

## **Section 1**

### **Framing the ‘problem’**

This section of the thesis consists of a single chapter which outlines the theoretical and methodological approaches used to consider the ‘problem’ of adolescence, schooling and English as it was formed in early twentieth century South Australia. I also describe the range of historical texts that make up the data corpus for this study. The corpus is contextualised with explanations of both the schooling structures and the various forms of curriculum that were established for the ‘older child’ in South Australia at this time .

## **C**hapter 2 Framing an historical study of the ‘problem’ of the older child, English/literacy, and schooling

This study begins with a ‘problem’ in the present—the tying together of adolescence, schooling and English/literacy as a source of anxiety and as a site for programs of rescue—and examines the ways this problem was assembled historically. In doing this, the study traverses broad topics such as education, schooling, curriculum, child and adolescent studies. Each of these topics, in turn, has links to disciplines such as history, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. I have been, necessarily, selective in my work across these topics and disciplines, drawing from them in a principled way to construct a study broadly informed by poststructuralist theories of discourse, subjectivity and governmentality. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the data corpus and describe the theories and methodologies I have drawn upon to construct this study.

In the first part of this chapter, I provide an overview in which I introduce the key concepts of the ‘problematization’ and *dispositif* which have shaped the research. I also briefly describe the historical period and sources of data for this study before introducing the three broad fields of adolescence, schooling and English/literacy, and their historical counterparts, which I have indicated are the chief elements of the problematization. In the following part of the chapter I describe the theoretical tools that I have used to understand these fields and to guide my analysis. I follow this with Part 2.3 on the methodologies that have informed my work. Here the focus is on the interdisciplinary use of history in the genealogical sense as well as for curriculum-historical inquiry, in combination with critical discourse analysis. Part 2.4 provides a comprehensive introduction to the data corpus used as the basis for the study.

### **2.1 An overview of the study**

I have deliberately used the concept of a ‘problematization’ as the focus of my study as a way of aligning it with the approach used by Foucault in his histories of the subject. Foucault (1985) described the idea of a ‘problematization’ in Volume 2 of *The History of Sexuality*. Outlining his approach, he described sexuality as an example of something that had been made a consistent moral problem in the ‘modern era’ and saw such a ‘problematization’ as a proper focus of a history of thought:

It seemed to me ... that the question that ought to guide my inquiry was the following: how, why, and in what forms was sexuality constituted as a moral domain? Why this ethical concern that was so persistent despite its varying forms and intensity? Why this “problematization”? But after all, this was the proper task of a history of thought, as against a history of behaviors or representations: to define the conditions in which human beings “problematize” what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live. (Foucault, 1985, p.10)

I realised that the figure of the adolescent and her or his proper acquisition of English/literacy at school was a moral problem which could be seen as a similarly persistent and varying ‘problematization’ that might be amenable to an historical analysis based on Foucault’s approach<sup>8</sup>. Foucault defined a problematisation in this way:

Problematization is not the representation of a preexisting object, or the creation through discourse of an object that does not exist. It is the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that brings something into the play of truth and falsehood, and sets it up as an object for the mind. (Foucault, quoted in Castel, 1994, pp.237-238)

The problematisation is the basis for something (for example, adolescents and their literacy) becoming ‘an object for the mind’ or, as Rose (1996a, p.300) puts it, where aspects of human beings ‘become the focus of concern, regulation, shaping or reformation’.

Foucault showed that a problematisation could be connected to a huge range of often contradictory social programs and practices that ideologically based studies might see as incommensurate. Rather than being an ideological basis of programs and practices, a problematisation ‘develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what different solutions attempt to respond to’ (Foucault, 2000, p.118).

This complex and paradoxical concept offered me a possible way of thinking about the range of (often contradictory) social and educational programs and practices that seem to find in adolescence, schooling and literacy, a source of anxiety and hope. The paradox of the problematisation is that it can be both the source of questions and concerns which bring an issue into the public domain as a problem—‘Why are our adolescents watching so many Australian soap operas?’—and/or a driver of possible solutions to the problems that are in the public domain—‘How can we address unemployment? Can we improve the literacy skills of adolescents?’:

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<sup>8</sup> In no way am I comparing this study to that of the history of sexuality—the scale, time-frame and sheer breadth of the problem studied by Foucault are greater than can be managed here. Rather, I am using Foucault’s approach as a model for my own more constrained and bounded inquiry.

This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of a problematization and the specific work of thought. (Foucault, 2000, p.118)

I consider the tying together of adolescence and English/literacy, in the present day discourses of education, as a site of anxiety and as a focus for governmental programs of rescue and repair centred around schooling. My study examines the way this problematisation emerged in the early twentieth century and explores the disparate elements, ways of thinking and acting that made it possible to see adolescence as a problem in relation to English/literacy. This is not to argue that I am investigating the 'source' of the issue, or seeking to uncover a singular program through which the adolescent was consciously made the subject of schooling and the English/literacy curriculum. Rather, it is to say I am studying the way that disparate elements may have been cobbled together to make such a linkage possible.

### **2.1.1 The problematisation in relation to social practice: the *dispositif***

Foucault (2000, p.114) also described a problematisation as 'the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that seem to me to pose a problem for politics', highlighting the way that a problematisation was concerned with a 'domain' or 'apparatus' of ideas and actions. Thus a problematisation such as the linkage of adolescence, schooling and English/literacy can be thought about as a kind of assemblage or 'social apparatus' that Foucault (1991c, p.81) labelled a *dispositif*. In early twentieth century Australia, for example, faced with new economic conditions, new kinds of populations and industries, and the need to construct a newly federated nation, a range of programs and practices was tried for governing people which, in part, solidified around the education of the older child and the management of their English/literacy. Foucault notes that such a process of solidification is not the result of conscious planning, or the triumph of one ideology or program over another, but the result of the (accidental and unintended) confluence of programs and practices that produce concrete effects. These collective effects can be seen as a 'social apparatus' or *dispositif* which Deleuze (1992, pp.159-160) has described in his review of Foucault's work as 'a tangle, a multilinear ensemble' of lines of 'enunciation', 'visibility', 'force' and 'subjectification'—in other words, a tangle of ways of talking about, seeing, and shaping human subjectivity. As I explored the ways that the problematisation of adolescence, schooling and English/literacy operated, this concept of the *dispositif* proved most useful. It allowed me

to conceive of a range of disparate programs for the management of the older child as being realised in an apparatus that had concrete effects:

[P]rogrammes don't take effect in the institutions in an integral manner; they are simplified, or some are chosen and not others; and things never work out as planned. But what I wanted to show is that this difference is not one between the purity of an ideal and the disorderly impurity of the real, but that in fact there are different strategies which are mutually opposed, composed and superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects which can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality, even though they don't conform to the initial programming: this is what gives the resulting apparatus (*dispositif*) its solidity and suppleness. (Foucault, 1991c, p.81)

This combination of 'solidity and suppleness' captures the way in which the ensemble of practices I tracked could be seen as a material apparatus of subjectification which, nevertheless, could change in often unpredictable ways.

### **2.1.2 The historical period and sources of data for this study**

In order to limit the scale of the research, my historical focus is on the first three decades of the twentieth century in South Australia. The beginning of the twentieth century was a time before either adolescence or literacy were terms in common use, and a time when the first public post-primary schools<sup>9</sup> were just being established. I argue that over the first few decades of the century the problematisation of the schooling of the older child beyond a basic primary school standard, and their proficiency in English, emerged in a form that can be related to the present. I have conducted an analysis of the emergence of this problematisation in one local site—the state school system of South Australia. By 1900, the Education Department of South Australia had been established for a quarter of a century and was responsible for primary schooling for the whole state. Over the first three decades the state moved to establish various forms of post-primary schooling for the older child. The debates, hopes, anxieties and ideals held for their education, especially in the English subjects, and the programs and practices that were initiated in response, are the focus of this study.

The data for this study are historical education texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A comprehensive introduction to these texts is provided in Part 2.4 of this chapter, after the descriptions of the theory and methods employed in this study. The

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<sup>9</sup> In South Australia *primary school* is the label used for what is elsewhere called the *elementary school*. In the present, children begin primary school at age five and complete seven to eight years from Reception to Year 7, moving into Year 8 in high school at around age 13.

purpose of the following list is to briefly introduce the four major sources of textual data which are referred to in those sections:

1. The *Education Gazette (EG)* published monthly by the Education Department<sup>10</sup>. This publication was the major medium for communication between the administrative centre of the Department and teachers and leaders in the schools, many of whom were in isolated rural districts of the state.
2. Curriculum documents including the *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools (CI)*, post-primary school courses, and the public examinations' syllabi. These courses were produced by the Department for state schools in South Australia. The examination syllabus documents were prepared by a Public Examinations Board (PEB) controlled by the University of Adelaide. These examinations determined entry into the university, or were qualifications leading to such entry.
3. *Parliamentary Papers (PP)* of the South Australian Parliament. These papers included records of proceedings, legislation, annual reports and reports of Commissions of Inquiry. Also, each year the Minister of Education provided an official report of state education that was prepared by senior Departmental officials.
4. Educational reports which were influential in South Australia in the planning of state education for the older child. These were reports published in South Australia and elsewhere as a result of various Commissions, fact-finding trips by Departmental officers, and commentary provided by commissioned experts.

As will be explained below, the texts from these four sources were used as the basis for a genealogical study of the linkages between adolescence, schooling and English/literacy, that was supplemented by curriculum-historical and critical discourse-analytic methods.

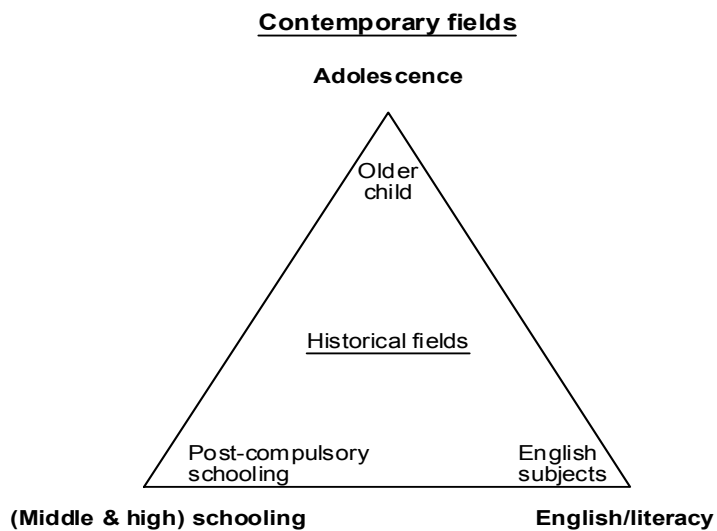
### 2.1.3 Fields of study

Figure 2.1.3 shows the three points of the problematisation introduced in Chapter 1—adolescence, schooling, and English/literacy. These three points form the fields of study which inform my work and around which I conducted my literature review. However, these are fields that are very much products of contemporary discourses of education and do not necessarily represent adequately the ways of thinking that were available in the

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<sup>10</sup> Original historical texts such as those listed here have an abbreviated title, shown in brackets when they first appear; for example, *Education Gazette (EG)*. Thereafter only the abbreviated title is used in bracketed references. Consult the List of Abbreviations for complete titles and publications details for these documents.

