history lesson: the teacher” (p. 121). Kitson et al. (2011) note: “One of the charges frequently levelled against history in the school curriculum – by employers, and indeed, by pupils – is that it ‘lacks relevance’” (p. 147). Awareness within the Victorian history community of the need to make the subject of History appear more relevant is indicated by the recurrence of the discourse of relevance in the 1970s and the early 2000s and fluctuating student enrolments (see chapters 4 and 5).

The discourse of student engagement therefore can be considered in terms of a survival strategy. Teachers have to demonstrate the relevance of history to students and parents, which means relevance emerged as a key criterion for content selection. Penny said, “wherever possible you try to make them realise how relevant it [the topic studied] is.” Travis stressed that relevance to students was the “number one” factor that shaped his teaching practice: “I had a rule that if I can’t make this topic relevant to you, I won’t teach it to you, simple as that.” Such statements are indicative of the ‘rhetoric of relevance’ or the ‘relevance imperative’, which has had a strong presence in the rhetoric around quality education and student disengagement in recent years (Darby-Hobbs, 2013). Accordingly, this “relevance imperative arises out of a push to reframe curriculum and pedagogy in ways that ensure that students’ experiences at school are relevant to their lives and perceived needs” (Darby-Hobbs, 2013, p. 77).
The relevance of history education was associated with its intrinsic and extrinsic value. For Travis, relevance had a philosophical dimension—“How is it going to make them be a better person or how is it going to give the larger understanding and life and the world we live in?—as well as a utilitarian dimension—“How is that going support them in their education or their life?” Callum underscored the intrinsic, moral dimension: “I talk to them about why I think History sets them up, not just for the workplace but just as a fuller person, a deeper person, a richer person intellectually, a more interesting person, a better dinner guest [chuckles].” For Edward, the skills taught in History “are the skills that are needed to be responsible citizens, to make responsible choices.” The discourse renders the student object not just as an ‘engaged student’, but potentially a ‘better person’ and a ‘better citizen’. Whereas intrinsic value can be interpreted as being driven by humanistic concerns that have an ethical or moral dimension, extrinsic value is interpreted as being fundamentally instrumental and utilitarian, it refers to equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need in the future and to be economically productive. This distinction might also be interpreted as the internal and external knowledges (see Chapter 2) students are required to develop (Yates et al., 2017). The boundaries of such analytical categories, however, are not static.

The distinction between the skills and knowledge that offer intrinsic and extrinsic value is becoming increasingly blurred with the valorisation of global citizenship, social efficacy and intercultural understanding in the knowledge economy. This is illustrated in the general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum (see chapters 1 and 2) and their manifestation in the new Victorian Curriculum as: critical and creative thinking, ethical, intercultural and social and emotional capabilities (VCAA, 2016c). Although the Victorian Curriculum’s general capabilities are not explicitly extended beyond F-10, VCE teachers are immersed in these broader twenty-first century education discourses through their ongoing engagement with these curriculum documents (Abbiss, 2013). Similarly, the language of Asia literacy policy has also shifted to “Asia capability,” an inheritance of the language used by Asialink Business – “Australia’s national centre for Asia Capability” (see Asialink, 2017). The AEF (2014a) says: “The next generation must enter the workforce with intercultural
capability and knowledge of Asia” (p. 4). The term capability more closely aligns the desired outcomes of curriculum with employability. This is an example of how the “shape and substance of knowledge” (Yates, 2017, p. 4) has been reconceptualised in Australia recently. The teachers’ responses reflect an awareness of the need to reconceptualise disciplinary knowledge in terms that communicate its relevance more distinctly.

The discourse of relevance has implications for Asia-related content choices because relevance is strongly associated with rationales for Asia education policy. On the surface the relevance imperative appears a logical and commendable aspiration, but it is not unproblematic. Relevance is a construct (Darby-Hobbs, 2013) and as such it is changeable and contestable. The profile of studies of Asia in schools has been elevated to a position of educational relevance through an accretion of policies across four decades, to the point that it is now embedded as a priority in the Australian Curriculum (see Chapter 7). Successive governments have appropriated the discourse of national self-interest, and as a result, the assumption that Australia-Asia relations must be nurtured for the purpose of the national strategic interests and economic prosperity has been widely disseminated. For example, in arguing for an Australian Curriculum that enables students to become Asia capable the AEF (2014a) foregrounded the point that “all [governments] agree that building our economies requires Asia capable Australians” (p. 1). Consequently, Asia policy rhetoric has positioned Asia engagement as relevant to the work of schools. Furthermore, engaging with Asia in History “adds value to learning” as “combined with intercultural skills, this [historical] knowledge enables students to become informed citizens” (AEF, 2014a, p. 7).

The teachers’ perceptions indicate that the rhetoric of relevance evident in Asia education policy has filtered through to schools. Bryce believes that students and teachers are interested in “the rise of Asia”. Similarly, Liam said, “we have selected the Chinese Revolution because we think that helping the students understand the rise of modern China is helpful in understanding the modern world and China’s place in it.” He added, “I thought the Chinese Revolution would be more relevant
and I felt it might be more engaging to our students.” Although Callum was not teaching the Chinese Revolution, he felt that students at Iron Bark Grammar School were demonstrably aware of the Asian Century rhetoric and were actively choosing to study Chinese as a LOTE because of the perceived employment, business and diplomatic benefits. The teachers’ responses are indicative of how “the teacher is enrolled into grand political narratives policy which link their classroom work with students to the processes of globalisation and national economic competitiveness” (Ball et al., 2012, pp. 72-73).

However, these examples also illustrate the inconsistency between the way teachers deploy the policy narratives of economic competitiveness and its actual uptake by students, in the form of student enrolments. For example, the teachers’ responses echo the rhetoric used to promote Chinese to non-Chinese background speakers, although it is not translating into enrolments across the nation. The recent study, Building Chinese Language Capacity in Australia (Orton, 2016), found that across the country only 4500 students are learning Chinese and in 2015 only 400 Year 12 students studied Chinese as a second language, a twenty per cent drop from the year previous. Similarly, the numbers of students studying the Chinese Revolution in Year 12 are relatively static. Proportionally the numbers have not climbed much since Revolutions was introduced in the early 1990s as Russia and France remain the most popular, followed by China (see chapters 5 and 7). Despite the perceived relevance of China, these impressions do not reflect empirical realities.

Furthermore there are examples of these discourses being resisted and appropriated in different ways. Edward recognised the discourse of national self-interest at play – “the fact of whether there should be a stronger focus on Asia-related topics is quite linked with the current situation and the fact that Australia is trying to develop its ties with the Asian market” but he said, “I don’t think we have been influenced much by this.” Other teachers associate the benefits of teaching Asia-related history with moral and cultural imperatives as well as economic ones:

Expanding kids’ worldviews, obviously understanding China is a big player in politics now and India I guess, and being able to have an understanding of
their cultural heritage, you know. But probably more for me, I just want them to be not racist and to consider their contribution to the world as equal to what European history has been, or their own cultural history because without that kind of respect for their heritage those kinds of racist attitudes will persist and I would like them to be good people. (Grace)

Her response provides another example of the perceived intrinsic relevance of history and its potential to develop intercultural capability. Travis also alluded to the apparent tensions in regards to the relationship between Asia engagement and the economic imperatives:

If you look back fifty or a hundred years in our educational programme, it has been Anglo-Saxon, white, colonial style education and realising that the world is larger than that and it requires our attention, is absolutely fantastic, which is why engagement with Asia is so important and it should be taught. But also for a real world perspective, if you are an Australian citizen and you are talking about real world application then where is the market? It’s economic as much as it is a social and political rationale. (Travis)

The above references to the market are indicative of the presence of an “Asia-as-market discourse” (Martin et al., 2015, p. 2) which has been cause for critique of Asia literacy policy (Rizvi, 2017).

Others extended their resistance to the policy narratives through a stronger counter discourse:

I think having an understanding of the region that you live in is really important and having an understanding of the politics in Australia’s operations – sometimes it wants to be seen as part of Asia and then other times it doesn’t – I think that young Australian people should be really aware of how Australia uses Asia as a political football to be honest. (Mary)

This suggests that the inherent power dynamics that drive Australia’s relations with Asia are glossed over. Moreover, Mary also senses that the narrow curriculum offerings in VCE History are indicative of Australia’s current strategic policy and she alludes to the impact this has on how Asia is conceptualised in the Australian policy imaginary:

China is the flavour of the month because it is the flavour of the month in every aspect of Australian policy making. You almost forget how big Asia is
and how many people live there because we only focus on Indonesia and China really, and it is a token gesture with Indonesia... So I am very cynical about that and maybe that comes back to why the Study Design doesn’t make mention of all the exciting possibilities you could do because there is a much bigger picture at play here. (Mary)

Indeed the only options for significant, stand-alone study of Asia in the new Study Design (VCAA, 2015a) are China in Unit 2 Ancient History and China in Unit 3 and 4 Revolutions (see Chapter 7).

These responses indicate that policy discourse is made sense of in very different ways; it is translated and interpreted in different ways (Ball et al., 2012). The policy rhetoric assumes becoming Asia capable is essential to all young Australians (see ACARA, 2016a; AEF, 2014a) and highlights the normative aspects of curriculum. Part of the reason that it has remained a problematic policy is because “[g]overnments and their agencies muddy the alignment of policy and practice because they devise Asia literacy policies with an archetypical student, teacher and school in mind” (Halse, 2015c, p. 14). Policy translation, however, occurs “within the constraints and possibilities of context” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). It is therefore essential to consider how context informs the intersection of Asia engagement and student engagement discourses.

To better understand why student engagement and relevance is foregrounded by teachers we also need to consider the context in which VCE subjects are competing for enrolments. Humanities subjects like History are required to prove their relevance to compete with the priority subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). This competition is heightened in the non-compulsory years: “Students select between these and other subjects, including STEM subjects, within discursive and political regimes that position the latter as more relevant for industry, employment and national economic prosperity” (Abbiss, 2013, p. 12). The National Innovation and Science Agenda is funding Restoring the Focus on STEM in School Initiative (Aust. Gov., 2016b) in order to provide “opportunities for Young Australians to get the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow” (para. 1). Moreover the Victorian Department of Education has a STEM in the Education State Plan (DET,
that details the hundred of millions of dollars being investing in developing the STEM capabilities of students and teachers. History might receive ongoing public and political attention but in comparison to STEM, its funding and resourcing is non-existent. It is within this policy context that VCE teachers have to establish a warrant for studying history.

Therefore regardless of the lofty ideals teachers might have about the transformative potential of history education, teachers are also required to respond pragmatically. Their comments intimate the need to maintain healthy subject enrolments and entice students with content that excites. Callum says: “history is a tough one to sell, we are always pushing for numbers – how many classes for next year, how many kids?” For Hamish, some topics are more of an “easy sell” than others. In reflecting on the “sales pitch” he felt the narratives of the Russian and French Revolutions were inviting to students: “there is a real story – sex, blood, pornography, murder, all of that stuff – and you lead in with that.” Comparably Janette and Penny discussed the “sexiness” of a European revolution compared to an Asian one: “it is violent, there’s blood, there’s gore, there’s war and you find your hook for it.” Indeed the teachers might be describing scenes from the online television hit Game of Thrones, in which the fictional setting of Westeros very loosely represents Europe. Conversely, Michael felt that his current cohort resented having to study the Chinese Revolution because they would prefer to do the French or American Revolution based on the popular culture to which they had been exposed. This example of consumerisation of curriculum is an effect of the student engagement discourse, which is driven by student ‘consumers’ who are assumed to be in the market for the sort of bold narratives they consume on the screen. As a result teachers need to select an appealing and marketable history program if they are to maintain the subjects that comprise their very workloads and ensure their survival in the labour market.

Another important contextual dimension for understanding the complexities of curriculum policy enactment is the situated context of a school – its setting, history and intake (Ball et al., 2012). Participants consistently acknowledged the contextual
nature of student engagement and commonly referred to their situated context as the “demographics” of the school. For example, in separate interviews Grace and Mark both discussed how the student demographic at Hakea Secondary College had a significant influence on what was comprehended as engaging content. At this school 73% of students have a language background other than English, many of whom are Lebanese-Australians (ACARA, 2016c). Grace illustrated how these factors influence her curriculum choices:

I changed one of the outcomes, the last one of Twentieth Century History, Issues for the Millennium. We focused on the Intifada in Israel and Palestine because the demographic of my school has a big Arabic population, so they were a little bit literate about that and they were interested because it was something that they had grown up hearing one side of the story. (Grace)

Natalia also made a similar point about a school she had taught at that had a high proportion of Vietnamese-Australian and African-Australian students. She said teachers “tended to pick contexts that were driven by the demographics, they looked at, for example, civil rights movement or apartheid, things that they felt that their demographic could perhaps connect to or relate to.” Janette and Penny felt that the educational aspirations and mostly Anglo background of their students’ families at Acacia Catholic College, where only 7% of students had a language background other than English (ACARA, 2016c), meant it was difficult to get students interested in Asia-related history in VCE. These statements point to a valuing of culturally responsive teaching, but perhaps an inadvertent essentialising of ethnic identity.

Moreover, these sorts of references to demographics indicate that “[s]chools can become defined by their intake and they also define themselves by it... teachers construct stories about their school that are based on their own experience but also on generalisations” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 22). Teachers make presumptions about the capabilities of their students based on demographic factors when assessing the accessibility of content. Teachers from schools with lower ICSEA values (see chapter 3), or a higher proportion of English as another language (EAL) students, were more likely to comment on student ability and content accessibility. The participants from Acacia Catholic College discussed changing the VCE units on offer from year to year
depending on the particular cohort. Some units, such as Revolutions, Renaissance Italy and the new Ancient History units were perceived as being “too difficult for our cohort – our kids’ literacy levels aren’t crash hot.” Mark also talked about avoiding areas that “they won’t get.” Travis commented, “my previous school was in a low socio-economic area with students who often struggled with academic learning at this level and so I would always tailor AOS1, I wouldn’t touch historiography.” Will expanded more specifically on the challenges that language can present in VCE History. Conversely, in a number of schools higher up the ICSEA value range, student ability was discussed in terms of areas in which students could excel. Teese’s (2014) research confirmed that a hierarchy of VCE subjects exists based on “the social distance between subjects” and he holds that “the distance within subjects relates to the relative difficulty experienced by different groups of candidates” (pp. 208-209). These issues regarding access and achievement will be expanded upon in the section on the discourse of assessment alignment.

There are increasing numbers of international students in Victorian government and non-government secondary schools. In 2015, the year these interviews took place, 60% of international students in schools were from China, followed by Vietnam and South Korea (VRQA, 2015). At a non-government school with a significant international student population, Travis drew parallels between the “massive focus on Asia” which included Asia-related history being embedded across all year levels and the fact that “the school markets in Asia now.” International education has been envisioned as a top economic priority for Victoria (Vic. Govnt., 2016a). International student enrolments in the tertiary and secondary sectors in Victoria have doubled since 2002 and secondary schools are competing to capture the Asian market which comprises half of the world’s international students (Vic. Govnt., 2016a). Liam also acknowledged that the high number of international students – around 12% of each year level, mostly from Shanghai – had influenced curricular decision-making in the middle years. He said, “in the lower year levels we make an effort to select content that will reflect the backgrounds of a lot of our students” and “we have discovered that drawing on Chinese history is very appropriate, it does tend to engage the girls a bit more.”
Teachers from government and non-government schools reported that increased enrolments of international students from East Asia was coupled with the schools’ increased efforts to engage with Asia at the whole school level. Edward noted that whole school Asia engagement was “especially relevant because here we have a fairly strong international student program and every year we have a cohort of international students coming here from China and it will be a benefit for us to understand their background in order to assess how we can support them.” Notwithstanding, these teachers did not see this demographic shift having a particularly significant impact on curricular decision-making in the VCE because international students, who by all accounts were said to prefer STEM subjects, did not tend to select VCE History units. These statements are couched in terms of engagement and inclusion because that is the subject position expected by the discourse of engagement. However, like some of the other instances where the discourse of relevance intersects with engagement this subject position is enmeshed in the mechanisms of global trade.

Lastly, it is important to consider further how the student engagement discourse relates to wider policy discourse. Overwhelmingly the participants expressed a desire for students to feel meaningfully connected to, or at least enjoy, the historical contexts, and even experience a positive transformation through the study of history. The participants were also realistic about the need to market their subject via appealing content as well as compete as a subject that can offer a knowledge and skill set relevant to twenty-first century learning. However, as discourse is historically contingent, teachers are products of their time and place. The discursive archive of twentieth century history education analysed in Chapter 4 indicated that the theories of learning and the roles of teacher and student have shifted significantly over time. The dominant constructivist theory that grounds pedagogical approaches in contemporary Australian classrooms demands student-centred approaches to learning and teaching in recognition of learning as a social and experiential process. This is indicated in the opening chapter of an introductory text for pre-service teachers: “Putting the student at the centre of the learning and
teaching relationship is a critical component of successful teaching” (Moss, 2013, p. 5).

In contrast, at the policy level notions of student engagement move away from relationships and towards school improvement measures and accountability. Looking again at the AITSL standards, student engagement is a standard by which teachers are measured. The language of engagement is embedded in the standards, for example in Standard 2.1 teachers need to demonstrate they can “develop engaging teaching strategies” and in Standard 3.1 they need to develop “teaching programs or lesson sequences that engage students” (AITSL, 2016a). Although AITSL (2016b) acknowledged that student engagement is “an ambiguous term... and difficult to measure” (p. 1), it is seeking to respond to government calls to promote engagement. Its aim to “develop indicators that measure engagement beyond the inadequate proxy measures that are currently used” by identifying evidence-based “best strategies” (AITSL, 2016b, p. 10) is indicative of the current audit culture. The federal government’s package of reforms, Students First, foregrounds students and the notion of “relevant curriculum” (Aust. Gov., 2015, para. 2). The rationale, however, is patently instrumental: “to ensure Australia’s future prosperity and to remain competitive internationally” (Aust. Gov., 2016c, para. 1). It is also indicative of the power relations imposed by the state – the government is simultaneously divesting responsibility by seemingly renewing the autonomy of schools and valuing the professional knowledge of teachers, while also maintaining control by enforcing new standards on teachers to “lift the quality” of teachers (Aust. Gov., 2015). One of the powerful, albeit narrow, ways of measuring teacher quality and student engagement is through the standardisation of student assessment, which is a product of the discourse of alignment, another influence on teachers’ content choices in VCE History.
6.4 The discourse of alignment

If VCE History did not include an external examination at the end of Unit 4, history teachers would quite possibly be making different decisions about content and pedagogy than they do currently. The impact of high-stakes examinations on the alignment of curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning in the VCE should not be underestimated. The VCE was originally introduced without external examinations, however, exams and study scores were restored in 1994 and the end of year exam comprises fifty per cent of a student’s total score. According to Teese (2014), the VCE’s retrieval of the old assessment practices put in place a framework in which “a regime of competition had become inescapable” (p. 198) (see Chapter 5).

The interview data reveals that this assessment regime continues to have a disproportionate influence on the curricular decision-making of teachers. The power of the discourse of alignment is signified in this comment from Callum: “you have got that straightjacket effect – the exam at the end of the year and one-size-fits all... so we kind of feel we are trying to serve many masters.” Exam success is essential for a high study score; therefore the exam looms large in the minds of teachers. The alignment discourse frames a broad grouping of the statements, which will be analysed in terms of exam alignment, assessment alignment and curriculum alignment.

Exam alignment refers to the influence that the exam has on teacher practice and student learning. The exam is pivotal, especially in schools where expectations about results are high. A number of teachers talked about maintaining the status quo in terms of course content because to change topics could jeopardise student results. In other words, they know how to get good study scores for certain topics. Conversely, at Yellow Gum Secondary College the feeling was that by changing revolutions, higher results might be achieved. Edward explained, “essentially we have looked at the data from the results of Year 12 exams and it looked like the French Revolution were lower, so it was probably for the students’ best interests to
shift to the Chinese Revolution.” Whilst there might have been other underlying reasons, this was the logic expressed.

Pressure from school leadership, parents and students to achieve good results was more acute in some schools than others, however, the influence of results was intensely felt in both government and non-government schools. Demand for high results could be said to roughly correlate with ICSEA values (see Chapter 3): at the schools with higher ICSEA values, teachers tended to talk about results being a strong driver of curricular decision-making. Callum said of Ironbark Grammar:

It is very results focused, it publishes the results, it is very proud of them. I have a responsibility to maintain that as a teacher here. Again being a results driven institution, we stick fairly closely to the Study Design, we really do let the exam tail wag the curriculum dog as it were I think...

Callum cannot emphasise enough the control exerted by results, which means teaching and learning is governed by the exam:

I have made the point a couple of times about the results focus – very heavily exam-driven, and really pushing through the course, much more teacher-centred here than at other schools... Parents pay a lot of money to send their children here and they do expect results, I think they expect tertiary entry results at a minimum, so we are very driven by that and that influences a lot, and I don’t think a lot of schools have that.... I think it would be quite liberating to do it the other way; it would be quite nice. (Callum)

The fact that he would feel ‘liberated’ doing it ‘the other way’ is indicative of the disempowering effect exam alignment has on teachers’ practice. While Callum associates these pressures with the parental expectations of an elite grammar school, this underestimates the extent to which teachers feel the power of exam alignment more broadly.

