Responding to a National English Curriculum: The embedded approach to change of the Catholic Education Office Melbourne

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ABSTRACT: *Across Australia the new Australian Curriculum: English (AC:E) has stimulated institutional interpretation and enactment based on jurisdictional and organisational culture and practice. One institution's response to the change in curriculum is the focus of this article. Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the sixth largest school system in Australia, has undertaken implementation of the AusVELS: English F-10 (Victorian Essential Learning Standards: Foundation to Year 10) curriculum using an embedded approach. Coordinating the work of personnel charged with implementation of the new curriculum, key features of this approach include literacy leadership, the professional learning practices of using a knowledge-building cycle of inquiry and professional learning teams, distinctive literacy-based projects and the system priority of school improvement. Analysis of interview and documentary data has been methodologically informed by Institutional Ethnography and Bourdieusian field analysis. Understanding of specific institutional responses to the AC:E may provide orientation for informed reflection on, and comparative analysis of, curriculum implementation experiences and practices.*

Introduction

Guided by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) and under the authority of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority*

Act 2008, a new national English curriculum (Foundation to Year 10) was released in Australia during late 2010, with a final version including achievement standards and work sample portfolios being published a year later. Although the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) is responsible for developing, administering and reviewing the new curriculum, Australia's eight state/territory school and curriculum authorities have responsibility for its implementation and implementation support (ACARA, 2012). In New South Wales (NSW), Australia's largest education jurisdiction in terms of population, implementation of the new *Australian Curriculum: English* (AC:E) was significantly delayed as this state's curriculum authority fulfilled the legislative requirement of producing state-based curriculum documentation. This was achieved by incorporating AC:E content into the existing English curriculum framework organised around outcomes. With somewhat less delay, the nation's second largest educational jurisdiction in population terms, Victoria, also took the route of incorporating the AC:E content into the existing curriculum framework which privileged domains/modes. This resulted in the production of two state-based 'national' English curricula – the *NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum: English K-10* and Victoria's *AusVELS: English F-10* – a situation unique to these two Australian states.

In both NSW and Victoria, this period of curriculum reform was accompanied by significant reorganisation of educational bureaucracies, and continuing devolution of responsibility to school level (see the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* policy (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2011) and the *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* position paper (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012)). One important consequence of these developments has been the marked increase in online delivery of support for teachers, including professional development. In relation to implementation of the new *NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum: English K-10* and Victoria's *AusVELS: English F-10*, online professional development was delivered by NSW and Victorian education and curriculum authorities in the form of web conferences, PowerPoint presentations, professional reading, and planning and programming tools. During this period of government-mandated curriculum change, within Australia's two largest educational jurisdictions many of the systems in place to lead and manage change had themselves been changing.

Within these circumstances, school sectors and systems in NSW and Victoria undertook curriculum implementation, drawing on their individual jurisdictional and organisational cultures and practices. The specific ways in which the government sectors in both these states and one non-government system in Victoria have interpreted and enacted their new English curricula has been a research focus of a three-year Australian Research Council Linkage project called *Peopling Educational Policy* (LP110100062). Drawing on findings from this project, this article concentrates on the non-government system in Victoria, exploring its approach to implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* through examination of everyday, practical curriculum change work with particular emphasis on change management practices. We thus begin by introducing the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM), the education system in focus. We then review some significant threads in the literature on systemic reform, professional learning and literacy leadership, but claim only partial coverage of this broad area of scholarship. Then we consider the case of the CEOM in detail, our findings explicating key features of the CEOM embedded approach to implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* and our discussion exploring this implementation approach using the Bourdieusian tools of field, habitus and capital. Our analysis

of the CEOM's curriculum implementation approach may provide some orientation for reflection on, and comparison between, alternative systemic change and/or curriculum implementation experiences and practices. Although this research is Australian-based, the management of systemic change involving new models of professional learning and literacy leadership has international relevance.

Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM)

The CEOM provides education to over 150,000 students across 331 schools in Melbourne, the capital city of the Australian state of Victoria, and operates within the third-largest Catholic diocese in the world. One of the largest education systems in Australia with over 18,000 employees, all CEOM school communities are supported by more than 400 personnel located in a central city-based office or one of four regional offices (see http://www.cem.edu.au/). The CEOM is part of the wider Catholic sector of schooling in Victoria and across Australia more broadly, sharing compulsory education provision nationally with the government/public schooling sector, the largest provider, and the independent schooling sector, the smallest provider.