Figure 2.1.3: The fields of study for my research



terminology, ideals and practices from the present cannot be read onto the past and that the discourses of those times must be read on their own terms. One of the challenges of genealogical work in considering the formation of a problematisation is that it must necessarily attend to the period before its full flowering. It does this in order to consider the various forms the problematisation might have taken prior to this period and the discourses and practices that were available to be taken up and used to respond to it. It equally must attend to those knowledges and practices that may have been used, but which have since been lost from sight or which have been taken up and used in different ways. It does this in order to 'reflect upon the contingency, singularity, interconnections, and potentialities of the diverse trajectories of those elements which compose present social arrangements and experience' (Dean, 1994, p.21). Doing such work allows both continuities and discontinuities with the present to be identified. In what follows, I briefly introduce each of the pairings of historical and contemporary fields shown in Figure 2.1.3

*Adolescence—older child*

Adolescence itself is something that is defined as an adjacent field to childhood—a not-quite-a-child—and as a transition into adulthood. In their modern forms, adolescence and childhood are constituted within developmental discourses that have arisen from movements such as 'Child Study' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a period when the first state post-primary schools were established. For the purposes of my study however, I needed to be aware that 'adolescence' was not a term in common use at the turn of the century and that a variety of labels might be being used for children in upper primary or post-primary school years. I therefore conducted an analysis of the labels used for the child in these years of schooling in the *Education Gazette* over the first

historical period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have therefore paired each of the field labels outside the triangle with terms on the inside which more precisely indicate the ways in which I have examined that field in the period of the early twentieth century. I use these different labels to emphasise that the

three decades of the century<sup>11</sup> (see Table 2.1.3). This analysis showed that the most common label used was 'child' (or 'children') which operated as a general label for those of primary school age. However, when the older child in the upper grades needed to be singled out, modifiers had to be used

**Table 2.1.3 Labels for the older child**

| Label        | Count |
|--------------|-------|
| child(ren)   | 232   |
| boy          | 70    |
| pupil        | 47    |
| girl         | 37    |
| adolescent   | 22    |
| youth        | 19    |
| young person | 18    |
| student      | 8     |

such as 'children of the upper classes' (Insp. Martin 1905 *EG*, p.85), and 'children after reaching of 13' (Dir. Williams 1908 *EG*, p.207) which signalled that a particular segment of childhood was being discussed. The labels 'pupil' and 'student' tended to be non-specific about age and less often modified than 'child'. There were more specific terms developed for the older child such as 'youth', 'young person', and 'adolescent', and even some indication that the terms 'boy' and 'girl' were being used to signal children of this age, such as when considering their post-school future—the child became a boy or girl as they came to the upper levels of school or left it behind. Based on this analysis, I decided that the term 'older child' best captured the way that children of this age began to be marked as different and needed to be labelled accordingly. This term also signals the shifting nature of the label, capturing to a small degree the way that both childhood and adolescence were being (re)shaped at this time around concepts of age and institutional structures of schooling.

To use a label such as adolescent generically would not be historically accurate and still less an adequate representation of the variety of meanings that were attached to children of this age at that time. I am not inferring that the 'older child' was somehow more 'real' than the adolescent (age and childhood operate in the realm of discourse as much as those of adolescence); rather, it is to signal that I am tracking the constructions of children of around 11 to 16 years old and considering the emerging idea that children of this age represented a special group with their own distinctive characteristics. I also use the term 'older child' to disrupt concepts of adolescence as a natural or given state, and to highlight it as something that arose within particular discourses as a way of constituting this older child. 'Adolescent' only became well established as a label in the schooling and curriculum data by the 1920s in South Australia but, even then, remained only one way of describing children of this age.

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<sup>11</sup> The data I used were the 198 quotations from the *Education Gazette* that I transcribed for the purposes of data display in this study. Each of these was selected for the way that it commented on an aspect of the education of the older child, or a related issue.

*(Middle and high) schooling—post-compulsory schooling*

Schooling provides the enclosure which has, along with the family, historically constituted both the child and the adolescent in their modern forms. Moreover, school operates as a space where children have been gathered together and thus made available for study and examination (Rose, 1999a). As will be seen in Chapter 4, most studies of the history of adolescence have argued that schooling was a key institution in the constitution of adolescence as a stage of life. Such studies have concentrated on the rise of the state high school as significant in that process, and of continuing importance in the present. Much of the middle school reform work assumes that high schools (or junior high schools in North America) are in need of reform and proposes separate forms of schooling for adolescence in some form or other. Thus, in the present, education for the adolescent is built around these two major institutions of high schools and middle schools.

At the turn of the twentieth century in South Australia, however, there was no equivalent in the state system to today's high schools and middle schools. The state provided only a primary school education up to the leaving age of 13. A child could leave school earlier if they could achieve the Compulsory Certificate based on the Class IV exam (aimed at children at around 11 and 12 years of age). The only post-primary system was provided by independent schools run privately or by religious organisations for those children whose parents could afford the fees. As will be shown in part 2.4 of this chapter, the first really significant state schooling for the older child in South Australia was conducted in the primary school, as the Education Department expanded the curriculum to cater for children who stayed on after they had achieved the Compulsory Certificate, even though they could legally leave. It was not until 1908 that the first high schools were established, followed in later years by various forms of 'super-primary' schools largely aimed at providing a vocationally oriented education in fields such as technical education, agriculture, home-making and commerce. Even in the early 1920s, many children staying on at state schools beyond the age of compulsion tended to receive an extended education in primary schools because they could not travel to the few post-primary schools established outside of Adelaide. For this reason, I have labelled the schooling for the older child in the first part of the twentieth century as 'post-compulsory schooling' to highlight the way that high schools were only one way that the older child came to be enclosed within the institution of schooling at that time.

### *English/literacy—English subjects*

The discussion in Chapter 1 of the ministerial press releases gives an indication of the way that literacy has come to be seen as central to the purposes of public schooling at in the present, especially for the training of the student as a potential citizen and worker.

However, the term 'literacy' has only been in common use in Australia since World War II (Green, Hodgens, & Luke, 1994); and, indeed, the word did not appear at all in the data for this study at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>12</sup> At that time the component subjects of English (Reading, Writing, Grammar, Composition, Spelling and so on) formed the core of the curriculum for the older child in the upper years of primary school.

Green and Beavis (1996a) have pointed out that 'English' has taken different forms between secondary and primary school, with primary forms being labelled as Language Arts during the 1970s and 1980s. Before that time, the label English tended to be used in both sectors. They argue that English as a curriculum field has been formed out of both the secondary school and the primary school and that the roots of the field stretch back to the formation of the popular public primary school. Green (1998) points out that, as a result of this history, English contains a set of dynamic (op)positions between grammar and literature, with the former carrying much in relation to the proper disciplining of young people as workers—something that relates to the 'grammar' of schooling itself, as well as to some of the present day discourses of literacy. To account for such complexity I have used the plural label 'English subjects' to define the historical curriculum field I study, which was to carry the work of developing a disciplined and 'lettered' population, along with the appropriate moral stance associated with reading, writing and speaking. A detailed overview of the scope of the English subjects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century South Australia is included in Part 2.4 of this chapter.

The three fields shown in Figure 2.1.3—adolescence, schooling and English/literacy—and their historical counterparts, provide the basis for the review of literature in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 3 focusses on the concept of adolescence and its related field of childhood, while Chapter 4 is concerned with the schooling of the older child and the role of the English subjects. In the next part of this chapter, I turn to the theoretical tools used to study the fields explored here.

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<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the term 'illiteracy' was used three times in the data reviewed. The terms 'illiterates' and 'literate' were also used once by one commentator using a source from the USA (Prof. Chancellor, Columbia University quoted by Insp. Charlton 1908 *EG*, p.204).

## 2.2 Theoretical tools

The theoretical tools I use in this research are based on three major concepts that were developed by Foucault—discourse, subjectivity and governmentality. These tools deliberately draw from across the range of his ideas from his earliest ‘archaeological’ work on discourse through to his later genealogical work which focussed on issues of subjectivity and power. I discuss each of these theoretical concepts below before summarising how I have used them in combination to consider the problematisation which is the focus of my study.

### 2.2.1 Discourse

The concept of discourse, in the Foucaultian sense, refers to the ‘controlling, positioning, and productive capacities of signifying practices’ (Threadgold, 1997, p.58). In this sense, a discourse is a ‘group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment’ (Hall, 2001, p.72). In Foucault’s work these groups of statements are seen as organised in relation to institutions which shape human subjects and are therefore connected with issues of authority and the practices which institutions allow and encompass. Discourses are not just systems of representation, but the basis of actions—discursive practices—that shape the world and what is possible to do within it:

Discursive practices are characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate exclusions and choices. (Foucault, 1977b, p.199)

In examining the discourses connected with the older child, I was concerned to consider the shape and nature of ‘object’ that could count as an older child; the ‘legitimate perspective’ that could be taken on this figure; the ‘agents’ who could speak with authority about the older child, and the ‘norms’ and ‘prescriptions’ that served to shape possible ways of dealing with the older child.

In this thesis I explore discourses which emerged in the early twentieth century, along with the institutional formation of post-primary schooling, to constitute the older child as a category. Here I examine discourse in the manner used by Foucault in his genealogical work which connected discourse studies with the formation of particular institutional

structures such as prisons (1977a) or the problematisation of aspects of human behaviour such as sexuality (1978; 1985; 1990). In taking up a 'genealogical' approach to a study of discourse, I am concerned with the formation of discourse in particular historical times and places and with its positive effects, 'its powers of affirmation ... the power to constitute domains of objects' (Foucault, 1981, p.73).

Such an approach allows me to discuss the formation of post-primary schooling, the establishment of English at the centre of the curriculum, and the introduction of constructions such as 'adolescence', as constituted within discourses. As a genealogy this study does not consider ideas such as adolescence through the unifying idea of 'change' which tends to treat transformations in the idea as progressive improvements or updates. My focus here is on the plurality of the transformations that took place. This is a focus on the discontinuities that highlight the contingency of adolescence as an object of discourse and its irreducibility to a single explanatory cause. I do not characterise the transformation of the idea of adolescence or the older child as a process of 'succession' where one idea takes over from another. Foucault describes two implications of an approach to discourse analysis which avoids concepts of change and succession:

...first, bracketing all the old forms of strained continuity which ordinarily serve to attenuate the raw fact of change (tradition, influence, habits of thought, broad mental forms, constraints of the human mind), and insistently making plain instead all the intensity of difference, establishing a painstaking record of deviation; second, bracketing all psychological explanations of change (the genius of great inventors, crises of conscience, the appearance of a new cast of mind), and turning instead to define as carefully as possible the transformation which, I do not say provoked, but *constituted* change. In short, substituting for the theme of *becoming* (general form, abstract element, first cause and universal effect, a confused mixture of the identical and the new) an analysis of *transformations* in their specificity. (Foucault, 1991b, p.56)

Following this general plan, it is my task to consider the emergence of discourses related to the older child in the field of education which were connected to, but distinguishable from, those concerned with childhood. In tracking the transformations that occurred in the development of these discourses, I consider the role of what Foucault (1972, p.66) called 'discursive subgroups' which provide 'points of diffraction' around the objects of concern. By this he meant that discourses open up spaces, even within their rules of formation, within which it is possible to develop alternative and even incompatible objects of discourse (such as the figure of the older child/boy/adolescent). In other words, discourses do not produce a uniform set of objects and practices because different discursive sub-groups produce alternative ways of conceiving of an object and dealing with it. Foucault explains the task of analysing this 'diffraction' of discourses as

describing 'a unity of distribution, that opens a field of possible options, and enables various mutually exclusive architectures to appear side by side or in turn' (Foucault, 1972, p.66). In Chapter 6 I identify the discursive subgroups that were at play in the early twentieth century in constituting the older child as an educable subject which did, indeed, develop different and even incompatible versions of that older child subject.

Foucault makes the point that it is tempting to identify one sub-group as somehow more fundamental than others, because its perspective on the objects may emerge as dominant. For example, was the discursive subgroup which included Educational Psychology fundamental to the formation of the older child because its constitution of the older child as a normed, psychological subject became dominant by the 1930s? Foucault rejects such a view, noting that discourses are, in turn, placed within a larger 'discursive constellation'—these are discourses which are contemporary with the discourse under study and related to it in some way—which will impact on the way ideas can be taken up and used. For example, the discourses of psychology, physiology, medicine and education were all in some way related to the constitution of the older child, and changes in these, or the insertion of a new discourse into the constellation, had an impact on the field of education. Changes in these other discourses may have meant that educational practices related to the older child were able to be taken up in new or different ways, or old approaches revived and renovated. Foucault (1972, p.67) argues that ideas from one sub-group may come to the fore, not because they are more compelling or fundamentally truthful, but because of a 'modification ... that is due to an insertion into a new discursive constellation'. For example, I will argue that concepts of growth and development from biology and physiology, and the insertion of these discourses into the constellation operating around education, allowed New Educational practices of Child Study to achieve a brief dominance in shaping the older child. For this reason discourse analysis attends to the 'economy of the discursive constellation' (Foucault, 1972, p.66) in which any discourse is placed.