There was agreement between teachers from all types of schools that the exam was the inception point for the alignment of assessment and curriculum. For example, Hamish talked about Banksia Secondary College in a similar way:

The context of where our school is, it is highly competitive with all of our neighbours and we are a results-driven business. So our focus is heading
more and more towards a private school model, but a private school focus where we live and die by our mean study score to the point that we have taken assessment models and rubrics and filtered them down to Year 9 to teach them those skills there. We teach essay structure in Year 9 that we teach to year twelves, so however we set it up in Year 12 we will teach them to do it, even doing your exam source responses we do that in Year 9. So it is sort of this big conveyor belt we are trying to track them on because the school focus this year and last year has been on improving our mean study scores, so when you have those demands, which are fine, it is the job...

(Hamish)

Another effect of the consumerisation of curriculum and schooling is indicated by the ways both teachers position their roles within an economic model: a business with parents/customers; local competition; and the factory model image in the form of a conveyer belt. The phrases ‘results-driven’ and ‘exam-driven’ encapsulate the notion of performativity which encourages regulation and change through the judgement of productivity and performance (Ball, 2003). At Banksia Secondary College they “live and die by the mean study score” which suggests that student performance is a measure of teacher performance. High-stakes testing has become representative of a policy technology of performativity, a regulatory intervention that forms and re-forms the values and subjectivities of teachers and other policy stakeholders (Ball, 2003). Hamish and Callum both intimate the need to compromise or put up with this pressure as part of the job and as part of the school culture. This is not a phenomenon found only in the wealthier suburbs of Melbourne. Competition between schools, high-stakes accountability and ways of identifying teachers ‘added value’ are said to be an international trend that has resulted from governments and schools turning towards “neoliberal looking reforms” (Evers & Kneyber, 2016, p. 2). An effect of this discourse is a move towards the “foregrounding of the accountability purpose of assessment” (Klenowski, 2012, p. 179).

As a result this encourages exam washback, which is when expectations concerning exam performance have a disproportionate flow on effect on pedagogical and assessment practices during the learning leading up to the exam. The effects of exam washback can be both positive and negative, intentional or accidental (Spratt,
Its operation is embedded in the discourse of alignment which takes for granted that the curriculum is the starting point to which assessment, instruction and teaching and learning activities are aligned to ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved. This is what Biggs (1996) refers to as constructive alignment. The benefit of alignment is synchronicity between intent and assessment, rather than disjuncture or misalignment (Craig & Craig, 2008; Mercurio, 2005). However, when summative assessment involves high stakes examinations, assessment alignment can become unbalanced.

The exam alignment discourse intersects with the professional knowledge discourse – teachers are required to not only be experts in their disciplinary fields, but also become exam technicians. It is common practice for the School Assessed Coursework (SACs) – the school-based summative assessment in the VCE – to replicate the various parts of the exam; indeed there is a widespread perception that this is best practice. For example, teachers will design a document analysis SAC using the exact question framework used for the document analysis question on the exam. The majority of participants referred to “mimicking” or “mirroring” the exam in SACs:

It [the exam] is definitely a necessary evil and kids understand that or they are taught to believe that. And it is hard not to focus on it, each of the four SACs throughout the year are geared to building the skills to answering each of the four questions in the exam, so everything you do is aimed at the exam, in terms of building knowledge and skill and that’s clear to me and to the students so there is that heavy focus on exam preparation right from the very first lesson of the year. (Michael)

At Callum’s school where results are paramount, the exam is replicated in Year 11 too: “basically Year 11 is a mini Year 12, so the exams, the assessment tasks will reflect exactly what is done in Year 12 and that will affect curriculum content delivery... even in Year 11 it is unseen, no notes, it is like they are walking into a mini-exam, so it is very tough.” The responses also indicated that exam preparation is commonly aligned down through the middle years, as described above by Hamish.
This is important in terms of the scaffolding of skill development, but it could mean that the way history is taught in Victoria is in danger of becoming formulaic, or examified. The negative effects of washback include a narrowing of the curriculum, didactic teaching and competitiveness, as illustrated by the teachers’ comments.

This places constraints on what and how students learn. Rather than the exam being aligned to the curriculum and its enactment, curriculum enactment becomes rigidly aligned to the exam. This can have the effect of dictating teachers’ curricular and pedagogical decision-making, constricting their autonomy. As exams are used by policy makers to standardise student achievement and are perceived to ensure that new curriculum is implemented in schools, the effects of exams tend to be positioned normatively by stakeholders (Kruger, Won, & Treagust, 2013).

Exam washback is a particularly illustrative example of the power discourse in action. As an experienced exam assessor for the VCAA, Martha expressed serious concern about the “problematic” impact this practice is having: “There is now a perceived formula for how to do the exam and so teachers are paranoid about how to beat the formula or how to match the formula.” The discursive effect is evident in the perpetuation of common beliefs about emulating the exam in SACS: “Quite often teachers will say ‘this is the way to do it’ and everyone goes ‘okay’... all these things are being entrenched in what we think we have to do, that we pass on as ‘here’s the way.’” Hamish, who undertook exam assessor training in order to better prepare his students for the exam and ultimately improve their performance, further illustrates this behaviour:

It is more about having the absolute confidence of ‘this is what you need to write’... Fifty per cent of the success is actually being able to do the exam, it is not so much content knowledge, it is about ‘how do I do that.’ So much of our planning changed based on what we learned, based on what we understood on how they were assessed and how to actually prepare them for the exam... But then again it is because of the priorities of our schools, of us being a results-driven business, sending teachers out to do that training is a priority. (Hamish)
Teachers can apply to be trained as exam assessors for the VCAA, which means they are paid to mark the end of year examination. As Hamish indicates, the value is perceived to be in learning the secret of *how to do* the exam.

It is therefore commonly acknowledged that training to be an exam assessor for the VCAA is the best professional learning one can do because it gives teachers the ‘intel’ they need to help their students succeed in the exam. This was raised in an article published in *The Age* newspaper, entitled ‘VCE assessors: the secret weapons helping schools achieve top results’. Based on VCAA data it was reported that “droves of teachers at top-performing private schools are signing up to mark other students’ VCE exams in a bid to gain valuable insight into the high-stakes tests” (Cook & Butt, 2017, para.1). The authors highlighted that the schools with the highest concentration of trained exam assessors were from elite schools, where the practice was widely encouraged in the belief that teachers who are exam assessors have the capacity to improve student performance; a trend that is correlated with study score data. Such trends indicate that exams provide a means to exercise social power within the curriculum hierarchy and their function within this structure ensures social inequality persists (Teese, 2013). The most socially, economically and culturally supported students continue to outperform those that lack this social power and resourcing, and as a result private schools outperform government schools (Teese, 2013, 2014). This was demonstrated by the list of top study scores for Revolutions in 2015, which presented as a roll call for Melbourne’s most elite schools – with a sprinkling of government schools, which were more often than not, select-entry government schools or those with high ICSEA values (*Herald-Sun*, 2015).

Thus the deployment of exam washback is intended to strengthen student performance, particularly in schools where results are already superior. It is perhaps not surprising then that when the new *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2015a) was published, there was a great deal of consternation across the state that it was not accompanied by a sample exam. Martha said, “teachers are losing their minds that they are not seeing a sample exam until next year.” This was reinforced by Hamish’s
concern: “if they change the exam, then you are changing the teaching strategy of every single teacher who teaches that because we start from the very start of the year teaching a specific skill according to the format on the exam.” Conceptualising the exam as a curriculum and teaching strategy clearly indicates the impact of exam washback. The problem with exam intensification though, is that it is “forcing more competitive students into a state of continuous intense exam preparation at the expense of conceptual mastery” (Teese, 2014, p. 310). As we can see from the data, it has become conventional wisdom that the knowledge required to do well in VCE History is not so much about historical thinking, but more so about acquiring the knowledge to produce the orthodox responses required of the exam.

Whilst teachers may appear complicit in this, they expressed concerns about this constraint. The exam-driven nature of the VCE is at odds with the ideals expressed through the student engagement discourse. Callum identified a key challenge as “the amount that you have to get through in the time and it really feels like you are shovelling coal into the locomotive… that’s really tough and there is really not much time to do a lot that is skills based or interest based.” Both Michael and Martha talked about being “torn” in relation to the demands of the exam and the desire to be more creative and flexible. Martha reflected that although “you are training them to be little monkeys in the exam” she also wants students “to have a love and passion for this thing.” Penny felt that the narrowness, arbitrariness and “stock standard” responses required of the exam did not allow students to fully express the depth of their learning. She said, “that is the problem, there is so much fun to be had with those VCE courses but there is just not enough time.” Mark was likewise concerned: “I feel a bit less flexible in terms of the content and even the style of delivery for Year 12, I think it is such dense material, you can’t do lots of activities, you have just got to get through the slog of it sometimes.” An implication for Asia-related history is that teachers do not have time to explore historiographical and intercultural issues in depth, or do the subjectivity work that challenges imperialised worldviews.
The teachers’ constant references to the “battle”, “slog” and “race” in relation to getting through the inordinate amount of content of year 12, also shows up the conflict between the actual realities of getting students exam-ready and teachers’ idealism in regards to being dynamic history educators that respond to the individual needs of their students and the relevant issues of the day, as described by the previous discourses. Other studies have similarly found that examinations influence the adoption of teacher-centred approaches, contract content and sacrifice higher-order thinking skills in order to focus on excessive amounts of content (Au, 2007; Fountain, 2012; Kruger et al., 2013).

The teachers also voiced the discourse of alignment when they discussed content choice and whole-school planning. Comprehensive and coordinated curriculum planning by school, learning area and year level is an expectation of schools (VCAA, 2016a). Two of the teachers discussed curriculum and assessment alignment across the year levels as strategic goals. Liam identified the objective of “vertical integration” of assessment from Year 7 to 12 to ensure “logical progression of skills.” For Bryce this was an effect of exam washback: “my strategy recently has been aligning the 7 to 11 assessment tasks with the same skill sets and concepts with the Year 12 exam.” This alignment imperative has been further complicated by recent curriculum reform in history across all year levels. A number of participants referred to these reforms necessitating careful year level crosschecking of topics. Liam explained: “it is very important to make sure there is no content duplication... students instantly zone out when they re-encounter a topic they have come across in a lower year level.” Alignment therefore has implications for the student engagement discourse.

Historical method, however, also makes other demands on content sequencing; history curriculum is to a large extent bound by the conventions of the discipline. Chronology and historical narrative significantly shape the organisation of content across the year levels. The Australian Curriculum: History, the AusVELS: History and the new Victorian Curriculum: History all progress chronologically from ancient times in Year 7 through to the World Wars in Year 10, where Units 1 and 2
Twentieth Century History carries on in Year 11. Other teachers spoke about the logic behind aligning content between the year levels. Janette said, “because we do rights and freedoms and the civil rights movements in Year 10 it makes sense to move in to the Vietnam War in Year 11.” In Year 12 teachers are naturally guided by the conventions of the discipline, as well as constructivism. Mary explained the importance of contextual sequencing: “I hate that idea of developing curriculum that doesn’t have a logical connection and you have all these supposedly stand-alone subjects or topics that don’t complement each other, or one doesn’t create a context for the next one.” Natalia articulated the value of building on conceptual understanding from Year 11 to Year 12: “we do the Vietnam War and the Korean War and they can use those opposing ideas again when they are studying the Chinese Revolution and the Russian Revolution, they have got that groundwork”.

Grace also connected this to student outcomes:

So in the VCE obviously I think the decisions behind doing Russia and China was that it was easiest to do two communist revolutions, so the decision was that for the kids they would only have to come to grips with one kind of idea I guess, communism rather than the Enlightenment or whatever. So that would be easy, so they would do better on the exam. (Grace)

All of the teachers who paired the Russian and Chinese Revolutions considered this to be an advantageous combination.

These points reiterate that the selection of Asia-related content cannot simply be understood in terms of teacher knowledge or the reach of national Asia literacy policy. This decision-making is also contingent upon “the context of globalising accountabilities” (Lingard et al., 2016), evidenced most clearly by the effects of exam washback. Alignment is a buzzword in the discourse of policy-makers, seen in statements that urge ‘strategic alignment,’ ‘alignment of policy with practice’ or ‘the alignment of student standards and high-stakes testing’ (see Glossary of Education Reform, 2013). The discourse of alignment acts to arrange curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, teachers, students and schools in well-ordered, straight lines. This assumes that curriculum is implemented rather than enacted, and as illustrated here, the power yielded by the exam restricts teacher autonomy and creative interpretation of curriculum: “Assessment tends to drive curriculum, to
decide what teachers and students will emphasise and choose to study and to define what scope of freedom schools might have in their day-to-day activities” (C. Collins, 2011, p. 200). In the case of VCE History, assessment does more than drive these decisions, it can cripple them through the limitations imposed by exam washback, creating the “conveyor belt” and “straightjacket effect.” Thus any discussion of the inclusion of Asia-related history must take these discursive practices into consideration.

### 6.5 The West as method discourse

Chapter 5 argued that the accumulated curriculum of nearly three decades of VCE History Study Designs has contributed to (re)securing the relations of power (Graham, 2011) of the West as method discourse, despite ongoing attempts to destabilise it. West as method shapes the construction of historical knowledge by taking the methods, categories and preferred topics of ‘Western’ history for granted. It represents a particular type of historical thinking, an ethnocentric way of thinking that “conceives of identity in terms of ‘master-narratives’ that define togetherness and difference” (Rüsen, 2004b, p. 118). The historical awareness of particular groups and individuals can be conceptualised as *historical consciousness*. Through the sense making processes of historical consciousness, the self is located in a particular cultural habitat, and “in situating themselves, subjects draw borderlines to others and their otherness” (Rüsen, 2002, p. 2).

Many of the teachers expressed their awareness of a collective historical consciousness when considering how “Eurocentrism” shapes constructions of Asia as Other, but were less likely to reflect on their individual historical consciousness. Foucault (1972) writes:

> It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. (p. 28)
Although the participants were not directly questioned about their own cultural backgrounds it remained an aspect of their curricular-decision making that largely went unsaid in the interviews.

Several teachers demonstrated an awareness of the dominance of the West as method approach in school history by identifying how it was expressed in the attitudes and collective historical consciousness around them. Grace reflected: “In regards to Asia, or Indigenous history, or things like that there are often dismissive attitudes because people don’t consider that politically important, or they are threatened by that, or basically they are racist.” Liam contended:

There seems to be a resistance to moving away from an Anglo-centric or British-centric version of teaching Australian history… Australia is not all white, not all Australians migrated during the Gold Rush or as convicts, but while people admit that, they then seem to be unwilling to transform that into reality when it comes to teaching and how we think about our national discourse. (Liam)

The implication is that in multicultural Australia, West as method remains central to maintaining common understandings of national identity. Bryce elaborated on how this political historicism impacts on curricular decision-making in schools:

I guess we live in a world that is dictated by a Western view, I think the materials and the resources that are available to us, in terms of things like film and text and engagement revolve around European and American perspectives and views. The only Asian studies we do are things that are Western topics that lend themselves or are related to Asia… (Bryce)

Callum also acknowledged that Euro-American preferences are difficult to shift:

I think History in Victoria is very much Europe and America and that’s that… When it is all said and done, Australia is still in some ways a European outpost, that mentality still persists – that what happens in Europe is the most important thing, or what happens in America is the most important thing, so therefore we had better study it. I think that is still a massive influence – and we have fallen for that as well – we have gone right down that path. (Callum)
The statements hint at an acquiescence of West as method in schools. In these conversations, teachers recognised that the underlying power relations require disruption but also indicate that the ethnocentrism or Eurocentrism that shapes the collective historical consciousness is perceived as the norm.

It was commonly noted by teachers that Asia and Australia-Asia relations tended to be represented negatively in the stated and enacted curriculum. For example, Mark commented, “a lot of the time when Asia comes into the curriculum it is because of some conflict or the negative connotation.” Penny gave some illustrative examples:

I actually noticed a pattern when I was writing it up myself about what we teach about where Asia features. So okay in Year 8: Medieval Japan. When we taught Year 9 history we looked at the Asian immigrants on the gold fields as a negative. Year 10 history: the role of Japan – a negative; the battle of Kokoda – a negative, they are the enemy. Even when I do it in Year 12 History it is the Russo-Japanese war and Japan is the enemy that puts Russia into a bad financial situation. Cambodia – genocide. Now I don’t know whether it is just a conspiracy theory that went through my head, but I couldn’t spot – other than perhaps medieval Japan, we do celebrate the Japanese society and their honour codes and all those great cultural traditions they came up with – beyond that I couldn’t spot a time when Asia is covered in a positive way. (Penny)

The ‘pattern’ or ‘conspiracy theory’ referenced here alludes to the way established historical attitudes and power relations are reflected in curriculum. Her colleague Janette concurred: “even with Australian history around Federation – fear of the Asian invasion, the Mongolian octopus, all those – you look at those images and it is all those negative sort of things.”

Such observations confirm that in the Australian imaginary, Asia still tends to take on the exaggerated shapes that includes, in these instances, menace and monster (Walker & Sobocinska, 2012, p. 1). Granted that global conflict was a defining characteristic of the twentieth century, it is difficult for teachers to choose Asia-related histories that are not viewed through conflict or a Cold War paradigm. Although more recent historiography (see Romero, 2014) has begun to dismantle the hegemonic dominance of the Cold War as East-West conflict, the above
statements suggest that teachers recognise that these representations are hard to shift. Their observations also support the analysis of the 2004 Study Design presented in the previous chapter, which argued that Asia was predominantly evoked through fear and conflict within the curriculum document.

These representational patterns potentially shape collective historical consciousness and subjectivity. Curriculum “inducts the younger generation into who is the ‘we’ and who is ‘other’; who is important and who is inferior; who are friends, who are sources of one’s cultural heritage, and who are alien” (Yates & Grumet, 2011, p. 242). An implication of this continued identification with Euro-American history and a tendency to know Asia through historical hostilities is that it maintains the preoccupation with positioning Australia as in but not of Asia (Behm, 2009; Jolly, 2008; Martin et al., 2015). Such representations continue to position Asia as separate: “from the dominant Australian perspective, Asia is over there, not here” (Ang, 2014, p. 129).

History is especially good at providing the “metanarrative and the narrative technology that positions us as peoples in relation to one another” (Parkes, 2007, p. 392). In this respect it delineates the ideas of togetherness and difference that shape historical consciousness. As we saw in the discourse of student engagement, there is a well-intentioned desire to include histories that are viewed as being more relevant to or inclusive of particular student demographics. These practices, however, are underwritten by the ethnocentricity of the West as method discourse as they are based on constructions of the ‘ethnic other.’ For example, it was noted that content was specially selected for non-Anglo students with Vietnamese, African and Lebanese heritages. White History teachers are the beneficiaries of the legacies of colonial frameworks, so it is a constant challenge to counter the invisible norm of whiteness, or the static notions of culture that have shaped the teaching profession and the histories constructed within the curricula that they have experienced both as students and teachers (Henderson & Jetnikoff, 2013; Parkes, 2007).
This leads us to considering Foucault’s (1972) notion of the *not-said* and that which went unproblematised in these conversations. Although the teachers gave examples of content choices based on personal narratives, these narratives did not tend to be connected to the sorts of master-narratives identified above. They considered the cultural background of their students to be significant but not necessarily their own. In Victoria, as across Australia, the teaching workforce does not represent Australia’s culturally diverse population – teachers are overwhelmingly white, middle class and of English speaking, Anglo-Australian backgrounds (Allard & Santoro, 2008; J. Collins & Reid, 2012; Santoro, 2005). Indeed I typify this description. Ethnicity and whiteness elide with the discourse of West as method. Liam’s response provides a detailed insight into the *not-said*:

> If I were asked about how do I feel about teaching Asia as history, I would say the first response is uncomfortable because when I went to school I was not taught Asian histories, unless you count doing a little bit on ancient China in Year 7. But I remember History in high school being, and this was not that long ago, being very Eurocentric, the idea of Australia as part of Asia, or the idea that our Asian neighbours had different paths through history, never appeared. Certainly when I went to uni there was no compulsion to study Asian histories so again in the history portion of my undergraduate degree I focused much more heavily on Western histories, things that I felt resonated more with me, partly because that cultural identity that I had built up through high school. And I will be honest, I come from a white Christian family, who as migrants came from the British Isles for the most part and many of them came 150 years ago, so there is a temptation to think of that as a natural Australian identity and possibly I have only begun to complicate that when I have arrived in this school and seen so many kids who don’t necessarily think of themselves as Australian or whose definition of Australian is very different to the one I grew up with. (Liam)

He underscores the culturally symbolic power of curriculum and its influence on subjectivity, which as Liam’s comment suggests, is not fixed. Liam was one of the younger teachers interviewed, the educational experiences to which he refers are within the Asia literacy policy sphere of influence of recent decades, and yet, Asia-related histories were largely absent from his education.
The sorts of comments from the teachers above also show that historical consciousness can be inherited not only through school curricula but also through intergenerational influences. Wineburg et al. (2007) explore the idea of intergenerational influence through the notion of cultural curriculum to show that education occurs well beyond the realms of institutionalised curriculum: “We conceptualised the development of historical consciousness not as a series of courses or lectures but as the result of a complex interplay between home, community, school, and the historicising forces of popular culture” (p. 71). This reiterates the value of contextualising history curriculum within its broader sociocultural context. Clark (2014) builds on this research with the notion of historical inheritance and highlights that historical consciousness is fluid and ever-changing throughout our lives. In this respect, Liam’s articulation of his historical consciousness acknowledges both the influence of the experienced institutional curriculum of school and university and the cultural curriculum of his historical inheritance, therefore calling to attention the interplay between individual and collective historical consciousness.