Implementation of the new *AusVELS: English F-10* by the CEOM, led by the central office Literacy Team, has been undertaken using an embedded approach in which the change in curriculum has been integrated into established professional learning practices and the system-wide priority of school improvement. Literacy leadership and professional learning projects in place to drive system-wide school improvement in literacy make this approach particularly distinctive. The CEOM model of literacy leadership has been developed over time through significant institutional investment as a strategic driver for school improvement, and provides consistency to reform across the system.

Systemic Reform and Professional Learning

The realisation of systemic reform at school level has been conceptualised as the strategic rebalancing of top-down and bottom-up change over time (Hopkins, 2007). In Australian-based research, this was operationalised in one area of the capital city of the state of Victoria, the Northern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, through a reform called *Powerful Learning*, which inverted the premise that change comes from the 'outside-in' (Hopkins & Craig, 2011). In this approach, reform is generated from the 'inside-out', beginning with student learning and the necessary changes in student learning to improve achievement, and then prompting the planning of effective teaching strategies and related organisational modifications, as well as consideration of prescribed policies to mould those most useful in light of identified improvement plans (Hopkins & Craig, 2011). Another Australian system-wide reform approach in which classroom practice is core is the NSW *Quality Teaching* model (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2003), which has been taken up widely across the state of New South Wales over the last decade and in the Australian Capital Territory more recently. This model specifies a set of pedagogical qualities that have been demonstrated to improve academically-based student learning outcomes, and its three dimensions, 18 elements, rating scales and elaborations provide schools and teachers with the detail to assist them in making fine-grained observations of their classroom practice and analyses of their assessment tasks with a view to improving them (Ladwig, 2005).

Despite these and other examples of larger-scale professional learning initiatives that have a focus on improving teacher practice, the underpinning link between teacher professional learning and improved student achievement remains complex and tentative. For example, seeking to understand the 'black box' between particular professional learning opportunities and their impact on teaching practice and student outcomes, a synthesis of international research findings completed for use in the New Zealand educational context developed a framework that took account of 84 dimensions of the professional learning environment likely to impact on student outcomes (Timperley et al., 2007). In similarly comprehensive work designed to inform US education systems, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) acknowledge the limited number of rigorous quantitative studies that evaluate the impacts of professional learning on student achievement and therefore the weak research base for causal inferences, but set out the following basic principles for designing professional learning from their survey of the literature: professional learning should be focused on student learning and specific curriculum content; it should align with school improvement goals and priorities; it should be intensive, ongoing, and connected to teacher practice; and it should build strong working relationships between teachers.

Central to the challenge of designing systems-level professional learning that impacts positively and substantively on student achievement, according to Luke and McArdle (2009), is the necessity to 'strike a balance between a centralised mandate for professional development programs, with their variable and necessary realisation in local contexts – treading the dialectical tightrope of balancing informed prescription and informed professionalism' (p. 248). This difficulty brings into focus the issue of purpose. As Kennedy's (2015) recent analysis demonstrates, the contemporary policy meta-narrative about the purpose of teacher professional learning is dominated by perspectives of human capital development and teacher socialisation at the expense of a subjectification perspective that advances teacher autonomy and creativity. The Australian experience is likely to have contributed, with Hardy (2008) identifying teacher professional development during the Liberal/Coalition decade of government (1996-2007) as a product of external, bureaucratic, market-oriented priorities as well as collaborative, inquiry-based, long-term initiatives, and suggesting these dual influences, acting in competition to shape teacher professional development, have created confusion at policy level and contradictory responses in practice.

Emerging from the changes in thinking and tensions related to managing systemic reform and professional learning, a new school-based role to facilitate professional learning in the area of literacy has emerged, initially from the US, over the last 15 years. Having been variously labelled as literacy coordinators, literacy coaches, literacy leaders and literacy specialist teachers during this time, the general job description of this relatively new role is to 'support teachers in making instructional changes or decisions in order to improve student achievement in reading and writing' (Deussen et al., 2007, p. 5). Although researchers acknowledge that empirical data demonstrating a link between the position of a dedicated literacy 'professional developer' and improvement in student literacy is minimal due to the fairly rapid take-up of this approach to professional learning (Deussen et al., 2007), and impact measurement is difficult due to the 'causal cascade' on which the approach is predicated (Atteberry & Bryk, 2011), some encouraging, albeit patchy, research exists.

