

# Residualization: what's that?

By Barbara Preston\*

Recent Schools Commission documents are likely to have a profound impact on public schooling if the thinking underlying them shapes policy over the coming years.

Elsewhere in this *Australian Teacher* Simon Marginson outlines the immediate dangers for public schooling in the Commission's positions and recommendations regarding school resources, administration, and funding levels.

These favoured recommendations could result in a new 'settlement' in the schooling debate. Just as the debates about state aid and the importance of the Catholic vote to the ALP in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in the 'Karmel settlement'<sup>1</sup>, we could see a new 'Tannock settlement' if the Government accepts the general orientation of the Commission documents and the Commission's interpretation of ALP policy.

Such a 'Tannock settlement' would be disastrous for public education.

The Commission's current orientation is to deny the public sector any right to a legitimate role in the debate about the public funding and administrative support of private schools. The Commission's terms of debate see the issues as internal to the supporters of 'needs' (more money to so-called needy private schools) and the supporters of 'choice' (equal levels of funding to all private schools).

The exclusion of the public sector from the debate is not just a simple matter of the Commission's bias against public schooling and in favour of private schooling.

It is also based on the Commission's understanding (or rather, lack of understanding) of the nature of the relationships between the public and private systems and of the social role of the dual (public/private) system of schooling.

The Commission fails to view education at a macro level — to see the overall pattern of education, and to see the subtle and complex structure of that pattern and the inter-relationships between schooling and society. Rather, the Commission's perspective (or perhaps, 'research paradigm') is based on a micro-level (school-level) analysis of the implications of funding and administrative policies.<sup>2</sup> Such 'methodological individualism' is a common problem of the social sciences, especially the sociology of education research which is used by policymakers such as the Schools Commission.<sup>3</sup>

It is an understanding of the relationships between public and private schooling and the social consequences of that relationship which forms the basis of Australian Teachers Federation policy concerning the dual system of schooling.

The actual nature of the dual system of schooling can be understood more clearly by applying the notions of more or less *universal* or *residual* public services (in this case, schooling).

The rest of this paper is concerned with explaining these notions; arguing why a universal orientation should be supported; outlining the subtle, sensitive and dynamic relationships between the public and the private which result in the public being more or less universal or residual; looking at the residualization of the public system over the past decade, and considering future possibilities.

## 'Universal' and 'residual' orientations

'Universal' has several meanings in discussions about public schooling — sometimes meaning (a) the *only* schooling system (the public system covering the universe of schooling, there being no private schools), or (b) an 'inclusive' and democratic schooling system (one which caters fully and positively for students from all groups), (c) post-compulsory schooling which is participated in by the whole age cohort, or (d) a 'non-residual' public system.

Though the three former meanings have importance, here 'universal' is used meaning

'non-residual'. This is because it is the concept with the most useful explanatory power for our current tasks of evaluating and developing positions on policies and practices (of governments, other organizations and individuals) which relate to private and public schooling.

The universal/residual dichotomy is common in discussions about other aspects of the social wage (or welfare state), and its value to those coming to grips with public health and public welfare issues would be equalled by its value to us in our attempts to come to grips with understanding the precarious position of public education.

The best way to explain the respective natures of universal or residual public services such as education is to tabulate the various pairs of characteristics, noting that each pair indicates the ends of a particular continuum, and that the universal/residual dichotomy is thus a continuum based on these various characteristics.

## Why support a universal orientation

A universal orientation of public services such as schooling enhances equality of outcomes, collectively and co-operation (rather than individualism and competition), and it enhances equal civil rights, distributive justice and more equal standards of living.

In contrast, a residual orientation exacerbates divisiveness and a stratified society. It stigmatises, humiliates and cuts off the options of those already most disadvantaged. It enhances the advantages of the

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It is generally chosen in preference to private sector alternatives by all strata in society.

It is supported by the full social and cultural spectrum, the wealthy and powerful as well as the weak.

It is seen as of value to the community as a whole (it has collective value), it is not just seen as of value to participating individuals.

High income-earners have no objections to 'their' taxes supporting it — it has 'financial solidarity'.

It socially defines and exhibits what is considered 'quality' in the service.

It determines and controls the relationships with and transitions between it and other services, institutions and practices.

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It is only used at a last resort, it has stigma attached. Those who can, choose the private alternative.

It is not supported by the whole community, even those who use it may not support it.

It is only seen as having relevance or value to those individuals actually using it.