The operationalisation of the West as method discourse is complicated by an apparent silence around reflexivity or an internalised historical consciousness. For Rüsen (2012), tradition is a key principle of historical sense generation; he distinguishes between functioning traditions, those that “confirm the power of ethnocentrism in forming cultural identity” (p. 59) and reflective tradition which “can be observed when the role of tradition in historical culture becomes an issue of reconsideration and reformulation, by which it assumes a form in which it can become a matter of discourse, critique, and argumentative acceptance” (p. 59). Enhancing self-reflexivity and reflective tradition has implications for Asia-related history. If teachers are to respond to the call of a postcolonial or deimperialist agenda, they need to have a deeper sense of collective and individual historical consciousness to challenge the inherent curricular othering that has shaped their own subjectivities. Only then can they ensure their students do not internalise fixed or essentialist notions of Australian identity, or nurture what Chen (2010) would describe as imperialised subjectivities. Indeed it has been argued that teachers need
to do this sort of self-reflexive work to better acknowledge the ways in which cultural backgrounds shapes subjectivities (Cloonan, Fox, Ohi, & Halse, 2017). Rizvi (2015) says, “we need to develop in our students forms of self-reflexivity about how our identities are historically constituted but are socially dynamic; how our practices of representing the other reflect relations of power” (p. 67). Before this can occur, teachers need to be able to do the same.

While participants may be reasonably alert to the effects of the West as method in VCE History curriculum, the conditions in which they enact curriculum can constrain their capacity to resist or dismantle this powerful discourse. A more deimperialised approach can be frustrated by quotidian concerns and the realities of the highly competitive VCE: “In the mundane, in relation to the pressures of performance, in response to constant change, there is little space or time or opportunity to think differently or ‘against’” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 139). This is not to say that teachers cannot or do not try, as evidenced by some of the examples throughout this chapter. The extent to which the new VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015) provides them the latitude to do so, or the “curricular strategies for the reconstitution of cultural imaginaries” (Lin, 2012, p. 155) is debatable and will be the focus of analysis in the next chapter.

6.6 Chapter summary

The teacher participants were asked to reflect on the factors that shape their curricular decision-making. Therefore they may be surprised that this analysis has read their responses as statements that take up particular discourse that both constrain and enable thinking, speaking and ways of being in the world. This chapter has argued that four key discourses enable, but largely constrain, curricular decision-making in VCE History. These included the professional knowledge, student engagement, alignment and West as method discourses. By understanding the curriculum policy process as interdiscursive, the apparent self-contradictions and incongruities of the teachers’ commentaries reflect curriculum policy as discourse and the messiness of enactment. These complexities have not been attended to in some of the research on Asia-related curricular choices. Wilkinson and Milgate
(2009) proposed that year 12 teachers were less likely to select Asia-related content over “the areas of study in which teachers feel most comfortable and/or in which they have been trained” (p. 5). There is evidence of this to some extent, but the assumption that teachers are less likely to choose Asia-related topics only because they are unfamiliar with them is an oversimplification.

Furthermore, these inconsistencies indicate the apparent paradoxes that teachers face. They must be passionate masters of their historical content areas, yet be intellectually nimble enough to tackle new content areas according to the diverse needs and interests of their students. They must engage their students, be culturally responsive and inclusive educators, yet teach to a rigid one-size-fits-all exam that measures their performance and diminishes the scope to be innovative teachers. They must compromise idealism for pragmatism. These patterns are consistent with global education policy trends: around the world the evaluative use of student performance data diminishes teacher autonomy and increases prescription, and the focus on the individual aspects of teaching ignores the challenges of the cultural and structural conditions in which teachers work (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2016).

This chapter has argued that curriculum policy is interpreted in diverse ways in diverse contexts, and shown that the power relations that modulate the work of teachers shape the possibilities for curriculum interpretation. This indicates that the curricular-decision making of VCE history teachers is embedded in deeper issues within the global education policy arena including high-stakes testing, performativity, consumerisation, life-long learning, teacher standards and instrumentalism. Although the teacher participants discursively position themselves as interested, enthusiastic and passionate, the “straightjacket effect” and “slog” of VCE curriculum is heavily felt. A curricular framework that constructively enables rather than constrains teachers’ curricular decision-making might counter some of these underlying issues and discontents (Priestley et al., 2016).
The analysis of the discursive conditions in which Asia-related history is enacted reveals that despite teachers being alert to the problematic nature of a curriculum heavily influenced by West as method, the process of deimperialisation has far to go in regards to curriculum enactment. The conditions of possibility for curricular decision-making are considerably limited by the multitude of competing interests that teachers are required to serve day to day and the discursive practices that constitute the ‘realities’ of being a VCE History teacher. Blaming teachers for not being qualified or interested enough in Asia-related history misses the point. The participants were also mindful of the policy rhetoric that apprizes Asia engagement in schools. To a lesser extent they are aware of the sort of work that needs to be done around culture and identity in relation to their own historical consciousness. This was evident in the gaps and silences around the whiteness and ethnocentric assumptions concerning ethnicity. Part of this, I propose, involves teachers first addressing their own culturally inherent subjectivities before they can assist students dismantle essentialising ideas of togetherness and difference. Overall, understanding the reasons why some histories are enacted while others are not, hinges on the complex and contradictory discursive practices of teachers and the competing demands they face at the school level and in state, national and wider education policy contexts.
Chapter 7: Asia-related VCE History curriculum and its policy context 2005-2015

7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter brings this history of the curricular present right up to the present with an analysis of the current VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015a), accredited from 2016 to 2020. It begins with an analysis of the discursive construction of Asia through the policy processes of the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary History (ACARA, 2013) and the VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015a). The following sub-research questions are addressed: What Asia-related history is available in key VCE History Study Designs from 1991 to 2015 and how does this relate to the policy contexts in which they were they developed? What are curriculum policy actors’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum? How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are their implications? The interview data shows the discursive consonance and dissonance between the perceptions of teachers and policy actors and the implications that these tensions have on their perceived roles in the curriculum reform process. The policy stakeholder participants are identified according to the organisation they represent: the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria (HTAV), the Asia Education Foundation (AEF), the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). They were asked about their organisation’s views on its contribution to national and state curriculum development, the new curriculum documents and the position of Asia within them. This is followed by an analysis of the content and orientation of the current Study Design to further scrutinise the representation of Asia.

7.2 The national curriculum policy context

The VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015) represents a significant curricular moment in Victorian curriculum history because it is the first Study Design to
incorporate the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History*. Usually the Study Design is revised every three to four years, however, the accreditation of the 2004 Study Design was extended to accommodate ACARA’s timeline. Thus, the development of the new Study Design involved a protracted reform process because it included the drafting, consultation and redrafting of the *Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary History*, which began in 2010, followed by the same process for the VCAA’s reform of the Study Design. The development of the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* provides important policy context for the development of the *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2014a). In order to appreciate the broader constitutive conditions of *Senior Secondary: History* and its relationship to VCE History, it is helpful to take a few steps back.

Political interference in history education intensified during the prime ministership of John Howard. Concern about the civic knowledge of young Australians leading up to the centenary of Federation culminated in the National Inquiry into School History in 2000 (see Chapter 5). A constitutional monarchist, Howard’s “traditionalist conception of nationalism” (Harris-Hart, 2010, p. 306) spurred his interest in scrutinising history education and in 2006 he zealously re-engaged with the debate (Bonnell & Crotty, 2008). In his Australia Day speech he called for a “root and branch renewal of the teaching of Australian history in our schools” (2006, para. 41), by which he sought to remedy the belief that school history had “succumbed to a postmodern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated” (2006, para. 41). This might have been a fair estimation of the 1991 *VCE History Study Design* but as discussed in Chapter 5, these postmodern features were not prominent in subsequent iterations.

The National History Summit was launched in August 2006 and was convened by Education Minister, Julie Bishop. Its aim was:

> to seek advice on ways the Australian Government could strengthen the place and maintain the integrity of Australian history in the school curriculum and re-establish a structured narrative in the teaching of Australian history throughout primary and secondary schools (DEST, 2006).
The notion of divining a national, structured narrative for students is based on an underlying assumption that “there is an objective, knowable past that all Australian citizens must own, whether they like it or not” (Ashton & Hamilton, 2010, p. 61). In response to Howard’s summit, a secondary teacher warned in an article in Agora that prescriptive constructions of the past risk the devaluation of the stories of those who are excluded from mainstream historical narratives (Ots, 2006, p. 13).

The subsequent debate reinforced the ideological schism between left and right formed in previous rounds of the ‘history wars’ (see Chapter 5). This division was clearly demonstrated by Bishop in an unvetted speech to be presented at the national History Teachers’ Association of Australia (HTAA) conference in October 2006 that accused left-wing ideologues of hijacking curriculum and taking themes “straight from Chairman Mao” (as cited by Topsfield, 2006). In the actual speech the hyperbole was toned down, although she still took the opportunity to attack “ideologues” (Bishop, 2006). From one side of the debate Bishop and Howard were accused of taking an antiquated narrative approach that privileges elites and marginalises subaltern group (Leadbetter, 2009). From the other, the left intelligentsia was admonished for its apparent parochial worldview, excessive self-righteousness and uncritical championing of multiculturalism (Melleuish, 2013). Donnelly (2006), for example, deployed a Western-centric discourse that criticised the lack of recognition “of Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage and the grand narrative represented by the rise of Western civilisation” (p. 32).

This episode, however, came to an abrupt end when the Howard government lost to Labor in 2007. The Guide to Teaching Australian History Years 9 to 10 developed in response to the summit and the 150 hours of compulsory stand-alone Australian history that it mandated was never implemented. This debate demonstrated that the politicisation and oversimplification of history risks reducing the national narrative to a cliché, especially when political intervention can be thwarted by the election cycle (Clark, 2010; T. Taylor, 2009). Nonetheless, it was significant because it shaped public discourse and initiated efforts to mainstream the Western civilisation/Judeo-Christian heritage discourse that continues to be circulated by the right, and in more conservative circles it popularised approaches to school history
that favoured collective memory over postmodern and postcolonial approaches.

As a consequence History – alongside English, Mathematics and Science – was prioritised as one of the first phase subjects of the new Australian Curriculum. This was further confirmation of “the view that history holds a special place in the curriculum” (Gilbert, 2011, p. 246). Reflecting on the consultation on the first Australian Curriculum: F-10 History draft, the ACARA representative indicates history curriculum was in the public consciousness as there was “really high-level engagement with History, I think it was topical at the time.”

A national curriculum had been on the federal agenda since the 1980s and some of the groundwork for it had been laid by the States and Territories’ collaboration on national curriculum projects (Henderson, 2011; Savage, 2016). In 2005 the Howard Government floated the idea of nationalising senior certification and commissioned the report Australian Certificate of Education: Exploring a Way (ACER, 2006). Driven by a coercive form of federalism, the Howard government failed to win support for a national curriculum from States and Territories, which contrasted with the co-operative federalism offered by the new Labor government with its ‘Education Revolution’ reform agenda (Harris-Hart, 2010). Australia was not alone in its federalist push for a national curriculum; policies that sought to expand federal hegemonic control of schooling were, and continue to be, consistent with global trends (Savage, 2016).

By and large the impetus for nationalisation was driven by the desire to make governance more efficient and effective (Savage, 2016). The timing was also propitious for the Rudd government – all State and Territory governments were Labor at the time of its election, which greatly aided agreement on a national curriculum (Savage, 2016). The National Curriculum Board (NCB) was established in 2008, and through an Act of Parliament became the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in May 2009; it was required to report to the Education Ministers through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: History (F-12) (NCB, 2009) was published in 2009.
7.3 Asia-related history and the Australian Curriculum: History

The relevance of Asia to young people’s futures was foregrounded in the new Australian Curriculum: History. From the beginning the incorporation of Asia in History was viewed as central to the Australian Curriculum’s “futures orientation” (NCB, 2009, p. 12):

A futures orientation focused on globalisation, the rise of the knowledge economy, the importance of sustainability, the rich diversity of the Australian people and their distinctive position within the Asia-Pacific region make an informed historical understanding all the more important. (p. 12)

Even history could not escape the policy makers’ obsession with “future proofing” (Kenway, 2008, p. 10) to nurture “the new sorts of worker that the global knowledge economy will require” (Kenway, 2008, p. 10). In previous chapters the discourse of relevance was discussed in terms of the way it positioned the need to know about Asia based on the immediate relevance of the region to Australia. In contrast, this future-focused iteration was attached to projections about the ‘Asian Century’ in a more global sense.

The embedding of the Asia and Australia’s engagement with the Asia cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum represented a significant policy achievement for Asia literacy proponents and a consolidation of decades of policy and rhetoric. However, while it might appear that this was the result of natural policy progression, the prioritisation of Asia literacy was largely due to the confluence of the specific discursive conditions and practices of this period. Such policy practices “tells us not what is ‘real’ but how politics is always involved in the characterisation and experience of ‘the real’” (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 176).

Rather, the championing of Asia literacy as a curriculum priority from 2008-2012 was invigorated by consistent inter-textual policy referencing and expedited by the political relations that delineated the discursive boundaries at the time. The synergy between Labor governments and policymakers provided the “set of relationships” (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 180) that made it possible for Asia literacy to be mainstreamed in education discourse and curriculum policy.
The new Labor federal government worked at revitalising the economic imperative of Asia literacy and urged State Education Ministers to do so too. The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) introduced in 2008, provided funding to education sectors in the States and Territories and was reminiscent of the Rudd Report’s (Kevin Rudd, 1994) economic goals (Halse, 2015a). Prime Minister Rudd’s (2008) refrain was "for Australia to be the most Asian-literate nation in the Western world" (para. 4). Rudd (2012) invokes the tropes of Asia literacy discourse, in which he also privileges China: “As Prime Minister and as Foreign Minister, I often argued that the best vision for Australia was for us to become the most China-literate and Asia-literate country in the twenty-first century – the China Century, the Asian Century” (para. 68).

The presence of Asia in school curriculum gathered momentum during Rudd’s leadership. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) – signed off by Education Ministers who represented Labor governments in all States and Territories except Western Australia – recognised that “Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). As Henderson (2015a) describes, “the Melbourne Declaration positioned the study of Asia in Australian education in the context of responding to globalisation and securing a knowledge economy thorough national curriculum reform” (p. 643). The potentiality of history to develop Asia literacy was signalled by Agora with an entire edition dedicated to the theme Asian History in 2009. Writing on behalf of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Stirling (2009) argued in the journal that a strong understanding of Asia was crucial for history students in the twenty-first century.

The Melbourne Declaration provided the overarching framework for the Australian Curriculum (see ACARA, 2010b; Hincks, 2009; NCB, 2009) and a lodestone for Asia literacy proponents, as indicated by the AEF’s Achieving the Goals of the Melbourne Declaration: Call for National Action Plan for Asia Literacy in Schools (AEF, 2010). The AEF played a crucial role in ensuring that studies of Asia and Asian languages were cemented in the new national curriculum (Halse, 2015a). The AEF participant
interviewed for this study highlighted its role:

We were part of the consultation process for the Australian Curriculum for all learning areas in terms of the curriculum and what should be taught. Obviously we had specific interest in the Asia cross-curriculum areas. (AEF participant)

Compared to the previous 1995 and 2000 statements, the AEF’s National Statement on Asia Literacy in Australian Schools 2011-2012 (AEF, 2011) was a more concise and assured document, perhaps having derived validation by the warrant provided by the Melbourne Declaration and the Shape of the Australian Curriculum. The National Statement (AEF, 2011) foregrounded the importance of cross-cultural communication, which would, in addition to providing “our young people with a competitive edge,” help to develop a “socially cohesive Australia and develop harmonious regional and global communities” (p. 2). The MCEETYA, ACARA and AEF positioned Asia literacy as social capital and their sentiments were somewhat more humanist in comparison to the discourse of national self-interest appropriated by the earlier policies (Halse, 2015a).

Both the Australian Curriculum: History F-10 and the Australian Curriculum: Senior Secondary History presented considerable scope for the selection of Asian histories. ACARA (2010a) set out the intended connection between the Asia cross-curriculum priority and the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History: “The dimension related to Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia includes the history of Asia in ancient times, the beliefs and values of Asian societies, and the history of Australia’s engagement with Asia in the modern period” (p. 2).

Many commentators, however, were not satisfied with the type of history included in the Australian Curriculum. Percival Wood (2012) is equally critical of Year 11 and 12 Modern History for its “adherence to the categories, ideas and global organisation emanating from Western civilisation” (p. 334). The Year 11 Ancient History unit’s focus on China is described as “unimaginative in terms of understanding our region” (Percival Wood, 2012, p. 333) and decolonisation is identified as lacking sufficient coverage, especially as it could provide scope to view
Australia’s responses to decolonisation and self-determination in Asia. Henderson (2011) notes the absence of recognition of the re-emergence of India and China, and the histories of regional neighbours like Indonesia and Vietnam: “Far more emphasis should be placed on the nations of Asia as significant in recent world history, and Australian students need opportunities to investigate the ways in which a ‘European heritage’ was one of many heritages in the region” (p. 5). In contrast, Berg and Melleuish (2010) were overtly critical of the excesses of postcolonial studies they saw apparent in the Australian Curriculum. Referring to History F-10 Melleuish (2010) said, “in the case of Australia, Western Civilisation must be a central organising principle of the curriculum” (p. 6) and added, “I cannot see how the Asia and Australia depth study could possibly be constructed as contributing to the significant past of our students” (p. 6). Similarly, reiterating a conservative discourse, Donnelly said:

On reading the national history curriculum, one searches in vain for a proper acknowledgement that modern Australia is Anglo-Celtic in origin and that our history can only be fully understood in the context of the nation’s Western heritage and Judeo-Christian beliefs and values. (para. 8)

Such criticisms were viewed as evidence of Australia’s willingness to maintain and defend Australia’s “enduring national image as an outpost of Western civilisation” (Pan, 2013, p. 77) but they also reflect the West as method discourse that privileges Western heritage in the curriculum. Nevertheless, these views were not universal, for example, the HTAV encouraged teachers to explore Asia-related histories in VCE and the Asian Depth Studies, as demonstrated by the Asia Pacific themed edition of Agora in 2012.

Although the statements made in these policies foregrounded the cultural rationale to some extent, slippages between the strategic and cultural purposes of these policies were still evident (Salter, 2013), particularly in the goals of the Labor government. The Australia in the Asian Century (Aust. Gov., 2012) White Paper fused Asia engagement with the Government’s economic agenda and reasserted the discourse of national self-interest. Prime Minister Julia Gillard (2012) said in the foreword, Australia must “seize the opportunities” if it is to be a “winner in this Asian Century” (pp. ii-iii). As such, Asia is constructed as “a resource for winning”
(Salter, 2015b, p. 785), representing the “reduction of culture to a function of markets” (Martin et al., 2015, p. 2). This is reinforced by the chapter, ‘Building Capabilities’, in which the building of Asia-relevant capabilities through school reform is required in order to “raise our productivity performance” (Aust. Gov., 2012, p. 161). Like NALSAS (see Chapter 5), the identified goals of the White Paper focused on increasing access to priority Asian languages – Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian and Japanese, or those of Australia’s major trading partners – and increasing student demand by working with businesses to show students the benefits of studies of Asia. In short: “Learning about Asia should be business-as-usual for every Australian school and every Australian student” (Aust. Gov., 2012, p. 169). The Australian Government had high expectations that the Australian Curriculum and the Asia engagement cross-curriculum priority especially would be the conduit for developing young people who had the “cultural knowledge and skills to enable them to be active in the region” (Aust. Gov., 2012, p. 15).

Responses to the White Paper reflect some of the tensions that have comprised Asia literacy discourse over the decades. According to Garnaut (2012), author of Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendency (1989), economically the White Paper was “ambitious and comprehensive” (2012, para. 1). Alternatively, it has been criticised as a testament to Australia’s “withered neoliberal imagination” (Connell, 2015, p. 42). It epitomised the fictional notion of an unprecedented Asia, (Walker & Sobocinska, 2012) and the underlying “colonial logic” (Takayama, 2016, p. 71) was constrained by a historically and politically constituted anxiety that embodied the old dichotomies of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and ‘East-West’ (Rizvi, 2013). Thus it has been argued that the parochial and opportunistic thinking of the White paper stressed the need for a more “deparochial” and “imaginative” (Koh, 2013, p. 86) curriculum response to Asia literacy.

Compared to the rhetoric of the White Paper, VCE History teachers were more cautious of the motives behind the Asia cross-curriculum priority. The HTAV representative, who was actively engaged in curriculum consultation with teachers, acknowledged teachers’ hesitancy when it came to the cross-curriculum priorities:
“There was a perception from teachers that the three cross-curriculum priorities, not just the Asian one but the Aboriginal one and environmental one, that this is a sort of a tick the box thing.” The attitude that including Asia is about ‘ticking the box’ suggests teachers perceive the cross-curriculum priorities as accessories rather than fundamentals of the Australian Curriculum. She added: “People are really happy to teach them when they are meaningfully embedded into the content... Some people where a bit sort of like ‘oh we will do it where we are doing it and it makes sense but I am not going to do it sort of in a general way.’” An implication of this attitude is that the Asia priority might not necessarily lead to the enactment of additional Asia-related history beyond what they ‘are already doing’ because teachers do not want to include it simply for perfunctory purposes.