In US-based research focused on teaching, the language and literacy practices of educators in both centre- and home-based early childhood settings, who received professional development in

the form of coursework accompanied by a year-long coaching intervention, improved significantly as compared to those receiving only the coursework as their professional development (Neumann & Cunningham, 2009). In the early years of schooling, teaching practices, measured by the instructional time teachers spent on five essential components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension), across grades one and two, were also found to be positively and significantly impacted as a result of *Reading First*, the large state-mandated reading improvement program established by *The No Child Left Behind Act* (United States Department of Education, 2001) in which literacy coaching was a defining feature (Gamse et al., 2008). In other research on *Reading First*, improvement in reading in the second grade was found to be related to the total number of hours of coaching teachers received (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011), and when individual statistical models were developed to represent the work of a small number of literacy coaches, in the majority of models there was a positive relationship between total improvement in student reading and the amount of time literacy coaches spent observing classroom teaching (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010). Additionally, reading improvement at one or more grade levels was found to be related to at least one of the identified literacy coaching activities (conferencing, conducting and discussing assessments, modelling, and observation) as well as to a focus by literacy coaches on comprehension (Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2011). The largest study of *Reading First*, however, found no statistically significant impact on student reading as measured by reading comprehension despite the consistent, positive effect of the intervention on teachers' reading instruction (Gamse et al., 2008).

In a set of New Zealand schools ranging in socio-economic status and type, improvement in reading achievement among 10-13 year-old students, measured by improved overall results and positive achievement in comparison to similar school types in standardised testing, was accompanied by the ongoing guidance and support of schools' delegated literacy leaders, and effective, long-term, whole school professional development in reading, both of which were highly supported by school principals (Fletcher et al., 2012). In one case study school, a government school located in a low socio-economic, urban area, that had been struggling with enrolment numbers and the quality of its teaching and had seen the resignation of its principal and the appointment of a commissioner to address its problems, Fletcher et al. (2013) found that improvement in students' reading outcomes over the subsequent years was in part due to the appointment of a part-time literacy leader.

In research that focuses on students' reading, writing and language skills, another US-based large-scale program called the *Literacy Collaborative*, designed to improve students' skills in the first years of school primarily through school-based literacy coaching, yielded significant gains in student achievement over a period of three years compared with gains from the base-line year before the program was initiated: in the first year of the program's implementation students made 16% larger learning gains on average, in the second year they made 28% larger learning gains on average, and in the third year they made 32% larger learning gains on average (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010). As the researchers noted, the value-added effect of the *Literacy Collaborative* might be explained by the year-long, detailed professional development coaches undergo before they begin working with teachers in schools as compared with the shorter and more piecemeal training provided by many other literacy coaching initiatives (Biancarosa, Bryk & Dexter, 2010).

Research Methodology

The *Peopling Educational Policy* research project, from which this article draws, employed the combined strength of Institutional Ethnography (Smith, 2005) and field analysis (Bourdieu, 1990b). Both these research approaches aim to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks by beginning with everyday social practices, such as work practices, and share a concern to understand these in relation to other sets of social forces and institutional relations (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). In addition, as everyday social practices are very often organised and controlled by texts, either by texts coordinating sequences of action or texts regulating other texts, Institutional Ethnography places great emphasis on textual analysis (Smith, 2006).

The project's second phase involved the organisation of a number of research initiatives, their aim being to allow researchers to work closely with those charged with the implementation of the new curriculum in order to build understanding of the localised practices of this major reform (Gerrard et al., 2013). The Phase 2 research questions were:

1. How is curriculum policy settlement achieved across system and school in the context of this one school?

2. How do bureaucrats, educators, and teachers approach mandated curriculum change at the system, school, and classroom levels?

3. What constitutes current local curriculum practices and how are these impacted upon by the mandated curriculum change?

4. How can initiatives connect with, and respond to, the priorities and concerns of those within the local setting?

5. What constitutes success for the initiatives for those within the setting, and what are the institutional conditions that are necessary for success?

Data were collected from four groups of CEOM personnel working on the front-line of the system's implementation of the new *AusVELS: English F-10* in Melbourne, Victoria: seven primary school classroom teachers, four literacy leaders and two principals from two primary schools of contrasting demographics, and three members of the central office Literacy Team responsible for creating and delivering the relevant professional development. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants in mid-2012, and a second round of interviews was conducted in mid-2013 with classroom teachers and literacy leaders only. The audio-taped interview data were transcribed verbatim and reviewed by participants for accuracy of transcription and meaning. Documentary artefacts were collected from literacy leaders to demonstrate their textual curriculum enactment work. In addition, a member of the research team attended four of the five P-8 Learning Literacies Project professional learning days during 2012, recording observations by way of field notes. All documentation presented at these professional learning days was collected for analysis. Documentation was also collected from the CEOM website, including system policy texts as well as literacy-specific policies/guidelines.

