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IMPLEMENTING COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION REFORMS: THE AUSTRALIAN REFORMS OF EDUCATION MINISTER JOHN DAWKINS, 1987–90

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews implementation of major national reforms in the Australian higher education sector initiated by Education Minister John Dawkins over the period 1987–90. In doing so, it employs the theoretical framework developed by Cerych and Sabatier (1986) in their landmark comparative study of implementation of major European higher education reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. A supplementary aim of the chapter is to assess the utility of the Cerych and Sabatier framework in explaining the Australian reforms, and to do so in the light of more recent theoretical work on public policy implementation and higher education policy change.

The reforms initiated by Minister Dawkins were dramatic and extensive, and far more ambitious than any single set of reforms initiated previously or since then in the Australian higher education system. Further, they were far more extensive and substantial than any of the European reforms discussed by Cerych and Sabatier. They thus pose the intriguing question as to how a single minister and the government of which he was a member could have so fundamentally changed a large national higher education system over the space of about three years.

In essence, the reforms of John Dawkins substantially restructured the Australian higher education system, abolishing the binary line between universities and polytechnic-type institutions known as colleges of advanced education (CAEs), combining separate universities and colleges through mergers to form larger and more comprehensive institutions, introducing new resource allocation arrangements, reintroducing student tuition fees through an income contingent loan system, substantially changing university management and governance, and placing a much stronger emphasis on research but with more selectivity in research funding (Harman 1989; Marginson and Considine 2000).

At the time the reforms were initiated in 1987, Australian higher education was almost entirely a public sector system, with about 390,000 students located in 19 universities and some 44 CAEs. While almost all these institutions had been created by state governments, since 1974 all regular government operating funding had come from the Commonwealth government, giving the Commonwealth considerable powers in policy direction.

In contrast, today the Australian higher education system is distinctively different, with over 900,000 students located in 37 public universities and another 30,000 students located in two private universities and a large number of smaller private colleges. Australian higher education is now much more entrepreneurial, with public universities generating a substantial proportion of their own income, largely from tuition fees from international and domestic students, and the sale of a variety of educational services. By 2002, there were 185,000 international students studying in public universities and this group constituted 20.6 per cent of total student enrolments. To a substantial extent, the reforms led by John Dawkins provided the policy and institutional base that made these impressive developments possible, creating a public higher education sector much better fitted to operate in a more competitive international environment (Sharpham and Harman 1997; Gallagher 2000).

Although the reforms of John Dawkins took place more than a decade ago, they remain controversial within universities and the wider community. Many academics who worked in universities and CAEs during the period of reform continue to blame Dawkins for a wide range of ills affecting higher education today, while some prominent former Labor colleagues of Minister Dawkins are still highly critical of his abolition of the binary line between universities and CAEs. On the other hand, many university leaders and higher education bureaucrats consider that Dawkins laid the basis for a more efficient, more confident and more competitive higher education system. But whatever the various perspectives, there is a degree of puzzlement about how, in such a short space of time, a single minister could have initiated and achieved such a high degree of policy change.

The chapter will first comment briefly on the theoretical framework developed by Cerych and Sabatier since it is necessary to explain the author's particular interpretation of the theoretical framework that contains a number of ambiguities. The reforms initiated by Minister Dawkins will then be outlined, addressing the following questions:

- How did the reforms originate and what were the official goals?
- To what extent have those objectives been attained over time? What other politically significant impacts have they had? Have additional objectives emerged and, if so, with what effects?
- What principal factors influenced those objectives?

Later sections discuss the utility of the framework to help understand the Australian higher education reforms of 1987 to 1990, and attempt an overall evaluation in the light of more recent research and writing.

2. THE CERYCH-SABATIER FRAMEWORK

Influenced by a growing public policy literature at the time on policy implementation (e.g. Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Bardach 1977; Majone and Wildavsky 1978), Cerych and Sabatier undertook the ambitious task of evaluating the implementation and success of a number of major national European higher

education reforms initiated in the 1960s and 1970s. They were well aware that a popular view at the time was that in many cases the high expectations of the reforms had not been achieved and that the degree of change achieved in implementation was far less than that hoped for.