When considered in relation to the discursive practices identified in the previous chapter, this cynicism emphasises the underlying idealism of teachers who tend to foreground the intrinsic rather than instrumental value of historical content and an unwillingness to be peremptorily told by policy makers to ‘tick certain boxes.’ Here there is some confluence of the views of the HTAV participant with the sentiments of some of the teacher participants. For example, Mary reflects: “You don’t want to develop curriculum where it looks like you have got a token attempt to include something ‘Asian’ because that is the politically correct thing to do.” Although such perceptions play into the arguments of conservative commentators discussed previously, these sorts of statements suggest that despite the mainstreaming of Asia literacy through the Australian Curriculum, the positioning of Asia engagement as a policy imperative actually makes some teachers suspicious of the Asia priority, even when they may inherently value the inclusion of more diverse histories. As Mary says, “It has got to be genuine and meaningful otherwise it is tokenism and that is an appalling thing to do, because then you are really making what you are teaching even less important – ‘oh we better do this because it looks good.’” This final comment hints at a problematic top-down approach to embedding Asia in the curriculum. These tensions have been an ongoing challenge for Asia literacy policy (see Chapter 5) and also point to the “perennially precarious space” (Salter & Maxwell, 2016, p. 297) that the cross-curriculum priorities occupy. The ambivalent reception of the priorities suggests, “we might see the cross-curriculum priorities as
more intended and symbolic than enacted and material” (Peacock et al., 2015, p. 385).

7.4 Review of the Australian Curriculum: History

The Coalition government’s call for a review of the Australian Curriculum in early 2014 underscores the continuing currency of West as method in the contestation of history curriculum. Then federal Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, expressed special concerns about the national curriculum casting insufficient value on “the legacy of Western Civilisation and not giving important events in Australia's history and culture the prominence they deserve, such as Anzac Day” (2014, para. 12). The symbolic role played by Pyne as a champion of the West is represented in a cartoon published in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* at the time of the review’s announcement. Entitled ‘Curriculum Development’ (Spooner, 2014), it depicts Pyne as a Knight Templar, a crusading bastion of Western Christianity raising his sword to the tiny teacher infidels who proclaim, “Sir Christopher is upset with our biased teaching.” In addition to the ideological position Pyne represents, the cartoon also offers a critique of the exaggerated role politicians are perceived to take in curriculum development.

Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire were the independent reviewers selected to lead the review of the Australian Curriculum. Both right wing, vocal critics of the Australian Curriculum, they have been wryly described as “hackneyed cultural warriors” (T. Taylor, 2014b, para. 5). Indeed there was significant concern among educators about the impartiality of the government’s selected reviewers (Reid, 2015). The announcement of the Review polarised commentary, thereby following a well-established pattern of political contestation of curriculum along the lines of left and right.

Within the pages of the *Review of Australian Curriculum* (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014) History generated much of the controversy and the discourses of a ‘balanced curriculum’ and the ‘Judeo-Christian values/Western civilisation legacy’ dominated the report (Parkes, 2015). The Review’s authors foregrounded that, “[a] number of
submissions to this Review are critical of the Australian Curriculum for failing to properly acknowledge and include reference to Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage and the debt owed to Western civilisation” (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014, p. 176). The use of the Judeo-Christian discourse – co-opted from out-dated US Cold War propaganda – was duly criticised as a misplaced Americanism (see S. Collins, 2013; Patton, 2014; T. Taylor, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). The view that “the Review could find no political bias in the history curriculum” (T. Taylor, 2016, p. 189) was supported by comments from the ACARA representative interviewed, who was directly involved with reviewing the Australian Curriculum Humanities and Social Sciences in light of the Review: “We held the view that it is already there. I did a mapping of Western civilisation and Christian heritage and it is in the curriculum.” This highlights that the focus on Asia-related curriculum is not in danger of overshadowing the traditional points of reference in history. She added, “we did some rebalancing and we took our revision out to consultation, but there wasn’t an appetite for huge change.” The State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to the “non-controversial changes” (T. Taylor, 2016, p. 189) which were within a narrowed down set of recommendations proposed by the Australian Government. ACARA released version 8.2 of the *Australian Curriculum F-10* following a redrafting and consultation process (see ACARA, 2015a, 2015b).

The Review was symbolic of the continued political interference in history curricula and the sort of worldviews that are projected onto them, which has implications for the imagination of Asia. Neither side of politics can resist attempting to refashion history curricula in their own image, even though politicians may over-estimate both the transformative power of history policy reform and of history itself. The Review highlighted the polarity that exists between the ideological drivers of curriculum and the disciplinary approach advocated by history education experts (Henderson, 2015b; Yates et al., 2017). When the dominant worldviews reflected in the *Review of Australian Curriculum* (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014) and *Australia in the Asian Century* (Aust. Gov., 2012) are contrasted, both effectively view Asia from imperialised, rather than deimperialised positions. For example, the ‘Judeo-Christian/Western civilisation legacy’ discourse deployed by conservatives gave
preference to a Western-centric historical metanarrative and they were reluctant to make space for the reimagining of Asia in curriculum. The discourse of national self-interest perpetuated by Labor’s commodification of Asia in the White Paper represented a different set of power relations but as the afore-mentioned critiques show, it emphasised the binarism inherent in Australia’s relations with Asia. These are further examples of the ways politicians have used Asia as an “ambivalent ‘sign’ in Australian political discourse” (Johnson et al., 2010, p 59).

In periods of heightened media debate around history curriculum, politics tends to cloud understandings of the dynamics of curriculum reform. As Collins (2013) argues, “it is of particular concern if these tactics of adversarial public discourse stand in the place of professional expertise in the creation and negotiation of school history curriculum” (p19). While the politicisation of history curriculum certainly contributes to the conditions of possibility in which curriculum is developed and enacted, this thesis demonstrates that it is not the only significant influence. However, those with professional expertise in history curriculum cannot separate themselves from this political and public discourse. A decade ago an experienced history teacher interviewed about the changes throughout his career commented, “there is also political interference now, in that educational decisions are often ‘election-driven’” (as quoted in Purnell, 2007, p. 11). This suggests that prior to this shift to “election-driven” educational decisions, political interference was not always a discernable condition of possibility for history curriculum and that politicians are seen to be increasingly intervening in education.

Both policy makers and teachers now take political and ideological intervention in history curriculum for granted, even if it is not always welcomed:

I think it’s also a pendulum you know, if you have a got a left wing government the right opposes it, anything they do is perceived as left; if you have a right wing government anything they do is perceived as being right. So it is the politicisation of the curriculum, as opposed to making decisions about what we all agree students should learn. (ACARA representative)

Travis remarked “it is just simply a case of whichever political party is in power and what ideology they bring to the table when these new AusVELS [the current
Victorian curriculum for F-10] or whatever the equivalent is being created.”
Furthermore this has implications for the enactment of Asia-related history because it influences the way teachers perceive curriculum change and their role within it:

For the Labor government, AusVELS had a huge push on Aboriginal and Asian contexts in the Asian century, for example, and we thought that was where we were going and at every year level we made sure we had an Asian element in there. And then Christopher Pyne made comments about moving back towards an Anglo, Western, Christian-Judaic point of view. We sort of laughed and said, here we go, there is gonna be big changes and I think for a government to even tamper with the Australian Curriculum after all the effort we put in, there would something that jades teachers and makes them cynical about curriculum change. (Bryce)

It was under these discursive conditions that the VCAA invited teachers to participate in the review of the Study Design.

### 7.5 Analysis of the 2015 VCE History Study Design policy process

Chapter 5 argued that the very first *VCE History Study Design* (VCAB, 1991) was largely the innovative document it purported to be. Twenty-five years later the 2015 *VCE History Study Design* (VCAA, 2014a) looks quite different because it has been developed under quite different discursive conditions. The nationalisation of curriculum represents a significant change to the curriculum policy work of the VCAA. Although nationalisation made the process of curriculum reform all the more complex and blurred established power structures (Savage, 2016), this analysis will demonstrate that a discourse of transparency is taken up by the policy actors interviewed from the VCAA and HTAV.

The integration of the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* with VCE History made visible the curricular customs of Victoria. Differences in ‘state cultures’ (Yates et al., 2011) and varying perspectives on history from across Australia presented ACARA with an ongoing challenge when consulting with States and Territories on the development of the *Australian Curriculum: History*:

...with that come many challenges because of course in every State and Territory there are different customs, traditions and practices... So there are
compromises and that is one of the challenges of course. There are some States, for example, that have a particular topic in history that they think they must have, that other States traditionally had, which is a tension that we have to find a mutual solution for... We had to make it broad enough and flexible enough to allow for States and Territories to continue their custom and practice – what they value, what they privilege in their existing curriculum. (ACARA representative)

The terms ‘customs, traditions and practices’ highlight that curricula are understood to have histories that are specific to their state contexts. The VCAA noted a “broad lack of engagement from Victorian teachers” (p. 5) in the consultation process for the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History possibly resulting from “consultation fatigue” (p. 5) brought about by the development of the Australian Curriculum: History F-10. For this reason VCE history teachers might be less inclined to embrace extensive changes to their established traditions and state culture.

These curricular customs are further illustrated in the ways that Asia-related history and the Asia cross-curriculum priority have been embedded in different states. In its un-enacted form the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History is more inclusive of Asia-related histories than the new 2015 VCE Study Design. The ACARA Curriculum Manager noted, “we have developed a curriculum which is broad-brush for states to develop their own syllabuses, or in your case the Study Design, so ours is very broad compared to what Victoria might develop.” Victoria quite possibly missed the opportunity to reimagine VCE History presented through these ‘broad-brush’ strokes, as will be demonstrated by the analysis that follows. In addition to the opportunity to select Asian histories across all Modern and Ancient History units, the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History included mandated Asian contexts in Unit 1 Modern History and the option to dedicate Unit 4 Modern History to the topic: Engagement with Asia. The Asia emphasis appears to have translated more directly into the new senior history courses in Western Australia (SCSA, 2017) and New South Wales (NESA, 2017b) in comparison to the VCE History Study Design. Both make direct reference to the Asia cross-curriculum priority and the NSW document has mandated the inclusion of an Asian context (the senior curricula of other States and Territories are yet to be published). While the VCE History Study
Design represents that which is valued and privileged in Victoria’s existing senior history curriculum, such attitudes are sustained by complex discursive practices.

The interview data provides insight into the apparent consonance and dissonance between perceptions of policy stakeholders and teachers in the curriculum reform process. From the beginning the VCAA made it clear that “any national history will have to be adapted to fit Victoria’s assessment” (Hincks, 2009, p. 32). The Victorian Response to the Draft Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum (VCAA, 2012) noted that Victoria welcomed the model, but in asserting its rights, underscored that the VCAA’s responsibility for the implementation of senior secondary certification would be maintained. It also highlighted that while there is definite overlap between the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History and VCE units, “the Victorian courses are structured to allow for coherence, sequence and depth” (VCAA interview). These points reflect some of the views of the teachers in the previous chapter, especially the thinking around the alignment discourse with its focus on assessment and the sequencing of topics.

Throughout the process the VCAA sought to be consultative and inclusive of teachers in the reform process and in doing so it engaged a discourse of transparency. In 2013 the VCAA established the History Expert Reference Group (HERG) to begin the process of redeveloping the new VCE History Study Design. The VCAA representative described the HERG:

...consisting of experienced teachers, academics and representatives of the History Teachers Association of Victoria (HTAV) to review current history provision and make recommendations regarding best history provision in Victoria. This group considered stakeholder feedback on the drafts of the Australian Curriculum for history, enrolment data, learning from other jurisdictions and new histories that might refresh history provision in Victoria. (VCAA representative)

The VCAA Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Committee (SSCAC) and the Principles and guidelines for the development and review of VCE studies (VCAA, 2013a) were to guide the revision of all Studies. In addition to considering the integration of the Australian Curriculum with VCE units, the HERG “recommended retirement of courses with low enrolments including: Renaissance Italy (Units 3&4);
Applied History in the Local Community (Unit 1); Conquest and Resistance (Unit 1); Koorie History (Unit 2); and People and Power (Unit 2)” (VCAA interview, 2015). Some of these initial recommendations were published in Proposed directions: Review of VCE English, History, Mathematics and Science Studies Discussion Paper (VCAA, 2013b) with enrolments figures (see Table 6).

Table 6: Enrolment figures for VCE History units (VCAA, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Name</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Applied History in the Local Community</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Conquest and Resistance</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Twentieth Century History</td>
<td>7536</td>
<td>7847</td>
<td>7723</td>
<td>8272</td>
<td>8842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Twentieth Century History</td>
<td>6911</td>
<td>7256</td>
<td>7219</td>
<td>7619</td>
<td>7930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Koorie History</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: People and Power</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>1103</td>
<td>1131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Australian History</td>
<td>1401</td>
<td>1400</td>
<td>1253</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>1241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Renaissance History</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units 3 &amp; 4: Revolutions</td>
<td>5069</td>
<td>5425</td>
<td>5612</td>
<td>5609</td>
<td>5665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading these figures in context with earlier patterns of enrolment, the contextual conditions of possibility and the discursive practices outlined in chapters 5 and 6 reminds us that a complex range of influences are at play in the uptake of units. The table clearly indicates that a number of units were only being taught in a few schools. Compared to the enrolment figures in Table 3 (Chapter 5), Australian History enrolments have halved since 1995 and enrolments in Revolutions have almost tripled. As the majority of VCE teachers teach Twentieth Century History and Revolutions, any major changes to these units would be the most disruptive to established teaching practices and resources.

The History Expert Reference Group established three review panels to develop the new and revised units that would comprise the draft Study Design. Each panel consisted of eight to twelve members representative of gender, school sector, universities and experience (VCAA interview, 2015), which is indicative of the VCAA’s desire to be inclusive. The Draft Consultation History VCE Study Design (VCAA, 2014a) was opened for consultation in mid 2014, and the fact that the title includes the word ‘consultation’ intimates that the VCCAA sought to foreground
that it was being transparent and consultative. Teachers and other stakeholders were provided the opportunity to give feedback online and through face-to-face consultation sessions facilitated by the HTAV in collaboration with the VCAA. Despite the VCAA’s commitment to transparent and inclusive practices, the teachers’ perceptions of the reform process varied. The teachers I interviewed were predominantly cynical about the process and only two were directly involved. Their colloquial discourse contrasts with the VCAA’s discourse of transparency. One participant commented: “I always get the feeling from them [VCAA] that decisions have been made and this is just bread and circuses for the plebs and they will let us have a say, but in the end decisions will get made by a pretty small group.” Mary agreed, “it is the bigwigs at the top who are developing a course with a far bigger picture in mind... a lot of manipulation goes on.” The imagery used by teachers reflects their view that they were at the bottom of a curricular pecking order. Bryce expressed frustration in the speed in which the VCAA introduced the new Study Design before textbooks were available: “they just dump these things on us.”

Even when teachers are encouraged to get involved they report feeling removed from the process. Liam, who attended a consultation session, felt teacher input into the review process was minimal and speculated from anecdotal evidence that “not a huge amount of regard was given for the public feedback that was given.” Janette said, “with these things it is often the same people doing it and working with groups who have been working together for a while, that is intimidating as well.” Similarly, Grace commented, “teachers are so busy I think unless you are really motivated and involved with the HTAV or VCAA you have very little involvement and even when you go to those meetings or read things it is all pretty removed from the actual process.” Feelings of being intimidated and ‘removed from the actual process’ suggest teachers feel undervalued and not confident that their views will be heard in the consultative process.

In contrast, the VCAA participant noted the positive contribution made by teachers: “teachers bring practical knowledge on the implementation of the curriculum and provide valuable advice on student workload and engagement with the curriculum.
Many history teachers are also discipline experts” (VCAA participant). Despite this endorsement, teachers are perhaps more attuned to the perception that policymakers think teachers should only be entrusted with the negotiation of technical issues, such as content, as the policymakers themselves have already made fundamental philosophical decisions (Ditchburn, 2015). In other parts of the world the centralisation and standardisation of national curriculum policy is seen to reinforce top-down approaches (Gerrard & Farrell, 2014), which positions teachers “as implementors of someone else’s policy” (Priestley et al., 2016, p. 136). These varying perspectives on the reform process underscore that not all policy actors are equal; the position they adopt within the policy process may be one of enthusiasm, criticism and indifference, depending on where they are in their career, their aspirations, their roles of responsibility and how their accumulated experiences have left them feeling (Ball et al., 2012). These teachers felt that the consultation process lacked integrity because they had little impact on the new Study Design. However, if a group of teachers that had been more actively engaged in the process had been interviewed, such as members of the HERG and review panels, their views on the inclusiveness and transparency of the process might be quite different. Different policy actors take up different policy positions (Ball et al., 2012).

The teachers and other policy actors’ different interpretations of the reform process of the Study Design are illustrated further in the views of the VCAA and the HTAV. Both represent the process as open and transparent. It was noted by the VCAA representative that “the consultation feedback contributed significantly to the re-drafting process” and when it came to integrating the Australian Curriculum with the VCE, “the key considerations related to stakeholder feedback, which advocated for the continuation of in-depth study of Australian History and History: Revolutions.” Thus, the three most popular courses – Twentieth Century History, Australian History and Revolutions – were retained.

Key points taken up by the VCAA also corresponded with comments from the HTAV representative:

Victorian teachers through a variety of ways express the view that they want to have depth and rigour and they don’t really want to do little bits and
pieces, so that has been a strong theme that has come through us... and certainly a couple of years ago there was a lot of media and a lot of talk about whether we should keep Australian History at Year 12. A lot of our members had strong views that we did want to, so that’s another thing that has come through. (HTAV representative)

The HTAV is a well-respected professional association, due to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2017. Over the decades it has been influential in defining history as a ‘subject community’ (Goodson, 1993, p. 23) in Victoria, and Agora has significantly contributed to discourse in history education over time. The HTAV has played an integral role in the development and implementation of the Study Design, which is consistent with international trends among professional associations as policy actors (Goodson, 1993; Guyver, 2016; O'Sullivan, Carroll, & Cavanagh, 2008). As such, they are “well positioned as vanguards within subject disciplines to interpret the discourses of curriculum change and provide practical support” (O'Sullivan et al., 2008, p. 178).

Some of the teachers commented positively on the HTAV’s work during this period. Janette said, “I think the HTAV as a stakeholder has been really good at getting stuff or asking for responses, or inviting people to get involved, they set up networks, so I think the HTAV has been front and centre for that, which has certainly made it easier.” The HTAV representative explained that the association had been actively involved in all parts of the Study Design’s reform and enjoyed good relations with the VCAA, which apparently is not the case in all states (HTAV interview, 2015). From the HTAV’s perspective the VCAA has been receptive to feedback on the Study Design:

I have actually found them [VCAA] pretty responsive, I think they’re pretty good and they need HTAV members... I don’t think in Victoria they are keen on putting something out and having lots of uproar, um so it’s in their interests I suppose to sort of check things first with our membership. (HTAV representative)

This image of a ‘responsive’ and ‘good’ organisation differs from the teachers’ metaphors of the VCAA as a ‘big wig’ that ‘dumps things’ on ‘the plebs’. Part of this process involved promoting the consultation sessions for members in order to
“inform the HTAV’s response to VCAA on the Draft Study Design” (HTAV, 2014, paragraph 1). The VCAA Curriculum Manager for Humanities presented at these sessions and teachers provided feedback on the draft study Design. According to the HTAV representative, “there was quite a take up [by the VCAA] from specific suggestions from the teachers who were there, so I would say a fairly big input.” Such comments take up the discourse of transparency.

Although the views of the teachers did not always correspond with the views of policy stakeholders, there was some consonance when it came to acknowledging the influence of assessment on and high-stakes testing in curriculum development and enactment. This is further evidence of the influence of the discourse of alignment (see Chapter 6). The ACARA representative highlighted assessment as a major challenge of curriculum reform:

I also think that assessment is the biggest [challenge] of all. If it is new there’s not even – for states that have external exams – there’s not even a list of essay questions that students have had to answer in the past. Like unpacking it, what are the real outcomes of this course that we want the students to have, or for them to perform in the exam, you know, what is the expected learning? And we don’t know if there is not that bank of stuff we have relied upon in the past. (ACARA representative)

As noted above, assessment was also central to the VCAA’s (Hincks, 2009) initial response to the Australian Curriculum. The HTAV representative reflected on the powerful presence of the exam felt during the consultation sessions:

In regards to criticisms some of them are not about the curriculum, it’s just worrying about what is going to be on the exam, which is slightly different issue. A lot of them are very anxious about when they are going to find out about exam advice but that’s a little bit different from actual curriculum. (HTAV representative)

These anxieties were also raised at the implementation briefings conducted by the VCAA in May 2015, one of which was made available as a video on the VCAA website. In the briefing video, the exam was raised consistently. Resonating with the teachers’ statements discussed in the previous chapter, one teacher stated: “I teach to the exam” (VCAA, 2015b). The representative from one of the review
panels was emphatic that exam alignment was a key factor behind the more explicit stipulation of the required knowledge in the new Study Design: “if it is not on the list, it will not be on the exam... the purpose of this new design was to correct clarity, that’s the intent and aim, both for teachers and exam-setters” (VCAA, 2015b). One of the interview participants present at one of the briefings also observed widespread concern regarding the exam: “they [the teachers] were all desperate for information so my feeling was they were very hungry for information and quite anxious.” The apprehension felt by teachers might also relate to their sense of powerlessness in the reform process. This frustration was exacerbated by the VCAA’s decision not to publish a sample exam until the start of 2016 to avoid confusion with the forthcoming 2015 exam.

The data show that the discourse of alignment and the demands of the external exam reverberate through the curriculum design and implementation processes. The unease about the exam expressed in the above statements further demonstrates that the exam is taken for granted; it is normalised as part of the discourses of accountability and performativity. As a result the idealised, symbiotic relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation has become unbalanced in Australia through the over emphasis on evaluation in the form of high-stakes testing, demonstrated most clearly by standardised testing at the national level (Lingard, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). As a consequence, teacher quality or teacher performance is disproportionately measured through assessment or student achievement (Skourdoumbis, 2014). The operationalisation of the alignment discourse by most of the participants is further evidence that VCE History curriculum policy cannot be decontextualised from globalised policy discourse driven by test-based accountability nor the larger neo-liberal policy assemblage by which these trends are shaped (Lingard, 2013). This also becomes apparent in the analysis of the content of the new Study Design.