Interview data were analysed inductively to identify convergences and divergences in reported activity, experiences and understanding in relation to the *AusVELS: English F-10* implementation. These were then carefully reviewed and consolidated following Smith's (2005) process of moving the analysis beyond the local in order to discover the implicit social

organisation that governs the local setting. Analysis of documentary data then contributed to a mapping of interviewees' related activities. From this, clarification of a set of key features that coordinate and shape the *AusVELS: English F-10* enactment work of CEOM personnel evolved, which was subsequently further refined through re-reading of both interview and documentary data. Further analysis explored the CEOM embedded approach to curriculum change utilising the Bourdieusian concepts of field, habitus and capital. Finally, representative excerpts from interview data were identified, and pseudonyms assigned.

Findings: Key features of the CEOM embedded approach to curriculum change

Literacy leadership

In place well before the implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* were the CEOM's literacy leadership structures, including professional literacy leadership learning networks and postgraduate education pathways. The CEOM (2007) *Literacy Leadership Framework* clarifies literacy leadership at system level, outlining expected practices and responsibilities across the five guiding CEOM conceptions of leadership (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2005), and articulates the extension of the role of the literacy leader beyond the school to include engagement with the wider faith community and external partners who are able to impact positively on student literacy (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2007). Literacy leadership within the CEOM is defined as a 'collaborative endeavour' in which the work of literacy leaders centres on the development of a culture of professional inquiry through their leadership of school-based collaborative professional learning (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2007). When asked about their role, the literacy leaders interviewed in this study commented on the role's function.

> Cate: I would say what I feel my role is in this school is to drive the literacy direction in the school.

> Evelyn: Primarily I look at what the needs of the students are, what the teachers want support in in order to support the students in their needs, and then ensuring that we've got the resources, the professional reading, the classroom help and, whatever they need.

> Judy: My students are the staff so I'm not in the classroom at all, I'm full-time out of the classroom.

> Peta: I really have this really strong belief that having good teachers in our profession is really important and if I can make a small sort of contribution to that then I feel I've done well.

The literacy leaders also commented on the practical activities in which they engaged.

> Evelyn: I help the teachers with gathering materials and resources to support developing their teaching of literacy. I liaise with the reading recovery teacher to ensure that the reading recovery teacher and what's happening in the classrooms is marrying up. I do a lot of work with the teachers in their classrooms – I do

modelling of a range of teaching instructional strategies and look how we can improve student learning, so we look at student evidence.

Judy: Up until just this year, they never asked me to come into their classroom but now they're asking me to come into their classroom to help them. They're coming to me and asking me to help them plan their units. They're asking me to look at their work programs to see if they think that they're doing the right, using the right strategies.

Cate: We got the teachers to track the students' writing on the AusVELS: English F-10 scope and sequence. Initially we did the tracking together as a team. I brought in writing samples and as a group we tracked the student on the AusVELS scope and sequence. From there the teachers then went off and they would work with the students on whatever area of need they were focusing on.

Peta: I've been looking into spelling because I'm doing a lot of research looking at programs out there, looking at people who can support us and support the teachers.

Other reported activities of the literacy leaders include: organising and leading professional learning sessions/meetings; attending meetings with other literacy leaders; creating school-based documentation relating to curriculum change and professional learning; organising, conducting and analysing surveys completed by students and teachers; analysing school and individual student data; proposing ideas for professional learning to school leadership; organising and analysing reflection and feedback on school professional learning; organising and conducting education sessions for parents and parents who volunteer to help in the classroom literacy sessions and writing supporting booklets; and meeting with parents after referral by classroom teachers. Literacy leaders operate in a fairly complex web of social relations, their role being realised by daily, or at least frequent, interactions with teacher colleagues (individually or as part of professional learning teams), other literacy leaders, school executive, students, parents, in-sourced professionals such as speech pathologists, agents from companies supplying professional learning resources, and school-based learning support and administrative staff. The schools' literacy leaders also maintain regular contact with the CEOM central office Literacy Team, acting as intermediaries between 'the system' and the school. CEOM literacy leaders function across a set of key features that socially organise and govern the embedded *AusVELS: English F-10* implementation approach. Figure 1 is a representation of these key features, depicting *AusVELS: English F-10* implementation embedded within CEOM professional learning projects, professional learning practices and the system priority of school improvement, and CEOM literacy leadership operating across these nested relationships.