The theoretical framework they developed following extensive case study work was set within the idea of public policy generally following a number of sequential stages, with their interest being on the implementation stage, particularly the extent and significance of goal achievement, and reasons for programme success or failure. The following factors were identified as being of crucial importance in explaining success or failure:

1. Legal: clarity and consistency, and degree of system change envisaged.
2. Adequacy of causal theory underlying the reform.
3. Adequacy of financial resources provided to implementing institutions.
4. Degree of commitment to various programme objectives of those charged with implementation within institutions.
5. Degree of commitment to various programme objectives among legislative and executive officials outside the implementing agencies.
6. Change in social and economic conditions affecting goal priorities or the programme's causal assumptions.

All these factors were seen as being important, but Cerych and Sabatier placed special emphasis on the adequacy of the causal theory and the degree of commitment to the reforms by both ministry officials and those within higher education institutions.

Later in their main theoretical chapter the authors summed up their theory by emphasising particularly the importance of the following factors:

- The amount of system change envisaged and the extent of support and resistance from ministry and higher education officials.
- The adequacy of causal theory, that is, the extent to which the means of reaching the objectives were understood and in which supportive officials were given jurisdiction over critical levers.
- The amount of active, informed support mobilised in favour of the reform by parliament, high officials, interest groups and university faculty.
- The extent to which a specific objective was affected over time by change in socio-economic conditions that gave rise to conflicting public policies or that undermined or fostered its causal theory or political support.

In a concluding chapter, the theoretical framework was further discussed with some minor adjustments being suggested. While goal clarity and consistency continued to be viewed as important, Cerych and Sabatier recognised that these conditions often cannot be fulfilled since vague goals are frequently the price for consensus in the formulation stage. Analysis of the case studies also led the authors to suggest a more complex conceptualisation of the scope of change within a three dimensional framework of depth of change (extent to which a new policy implies departure from existing values and practices), functional breadth (the number of

functional areas in which the given policy is expected to introduce more or less profound modifications) and the level of change (indicating the target of reform, such as a whole system or a particular sector).

Final comments in the concluding chapter somewhat surprisingly related to the importance of power processes and complexity, with the authors expressing their attraction to a perspective that focused almost exclusively on groups of political actors and the power they bring to the process. This comment was significant since the original framework did not explicitly address issues of power and influence.

3. THE AUSTRALIAN REFORMS OF MINISTER JOHN DAWKINS

The following overview of the Australian reforms is organised around the three key questions that guided the first stage of the research by Cerych and Sabatier, with some efforts to apply elements of the theoretical framework.

3.1. How the Reforms Originated and Reform Goals

The significant changes of the reforms in the Australian higher education system were driven by a number of influences but by far the most important driver was macro- and micro-economic reform. The Labor government of Bob Hawke was returned to office in the general elections of July 1987 committed to major structural reform of the Australian economy. In the past, Australia had depended largely for its export income on a relatively small number of rural commodities, and on minerals and coal. International fluctuations in major commodity prices in the mid-1980s resulted in a number of commodities simultaneously experiencing major price declines. This prompted a major review of economic policy, resulting in the development and articulation of new strategies aimed to enlarge the export base and, in particular, to encourage the export of specialised manufacturing and services. It also led to further reductions in tariffs and micro-economic reform in order that Australian manufacturers should be better placed to compete internationally. In such a new economic order, higher education was seen to have a much enhanced role in producing more and better qualified graduates, and in supporting economic growth with a stronger R&D base (Harman 1989).

Other factors operated to support the general directions of reform. Increasing student retention rates in secondary schools and labour market changes contributed significantly to stronger demand for student places, both from school leavers and adults. Another important influence was structural changes in public sector management with the application of new ideas about competition and the use of market mechanisms to guide the allocation of resources and management of public sector organisations (Harman 2001). Further, within the government, there was a strong view that universities in particular had been slow to change and that major reforms were needed to jolt them from their complacency.

Minister John Dawkins, who previously had been Minister of Finance, took on the newly created mega Department of Employment, Education and Training after the Hawke government was returned to office in 1987 and immediately began

planning reform of the higher education system. With a background in law and economics, Dawkins had proved to be particularly successful as a tough and energetic finance minister. With his higher education reform agenda he moved with considerable speed, assisted by a loose group of senior advisers that included both selected government officials and sympathetic senior university vice-chancellors. By late 1987, Dawkins had published a green paper (Dawkins 1987) that set out the proposed reform agenda and, following wide consultation, by July 1988 had confirmed the detailed policy directions in a white paper (Dawkins 1988). These cleverly crafted documents, written largely for a wider community audience, outlined both the broad directions and key details of the reform, but they also provided explanations why rapid and fundamental change was seen to be essential.