7.6 Analysis of the 2015 VCE History Study Design

The VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015a) was implemented in schools at the
beginning of 2016 and is accredited until December 2020. Despite the opportunity
presented by the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History*, the legacies of
previous Study Designs are etched in its pages. Notable structural changes include:
the units offered, e.g. the addition of Ancient History and Global Empires units and
the discontinuation of units with low enrolments; the integration of historical
thinking concepts; the removal of historiography; and a renewed emphasis on
historical inquiry. There is also a shift in the way in which the nature of history is
framed. From 1991 up until 2015 the opening sentences of the Introduction to the
Study Design remained the same: “History is the study and practice of making
meaning of the past. It is also the study of the issues and problems of establishing
and representing meaning” (VBOS, 1996; VCAA, 2004; VCAB, 1991). The new Study
Design begins: “History involves inquiry into human action in the past, to make
meaning of the past using primary sources as evidence. As historians ask new
questions, revise interpretations or discover new sources, fresh understandings
come to light” (VCAA, 2015a). This conceptualisation is very much focused on
evidence and by matter-of-factly referring to historians’ interpretations, the
contested and problematic nature of history is deflected.

The number of semester long units offered in VCE History has shrunk from 21 to 13
over the years (see Table 7). More significant has been the increasing level of
content prescription, demonstrated by rigid statements outlining the required key
knowledge and key skills. Some teachers may view the increased level of detail as a
helpful scaffold for their courses; others might find it too formulaic. Either way, this
approach ensures courses remain closely aligned with the exam. Where content
choices were practically unlimited in the first Study Design, and quite broad in the
intervening years, the number of historical contexts has narrowed, except for the
introduction of Ancient History and Global Empires. Further, most take an approach
that favours methodological nationalism. In contrast to the more open-ended units
of the past, units 1 and 2 now have more restrictions placed on the historical
contexts that may be selected from, limiting the opportunities for transnational and
translocal approaches. A curriculum that is inclusive of diverse histories and
historiographical perspectives has a greater capacity to challenge ethnocentric
perspectives or metanarrative with multi-perspectivity and poly-centric approaches (Rüsen, 2004b). In short it recognises “the past is inherently diverse” (R. Harris, 2013, p. 408).

### Table 7: Units in 2015 History VCE Study Design (VCAA, 2015b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Areas of study</th>
<th>Choice of historical contexts/topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Empires</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 1: The making of empires 1400-1755</td>
<td>AOS1: Exploration and expansion&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Disruptive ideas</td>
<td>Focuses on European voyages of exploration, and how new ideas and discoveries challenged old certainties and strengthened European Empires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Empires</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 2: Empires at work</td>
<td>AOS1: New colonies, new profits&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Challenges of empires</td>
<td>Depth-study of at least one European colony in the Americas, Africa or the Caribbean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1: Twentieth century history 1918-1939</strong></td>
<td>AOS1: Ideology and conflict&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Social change and cultural change</td>
<td>AOS1: Choice of nations impacted upon by peace treaties, e.g. USSR, Germany, USA, Britain, Italy and Japan&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Italy, Germany, Japan and/or USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2: Twentieth century history 1945-2000</strong></td>
<td>AOS1: Competing ideologies&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Challenge and change</td>
<td>AOS1: Cold War: USA, USSR and conflicts in Berlin, Korea, Cuba and Vietnam&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Select two: decolonisation movements in Africa or the Asia Pacific (i.e. Algeria, Congo, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaya, East Timor, Papua New Guinea), campaigns by terrorist groups, Arab-Israeli dispute, anti-apartheid movement, the Irish ‘troubles’, civil rights in the USA, feminism, environmentalism and the peace movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancient History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 1: Ancient Mesopotamia</td>
<td>AOS1: Discovering civilisation&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Ancient empires</td>
<td>Mesopotamia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancient History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 2: Ancient Egypt</td>
<td>AOS2: Egypt: the double crown&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Middle Kingdom Egypt: Power and propaganda</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancient History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 2: Early China</td>
<td>AOS1: Ancient China&lt;br&gt;AOS2: The early empires</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ancient History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 3 and 4: Ancient history</td>
<td>AOS1: Living in an ancient society&lt;br&gt;AOS2: People in power, societies in crisis</td>
<td>Select two: Egypt, Greece or Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unit 3: Transformations: Colonial society to nation</td>
<td>AOS1: The reshaping of Port Phillip District/Victoria 1834-1860</td>
<td>AOS1: 19th century Port Phillip District/Victoria&lt;br&gt;AOS2: Australia from 1890 to 1920</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though methodological nationalism remains the dominant organisational and analytical category, it does mean that ‘Asian history’ is not described in a generic or homogenous way. Certainly the Australian Curriculum’s Asia priority has a focus on the diversity of Asia. The AEF participant commented:

So I think one of the things that we’ve worked really hard to do over our twenty-three year history is to dispel those misconceptions and myths about Asia and even using the term Asia, we tend to often to shy away from because there’s a big difference between China, Malaysia, India, Vietnam and I could go on. So it recognises the diversity of the countries of that region... Look we always talk about the diversity of the Asian region. (AEF participant)

However, when a select list of nation-states is prescribed this also contracts the possibility for inquiry on a wide range of countries. For example, previously quite an open-ended unit, only the following nation-states may be selected in the current Unit 1 Twentieth Century History AOS2 Social and Cultural Change: Italy, Germany, Japan, USSR and/or USA (VCAA, 2015a, p. 23). Where teachers were once given the responsibility for selecting historical context beyond the listed examples, this lack of choice reflects the tacit governing of teachers’ decision-making.

The tightening of content options highlights the gaps and the histories given priority within Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History. For example, the historical focus dilates and contracts in particular decades based on the events that are deemed to be historically significant – which are mostly big political histories/events that
position Europe and the USA at the centre of world history. For example, more time is allocated to WWII peace treaties and the Cold War. I propose the reasons for this are both curricular and historiographical. Whereas the semester long Unit 1: 1918 – 1939 is dedicated to less than two decades of the inter-war period, the same amount of class time is given to Unit 2: 1945 – 2000. In contrast the previous Study Design covered 1900 – 1945 in Unit 1. The change to the timeline appears to be based on curricular factors. The abridgement from 45 years to 25 years reflects the reshuffling of the *Australian Curriculum: History 7 to 10* and the *Victorian Curriculum*, and the desire not to duplicate content on the World Wars now covered in Years 9 and 10. Similarly, the lack of any reference to Australian history is perhaps also to avoid overlap with Unit 4 Australian History, even though a very small number of students go on to study VCE Australian History. In 2016, just 928 students completed the Australian History exam (VCAA, 2016b). The units therefore appear lopsided due to the shorter timeline of Unit 1 compared to Unit 2 spanning more than half a century.

Unit 2 Twentieth Century History offers teachers relatively more choice than Unit 1. The comprehensive AOS1 Competing Ideologies tightens the focus in on the Cold War and in AOS2 Challenge and Change two historical contexts must be selected from a list of options. As a result the following are afforded much less class time (about five weeks) and appear as if footnotes to twentieth century history: decolonisation movements in Africa and the Asia-Pacific; terrorist campaigns; conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli dispute, anti-apartheid in South Africa or the Irish troubles; and social and political movements such as civil rights in the USA, feminism and environmentalism (VCAA, 2015a, p. 28). A reduced and finite selection of contexts is not conducive to exposing students to a multiplicity of histories and squeezing more divergent histories together as options effectively marginalises them. Alternatively a less prescriptive approach to the historical timeframes and contexts throughout the units would provide teachers with more freedom in their curricular decision-making according to the needs of their students, especially in units 1 and 2 where they are less constrained by the requirements of an external exam.
Twentieth Century History provides moderate scope to study Asia-related histories. However, these options tend to be viewed through the lenses of war and Western intervention, a point noted in chapters 5 and 6. Contexts include Japan after WWI, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. In *Twentieth Century History Advice for Teachers* the example course outline makes the following suggestion for examining cultural change in Japan: “the influence of westernisation on the lives of young women (moga) in Japan in the 1920s” (2015 p. 17). No doubt this would be an interesting topic but this consistent positioning of Asian societies as the object of Western intervention has a cumulative and symbolic effect across the units, and across the Study Designs over time. Such representations only see “Asia as a product of history” and less so as “an active participant” (Chen, 2010), which does not move towards deimperialised representations of Asia.

India has also been omitted from the new Study Design, as noted by one of the teachers commenting on Unit 2 Twentieth Century History:

> I wasn’t a huge fan, I felt like they cut out – actually one of the biggest and one of the most successful units we taught at Year 11 was the history of India and Indian Independence – and it was just cut out altogether..... It was a narrowing. I would say we will probably still teach it anyway, we will still cover the curriculum but we will keep that in there because South Africa is in there the Apartheid movement so we will probably, even if it just a small unit as background... To take India and the Indian Independence movement out and Gandhi of all people off the table of twentieth century history! I would put down the history of Gandhi in the top five things that happened in the twentieth century, wouldn’t you say? (Bryce)

Bryce makes a powerful point here: India has been written out of this Study Design. Indian Independence has lost its long-standing place in the Study Design, even though it is suggested as a case study in the *Australian Curriculum: Modern History Unit 3*. Paradoxically India is now the country from which Australia’s highest proportion of immigrants come from (Aust. Gov., 2017). Walker (2013b) suggests that historically Australia has taken India for granted; certain shared commonalities “makes it less straightforward to fit India into the ‘Asia-literacy’ paradigm” (p. 32). The fact that India is no longer suggested as a historical context in the Study Design is a serious oversight and not only indicative of the devaluation of Indian history but raises questions about the disproportionate value placed on other histories.
In contrast, Chinese history has grown in the Study Design. Early China is now an option in Ancient History Unit 2 and China is still one of four options in Units 3 and 4 Revolutions. Certainly Chinese history is an exciting, expansive and relevant field of historical inquiry, but regardless of the actual historical rationale, we are constantly reminded in public and political discourse that it is Australia’s top trading partner (Aust. Gov, 2017). Some might argue this reflects “the growing spread of the Chinese world” (FitzGerald, 2017, p. 10), which foreign policy specialists argue should be taken very seriously in Australia (FitzGerald, 2017; White, 2017). As Mary, one of the teachers interviewed commented: “China is the flavour of the month because it is the flavour of the month in every aspect of Australian policy making.”

Some histories of decolonisation in Asia may be explored, albeit in a limited way. Unit 2 Twentieth Century History AOS2 includes the suggestions: Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaya, East Timor and Papua New Guinea. However, contexts and concepts that were once provided a whole semester of class time (i.e. Unit 2 Imperialism and Colonialism, Unit 1 Imperialism in Asia, Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance; Unit 2 Nationalism in Asia, Units 3 and 4 Nationalism and the Modern State and Units 3 and 4 Asian History) have only been allocated five or so weeks, sometimes less. The same amount of time is now given to the study of Indonesian decolonisation as the Baader Meinhof gang, a left-wing militant group in 1970s West Germany (VCAA, 2015a). In the Twentieth Century History Advice for Teachers the sample course only allocates two weeks to cover the Indonesian independence movement, including the short and long term effects of decolonisation (VCAA, 2015). Australian academics acknowledge the significance of the decolonisation of Asia for understanding the region and Australia’s role in (Percival Wood, 2012; White, 2017), however, these histories have to compete with a wide selection of other contexts so it is possible that decolonisation in Asia will be overlooked.

Indeed a teacher participant said the Baader Meinhof gang presented an option that students might perceive as cool and interesting.

Yet the histories of decolonising Asia have shaped the personal histories of many Australian students, their parents and their grandparents. Habgood (2014), a VCE
teacher, fervently argues in *Agora* for the value of Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance (VCAA, 2004) because she was able to introduce students to the postcolonial work of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, as well as case studies that included Vietnam, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste. She highlights: “It caters to a multicultural cohort. It allows the teacher to encourage students of a non-Western origin to research/understand their own family backgrounds” (Habgood, 2014, p. 24). Bearing in mind the issue of ethnically stereotyping students (see Chapter 6), the shrinking of the historical worlds represented in the Study Design restricts the capacity of teachers to be culturally responsive to their student cohorts. Gay (2015) suggests, “culturally responsive teaching is both an epistemological and a methodological enterprise – that is, it involves what to teach, why to teach, how to teach, and to whom to teach with respect to ethnic, racial, cultural, and social diversity” (p. 125). Empirical evidence supports this assertion, with a small-scale British study that found that students from majority and minority cultural backgrounds expressed desire for the inclusion of diverse types of history (R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014).

A benefit of a history curriculum that provides greater scope for transnational, translocal, local or place-based histories, is that notions of identity, place and space can be reconfigured and reimagined through the development of richer interconnections and understandings of those inter-relations (Koh, 2015; Salter, 2015a; Weinmann, 2015). The current Study Design now provides little space to do the culturally responsive teaching commended by Habgood (2014), or the sort of deimperialisation and subjectivity formation work advocated by Chen (2010) and Lin (2012). Where this was a possibility in the former semester long units listed above, this sort of history has been compressed into a single dot-point in the current Study Design. Moreover, it has occurred at the point when Asia literacy has supposedly reached its zenith in the national context.

Whereas a number of units in earlier Study Designs sought to challenge the teleological processes of European expansion and political historicism, the scope to do this in the current Study Design has diminished. By contrasting European
progress with the decline of non-European empires and focusing on European global domination, the new Units 1 and 2 Global Empires (VCAA, 2015a) inadvertently reinscribes the West as method as the dominant mode for understanding the early modern period:

- Unit 1 AOS1: Briefly touches on the Ming and Ottoman empires but focuses on the significance of European exploration and expansion.
- Unit 1 AOS2: The only new discoveries and ideas listed are European: e.g. the Scientific Revolution, the Protestant Reformation, Gutenberg’s printing press and the Enlightenment.
- Unit 2 AOS1: A European empire and a European colony in the Americas, Africa or the Caribbean must be selected. It includes examining the impact of invasion on indigenous people, ‘frontier’ conflict, slavery, and slave revolts.
- Unit 2 AOS2: Requires the examination of the effectiveness of global empires in dealing with challenges such as resistance to colonisation but the long-lasting impact of colonialism is not included.

The focus on global expansion marginalises non-European empires and marginalises the history of imperialism and colonialism in the Asian region, including Australia’s regional neighbours. Although these units appear to offer a world history approach and do not preclude teachers from examining postcolonial perspectives, the unit descriptors tend to categorise societies according to the coloniser/colonised binary. In effect the narrative carved out by these units symbolically reinscribes the power relations of coloniality, reinforces that the early modern period was characterised by European modernisations and positions the West as the source of the most powerful and innovative empires. In contrast, the older History of Western Ideas (VCAB, 1991) course was more transparent about its ideological framing.

One area where some changes in the representation of Asia are apparent is in Units 3 and 4 Australian History. For example, the units reflect a shift in historiographical approaches to Australian-Chinese history that empowers Chinese people as active historical actors rather than just ‘victims’. In Unit 1 AOS2 the language used to describe the Chinese on the goldfields is suggestive of agency as indicated by the
reference to “European and Chinese digger protests against unfair taxation” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 52). As noted by Lake (2015), this has not often been the case:

Many histories of race relations – and curriculum resources for schools – focused on depictions of Chinese in racist cartoons and magazines... the focus tended to be on white attitudes towards Chinese Australians, who were represented in terms of racial stereotypes, rather than on the political activities, viewpoints and writings of Chinese colonists themselves. (p. 100)

Contemporary historiography (see Couchman & Bagnall, 2015) instead emphasises the historical agency of Chinese Australians and their active participation in political life (Lake, 2015). It is these sorts of histories that provide resources for teachers of Australian History to challenge established representations of Asian Australians as simply ‘immigrants’, ‘victims’, ‘threats’ and ‘economic opportunities’. As Lake (2015) suggests though, representational shifts need to correspond with knowledge of recent historiographical shifts in Australian history.

While the mention of “the threat of Japanese invasion” (VCAA, 2015, p.56) shows there is still evidence of the invasion discourse (see Chapter 5), in Unit 4 AOS2 there is some scope to explore Australia’s engagement with Asia in different ways. For example, key knowledge includes:

- New patterns of immigration: “change regarding immigration patterns, including the phasing out of the White Australia policy, concern for Australia’s reputation, changing relationships with Asia, and the resettlement of Indo-Chinese refugees” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 58) and “the rate of Asian migration, and threats to cohesion (Blainey controversy, 1984, and the rise of One Nation, 1996)” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 58).
- A global economy: “increased trade with Asia” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 58).

While these points show that more attention is given to Australia’s changing relations with the region by focusing mainly on tumultuous aspects, this may distort
or preclude the exploration of everyday lived experiences of these social and cultural changes.

In addition to content, the methodological orientation of the 2015 Study Design has implications for the representation of Asia. The disciplinary orientation and incorporation of historical thinking is consistent with the disciplinary model advocated by history educators internationally (see Lévesque, 2016). Historical thinking includes: ask historical questions; establish historical significance; use sources as evidence; identify continuity and change; analyse cause and consequence; explore historical perspectives; examine ethical dimensions of history; and construct historical arguments (VCAA, 2015, p.10). The integration of historical thinking across all unit descriptors – in relation to both substantive and procedural knowledges – demonstrates the VCAA’s commitment to embedding a theoretically rigorous framework into the curriculum. The aim to refocus on thinking and inquiry is to be commended because it challenges the rote learning and prescriptive exam-driven approaches identified by teachers in Chapter 6 (see Cocks, 2016).

Although reference to this contemporary cognitive model is laudable, two issues emerge from closer analysis: lack of acknowledgement of the research foundation on which the model of historical thinking is based and the curtailment of historiography. First, the Study Design does not cite any of the history education scholarship that underpins historical thinking. Indeed this corresponds with an established pattern in which the Study Design does not explicitly align with particular historiographical approaches, even when the influences of contemporary theory appears evident, such as the postmodern/postcolonial orientation of the 1991 Study Design. However, historical thinking is an established model in the field of history education (see Chapter 2). The Study Design’s appropriation of historical thinking is based on Whitehouse’s (2015a, 2015c) integrated model that synthesises research from Seixas and the Historical Thinking Project with the historical reasoning model developed by the Dutch researchers, Van Drie and Van Boxtel. This is not stated in the Study Design so it is only through tracing Whitehouse’s paper that it becomes clear that he was originally commissioned by the VCAA “to set out
the approach to historical thinking in the senior history curriculum” (Whitehouse, 2015b, p. 56). The research foundation was more clearly articulated in the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* materials which stated that the concepts that informed the historical knowledge and understanding strand were “drawn from the latest research in the field of historical thinking, including the work of Peter Seixas, Sam Wineburg, Stephane Lévesque, Jannet van Drie and Carla van Boxtel” (ACARA, 2014b, p. 3). The omission reminds us that history curriculum is created under quite different discursive rules than history and signals that efforts have been made to neutralise evidence of the historiographical context in which history curriculum is made.

Second, the removal of historiography in effect compromises the disciplinary approach of the 2015 Study Design. The disciplinary approach is similar to that taken in the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* (ACARA, 2017b) where historiography remains a key concept. The rationale for Modern History v8.3 (ACARA, 2017b) states: “Students develop increasingly sophisticated historiographical skills” (para. 5). This is also quoted in the new Western Australian Senior Modern History course (SCSA, 2017) and the New South Wales Modern History Stage 6 syllabus (NESA, 2017b), indicating that not all states have been as reluctant to refer to historiography. The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) provides a definition in its syllabus documents: “Historiography: The study of how history is constructed. It involves the critical analysis and evaluation of historical methodologies and the way history has been written over time” (e.g. NESA, 2017b). It also states: “The Year 12 course is structured to provide students with opportunities to apply their understanding of sources and relevant historiographical issues in the investigation of the modern world” (NESA, 2017b, p. 17 & 61).

In VCE History, historiography has been replaced with the concept, *historical interpretations*:

> There are many ways to explain the past. Historical interpretations are the result of disciplined inquiry. In VCE History, students are required to evaluate such interpretations. Furthermore, they use historical interpretations as evidence in support of their own arguments about the past. Students are not required to study historiography. Historiography
traditionally is the academic study of the historian and his or her views, including their political philosophy, methods of research, upbringing, time in which the history was written and their access to new evidence and research. Instead VCE History focuses on the historical interpretations of the key knowledge. (VCAA, 2015a, p. 10)

The narrow definition of historiography herein focuses on the socio-historical context of historians in a fairly individualised sense, focusing on “his or her views” which misrepresents the rich possibilities of historiography discussed below. The notion of historical interpretations seems to focus on what is being said and less on why it is being said, or for what purpose the historical interpretations are used. For example, students are required to compare historical interpretations framed through the historical thinking concepts: “What does X historian identify as the significant causes or consequences of...?” ‘How does the interpretation of historian X differ from that of historian Y when assessing historical changes?’” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 11). This is a significant change to the previous 2004 Study Design, which included a historiographical exercise (see Chapter 5) and it means students are no longer required to connect the socio-historical contexts and theoretical lenses of historians to the development of historians’ interpretations.

The VCE History Update video noted “there was a lot of discussion and debate about the design in the new curriculum about historiography” (VCAA, 2015b) and reiterated that the focus was what rather than why to make the Study Design “clear and less complicated” (VCAA, 2015b). The VCAA representative argued that the complexity of historiography asked quite a lot of students so “it was to cut back in time and to be more realistic about what was achievable for year 12 students” (VCAA, 2015b) as “a more constructive way to engage kids with thinking about the past” (VCAA, 2015b). Overall it was argued that the change will make the course more manageable (VCAA, 2015b).