In undertaking an analysis of the formation of the older child, I do not attempt a complete analysis (archaeology) of the discourses related to the older child. Taking my lead from Carmen Luke (1989, pp.41-44) and her study of the formation of childhood, I focus on the aspect of archaeology identified by Foucault as 'the formation of objects' (1972), as a strategic approach to considering the way in which the older child was constituted within education in the early twentieth century. This involves mapping for the figure of the older

child the rules of its existence as an object of discourse, a process for which Foucault (1972, pp.41-42) described three analytic tasks. First, to map the *surfaces of emergence of the object*, or the places in which it first appears as an object of concern—as in certain sites such as the family, the school, the nation or in relation to certain problems such as health, defence and employment. Second, to describe the *authorities of delimitation*, or those persons, institutions or ideas which come to be able to form opinions and judgements on the object which will be broadly recognised and accepted, or who will determine if an opinion is acceptable. Third, to analyse the *grids of specification* which are the systems used to define, group, classify, hierarchise the object.

### 2.2.2 Subjectivity

The human being is not the eternal basis of human history and human culture but a historical and cultural artifact. (Rose, 1998, p.22)

By taking up the perspective on what it is to be a human being proposed here by Rose, I acknowledge that the human subject does not exist outside of social and cultural forms of representation and understanding. Certainly the body exists, but it is known through language and other forms of representation available in discourse. In this way, the human being is always subject to the ways of knowing and the forms of power operating in the social groups. According to Mansfield (2000, p.3) 'one is always subject *to* or *of* something ... the self is not a separate and isolated entity, but one that operates at the intersection of general truths and shared principles'. Here Mansfield defines subjectivity as much by what it is *not* as by what it is. His concept of subjectivity also helped me to define what my historical study was *not*. I did not take as my starting point a view of young people as unitary subjects. I did not try to analyse historically what it was 'really' like for them, nor did I assume that there were essential or foundational features of the older child that lay behind or beyond the discourses of curriculum and schooling waiting to be identified. I did not seek an older child that English and the curriculum repressed or ignored or brought into the light of reason. Instead I sought to track the historical construction of a child subject (Poster, 1997) or, rather, the construction of a transitional subject which was not quite a child, nor an adult—the older child—not the usual subject of public schooling at the turn of the century. Following Weedon (1987), I saw subjectivity as formed within, and in response to, discourses and institutional practices.

Foucault (1986, p.208) described three ways in which human beings are made 'subjects': through being made into objects by disciplines (for example, being a 'subject who labours')

in economics); through being objectivised by 'dividing practices' (for example being labelled 'mad' or 'sane'); and through turning himself or herself into a subject (for example people seeing themselves as subjects of sexuality). Each of these processes—being made the subject of knowledge, being subject to dividing practices, and submitting oneself to an 'ethics of the self'—constitute modes of subjectivity. The first two refer to being made subject to discourses and discursive practices, while the last concerns the work that people do on themselves in order to fit with (or dispute) the positions made available to them in discourses.

There is a strong link between the concepts of discourse and subjectivity because it is through the institutions that are linked to discourses that 'speaking positions' are offered which humans can take up:

[I]ndividuals come to speak as particular kinds of subjects—to speak themselves into being—through speaking the discourses that enable the particular institution. (Lee & Poynton, 2000, p.5)

Lee and Poynton capture the interrelationship between discourse and subjectivity here, indicating that what can be said, and the subject positions available, arise out of discourses and institutions, but that the act of speaking those discourses and taking up the available subject positions also serves to reinforce and legitimise those same discourses and institutions.

This is a key point for my study of the subject of the older child formed within the institution of school and the English curriculum that allows me to say what my study *did* seek to do. I asked what subject positions were made available for the older child by the discourses of these institutions. Being formed from (potentially) contradictory and competing discourses, or discursive architectures, I did not expect that there would be a single subject position to be identified, nor that the positions available would be consistent or coherent. Taking the three ways in which humans are made subjects provided by Foucault, I posed the following questions in my analysis:

1. What labels, metaphors and titles were given to the older child as a subject in the discourses of schooling and the English curriculum?
2. What dividing practices and grids of specification were used to group, differentiate or otherwise identify the older child as a subject in the discourses of schooling and the English curriculum?

3. What invitations and practices were made available to the older child for making themselves subject to the discourses of schooling and the English curriculum?

The individual 'older child' subject developed in the school was to be shaped by disciplinary technologies made available by the development of the modern school with its classrooms, playgrounds and the specific pedagogical practices of school subjects such as English. In order to understand the basis of the disciplinary and pedagogical practices and technologies that were used to shape desired subjectivities, I found the concept of *governmentality* to be useful.

### 2.2.3 Governmentality

The concept of subjectivity is powerfully complemented by the concept of governmentality. During the eighteenth century, according to Foucault (1991a), the government of (European) nations moved away from operating through the 'power of the prince' to manage his territory, towards government which focussed on the management of the health and welfare of the population. In the governmental states which arose, it was the concept of the population—understanding it, measuring it, disposing it towards certain actions—that was the key to the maintenance and ongoing health of the state. People came to be governed, not through the direct power of the sovereign, but through a multiplicity of governmental 'tactics' and procedures designed to improve the welfare of the population overall. For Foucault governmentality was:

The ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. (Foucault, 1991a, p.102)

The government of populations was achieved through a variety of techniques such as the use of the Christian pastoral notion of care, and through the development of institutions such as the police and schools through which the population could be better known and managed.

In this sense, governmentality is important to my project because, through the institution of mass public schooling, the older child was made thinkable both as an element of *population* (Foucault, 1991a), and as a problem that was amenable to expert intervention:

[F]rom the eighteenth century, new intellectual techniques (political arithmetic, statistical survey) operating within new governmental institutions (bureaus of economic management, public health, social assistance, public education) began to transform government into a series of domain-specific 'problems' open to expert analysis. ... it was in this sphere of 'governmentality' that a pastoral school system could present itself as an appropriate instrument for transforming the capacities of the population into a problem and object of government. (Hunter, 1994b, p.28)

There are two elements of governmentality that have implications for my study. First, that this bringing of the older child into the institutional space of the school made this figure open to 'populational reasoning' (Baker, 1998b; Popkewitz, 1998) which established norms for its behaviour and criteria by which it could be judged:

By defining groups in particular ways and maintaining records that gave material qualities to the construction of groups, populational reasoning "normalized" certain characteristics. What were socially constructed criteria appeared in time as "natural attributes" (e.g., "racial characteristics"). The historical and cultural specificity of the reasoning became submerged, and the appearance of the criteria as "natural" became reinforced through scientific techniques that were built around gathering data about the attributes. (Baker, 1998b, p.131)

Following Baker's argument, the classification of older children as a populational group meant that they became measurable. These measures could be turned into norms, and these norms, through being 'found' in further technologies of measurement, became 'natural' and expected attributes of members of the group. These consequences of classification as a group have been considered in my analysis of the corpus of texts used in my study, especially in relation to the norms that were established for them within schools and subject English<sup>13</sup>.

The second element of governmentality I focus on is the technologies of supervision and correction that were applied to the older child in various programs of reform. I consider the use of psychology, child study, military training and so on, as human technologies (Rose, 1999a, p.8) or social technologies (Popkewitz, 1998, p.23) for shaping the older child that were deployed within various discourses:

Human technologies involve the calculated organization of human forces and capacities, together with other forces - natural, biological, mechanical - and artefacts -

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<sup>13</sup> Bowker and Star (2000, p.16) have pointed out that in the late nineteenth century there was an 'explosion' of the processes of classification and standardisation in all spheres of science and industry—a period coinciding with the constitution of adolescence as a life stage. They note that the histories of classification are 'considered by most to be boring, trivial, and unworthy of investigation' (p.17). Because of this, the social and cultural assumptions that are built into the establishment of all such systems are lost, and the classifications themselves become naturalised and taken for granted.

machines, weapons – into functioning networks of power. Within such a composition, elements are brought together that might appear, at first sight, to belong to different orders of reality: architectural designs, equipment and technical devices, professionals, bureaucracies, methods of calculation, inscriptions, reformatory procedures and the like. (Rose, 1999a, p.8)

I considered the possible compositions of elements of the kinds suggested by Rose as ‘technologies of subjectivity’ (p.9) for the shaping of the older child in desirable directions. As Rose reminds us, not all such technologies succeed; indeed many fail and all have unanticipated effects, but their ‘small histories’ contribute to larger patterns of governmental practices that have effects on people. In my study I have considered the kinds of networks of practices that might be thought about as human technologies that worked to shape the subjectivity of the older child.

These three concepts of discourse, subjectivity and governmentality can be seen as the key theoretical elements of my study. Foucault (1981, pp.70-73) himself saw his earlier archaeological work on discourse as complementary to his later work on the subject and power, calling the former ‘critical’ analysis and the latter ‘genealogical’. He saw the critical work as involving the analysis of the ‘systems which envelop discourses’ (p.73) and the ways in which they act to exclude, constrain and delimit what it is possible to think and do. I apply this to my study of the discourse of the older child and the ways of thinking about this figure that were available to be taken up in such a discourse. The genealogical approach, on the other hand, focussing on processes such as subjectivity and governmentality, considers the operations of discourse in a more positive or productive sense in terms of the ways in which discourses act to constitute the objects of which they speak. Through a genealogical approach, I consider the historical formation of a discourse of the older child and the processes through which it came to constitute subjects and shape actions. It is to the methodological issues that I now turn.

## **2.3 Methodologies**

This study is primarily a Foucaultian genealogy working with the major theoretical constructs described in the previous part of the chapter. Genealogy is supplemented by curriculum-historical inquiry and critical discourse analysis. Using these methodologies my technique has been to treat as data, historical artefacts such as curriculum texts, and histories themselves. These materials operate as both texts and as data in this study. The purpose of what follows is to describe how each of the elements of genealogy,

curriculum-historical inquiry and critical discourse analysis (CDA) have been used in defining and analysing the data corpus of texts.

### 2.3.1 Genealogy

One of the major challenges of conducting a genealogy is to 'read' historical material in ways that lead the researcher away from the narrative impulse of traditional historical work that tells the story of how things came to be. In contrast, the starting point for genealogies is that the present is not seen as an inevitable outcome of the past, nor its seamless continuity; indeed, the past is the 'other' of the present and, being 'other,' the past can be used to bring into relief the contingency and the constructedness of the present. Further, an important feature of genealogical work (and one of the ways in which it echoed and built upon Foucault's archaeological studies) is its refusal of the unity of subjects (e.g. child, citizen), institutions (e.g. school, hospital), and ideas (e.g. democracy, sanity) across time, noting that, being constituted within discourses, they are the *effects* of particular (historical) practices:

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (Foucault, 1980a, p.117)

This is a radically different kind of history which requires reading practices that are disruptive and which resist the modernist search for fundamental truths:

For the genealogist there are no fixed essences, no underlying laws, no metaphysical finalities. Genealogy seeks out discontinuities where others found continuous development. It finds recurrences and play where others found progress and seriousness. (Foucault, 1986, p.106)

A genealogy involves a process of starting with a problem (a question or practice which is the focus of attention) as it is currently constituted and tracing its genealogy—this is the problematisation discussed in 2.1. A genealogy attends to the history of its transformations and its emergence as a problem worthy of attention (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986, pp.118-25). Dean (1994, p.21) uses the term 'critical and effective' histories for this approach which is used to 'reflect upon the contingency, singularity, interconnections, and potentialities of the diverse trajectories of those elements which compose present social arrangements and experience'. The implication here is that the particular role of traditional history has been to fabricate seamless representations of the production of

present arrangements, something which a genealogist attempts to unpick and to show how things could have been otherwise:

[I]f the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. (Foucault, 1977c, p.142)

In its opposition to traditional historical method, genealogies attend to discontinuity, to accidents and the mundane (Cormack, 1998). These histories focus on the practices and techniques by which human subjects have been shaped (Rose, 1996b) and not just the ideas and knowledges that have been brought into play in this process. Such a focus steers the historian towards a study of the improper, the delinquent, the dis-eased, because it is out of concern for these that notions of normality, their accompanying grids of specification and the ‘technologies’ that shape human subjectivity typically have been developed (Rose, 1996b, p.131). This focus on the mundane and programmatic aspects of history through Rose’s genealogical approach is significant for my study. I am interested in the transformation of the ‘moral technologies’ (Foucault, 1991c)—the ‘practices’—by which populations are shaped and disciplined.