In summary, the higher education reforms of Minister Dawkins aimed to achieve:

- replacement of the binary system made up of separate university and polytechnic sectors by a Unified National System of Higher Education;
- reduction in the number of separate higher education institutions to form larger institutional units through institutional mergers;
- a more competitive approach to funding, with more emphasis on institutional performance and monitoring;
- increased research funding but with a more selective approach with greater emphasis on national research priorities and competitive funding;
- changed management practices within institutions, giving vice-chancellors considerably more authority and giving universities more autonomy in charting their own directions;
- more flexible policies for academic employment and academic work;
- increased government funding to facilitate major increases in student enrolments, with substantial new financial contributions from students who from 1974 had not been required to pay tuition fees;
- replacement of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) by a higher education division within the Department of Employment, Education and Training (Harman 1991).

To these original reform objectives others were soon added. Universities were given approval to charge full-cost fees to international students, and to charge tuition fees for domestic students enrolled in postgraduate courses other than research higher degrees. The new arrangements for overseas students together with additional government support mechanisms, especially more effective marketing, facilitated major growth in international student enrolments in public universities from 24,998 in 1990 to 95,605 in 2000. Developments with both domestic and international fee-paying students and other initiatives have resulted in universities themselves generating an increasing proportion of their income, with only about 50 per cent of university revenue today coming from regular federal government grants (Nelson 2002).

3.2. Extent to Which the Reform Goals Were Achieved and Their Impact

Overall, Minister Dawkins was highly successful and his reform package was substantially achieved. The binary system was abolished simply by ministerial fiat and confirmed later in legislation enacted by the Commonwealth Parliament, while the plan to reduce the number of separate institutions was far more successful than even the Minister anticipated. By the early 1990s, the number of separate higher education institutions had been reduced from 44 CAEs and 19 universities to 36 relatively large and more comprehensive universities (Harman 2000). More competitive approaches to funding were introduced and some funding was removed from universities and allocated to the new Australian Research Council for competitive allocation. Vice-chancellors were encouraged to exercise more authority and take a stronger role in planning and priority setting within their institutions while state and territory governments were pressed to review the composition of university governing bodies and strengthen the strategic planning and monitoring capacities of universities. Although the Labor government of Gough Whitlam in 1973 had abolished student tuition fees to enhance access, student contributions were re-introduced through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), which was essentially an income contingent deferred graduate loan scheme. From the start, the HECS scheme operated successfully with a surprisingly small degree of student opposition. Minister Dawkins cleverly managed the decision on HECS by giving responsibility for devising the new scheme to a high-level prestigious committee, chaired by a former Labor Party Premier of the State of New South Wales. Substantial additional funds were found by the Hawke government to facilitate expansion, with the result that total student enrolments grew quickly from 393,734 in 1987 to 485,075 in 1990 and then on to 722,816 by 2000.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that a small number of items in the original reform agenda were not implemented. The idea of consolidating distance education into a small number of special distance education centres in selected universities was soon abandoned as being impractical, while the attempts to achieve greater flexibility in staffing proved less successful than anticipated, largely because of the strong role of academic unions and the operation of national industrial relations machinery. However, this demonstrates a willingness by Dawkins to compromise on items of secondary importance in his plans.

3.3. Explaining Implementation Success

The high degree of success that was achieved can be attributed to a range of factors but particularly important were the following:

- The energy, political skills and commitment of Minister Dawkins to the reform package, his ability to clearly articulate his objectives and details of the reforms, and his ongoing role of chief advocate for the reform process.
- The high degree of support that Minister Dawkins had within the cabinet and government, and his ability to attract additional public financial resources for the higher education sector.

- A high level of influential community support for the reforms, especially from business, the media and particular university vice-chancellors.
- Replacement of the existing bureaucratic agency for higher education coordination (CTEC) by a new administrative division within the Department of Employment, Education and Training that was responsible for implementation of the reforms, and staffed by sympathetic senior staff.
- The use by Minister Dawkins and his department of a variety of policy instruments, particularly persuasion, financial incentives, performance funding, and ongoing support from ad hoc advisory groups.
- The difficulty for opponents to deal with such a large and comprehensive reform package, combined with the speed of change employed by the Minister.