Historiography is recognised as being a challenge to teach in secondary school settings but is also respected as a fundamental element to doing historical inquiry. The article ‘History, Hell and Historiography’ (Casham, 2014) written by a VCE History teacher acknowledges that historiography is difficult to make accessible to
students, but offers a compelling argument for persevering with it. It is argued that incorporating historiography, “the constantly evolving element of the VCE Histories” (Casham, 2014, p. 66), can support the development of evaluvative skills required for the workplace, foster empathy and enable students to think for themselves (Casham, 2014). Removing the study of historiography does not preclude teachers from examining the historiographical context of various interpretations or schools of thought, however, a history curriculum that does not reference the concept of historiography may encourage students to view interpretations as akin to opinions, free of heuristic structures. History education scholars are supportive of incorporating historiography in the classroom. For example, concerned by the politicalisation of history curriculum, Rodwell (2017) contends: “Any history taught in schools and colleges needs to be accompanied by a rigorous immersing of students in historiography” (p. 376). Similarly Parkes and Donnelly (2014) argue, “the study of history is transformed through this process, foregrounding the historicity and rhetorical construction of all constructions of the past” (p. 127).

The possibilities for students to develop their “historiographical gaze” (Parkes, 2011) are occluded by a course that is historiographically lite. The original VCE History Study Design (VCAB, 1991) had a strong focus on issues of representation, contestability, the role of historical memory and the use of the past in the present. The new Study Design (VCAA, 2015a) claims to cover the aim “recognise that the way in which we understand the past informs decision-making in the present” (p. 6), however, there is no evidence of its integration into a single unit descriptor. A focus on historical interpretations at the expense of a more encompassing notion of historiography means students may not be exposed to multiple epistemologies, or develop the skills to critique how societies, as well as themselves, use history and its disciplinary tools for competing purposes.

This also has implications for the study of Asia-related history, especially if we take up the challenge “to multiply frames of reference in our subjectivity and worldview” (Chen, 2010, p. 223). Western historiography and methodological nationalism are
more likely to be key points of reference and are less likely to be critiqued. The opportunity for the sort of interpolation discussed in Chapter 3 is no longer an option. It also discourages exploration of other epistemologies, such as Asian historiographies and perspectives, exacerbating an ongoing issue in doing Asia-related history – the tendency to rely mostly on sources and perspectives about Asia rather than Asian perspectives from Asia. Making space for historiography in the curriculum potentially makes space to discuss the construction of history from an intercultural perspective. This might include asking questions such as: “To what degree do the established methods of historical interpretation allow for the idea of a multitude of cultures and their crossing over the strong division between selfness and otherness?” (Rüsen, 2004b, p. 127). A history curriculum devoid of historiography, even one that is based on historical thinking, could potentially place students and teachers in “a moral vacuum” (Parkes, 2014, p. 9) by denying them the opportunity to understand how all our views and biases have been socio-historically shaped, including their own. Yates et al. (2017) also highlight that issues about identity and those that are emblematic of the ‘history wars’ are “not a side issue, or unimportant, or easily brushed aside” (p. 235); they continue to be “important to the knowledge agenda for students” (p. 235). Limiting the study of history to decontextualised interpretations may obscure the dominance of Western historiography and side-step exploration of the lasting effects of historical processes, such as imperialism and colonialism. New teachers are also less likely to value historiography or develop the pedagogical content knowledge required to teach it well.

7.7 Chapter summary

The 2015 Study Design was a long time coming, a process made all the more complex by curriculum nationalisation. At a national level this makes history curriculum even more vulnerable to interference according to the ideological tenets of both sides of politics. However, when the political and public discourse around history curriculum is considered in relation to the historical shifts and discursive
practices analysed in this thesis, a deeper and more complex understanding of history curriculum and contemporary understandings of Asia can be articulated.

Moreover, the established curricular customs of States and Territories have significant bearing on curriculum reform at the state level. The Victorian response to this process and the morphing of the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History* into the reformed 2015 Study Design made the curricular traditions, values and practices of the VCAA and VCE teachers all the more pronounced, illustrated by teachers’ resistance to tinkering too much with the popular, established units. When this apparent orthodoxy is interpreted alongside the discourse of alignment that emerged in the interviews (see Chapter 6), this sort of response suggests that the pressures of performativity are widely felt. Too much change is perceived to put student exam performance at risk, which may be seen as a reflection on teacher performance. The power of assessment alignment is manifest through the VCAA’s decision to limit the historical contexts on offer and the tightening of the statements of expected knowledge and skills. Despite the VCAA’s desire to appear transparent and inclusive in their processes, the teacher participants did not validate the discourse of transparency in their evaluation of the VCAA’s drafting and consultation processes. This contrasted with the warmer responses concerning the HTAV’s involvement as a policy actor and the HTAV’s positive assessment of the VCAA’s practices.

Overall the Study Design is limited in its capacity to fulfil its aim to “explore a range of people, places, ideas and periods to develop a broad understanding of the past” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 6) because of the limitations placed on the historical contexts available. Compared to past iterations of the Study Design, this ‘range’ is more predetermined by the curriculum makers than ever. Despite the enshrinement of Asia literacy in policy documents such as the *Melbourne Declaration, Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper and the Australian Curriculum, overall the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum has not been markedly transformed. The addition of the potentially dynamic historical thinking concepts to VCE History is compromised by the reduction of historiography to historical
interpretation. More generally the Study Design demonstrates a move away from postmodern and postcolonial frameworks and this means a loss of the rich historical inquiries and critical skills of benefit to increasingly diverse student cohorts. Euro-American content and approaches that deploy the West as method discourse dominate. The result privileges an ethnocentric metanarrative over narrative diversity, compounded by the reduced capacity for examining how historians construct historical identity and for mutually recognising, and respecting, intercultural differences in the construction of historical identities that are different to our own (Rüsen, 2004b). This move has moral effects, as Henderson (2012b) identifies: “engagement with ‘others’ is one of the most powerful ways to develop values of tolerance and respect for human rights” (p. 4). A diverse and inclusive history curriculum reflects a more encompassing and far-reaching view of the world.
Chapter 8: In closing

8.1 Chapter overview

As a history of the present, this thesis set out to critically analyse the representation of Asia within senior secondary history curriculum policy processes in Victoria. Within this curricular space the idea of Asia is ambiguous. Asia is sometimes conjured as a continent, a geo-political entity, a market, the product of the colonial imagination, or disparate nation-states. While it is important to historicise the idea of Asia, this form of critique can be fraught because totally discounting the idea of Asia risks delegitimising contemporary, heterogeneous understandings of Asia. Nevertheless, the idea of Asia has acquired substantive status through Australian curriculum policy discourse over recent decades, reflected in state and national curriculum policy documents, government reports and rhetoric, public commentary and academic debate. Asia-related history is intrinsically valuable and interesting for many reasons, yet in Australian education policy discourse there is a perpetual need to rationalise, legitimise and label it. These representational practices require investigation so as to understand why and how Asia is positioned in the Australian imaginary and how Asia-related history is constructed by world, regional and national history.

This thesis has critically engaged with the overarching research question: How is Asia represented in VCE History curriculum policy processes and how might this representation be explained? In VCE History curriculum policy processes the representation of Asia continues to shift in relation to the political, economic, intellectual, cultural and educational discourses that intersect during the socio-historical context in which the VCE History Study Design is created. The interpretation and enactment of Asia-related history is further framed by the discursive practices of VCE History teachers, which are shaped by tensions between their philosophical and pedagogical ideals, and their individual and collective historical consciousness. The thesis analyses the pragmatic ‘realities’ that arise from the curricular customs of the VCE and discusses the implications of situated school
contexts and broader education policy discourses for curriculum policy.

One of the arguments made in this thesis, is that the constituent discourses, such as the West as method discourse and Asia literacy discourse, are circulated by education policy and history curriculum policy. I was able to make this argument by combining historical analysis, critical policy analysis and discourse analysis, to trace the continuities and discontinuities in the practices, structures, worldviews, relations and assumptions that regulate and disrupt the production of historical knowledge about Asia and Australia’s relations with Asia. These conditions of possibility influence how policy-makers, such as the ACARA, the VCAA, the AEF and the HTAV, develop curriculum and how it is enacted through the curricular decision-making of VCE History teachers, whose practices are complex and often contradictory at times. Therefore Asia-related history does not have a default setting in VCE History, but is demonstrably shaped by ongoing tensions between tradition and innovation.

This thesis has also engaged with the following question: How do discourses and tensions shape the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy processes and what are the implications? The implications have been analysed throughout the chapters and in this final chapter are interwoven with responses to the other sub-research questions. While these curriculum policy processes are entwined through interconnected domains, this chapter is organised according to the research sub-questions. The section on the stated curriculum examines: What Asia-related history is available in key VCE History Study Designs from 1991 to 2015 and how does this relate to the policy contexts in which they were they developed? The section on politics and policy actors examines: What are curriculum policy actors’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum? What representations of Asia and Australia-Asia relations are communicated by key VCE History Study Designs and their related policy contexts? The section on the enacted curriculum examines: What are teachers’ perspectives about Asia in the VCE History curriculum? What influences teachers’ curricular decision-making about Asia-related history and the VCE History units they teach? The final section considers the future of VCE History curriculum and returns to the overarching research question in order to address
possibilities for how representations of Asia might be transformed. The limitations of this study, the current disciplinary character of history curriculum and alternative directions for VCE history curriculum are considered alongside an agenda for further research. Furthermore, as a qualitative researcher and discourse analyst I recognise that I cannot work outside of discourse which means that I have used discursive techniques to present a particular view of the world throughout this thesis (Graham, 2011; McLeod & Thomson, 2009; Parkes, 2011).

8.2 The stated curriculum

The analysis of the stated VCE History curriculum in chapters 5 and 7 reveal inconsistencies in the ways in which Asia is discursively constructed. Such inconsistencies, however, reflect the presence of a theme throughout the chapters – the tension between tradition and innovation. These forces work interdependently upon history curriculum, providing frictions that shape approaches to history education and Asia-related history within the curriculum policy contexts of all VCE History Study Designs. For example, it was shown how the West as method discourse has reinforced the West, and particularly Europe, as the traditional point of reference for world history in Victorian history curriculum over the decades. However, these dominant constructions were resisted through the innovations of postmodernism, postcolonialism and more open-ended approaches to the organisation and content of units.

The relationship between the representation of Asia in broader policy contexts and the stated curriculum, or key VCE History Study Designs, cannot be strictly understood through causal relations. Rather the political, economic, intellectual, historical, cultural and educational discourses that shape the stated curriculum provide the conditions of possibility for the emergence, appropriation and reappropriation of Asia-related history. Sometimes national economic and strategic drivers of curriculum are made visible by the content of the Study Design. The clearest example of a correlation between the Asia policy context and VCE History is the introduction of Unit 3 and 4 Asian History (VBOS, 1996) during the ‘golden age’ of Asia literacy in the mid 1990s. The countries available for study reflected
Australia’s key Asian trading partners and the trade languages identified in NALSAS policy. However, this relationship can also appear paradoxical as more recently the availability of Asia-related history has diminished rather than diversified at a time when the Australian Curriculum has prioritised Asia. Therefore, it is necessary to consider other underlying influences at the state level or the intellectual and educational movements that filter through to history curriculum. Since its inception as a relatively radical curriculum model in the early 1990s, the VCE Study Design has erred towards conventionality and become increasingly prescriptive. Thus the development of history curriculum does not follow a linear trajectory but is characterised by continuities and discontinuities and the contestation between tradition and innovation.

The analysis of Asia-related history content reveals more than simply what type of Asia-related history is available; rather it considers how Asia is represented to provide insight into the symbolic meanings and worldviews projected on and by curriculum. Chen’s (2010) conceptualisations of Asia as method and deimperialisation have been applied throughout the thesis to trouble the dominant points of reference or subject positions from which Asia-related histories are viewed or constructed. In Australia, history curriculum was traditionally based on British imperial history and has adopted the conventions of Western historical method. Thus the traditional points of reference or frames for viewing Asia have included imperialism, colonialism, cold war structures and the nation-state. This approach is also characterised by political historicism, the dominant narrative whereby “Europe works as the silent referent” (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 28). These traditional worldviews in which Asia is often viewed as inferior, passive and a product of colonialism have helped sustain a metanarrative of Western hegemony in the stated curriculum and are conducive to maintaining the West as method discourse. Such constructions of Asia are problematic because they tend to reproduce fixed meanings and limit the possibilities for reconceptualising Asia as relational, dynamic and an active participant in historical processes, as well as restrict the possibilities for societies in previously imperialising nations, like Australia, to deimperialise subjectivities (Chen, 2010).
To some extent there is evidence in VCE History curriculum that implicitly demonstrates that “the West as method has become the dominant condition of knowledge production” (Chen, 2010, p. 216). However, history curriculum is more nuanced than this. The following examples show that some units encouraged the sort of reflexive work required of a deimperialised approach while the structure of others were framed by political historicism and an imperial culture contact model, which means they were more likely to reproduce the West as method discourse:

- In the first *VCE History Study Design* (VCAB, 1991) Unit 2 Imperialism and Colonialism and Unit 3 and 4 Culture Contact in the Pacific explicitly resisted a Eurocentric culture contact model by focussing on culture contact during the pre-colonial period. While the postcolonial and postmodern orientation of the Study Design reflected theoretical developments in history during the 1980s and early 1990s and the thematically organised units potentially disrupted traditional approaches to historical narrative and Western metanarrative, other units, like Unit 2 History of Western Ideas and Units 3 and 4 The City in History employed more conventional approaches.

- The 1996 and 2004 Study Designs dealt with colonialism in Asia in a less reflexive way; all units took European imperialism as their starting points, including Unit 3 and 4 Asian History (VBOS, 1996), but they still explored decolonisation quite extensively. The majority of units reinforce the binary of European powers as colonisers and Asian societies as the colonised, which limits the study of imperialism by Asian colonisers, such as China. Asia has been excluded from this configuration altogether in Unit 2 Global Empires (VCAA, 2015a).

- Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance (VCAA, 2004) provided scope to study the long term impact of colonisation by examining decolonisation in detail, especially compared to the 2015 Study Design, which has marginalised the study of decolonisation by reducing it to a brief option in Unit 2 Twentieth Century History.

- Asian History tends to be homogenised as a convenient descriptor, but paradoxically is separated into national histories due to a preference for methodological nationalism over transnational approaches e.g. Units 3 and 4...
Asian History (VBOS, 1996). Compared to units such as Unit 3 and 4 Nationalism and the State (VCAB, 1991) and Unit 1 Conquest and Resistance (VCAA, 2004) there is less opportunity to critique the idea of nation and nationalism in the 2015 Study Design.

- A preference for national histories and global conflict in the Western metanarrative model emphasises big political history, militarism and war. This is evident in all iterations of Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History in particular. As a result the curriculum unwittingly constructs the countries of Asia as authoritarian, hostile or weak, and often undemocratic, communist Asia is positioned in conflict with the values and politics of a liberal and democratic West, i.e. Japan is only viewed as a World War II enemy and Vietnam, China and Korea are predominantly viewed through the prism of the Cold War. As Mark, one of the teacher participants interviewed observed, Asia is often studied primarily in relation to conflict or Western intervention, which tended to emphasise “Asia’s weaknesses a lot of the time.”

- In the past, possibilities for diverse Asia-related histories or transnational approaches have been largely contingent on thematic approaches and the open-ended nature of units. Yet as content prescription has intensified, the historical contexts or nation-states that may be selected have narrowed. This brings into sharper focus those countries that are included and excluded by curriculum, e.g. China has replaced India as the centrepiece of Asia-related VCE History.

- In Unit 3 Australian History in the current Study Design (VCAA, 2015a), the representation of Chinese diggers suggests agency rather than victimhood and is more reflective of contemporary historiographical innovations.

These examples show that the approaches and content relating to Asia-related history in each of the Study Designs cannot be categorically labelled as Eurocentric or postcolonial one way or the other. Inconsistencies are evident within individual Study Designs and sometimes within individual units.
Notwithstanding, there still remains a preponderance of the traditional West as method discourse. Although conservative critics have questioned the level of attention given to ‘Western legacies’ in history curriculum this sort of content is sufficiently covered in the 2015 Study Design including: classical Greece and Rome; the age of European empires and the age of exploration; the spread of Christianity; the development and spread of new technologies (i.e. the Gutenberg printing press) and economic theories (i.e. early capitalism); the Scientific Revolution; the Enlightenment; liberalism; democracy in the twentieth century; and a focus on how a colonial society transformed into the Australian nation, to name a few (VCAA, 2015a).

As noted in Chapter 1, one of the aims of this thesis was to investigate the claim made in the rationale of the current VCE History Study Design: “The study of VCE History assists students to understand themselves, others and their world” (VCAA, 2015a, p. 6). The teachers certainly concurred with this aim, even though the demands of time, assessment and study scores constrained their philosophical intentions in this regard. The extent to which the 2015 Study Design fulfils this aim through the stated curriculum is arguable. If the stated curriculum does not consistently offer a range of subject positions, perspectives or points of reference for making sense of world history then students and teachers are less likely to consider Asia-related histories in terms of agency, fluidity and hybridity. With less time given to looking at decolonisation, the ongoing impact of colonialism or more recent histories of the region, historical stereotypes and assumptions may go unchallenged. Moreover the removal of historiography in the 2015 Study Design has implications for the formation of students’ subjectivity/worldviews as they are less likely to critically compare a range of subject positions or critique dominant modes of representation, and are less likely to be exposed to Asian historiographies or deimperialising approaches – of which more below.

Many units also take the conventional approach of methodological nationalism, which in the context of the VCE limits units to national studies, as opposed to more unconventional transnational or translocal approaches that transcend national
borders and explore the flow of historical change in a less linear way. Pragmatically methodological nationalism, as well as more prescriptive content ‘choices’, makes units easier to resource, manage, assess and market to students, but has deeper historiographical implications because it accepts the nation-state as a natural or normative unit of analysis and the main social unit of society (Amelina, Nergiz, Faist, & Glick Schiller, 2012). As a result, methodological nationalism tends to curb opportunities to consider the past through transnational or translocal approaches including the multi-directional flows of people, culture, ideology, religion, philosophy and language between borders. Consistent focus on national, political and militaristic histories means cultural history, social history and ‘history from below’ are marginalised. Cultural history can be revelatory because it offers a mode of reading against the grain and beyond the standard structures of government and hierarchies of power, focus in on other areas of human endeavour, use different historical artefacts, foster empathy and enable the inclusion of voices that are silent within the scheme of large-scale political histories. Victoria’s culturally diverse population is shaped by global mobilities more than ever, so it is important that students have the opportunity to develop historical understandings that incorporate everyday experiences and border-crossing or integrate social and cultural histories with these more spectacular grand narratives.

The teacher participants highlighted the importance of being able to select content that was relevant and engaging to their students. The narrowing of content inhibits curriculum that is culturally inclusive and culturally diverse unless teachers consciously and deliberately chose alternate content to address these issues. In multicultural Australia the development of intercultural understanding is a well-established goal of schooling, illustrated by the inclusion of the intercultural understanding capability in the Australian Curriculum and Victorian Curriculum (ACARA, 2017a; Halse et al., 2015; MCEETYA, 2008). Further, local and international research indicates that students do not always feel a personal connection to history curriculum, which has an impact on engagement (M. Dixon et al., 2015; R. Harris & Reynolds, 2014). As highlighted at the beginning of the thesis, student demographics are diversifying and global mobilities are changing the way young
people interact with the world. If history curriculum is to offer content that is both familiar and different for all students, and if it is to include and expand worldviews, it needs to continue to transform. Recent Victorian-based research found that the development of young people’s intercultural capabilities requires an integrated and whole school response, but also noted that curriculum innovation was considered one of eight essential principles for enhancing intercultural capabilities in schools (Halse et al., 2015). Before teachers can innovate with curriculum or build programs for their specific school contexts, they require as a foundation, a stated curriculum that has cultural diversity inbuilt into the content from which they can select.

8.3 The politics and policy actors

Over time the purposes for learning about Asia have been the subject of change and contestation. The sorts of Asia-related histories included in official curriculum have shifted according to the significance, value or purpose they are accorded at any one time by national policy, government rhetoric, and organisations like the Asian Studies Association, the AEF or the HTAV. Over the long term, the uneven representation of Asia is marked by both the recurrence and discontinuance of key discourses:

- In the first half of the twentieth century British history and the established *imperial discourse*, which had been characterised by the promotion of imperial culture and ‘great men’, was replaced with European ‘world’ history after WWI as faith in the British Empire began to fade and the imperial discourse lost traction.

- In the late 1960s and early 1970s the *discourse of relevance* spurred the inclusion of Asian history in Victorian history curriculum. In the early 2000s, the discourse of relevance was understood in quite different spatial and temporal terms, illustrated by the inclusion of millennial issues and histories of the Middle East in Twentieth Century History.

- The broadly *utilitarian discourse* of the late 1970s, which balanced cultural and economic arguments for studies of Asia, was overlaid by the economically rationalist *discourse of national self-interest* in the 1980s.
Whereas this was driven by the perceived need to engage with Asia’s new ‘economic tigers’ in its earlier manifestations, by the late 2000s it was motivated by the need for Australia to develop economically competitive future workers and global citizens for the ‘Asian Century.’

- During the late 1980s and early 1990s the discourse of regional engagement and discourse of national self-interest appear to coalesce in Unit 3 and 4 Asian History (VBOS, 1996). At a time when History enrolments were in crisis and Asia literacy was at its political peak, these new units offered histories that paralleled Australia’s key trade partners and trade languages. Perhaps a similar discursive ‘reality’ is visible again. Currently, the only stand-alone Asia units are Ancient History Unit 2: Early China and Units 3 and 4 Revolutions: China; India no longer has prominence. China is Australia’s top two way trading partner and India is number nine (Aust. Gov, 2017). Regardless of the actual curriculum or historical rationales, such correlations are the corollary of an ingrained economic instrumentalism in Asia education policy.