As I have explained, the problematisation I am examining is the way in which the older child has been tied to schooling and English/literacy as a site of anxiety and for projects of rescue—this is the development of an adolescent subject who is to be made safe through a proper schooling in literacy or English. Over the last two decades the literate child/student subject has been the focus of wide-ranging debate and the target of programs of reform as national economic wellbeing has been tied to the literacy levels of its populace, particularly its future workers or school students (Department of Employment Education and Training, 1991; Kemp, 1999). Green (1998) and Green and Beavis (1996b) point out that the subject English historically has been at the centre of the public school system in Australia—a primary site for shaping of the future citizen and a touchstone for the health of the system overall. Thus I emphasise the kind of older child subject that was constituted in the school and English curriculum at different times in order to trace the historical transformations of the discourses that constitute this student subject.

I have found the work of Foucaultian scholar Nikolas Rose (1996a; 1996b; 1998; 1999a; 1999b) particularly useful in considering the methodological challenges of genealogical work. His concept of a ‘genealogy of subjectivity’ is the closest example I have found in

the methodological literature to the kind of study being conducted here. He argues that a genealogy of subjectification needs to focus on the ‘*practices* that locate human beings in particular “regimes of the person”’ (Rose, 1998, p.25) and suggests five ‘pathways’ along which a study might proceed:

1. *Problematizations*—where how and by whom aspects of the human are rendered problematic?
2. *Technologies*—the means and programs developed to govern, shape humans
3. *Authorities*—those who can speak the truth about human problems
4. *Teleologies* (the forms of life which are the ideals, exemplars or aims for practices and programs for working on humans)
5. *Strategies*—procedures for regulating humans that are linked to wider political, moral, social objectives and domains (adapted from Rose, 1998, pp.25-28).

His first point—the problematisation—is the starting point of the genealogy. The four following pathways provide a guide to the elements of the apparatus of subjectification (*dispositif*) which need to be traced. These four pathways explore the governmental tactics and practices which are involved in the shaping of the subjectivity of the older child. They also allow for a consideration of the way in which the discourses might operate to restrict and shape possible ways of thinking and acting, especially through investigation of the authorities who can ‘speak the truth’ about the older child.

These five pathways guided my approach to this genealogy—how the older child came to be seen as a problem in relation to schooling and English—within the necessary limits of a doctoral thesis. First, I have not attempted to track the genealogy of this problematisation over the entire twentieth century. I decided to focus on the period of the formation of this problematisation around the establishment of state schooling for children in the post-primary years—that is, in the first decades of the twentieth century. For this reason, I have not tracked the way this problematisation might have been transformed in the intervening period to the present. This remains for the future. I argue that the first three decades of the century were the most important to study because this seemed a period of formation where a range of technologies, teleologies and strategies may have been tried before some kind of settlement of the problem around the construct of adolescence occurred in the late 1920s and 1930s. Secondary schooling for the entire population of adolescents was not established in Australia until the 1950s, so the period I am studying was a time when the idea of the older child and the most appropriate ways of schooling

that child were still 'up for grabs'. I was alert for discontinuities and for approaches that failed or which were abandoned or reshaped. Such work allows us to see that current arrangements and settlements were fabricated and piecemeal and could easily have been otherwise, rather than being seen as natural or inevitable.

Foucault himself (1986) coined the term 'history of the present' for the approach I am taking (see also Tyler & Johnson, 1991). The benefits of this approach include providing the researcher with some distance from contemporary debates and issues; an estrangement that makes critical reading possible. This approach can also resurface alternative discourses (sets of assumptions, vocabularies, institutional structures) that can allow otherwise taken-for-granted ways of seeing things to be identified, denaturalised and challenged:

Some effects of genealogy are that it undermines particular historical configurations of power relations by targeting their already fractured, unstable and impaired form; it subverts the process of reiteration of regulatory ideals (Butler 1993); it questions how subjectivities are constructed and given meaning; it considers how discourses produce subjects with particular kinds of power and capacities, and; it opens up new strategic theoretical possibilities. (Hayes, 2000, p.47)

In the present time there is almost a flood of texts, images and productions of truth about young people, literacy and schooling of the kind discussed in Chapter 1. It is easy for educators to be swept along in this flood and to see as natural and necessary the linkage of common sense versions of schooling, adolescence and literacy. Historical study has the potential to denaturalise that process—not so we as researchers can stand aside from it, on the banks of the swollen river as it were (there are no fixed points from which we can research these issues). Rather a genealogical approach provides some tools and devices, like snags and logs in the river, to help researchers swim against and across the discursive current, as well as with it.

### **2.3.2 Curriculum-historical Inquiry**

There are elements of this study which relate specifically to the historical study of the English curriculum for the older child. I am aware that there is a long tradition of work in curriculum inquiry and curriculum history on which my study has been able to build. I see my own work as supplementary to both of these fields in that this study uses insights offered by curriculum-historical inquiry. As well, it seeks to build on the historical record regarding the English curriculum in South Australia in the first three decades of the twentieth century. In describing this thesis as making a *supplementary* contribution to

curriculum-historical inquiry, I am signalling that my work takes a particular perspective on historical studies of education and curriculum that distances it from mainstream work in the curriculum history field. My focus in this regard is to take seriously the challenge offered by the 'linguistic turn', and poststructural theories more generally, for historical studies of the curriculum and schooling. Broadly speaking the challenge is that there is no place outside of discourse for studies of history to locate themselves. Barthes (1997, p.121), for example, notes the claim that history was about collecting and using 'facts' (the referents here being beyond discourse, yet only ever able to be used within discourse) served to disguise the way historical discourse proclaimed its own authority:

We could say that historical discourse is a fudged up performative, in which what appears as statement (and description) is in fact no more than the signifier of the speech act as an act of authority. (Barthes, 1997, p.122)

The view of history as discourse means that no longer can the study of history assume simply or simplistically that there is a 'reality' or 'past' which lies outside of historical or textual representation; one which can provide a touchstone for verifying or checking a history. This has two implications for the conduct of historical research into curriculum. First, it means that historical sources must be thought of as 'texts' or symbolic resources which are themselves the product of discourses, rather than transparent representations of what people thought or believed:

Textuality has important implications for traditional historical methodology and representation. It adds complexity to the reading of documentary remains from the past by conflating what they signify with how they signify. It supplements, when it does not dissolve, the notion of authorship and intention into the social, cultural, or other textualizing practices that produced the document or remain, thereby repudiating the traditional notions of intention and authorship that had supplied the premises necessary to interpret documents as evidence for the reconstruction of the past as actual context. (Berkhoffer, 1995, p.22)

Such an understanding of historical documents as texts disrupts fundamental distinctions between 'primary' and 'secondary' sources because both are to be conceived as discursive productions and representations of the past which are '*always* apprehended through the sedimented layers of previous interpretations and through the reading habits and categories developed by previous/current interpretive discourses' (Jenkins, 1995, p.11). No text can, therefore, be said to be 'original', in the sense that it was not constituted by the discourses it operated within or did not, itself, comment on and respond to other discourses. Bakhtin (1981, p.337) notes that 'our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words', and that most texts are *dialogic* in that they are written out of, and in response to, other texts.

The second implication is that historical research itself is also an act of texting the past—an act of writing that is constituted within discourses (Vick, 1998). History is always being written within discourses that constitute and are constituted by present-day power structures and ruling relations—which implies a need for reflexivity about the place of historical writing within those structures and relations, acknowledging the particular role of history in bolstering or disrupting these discourses (Munslow, 1997). Hayden White's (1987) work on the textual form of historical discourse shows that the narrative form of historical discourse is central to its power and its appeal:

The authority of the historical narrative is the authority of reality itself; the historical account endows this reality with form and thereby makes it desirable by the imposition upon its processes of the formal coherency that only stories possess (White, 1987, p.20).

By imposing a narrative on past events—giving the past a 'plot'—history is implicated in giving form (value, meaning) to peoples' lives and social structures, providing explanations and connections which have powerful effects in the present. This is not to say that the writing of historical narratives should stop, rather it is to say that the writing of such narratives should self-consciously avoid claims to being a 'truthful' account of the past. It is to argue for writing histories that avoid reproducing the 'grand narratives' (Lyotard, 1984) of progress and enlightenment but which are alive to the 'playfulness, multiplicity, openness and ambiguity in telling stories that make our lives meaningful' (Vick, 1998, p.12). Vick's commitment to such narratives matches Foucault's own aims for genealogies which would problematise taken-for-granted categories (such as adolescence) or social apparatuses (made up of elements such as schools and curriculum) which shape human subjectivity, and illustrate the contingency and fragility of their existence. This is the use of history to be playful and to open up new ways of thinking, or even recovering some that have been subordinated.

The challenges for curriculum-historical inquiry arising from this perspective are many and include the need to consider curriculum materials as texts which are themselves formulated within discourses and which are not a conduit for authorial intentions. This involves considering ways in which the curriculum can be thought of as a contradictory and disputed discursive space and as a social practice which serves to constitute human subjects through being an element of governmental assemblages. It also involves attention to some of the neglected aspects of curriculum history which has in Australia, according to Baker (1996, p.114), tended to focus more on teachers, administrators and academics

than on the figure of the child. In addition it involves directing attention to the local to avoid what Baker calls a somewhat 'generalized, universalistic, ahistorical and unidimensional' approach which has not been sufficiently sensitive to variation between states or to the struggles between different interests and groups over the curriculum (p.112). My study addresses some of these gaps by considering the formation of an older child subject in the English curriculum in one local site—South Australia in the early twentieth century.

This study explores curriculum as a textual practice—that is, as discursive practice which systematically forms the objects of which it speaks (Foucault, 1972). As is discussed in Part 2.4, the textual data considered is the official curriculum plus ancillary texts that were designed to support and supplement the curriculum. I am aware that, in the enactment of the curriculum in local sites, much will have occurred that a study focussing on the authorised, written curriculum and commentary does not examine. However, I argue that authorised curriculum documents and commentaries remain a site with huge potential for historical study. They are prime sites for studying the discourses that serve to constitute the student (and teacher) subject and the curriculum. These discourses frame what it is possible to say about these objects, as well as the other objects to which they could be related. Curriculum texts also detail the technologies (the subjects, methods, strategies, practices) which have been developed in institutional sites to shape the student as a subject. The curriculum texts studied provide insights into regimes of local, mundane, contingent ways of doing and saying things that articulate with the discourse of the older child. These documents provide a way into understanding and researching the everyday 'work' that is involved in shaping the child as citizen. In using such texts as data 'there is no attempt to examine the object of inquiry itself (what the past was "really" like), merely what is sayable, thinkable, writeable' (Kendall, 2001, p.26).

As texts, curriculum documents and commentaries are also sources of information about the debates and issues of contestation of their time. In spite of the fact that curriculum documents do represent the authorised and authoritative 'word' on schooling, they are not univocal. Following Bakhtin (1981) most texts can be described as dialogic—carrying with them meanings and ideas from their past that must be negotiated with ideas and practices in the present. The meanings of words and language are never fixed and authors who write texts must engage in a process (dialogue) that attempts to define a certain meaning for the words in this time and place and to dismiss, displace, rearticulate or

incorporate other possible meanings. In this way texts are always in dialogue—with the past, with other texts, with practices—and traces of this dialogue can be found within the text. The historical texts I studied, such as curriculum documents, curriculum commentaries and inspectors' reports are, like all texts, formed out of the discourses of their time and out of other texts, whose words they use or to which they refer. This makes texts such as inspectors' reports sites where it is possible to trace the different (and sometimes contradictory) discourses, ideas and histories that shape the curriculum. Vick (1997b, p.122) has argued that texts such as inspectors' reports in the nineteenth century produced normalising accounts of children's capacities which 'were clearly "true" and in this respect incontestible (*sic*)'. While I agree these reports were often examples of an 'authoritative discourse' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.343) characterised by an inert, compact and even 'magisterial' way with words, I also found that the inspectors' reports contained elements of 'intense interaction' that Bakhtin called a feature of 'internally persuasive discourse' (p.245). These were texts where inspectors disagreed with each other, wrote back to teachers' practices, acknowledged doubts, and attempted to build a case for a particular view of the curriculum<sup>14</sup>. These texts were in dialogue with other texts and practices, and therefore provided traces of the contradictory and contested processes of curriculum construction, even as they presented an authoritative account.