Professional learning projects

The CEOM has utilised a number of professional learning projects to implement the new *AusVELS: English F-10* curriculum. The majority of these projects involve literacy leaders only; however, a couple have a component where classroom teachers are involved also. Some project components have dealt with the new curriculum directly – 'have brought *AusVELS* in' (Karen, head office Literacy Team) – through explicit briefings and presentations, but the predominant

treatment of *AusVELS: English F-10* in these projects has been its use as a means for working on existing system priorities and school learning needs.

FIGURE 1: LITERACY LEADERSHIP IS INTEGRAL TO KEY FEATURES OF THE CEOM EMBEDDED APPROACH TO CURRICULUM CHANGE
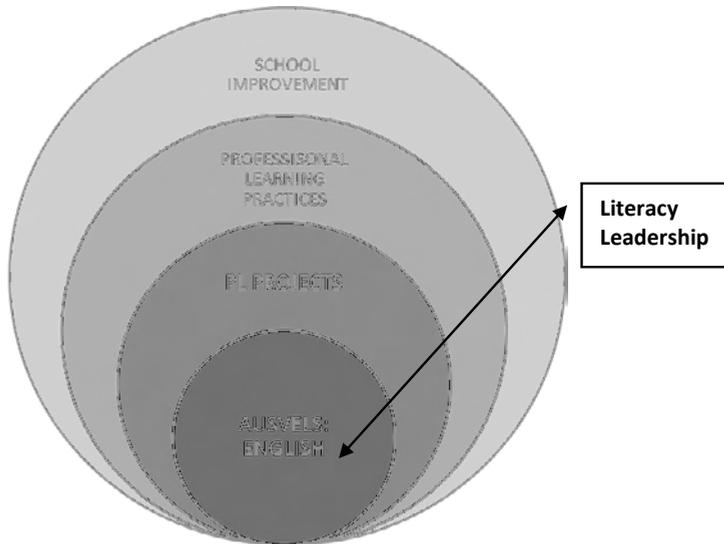
One such professional learning project is the P-8 Learning Literacies project (P-8), which is designed to develop a culture of inquiry into literacy through professional reading, planning, action, reflection and learning informed by evidence and analysis. Through participation of teachers in a collaborative and self-regulatory knowledge-building cycle of inquiry (Timperley et al., 2007) led by literacy leaders, continuous school improvement in literacy is fostered. Running for the first time in 2011, the focus of the one-year P-8 program is writing, which was identified as an area of need by CEOM leadership. This focus on writing, however, is seen as supporting the main function of the project, as Karen clarified: '… it wasn't really about writing in the very beginning, it was about teacher inquiry and supporting literacy leaders through teacher inquiry – and writing was the focus'.

The P-8 project comprises five off-site professional learning days held across the school year, with the first and last attended by literacy leaders only. The first 'leader day' is designed to contextualise the program and clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of all personnel involved, and the last day concentrates on reflecting on the learning that has taken place throughout the year and planning for how the learning can be continued beyond P-8. The three 'team days' are attended by literacy leaders and their teams of teachers, selected based on needs identified by the participating schools. Each 'team day' involves shared, in-depth and hands-on analysis of a sample of student writing and related instructional planning. Specifically, this begins with assessment of what the student can do (*What does the student have control over in this writing sample?*), followed by articulation of the next step in terms of the student's learning

through identification of content in the new curriculum (*What content descriptors complement the desired learning for this student?*), and the building of relevant teacher knowledge to improve instruction for this student (*What do I, as the teacher, need to know and do to enable this student to achieve the desired learning?*) through sessions on relevant pedagogical content knowledge. This process, part of the knowledge-building cycle of inquiry mentioned above, is elaborated below as an element of the CEOM's professional learning practices.

P-8 builds the capacity of literacy leaders to work with classroom teachers in practical and strategic ways, both on- and off-site. Each team of classroom teachers, along with their literacy leader, forms a school-based Professional Learning Team (PLT) that meets regularly to collaborate on the professional learning activities introduced by P-8. Larger primary schools have two literacy PLTs, one for Years P-2 ('the junior team') and another for Years 3-6 ('the senior team'), and therefore two literacy leaders. The PLT model has been used by the CEOM for a number of years (see, for example, Griffin et al., 2010), and is elaborated below as an element of the CEOM's professional learning practices.