Since the Dawkins reforms, the Australian higher education system has been remarkably stable. Only one merged institution has failed while the total number of public universities has increased by only one. The main policy initiatives of successive governments since then have focused mainly on further developments along the policy directions set in the period 1987 to 1990. Particularly important have been the increased use of competition and market mechanisms in funding allocations and policy steering, the introduction of stronger quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms, further reforms in increased targeting of research funding, and new efforts in R&D and research commercialisation. Unfortunately, more recently, first the Labor government led by Paul Keating and then the coalition government led by John Howard, have substantially reduced public funding levels per student unit. This reduction, combined with the effects of salary increases awarded separately by individual universities through enterprise bargaining, have resulted in substantial deterioration in staff: student ratios from 14:1 in 1990 to 20:1 in 2002 (Nelson 2002).

4. THE AUSTRALIAN CASE AND THE CERYCH-SABATIER FRAMEWORK

The Cerych-Sabatier framework, as already noted, focuses particularly on two major elements in analysis of implementation: the extent and significance of goal achievement, and reasons for programme success or failure. The following sections attempt to relate the Australian case more directly to the key elements of the framework.

4.1. Programme Goals

Cerych and Sabatier saw success or failure of policy implementation being significantly influenced by two aspects of the goals themselves: the amount of change envisaged, and the clarity and consistency of the goals themselves. They saw the amount of change envisaged as being highly important, especially with regard to how far such change departs from the values and procedures of the existing order, with major changes being more likely to be resisted than minor ones. They suggested analysis of the degree of system change in terms of the number of

institutions affected, the proportion of individuals in institutions whose behaviour would have to change, and the amount of behavioural change expected of each.

The Australian reforms run counter in a number of respects to the European cases discussed by Cerych and Sabatier and to the conclusions drawn. They involved major change from the existing order and constituted a dramatic and extensive departure from traditional values about institutional autonomy, collegiality and the desirability of incremental change being initiated by the universities themselves. A large number of institutions were affected – in fact, all public higher education institutions, and significant behavioural change was expected by each including a formal application to join the new Unified National System of Higher Education and accept its key guiding principles in order to qualify for Commonwealth government funding. All this raises questions about some of the conclusions drawn by Cerych and Sabatier from their European cases. For example, in discussing the British Open University, they draw the conclusion that "radical departures can be implemented [only] if they are limited to one or very few functional areas of the institution or the higher education system" (Cerych and Sabatier 1986: 245).

Why did the Australian reforms succeed so well despite the degree of change envisaged? A number of factors appeared to operate. First, while academics generally and some individual institutional heads were strongly opposed to important elements of the package, at the same time there was considerable support amongst influential sections within the higher education sector. A 1989 study of governing body chairs and registrars of university and CAE and senior executives in charge of government agencies concerned with the management of the higher education sector reported that 70 per cent of respondents thought that elimination of the binary line was desirable while 80 per cent favoured increased competition between institutions and 90 per cent felt that institutional management should be strengthened (Meek and Goedegebuure 1989). Some individual senior academics were attracted to the possibility of rapid future growth in student enrolments and increased research funding. Vice-chancellors generally were in favour of a stronger role for university leadership and increased autonomy for universities, although many publicly voiced criticisms of the reform agenda, possibly mainly to placate their staff. Many CAE staff enthusiastically supported ending the binary line and gaining parity of esteem with university academics, even though they may have strongly opposed mergers affecting their own institutions. Second, substantial increases in funding facilitated rapid growth in student enrolments and increases in research funding and so quickly offset to some extent particular less desirable aspects of the reform package while implementation of the reforms soon provided energetic and well-qualified academics with opportunities to take new academic and research initiatives. Third, since the reforms sprang from major economic restructuring, they carried a stronger degree of government endorsement while the higher education reforms themselves attracted wide-based business, professional and media support. Fourth, the fact that the reform package was extensive and made up of various separate elements made the task of opponents extremely difficult, as did the relatively rapid speed with which the reform process moved.

Clarity and consistency of goals were seen by Cerych and Sabatier to be particularly important. Overall, the main stated objectives of the reforms were clear

and consistent, although at the same time there was scope in the early stages for variations of interpretation on particular details. For example, with regard to institutional mergers, the green paper used the word 'consolidation' rather than 'merger' or 'amalgamation'. While most institutions interpreted consolidation to mean mergers, some institutions thought the Minister would be satisfied with loose associations between institutions. However, the white paper clarified this issue and clearly spelt our institutional merger requirements. This suggests that while clarity and consistency may not be essential for a reform package in its early stages, certainly final documentation needs such clarity and precision in order to facilitate implementation.