The way in which I have treated curriculum and ancillary material as discourse and text has links to the fields of curriculum inquiry and curriculum history. For example, Goodson (1995, p.16) points out that the written curriculum provides a guide to the 'legitimizing rhetorics' of schooling. His understanding of the 'symbolic significance' of these texts is an important conceptual link between curriculum inquiry and my own study of curriculum as discourse. Goodson also argues for the importance of studying the 'preactive' curriculum as a site for understanding not only what are set as the parameters for practice, but also the way the curriculum acts as a guide to the workings of schools:

[T]he written curriculum provides us with a testimony, a documentary source, a changing map of the terrain: it is also one of the best official guide books to the institutionalized structure of schooling. (Goodson, 1995, p.16)

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<sup>14</sup> Hamilton (1989) also found that such materials were a useful historical data source. He noted that the works written by School Superintendents in the USA (in some ways, equivalents of inspectors in Australia) were useful because 'they were in touch with both schoolroom practices and the ideological currents that informed them' (pp.20-21).

Goodson does make the distinction between the written curriculum and the 'active' curriculum of the classroom, but rejects a view that the former is irrelevant for, or not articulated with, the latter. In this regard he points to the way that some curriculum frames and practices become naturalised, and over time come to be seen as simply 'practice'. An historical perspective allows such practices to be seen as the product of earlier curriculum frameworks and not, as is commonly understood, somehow divorced from theory. This is an example of the way that curriculum-historical inquiry is open to the processes by which knowledge and practice are intertwined in shaping the work of schools. Goodson (1995, p.33) also highlights the way that the historical study of curriculum can open up institutions such as schools to scrutiny—to 'look behind the schoolhouse door' so that they can be seen as more than a "'black box", unopened and unanalysed'. In a related way, Seddon (1989, p.3) argues that the:

'... core of curriculum history centres curriculum in the selection, organisation and distribution of knowledge; sited in *educational institutions* and hence, implying that curriculum is oriented to *learners*. (Seddon, 1989, p.3, emphasis in the original)

While my own study would seek to deconstruct the objects italicised by Seddon and place them 'under erasure' (Hall, 1996, p.1), it is fundamentally interested in these processes of the selection, distribution and organisation of knowledge that are centred in the discursive practices of schooling. Indeed Seddon (1989, p.3) argues that curriculum history can challenge 'eternised' ideas about knowledge, learners and educational institutions, and can illustrate the diversity and range of their use historically. The historical awareness developed in curriculum history is something that Seddon would use in contemporary debates that shape knowledge construction—this orientation to action in the present aligns to the genealogical rationale for my own study. It involves attending to the 'peculiarly twentieth century significance of curriculum' (Seddon, 1989, pp.6-7), and the 'life cycle of curricular knowledge' (Goodson, 1995, p.25) which can be seen in the 'continual flux' (p.25) of the fortunes of different school subjects.

While noting these parallels between my own study and the goals of curriculum history, I am also mindful of the ways in which poststructuralist inspired historical studies of schooling and the curriculum have been critiqued by educational historians. For example, Selleck (1991, p.92) in a review essay of Ian Hunter's *Culture and Government*, critiques terminology used by Hunter as 'elitist mystifications' which 'make the obvious seem challenging' and accord 'privilege to theory which is checked against little'. McCulloch and Richardson (2000, pp.74-77), in a case study of 'Foucauldian interpretations' of

educational history, repeat Selleck's concern about the use of terminology and note other critiques of the historical inaccuracies in Foucault's own work, while acknowledging the 'informative' nature of his theories. If Foucault is to be used in studies of education outside of France, they argue, then his theories need to be 'properly contextualised' in a particular time and place.

In response to these criticisms, it is possible to argue that the discipline of history has yet to adequately take account of the linguistic turn, and the theoretical implications of that move, with its inevitable accompaniment of new terminology and ideas. Indeed, I have engaged in these methodological debates myself (Cormack & Green, 2000). However, it is also important to acknowledge that theory needs to be grounded in adequate and defensible accounts based in data and that theoretical constructions cannot simply be transported and applied to different places and times without doing some damage to the inevitable and important differences that arise in different localities and periods. Therefore I have been guided by the work of historians in contextualising my analysis in the period I studied. Importantly, I examine the period preceding the first decades of the twentieth century in order to understand the immediate context of the texts I was reading. I have situated my study of South Australian schooling and curriculum within a reading of the historical records and histories that were related to the period and place I studied. Whilst I do not attempt a curriculum history, I use historical data in a way that does not contradict the historical record established by curriculum and educational historians.

Castel (1994) directly addresses this very issue in his discussion of Foucault's use of the problematisation as a basis for historical work. He notes that this approach contains a 'risk' which is that studies based on problematisations reread 'historical material from the standpoint of categories... that are not utilized by historians to organize their own corpus' (p.251) and therefore establish alternative accounts to those constructed by historians. In this he is absolutely correct. Categories I am using such as 'subjectivity' are contemporary theoretical constructions. I am attempting to read historical data to understand a problematisation in the present, and not to understand the past on its own terms. Castel (pp.251-252) argues that, given problematisations construct an alternative account to those of historians, two 'demands' must be satisfied. First, there must be some contribution arising from this different account that adds to what historians have provided—in other words, it is no use using a different approach to arrive at the same insights. Second, in making a contribution to the understanding of the present, a problematisation should not

do damage to the historical record—it should not use historical data in a way that a historian can show is false. I acknowledge these ‘demands’ in the conduct of this genealogy.

The curriculum-historical elements of my study, therefore, are best seen as supplementary to the work of historians, rather than a rewriting. My account is offered in the spirit of an enrichment and an expansion of possible ways of reading and making use of history:

Opportunity to tell *different* stories, *supplementary* stories, is crucial. This means not only re-visiting and re-reading the available historical record, but as well seeking to add to the archive by encouraging and engaging in careful, informed, critical curriculum-historical inquiry. It means folding into a never-ending, dynamic, ever-revisable story rich accounts of past, present *and* future formulations of curriculum and schooling in Australia. (Green, 2003, p.138)

### **2.3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis**

From a methodological perspective, my key challenge has been to engage with both text and discourse as ‘data’, on the one hand, and as constituting the very practice of genealogical and curriculum-historical inquiry itself, on the other. This required a form of discourse analysis which was both sensitive to historical (con)texts and self-consciously reflexive in its application, both features of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). I have used CDA as a guide to my analysis of historical texts and to position my work as the basis of action in the present. Fairclough (2001) helps to distinguish CDA from other approaches to discourse analysis by defining what makes it critical:

It is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology. It is a resource which can be used in combination with others for researching change in contemporary social life ... (Fairclough, 2001, p.229)

These claims illustrate both the appeal of CDA for my project and some of the difficulties of its application. Its appeal lies in the explicit focus on social relations and the exercise of power which relates well to my attempts to analyse the ways in which the adolescence-schooling-literacy problematisation has worked as a social practice to shape the subjectivity of the older child and the forms of power/ knowledge implicit in that process. The difficulties lie in the way in which CDA is typically applied to discourses in the present or recent past, rather than to the distant past as is the case with my thesis. It is implicit in the descriptions of the conduct of CDA that the texts are analysed in the context of their production and consumption and in the wider social context of their use. The assumption made by most descriptions of CDA is that the analyst has access to this

context in the immediate, lived sense and can bring this experience to the analytic process. Even the approach to CDA which is labelled the 'discourse-historical approach' (Wodak, 2001, p.79) utilises history to provide 'background information which is necessary to understand the object of investigation' in the present and does not focus on the analysis of historical texts themselves. Indeed Wodak (p.69) argues for 'field work and ethnography' as important elements of such work, reinforcing the approach as applying to texts in the present and the use of history as an (important) ancillary<sup>15</sup>. However, for my study, the link between CDA and history is more immediate and I have therefore sought to find ways of bringing historical studies of the curriculum together with discourse-analytic method.

In his review of the current state of the field of curriculum history, Franklin (1999) notes that the 'most interesting and conceptually rich work' (p.472) has attended to the 'language' of curriculum materials, or used a 'postmodern interpretive lens' (p.473). This work has involved 'pursuing a "linguistic turn" which focuses on the discursive patterns through which schooling is constituted' (Popkewitz, 1997, p.138). As Green and I have argued elsewhere (Cormack & Green, 2000), the work of Popkewitz and colleagues, which has been concerned with tracking historically the large scale discursive patterns through which the curriculum and its objects such as students are constituted, needs to be matched with more 'close-grained work on actual textual traces and practices'. This has involved finding ways of attending to discourses and the specific *texts* they produce (Lemke, 1995, p.7) which bring together insights from linguistics and from poststructuralist work in ways suggested by Threadgold (1997, p.13) when she says that the 'textual function is the space of intertextuality and subjectivity and the habituated body'. In other words texts link with other texts and work not only to shape subjectivity, but also work on and through readers' and writers' bodies. This study is an attempt to work with curriculum-historical texts as such a space.

CDA is an emerging group of practices (Fairclough, 1989, 1992; Luke, 1995; Luke, 1997) which attends to issues of power and the material effects of discourses on peoples' lives.

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<sup>15</sup> That having been said, there is still a potential relationship between this study and discourse-historical methodology. As a genealogy, the aim is to produce insights and perspectives which are useful as a basis for action in the present. Therefore this study can be seen as tracking aspects of the history (genealogy) of texts being used in the present, such as the school advertisement and press release featured in Chapter 1. However this study does not include the fieldwork and ethnographic elements of study around those texts in the present which are a feature of discourse-historical methodology as described by Wodak (2001).

In many ways it can be seen as a resistant reading practice, which works to disrupt assumptions about texts and to show how they operate to shape the world in certain interests. Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p.268) define 'eight principles of theory or method' for CDA work:

1. CDA addresses social problems (the focus is on the 'partially linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures)
2. Power relations are discursive ('the linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power')
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture ('discourse constitutes society and culture, as well as being constituted by them')
4. Discourse does ideological work ('ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power')
5. Discourse is historical ('discourses are always connected to other discourse which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently')
6. The link between text and society is mediated ('making connections between social and cultural structures and processes on the one hand, and properties of text on the other')
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory ('critical reading ... implies a systematic methodology and a thorough investigation of context')
8. Discourse is a form of social action ('critical linguistics makes explicit interests which otherwise remain covered') (extracted from Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, pp.271-280)

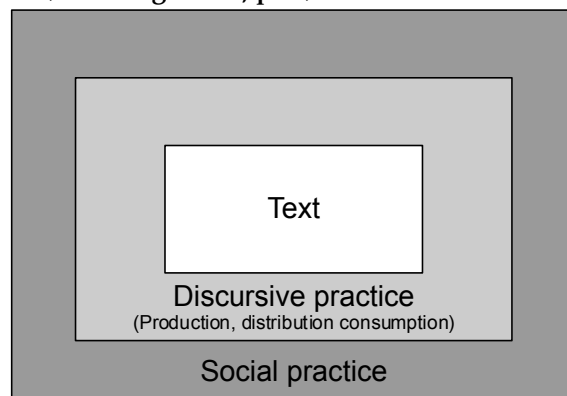
Such principles are a broad guide to my own work, within the limitations already described, given the textual material that constituted my data corpus was historical rather than contemporary. In particular, I found three features of CDA were important to the genealogical approach.

The first feature was the set of strategies that CDA provided for linguistic analysis that promoted a 'denaturalised' reading of texts and highlighted their role as discursive practice. This is a reading which is different from the preferred reading structured by the author(s) of the text. Patterson (1997a) highlights this feature when she labels CDA as 'a condition of doubt', where the taken for granted is interrupted and questioned. This reading against the grain is useful in the genealogical requirement to question and unpick those constituent assumptions of discourse, those categories that they take for granted or which are 'so fundamental that they remained unvoiced and unthought' (Young, 1981, p.48).