- During the mid to late 1990s the composite Asia literacy discourse became more prominent. Buoyed by the support of the Keating government, it found regular expression through enthusiastic articles and dedicated special issues of Agora, although some critiques countered uncritical acceptance of Asia literacy. During the Howard years Asia literacy was marginalised politically but then revived under the Rudd-Gillard government, exemplified by Rudd’s (2008) call for Australia to be “the most Asia-literate nation” (para. 4). The development of the Asia-priority tied Asia literacy to the Australian Curriculum’s futures orientation, positioning it as a procedural knowledge with economic, strategic and cultural benefits. The AEF, a long term driver of Asia literacy discourse, has most recently foregrounded Asia capability over Asia literacy, a term associated more with business and global citizenship (AEF, 2016; Asialink, 2017). Throughout this time it has been influential in the promotion of Asia-related histories.

- Over the decades the West as method discourse has operated differently across time and contexts, acting to privilege history content that
consolidates Western metanarrative. Since the late 1960s, evidence of this discourse is seen in critiques that highlight the value accorded to Euro-American history, which has positioned Asia-related history as tokenistic. By the 1990s, Western-centric approaches to Asia-related history were criticised for the overt perpetuation of Orientalist binaries that reinforced East/West, Australian self/Asian Other and us/them. The maintenance of these dominant ways of thinking can be explained by Australia’s strategic desire to capitalise on expanding Asian economies, then and now. If Asia is viewed as separate to Australia it can continue to be viewed instrumentally and as an economic opportunity (Rizvi, 2017). West as method has also been expressed through a tendency to view historical Asia primarily through the lens of imperialism and colonialism, which tacitly positions Western powers as superior. Although Australia-Asia relations have become more sophisticated, the underlying power dynamics embedded in ideas of ‘Asia capability’ are enabled by the West as method discourse that allows Australia to imagine Asia according to its own terms and its own interests. Subsequent to the ‘history wars’ of the late 1990s and early 2000s, conservative commentators and politicians engaged another brand of West as method discourse that espoused the legacy of ‘Western civilisation and Christian-Judeo heritage’ and sought to bolster the place of history content valued by conservatives (i.e. Anzac Day, the Enlightenment and liberal democracy) and promote a structured historical narrative as opposed to the relativism of postmodern approaches. These attitudes were exemplified by the arguments made for and in the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014).

To a lesser extent, a counter hegemonic discourse is taken up in Asia-related history curriculum policy critique. There is evidence that concern regarding the representation of Asia in the Victorian history education community has been expressed for some time (Broinowski, 1992a; Davis, 1992; L. Dixon, 1979; Martell, 1970; McKay, 1980; Russo, 1969). Partly as a response to the discourse of national self-interest in the 1990s, education scholars sustained a steady counter discourse
through their critique of Asia literacy policy. It was largely postcolonial in orientation and critical of the ways in which Asia literacy policy framed Asia through a hegemonic form of Orientalism (Garbutcheon-Singh, Elliott, & Chirgwin, 1998; Lo Bianco, 1996; Nozaki & Inokuchi, 1996; Rizvi, 1996, 1997; M. G. Singh, 1995, 1996a) and also questioned whether history was the most appropriate place for embedding studies of Asia (Williamson-Fien, 1994a, 1994b, 1996).

These theoretical reconceptualisations brought to attention an awareness of binarism and Orientalism although they have not been thoroughly translated into the history curriculum or Asia education policy. However, there are some small changes in curriculum policy that in part act to resist the homogenised representation of Asia. For example, ACARA acknowledges, “some of the world’s most dynamic, varied and complex societies are in the Asia region” and “Asia and its diversity” (ACARA, 2016a) is a key organising idea of the cross-curriculum priority. More recently this counter discourse has responded to the criticisms concerning the divisive and opportunistic nature of Asia literacy policy rhetoric with its focus on deficiencies in young Australians, by reappropriating the Asia literacy project. Instead, Asia literacy “as a radical cosmopolitan project aspires to promote a rethinking of hitherto dominant conceptions of self and (Asian) Other located both inside and outside of Australia” (Iwabuchi, 2013, p. xvi). The reimagining of a critical and reflexive Asia literacy recognises existing intercultural understandings that are developed outside of school curriculum through transcultural connections and the mundane and lived experiences of young people, as well as seeks to reframe economic rationales for Asia literacy by focussing on social and cultural dimensions (Iwabuchi, 2013; Martin et al., 2015; Rizvi, 2017).

Over the decades the AEF has been an influential policy actor in the construction of Asia-related history curriculum policy, through its publications, professional learning and policy advocacy work. It represents an authoritative voice in policy discourse, or more specifically the context of influence (Ball, 1993; Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992). The AEF has been a leader in constructing the Asia education policy agenda and through the resources and professional learning it provides has played a powerful discursive
role in moderating how Asia is talked and thought about in schools. The AEF is sustained by government funding, which means the subject positions available to it are constrained by a pragmatic need to be aligned with contemporary policy and government rhetoric. Although it has sought to balance the social and cultural rationales with the economic and strategic rationales, ultimately the AEF needs to centre the future-focused benefits of Asia capability on employability in the “new world world” in which “Asia is the economic powerhouse of the world” (AEF, 2017, p.2). The AEF has long valued the place of historical understanding in the development of Asia literacy/capability and therefore has had a close association with the HTAV, which includes publishing in Agora (e.g. AEF, 1995a) and presenting professional learning for History teachers (e.g. HTAV/AEF, 2017).

Tension between tradition and innovation is further illustrated in the way in which the established curricular customs of VCE history were preserved through the integration of the Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History with VCE History. The 2015 Study Design shows that even through the process of curriculum nationalisation, state curriculum authorities can still take relative control of the content of curriculum in the senior secondary years. This is evidenced by the continuation of the three most popular units: Units 1 and 2 Twentieth Century History, Units 3 and 4 Revolutions and Units 3 and 4 Australian History. The VCAA and HTAV indicated that this was in response to the preference of VCE teachers. The reluctance of teachers to adopt wholesale curriculum change is not necessarily due to their conservatism and disinterest in exploring new histories but rather the demands they face as the enactors of curriculum (see the following section). Victoria’s established state curricular culture is also maintained by the discourse of alignment, which in effect normalises assessment practices and the perpetuation of exam washback. The congruity of views between the VCE History teachers and the ACARA and HTAV representatives regarding the influence of the exam and the anxiety caused by changes to assessment demonstrates the pervasiveness of the assessment alignment discourse. The emphasis on high-stakes examinations and the relationship between teacher performance and student results points to the broader discourse of performativity at work.
On the other hand, the dissonance between the teachers’ perceptions of the reform process and discourse of transparency engaged by the VCAA indicates that the projected values of a discourse espoused by one group of policy actors can be ignored or misinterpreted by another group. This was evidenced by the VCAA’s emphasis on the inclusive and consultative nature of the reform process and contrasted with the frustration expressed by teachers who viewed themselves at the bottom of a hierarchy. The discourse of transparency was also taken up by the HTAV, which viewed the VCAA’s negotiation of curriculum more favourably than the teachers. Throughout the development of the *Australian Curriculum: History* and *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: History*, and reform of the 2015 VCE Study Design, the HTAV has acted as a conduit between teachers, the VCAA and ACARA by participating in the review panels and collaborating with the VCAA to provide teachers with consultation and implementation sessions. The teacher participants reflected positively towards the HTAV’s role within this configuration and overall they play a significant role influencing and interpreting VCE History. Furthermore, the HTAV’s *Agora* has provided a space for the promotion and contestation of Asia-related history since its inception in 1967.

Politicians involve themselves as both the authorised and unbidden policy actors in history curriculum policy processes in relation to Asia-related history. Throughout the thesis it has been argued that while politics plays a significant role in shaping the conditions of influence for the development of history curriculum, political contestation is one of many influences that sometimes overshadows other intellectual, economic, educational and pragmatic influences. Notwithstanding, political interference has reverberated through Asia-related history curriculum policy and Asia education policy discourse. Examples include:

- The acceleration of Asia education policy under Keating in the early 1990s, which provided conditions that were highly favourable for making Asia an education priority largely because it was driven by an economic rationale that promised the benefits of increased trade. The resulting discourse of national interest has continued to reverberate in rationales for Asia literacy.
• In the mid 1990s the Kennett government initiated significant changes to VCE curriculum and assessment, including reinstating external exams, and placed government representatives on the VCE History accreditation committee (Clark, 2006). This highlights the influence that the state government can exert on the state curriculum authority beyond just changing its name – i.e. VCAB, VBOS, VCAA.

• In the mid 2000s Prime Minister John Howard’s History Summit and the resulting history education resources failed to make any substantive changes to history curriculum when he lost the next election. One effect, however, was elevating the profile of history curriculum in subsequent public debate regarding the development of the Australian Curriculum.

• During the late 2000s the Rudd/Gillard government inverted the Howard government’s ambivalence towards Asia education policy with the inclusion of the Asia cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum and *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper. Despite the policy mainstreaming of Asia literacy, the 2015 Study Design is not more inclusive of Asia-related history than those that came before it.

• In 2014 Education Minister Pyne’s launch of the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014) triggered political and public discourse around the inclusion of Asia at the expense of the West in national history curriculum. This did not lead to substantive changes to curriculum but it did further the momentum of the Western civilisation/Christian-Judeo heritage discourse among conservatives and encourages the criticism of the place of Asia-related history.

Commentators also generate friction between tradition and innovation by polarising progressive and conservative views of history education. For example, neo-conservatives have called for the legacies of Western civilisation to be better recognised by history curriculum, in contrast to left leaning commentators whose preferences have been criticised for being too postmodern and politically correct. This sort of “conservative reaction to multiculturalism, political correctness and narrative diversity in the curriculum, in part operates as a nostalgic yearning for an
unproblematic ‘White history’” (Parkes, 2009, p. 121) is a concern because the continued perpetuation of the West as method discourse precludes opening up space in the curriculum for deimperialised content and approaches.

Overall a range of policy stakeholders participate directly and indirectly in the policy processes that shape constructions of Asia-related history in the VCE. This does not mean to say that history curriculum developers, policy makers, teachers or curriculum stakeholders have intentionally sought to represent Asia as such over the last three decades, or are incapable of developing or expressing sophisticated renderings of Asia. Rather these discourses manifest from “statements which coagulate and form rhetorical constructions” (Graham, 2011, p. 667) that reflect “a set of regularities... constituted in a disparate set of political-economic conditions, assumptions and forces” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 140). Within these policy contexts and debates, however, the prepotency of the VCE teachers who interpret and translate curriculum in the everyday practices of their schools and classrooms can sometimes be overlooked.

8.4 The enacted curriculum

In explaining and rationalising Asia in VCE history the teachers deployed discourses of professional knowledge, which constituted ‘the expert teacher’; student engagement, which constituted ‘the engaged student’; assessment alignment, which constituted ‘exam washback’; and West as method which constituted ‘the Eurocentric curriculum’. The objects that are made ‘real’ by the effects of certain discursive practices and ‘rules’ have implications for the enactment of Asia-related history. These discursive practices were shown to be contradictory at times. For example, the philosophical and pedagogical purposes espoused by teachers appeared to be undermined by the practical realities of twenty-first century teaching and pressures of other global education discourses, including the performativity and accountability required of a competitive model of high-stakes examinations. This means the desires of Asia education policy makers are not necessarily aligned with the conditions in which teachers enact curriculum (Halse,
2015c). Teachers acknowledged the discourse of national self-interest, but did not attribute their curricular decision making to this instrumental rationale. Overall teachers tended to be wary of the tokenistic inclusion of Asia for extrinsic purposes, a point also highlighted by the HTAV representative.

Teachers acknowledged the purpose and value in learning about Asia, but their attitudes do not correspond with ACARA’s cross-curriculum priority that advocates Asia knowledge so that students “can effectively live, work and learn in the region” (ACARA, 2016a). The perceived power of the student engagement discourse suggests that teachers conceptualise purpose through the metrics of relevance, engagement and accessibility, based on teachers’ understandings of student cohort demographics, abilities and aspirations. Teachers identified extending students’ worldviews and challenging racism as potential social benefits from the study of Asian history. Rather than equating this with students’ future roles as workers or citizens though, this was discussed in terms of helping them become better people. These points highlight the “seemingly irreconcilable differences between key stakeholders and policy actors” (Halse, 2015c, p. 13), reinforcing the notion that Asia literacy represents a wicked policy problem that cannot be resolved in the terms that it is currently understood (Halse, 2015c).

The realities and pressures of teaching in a competitive system driven by high-stakes testing and the discourse of performativity also shape the purpose of learning about Asia. Some teachers and curriculum stakeholders’ invocation of the assessment alignment discourse indicate this. The power of the VCE exam on teachers’ curricular decision-making was seen to compromise their pedagogical practices and philosophical desire to engage students. This again highlights the tension between tradition and innovation – the capacity of teachers to innovate was constrained by assessment practices that were perceived as demanding more efficient and conventional approaches. The influence of exam washback on assessment across the year levels had the negative effect of a ‘straightjacket approach’ that was also recognised as a pragmatic response necessitated by a system in which VCE teachers and their students are required to perform. These
pressures also conflicted with the value teachers placed on life-long learning and their desire to engage with new topics. It is not uncommon for “bits of policy to carry within them competing or contradictory subject positions” (Ball et al., 2012, p. 138). This was illustrated by the contradictory nature of teachers’ discursive practices and their frankness about the need to make compromises within this discursive ‘reality’.

Another significant influence on the teachers’ interpretation of Asia-related history curriculum is less visible. Their historical consciousness is shaped by their own cultural habitat and cultural curriculum (Rüsen, 2004a; Wineburg et al., 2007), which was evident in the ways in which the teachers engaged the West as method discourse. At least half of the participants spoke of the dominance of Eurocentrism in the collective historical consciousness of their school communities and said that a reason for including Asia-related history was to purposely unsettle the dominance of Eurocentric content. However, they were less likely to articulate how their individual historical consciousness influenced their curricular decision-making.

Considering the relative cultural uniformity of the Victorian teaching workforce, which is predominantly white and of English speaking backgrounds (Allard & Santoro, 2008; J. Collins & Reid, 2012), it was argued that self-reflexive work that engages teachers with the invisible norms of whiteness is necessary if teachers are to critically engage with ethnocentrism or interculturalism, or do subjectivity work with their students (Cloonan et al., 2017; Hickling-Hudson, 2005). This sort of intercultural work tackles an ongoing challenge that is part of a much larger project for schools, not just in Australia but globally (Cloonan et al., 2017). If teachers and students are to expand the reflexive tradition in the area of history curriculum, there needs to be scope for the critique of tradition in historical culture (Rüsen, 2012).

The policy eduscapes (Luke, 2008) in which teachers operate are culturally, socially, politically and economically complex, and under constant transformation. By viewing curriculum enactment through a critical policy analysis framework both the regulatory effect and contributing conditions of discourse are made visible, giving
insight into the type of subject positions (un)available to teachers. As a more complex response than curriculum ‘implementation’ it avoids assigning fault to teachers:

Here we do not blame the teacher for a failure of political insight, indeed we recognise, only too immediately, the ways in which we are all deeply implicated in, and bound up and into, the contemporary neo-liberal and globalising settlement and its triumph is that most of the time we do not even notice that it is there. (Ball et al., 2012, pp. 138-139)

Therefore an important consideration for making sense of how Asia is represented through enactment requires an understanding of the competing demands that are generated by this broader policy context in relation to the situated practices of teachers.

8.5 The limitations of the study

Before considering how a future research agenda might explore possible strategies for transforming the representation of Asia, the limitations of this study need to be discussed. The extent to which enactment has been investigated is limited to the contemporary context – principally teachers’ enactment of the VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2004), and to a smaller extent their projected or planned enactment of the new VCE History Study Design (VCAA, 2015a). It was not within the scope of the study to undertake historical inquiry into the enactment of earlier curricula. The data is also limited to a cross-section of teachers who participated, therefore it is illustrative rather than representative. It was also beyond the scope of the research to extend the analysis of the representation of Asia-related history in the precursors to the VCE, the High School Certificate (HSC) and Matriculation. Future research could benefit from developing an oral history based on interviews with past VCE and HSC History teachers, as would historical inquiry that draws more on archival investigation and earlier curriculum policy.

This study endeavours to make sense of the complexities of curriculum policy processes in relation to Asia-related history. The extent to which these recent
reforms are investigated are limited to looking at the discursive construction of Asia. The study did not seek to present a systematic analysis of the development and consultation process for Senior Secondary History or the reform of VCE History. I was not privy to the behind the scenes political toing and froing of the curriculum writing process. This would require interviews with a wider range of policy actors and could be followed up by deeper investigation into how curriculum policy is made. Moreover, the policy actors interviewed were representing the views of their organisation, and as such were perhaps constrained in their responses, particularly in regards to the internal politics of the reform process.

Another limitation of the study is that it does not fully address the multifaceted nature of curriculum because it did not examine Asia-related history curriculum from the perspective of those who experience it – VCE students. The scale of the study could not facilitate their inclusion. Teaching and learning are not one and the same: “What students learn may have a link with what teachers teach, but the two are not necessarily identical” (Osberg et al., 2008, p. 216). Had the study focused solely on the enactment of curriculum in the present, the research design would have included interviews with students to investigate how Asia-related history curriculum is learned or experienced. Certainly Clark (2008) has demonstrated the value of this sort of research in her investigation of Australian history and in the area of Asia literacy there is a recognised lack of research that includes student voice (Halse & Cairns, in press).

8.6 The future of VCE History

In Is Australia an Asian County? FitzGerald (1997) reflected: “What is needed from our education? It is not just training in certain skills or even adding Asia to the existing curriculum. It is an opening and refurnishing of the Australian mind” (p. 73).

Twenty years later in Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead, Rizvi (2017) poses a related question: “To develop Asia Literacy, the inclusion of such Asia-related content into the Australian curriculum is clearly necessary, but is it sufficient?”(p. 110). If issues of representation are not addressed in and by curriculum, perhaps we will still be asking these sorts of questions in another 20
years. Inclusion of Asia in curriculum does not necessarily stimulate deeper epistemic and cultural enrichment or enable transformation of representational practices. If we value curriculum that engenders fluid and variegated representations of Asia over essentialising ones, then the traditional points of reference that characterise VCE History and Asia literacy policy need continued troubling and shifting. Others have argued that change needs to involve some critical reflection on identity formation if Australia is to break out of this familiar cycle (Pan, 2013; Rizvi, 2015, 2017; Walker, 2012, 2013b, 2015). This raises the question of whether or not VCE History curriculum provides a site for the development of richer intercultural understandings about historical and contemporary Asia. To address this point, the disciplinary nature and structure of history curriculum needs to be considered before some possible future directions are examined.

VCE History curriculum has its own historiography and is organised according to its own unique disciplinary logic. The discipline is fundamental to fixing the limits of discourse, controlling its production and function (Foucault, 1970/1981). These structures are not fixed, as demonstrated by this study, however, the discursive rules of Western historical method endure within these structures. Critiques of Asia-related history curriculum argue “the general capacity of History to incorporate alternative voices is limited to the extent that those voices fit the pre-existing frameworks and prejudices of History” (Williamson-Fien, 1994b, p. 15) and are longstanding: “How on earth can we avoid the Western clichés of Asian history without first discarding the Western clichés of Western history, on which our approach to Asian history is necessarily based?” (Russo, 1969, p. 1). Whilst VCE History has discarded some of these clichés, the essence of the issue remains: “A criticism of nation-centred and ethnocentric history is not only about excluded subjects. It is the historical thinking itself, the concepts historians use, their academic methodology and their way of proving the truth and of narrating the past” (Epple, 2012, p. 167). Such critiques and the implications of the discursive practices identified by this study prompt further deliberation about the methodological framework of VCE History curriculum.
Discourses of Asia are constrained by the ways in which the purpose of history is interpreted by history curricula. The disciplinary orientation has gained traction in recent years, as demonstrated by the 2015 Study Design with its focus on history as a discipline characterised by historical thinking. It contrasts with a traditional/conservative orientation that seeks an uncomplicated national narrative and the progressive/pluralist discourse which advocates global and multicultural points of view (Symcox & Wilschut, 2009). However, if the scope for procedural knowledge within the disciplinary orientation only extends to historical thinking and not the inclusion of global and multicultural perspectives, then such a curriculum cannot feasibly be expected to develop other procedural knowledges such as Asia capability and intercultural understanding. In its current iteration, the Study Design only provides scope to develop substantive historical knowledge about some select Asian histories and elements of Australian-Asian history. The slippage between the prioritisation and discretionary nature of intercultural understanding about Asia and Australia and Asia highlights this as a precarious curriculum policy imperative (Salter & Maxwell, 2016), particularly in senior secondary history.

