



THE DEVELOPMENT OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA, 1939-1979

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SUMMARY

Within the development, of tertiary education in Australia in the post-War period, there are four committees of inquiry which clearly have played a central role. These are the Interdepartmental Committee on Education (1944), the Committee on Australian Universities (1957), the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia (1964-65), and the Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training (1979). These become known as the Walker Committee, the Murray Committee, the Martin Committee and the Williams Committee after their chairmen. It was these inquiries which ratified and legitimised policies for tertiary education which enabled both diversification and centralisation of the system. An examination of the reports of these committees occupies a major section in this thesis. It is preceded by an examination of the political and historical context in which the committees of inquiry were situated.

The thesis opens with a chapter which deals with the theoretical issues dealt with in the study. In particular, it outlines the way in which the hegemonic process develops and operates, stressing that it is neither singular nor static, but constitutive and based in a network of individual institutional hegemonies within society. The relationship between tertiary education and the hegemonic process is discussed. This chapter provides the theoretical underpinning on which the study rests.

Following this, the thesis consists of two distinct parts, each containing four chapters. The first deals with the historical development of tertiary education in Australia. A background chapter covering the period up to 1939, when the study proper commences, illustrates how the growth of tertiary education was anticipatory, in that the changes recommended proceeded rather than followed or reflected

economic developments, and was linked with the struggle to establish bourgeois hegemony in Australian society. The tenuous leadership of the bourgeoisie in the face of a military-squatter alliance, and later, working-class militancy, led to specific developments in the universities. The next three chapters deal with the period from 1939 to 1979. In chapter three, general developments are reviewed. The growth of Commonwealth involvement is traced and the issues of constitutional responsibility and financing tertiary education are canvassed. Chapter four deals with the political context in which development was situated. The period around the Walker Committee, which was an integral part of the post-War reconstruction machinery determined the broad directions in which tertiary education was to develop, with diversification, growth and increasing Commonwealth involvement becoming evident. The period around the Murray Committee and up until the Martin Committee, saw an intensification of the pressures for growth of the tertiary education system, and the development of clear sectionalisation of it. From the Martin Committee until the Williams Committee, the system as a whole experienced a rapid period of growth followed by a rapid period of contraction, both of which strained the resources available to tertiary education and the relationships within and between the sectors. Chapter five examines some of the major issues which arose in the course of general debate concerning tertiary education and its role in the hegemonic process. The areas canvassed are the relation between education and the economy and the notion of education as an investment, both of which occupied a considerable portion of the debate.

The second major part of the thesis deals with the four committees

of inquiry. Chapter Six, which deals with the Walker Report, is much shorter than the following three chapters for two main reasons. First, the Walker Committee was a confidential committee, the findings of which were never officially released. It has been since, however, the subject of a study by Tannock, and because he has published many of the major documents concerning the Committee, less time has been spent in this study than might otherwise have been necessary. Chapters Seven and Eight deal with the Murray Report and the Martin Report. Both are approached in a similar manner. The two committees, along with the Williams Committee, called for public submissions as well as met with interested parties during the course of their deliberations. The papers of the two were available, which allowed a more comprehensive analysis to be undertaken. In each of these two chapters, the deliberations of the Committees, the submissions to them, their reports and reactions to the reports are dealt with. Chapter Nine deals with the Williams Report. It is rather less comprehensive than the preceding two chapters, as the papers of the Committee, as distinct from the submissions to it, were unavailable for analysis.

The conclusion, of course, follows the second part of the study.