The P-6 (Prep to Year 6) Clusters program forms part of another CEOM project called the Literacy Leadership Project (LLP). The overarching purpose of this project is to develop and support literacy leaders through building their leadership capacity. Supported by the view that literacy leadership is embedded in the structure and culture of CEOM schools, the LLP strives to assist and challenge schools with the task of literacy improvement, and has included a focus on the implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10*. In this program, literacy leaders from schools in CEOM regions meet four times a year off-site as 'clusters' for these professional learning sessions. This project also includes accredited pathways for postgraduate study designed specifically for literacy leaders in Catholic schools developed in collaboration with the University of Melbourne. CEOM literacy leaders can earn credit towards a Specialist Certificate in Literacy Leadership, a Postgraduate Certificate in Literacy Leadership or a Masters in Literacy Education.

Created and delivered by experienced project and education officers from the central office Literacy Team, these professional learning projects build professional relationships between literacy leaders and central-office personnel. When asked about the relationship between the central office Literacy Team and literacy leaders, its function as a link between the system and schools was identified by a member of the Literacy Team.

> Jenny: We're not available to go out to schools all the time but we're certainly always available by phone or by email and I think, we're there to serve them and to bring the system messages to them, and to try and build a coherence across the system and I think they see it as a really collaborative relationship.

The implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* using professional learning projects such as P-8 and LLP demonstrates professional learning that has a dual focus on leadership and English literacy pedagogy.

Professional learning practices

The knowledge-building cycle of inquiry central to the CEOM professional learning practices is adopted from the work of Timperley et al. (2007), and sets out a professional learning process based on an ongoing cycle of three phases of inquiry. The first inquiry asks, what knowledge and skills do our students need? This phase of the process involves teachers using their assessment

expertise to obtain data on students' knowledge to effectively identify what students need to learn. As Evelyn (literacy leader) explains: 'The first thing we look at is the [school] data before we look at the curricula'.

The second inquiry asks, what knowledge and skills do we as teachers need? This phase of the inquiry involves teachers analysing how their specific teaching approaches have contributed to patterns of student achievement and learning at a collective level. Here, teachers need to consider the relative strengths and weaknesses in their own knowledge and skills in order to formulate their own learning goals. Fundamental to this second inquiry is teachers' self-perception: a view of themselves as agents of change, able to improve practice and, in turn, students' learning, motivates teachers to deepen their professional knowledge, refine their pedagogical skills and engage students in improved and/or new learning experiences.

The third and final inquiry asks, what has been the impact of our changed actions? This phase concentrates on the effectiveness of the action taken in response to the two previous phases of inquiry, and involves teachers designing methods of evaluating the impact of improved practice on students and carrying out analyses of student achievement over time (Timperley et al., 2007). Undertaken in an ongoing fashion, this cycle of inquiry ensures professional learning is grounded in clearly identified, specific school-based learning needs. As Jenny from central office concluded: 'We're trying to build sustaining structures for professional learning based on the context that the school has'.

The professional learning practice of in-school collaboration through a Profession Learning Team (PLT) is also integral to the CEOM schools. CEOM PLTs are teams of teachers that hold fairly formal and regular meetings, usually with an agenda, minutes, professional reading and related discussion that are led by their literacy leader, and the time spent by teachers in PLT meetings is formally registered as professional learning with the Victorian Institute of Teachers. As with the knowledge-building cycle of inquiry, PLTs encourage a culture of teacher learning that relates directly to school context, and involves shared responsibility for student learning outcomes. As Katja, a classroom teacher, stated: 'We don't have them as regularly as the junior team would like but the PLTs, the discussion, the dialogue and the facilitation of that is really powerful, so I think as a junior teacher the power of the PLT is really important'. P-8 involves literacy PLTs; however, other curriculum areas have their own PLTs, and thus it is often the case that CEOM teachers are members of more than one PLT. The PLT model, firmly established within CEOM professional learning practices, is likely to sit well with teachers as, according to Hardy (2008), more collaborative, extended and inquiry-based professional learning initiatives are typically favoured by teachers.