The wealthy resent 'their' taxes supporting it, and may demand tax rebates or other more direct public financial support for private sector alternatives.

'Quality' is socially defined by the private sector alternative. The public is seen as inferior.

The private sector determines and controls relationships/transitions, e.g. the control of the school-university nexus by elite private schools.

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already powerful and privileged. One Australian writer on the issue put it quite plainly:

To be a recipient of services or income from a welfare state with a residual orientation "one has to acknowledge one's inferior ability to participate effectively in the prevailing economic and social order. Hence residual welfare services are socially divisive. The outcome of residualism is legitimation of disadvantage, legitimation of inequality, legitimation of exclusion of the industrial human residue from the mainstream of social life. . . . Selective (residual) social welfare always runs the danger of creating two societies in one, evident in two distinct lifestyles, distinct patterns of economic and social consumption, and two distinct levels of social functioning. The implications of such a policy are grave. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

The essence of this argument applies as much to education as it does to health and those benefits and services more narrowly labelled 'welfare'.<sup>5</sup>

### Dynamics of residualization

In areas of the social wage where there are private alternatives, the development and maintenance of a predominantly universal orientation is a difficult and subtle task.

In general the more or less the public service is universal or residual the private will have the characteristics of the opposite. The relationships are dynamic and complex, and often subtle or seemingly irrelevant changes in government practice, in attitudes of sectors of the community, in institutional arrangements, or elsewhere, can set in train major shifts.

One major shift could be the 'vicious circle of stigmatization' which is an aspect of a vicious circle of residualization.

A failure to develop and maintain top quality services in the public sector can set up such a vicious circle, as Gosta Esping-Anderson has argued:

It is important to stress the absolute necessity of top quality services. If. . . standards are not to the expectations of the wealthy, we would quickly witness the rise of a dual welfare system in which confinement to publicly provided services is circumscribed by stigma and symptoms of social degradation. . . . Middle class support for public services erodes rapidly when the clientele is poor people. Financial solidarity (that is willing financial support from the middle class via the taxation system) evaporates and, as the middle class escapes from financial responsibility, the quality of services will erode even more, and the vicious circle of stigmatization tightens.<sup>6</sup>

This latter argument (that use of the service by the middle class is crucial for the service's financial support by government) has been forcefully argued in the welfare area in recent years. Once the middle class (and others) begins to leave a public service a vicious circle sets in which is related to both the changing clientele as the middle class leave, and the lack of support for the service by governments because the powerful and articulate in the electorate, including the swinging voters, no longer support that

public service. There is thus a very volatile dynamic.

As well as perceived quality, the public system must have those other characteristics previously listed if it is not to begin the slide into complete residualization. That is, it must also have collective value, and it must determine and control the relationships with and transitions between it and other services, institutions and practices if it is to be chosen in preference to the private sector alternatives, supported by the full social and cultural spectrum, and have financial and political solidarity.

Once the slide begins actual and perceived quality would fall (and perhaps in a desperate attempt to win back those leaving, the public service may be oriented to their whims rather than the needs of the rest of its clientele), the public service would lose what power it had to define and control relationships and transitions, and the general orientation to collectively would be undermined by increasing privatization.

It would be a difficult task to turn the dynamic around, especially once the momentum was up.

### Public school residualization

In schooling, as in most other areas of competing public and private services, it is the relations between the private and the public which largely determine whether the public is more or less universal or residual. (To maintain a universal orientation a public schooling system should also have characteristics including: 'inclusiveness' and non-discrimination; democratic participation and control; equality of outcomes; choice within a common framework; and inter and intra-school comprehensiveness with no selective schools, and no streaming.)

Those relations are dynamic and tension-ridden, without stable equilibria (except, perhaps, at its extremes of negligible private schooling on the one hand, and the pure market with negligible genuinely public schooling on the other). This is especially the case with schooling in Australia today.

It is this instability and the current increasingly 'residual' nature of public schooling (after its more universal moments up to the early 1970s) which make understanding, vigilance and appropriate powerful action so crucial.

The relation between the public school system and the private sector (especially the Catholic sector) is complex and sensitive.

It has long been recognised that the public education system suffers because of the existence of the elite independent schools. Eliteness is necessarily relative — relative in this case to students at government (and non-elite private) schools.

The dominance by the elite schools of the social definition of quality education and their control over the nexus between schooling and higher education has meant that the public system is relatively 'residual'.