Another factor that proved important was the role of the Minister as chief advocate of his reforms, giving numerous speeches on university campuses and to public bodies. On numerous occasions, he faced noisy student and staff demonstrations on university campuses. Clearly advocacy and persuasion proved powerful policy instruments.

4.2. Goal Achievement

Cerych and Sabatier identified six key factors that affected the implementation process and for each, distinguished between those that offered the potential for intervention at the policy formulation stage in order to structure the implementation stage, and those where policy makers actually did so. Each of the six factors will be discussed briefly.

4.2.1. Legal-clarity and Consistency; and Degree of System Change Envisaged
According to the Australian constitution, powers over education are reserved for the states. However, at the time of the reforms, for four decades the Commonwealth government had played a major role in education largely on the basis of a constitutional provision that allowed the Commonwealth Parliament to provide grants to the states on whatever conditions that it set. This 'power of the purse' was greatly strengthened for higher education in 1974 when the Commonwealth accepted full responsibility for funding higher education. Minister Dawkins in 1987 was well aware that many of the key elements of his reforms could be achieved only through the use of financially based power. This power was used effectively in a number of respects, such as requiring all public higher education institutions to formally apply for membership of the new Unified National System of Higher Education, which required giving guarantees to abide by the guiding principles specified by the Minister. Some reforms such as institutional mergers, however, required amendment to state or territory legislation. By various means, Dawkins successfully persuaded state governments as well as the government of the Northern Territory to take appropriate administrative and legislative action.

4.2.2. Adequacy of Causal Theory Underlying the Reform
Cerych and Sabatier placed special emphasis on the adequacy of the causal theory and the degree of commitment to the reforms by both ministry officials and those

within higher education institutions. Every reform, according to Cerych and Sabatier, is based on a set of assumptions about the exact causal process by which goals are attained. Particularly important is the extent to which the means of reaching the objectives are understood and in which supportive officials are given jurisdiction over critical levers.

Minister Dawkins was a superb political operator who had a clear vision of what he hoped to achieve, a well-developed strategy in mind to achieve his objectives, and was highly successful in ensuring that the reform goals and causal theory were well understood by key Commonwealth officials as well as by ministers and officials at state level. Since Dawkins doubted the capacity of the CTEC to effectively implement his reforms, he quickly replaced the Commission with a new major administrative unit within his new department, staffed by new and highly experienced senior officials sympathetic to the reform goals. In fact, a number of these officials had been part of the loose group called 'the purple circle' who worked personally with the Minister in planning the reforms and in drafting the green paper. During the implementation process, the Minister himself kept tight personal control over the process, using his officials and an Amalgamation Task Force to work directly with state governments and with universities and CAEs. Some key university vice-chancellors were coopted early to his efforts, as were most state education ministers over time. Further, as already noted, Minister Dawkins was well aware of federal and state powers with regard to higher education and so proceeded carefully to assure maximum federal-state cooperation. So successful was he in gaining the cooperation of state governments that in a number of states including New South Wales non-Labor governments became some of his most enthusiastic partners.

A major factor in explaining the success of Minister Dawkins lies with his strong political position in cabinet and his ability to attract loyal and enthusiastic support from the Prime Minister and cabinet colleagues. The Dawkins' reform plan received unequivocal cabinet support before it was publicly released, although it was many months before any enabling legislation was passed. But there was never any doubt that the key elements of the reform package would be translated in law, although in the case of the Australian Capital Territory a major institutional merger involving the Australian National University eventually was blocked by members of minor political parties who held the balance of power in the upper house of the Commonwealth Parliament.

4.2.3. Adequacy of Financial Resources Provided to Implementing Institutions
Adequate financial resources were provided to facilitate implementation. Despite the strong opposition of staff and academic staff groups to reintroducing student tuition fees, a cleverly designed new fee system was successfully introduced. Moreover, the Minister was successful in persuading the government to allocate sufficient additional funding to facilitate major expansion in student enrolments, significant increases in research funding, additional capital funding (which went to cooperating higher education institutions) and incentive funding to assist institutions willing to enter mergers.

4.2.4. Degree of Commitment to Various Programme Objectives of Those Charged With its Implementation Within the Education Ministry and Affected Institutions

This factor proved to be of great importance. As already noted, the Minister used the strategy of agency replacement to ensure that implementation was handled by highly competent and committed officials. Moreover, during the early planning stage the Minister drew around him a loose group of university vice-chancellors and Commonwealth officials, highly sympathetic to the reform package.