Furthermore, the way in which history curriculum is written significantly shapes its representational practices. Designing history curriculum is very different to that of creating or writing history. Historians usually declare their interests, have a clear theoretical intent or make reference to the various perspectives within their field e.g. Marxist, feminist, revisionist, Western-liberal, Soviet, postcolonial or postmodern perspectives. Due to the ongoing politicisation of history curriculum, the hesitance of VCE History curriculum designers to refer to the specifics of historiographical debates, schools of thought, or theoretical frameworks is to be expected; this context limits the subject positions permitted in curriculum design. While the Study Design refers to the contested nature of history very generally and the presence of different historical interpretations, it is written in such a way that gives the impression it is apolitical, that it is outside of historiography. Even when some historiographical innovations or debates are absorbed by curriculum they are not supported by reference to research or the contemporary historiographical context from which they come, as illustrated by the 1991 Study Design with its
postmodern and postcolonial sentiments, or the 2015 Study Design with its historical thinking framework. The unit descriptions within the Study Designs also tend to construct narratives that appear to be impartial, yet authoritative. The language of history curriculum has been described as similar to that of textbooks – objective, neutral, descriptive, didactic and static (Clark, 2006). This is particularly evident in the subdued tone of the introduction of the current Study Design (VCAA, 2015a). Paradoxically, this ‘depoliticised’ style of writing history curriculum appears to be an effect of the incessant politicisation of history curriculum discourse. As the thesis has shown, history curriculum cannot be separated from the socio-political context in which it manifests.

The ‘history wars’ and the various reviews/summits conducted by governments discussed throughout the thesis hint at the reasons why curriculum designers might seek to make history curriculum a small target for potential critics. Some might argue that historiography does not have a place in senior secondary school, as the VCAA has done recently, though history education scholars tend to argue strongly for its inclusion. The VCE History curriculum will struggle to expand upon the traditional points of references from which Asia-related history can be viewed and critiqued if it continues to shy away from historiography, issues of representation and the inherently political and ideological nature of history and history curriculum. An implication of removing historiography and replacing it with a watered-down approach to historical interpretation is the curtailment of the critical historiographical work that is required if outmoded, hegemonic and imperialised representations of Asia are to become deimperialised, or as Ashcroft (2001a) suggests interrupted through interjection and interpolation (see Chapter 3). The interpolation of more hybridised, dynamic and fluid worldviews into VCE History would require a more reflexive, critical and deconstructive approach to be integrated into the aims and unit structures of VCE History, including a rethinking of the ubiquity of methodological nationalism.

As discussed in chapters 5 and 7, the basic units of historiography – empire, civilisation and nation – can have an essentialising effect (Bauck & Maier, 2017),
especially when viewed mostly through a nation-centred lens (Amelina et al., 2012, p. 2). Teaching history has always been connected with the nation (Guyver, 2016), but strategies for post-national history curriculum can be integrated into curriculum (see Wilschut & Symcox, 2009). While it is not argued that national histories should be abandoned by history curriculum altogether, by expanding some units or areas of study beyond national frameworks, students may be encouraged to see connections between people, societies and events that are often considered to be separate (Curthoys & Lake, 2005) and enable new ways of understanding questions in a globalising world (Epple, 2012). For history students this might mean being able to reflect on how their own, and other people’s historical consciousness and worldview is shaped by historical memory based on particular narratives, values and power relations, thereby challenging the “asymmetrical relationship between self and other” (Rüsen, 2002, p. 2) or encouraging “critical consciousness of their own socio-political situation” (Lin, 2012, p. 171). Deimperialisation requires the imperialising population to examine how “the conduct, motives, desires, and consequences of the imperialist history that has formed its own subjectivity” (Chen, 2010, p. 4). Making space to critically evaluate the long-term impact of colonisation makes the past relevant to the present and also connects the global and the local. Students and teachers can then become more attuned to the presence of these relations within their own classes and school communities.

Possible alternative frameworks for rethinking history beyond nation-state borders include transnational history (Amelina et al., 2012; Casalilla, 2007; Curthoys & Lake, 2005) and the similar, but different, entangled history (Bauck & Maier, 2017; Freitag & von Oppen, 2014). In transnational history “historiography seeks to place emphasis on relations between imagined communities at levels other than that of relations between governments of contemporary nation-states” (Casalilla, 2007, p. 660). Bauck and Maier (2017) describe entangled histories: “Taking a trans-cultural perspective as the main point of departure, entangled history centres on the interconnectedness of societies. The basic assumption is that neither nations, nor empires, nor civilizations can be the exclusive and exhaustive units and categories of historiography” (para. 1).
An entangled history approach to the history of the region could provide scope to do the following: reveal new lines of inquiry, concepts and themes; address the overemphasis on political and military history and open up space for social and cultural history; highlight links between local and global; create space to acknowledge translocality, fluidity, hybridity and mobility; and encourage multiperspectivity and non-Western historiographies. The idea of initiating entangled histories into a nation-centred curriculum may sound somewhat idealistic, but as a historiographical trend it is starting to attract attention in Australia and the theme of the 2017 Australian Historical Association’s (AHA) annual conference is *Entangled Histories*. The AHA (2017) says entangled histories reflects “the increasing move away from narrowly defined ‘national’ histories towards an understanding of History as an interlinked whole where identities and places are the products of mobilities and connections” (para. 3). History in the academy does trickle down to schools, as illustrated in Chapter 4 through the influence of *history from the ground up* on pedagogy via New History in Britain and then the SHEP in Victoria. If an entangled histories approach were to be included as one of a range of historiographical approaches in history curriculum, the issue of resourcing would be a significant consideration as most texts are based on separate nation-states. Teacher professional learning would also be a consideration. Nonetheless, the potential for trans-cultural history in schools presents a fertile line of inquiry for future research in curriculum development.

VCE History curriculum is at a significant transition point and this study ends at the beginning of a new curricular phase. The Study Design’s new cognitive model, based on historical thinking concepts, could potentially transform how Asia is constructed and deconstructed in the coming years. All models of historical cognition have strengths and weaknesses (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015). Based on the potentiality and limitations of teaching historiography discussed in Chapter 7, I argue that the transition from historiography to historical interpretations attenuates possibilities for critically examining, and therefore, transforming the representation of Asia. Narrative diversity is essential for beginning to address issues of representation and
is enhanced by the teaching of history through historiography: “reclaiming historiography as the unsayable of historical discourse becomes a strategy for opening new curricular possibilities” (Parkes, 2009, p. 105). The devolution of historiography should therefore be reconsidered. As historiography remains central to senior history courses in NSW (NESA, 2017a) and Western Australia (SCSA, 2017), perhaps Victoria might look to how these states deal with the challenges it poses. Nevertheless, the historical thinking concepts – particularly historical significance, ethical dimensions and historical perspectives – could stimulate divergent thinking about Asia-related history, so long as teachers have time and space to explore the possibilities of historical thinking as well as content. As noted by the teacher participants, the ‘slog’ of getting through the content of VCE History courses has pedagogical implications and the influence of the exam cannot be under-estimated. The impact of these changes present opportunities for further research, particularly that which looks closely at enactment through pedagogical practice and the impact of the historical thinking model on student learning.

The analyses and arguments presented in this thesis suggest that there is a warrant for new research that examines how curriculum might be reconfigured in a way that challenges ethnocentric historiography and takes the question of intercultural understanding seriously. Across the globe, history education scholars are grappling with similar questions. To take this research further in this direction, the next step might be to look at models for intercultural historical learning (Nordgren & Johansson, 2015), cosmopolitan history (Symcox, 2009), critical historical thinking (Salinas, Blevins, & Sullivan, 2012) and relevant history (Van Straaten, Wilschut, & Oostdam, 2016) among others. Theoretically, Rüsen’s (2004b, 2005) intercultural approach to historiography and his work on historical consciousness would be particularly constructive. Regardless of the model of historical thinking or historical consciousness adopted, assessment is an ongoing issue (Ercikan & Seixas, 2015). Considering the exam-driven nature of VCE History, any further research in this area also needs to explore assessment practices in much greater depth. Lastly, although not specific to history, several scholars have proposed how future approaches to ‘Asia literacy’ might reimagine approaches that are critical, deparochial,
transcultural and translocal (Koh, 2013, 2015; Nozaki, 2009a, 2009b; Salter, 2014a; Weinmann, 2015). This work would also prove fruitful as a starting point for further research.

Asia as method and the notion of deimperialisation are not suggested here as antidotes to the way West as method has traditionally framed world history in VCE History curriculum. However, as a framework it has provided provocation for investigating the discourses, practices and subject positions that are explicit and implicit in history curriculum policy in relation to Asia-related history. Ideally an entangled approach that recognises the legitimacy and limitations of both Asia as method and West as method – as well as many other ‘methods’ – would allow a broad range of students to engage with a broad range of histories and historical perspectives in ways that are interculturally and intellectually constructive. As this thesis demonstrates, this cannot be achieved through changes to content alone; in addition to reflecting on the discursive effects of the disciplinary tools and concepts of history, a multi-dimensional understanding of the conditions of possibility in which curriculum is developed and enacted is required. History curriculum need not only be a product of the ongoing contestations of tradition, innovation and politics. These forces can be recognised within history curriculum as integral to reflexively learning about how collective and individual historical consciousness is shaped by the way we learn about the past.
Appendix A

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: VCE History Teachers

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Representations of Asia in the VCE History Curriculum Policy Process

Student Researcher: Rebecca Cairns

Associate Researcher(s): Professor Christine Halse and Dr Michiko Weinmann

What is the project about?
You are invited to participate in a research project that explores the perspectives and experiences of VCE history teachers in regards to their decision-making about curriculum planning, especially Asia-related history curriculum and the current reform of the History: VCE Study Design. It is not necessary for participants to have had experience teaching Asia-related history.

Who is undertaking the project?
Rebecca Cairns, an experienced VCE History teacher, is undertaking this research for a Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

Who is participating in the project?
School-based interviews will be conducted with individuals and teams of VCE History teachers, including Humanities Learning Area Managers/Heads of Department where possible.

What is the purpose of the research?
This project aims to examine the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy. It will investigate the research question: How is Asia represented in the VCE History curriculum and how might this representation be explained? The purpose of interviewing VCE History teachers is to find out about the factors that influence their curricular decision-making.

What will participation involve?
You are invited to talk about your own experiences and perspectives in a face-to-face interview. Some open-ended questions will be used to generate discussion about your experiences with VCE History curriculum planning. If there is more than one VCE History teacher at your school, then the VCE History team is invited to participate in a small group discussion that could also include the Humanities Learning Area Manager or Head of Department. The 45-minute interviews will be conducted at your school. One participant from each school will also be invited to participate in a 30-minute follow up telephone interview in early 2016. Interviews will be audio recorded and some basic demographic
information related to your teaching experience will be requested. Confidentiality and privacy will be protected.

What are the benefits of the project?
Your participation will provide valuable data in an under-researched area of history education. Teachers play a pivotal role in the enactment of curriculum policy through their curricular decision-making and content choices, yet very little has been published on this aspect of teachers’ work. It is particularly timely to investigate the factors that shape content choices during this significant period of curriculum change in Victoria. It is hoped that you will also enjoy the opportunity to reflect on your professional practice.

How were my contact details obtained?
This study aims to interview teachers from a proportionate sample of diverse schools from the government, Catholic and independent sectors. Your personal contact details have not been obtained as contact has been made through an invitation sent to the school’s email address.

How will privacy and confidentiality be protected?
No individual teacher or school will be identifiable in all documents resulting from the research. All identifiable information will be removed from your responses and replaced by codes or pseudonyms. The Department of Education and Training / Catholic Education Office and your school’s principal have given consent for teachers to be invited to participate in this research. To ensure confidentiality, you are not required to inform them of your choice to volunteer to participate.

Can I withdraw my participation?
Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without explanation.

Will I be able to find out the results from the project?
This research will be published in the form of journal articles, conference papers and a PhD thesis. You will be notified of these publications should you wish to read about the findings of the project.

Who do I contact if I have any questions about the project?
Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact: Professor Christine Halse: c.halse@deakin.edu.au  +61 3 9251 7251
  Rebecca Cairns: rcair@deakin.edu.au  +61 3 5247 9283

Complaints
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au Please quote project number [HAE-15-051].
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: VCE History Teachers

Date:

Full Project Title: Representations of Asia in the VCE History Curriculum Policy Process

Reference Number: HAE-15-051

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form. I understand that participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without explanation.

I agree to:

- Be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded;
- Complete a form that asks for some background information about my teaching experience;
- Do a follow up phone interview in 2016.

Participant’s Name (printed) ……………………………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………… Date ……………………………

Rebecca Cairns
PhD Student, School of Education and Arts
Building ic3.417
Deakin University Locked Bag 20000
Geelong Victoria 3220
Appendix B

**Participant Information Sheet**

Name*: .................................................................................................................................

School*: ..............................................................................................................................

Current position: ................................................................................................................

Years teaching (fulltime equivalent): ......................................................................................

Years teaching VCE History (fulltime equivalent): .................................................................

What History units / topics are you teaching currently? .............................................................
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What History subjects have you taught previously? .................................................................
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What sort of History related professional learning do you engage with? .................................
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List the VCE History units currently taught at this school: ....................................................... 
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List any Asia-related topics you have taught in VCE History: .................................................
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List any Asia-related topics you have taught in years 7-10 History: .......................................
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*Participants’ names, schools and details will not be identifiable.
Appendix C

An Invitation to Teachers of VCE History

Do you currently teach VCE History?

Are you interested in making a contribution to history education research?

The Project
Teachers of VCE History, Heads of History Departments and Humanities Learning Area Managers are invited to participate in a research project that explores the perspectives and experiences of VCE History teachers in regards to their curriculum planning and content choices. If there is more than one VCE History teacher at a school, the VCE History team is invited to participate in a discussion.

The project is investigating the research question: \textit{How is Asia represented in the VCE History curriculum through curriculum policy, curriculum policy leaders, teachers and student enrolment, and how might this representation be explained?} The focus of the interview is on the factors that influence teachers’ curriculum planning in VCE History. Participation in the project will provide valuable data on an important but under-researched area of teachers’ work.

What will participation involve?
- A 45-minute face-to-face interview in 2015.
- A 30-minute telephone interview in early 2016.
- Respondents will not be identified by name or school.
- Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time.
- Experience teaching Asia-related history is not required.

Who is undertaking the project?
Rebecca Cairns, a VCE History teacher, is undertaking this research as part of a Doctor of Philosophy with the school of Arts and Education at Deakin University.

If you are interested in participating or finding out more information please contact:
Rebecca Cairns
PhD Student, Deakin Geelong
rcair@deakin.edu.au
ph: 0431822421
Thank you
Appendix D

**Interview Guide: Teachers**

**Beginning:** introduce the research project, objectives and purpose; give overview of what the interview will cover; check informed consent again; discuss arrangements for confidentiality, including asking teachers not to use any names during the interview; and discuss set up of interview (time, recording etc.)

- Could you start by telling me about your role as a History teacher here?

**Unit design and content selection**

- When you are planning VCE History programs in your History team, what steps are involved in the process?
- How often do topics or contexts within VCE History units change at this school?
- What factors influence your and other VCE History teachers’ decision-making regarding topic and content selection at this school?
- What do you enjoy and what do you find challenging when planning VCE History programs?

**Asia-related content in VCE History**

- The ways schools engage with Asia literacy varies widely. It could include emphasising studies of Asia across the curriculum, Asian languages, sister school connections, professional learning for teachers, in-country experiences, community links, expansion of Asia-related learning resources or engagement with specific programmes. What sorts of things does this school do to foster Asia-Australia engagement?
- Which Asia-related history topics are included in VCE history here?
- What do you see as the benefits of teaching Asia-related history in VCE?
- What do you see as the challenges of teaching Asia-related history in VCE?
- Are the factors that influence your decision-making regarding Asia-related topic and content selection different to the factors you mentioned in the previous question about content selection?
- What sort of support do VCE History teachers need for the teaching of Asia-related topics?

**VCE History Curriculum Reform**

- Were you involved in the consultation process during the development of the new Study Design and why? If not, would you like to have been involved?
- What are your thoughts on the new VCE History Study Design?
- What factors have influenced or will influence your team’s decision-making during this period of curriculum reform?
- History curriculum development and implementation is a complex process involving government departments, curriculum authorities, curriculum leaders, teachers, students and other stakeholders. How would you describe VCE History teachers’ contribution to the process of History curriculum development and implementation?
• In general, what factors do you think influence VCE History teachers’ decision-making regarding topic and content selection in other Victorian schools?
• What do you think public and political perspectives about history education outside of schools?
• Last year the federal Government commissioned a report on the Australian Curriculum, authored by Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire. It was recommended that “the Australian Curriculum: History should be revised in order to properly recognise the impact and significance of Western civilisation and Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs.” (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014, p.181). To what extent do you think these aspects require greater recognition in History curricula in general?
• Do you have any further comments to add?

Interview Close: Indicate again how their responses will contribute to the objectives of the project; answer any questions that may have arisen; and show appreciation.
Appendix E

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Curriculum Leader Participant

Plain Language Statement

Date: August 2015
Full Project Title: Representations of Asia in the VCE History Curriculum Policy Process
Student Researcher: Rebecca Cairns
Associate Researcher(s): Professor Christine Halse and Dr Michiko Weinmann

What is the project about?
You are invited to participate in a research project that explores the perspectives of curriculum policy leaders and stakeholders on history curriculum development and history education in Victoria in general, and Asia in the VCE History curriculum in particular.

Who is undertaking the project?
Rebecca Cairns, an experienced VCE History teacher, is undertaking this research for a Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

Who is participating in the project?
Curriculum leaders and history education stakeholders from a range of history and Asia literacy related education organisations and curriculum authorities are invited to contribute. VCE History teachers from the government, Catholic and private sectors will also be interviewed.

What is the purpose of the research?
This project aims to examine the representation of Asia in VCE History curriculum policy. It will investigate the research question: How is Asia represented in the VCE History curriculum through curriculum policy, curriculum policy leaders, teachers and student enrolment, and how might this representation be explained?

What will participation involve?
You are invited to talk about your perspectives in a face-to-face interview. Some open-ended questions will be used to generate discussion about history education and history curriculum reform. The 45-minute interviews will be audio recorded and will be conducted at a location that is convenient for you.

What are the benefits of the project?
Your participation will provide valuable data in an under-researched area of history education. Curriculum leaders and stakeholders play a pivotal role in the development of curriculum policy and research into their roles and perspectives will contribute to greater understanding of the complexities of the curriculum policy process. It is particularly timely to investigate the factors that shape history curriculum policy during this significant period of curriculum change in Victoria. It is hoped that you will also enjoy the opportunity to reflect on your professional practice.
How were my contact details obtained?
Your contact details were not obtained, as the initial invitation was sent to your organisation to forward on to the appropriate person.

How will privacy and confidentiality be protected?
As a curriculum leader you will be commenting on the organisation’s professional and public position on history curriculum and due to the specialised focus of your role and that of the organisation it is difficult to ensure your responses are not identifiable. Subject to your consent, where necessary your name and the organisation will be identified.

Can I withdraw my participation?
Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without explanation.

Will I be able to find out the results from the project?
This research will be published in the form of journal articles, conference papers and a PhD thesis. You will be notified of these publications should you wish to read about the findings of the project.

Who do I contact if I have any questions about the project?
Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact: Professor Christine Halse: c.halse@deakin.edu.au +61 3 9251 7251
Rebecca Cairns: rcair@deakin.edu.au +61 3 5247 9283

Complaints
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact: The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au Please quote project number HAE-15-051.
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Curriculum Leader Participant

Consent Form

Date: June 2015

Full Project Title: Representations of Asia in the VCE History Curriculum Policy Process

Reference Number: HAE-15-051

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

I understand that participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without explanation.

I agree to:

- be interviewed and for the interview to be audio recorded;
- be identified by name and organisation where necessary.

Participant’s Name (printed) ...............................................................

Signature ................................................................. Date .........................

Rebecca Cairns

PhD Student, School of Education and Arts
Building ic3.417
Deakin University Locked Bag 20000
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rcair@deakin.edu.au
Appendix F

Interview Guide: Curriculum Leaders

(Core questions will require minor adjustments according to the individual’s role and organisation)

Beginning: introduce the research project, objectives and purpose; give overview of what the interview will cover; check informed consent again; discuss arrangements for use of identifiable data; and discuss set up of interview (time, recording etc.)

- Could you tell me about your role as [Curriculum Manager/Project Officer/Executive Officer etc.] in relation to the development of [history curriculum/promotion of Asia-related history resources/teacher professional development etc.]?

Asia Literacy and History Education

- The ways schools engage with Asia literacy varies widely. It could include emphasising studies of Asia across the curriculum, Asian languages, sister school connections, professional learning for teachers, in-country experiences, community links, expansion of Asia-related learning resources or engagement with specific programs. What does your organisation see as the purpose of Asia literacy in schools?
- How does history education connect with engaging with Asia?
- What does the organisation see as the benefits of teaching Asia-related content in VCE History?
- What does the organisation see as the challenges of teaching Asia-related content in VCE History?
- What factors do you think influence VCE History teachers’ decision-making regarding topic and content selection?
- What sort of support do VCE History teachers need for the teaching of Asia-related topics in VCE?

VCE History Curriculum Reform

- History curriculum policy development is a complex process involving government departments, curriculum authorities, curriculum leaders, teachers, students and other stakeholders. How would you describe the organisation’s contribution to the process?
- In what ways was your organisation involved in the recent reform of VCE History and/or the consultation process for the development of the Australian Curriculum: Senior History?
- What are the organisation’s views on the range of Asia-related content available in the current and/or new Study Design: VCE History?
- How will your organisation support the implementation of the new Study Design: VCE History?
- What do you think influences political and public perspectives about Asia-related history?
Last year the federal Government commissioned a report on the Australian Curriculum, authored by Kevin Donnelly and Ken Wiltshire. It was recommended that “the Australian Curriculum: History should be revised in order to properly recognise the impact and significance of Western civilisation and Australia’s Judeo-Christian heritage, values and beliefs.” (Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014, p.181). What is the organisation’s position on the need to revise the Australian Curriculum: History?

Do you have any further comments to add?

**Interview Close:** Discuss follow up interview; indicate again how their responses will contribute to the objectives of the project; answer any questions that may have arisen; and show appreciation.


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