The relationship between elite indepen-

dent schools and government schools is fairly stable. During the 1960s, the public system did improve its relative position somewhat as the elite independent schools suffered a more severe financial crisis. However, during the past decade those schools have made up their lost ground.

What is becoming more significant for the public system than the relatively stable relationship with the elite schools is the rapidly changing relationship with the Catholic system. The Catholic system is moving rapidly closer to the independent system in social role.

The necessary consequence is the increasing residualization of public schooling.

Some of the evidence of the Catholic system's movement towards a dominant elite social role includes: (a) changing retention rates to year 12: between 1969 and 1982 retention in the Catholic system improved by 60 per cent, in the public system it improved only 30 per cent;<sup>7</sup> (b) university participation of graduates: in the sixties and early seventies, relative participation rates of graduates from the public and Catholic systems were more or less proportional to relative overall enrolments in the respective systems; by the early 1980s the relative Catholic rate had roughly doubled;<sup>8</sup> (c) though it is difficult to get strictly comparable longitudinal (i.e. over time) data on student and family characteristics what there is indicates that the clientele of the Catholic sector is substantially distinct from the public system in terms of parental income and occupational status and students 'cultural' characteristics, and is becoming (or already is) close to the characteristics of the clientele of the independent sector.<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion

Public school supporters and others have a major and legitimate stake in influencing government policies and practices relating to private schools.

The issues go well beyond the principled matter of opposition to public funding of private enterprises. They include the impact such government policies and practices have on public education and society as a whole.

The greater the effective support for private schooling from governments (and others) the more public schooling is forced into a residual role. That relationship is a powerful and necessary one which cannot be denied.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Education and the Schools Commission have all expressed the hope that the 'State aid debate' will be resolved, removed from the political agenda, that there will be a new 'settlement'.

However, a 'settlement' similar to the Commission's current proposals will not eliminate conflict or the dual system which is socially divisive and destructive. It will only hide the conflict and nature of the dual system from view, while the residualization of public schooling continues at an accelerated rate.

The notes for this article are on page 15.

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### Notes from pages 5 and 6

1. See Simon Marginson, 'Re-assessing Karmel: Notes on the implications of the 1973 education settlement for educational equality in 1983,' *ATF Research Papers*, No. 4, May 1983, and Simon Marginson, 'Re-assessing Karmel: results of the 1973 education settlement', ATF mimeo, 1983 (a further development of some of the arguments in the May 1983 paper).
2. This argument is further developed in the submission from the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association, the Victorian Teachers' Union and the Technical Teachers' Association of Victoria to the Commonwealth Schools Commission in response to Target Recurrent Resource Standards Study Draft Report and Options for Commonwealth Funding of General Recurrent Resources for Australian Schools, Melbourne, March 1984, esp. pp. 16-17.
3. For a discussion of 'methodological individualism' see Steven Lukes, 'Methodological individualism revisited' in Donabby Emmet and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds), *Sociological Theory and Philosophical Analysis*, Macmillan, London, 1970.  
The two types of research ('effective schools' and 'production function') considered by the Commission in its development of TRRSS are both based on aggregating individual student's characteristics relative to various qualitative characteristics of individual schools attended by those students — there is no consideration of the relations between those schools and other schools, or of the structure of the schooling system and how it relates to society.
4. Adam Jamrozik, 'Universality and Selectivity: social welfare in a market economy,' in Adam Graycar (ed.), *Retreat from The Welfare State*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 180-181.
5. A universal orientation of the public sector is also particularly important for the social and economic independence of women. See Cora V. Baldcock and Bettina Cass, *Women, social welfare and the state*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, especially the introduction and chapter three. Also, recent writing by Beatrix Campbell in Britain.
6. Gosta Esping-Anderson, 'The incompatibilities of the welfare state,' *Thesis 11*, No. 7, 1983, pp. 42-53.
7. Commonwealth Schools Commission data. More recent (1983 and 1984) retention increases in the public system do not necessarily mean a turn-around in what the 1979-82 trend indicates — the 1983 and 1984 increases are probably in large part a result of school being a 'shelter' from unemployment after the dramatic drop in apprenticeships in 1982-83. (There are, of course, likely to be other more positive partial explanations.)
8. Derived largely from tables 5.5 and 5.6 in D.S. Anderson and A.S. Vervoorn, *Access to privilege*, ANU Press, 1983, p. 69.
9. As yet unpublished data from a major Melbourne University research project, and data published in Anderson and Vervoorn, op cit, chapter 5.