With regard to higher education institutions likely to be adversely affected by the reforms, the Minister already had a group of vice-chancellors strongly committed to the reforms, with others soon joining, attracted by the overall package or particular elements in it, or by the possibility of attracting additional funding by being cooperative. This was important in helping neutralise the impact of those vice-chancellors opposed to the reforms, many of whom over time saw the wisdom of linking themselves with the Minister's cause, or giving up overt opposition.

While publicly many university vice-chancellors criticised the Minister's reform package, privately many moved quickly within their own institutions to implement key elements. Vice-chancellors of leading research universities, for example, soon became involved in merger discussions with one or more colleges, perceiving that in the new Unified National System of Higher Education institutional size would be an important determinant for attracting additional financial resources. Vice-chancellors and governing bodies also quickly embarked on reforms to enhance the authority of senior management and their capacity to undertake more effective strategic planning.

4.2.5. Degree of Commitment to Various Programme Objectives Among Legislative and Executive Officials Outside Implementing Agencies

Minister Dawkins retained strong support within the cabinet and support was forthcoming from other Commonwealth government departments, particularly the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Finance. However, much of the early stages of implementation were achieved without enabling legislation.

4.2.6. Change in Social and Economic Conditions Affecting Goal Priorities or the Programme's Causal Assumptions

Implementation was clearly facilitated by continuing business and elite support for both economic reform and reform of higher education. While there was strong opposition from academic staff unions to particular elements of the reform package, as already noted, academic union leaders found great difficulty in simultaneously opposing large numbers of separate reform measures, while individually many academic staff supported particular elements of the reform package. Further, as implementation proceeded, many vice-chancellors, state education ministers and state government officials to a large extent were coopted to assist with implementation.

In their concluding chapter, Cerych and Sabatier commented on the attractiveness of using interest group analysis in explaining national higher

education reform efforts. Interest group analysis has a clear utility in understanding implementation of the Australian reforms. Basically, Minister Dawkins and his allies formed a broad coalition of interests, and were successful largely because of their clear objectives, the considerable political power they had available to them, their political skills in advocacy and attracting others to their cause, and their willingness to use their available power and skills to maximum advantage. Dawkins' period as education minister worked to his advantage and he was soon rewarded with the more senior portfolio of treasurer.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE CERYCH AND SABATIER FRAMEWORK MODEL

The theoretical framework developed by Cerych and Sabatier worked reasonably well in analysis of their case studies of European higher education reforms and in providing the final comparative overview. It should be noted, however, that in their analysis the researchers showed surprising flexibility in use of the framework, introducing additional elements or elaboration where necessary. In discussing the British Open University, for example, particular emphasis under goal structure was given to the efforts of the founders, particularly Minister Jenny Lee and the planning committee, while under implementation major emphasis was given to the role and strong commitment of key implementing officials especially the foundation vice-chancellor, Walter Perry (Cerych and Sabatier 1986: 50–55). Yet the original framework did not provide explicit reference to the political skills or roles of individual key actors.

The analysis in this chapter of the Australian reforms demonstrates the utility of the Cerych and Sabatier framework for studying more recent reforms and in a country located in the Asia Pacific region rather than in Europe. In particular, the framework's major headings directing attention to goal structure and goal achievement proved useful in identifying major items for analysis.

With regard to goal structure, the emphasis on the degree of change envisaged and the clarity and consistency of goals proved helpful especially in raising issues about the clarity and goal consistency of the Australian reforms. With regard to goal achievement, the six elements of the framework were useful in identifying major contributing factors. However, the element on legal aspects was somewhat repetitious since it also included reference to causal theory. Adequacy of financial resources, commitment amongst legislators and officials in related agencies and whether or not there were significant changes in social and economic conditions affecting goal priorities all proved highly useful categories. But more powerful items were the adequacy of the causal theory underlying the reform and the degree of commitment to the reform by ministry officials and affected higher education institutions.

What appears lacking in the framework, however, from the perspective of the Australian case study are items related specifically to power and politics, and to political resources and their effective use in implementation. There is also little, if any, emphasis on the range of different political instruments that reformers can use and how more subtle and indirect instruments sometimes better suit some situations.

One reason for the remarkable success of John Dawkins was his political power as a highly experienced minister with high standing in the cabinet, well-developed advocacy and persuasive skills, and ability to use a surprisingly varied number of different political instruments, including persuasion and advocacy, consultation, financial incentives, threats and sanctions, legislation and regulations.