My linguistic analysis was guided by Fairclough's (1992) representation of the three dimensions of discourse in relation to discourse-analytic traditions as shown in Figure 2.3.3. The central dimension refers to the textual dimension of discourse—for example, the

texts that are used in relation to schooling and the curriculum in the case of my study—and encompasses the analysis of those texts. The second dimension refers to the discursive practices that are involved in the production, distribution and consumption of the text(s) being analysed. At this level the analyst is interested in who produces and who ‘reads’ the texts

**Figure 2.3.3: Dimensions of discourse (Fairclough 1992, p.73)**



and how these texts are used to shape what people are and what they do. The outer dimension refers to the broad ‘social practices’ which shape the discursive practices and give meaning to them—these are the ‘social structures and relations of power’ (p.72) that are the product of struggles over the social space.

Analysis of texts in CDA is always related in some way to the other, outer dimensions shown by Fairclough. In curriculum-historical study, this would mean that texts such as curriculum documents, teacher references, student text books, classroom artefacts, minutes of meetings, official regulations and so on, are always considered in terms of the discursive practice in which they are used and constituted and this, in turn, is related to the broader social structures which frame the practices and texts under examination. To relate this in even an more concrete way to this study, a chain of considerations is involved which is sketched in Table 2.3.3.

**Table 2.3.3: Dimensions of discourse in relation to the data of this study**

| Dimension           | Considerations  |
|---------------------|---|
| Text                | The focus of textual analysis is on educational reports, the official curriculum and the <i>Education Gazette</i> —the official organ of the Education Department responsible for state education in South Australia. The <i>Education Gazette</i> is published monthly and contains official instructions to teachers, curriculum specifications, inspectors’ reports, transcripts and reports of speeches, extracts from articles and other forms of ‘guidance’ for teachers about the curriculum   |
| Discursive practice | These documents operate as official sets of instructions and as texts that seek to persuade—they are to be <i>consumed</i> in certain ways and are <i>produced</i> or <i>distributed</i> by the Education Department and other organisation. The <i>Education Gazette</i> is <i>distributed</i> to every school and each teacher is expected to read it. It assumes and constitutes particular relations between teachers and headmasters; teachers and inspectors; teachers and students. It contains <i>intertextual</i> references to other documents - inspectors’ reports, acts of parliament, journal articles, politicians’ speeches, newspaper reports, texts for students—that is, it operates within sets of other sites and practices. It not only instructs teachers, it seeks to guide them, provide models of practice. It also speaks to (it is in dialogue with) other ways of seeing teaching and curriculum - e.g. the ‘practical’, the ‘time-server’, the ‘old-fashioned’ teacher. It is also a hybrid text with contradictory and complementary discourses operating. |

| Dimension       | Considerations  |
|-----------------|---|
| Social practice | The producers and consumers of these documents operate in a state-wide education bureaucracy struggling to assert its legitimacy and to raise the status of schooling. The economic conditions and other factors (e.g. WWI) impact on the resources available to the Department and to teachers and to the positions that are available to them as readers and producers. The early twentieth Century is also a time of tension between rural and urban interests and concern about the movement of people to the cities and the consequent problems this causes. It is a time when the separate former British colonies have established the Commonwealth of Australia and are involved in the problem of shaping of a new 'British' nation. The role of the school in shaping citizens and the skills and knowledge they should have is being debated. Thus the nature and content of the curriculum and teaching is a political issue. |

Each of these dimensions aids the analysis of the others and, in practice, there is considerable overlap. Significantly, this approach allows linguistic analysis at the micro-level to be connected to analysis of issues of power at the macro-level, via consideration of the actual discursive practices through which subjects such as teachers, students and inspectors are constituted. The focus on each of these dimensions can be varied according to the questions being asked and the data available.

In relation to the analysis of texts in the central box, Fairclough (1992, p.74.) argues that 'any sort of textual feature is potentially significant in discourse analysis'. He offers a large range of possibilities under four main headings ranging from the smallest textual elements to the largest: 'vocabulary', 'grammar', 'cohesion', and 'text structure' (p.75). Each of these was valuable in my own work, although I am not trained in the Hallidayian model of grammar used by Fairclough. My approach was to conduct a more thematic analysis of language, guided by Fairclough, informed by the genealogical and curriculum-historical approaches discussed above. Gee describes such an approach as a 'form of critical discourse analysis' that is 'not rooted in any particular linguistic background or theory (Gee, 2003 in press, p.30). I used the four headings provided by Fairclough in the following ways:

- *Vocabulary* involved consideration of the labels used for (school and student) subjects, the use of lexical items which may have been the focus of overwording or changing meanings over time, or the metaphors which were applied to curriculum and human subjects.
- *Grammar* guided me to analyse the processes (verbs) in the texts studied that signalled what students or teachers were to do, and how they were to be in the classroom. I also considered the ways in which the language of the texts signalled degrees of certainty or confidence (modality) in the points being made, as well as the interactional elements which signalled who was setting the agenda and who were the intended participants in the use of the text.

- *Cohesion* was considered at two levels. First, within texts to consider the ways in which they may be constituted by a range of discourses and positions (for example, were they presenting a single perspective or were they contradictory or additive in their arguments?); and second, at the level of intertextuality, to consider the other texts to which they were linked in support or in opposition (this is discussed in more detail below).
- *Text structure* was examined to identify significant elements of the texts, changes in their structure over time, and the organisers used to carry the content.

Fairclough (1992, p.237) notes that the analysis of the other levels (the two outer dimensions) of his model are 'more difficult to reduce to a checklist'. Given the nature of this corpus, I did not have immediate access to the practices of production, consumption and distribution of the texts I analysed. For this level and the outer dimension of social practices I relied on the reading of the work of historians and also on the reading of the texts to which I did have access, in order to consider the available clues for the ways that the texts I analysed were used and positioned in context. In this task I found analysis of *intertextuality* a useful way of considering how the texts may have been read and produced and linked to broader social conditions. Through intertextual references it is possible to track the relationships between and within texts that show the different viewpoints and meanings being employed. For Fairclough (1992), this involves tracking relations between texts in 'horizontal' and 'vertical' planes:

On the one hand there are 'horizontal' intertextual relations of a 'dialogical' sort ... between a text and those which precede and follow it in a chain of texts ... On the other hand, there are 'vertical' intertextual relations between a text and other texts which constitute its more or less immediate or distant contexts: texts it is historically linked with in various time-scales and along various parameters, including texts which are more or less contemporary with it. (Fairclough, 1992, p.103)

The sensitivity to intertextuality along both of these planes allowed me to consider the links between the material I was reading and other texts. Through intertextual links I was able to track ideas that worked across texts synchronically—for example between inspectors' reports and the *Course of Instruction*, or between national reports and politicians' speeches—and diachronically—for example, between German eighteenth century writing on pedagogy, and twentieth century curriculum materials.

An important element in intertextuality is what Bakhtin (1981) labeled 'dialogism'. This refers to the process of negotiation of the meanings that a word or text carries with it, with

the particulars of the context in which it is being used. This is a process which stratifies language:

[T]he centripetal forces of the life of language operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but also—and for us this is the essential point—into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, “professional” and “generic” languages, languages of generations and so forth. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.271-2)

Bakhtin shows that there is always a ‘language of the day’ or ‘place’ which must be understood as emerging at the nexus of the language’s history and the context in which it is being used. Words, labels, constructs and so forth must not be assumed to be the same across time or space. Words and texts always carry with them the marks of struggles over their meaning which can be tracked over time. Dialogism implies that texts are not single-voiced—they are engaging in dialogue with other texts over meaning—speaking back and forth to one another in an attempt to negotiate an agreed meaning (version of the truth)<sup>16</sup>. Thus curriculum texts carry with them fragments of the voices of the different viewpoints that are engaged in that negotiation (or struggle), even if it is only in the form of an interdiction which seeks to silence other voices or perspectives. Indeed, I became aware of practices and beliefs that were different from the official discourse through reading admonitions to teachers about what they were *not* to do, or those which the inspectors and others would like them to *stop* doing. Other perspectives were in evidence, even if in the negative.

Intertextual links and examples of dialogism provide useful insights into the ways that ideas were being promulgated and distributed and the political projects to which they were being attached. Along with my reading of work by educational and curriculum historians discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, attention to dialogism provided some insights into the discursive and social practices into which the texts I analysed were inserted.

I also considered how the texts I studied may have been used in peoples’ material lives to shape subjectivity and their bodies—another emphasis of CDA. This involved attending to the way that the body was being constituted in these texts, either directly or by implication. For Threadgold (interviewed in Kamler, 1997a, p.447), it is simply not

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<sup>16</sup> This process of dialogism needs to be related to the broader discursive context in which it occurs—after all, the words and texts of some people ‘count’ more than others because of their relative power and institutional status, and there are spaces in which dialogue is not permitted.

possible to have 'text and context without a body'. The body is required for producing texts—the musculature involved with vocal chords for producing speech for example—and also for consuming and using them. Researchers such as Kamler (1997b) have shown how, in educational institutions, textual practices are central to the shaping of student (and teacher) bodies to produce a habituated way of being in, and seeing, the world. It is a reminder that curriculum work is more than intellectual work, since it centrally includes work on the body—how it is to be, where it is to be, how it is to be held and disposed. I was especially alert in my analysis for the ways in which the texts were implicated in the shaping of the student body.

Finally, CDA involves a self-conscious attention to the role of the researcher and his or her relation to the field being studied (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Lee, 2000). CDA acknowledges that relations of power are central to research—for example, who gets to produce authoritative accounts of texts and the world. Luke (1997, p.349) notes that, after the poststructuralist denial of 'totalising schemas' and teleological versions of history and research, CDA cannot appeal to foundational theories but rather must both use and build theory and 'accept the provisional and contingent nature of that theory'. For Luke (1997, p.349), CDA is a 'situated political practice: a machine for generating interpretations and for constructing readings, none of which is neutral or unsituated'.

Luke's perspective relates to the points made earlier about the need for historical research to attend to the politics of the here and now—to understand how history bolsters or critiques ways of seeing the world that works for particular interests. Luke (1997) goes a step further than asking for such an awareness, however, and declares CDA as an openly political project which acknowledges the situatedness of the researcher and allows for the provisional nature of the theory it employs. For him, CDA has to:

... retain an allegiance to the representation of diasporic and subaltern voices and positions. The challenge for critical discourse analysis is to stand as an openly counter-scientific sociocultural practice. (Luke, 1997, p.349)

This study arises out of such a desire—to find alternative discourses and ways of understanding the 'problem' of adolescence, schooling and literacy as a basis for future work in the field. Just as the 'diasporic and subaltern voices and positions' in curriculum debates need to be bolstered, dominant forms of knowledge about young people and their schooling need to be disrupted and denaturalised. In the present, it is the figure of the young person as a member of traditionally marginalised social groups—communities in

poverty, indigenous peoples, immigrant communities, girls—who is cited ritualistically in justifications of proposed reforms. This figure is the constant target of curriculum reforms—it is the ‘problem’ to be ‘solved’. CDA can assist in attending to some of the spaces and silences that have been established by monologic versions of curriculum history which has somewhat ignored the figure of the child and the ways in which the curriculum serves to constitute them. It can support an attempt to ‘tease out of scanty evidence some inkling of the educational lives of the inarticulate’ (Kaestle, 1999, p.123). CDA also can be used to problematise the taken-for-granted lines of reasoning (such as ‘early intervention’) and categories (for example, ‘basic skills’) that underpin curriculum reform today, to consider their effects on those who are the targets rather than the authors of curriculum reform. The challenge is to do this in a way that does not simply establish new ‘truths’ of curriculum but which fully acknowledges the partiality and contingency of the work involved. This needs to be done reflexively, in the knowledge that the work I do involves the development of an expertise which, like any other, can be deployed as yet another technology for shaping subjectivity. This is not an innocent project of critique but the basis for intervention, with all the risks and possibilities that entails.

## **2.4 The data corpus**

The data corpus centres on the first three decades of the twentieth century, with some excursions into the late nineteenth century. I selected this period because during this time the first moves were made to establish state schools especially designed for the older child starting with a ‘continuation school’ in 1908 (later in that year relabelled as Adelaide High School). By the mid 1920s a scheme of ‘super-primary’ education was proposed which involved home-making schools, a technical high school, central schools (junior technical school for boys, commercial schools), high schools, higher primary schools, and supplementary courses (1925 *EG*, pp.218-219). These three decades were a period of establishment and experimentation in schooling for the older child, with an equal variety of work taking place in the curriculum field.