School improvement

School improvement is an overarching priority for the CEOM and drives systemic reform. How schools action this priority is presented in the system's *School Improvement Framework* (SIF) (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2014), which sets out an ongoing, four-year procedure for school improvement planning. The SIF directs schools on how to establish the most favourable organisational conditions for improvement given their particular circumstances and address the requirements of official school registration. As part of this, the school review process develops each school's School Improvement Plan, which identifies a set of priorities to address, and this is

subsequently broken down to inform each school year's Annual Action Plan. These documented areas for school improvement subsequently guide decisions about teachers' professional learning. For example, only a school that had identified 'creating texts' within its Annual Action Plan was eligible to register for the P-8 project focused on writing. The emphasis on connecting professional learning and school need is outlined by Jenny from the central office Literacy Team:

> We implement sort of improvement whilst at the same time concentrating on new initiatives, but we try to do it within a context so that the schools see it as something they need to do because it's in the best interests of their students – so we don't do one-offs where they're not connected.

The teaching and learning framework titled *Learning Centred Schools, A Sacred Landscape: Learning and Teaching Framework & Strategy 2009-2013* (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2009a) makes clear the CEOM's vision of bringing together the Catholic faith and education through living within the Christian Tradition and building accessible, strong and high-achieving school communities in the 21st century. In this document, the CEOM articulates the alignment of their policies and capacity building initiatives in support of school-level improvement in student learning through improvement in instruction, and details a multi-pronged approach to contemporary education through five streams of innovation. The CEOM literacy strategy titled *Literacy: Learning for Life 2009-2013* (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2009b) sets out four strategic goals, one of which is to build continuous school improvement and accountability, and engages the abovementioned innovation streams through seven literacy-based professional learning projects (two of these, the P-8 Learning Literacies project and Literacy Leadership project, are outlined above).

TABLE 1: CEOM INNOVATION STREAMS, LITERACY POLICY GOALS AND RELATED LITERACY-BASED PROJECTS

Innovation Streams	**Literacy policy goals**			
Leaderships for learning	Educational Leadership	Quality Teaching	Continuous School Improvement & Accountability	Differentiated Support
Curriculum by Design	**Literacy projects**			
Transforming Pedagogy	Literacy Leadership Project (LLP)			
	Literacy Assessment Project (LAP)			
	Collaborative Literacy Learning Communities			
Assessment for Learning and Teaching	School Improvement Literacy Project			
	Reading Improvement Project			
	Learning Literacies Project (P-8)			
Learning Environments	Secondary Literacy Project			

Discussion: Exploring the CEOM approach utilising Bourdieusian conceptual tools

The CEOM operates within a particular discursive and social context. Understood as a Bourdieusian field, this 'space' is a network/configuration of objective relations between positions and follows a specific logic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In other words, the CEOM operates as part of a field of education that is regulated by many integrated positions and has its own set of rules. This field of education is a dynamic social space in which the CEOM and many other organisations/institutions and individuals exist as 'agents' who are socially constituted by the field as active and acting (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Providing insight into the social organisation and governing processes of the CEOM, key features of the CEOM implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* detailed above also offer some sense of the action taken by the CEOM within the field of education in response to an externally-mandated change in English curriculum. In general terms, the CEOM's embedded approach to curriculum change can be seen as a response to competing agendas and interests by paying them sufficient attention without losing sight of core priorities for improvement – identified as a central challenge in managing education reform (Levin & Fullan, 2008). More specifically, and drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the types of agency this concept invokes, the CEOM's approach is generated by its 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53), and can be viewed as both an act of *adaptation* to the field of education and as an act of *distinction* within the field. On the one hand, systemic change based on school improvement and professional learning that are both predominantly informed by standardised testing data and a national curriculum may be seen as an adaptation to transformations to and within the field of education in Australia to what is described by Lingard (2010) as an emerging national system of schooling built around new accountabilities involving new public management, performativity and neo-liberal globalisation. This form of action by agents involves practices of 'functional adaptation' to the regulating forces of the field (Swartz, 1997, p. 114). On the other hand, systemic change based on school- and student-based 'inside-out' models of reform and professional learning for improvement in pedagogy and learning can be thought of as one mechanism by which the CEOM is able to differentiate itself from other agents within the field of education. Informed use of data and curriculum could also be elements of this perspective of the CEOM curriculum change approach. That is, through embedding the change in curriculum within CEOM-developed policies, practices and projects, all of which involve the CEOM model of literacy leadership, systemic change takes on a high level of institutional contextualisation, producing a distinct approach to curriculum change. The form of action by agents that creates distinction involves practices within a field that differentiate agents from one another (Swartz, 1997).