In their theoretical framework, Cerych and Sabatier pay no attention to simultaneous policy developments in other policy domains of government, or the possible impact that other problems being tackled by government at the same time might have on higher education reform. Neither is there attention to where higher education reforms fitted in a government's overall policy agenda, or the possible effects of there being a number of administrative steps between implementers and higher education institutions. On the last point, Dawkins and his officials were fortunate in that they could relate directly on a personal basis to state ministers and officials, as well as to heads of higher education institutions.

At the same time, the framework was a bold and ambitious attempt in comprehensive theory building that has stood the test of time well, and still has the potential to provide considerable help in conceptualising and understanding national higher education reform, particularly at system level. Few other studies of higher education reform have come up with such a comprehensive framework.

In the period of almost three decades since Cerych and Sabatier completed their manuscript, there has been considerable research internationally on public policy research and some important work on higher education policy studies. Yet, to a large extent, the achievements of this period have been disappointing in the sense that they have failed to come up with alternative comprehensive theoretical constructs.

The public policy research efforts since the early 1980s have produced a considerable body of literature as demonstrated by recent reviews by public policy and public administration scholars (e.g. Sabatier 1999; Cline 2000; O'Toole 2000; Wilson 2000; Sinclair 2001; Blair 2002; De Leon and De Leon 2002). But, as two of these scholars comment:

> Starting with the seminal work of Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, policy implementation has burgeoned from a largely overlooked interest to perhaps the policy analysis growth industry over the last thirty years. However, even though an enormous set of books and articles deals with implementation, it has been described by some as an intellectual dead end because of its problematic relationship to a generalised theory of policy implementation (De Leon and De Leon 2002: 467).

While this view might overstate the situation, at the same time the contributions of three decades of work appear not to have provided as much in terms of significant new approaches for studying the implementation of national higher education reform as might have been expected.

Some work points to possibilities for gaining a better understanding of problems related particularly to why sometimes national reform gains a central place in higher education agendas and why sometimes substantial reform is achieved after long periods of continuity and incremental change. For example, Sabatier (1999) has reviewed a range of theoretical work, including institutional rational choice, the multiple streams framework, the punctuated equilibrium framework, the advocacy coalition framework, the policy diffusion framework and the funnel of causality

framework. Of these, the multiple streams framework and the punctuated equilibrium framework appear to offer the best prospects in studies of national higher education reforms. The multiple streams framework views the policy process as being composed of three streams of actors and processes: a problem stream consisting of data about problems, a policy stream involving proponents of policy solutions to policy problems, and a politics stream consisting of elected officials. These three streams normally operate independently of each other, except when a window of opportunity permits policy entrepreneurs to couple the various streams together. This framework could be useful in helping explain how particular policy reforms gain a place on national government agendas and possibly could be linked to earlier work of scholars such as Cobb and Elder (1972).

The punctuated equilibrium framework sees policy making as being characterised by long periods of incremental change punctuated by brief periods of major policy change. Policy change comes about when opponents manage to fashion new policy images and exploit the multiple policy venues characteristic of countries such as the United States. A similar approach is that of Wilson (2000) who suggests a policy regime model with particular attention on stressors (such as catastrophic events), economic crises, demographic changes and shifts in production impacting on policy regimes and creating pressures for change. Such theory could be useful in the case of the Australian higher education reforms where an economic crisis prompted major economic reform that in turn impacted on higher education. Much of the political leverage employed effectively by Minister Dawkins was based on perceptions of both politicians and the business, professional and media elites that national reform was urgent in order to address issues of export income, and macro- and micro-economic blockages.

Other possibilities relate to work on policy tools and implementation networks (Blair 2002). Since the late 1980s, one line of policy implementation research took a different path by focusing on policy instruments rather than policy actors. As explained by Maitland (1995), this approach views public policy delivery in terms of specific government actions. Policy tools include grants, subsidies, regulations, tax incentives, persuasion, authority and direct provision. This approach would be useful in more detailed analysis of the Australian case study since one of the reasons for a high degree of success was the variety of suitable policy instruments used by Minister Dawkins and his implementing officials.

Network analysis has potential for dealing with situations when public service delivery no longer remains the exclusive and direct responsibility of employees on government payrolls. Rather implementation takes place indirectly involving intricate administrative links among public, government and non-profit organisations. Hence in some situations it is important to consider in programme implementation the role of networks and various organisational linkages. Of particular relevance is the work of O'Toole (1997) who sees service delivery depending on network linkages that in many cases may be informal with administrative direction being often dispersed. While in the case of the Australian reforms there were clear lines of bureaucratic and political authority, at the same time loose networks played an important role in building support.