In addition to these experiments with post-primary schooling, there was also evidence that the primary school curriculum was being extended in this period to include more and more older children beyond the Compulsory Certificate standard which was set at Class IV level. The Education Acts right up to 1915 allowed children to leave school before 13 if they had met the Compulsory Certificate standard. This clause meant that a few children left well before they were 13, but it also meant that there were some children in school

who had met the criteria for an adequate compulsory education, who continued to study until the leaving age. These were the children who stayed on for Class V work. According to Miller (1986, p.128), 7.8% of all enrolled students were in Class V in 1901. In addition, the Department established a Class VI in 1901 (*EG*, p.26) with a curriculum that, in most schools, was based on the syllabus for the university Primary Public Examination which would later be the first qualification sought by secondary students when state high schools were established. Thus the age of compulsion legitimated some children staying on after obtaining the Compulsory Certificate, just as it legitimated leaving school at 13 for those who did not obtain that standard.

Appendix 2.4 details the range of administrative arrangements centred on the older child from the establishment of the Education Department in 1876 right through to the 1920s. What this survey of administrative changes indicates is that, in the first decades of the century, the education of the older child in the state school system was accomplished as much within the years of compulsion in the primary school as it was in purpose built post-primary schools. The Department extended primary schooling well beyond the Compulsory Certificate standard in the primary school and provided a range of incentives for remaining at school. While much of the rhetoric focussed on the various kinds of primary schools that were established, administrative and regulatory work on the post primary schools provided an experience of schooling beyond the Compulsory Certificate standard for many pupils who never attended a post-primary school. Overall, state secondary schooling remained quite a minor aspect of education over the first part of the century<sup>17</sup>. Table 2.4 shows that when secondary education was established in 1908 only 10% of the children over the age of compulsion (13) were in high or district high schools, the remainder were in primary schools. Even by 1916, the year in which the school leaving age was raised to 14, less than half the children at state schools who stayed on beyond the compulsory age were at a primary school.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, as late as 1925 children could stay at primary school through to Grade 9 if they did not have access to one of the nine district high schools (which had been formed out of the upper 'continuation' classes of state primary schools between 1908 and 1911, on the same premises) or higher primary schools (around 20 established from 1921). It wasn't until 1927 that transport subsidies provided the opportunity for such rural students to get to a post-primary school to study beyond Grade VII.

**Table 2.4 Numbers of children above the age of compulsion attending primary and post-primary schools, 1907 to 1916<sup>18</sup>**

| Year              | 1907 <sup>a</sup> | 1908 | 1909 | 1910 <sup>b</sup> | 1912 | 1913 | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 <sup>c</sup> |
|-------------------|-------------------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| primary           | 6511              | 6040 | 5898 | 4938              | 4527 | 4855 | 4826 | 5272 | 1968              |
| post-primary      |                   | 641  | 811  | 1368              | 1807 | 1865 | 2120 | 2333 | 1810              |
| % in post-primary |                   | 10%  | 12%  | 22%               | 29%  | 28%  | 31%  | 31%  | 48%               |

<sup>a</sup> There were no post-primary schools in 1907. Adelaide High School and nine district high schools were established in 1908

<sup>b</sup> No data given for 1911

<sup>c</sup> From 1916 the school leaving age was raised to 14, thus accounting for the drop in the overall number of children staying on beyond the age of compulsion

Table 2.4 provides an indication that this was not a period where a singular plan was enacted and schooling for the older child seamlessly constructed. Instead, it was a time of experimentation, contradictory programs, and piecemeal reforms which, nevertheless, led to an enduring structure within which the experience of growing up beyond achieving the Compulsory Certificate was brought into the realm of governmental reforms.

The first three decades of the twentieth century were also a time in which English was first formed as a subject. The 1907 *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools* of the Education Department of South Australia was the first to group formerly separate subjects of Reading, Spelling, Grammar, Language, Poetry and so on, under the heading of 'English' (Cormack, 2001), although the term 'English' had been used in primary schools as far back as 1885 as an over-arching label for 'composition' and 'grammar'. Thus in South Australian government schools, English was a primary school subject before it was a high school subject, an issue that has not been fully explored in curriculum histories of the subject (Peel, Patterson, & Gerlach, 2000, p.291). Over the three decades studied, different versions of English were developed for students beyond the compulsory standard of the primary school depending on the different versions of post-compulsory schooling that were established. These processes of curriculum 'fabrication' were mapped and related to the various forms of schooling discussed above.

I occasionally found it necessary to range into the years preceding my target period in order to better contextualise and understand the material I was analysing. For this reason I considered curriculum material relating to schooling and the English subjects in South Australia ranging back to the formation of the Education Department of South Australia in 1875.

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<sup>18</sup> Data based on annual reports to the Minister Controlling Education in the *Parliamentary Papers* (No.44). The years shown were the only ones in which data was provided in a way that allowed such a comparison between primary and post-primary schools.

The major sources of data for the study were:

- the *Education Gazette* (EG) published monthly by the Education Department<sup>19</sup>
- curriculum documents including the *Course of Instruction for Primary Schools* (CI), post-primary school courses, and the public examinations' syllabi.
- *Parliamentary Papers* (PP) of the South Australian Parliament including records of proceedings, legislation, annual reports, Commissions of Inquiry
- educational reports which were influential in South Australia in the planning of state education for the older child.

Each of these sources of data is explained in turn below.

#### **2.4.1 The Education Gazette**

The *Education Gazette* (EG) was produced monthly and forwarded to every teacher in the state. As well as being the official means of communicating administrative and curriculum requirements to a far-flung teaching force<sup>20</sup>, it provided a forum for teacher 'improvement' and acted as a record of key events. It contained, among other things, extracts from conference speeches, announcements of regulations, articles, extracts from inspectors' reports, tips and hints for teachers, official statistics and lists, curriculum guides, and reports of teacher association meetings. The *Education Gazette* was a multi-vocal text, where official pronouncements were placed alongside commentaries, complaints and entreaties to teachers, notices about events and all the other texts necessary to run a widely dispersed education system. While the 'official' voice was dominant, the *Education Gazette* was far from univocal as different discourses competed to 'speak the truth' about teaching and curriculum. Also detectable in this text were the echoes of practice (exemplary and problematic, everyday and special), and alternative ways of seeing the world of curriculum and teaching.

The *Education Gazette* seemed an ideal site for the application of critical discourse analysis that was alert to the possibilities of multiplicity of discourses and flows of power from

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<sup>19</sup> Original historical texts such as those listed here have an abbreviated title, shown in brackets when they first appear; for example, *Education Gazette* (EG). Thereafter only the abbreviated title is used in bracketed references. Consult the List of Abbreviations for complete titles and publications details for these documents.

<sup>20</sup> Each month, teachers had to initial the school's *Education Gazette* to show that they had read it.

'below' as well as from 'above'. For nearly all of the first two decades of the century, the official *Course of Instruction* was published in the *Education Gazette*, only becoming a separate publication in 1920. In addition to being a source of the official primary school curriculum, the *Education Gazette* was an important site of supplementary curriculum commentary and guidance for teachers. During the 1920s, special sections were added to the *Education Gazette* for the guidance of teachers in the newly established high schools and technical schools. Overall over 350 editions of the *Education Gazette* were read, and 759 separate texts within it were identified for close analysis. Appendix 2.4.1 provides three sample pages from the *Education Gazette* to give the reader a sense of the layout and style of the publication.

## 2.4.2 Curriculum documents

In the first part of the twentieth century, the upper levels of the primary school were as important to the education of the older child as the post-primary schools that were established from 1908 onwards. I therefore begin with a discussion of the curriculum in the upper primary years, before moving on to the curriculum for post-primary students.

### *The curriculum in the primary school*

In the primary school, the age and class configurations varied over the period of my study and I was compelled to work back to the first days of the Education Department in order to understand the names and labels that were being used for various student groupings and subjects in 1900. Table 2.4.2a shows the structure of the 'class' system that operated from 1876 to 1915.

**Table 2.4.2a: The class system 1876 to 1915**

| 1876-1877       |     | 1878-1906       |           | 1907-1915       |           |
|-----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| Label           | Age | Label           | Age       | Label           | Age       |
| Junior Division | 6   | Junior Division | 6         | Junior Division | 6         |
| Class I         | 8   | Class I         | 8         | Class I         | 8         |
| Class II        | 9½  | Class II        | 9½        | Class II        | 9½        |
| Class III       | 11  | Class III       | 11        | Class III       | 11        |
| Class IV        | 12½ | Class IV        | 12½       | Class IV        | 12½       |
|                 |     | Class V         | not given | Class V         | not given |
|                 |     |                 |           | Class VI        | not given |

In 1876 the label 'class' was used for the curriculum standards set for the inspector's annual examination of each school, continuing a practice from the period of the Board of Education that had preceded the Education Department. Standards were established in

four classes on top of a 'Junior Division', with Class IV<sup>21</sup> representing the 'compulsory standard' after which children could leave school, even before reaching the age of 13. In 1878 a Class V standard was given for the first time by the Education Department for those students who stayed on at school even though they had completed the compulsory standard. A Class VI standard was introduced in 1907, providing two levels of the curriculum for such students. The ages given in Table 2.4.2a must have been a very rough guide, given the historical research by Davey (1985), discussed in Chapter 4.1.1, on the small proportion of students who actually completed the compulsory standard before leaving school. It is clear, however, that a small minority of students did stay on at school to gain the Class IV and Class V certificates. A Class VI was introduced into schools in 1901, but that was based on the syllabus of the Primary Public Examination (discussed below), and 1907 represented the first time the Education Department published its own course for this class. For the purposes of my study of the older child I decided to survey the Class V and VI curricula, as these were for the older children beyond the compulsory standard.

With the new Education Act of 1915 which raised the leaving age and lowered the compulsory age for beginning school, the 'class' arrangement of the curriculum was changed to a system of 'grades'. The old Class V curriculum was split between the new Grades VI and VII (the last two grades of the primary school). From 1915 I tracked the curriculum for Grade VII as the continuation of Class V and Grade VIII as the continuation for Class VI. In 1921 the system was altered again, this time to allow for 'the completion of the primary course in seven years instead of eight' and for children to 'complete the new Seventh Grade at the age of 12 to 13 years' (1920 *CI*, p.9). This would allow for 'from one to two years post-primary instruction' and was therefore specifically aimed at the older child. In practice, the changes seemed to increase slightly the expected age at which children would complete each grade. For example, the official guidelines announcing the change for 1921 recommended that only 10% of students in the old Grade VI be promoted to the new Grade VII—the remaining 90% had to stay in Grade VI for another year, and all the old Grade VII students had to stay in the same grade. From 1921, there was no Grade VIII curriculum published for primary schools, although children at this time could stay on at primary school for two years if they lived too far from a Central School. In 1929, this situation was formally recognised and 'First Year' and 'Second Year' courses were provided in an appendix to the *Course of Instruction*.

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<sup>21</sup> Roman numerals were always used to specify class and grade level and are used here.

The *Course of Instruction* was published at irregular intervals and was included in the *Education Gazette* up to 1918, while being produced as a separate document from 1920. Table 2.4.2b shows the years in which the *Course of Instruction* was published. I analysed the English subjects in each of these documents.