In exploring the CEOM *AusVELS: English F-10* implementation using habitus, the notion of 'institutional habitus' can be mobilised to bring attention to the common taken-for-granted practices and understanding that are deeply rooted within institutional practices (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). Like the habitus of an individual, institutional habitus becomes established over time, but differs due to its collective nature by being less fluid (Reay, David & Ball, 2001), which suggests a fairly durable, institutional filter to guide action. Importantly though, both the structuring power of the field of education on the CEOM's institutional habitus (and therefore its response to curriculum change), as well as the possibilities made available by the field of education through

the institutional habitus of the CEOM as a very well-established agent with relative authority, need consideration. Suffice to say, an agent's habitus is constrained to what is possible within the logic/regularities of the field and yet also constitutes/reforms the field – this dialectical relationship between field and habitus described by Bourdieu (1990a) as being one of 'ontological complicity' (p. 3).

Within the CEOM, the literacy leadership model is well-established and literacy leaders have an accepted role within schools. The institutional legitimacy assigned to literacy leaders enables them to carry out their everyday work with certainty and confidence. In a Bourdieusian analytic frame, what creates this legitimacy is the 'capital' that is accrued to CEOM literacy leaders. Capital, in this sense, is the pool of resources comprising what is valued in a social field, with each resource or form of capital operating as a means of relating socially and in terms of power (Swartz, 1997). Firstly, through being appointed to the position of literacy leader, and pursuing additional related formal qualifications through the postgraduate pathway option provided to CEOM literacy leaders, an institutionalised form of *cultural capital* (see Swartz, 1997) is accrued to literacy leaders. Secondly, as literacy leaders develop an increasingly durable professional network, job-specific *social capital* (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) is accrued to them. These forms of capital, and likely others, acquired by CEOM literacy leaders over time, form what could be described as 'literacy leader capital'. Within the CEOM, this literacy leader capital has *symbolic* power – that is, 'a power of consecration or revelation' or 'the power to make things with words' (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 23). CEOM literacy leaders in this study carried out a wide range of activities and worked with a wide range of people, and the broad scope and highly integrated nature of their work within schools attests to the symbolic power of their position. Symbolic power is evident through use of the documents that CEOM literacy leaders produced to support the implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10* in their schools. The authority of these documents also derives from their acting as a formal conduit between systemic and local discourse, and their circulation and use within schools reinforces the legitimacy of the literacy leaders, thereby increasing the symbolic capital accrued to them over time.

Literacy leader capital is not available to all CEOM teachers – it is a form of capital that sets a small number of teachers apart from others. With only two literacy leaders at most being appointed in CEOM schools, the designation of such a leadership role to a select group of teachers is not simply moving to a more distributed form of system and school leadership, but as Timperley (2005) recommends, it is a more distributed form of system and school leadership of which the focus of leadership activities is the improvement of the instruction of teachers. The CEOM has invested significantly in its literacy leadership model as a strategic driver for school improvement *through* improved instruction for students *by* building the capital of literacy leaders. CEOM literacy leadership would appear to address what Dawson (2014) identifies as the unmet need for professional growth of many experienced and competent teachers through professional development in teacher leadership that is central to school improvement. What is more, as agents strive to maintain or improve their social position in the field of education, under certain conditions the capital/s they draw on are able to be converted to other forms of capital (Swartz, 1997) – for example, to economic capital by way of job promotion. This suggests the possibility of ongoing and material benefits for literacy leaders, and the restructuring potential of literacy leadership within the field of education.

Conclusion

In this article we have examined the embedded implementation of *AusVELS: English F-10,* the Victorian incarnation of the AC:E, by the CEOM. Using the conceptual and methodological tools of Institutional Ethnography and Bourdieusian field analysis we have both explicated a set of key features that coordinate and shape the everyday, practical curriculum change work of CEOM personnel and explored the CEOM approach to curriculum change in relation to the field of education, the CEOM habitus and the capital accrued to CEOM literacy leaders. The CEOM's embedded approach to curriculum change draws on literacy leadership, professional learning programs, professional learning practices and systemic change management based on school improvement. During this period of curriculum change, and the concurrent changes in bureaucratic structure and provision of professional learning, this study finds the interpretation and enactment by the CEOM of *AusVELS: English F-10* using an embedded approach to curriculum and systemic change is distinctive within the contemporary constraints of the field, and demonstrates considerable institutional investment in literacy leadership.

Acknowledgements

Since the *Peopling Education Policy* project, further work has been undertaken by CEOM on their literacy strategy. More information is available at <http://www.cem.edu.au/>

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