The higher education policy studies literature is more limited, especially in terms of work with a strong focus on implementation of substantial and comprehensive national higher education reforms. Some of the most interesting literature has come from team projects working on comparative studies of Swedish, Norwegian and British higher education reforms. In their comparative study of *Reforming Higher Education*, Kogan and Hanney (2000) concentrate particularly on theoretical issues concerning changes in the role of the state and universities within it, the extent to which contexts or individual actors cause change, modes of higher education policy making including the role of elites and interest groups, and continuity and discontinuity in policy. In elaborating on each of these issues, they draw on a considerable body of social science research. Particularly relevant in terms of higher education policy development and implementation is the extent to which higher education policy was determined as a matter of public policy as opposed to how far it was created in the higher education system itself.

To take another example, in their study of Swedish university reforms, Bauer et al. (1999) considered policy formulation processes and reform decisions by state authorities concerning the higher education system. They took particular interest in how government reform policy and goals corresponded with reform outcomes, although this effort was not primarily an investigation into reform implementation. In explaining change and continuity, they looked particularly at elements including the content and values of the reform policy and policy formation processes at national level, the instruments of reform, the impact of reform on higher education institutions and their responsibilities, obligations and internal distribution of authority as well as the response and action by institutional leadership, the demands on basic units affecting academic working conditions and professional roles, and academic values and professional identities influencing the reception of and reactions to the reform by faculty. Various theoretical work from other scholars informed different issue areas, an important element was development of a two-dimensional model of change forming a matrix based on purpose (intrinsic and extrinsic elements) and authority (centralisation and decentralisation). They also used a frame/process model, based on the idea that educational processes and outcomes are often influenced by circumstances and preconditions at various levels in an educational system. Such framing factors are not always taken into account when reform goals are formulated. On the issue of implementation, they developed an arena model based on the twin concepts of space of action and capacity for action. The key point in this conception is "that the actor's autonomy is dependent upon the extent to which [they] succeed in exploiting [their] space of action and … capacity for action in order to realise [their] own preferences" (Bauer et al. 1999: 35).

6. CONCLUSIONS

We return to the central question that this chapter has addressed. How was a single education minister able to change a national higher education system so

fundamentally in a short space of three years? Why was Minister Dawkins so successful in the implementation of his reform package? His success was particularly significant when it is remembered that Dawkins was Commonwealth education minister and within the Australian federal system of government the Commonwealth has never had constitutional powers for higher education, although for the past half century it has achieved significant leverage over higher education through its 'power of the purse'.

In terms of the Cerych and Sabatier framework, despite the substantial change envisaged, Dawkins was successful because of the clarity and consistency of the reform goals that were an integral part of major national economic reform and were strongly supported by leading business and professional groups, and influential media. There was a clear underlying causal theory with a well-developed plan of implementation, particularly concerning political and administrative processes and how key reform elements might be achieved. The latter related particularly to achievement of substantial increases in student enrolments and graduate completions, increased research activity and university contributions to national R&D, increased institutional efficiency achieved and an effective return to a form of student tuition fees. Attracting substantial additional Commonwealth financial resources to facilitate rapid expansion in student enrolments and in research proved relatively easy because of the high standing of Dawkins in cabinet, and especially after he gained agreement on the new mechanism for student financial contributions. Although the bulk of additional financial resources were employed to facilitate expansion in student numbers and research, significant resources also were employed as incentives to assist institutional mergers and reward cooperating universities. A high degree of commitment from officials was ensured by replacing the CTEC with a new higher education division and from the start Dawkins was strongly supported by an influential group of university vice-chancellors. With few exceptions, the passage of enabling legislation in Commonwealth and State Parliaments provided no major problems, while social and economic conditions worked to the Minister's advantage, generating on-going strong support from higher education sector leaders and from community elites and the serious press.

Apart from all this, of vital importance were political factors and political alliances, particularly the political skills and commitment of the Minister, and his ability to attract support, persuade, publicly confront opponents, bargain and personally steer the implementation process. Significantly, the Minister used a surprisingly large range of different policy instruments while the speed with which he moved and the breadth of the reform package provided difficulty for opponents to mount effective and timely opposition. This was especially the case with the academic unions and student associations.

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