**Table 2.4.2b: Years of publication for the *Course of Instruction***

| 1870s             | 1880s | 1890s | 1900s | 1910s | 1920s |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1876 <sup>a</sup> | 1885  | 1890  | 1900  | 1910  | 1920  |
| 1877 <sup>a</sup> | 1888  | 1892  | 1907  | 1911  | 1924  |
| 1878              |       |       | 1908  | 1912  | 1929  |
| 1879              |       |       | 1909  | 1913  |       |
|                   |       |       |       | 1914  |       |
|                   |       |       |       | 1916  |       |
|                   |       |       |       | 1917  |       |
|                   |       |       |       | 1918  |       |

<sup>a</sup> No Class V or above curriculum included in this year

In practice each version of the *Course of Instruction* was not a completely new writing of the curriculum. Typically only some subjects or parts of subjects were changed in each version. A complete map of the changes to the labels and content of the English subjects is provided in Chapter 8.1. Over time though, there was considerable change in subject labels and in the text structure. Prior to 1878 the curriculum was a simple list labelled the 'Programme of Inspector's Examination' listing the content by grade that the inspector would test in his annual school examination. The program was published as part of the Education Regulations promulgated in the *South Australian Government Gazette (SAGG)*. The 1878 *Course of Instruction* supplemented this program list with four brief regulations about teacher promotion, the teaching of gymnastics, the teaching of drill, and being able to charge students for additional lessons out of school hours. The course covered just two columns, or around one page of the *South Australian Government Gazette*. The 1885 *Course of Instruction* provided brief introductions (a few sentences or paragraphs) to each list of graded content as a guide to teachers about aims and appropriate methods of teaching which added to the length of the text. The 1888 *Course of Instruction* was the first to be published in the newly created *Education Gazette*. By 1900 the introductions and explanations that preceded the list of graded content had grown with each version of the *Course of Instruction* and it now covered seven pages. By 1901 the *Course of Instruction* was 23 pages long, and by the time it was published as a separate document in 1920 it was 67 pages. The final document analysed in 1929 was 169 pages long. Most of the additional length in these documents was due to the constant addition of material to better guide teachers on how to teach, what to teach and why.

### *The post-primary curriculum*

When the Adelaide High School and the district high schools were established in 1908, the curriculum was built around the syllabi of the public examinations set by the Adelaide University each year and published in the *Manual of the Public Examinations Board (PEB Manual)*. The university set four public examinations: the Primary, the Junior, the Senior, and the Higher Public Examination.

The *Primary Public Examination* was a preliminary examination which seemed to be designed as a publicly recognised qualification for the end of primary schooling for use by private schools, although some public school students did sit for this examination from Class VI of primary school, and in the early years of the district high schools. Up to 1901, this examination was called the Preliminary Public Examination. The Primary Public Examination was discontinued in 1923. The *Junior Public Examination* was the first post-primary qualification. It did not provide for entry into university. However, it clearly provided a stepping stone to the *Senior* and *Higher Examinations*, which did allow students to matriculate. There were indications that it was also a useful qualification for entry into desirable jobs, although organisations such as the railways, banks and the civil service conducted their own entry examinations until they were consolidated into the one system after 1917 (Miller, 1986, pp.139-140). During the 1920s, some subjects in the public examinations system could count for entry into such employment (1920 *PEB Manual*, p.18). It typically took two years of post-primary study for the Junior Public Examination, with an extra year each for the Senior and then the Higher Public Examination. In 1923, the Junior Public Examination was renamed the Intermediate Examination and the expected time of completion expanded to three years of high schooling<sup>22</sup>.

The Adelaide High School and district high schools courses were built around the syllabus of the Junior Public Examination, although, especially in the district high schools, there was also allowance for children to study for the Primary Public Examination. However, by the 1920s, state school students were only taking the Junior and Higher

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<sup>22</sup> In the same year, the Senior Public Examination was relabelled the Leaving Examination and remained the main course for university matriculation. The Higher Public Examination was renamed Leaving Honours, continuing the tradition of allowing an extra year in High School for students wishing to specialise before entering university.

Public Examinations<sup>23</sup>. In terms of curriculum, the arrangement of using the examination syllabi to set course content in the high schools seemed to be a taken-for-granted way of doing things. However, in his report for the 1909 year, the Director claimed that there was a number of students, especially in the country areas of the state, for whom this arrangement did not work:

The arrangement of the work for those pupils who wish to prepare for entrance examinations to higher educational institutions presents no difficulties; but in country districts such pupils are in the minority, and a course of work is required which is adapted to the needs of the girls and boys who can remain at school for only two years after completing the primary school course. (1910 EG, p.144)

As a result, a dual course was developed for district high schools and published for the 1912 school year. The *Course of Instruction* noted that students should be 'graded into two divisions'. Division A comprised those students who would go on to university or other higher institution such as the School of Mines; and Division B those students who would remain at high school for only two years before leaving for work. For the Division A students, the Junior Public Examination would continue to provide the syllabus of study, while a separate course was now prepared for the Division B students. In spite of the Director's assumptions about the need for this alternative, Miller (1986, p.139) reported that, in 1911, 'about seven out of ten high school students' took the exam-oriented course.

I have concentrated my mapping on the Junior (later Intermediate) Public Examination, as well as on the other courses developed by the Education Department as a supplement, alternative, or preparation for this examination. Such alternative courses were developed for high (and district high) schools, as mentioned above, as well as for central schools, Thebarton Technical High School, and higher primary schools. Table 2.4.2c shows the courses that were published for the period of my study which I reviewed. Each of these alternative courses was developed for the child it was assumed would *not* go on to university or other higher education institution.

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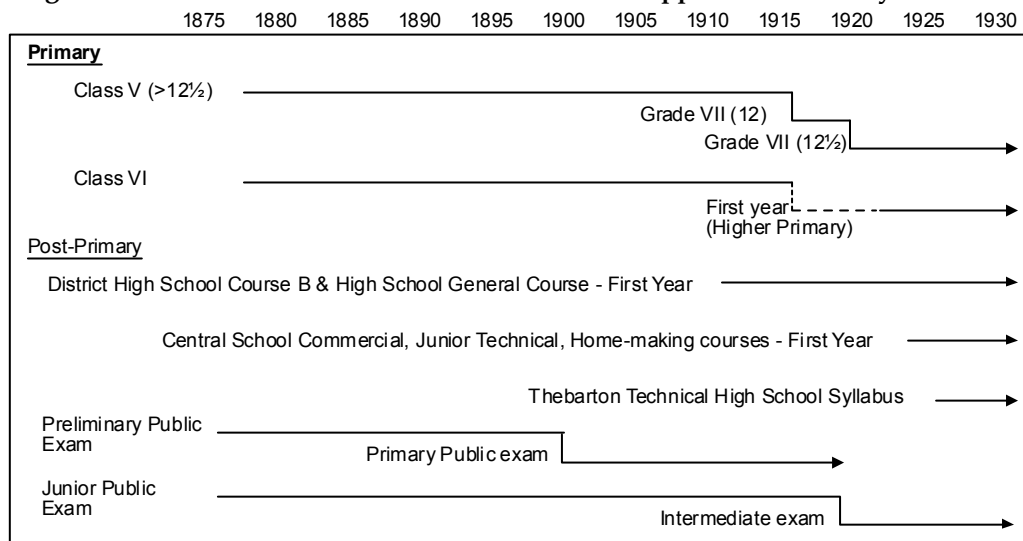
<sup>23</sup> It should be remembered that these examinations involved a very small proportion of the student population overall. In 1910 the district high schools enrolled 1,578 students compared to a total of around 49,000 in all primary schools (1911-1912 PP No.44, p.6). They even involved a minority of the over 13 year olds—in December 1910 there were 1,673 pupils over the compulsory age of 13 enrolled at Adelaide High School and the district high schools, while there were 4,871 over 13 year olds in primary schools. In spite of the small numbers involved, these examinations appeared to exercise an influence over all the courses offered in state post-primary schools, whether or not they were built around the assumption that students would go on to higher education. Similar content and text books were used across all the courses I surveyed, as will be explored in detail below.

**Table 2.4.2c: Education Department courses of study for post-primary schools**

| Year | Title   |
|------|---|
| 1912 | Course of Study in District High Schools (EG, pp.57-59)   |
| 1913 | Course of Study in District High Schools (EG, pp.180-184)   |
| 1921 | Courses of Study for high schools, domestic art schools and higher primary schools (separate publication). NB: This was not analysed as no copy could be located. |
| 1924 | Courses of Study for Central Schools: A. Commercial; B. Junior Technical; C. Home-Making  |
| 1925 | Thebarton Technical High School Syllabus (EG, pp.176-184)   |
| 1929 | Courses of Study for High schools (separate publication)  |
| 1929 | Courses of Study for Central Schools, Boys: A. Commercial; B. Junior Technical (separate publication)   |
| 1929 | Courses of Study for Central Schools, Girls: Home-Making Course (separate publication)  |

Overall, then, tracking the curriculum for the older child became a complex task working across primary and post-primary levels of schooling and a variety of grade levels and curriculum documents. Figure 2.4.2 provides a summary of both the class/grade levels and types of courses tracked in primary and post-primary state schools.

**Figure 2.4.2: Courses for the older child that were mapped for this study\***



\* Broken line indicates that no course was offered at that time

### 2.4.3 Parliamentary Papers

The *Parliamentary Papers (PP)* were surveyed for material relevant to my study. In the main this involved locating the proceedings of Parliamentary Enquiries and Commissions related to educational matters. I also referred to the annual reports of the Education Department that were included in the *Parliamentary Papers* where senior officials provided summaries and statistics of the operations of the Education Department. Where appropriate, I consulted records of parliamentary proceedings related to education legislation or parliamentary questions to the Minister responsible for education in the government of the day, as well as the various Education Acts passed by parliament. Table 2.4.3 provides an overview of the materials accessed from the *Parliamentary Papers*.

**Table 2.4.3: Major documents analysed from the Parliamentary Papers**

| Year | Title   |
|------|---|
| 1875 | Education Act   |
| 1878 | Education Amendment Act   |
| 1879 | Education Further Amendment Act   |
| 1881 | Progress Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly on Education   |
| 1882 | Progress report on Commission on Working of Education Acts  |
| 1883 | Final report on Commission on Working of Education Acts   |
| 1891 | Education Acts Amendment Act  |
| 1895 | Act to amend the Law relating to State Children   |
| 1899 | Act Relating to the Protection of Children  |
| 1905 | Act to amend the Education Acts   |
| 1908 | Preliminary Report of the Director of Education Upon Observations Made During an Official Visit to Europe and America, 1907 |
| 1911 | First Progress Report of the Royal Commission on the Adelaide University and Higher Education                               |
| 1912 | Third Progress Report of the Royal Commission on Education  |
| 1913 | Final Report of the Royal Commission on Education   |
| 1915 | Act to consolidate and amend the Law relating to Public Education   |

Not all available Parliamentary Commissions and Reports were included as data in the corpus. I concentrated on using the various reports of Parliamentary Commissions to provide contextual information in the period around the formation of the Education Department (for example, the Commission Reports, 1881-1883) and to examine the major reports of the early twentieth century that appeared intertextually in the *Education Gazette* (for example the 1908 report of the Director). For other major reports (for example, Board of Enquiry into Technical Education, 1886) I relied on the work of educational historians who had studied South Australia (Miller, 1986; Trethewey, 1977).

#### 2.4.4 Other educational reports

In addition to the reports described above that were sourced from the South Australian Parliament, I also incorporated into the data set two other major educational reports from elsewhere. These were the *Report of the Commissioners, Mainly on Secondary Education* which was published in 1904 in New South Wales (hereafter *Knibbs-Turner*, after the two authors), and the English *Report of the Moseley Educational Commission to the United States of America, October-December 1903* (hereafter *Mosely Report*) published in London also in 1904. Both of these reports were frequently cited in the South Australian context in connection with debates and work on establishing schooling for the older child.

In analysing all of the materials described in this part of the chapter, my process was to read thoroughly the texts to note instances where the older child was talked about or made a subject or object of curriculum or school practice with a focus on the English subjects. Through my initial reading I identified key documents or sections for more

in-depth analysis, and built a log of key events that I could use to relate my analysis to the broader historical record. For example, I built a list of the key Education Department personnel who were responsible for writing and producing the curriculum and other materials I analysed in the South Australian context. This is published in Appendix 2.4.4 as a guide to the reader who wishes to locate the position and tenure of the people I refer to in the data chapters as the writers and speakers of the texts I have analysed.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The reviews of genealogical, curriculum-historical inquiry, and critical discourse-analytic methods discussed in 2.3 show that these approaches share many similar methodological challenges and questions, at least as I have conceptualised them. They all include work across disciplines, and a focus on text and discourse. History is a discipline which is essentially dealing with issues of representation in the kind of data it uses, and with the process of presenting narratives of those representations (representation of representation). Historical inquiry therefore involves participating in discourse, and at the same time seeking to find ways to (re)present it, critique it and do work on it. It has been my intention in this chapter to take up Jenkins' (1991, p.68) challenge for historians to 'deliberately call overt attention to their own processes of production and explicitly indicate the constructed rather than found nature of their referents'.